

Victorian Popular Fiction Association

2pm Saturday 6th March 2010 Study Day at Kingston University
Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2EE
John Galsworthy Building

Dr Liz Thiel (Roehampton University)

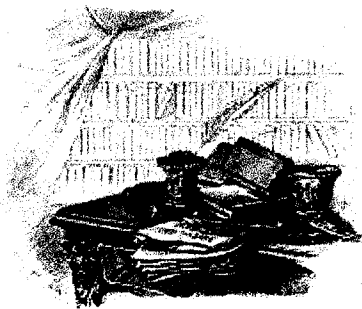
'Beyond the Children's Literature Canon: the author known as "Brenda"'

Liz Thiel is a Senior Lecturer in Children's Literature at Roehampton University where she teaches on undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Her recent publications include *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-century children's literature and the myth of the domestic ideal* (Routledge, 2008). She is also co-author of *A Victorian Quartet: Four forgotten women writers* (Pied Piper, 2008), which features a section on 'Brenda'. Her current research, 'Unlikely Innocents: Revisioning the Child in Nineteenth-Century Literature', explores images of the degenerate and anti-Romantic child in texts for both children and adults.

Professor John Spiers (IES, University of London)

'By Book or By Crook: The Secret History of a Victorian Publisher, R.E.King – "Publisher for the Millions"'

John Spiers is a Senior Research Fellow, Institute of English Studies, University of London, and a Visiting Professor at the University of Glamorgan. He had a distinguished career in academic publishing, founding and running The Harvester Press of Brighton for 20 years. He is the author of a number of books, including *Serious About Series* (IES, 2007), and a recent work on public policy, *Who Decides Who Decides?* (Radcliffe, Oxford, 2008). He edited *Gissing and the City: Cultural Crisis and the Making of Books in Late Victorian England* (Palgrave, 2006). He is also the editor of two volumes on *The culture of the Publisher's Series*, to be published by Palgrave later this year.



The Victorian Popular Fiction Association has been established to offer a regular forum for the dissemination and, hopefully, publication of the vast amount of research currently being done on Victorian popular fiction. The planning of the Victorian Popular Novelists 1860-1900 conference of September 2009 confirmed to the association's founders that research into this area of Victorian studies was both diverse and rewarding. We plan to hold an annual conference but also anticipate that regular research seminars would be productive and informative, enabling academics working in this field to share their work and establish and maintain a vibrant network of collaborative scholarship. Information about the VPFA, and about our 2nd annual conference, Victorian Popular Culture: Prose, Stage and Screen (IES, 22-24 July 2010), can be found on the VPFA home page given below.

Greta Depledge and Jane Jordan

<http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/victorian/>

BEYOND THE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CANON: The author known as 'Brenda'

Georgina Castle Smith (1845-1933), the woman known as 'Brenda', was the author of twenty three novels, most of which were for children. Although she is remembered primarily for the street arab tale *Froggy's Little Brother* (1875), Brenda also wrote about the children of her own middle-class world. While these texts are now virtually forgotten, they often provide fascinating insights into Victorian life. Brenda's books were widely read during her lifetime and her readership ranged from Sunday school pupils to the aristocracy; Alix of Hesse, later wife of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, was an admirer of Brenda's work, as was social campaigner Lord Arran, a philanthropist and leading member of the Children's Country Holiday Fund.

Bibliography

- Bratton, J. (1981) *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*. London: Croom Helm
- Brenda. (n.d.) *Froggy's Little Brother*. London: John F. Shaw (first published 1875)
- (n.d.) *A Saturday's Bairn*. London: John F. Shaw (first published 1877)
- (n.d.) *Victoria-Bess: The Ups and Downs of a Doll's Life*. London: John F. Shaw (first published 1879)
- (n.d.) *Little Cousins or Georgie's Visit to Lotty*. London: John F. Shaw (first published 1880)
- (n.d.) *The Pilot's House or The Five Little Partridges*. London: John F. Shaw (first published 1885)
- Hollingshead, J. (1986) *Ragged London in 1861*. London: Dent (first published 1861)
- Mayhew, H. (1968) *London Labour and the London Poor*. London: Constable (first published 1861-2)
- Thiel, E. (2008) *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-century children's literature and the myth of the domestic ideal*, London and New York: Routledge
- Thiel, L., Lomax, E., Carrington, B., Sebag-Montefiore, M. (2008) *A Victorian Quartet: Four forgotten women writers*, Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing (Brenda, Hesba Stretton, Flora Shaw and Mrs. Molesworth)

Illustrations

Introductory illustration: A rare published photograph of Georgina Castle Smith circa 1912. Castle-Smith family collection.

'Georgie's haircut' by T. Pym from *Little Cousins or Georgie's Visit to Lotty*, p.103

'The Punch and Judy show' by T. Pym. Ibid. p. 132.

'Musgrave throws his dinner out of the window' by Unknown from *A Saturday's Bairn*, n.p.

'Froggy dreams of his childhood' by Castle Smith from *Froggy's Little Brother*, n.p

Liz Thiel/Roehampton University 2010 (L.Thiel@roehampton.ac.uk)