

sued. The figure describes the experience of being left alone in Peru, of running from authorities, of his younger friends being picked up because they couldn't run as fast; and of hiding from anyone in Sweden who might call in the authorities and, especially, of the unbearable loneliness suffered until the age of 12. Specific locations, such as the streets of Peru, the school playground and classrooms in Sweden are represented in colourized images, framed within the larger image. Thus, all details, while factual, are explicitly presented as manipulated, constructed, coloured, shaped, drawn.

Hidden, like many of the films discussed, contributes to new possibilities in cinema that challenge conventional category labels through the bold mixing of formal and stylistic strategies. My opinion of these films as pushing and pulling at "the cinema" and its established types of filmmaking found unforeseen support when I discovered that *Hidden* was simultaneously screened at Sprockets and Hot Docs, a festival of documentary cinema. Competing against equally powerful subject matter but more conventional forms, *Hidden* was awarded Best International Short Documentary. At 12 minutes in duration, the story of one boy stands in for the stories of all innocent children who are victims of the injustice and inequity of the adult world, bent as it is on maintaining imaginary boundaries of difference. Significantly, the collapse of formal, aesthetic and thematic boundaries evident in *Hidden* — through its use of the short form, animated, realist, and experimental aesthetics, as well as political, historical, and factual subject matter — provides a potent echo to the film's message. Finally, and to anticipate my next review essay, the innovations of the short children's films are evident in a number of recent feature films. The most powerful statement of this fact is the surprise Academy Award in the category of foreign film: it went to the Japanese anime film, *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, Japan, 2001).

Work Cited

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Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids or for Teachers? / Marissa McHugh

Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids. Lois Burdett. Firefly, 2002. 64 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55209-413-8.

Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids is Lois Burdett's eighth Shakespeare adaptation in her *Shakespeare Can Be Fun!* series for children. The books in this series aim to present Shakespeare's plays in theatrical story forms that are accessible and enter-

taining for children. *Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids* presents the humorous tale of Beatrice and Benedict, two witty and hot-tempered characters who are coerced into believing that they are in love with each other. The book begins with a foreword by the Academy Award-winning actor Denzel Washington, who played Don Pedro in the popular Kenneth Branagh film version of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). In this foreword, Washington congratulates Burdett on her innovative approach to teaching Shakespeare and on her ability to “open up the door to Shakespeare” for young children.

Burdett succeeds in making *Much Ado About Nothing* accessible for children by adding an on-stage narrator. By claiming authorship of the work and by speaking in an omniscient voice, the narrator (probably intended to be a teacher or adult) assumes the status and character of Shakespeare:

I have a story, with an all-star cast,
Set in Sicily, in times long past.
Beatrice and Benedict, the heroes of the play,
Battle with words and wit everyday.
But I have a plan to unite the two,
That is intended to entertain you.
So join me, my friends, under Messina’s sky,
As Signior Benedict and his troop draw nigh. (5)

This narrator’s oration throughout the play serves to contextualize the story, to introduce the characters, and to explain the stage directions. Further narration introduces characters, cues entrances and exits, prompts character stage actions and lines, and assures the smooth progression of the storyline.

Burdett also adapts elements of the Shakespearean style to suit her young audience. She writes the entire play in rhyming couplets, mimicking the structure of nursery rhymes familiar to most children. She also adapts the Early Modern language to suit a more familiar North American vernacular. The boxed commentaries below the narration and dialogue further reinforce the comprehension of the verse and language. These boxed commentaries contain children’s interpretations of the plotline and of the character’s thoughts. For instance, seven-year-old Lauri-Beth Lewis sums up Beatrice’s initial feelings for Benedict: “Benedick, you annoying pest, your mouth blabs more than a parrot squawks. You’re such a bragging show-off” (9). These boxed inner dialogues exemplify that a young audience can readily relate to Shakespeare’s plays and characters. Washington, in his foreword to this play, describes the illustrations as charming: “[Burdett’s] delightfully entertaining text is complemented with her students’ thoughtful interpretation and charming artwork which make *Much Ado About Nothing* come alive in a whole new way.” Though the pictures may be perceived as “charming,” the different visual interpretations of the characters impede their recognition. Consequently, the play relies almost completely on its word content for story meaning.

The book’s emphasis on words and its reliance on narration make it, I would venture to say, better suited to being a teacher resource book than a children’s picture book. Burdett does describe the book’s function as being partly reliant on a teacher or another adult. On the last page, she lists a variety of home or classroom activities in which to use the play as a learning resource: “Locate Messina, Sicily on a map of the world” and “Choreograph a dance and compose music for the party