

BritLit Update

Golden October

October in BritLit World usually creates activity that can be most likened to a swan. From above the water, the graceful bird proceeds on its stately journey, apparently unperturbed by the ways of the world. Under the surface, however, it is another story, as webbed feet paddle away furiously. As a result there is little to report in the panoramic sense, though the frantic activity that has been going on behind the scenes, or under the water, is likely to bring rewards over the next few months.

For example, there has been a great deal of work being carried out on the kits front. While keen observers of activity on the web pages will have noticed that the old 'Return of the Moonman' kit has had a fresh lick of paint, and has lost a few kilos, there doesn't appear to have been a lot else that has happened over the past few weeks. Well, actually, not true.



The 'Segovia' kits (see Issue 4.8) are now ready for posting on the website now that copyright issues have been sorted out, and there is lots more. One of the longest awaited kits – 'The Wolf's Tale', which has been 14 months in gestation, poor mother – is just about ready to meet the world. This has been a labour of love by the team, and especially recently by Claudia Ferradas who had to virtually rebuild the kit from ancient parchments, runic crosses and by reading tea leaves after the wizardry of

electronic, digital storage failed us, and the back-up wouldn't play either. A few extra checks and the kit should be ready to shake its feathers and be displayed and admired by all and sundry.

Then there has been work on the three new kits promised from the NILE in Norwich crew of 2008, and 'The White Towel' (Bali Rai), 'Orange Juice' (Michael Rosen) and 'The Hand that Feeds' (Michael Z Lewin) are all about ready to go – probably in that order. All of these will in some way be firsts: Bali Rai is our first British Indian writer on the project, Michael Rosen our first Children's Laureate and Michael Z Lewin is our first American writer. Mike Lewin has dual American/British nationality, so you might like to ponder how he himself pronounces the mysterious 'Z' in his name.

In November, then, these projects should become publically available. They won't all appear at once; that would be confusing and unhelpful to our patient public. They will appear at regular intervals over the next few months.

Meanwhile the scripting for the newest of the kits has been finished. Scripting? The new project, based on Melvin Burgess's story, 'Coming Home', will include 2 minute video clips featuring the main characters, plus a podcast of the climax of the story together with alternative endings. This has meant that we have had to engage the author to revisit his story and rewrite certain sections so they fit the mixed media of the new project. Filming and recording should be finished by the end of November and the project should see the light of day sometime in the new year, possibly as early as February, but, of course, it will have to stand in line with the other projects described above.

Busy times, after all.

Francesca Returns

Since Francesca Beard, performance poet, was in Portugal last with her 'Chinese Whispers' show, she has been to the Olympics. The 'Animal Olympics' to be precise, a children's show she wrote to coincide with the Beijing Olympics and to ask the vital question: why weren't the animals of the of the Chinese horoscope invited to take part in the games? Serious stuff indeed.



Francesca will be back in Portugal briefly, straight after her UK tour with 'Speechless', a group of SE Asian and UK based poets performing to audiences across Britain (*left*), (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-literature-speechless-2008.htm>) to work in Porto and, especially to help the BritLit project develop more authority in one of its chosen areas of pedagogic concern – critical thinking. Much of Francesca's work, while often light-hearted

and playful on the surface, deals with profound and disturbing issues and while in Porto she will be getting students involved in aspects of identity and culture, debt and responsibility (oh, how topical) and the commercialisation of art. Weighty stuff, and no doubt delivered with the lightest of touches which will belie the impact.

Francesca will be appearing at FLUP (University of Porto) on Tuesday 11 November and at the British Council, Porto, on Wednesday 12 November.

International Conference in Lisbon



TEFL Theory, Practice and Methodology: 1st International Conference on Teaching English as a Foreign Language at FCSH Universidade Nova de Lisboa 28 and 29 November. Speakers include Martin Dewey, King's College, London (sponsored by British Council, Portugal).

More information:
<http://unenglishteaching.wordpress.com/conferencias/>

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