

Dear Reader

Recently, while talking about 'The Conquerors', I was asked why I wrote about big issues. The speaker meant books such as 'Two Monsters' which is about the other person's point of view, 'Not Now Bernard,' about the ignored child and the monster within us and 'Who is Mrs Green?' where the target of anger is not the cause of it. Books which, I hope are enjoyed for the story. I'd hate to lecture, but I'd like to provoke discussion and leave the reader something to think about.

These books are sometimes overshadowed by the popularity of Elmer. But even the Elmer series can contain big issues. In 'Elmer and the Hippos' for example, the hippos are like unwanted immigrants whose river has dried up. 'The Conquerors' is based on an idea I've had for many years. An ex-soldier I knew recounted how during the second world war, they had landed in Italy and to put it simply, conquered it – excuse my historical inaccuracy. After the war he dreamt only of returning to Italy. Who had conquered whom?

I knew I'd use this theme at some point. The point came with the war in Iraq. I felt angry that History should teach us nothing and angry about the obvious disastrous consequences. I also felt a kind of impotence, there was nothing I could do except create a book.

I finished the book very quickly. I always have a book en route, but usually it is produced alongside my paintings, drawings, gouaches, pastels etc. This time, I wrote and rewrote, drew and redrew and ignored everything else. I ended up using a technique of simple line and coloured pencils leaving plenty of white paper to keep the feeling light. Judging by the critics and the number of countries who have published it, it's a success. Once I'd finished the book, I felt better.

My next book to be published is 'Three Monsters.' It was not written as a reaction to a particular event, but recent history has given it extra significance. The story concerns a monster in search of a place to live after his land has been destroyed by an earthquake. He arrives at a land inhabited by two other monsters who don't want him to stay there until they realise that he could be useful.

So, why do I write such stories? Perhaps because I was brought up on moral tales. Perhaps because the air is as full of stories as it is of TV and radio programmes and telephone conversations; a story teller is just a receiver for some of those stories. I happen to receive the kind of stories that I write, so I'm the first to hear them.

I hope that the stories give pleasure to readers. I get a lot of pleasure from writing and drawing them.

Happy Reading

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David McKee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.