



Enchanted Lion Books is the winner of the 2016 (Mildred L.) Batchelder Award for *The Wonderful Fluffy Little Squishy*, written and illustrated by Beatrice Alemagna and translated by Claudia Zoe Bedrick. Bedrick delivered these acceptance remarks at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 27, 2016, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Batchelder Award, visit <http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.



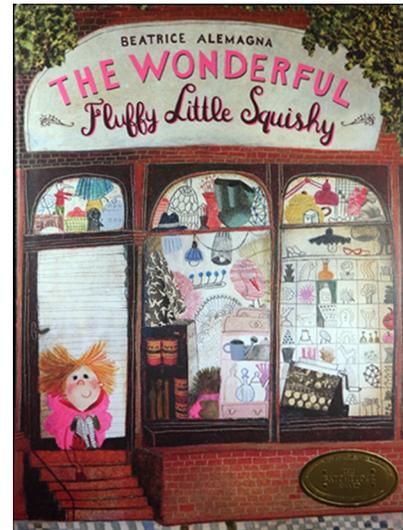
# Batchelder

## AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good morning. I am delighted to see all of you and to be here to accept the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for Beatrice Alemagna's *The Wonderful Fluffy Little Squishy*. Given the increase in good books in translation for young readers now being published in the US and the fantastic books from TOON, NorthSouth, and Seven Stories that were selected by the Batchelder committee for 2016 honors, I can only confess to real and happy surprise at the award going to the *Fluffy Squishy*. Indeed, I was so surprised to begin with that I couldn't help but wonder what role the hot neon pink might have played in the selection.

In more assured moments, though, I like to think that the award came in recognition of the ways in which language honed and shaped by adults in their roles as author and translator might result in a text that truly carries a child's voice across cultures and continents. As the translator of the book, I had a single conversation with Beatrice Alemagna, the author, about the text, in which she told me that the most important thing for her was respecting the child's sensibility and voice so that the book would be richly childlike in whatever language it went into, but not for a moment childish.

The French title of the book is, *Le Merveilleux-dodu-velu-petit*. But what is a dodu-velu-petit? The first



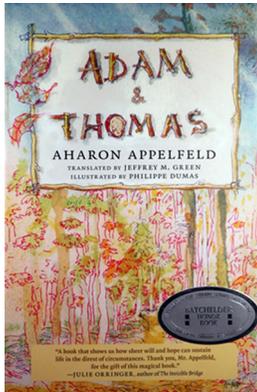
French speaker I asked, just to test things out, told me she didn't know exactly, but that it would be some kind of small fat hairy thing. Hmmm, I thought. Was this really such a great acquisition after all? Another friend said it would be something like a small plump furry thing. That seemed better, but still not great, and no equivalent of dodu-velu.

What are the differences between plump, pudgy, tubby, round, and squishy? Not all that many, perhaps, but that's only before you consider the context. Once situated within the pages of the book, we realize that only one of those words can be selected and not only must it name a make-believe neon pink creature, it also has to name a creature that might be hairy, fuzzy, furry, fluffy, or just plain

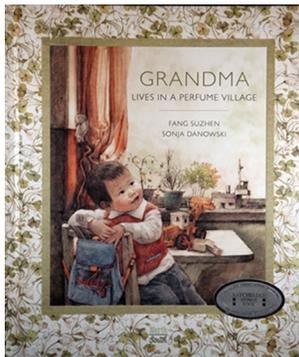
Enchanted Lion Books, based in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is an independent publisher of illustrated books and fiction for readers of all ages. They have published books in translation from around the world and have created many books with authors and illustrators as well.



## 2016 BATCHELDER HONOR BOOKS



*Adam and Thomas*  
Appelfeld, Aharon  
Illus. by Philippe Dumas  
Trans. by Jeffrey M. Green  
Seven Stories



*Grandma Lives in a Perfume Village*  
Suzhen, Fang  
Illus. by Sonja Danowski  
Trans. by Huang Xiumin  
NorthSouth/NordSüd Verlag

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soft. How to combine the one set of possibilities with the other to create in English the *dodu-velu* of the French?

Pudge and pudgy are pretty great kid words as are fuzzy and fluffy. So that was my first point of approach to translating the title and the pink thing's name: to look for childlike words that sounded good, hopefully even charming and funny, like the protagonist herself. My other path into the book and its translation were the remarkable, expressive illustrations. As a result, hairy and fat disappeared. Furry hung around for a little while, but fuzzy and fluffy quickly took precedence. As for pudge, it's certainly a sweet word and sounds good, but Beatrice's illustrations of the *dodu-velu* seemed to invite another description. And this leads to an important point about the translation of picture books, which is that the pictures themselves guide the search for language as much as anything else. The pictures carry us into the garden and ask us to name things as if for the first time, meaning well and in a fresh way. Here is a coin-operated fountain; here is the butcher with his mean red face; here is the garbage man Quentin, who is a stupid oaf. The French might call Quentin "espece d'idiot," and in English we might say "idiot" too, but in US kid-speak, Quentin has to be stupid.

The translator Edith Grossman asks, "...what do translators translate, and what exactly are they faithful to?" A question she answers by saying: "To my mind, a translator's fidelity is not to lexical pairings but to context.... Good translations are good because they are faithful to this contextual significance. They are not necessar-

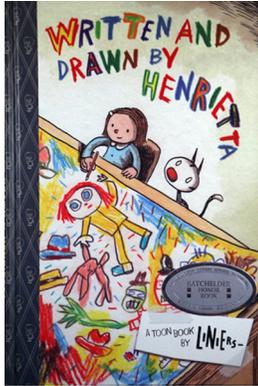
ily faithful to words or syntax, which are peculiar to specific languages and can rarely be brought over directly in any misguided and invariably muddled effort to somehow replicate the original. This is the literalist trap, because words do not *mean* in isolation. Words mean as indispensable parts of a contextual whole.... Translators translate context. We use analogy to recreate significance, searching for the phrasing and style in the second language which *mean* in the same way and *sound* in the same way to the reader of that second language."

*Dodu-velu* might have been fuzzy pudge from the words and their sound alone, but in conjunction with the pictures and the personality of the protagonist Eddie, neither pudge nor fuzzy, nor plump and hairy seemed quite right. Rather, between the pictures of Eddie and the hot pink creature itself, *dodu-velu* suddenly became a fluffy squishy, with squishy transforming from an adjective into a noun as though it was the most inevitable thing in the world. But why those words exactly? Because given her story, Eddie just didn't seem to be after something plump or pudgy or round. Her search rather seemed to be about finding something squishy she could hug; something fluffy and soft she could hold. Something rare and sweet and impossible. A funny adjective become noun: a squishy. A *dodu*.

My heartfelt thanks to Beth Rosania and the 2016 Batchelder committee for their selection of *The Wonderful Fluffy Little Squishy*; to ALSC in its entirety and to Courtney Jones in particular, who has never failed to respond to my chaotic, last minute style with charm, humor, and elegance; to au-



## 2016 BATCHELDER HONOR BOOKS



### *Written and Drawn by Henrietta*

Written, illustrated, and  
translated by Liniers  
TOON/RAW Junior

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thor/illustrator Beatrice Alemagna for her beautiful representation of children; and to Aurelie Lapautre at the French publishing house Albin Michel who extended rights to the *Fluffy Squishy* to Enchanted Lion and was one of the very first people in French publishing to take a chance on us way back in 2010 when the company was still relatively unknown; finally, I would like to thank USBBY and the many librarians across the country who work tirelessly in support of books in translation for young readers here. Thank you, all.



Association for Library Service to Children

For more information about  
the Batchelder Award, visit  
<http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.

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