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NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS: Responses to the various calls for papers are most welcome. Any articles should be sent in duplicate and on diskette, IBM or MAC. Articles and correspondence should be mailed to the Editors, *CCL*, Department of English, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1.

NOTE AUX COLLABORATEURS: les réponses aux appels de communications et les propositions d'articles sont les bienvenues. Tout article destiné à la revue doit être envoyé en deux exemplaires, avec une version sur disquette (IBM ou MAC). Veuillez adresser ces articles, les comptes rendus et la correspondance à Daniel Chouinard, Études françaises, Université de Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1.

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Editorial: Sex and Sensibility

Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
'Ode: *Intimations of Immortality*'
William Wordsworth

Surely one of the most arresting discoveries one makes in digging into the past is that children haven't always been such Innocents, trailing clouds of glory from Heaven, and only tumbling into sex and rebellion at fifteen. Reading the seventeenth-century records of Louis XIII's physician, for instance, reveals that the childhood of the young dauphin was closer to *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* than *The Velveteen Rabbit*. As soon as Louis XIII could talk, he was given the facts of life; as soon as he could walk, he took part in adult ballets, appearing, even, as a naked Cupid. At five, he attended a farce about adultery which he enjoyed enormously; by seven he was a regular theatre-goer who was also an aspiring hunter and an accomplished gambler. Most surprising of all is what Philippe Ariès notes so often about Medieval and Renaissance children: they were not shielded from the sexual practices of adults. Not only was the dauphin a fan of the "blue" stories the courtiers of all ages told in his midst, but also he seems unfazed by the keen amusement his own sexual play with his sister (placed naked in the King's bed) evokes from a courtly audience, including Henry IV.

Such revels do, however, come to an end. In the case of the dauphin, they ended at age seven when his "infancy" was officially over and his sexuality thereafter curbed. In the case of many girls, especially less-privileged ones, any and all revels often end in their early teens when their childhood, as this seventeenth-century street ballad reveals, ends in motherhood:

When once I felt my belly swell
no longer might I abide;
My mother put me out of doores,
and bang'd me backe and side.

Ironically, being "out of doores," would, to subsequent generations of poets

(especially the Romantics), bespeak the child's organic union with Nature, her innocent, asexual, pure and harmless merging with God's earth; it would not be the sign of sexual shame it is for the "young lass" of the ballad.

Of course, children are not the picture of Wordsworthian Innocents *now* any more than they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but we still cling to the comfort of binary oppositions that relegate the child to the space of purity and darling incapacity, while we claim, somewhat begrudgingly, ownership of experience, competence, power and — yes — sexuality. Children, we tell ourselves (blissfully ignoring Freud), are free of sexual feeling and response; and the longer they stay that way the better. But, better for whom? Jacqueline Rose and James R. Kincaid, both critics of children's literature, argue that the construction of children as asexual is necessary to the psychic and cultural life of the *adult*: it functions to completely deny what Rose identifies as "frightening" — a child's sexuality — and to help sustain a nostalgia for a world, like *The Wind in the Willows*, "free of problems, clear of the clash of sex."

This special issue of *CCL* will not encourage nostalgia for any such lost idyll; it will, however, encourage debate as new and important voices interpret the contours of a vast and neglected terrain: young adult sexual experience. We begin with Charles Montpetit and his wonderfully witty article on the publication history of *The First Time*, a history that hints that English Canada may be more nostalgic about that Eden of childhood than French Canada — or perhaps just more embarrassed about sex (doesn't inquiry into young people's sex lives seem prurient?) or more fearful that giving young adults stories about first-time sexual experiences will ineluctably lead to the fate of the lass in the ballad: *swollen belly, ruined life*. We offer, in the review section, four viewpoints on the success of Montpetit's controversial anthology.

The other articles in this issue all ask us to re-evaluate how we view sex — not just whether or not we think children and young adults should be exposed to writing about it, but also how we construct, for instance, homosexuality (Perry Nodelman's "Bad Boys and Binaries"), female desire (Anna Altmann's "Desire and Punishment"), and the way in which our constructions of these things can be taught in the classroom (Meredith Cherland's "A Postmodern Argument Against Censorship"). For those who take Cherland's message to heart, we offer Lynne McKechnie's useful bibliography of titles to explore. For those who want "Just the facts, please," Aniko Varpalotai will show you what you might, or might not, learn in three new books about body changes.

But this issue is, finally, not so much about the body as it is about the mind. And what goes on in the mind is sometimes more tantalizing, more disturbing and more touching than what goes on behind closed doors (when the clouds of glory have gone for the night and so have your parents).

Marie Davis

Éditorial: De l'innocence à l'affirmation de soi: adolescence et sexualité

Le mythe de l'"âge de l'innocence", hérité des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, perdure dans bien des esprits et cautionne, dans le domaine de la littérature pour la jeunesse, le recours à la censure. Quel parent, même vétéran de la Révolution sexuelle des années 60 et 70, ne voit pas dans son enfant un être innocent en soi, c'est-à-dire pur, asexué et sans défense qu'on doit protéger des influences néfastes d'un monde résolument hostile? Pourtant, l'expérience dément bien vite ces beaux sentiments, car la vérité se trouve plutôt du côté de Freud: l'enfant, quelquefois, ressemble davantage au "pervers polymorphe" de la tradition augustinienne qu'au chérubin à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Les grands travaux historiques des Philippe Ariès et des Jacques Le Goff confirment cette observation: la distinction entre l'enfance et l'âge adulte a considérablement évolué depuis le moyen-âge. Qu'il suffise d'alléguer le *Journal* d'Héroard, médecin du dauphin, le petit Louis XIII. L'observation quotidienne du futur roi de France à laquelle s'est livré le médecin montre l'omniprésence de la sexualité dans la vie enfantine au XVIIe siècle, qui, à cet égard, n'était pas retranchée du monde des adultes. Le jeune Louis, dont le "guilleri" était bien souvent le centre de son univers, voyait, entendait et savait tout!

Le présent numéro conteste donc la complaisance morale des adultes et remet en cause la dichotomie entre la prétendue innocence des enfants et le droit de propriété des adultes sur l'expérience, le pouvoir et la sexualité. Tout d'abord, Charles Montpetit raconte la genèse de son recueil *The First Time*, version canadienne de sa célèbre anthologie québécoise, *La Première Fois*. L'on sera mieux en mesure de comprendre, à la lumière de son double témoignage, en anglais et en français, et après la lecture des quatre comptes rendus de cet ouvrage, la complexité de l'emprise culturelle des institutions et des mentalités sur la littérature de jeunesse dès qu'il est question de sexualité (sans compter le fait que l'on sera à même de mieux percevoir une différence fondamentale entre le Canada anglais et le Canada français: si les auteurs anglophones tendent à regretter le Paradis perdu de l'enfance, les écrivains francophones, eux, favorisent résolument l'autonomie personnelle et l'affirmation de soi). En second lieu, quatre études vont enrichir notre perception de la sexualité dans la littérature pour la jeunesse: qu'il s'agisse d'homosexualité (P. Nodelman), du désir féminin (A. Altmann), de l'enseignement de la sexualité à partir du texte littéraire (M. Cherland) ou encore de la menace que représente pour les auteurs la nouvelle loi sur la pornographie enfantine (L. McKechnie), une réflexion approfondie sur le bien-fondé de nos certitudes morales paraît plus que jamais nécessaire. Enfin, l'article de Suzanne Pouliot complète ce panorama critique; l'examen de la résurgence de ce personnage stéréotypé par excellence qu'est la sorcière confirme l'étroitesse du lien entre rôles sexualisés ("gender roles") et apprentissage de la sexualité.

Daniel Chouinard

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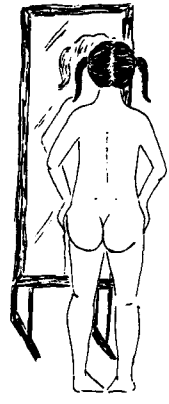

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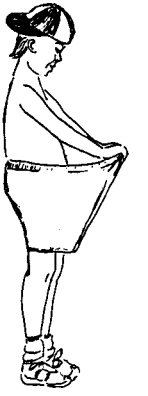

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Apocalypse Maybe: The Making of the *First Time* Anthology

Charles Montpetit

It was the poet, the artist, who discovered love, created the lover, made sex everything that it is beyond a function. *It was the Mr. Sumners who have made it an obscenity.*

— Jane Heap, co-publisher of *The Little Review*, after John Sumner got the periodical banned in 1920 (DeGrazia 14)

In 1992, I wrote a *CCL* article in which I took potshots at the reasons that are most often invoked for getting a book banned. I was asked to do this because I had personally encountered a fair share of comments about whether certain books could be put in teenager's hands. This in turn was due to my editing the Québec/Amérique anthology *La Première Fois* — a collection of true stories for adolescents about first sexual experiences.

Since then, however, I found out that censorship is not always the ultimate problem connected with such a project. Jittery unease can take many forms, and even the best of us will let out a little light prejudice when confronted with the subject. For instance, when I proudly mention that the first print run of *La Première Fois* sold out in record time, most people just smile and reply (all together now, I know you're thinking it too): "Of course it did! It's about SEX!"

The assumption here seems to be that anything with sex in it constitutes some sort of surefire ticket to Easy Street. Oh, it may be accurate in many circles, but I hope you will forgive me if I don't share the cynics' sweeping views on the matter. Maybe the people I was talking to weren't paying attention, but I did say these were stories for *adolescents*. And in the world of children's literature, sexually explicit scenes are usually not a good career move. To put it bluntly, writers and publishers alike tend to consider that the scariest slogan ever devised about AIDS also applies to children's book sales:

Sex = Death.

I myself am a bit guilty of thinking along those lines. When I first thought of working on a book about true sexual encounters, it was because I believed it could provide amusing, down-to-earth counterpoints to those infamous *Penthouse* letters, which always seem to take place on a different planet — and of course, I immediately gave the project an R rating. It took me years to realize that I would make an even better point if I focused on *first* sexual experiences, for these were the ones which most needed demystification. But if I narrowed things down to this concept, didn't it change the target audience? Just who could most

benefit from reading about this, if not the adolescents who were about to embark on a similar adventure?

I won't launch once again into an enumeration of the reasons which justify this approach.[1] Suffice it to say that when teenagers lack information about an issue they're on the verge of tackling personally, the gap should be corrected at their level, not in books they won't be allowed to read for many years. And since the information that *is* made available to them is either watered down or alarmist, it's easy to understand how quickly they can get bored or turned off. Sure, STD warnings are necessary, but as studies upon studies have revealed during the last few years, teenagers mostly want to know about the *human* side of the experience: after all, isn't it the very aspect that we adults find interesting, too?

Yet I couldn't just list the glorious, not-so-glorious and very subjective ingredients of a first sexual encounter: as they vary enormously from one person to the next, no universal rule can ever be taught in this area. Many different testimonies were needed, and each of them had to re-create the setting, the moods and the atmosphere as they were perceived by the protagonists at the time, plus enough background documentation to explain where everyone was coming from. In other words, I had to find witnesses who were comfortable with the telling of complete *stories*. And if these stories were mainly intended for teenage audiences, then I had better turn to people who were familiar with children's literature.

There you are, no way around it. After eight years of toying with an adult book concept, I'd suddenly realized that I should have been recruiting *children's* writers. From that point on, it only took me two days to find a bunch of authors who were interested in working on the project. Almost immediately, three major publishers simultaneously offered to handle the anthology, sight unseen. And nine months later — no metaphor intended — the first copies of *La Première Fois* were rolling off the presses.

It felt like hard work at the time, but now that I look back on it, I know I've been exceptionally lucky. Aside from one author dropping out when the rest of the team didn't vote for his publisher, *La Première Fois* had breezed through the obstacle course without a single glitch — and dammit, that just hadn't been *normal*. I had anticipated tremendous difficulties in getting this idea across, and I never got my fight. It wasn't fair.

Then I decided to do an *English*-Canadian version.

* * *

The invitation to potential contributors read something like this:

> In 1991, sixteen Quebec authors realized that modern teens still had a very unrealistic view of sex, for most movies, romance novels and backstreet banter tended to distort real life beyond recognition. In order to complement the sex education courses' focus on 'plumbing' matters, they came up with heartfelt accounts of the events and emotions involved in *real* first sexual encounters, whether these were positive or negative, funny or dramatic, successful or not.
>
> *La Première Fois* was both a critical and a popular success. Press coverage was phenomenal, and in 1992, the International Youth Library in Munich included the anthology in its annual *White Raven*

selection (the world's best books for young people).

Since this issue is not limited to Quebec, we'd now like to put out a pan-Canadian edition entitled *The First Time*, with *new* stories from all over the country.

Please note that the tales, while true, do not have to be the authors' own. And whether they are or not, writers will be able to use first- or third-person narratives indiscriminately. Since all the characters' names must also be changed, it will be impossible to know which stories are autobiographical, if any. The introduction will make this clear.

More than just an anthology, *The First Time* will be an indispensable documentary for the upcoming generation. But this doesn't mean that our characters must be perfect role models for teenagers. *Au contraire*, if we're to create credible alternatives to fictional encounters, then mistakes, poor timing and biases should be discussed along with the joys and the surprises of the experience.

The rules are simple:

• *No crushes, puppy loves or fantasies.* The definition of a 'first time' is left to each individual, but it must be a significant part of one's sexual awakening.

• *No fiction, rumours or composites.* Artistic licence is allowed to avoid pedestrian details, but salient facts must be true. Stories can be adapted for the 1990s if the point isn't altered.

• *Self-censorship must be low.* Euphemisms and 'fading to black' are not required, but absolute frankness is not a necessity either. The way one would speak with intimate friends is best.

There is no deadline, and no one is expected to write on spec. To ensure enough variety, however, we'd appreciate receiving short outlines and author's bios as early as possible. Proposals will be considered on an ongoing basis.

[Encl.: sample reviews of *La Première Fois*. A list of interested contributors will follow.]

Now, I'm no fool, but I do suffer from occasional bouts of optimism. For one thing, I feel at home just about anywhere in Canada, and I don't happen to think that there are many basic differences between French and English mentalities. So when people kept telling me, on both sides of the language barrier, that the success of *La Première Fois* had probably been due to the break-all-the-rules distinct/weirdo nature of Quebec, I couldn't help but laugh. True, the average Montrealer does tend to be kookier than, say, the average Torontonian, but "conservative" Ontario has a *lot* more in-school condom dispensers than "open-minded" Quebec. So who's to say what these labels are supposed to mean, really?

Name familiarity, however, was a totally different issue. Not many children's writers are acquainted with both of our Solitudes, so there was a chance that the above invitation, coming as it did from someone whom no one had ever heard of outside Quebec, would not inspire the same trust as my phone calls to my francophone colleagues had in the case of *La Première Fois*.

Then again, a road-tested project is usually easier to sell than a theoretical one. And I had just won a Governor General's Award for one of my novels, so I waved that around a bit in my cover letter, hoping for signs of recognition.

I also met with the nice people at CANSCAIP, who recommended dozens of writers I might want to contact, and the friendly staff of the Children's Book Centre added their own suggestions to the list, making it close to a hundred names long. Still, I didn't want to turn anyone down after having aroused their interest, so I decided to start by sending out twenty invitations to the most likely prospects.

Then I tried twenty more.

Then thirty more, including letters to mainstream writers who had been at least marginally involved in children's literature at one point in their career, from

Margaret Atwood to David Suzuki.

Then I turned to *every* other writer on my list, made impassioned phone calls, posted public notices in three professional newsletters, and sent repeat invitations to all the authors who had remained silent up to that point.

The answers I got weren't exactly encouraging:

No thanks.
Sorry, hasn't happened yet.
It's just not the right thing for me to be writing now.
My experiences would not qualify for your book.
My first time was not write-worthy by any criterion.
I see no benefit in exposing [teenagers] to my personal life.
The writing hours are fully committed through 1993 and 1994.
My usual public — age 9-12 — might read it, and they're too young.
Perhaps someday when my kids are all grown up and my wife has left me.
I'll *talk* directly to [teens] about any topic they're interested in, but I find that I'm reluctant to commit my own experiences to writing.
I believe that fiction is a much better vehicle for honesty about sex and romance, given its veneer of imagined reality, than non-fiction can ever be.
The first kiss, the first broken heart, the first heavy petting, the first illicit affair and any number of other sexual "firsts" are probably more memorable and more interesting.

To be fair, most of the writers also expressed a lot of sympathy, even if they couldn't personally take part in the project. Words like "fascinating," "fabulous," "splendid," "wonderful" and "much needed" kept cropping up — unfortunately followed by the word "but." If it hadn't been for a trickle of support from a few reputable authors, I'd have thought this was an idea whose time had not yet come.

(At this point, I should apologize in advance for insisting heavily on the writers' standing and achievements. It may seem like collective bragging, but let's face it: with a subject like this, we need all the credibility we can muster.)

First among those who came forward was Alberta Authors' Association Award-winner **Mary Blakeslee**. She only wrote two words —

Sounds great!

— but what a relief this was for my tattered soul. She'd actually checked the "yes" box on my answer card! She thought the project made enough sense to get involved!

Other supporters like Leacock medalist **W.P. Kinsella** eventually shone through, but on the other hand, many writers who did show some initial interest came up blank and eventually bowed out. It made for rough sailing, especially since backup volunteers weren't banging at our door.

The decision certainly wasn't easy for everyone. Canadian Authors' Association laureate Budge Wilson initially phoned in from Nova Scotia to turn the offer down but, ironically enough, ended up on the other side of the fence after hearing how bleak the situation sounded. Metcalf and Christie award-winner **Brian Doyle** wrestled with the assignment for a few months, pulled out regretfully, then returned a year later with a completely different angle. Golden State Bank-

honoured poet **George Swede**, triple P.E.I. prize-winner **Deirdre Kessler** and Sheila Egoff laureate **Julie Lawson** all had to undertake extensive rewrites in order to get their stories right. And Bilson, Metcalf and CAA award-winner **Martyn Godfrey**, who had originally declined to participate, went through several changes of heart before he could bring himself to release his contribution. My hat goes off to all of these people: as a contributor myself, I know how hard it was to walk the line between explicit and tasteful, and I'm sure I made things even tougher by providing pages and pages of picky, paranoid and overly nervous editorial comments ("Are you sure that softball-sized breasts don't qualify as 'big' on a fifteen-year-old?").

I'm also deeply indebted to Regina cartoonist **Leanne Franson** and Toronto writer **Christopher Paw** for providing thoughtful lesbian and gay testimonies; to Edmonton author **Lyle Weis** for his down-to-earth account of an extramarital affair; to Jamaican-born nurse **Linda Brissett** for her enlightening look at different cultural standards and little-known physical risks; to sex education consultant **Jill Golick** for an hilarious piece on the art of masturbation; to Vancouver correspondent **Martin Stephens** for difficult reflections on the issue of incest survival; and to teenage YTV writing contest finalist **Linda Valenta** for her portrait of an encounter that wasn't a week old when she joined the team. None of these themes are easy to tackle in the best of circumstances; to do it in style, for a project the likes of which had never been attempted in the English language, now that required guts.

Yes, I know: the above list does make for a pretty explosive combination, and you'd be forgiven for thinking that we were pushing the envelope beyond the acceptable range. After all, Geraldo, Oprah, Shirley and their peers have steadfastly fed us similar diets in their ongoing pursuit of sensationalism. The net result is that we now think of Anything-with-sex-in-it, not just as the aforementioned money machine (whether this is true or not), but as a shameless appeal to the prurient interest, a tawdry tactic which cheapens both proponent and recipients ... and a downright dangerous approach when children are involved.

That last point was driven home by our very government. Halfway through our recruiting process, the feds passed Bill C-128, a law nominally aimed at child pornography, but drafted so broadly as to prohibit all visual or written material describing the sex life of anyone under the age of 18 (*Criminal Code* 163.1). Never mind that in Canada, the age of consent for intercourse is usually fourteen — or twelve, if your partner is less than two years your senior. It may have been legal for eighth-graders to make love with one another, but on June 23, 1993, it suddenly became a criminal offence to *portray* them in the midst of such activities.

Now what kind of a law is that? For one thing, it does absolutely nothing to stop *actual* cases of child molestation.[2] As for literary representations of teen sex, it makes no distinction between pro or con, real of fictitious, abusive or consensual. It does allow material which has artistic merit or serves educational purposes, but this is left for the police to decide, not the public or the artistic community — and with all due respect for our customs and law enforcement

officers, the past few years have been rather enlightening as to their capacity to apply vague moral guidelines with any consistency.

Besides, the 1993 trial of Toronto painter Eli Langer clearly showed that, even if the charges are eventually dropped, this does not protect you from being arrested, having to stand trial and getting your work confiscated or destroyed in the first place (Book and Periodical Council, VIII-11). Obviously, this must have had a chilling effect on current and potential *First Time* contributors.

Nevertheless, all of the above authors not only stuck to their guns, but even though I'd said they could wait until a publisher had shown interest in the proposal, *they all decided to write their stories without further ado.* I won't pretend it was a miracle, but since many participants felt that this could affect their entire career, it did appear to be a quietly heroic thing to do.

Okay, sex *has* often been used in unsavoury fashions, and I'm quite willing to admit that, taken out of context, the sketchy outlines provided herein may not convey the full power and artistic value of the stories they represent. Yet this could just as well apply to Shakespearean dramas, tales from the Bible or any number of modern masterpieces if they were summarized solely in terms of their provocative content, or on the basis of isolated excerpts. I therefore urge outraged members of the public not to form an opinion until they have looked at the collection in its proper context.

Unfortunately, I'm afraid that I'm being too optimistic once again, for history has proven time after time that this is exactly what censors never do. So, defensive as this may sound, I'd like to make sure everything is crystal-clear before I move on.

As the guidelines to *The First Time* pointed out, the anthology was created to broaden the way one looks at relationships, not to reduce them to their lowest common denominator. We're dealing with complete relationships here, from the very first glances to the aftermaths, and the entire spectrum of intermediate happenstances is being marvelled at. Unlike other depictions, our accounts do not bashfully stop at the bedroom door, but neither do they linger inside for a longer period than is necessary. In crude word-counting terms, we're talking about an average of one or two explicit paragraphs out of every 20-page story: not much to shake a stick at, unless you happen to be the type of person who, like C-128's drafters, want certain scenes to be struck from existence, even though they deal with very legal things to do — or very legal body parts to own.

Enough of that. The time had come to seek out a publisher, and it was with complete confidence in the quality, the appeal and the importance of this product that I approached the companies which seemed most likely to lend us an ear. Each package included an overview of the project's objectives, a sample story, the contributors' track records, and the synopses of our sixteen tales. Not wanting to turn anyone down after having aroused their interest, I decided to start by sending out six proposals to the most likely prospects.

Then I tried eight more.

Then fourteen more, plus phone calls and repeat letters to all the publishers

who had remained silent up to that point.

All in all, no less than 27 companies turned the project down, from large firms like McClelland & Stewart to small presses like Pottersfield and Thistledown. And that number doesn't even include companies that team members weren't too fond of, or inappropriate choices such as nature-oriented publishers, local-interest ventures and strictly educational enterprises. I certainly wasn't aiming for a rejection record, though I did take dubious comfort in knowing that Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* had been sent back 25 times before it finally got through.

It's not as if *The First Time* didn't reach the editors' desks. Even in the cases where the services of an agent are usually indicated, enough interest was initially expressed to demonstrate that the project had landed in receptive hands. But while the concept seems to have launched lengthy discussions almost everywhere, the end results were invariably similar:

I apologize for the inordinate amount of time we have taken to consider your proposal. This is certainly an intriguing idea, and very attractively presented. Unfortunately, our feeling is that it is really not right for our present publishing program. I wish you every success finding an enthusiastic publisher.

We have discussed this very interesting project in detail with both the editorial and sales departments. Unfortunately, we have had to conclude that [we are] not familiar enough with the target market to do justice to the book. I hope that you do find a publisher who can help you.

Sorry for the delay with this but I wanted to give some of the other editors around here a read of the material you sent. Our basic consensus is that the idea is very appealing but the actual stories don't work for us. I do, however, wish you all the luck in finding the right house.

Random House passed it on to me after [their] reading. It's a good idea, but it did not seem quite right for our list at this time. Best of luck in placing the project with another publisher.

I'm sorry for the delay in making a decision regarding publication. Both the editor and the publisher have now reviewed your proposal, and I'm afraid they've decided this project wouldn't be appropriate for our list. Perhaps Groundwood would be interested.

While *The First Time* sounds like a very interesting project, I don't think it's right for Groundwood's list. Best of luck placing it elsewhere.

As you know, we [were] very seriously interested. I have discussed your plans in our editorial meeting, and, despite our being more fully informed, we have decided that this is a project we should simply pass on. I wish you better fortune with another publisher.

Here's all the material back ... which depresses me no end (and, no doubt, you even more). Good luck — not all publishers can be totally stupid!

I find your proposal very intriguing, which in part explains why I have held on to it for so long. However, after careful consideration, it is too much of a financial risk for us. We wish you the best in finding an appropriate publisher.

Please accept our apologies for the delay. We were intrigued by the project and discussed it at length in several editorial meetings. In the end, however, we decided with regret to expend our energies elsewhere. All very best wishes for the success of the English edition.

It sounds like a worthwhile project. This is one of the occasions when we regret being limited to our [illustrated books] specialty. We sent a letter to our distributor, who occasionally publish an attractive project themselves. They have not replied as yet, and I thought it only fair to return your outline. Good luck with this!

We thought long and hard about the project because, as you know, we were quite intrigued by the idea. Unfortunately, the stories seemed either too bland for the trade market or too risqué for the educational market. In order for this anthology to work, we feel it would have to be better geared towards one market or the other. We wish you every success with it.

I liked it but ... although we considered your proposal seriously, we felt that we could not get support for it from our educational wing. We wish you every success in placing it with

another publisher.

Sorry to be so slow in responding. There were some very positive elements to your project, but I don't think I can accept it. This is going to be a tough year and I'm feeling a bit more cautious than usual. Good luck with your search.

I'm so sorry I did not respond earlier to your request. It is a wonderful idea and I do know it was a spectacular success in Quebec [but] I think it will be difficult to get the idea published in English-speaking Canada except as an adult book. Good luck in finding a way ...

Kids Can's Charis Wahl is the only editor who called to discuss the situation at length. She was particularly miffed with the absurdity of it all: she had found the manuscripts most exciting, but hadn't been able to convince the people in the marketing department to follow suit. Since they didn't feel that the anthology matched the age of their predominant audience, she had gone so far as to suggest the creation of a new "Real World" or "Exploration" imprint for it. And when that didn't work, she even tried to get three *other* companies interested... to no avail, alas.

She also discussed the project with a few of the publishers who'd already turned it down, and found that in spite of their remarks about editorial content, their refusal had also been marketing-based. Not only could there be no distribution via the lucrative school market, but *The First Time* couldn't even be fitted into an existing niche, and therefore couldn't be handled by the normal computer-defined channels of major bookstore chains — "ah, a children's science book, this goes on shelf 3B." The anthology required adaptability and a distinct sale strategy, and the decision-makers feared this was too much to ask from individual vendors. To paraphrase one of the rejection slips, why should they "expend their energies" on a worrisome scheme when there were plenty of trouble-free projects in the sea?

The situation seemed hopeless. I'd gotten my fight, but it was on the wrong front. Ideas can be challenged, but numbers and formulas mustn't be tampered with. (If you're a writer, try discussing various clauses of a contract with your publisher: you'll find that it's easy to change the parts that transfer total editorial control to the company, but the royalty percentages are usually carved in stone.)

I was ready to throw in the towel. If large firms are so set in their ways that they can't adapt to new markets, and small companies consider that this idea is "too much of a financial risk," then how in blazes was this book supposed to be born?

Enter Bob Tyrrell, May 26, 1994.

Thank you for sending the stories from *The First Time* anthology. I enjoyed reading them and feel that this is a very worthwhile project — though I am not 100% confident as to just what reaction it will provoke in English Canada. But I suppose that's what makes this business interesting! In any case, I would like to publish *The First Time*.

I am including a copy of our standard contract for your perusal. Let me know if you have any questions on it. I really look forward to working on this project with you.

By that point, I'd grown used to opening my mail with my heart in my mouth, so it took a while before my breathing returned to normal. Of course — a publisher from the *other* great Canadian weirdo province, what could be more appropriate?

With hindsight, it's easy to see that I should have thought about B.C.'s Orca

Books a long time before I did. Their track record is impeccable (they were named Publisher of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers Association in 1992), they've grown steadily since their inception (a rare sign of health in these troubled literary times) and they've put out an unusually high number of successes, from the Sheila Egoff Prize-winning *Siwiti* to the IODE, Howard-Gibbon and Governor General-honoured *Waiting for the Whales* — oh God, I'm doing the credibility thing again.

The best part is, they're also no strangers to controversy: Diane Carmel Léger's *Maxine's Tree*, which they published in 1990, is still widely recognized as a classic case of standing up to would-be book banners (in this case, the logging industry). The only reason I hadn't contacted them in the first round is that until recently, they'd stuck almost exclusively to B.C.-related matters. My sending them a proposal had been an awfully long shot, but I guess it sometimes pays to try unlikely venues.

So there's a happy ending to this saga after all. Then again, it may not be appropriate to call this an ending, for I'm writing this as we're entering the proofing stage — the books themselves aren't out yet. You'll have to decide for yourselves how the rest of the story goes, and I hope you'll keep me posted on further developments. I can't wait to find out how it all turns out.

'For God's sake, don't publish any more obscene literature!'
'How am I to know when it's obscene?'
'I'm sure I don't know. But don't do it!'

— Lawyer John Quinn to Margaret Anderson, after she published an excerpt of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1920 (DeGrazia 13)

NOTES

1 Since the "Censorship" issue of *CCL* is out of print, I will gladly mail a copy of the article to anyone who sends me a stamped self-addressed envelope. Write to Charles Montpetit, 4282c Fullum, Montreal H2H 2J5.

2 In case you're wondering: there already are laws against sexual misconduct whenever children or teenagers are involved with an older person who is in a position of power or authority over them. Bill C-128, however, added nothing new to this legislation.

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Charles Montpetit *hasn't learned his lesson yet: on top of current fiction projects, he's now working on Australian, British and International Editions of* The First Time.

Voyage au bout du purgatoire: en coulisses de *The First Time*

Charles Montpetit

En 1991, on s'en souviendra, seize auteur(e)s pour jeunes ont décidé de compléter les cours d'éducation sexuelle québécois en décrivant ce qui se passait vraiment lors d'une première relation amoureuse. L'anthologie qui en résulta, *La Première Fois*, fut immédiatement portée aux nues par le public et la critique.

Mais pourquoi s'en tenir au Québec? Aussitôt après avoir dirigé ce projet, j'ai commencé à travailler sur *The First Time,* une version pancanadienne de l'anthologie qui regrouperait cette fois des textes provenant d'un océan à l'autre.

Cependant, lorsque j'ai annoncé mon intention autour de moi, les avertissements ont fusé des deux côtés de la barrière linguistique. De l'avis général, le succès de *La Première Fois* n'était possible qu'au Québec; au-delà de nos frontières, j'allais me heurter à une mentalité, disons, bien plus traditionnelle.

Ben voyons donc, comme si la façon dont un cerveau conçoit la sexualité dépendait de la langue au Canada! D'accord, notre façon de vivre est peut-être plus progressiste (ou farfelue) à Montréal qu'à Toronto, mais cela n'empêche pas que les distributrices de condoms sont bien plus nombreuses dans les écoles ontariennes que québécoises. Par conséquent, que doit-on penser d'étiquettes aussi faciles?

La crédibilité, par contre, était une autre paire de manches. Peu de gens lisent autant de livres pour la jeunesse français et anglais: en dehors du Québec, les invitations d'un auteur que personne ne connaît susciteraient sans doute un peu plus de méfiance que les coups de téléphone qui m'avaient permis de recruter la plus grande partie de l'équipe francophone en une fin de semaine.

Par contre, un projet qui a déjà fait ses preuves est plus facile à vendre qu'un concept théorique. J'ai pris soin de souligner que même s'ils devaient être authentiques, les récits n'avaient pas nécessairement à être autobiographiques, et j'ai espéré que le Prix du gouverneur général que j'avais remporté peu de temps auparavant me permettrait de marquer quelques points.

Grâce à l'aide du *Canadian Children's Book Centre* et de la *Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers*, j'ai pu dresser une liste de cent personnes susceptibles d'êtres intéressées par le projet, et j'ai envoyé une invitations aux vingt individus les plus prometteurs.

Puis aux vingt suivants.

Puis aux trente suivants, dont la plupart des auteur(e)s de littérature générale qui ont déjà écrit pour les jeunes — de Margaret Atwood jusqu'à David Suzuki.

J'ai fini par éplucher *toute* ma liste de noms. J'ai aussi laissé des messages sur moult répondeurs, j'ai placé des annonces dans trois publications professionnelles

et j'ai envoyé un suivi à toutes les personnes qui étaient restées silencieuses.

Les réponses ne furent pas des plus encourageantes :

Non merci.
Désolé, ça ne m'est pas encore arrivé.
Ce n'est pas ce que je dois écrire ces temps-ci.
Ma première fois n'est pas digne d'un texte écrit.
Je ne vois pas l'avantage de révéler aux jeunes ma vie personnelle.
Mon public habituel — 9-12 ans — pourrait lire cela, et c'est trop jeune.
Peut-être un jour, quand mes enfants auront grandi et quand ma femme m'aura quitté.
La fiction constitue un meilleur moyen d'être honnête en matière de sexualité, sous le couvert d'une réalité imaginaire.
Le premier baiser, la première rupture, les premières caresses, la première infidélité et tant d'autres premières sont probablement plus mémorables et plus intéressantes.

Soyons juste: les mots *fascinant*, *fabuleux*, *splendide*, *merveilleux* et *fort utile* figurent dans bien des lettres — hélas suivis du mot *mais*. Sans les individus qui ont enfin relevé le gant, j'aurais pu croire que l'idée avait trop d'avance sur son temps.

Ce ne fut pas de tout repos. Même les rares volontaires trouvèrent la tâche délicate et plusieurs durent se désister après bien des essais infructueux, quitte à revenir plus tard à la charge avec une approche différente. Pour d'autres personnes, par contre, ce fut l'inverse: d'abord tentées de décliner l'invitation, elles finirent par se laisser fléchir, pour ensuite se piquer au jeu. Et d'autres encore retournèrent plusieurs fois leur veste, ce qui rendit évidemment la composition de l'équipe assez précaire; dans la mesure où l'équilibre entre les sexes, les régions et les groupes d'âge devait malgré tout être respecté, cela faisait bien des écueils à éviter — surtout quand on considère que les volontaires de remplacement ne se bousculaient pas au portillon.

Chapeau aux membres de l'équipe qui ont tenu le coup. En tant qu'auteur participant, je sais à quel point il fut ardu de pondre un texte à la fois explicite et de bon goût. Et en tant que coordinateur, je sais que j'ai dû rendre les choses encore plus difficiles avec page sur page de commentaires aussi paranoïaques qu'exaspérants.

Cela prit plus de trois ans, mais de peine et de misère, une équipe des plus remarquables fut mise sur pied. On y retrouve entre autres : W.P. Kinsella, Budge Wilson, Brian Doyle, Mary Blakeslee, George Swede, Deirdre Kessler, Julie Lawson, Martyn Godfrey.

Ajoutez à cela la bédéiste Leanne Franson et l'écrivain Christopher Paw, qui apportèrent d'émouvants témoignages lesbien et gai; l'auteur Lyle Weis, qui traça un portrait sans fard d'une adultère; l'infirmière Linda Brissett, qui ouvrit une fenêtre haute en couleur tant sur la culture jamaïcaine que sur des risques peu connus; la consultante en sexualité Jill Golick, qui nous offrit un survol révélateur de la masturbation féminine; l'auteur Martin Stephens, qui nous fit part des douloureuses réflexions d'une victime d'inceste; et l'adolescente Linda Valenta, dont la Première Fois ne datait pas encore d'une semaine lorsqu'elle se joignit à l'équipe. Un mélange explosif, certes, mais tout à fait à la hauteur de l'anthologie québécoise.

L'amour et la loi

Le gouvernement ne nous rendit toutefois pas la tâche facile. Au beau milieu de notre campagne de recrutement, la loi C-128 fut adoptée à Ottawa. En surface, cette mesure luttait contre la pornographie juvénile (difficile de s'y opposer), mais elle râtissait tellement large que toute scène sexuelle impliquant des moins de 18 ans devenait interdite, qu'elle soit visuelle ou écrite. Bien qu'on puisse légalement faire l'amour dès 14 ans au Canada — ou même dès 12 ans si l'écart d'âge entre les partenaires ne dépasse pas deux ans — il devint illégal d'en *parler* le 23 juin 1993.

Voilà qui est absurde. Non seulement n'avait-on rien ajouté aux lois contre l'exploitation des enfants, mais il importait peu qu'un texte soit pour ou contre, qu'un cas soit fictif ou réel, ou que la relation soit abusive ou non. Des exceptions étaient bien prévues pour les créations éducatives ou artistiques, mais c'était la police qui devait en décider ... et malgré tout le respect que nous devons à nos policiers, le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est qu'il leur fut parfois difficile de faire respecter de vagues directives morales avec uniformité, ces dernières années.

De toute évidence, l'équipe de *The First Time* ne s'est certainement pas sentie encouragée (et les volontaires se firent encore plus rares). J'ai proposé aux personnes recrutées d'attendre qu'une maison d'édition démontre son intérêt avant d'aller plus loin, mais à ma grande surprise, *tout le monde écrivit son texte sans se faire prier.* Dans la mesure où plusieurs avaient exprimé des craintes pour leur carrière, ce fut là un choix audacieux de leur part — et un geste que j'appréciai au plus haut point.

Des refus élogieux

Requinqué par cette motion de confiance, c'est avec assurance que j'ai présenté le projet aux six maisons d'édition les plus susceptibles d'être intéressées.

Puis aux huit suivantes.

Puis aux treize suivantes, plus maints appels et suivis auprès des entreprises qui étaient restées silencieuses.

Au total, vingt-sept compagnies ont rejeté le projet, des grandes maisons comme McClelland & Stewart jusqu'aux petites comme Pottersfield ou Thistledown.

Mais il ne faut pas croire que *The First Time* n'a pas su retenir l'attention de leur personnel. Dans la plupart des cas, les réactions initiales furent même fort positives. Mais en bout de ligne, les résultats étaient identiques:

> Comme vous le savez, nous [étions] très sérieusement intéressés, mais malgré les renseignements supplémentaires, nous avons décidé que nous devrions simplement passer outre. Je vous souhaite plus de chance avec une autre maison.
>
> Je vous rends votre matériel ... ce qui me déprime sans fin (et vous encore plus, sans doute). Bonne chance — toutes les maisons d'édition ne peuvent être totalement stupides !
>
> Votre offre m'intrigue beaucoup. Cependant, tout bien pesé, le risque financier est trop élevé pour nous. Nous vous souhaitons ce qu'il y a de mieux dans votre recherche d'une maison d'édition appropriée.
>
> Le projet semble méritoire. Nous avons contacté notre maison de diffusion, qui publie parfois un projet accrocheur [mais] elle n'a pas répondu. Bonne chance !
>
> J'ai bien aimé mais ... nous croyons que nous n'aurons pas le soutien de notre division éducative pour cela. Nous nous souhaitons tout le succès possible pour placer le projet chez une autre maison d'édition.

Ce projet comportait des éléments fort positifs, mais l'année s'annonce dure et je me sens un peu plus prudent que d'habitude. Bonne chance dans vos recherches.

L'idée est merveilleuse [mais] elle sera difficile à publier au Canada anglais, sauf comme livre pour adulte. Bonne chance pour ce qui est de trouver un moyen ...

Comme me l'a expliqué une éditrice après avoir discuté du projet avec ses collègues d'autres maisons, les manuscrits était emballants mais les objections venaient toujours des départements des ventes. La diffusion était impossible dans les écoles, et comme l'anthologie ne ressemblait à rien d'existant, elle ne pouvait être confiée aux systèmes informatisés des grandes chaînes de magasins — "ah, un livre scientifique pour jeunes, ça va sur l'étagère 3B". *The First Time* exigeait une mise en marché personnalisée, et c'était trop demander aux libraires. Pour paraphraser une des lettres de refus, pourquoi devrait-on "investir de l'énergie" dans un dossier aussi problématique quand on peut se tourner vers tant d'autres projets plus sécuritaires?

La situation semblait sans issue. Si les grandes compagnies ne peuvent s'adapter à un nouveau marché, et si les petites entreprises considèrent que "le risque financier est trop élevé", comment un tel livre peut-il bien être voir le jour?

Entrée en scène d'Orca Books (Colombie-Britannique), 26 mai 1994:

Merci de nous avoir envoyé les histoires de The First Time. *Je les ai bien appréciées et je crois que le projet a beaucoup de mérite — bien que je ne sois pas sûr à 100% de la réaction qu'il va susciter au Canada anglais. Mais je suppose que c'est ce qui rend le métier intéressant! Quoi qu'il en soit, j'aimerais publier* The First Time.

Au fil des ans, je m'étais habitué à ouvrir mon courrier avec le cœur dans la gorge, aussi ma respiration prit-elle un long moment avant de revenir à la normale. Mais oui, un éditeur de *l'autre* province farfelue au Canada, quoi de plus approprié?

Avec le recul, je sais que j'aurais dû penser à Orca plus tôt. L'entreprise a remporté un nombre inusité de prix littéraires, fut consacrée Maison d'édition de l'année en 1992, et a même une certaine expérience de la controverse (le livre *Maxine's Tree* est encore considéré comme un classique par les organismes anti-censure). Jusque là, cependant, leurs publications avaient été presque exclusivement consacrées à la Côte ouest, et c'est seulement par acquit de conscience que je leur avais envoyé le projet. Comme quoi on a parfois intérêt à être exhaustif.

C'est donc à ce point-ci que *The First Time* quitte les coulisses — au moment où j'écris ces lignes, je n'ai aucune idée de l'accueil qui lui sera fait. Mais s'il y a une leçon à tirer de cela, il faut croire que je ne l'ai pas retenue: je prépare maintenant des éditions australienne et britannique, et j'ai vraiment hâte de voir ce que cela va donner!

C'est le poète, l'artiste, qui a découvert l'amour, créé l'amant, fait de la sexualité plus qu'une simple fonction. Ce sont les Sumners de ce monde qui en ont fait une obscénité.

— Jane Heap, co-éditrice du *Little Review*, banni par John Sumner en 1920

Charles Montpetit *est incorrigible: il travaille sur plusieurs projets de romans tout en préparant les versions anglaise, australienne et internationale de* La Première Fois.

Desire and Punishment: Adolescent Female Sexuality in Three Novels

Anna E. Altmann

Résumé: La représentation de la sexualité féminine ignore le désir et s'appesantit sur la faute et la punition, double réalité que le roman sentimental tend à occulter. A. Altmann étudie trois romans contemporains qui présentent des cas de maternité non voulue, différents, certes, mais faisant ressortir la vulnérabilité des adolescentes.

Summary: Social constructions of female sexuality have traditionally been short on desire and long on punishment. Romance has been the veil concealing the realities of both. Three contemporary novels for adolescents, read as a triptych, show pictures of sex and unwanted teenage pregnancy from three different perspectives, linked by a common understanding of the sexual vulnerability of adolescent girls.

That sex and romance are primary connecting threads in girls' tradition is evident in the narratives of teenage girls, which make it clear that in the current period, at least, sex and romance are the organizing principles, the fundamental projects in many, many teenage girls' lives. (Thompson 354)

Social constructions of female sexuality have traditionally been short on desire and long on punishment. Romance has been the veil concealing the realities of both. Fiction offers us a way to explore some of these constructions and their inherent contradictions.

I have chosen three contemporary novels for adolescents that, read as a triptych, both support and challenge some of the dominant discourses on sexuality available to young women. One of these novels is Canadian, one British, and one from the United States. My main focus here will be the Canadian novel, *january, february, june or july*, by Helen Fogwell Porter, published in 1988. The other two, Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody*, published in Britain in 1991, and Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Make Lemonade*, published in the United States in 1993, will be discussed as companion pieces. All three have teenage girls as protagonists, and deal with unplanned teenage pregnancy.

january, february depicts sex for a young woman as straightforward physical pleasure, the satisfaction of desire. It also makes clear that young women are made vulnerable by their sexuality in a way that men are not, because they can become pregnant. For young women, the awakening of sexual desire that comes with the physiological maturing of adolescence brings with it the possible punishment of public shame and entrapment. *Dear Nobody* makes desire acceptable as a development from emotional intimacy, and turns the punishment of unwanted pregnancy into unexpected fulfilment. *Make Lemonade* emphasizes the vulnerability and entrapment that sexuality can mean for young

women, and leaves out desire and pleasure entirely.

Porter's novel won the Canadian Library Association's Young Adult Book Award in 1989. The award is no firm guarantee of literary quality, but *january, february* is a fine novel. In spite of its quality and status as an award winner, it has had remarkably little attention. I suspect a part of the reason for its having been almost ignored is the treatment of adolescent sex and unplanned pregnancy in the story. (The other part is probably that it is very much a regional novel, set in St. John's, Newfoundland, and was published by a small Canadian press.)

The book has had only three reviews. One, in *Books in Canada*, said "*January, February, June or July* is a carefully balanced, unpretentious novel *about* an appealing young person, but it's an adult novel all the way, and a polished one" (Hill 35). The second, in *Atlantic Provinces Book Review*, comments that the book "becomes hopelessly bogged down in trivia and banality" (Baker). The third review, in *CM*, recommended this book "to more mature high school students and to adults, who would gain a better understanding of each other through reading it" (Blaine). The reviewer ends with a warning: "Contains occasional explicit language." This review is the only one to appear in a journal or section of a journal reviewing books for young people.[1] Adult readers who review and buy books for young adults may have decided that the factual tone and frankness of the novel are inappropriate for teenage readers.

In contrast, the other two novels were widely reviewed. *Dear Nobody*, which won the Carnegie Medal for 1991, was on the ALA "Best Books for Young Adults" list in 1993, *School Library Journal*'s "Best Books of 1992" list, and had a starred review in *Booklist*. *Make Lemonade* was on the 1994 ALA "Best Books for Young Adults" list, an ALA "Notable Book for Older Readers," an ALA "Recommended Book for the Reluctant Young Adult Reader," a "Top of the List" winner for youth fiction in *Booklist* in 1993, and was chosen for the PNLA's Young Readers Choice list in the senior division for 1995/96.

Two of these books, therefore, will be widely read, and one will not. The three complement each other in a number of ways, one of which is in what they have to say about sex, a central concern for both their adolescent and adult readers.

These three novels, taken together, make an interesting triptych. The panels show pictures of sex and unwanted teenage pregnancy from three different moral angles or perspectives, linked by a common representation and understanding of the sexual vulnerability of adolescent girls. This description of the books is, of course, a flagrant reduction. To borrow a phrase from John McPhee, as a description this statement "is only somewhat more encompassing than to say that Herman Melville wrote a novel about a one-legged madman in vengeful pursuit of a whale" (McPhee 116). These are works of fiction, not case studies or sermons. By limiting my discussion of them to a reading of what they have to say about sex and teenage pregnancy, and by limiting the discussion even further by approaching it as a societal question rather than as a question of plot, I do not mean to suggest that these novels should be read as parables in a program for sex education. There are many other things going on in each book — social,

political, emotional, aesthetic. These are stories about individuals, not examples, and the particular is always different from the general.

But it is illuminating to examine how the messages that may be taken from these novels fit into the available contemporary discourses on adolescent sexuality (even though, in a sense, each book attempts to interfere with such discourses by particularizing them).[2] Certainly these novels contribute to the moral climate in which girls learn ways to live their sexuality. And certainly young readers explore their worlds through books such as these.

In *january, february*, the fifteen-year-old protagonist, Heather, has her first sexual experience as a result of her own desire, not because of romance. Her short relationship with Frank, the young man who is her partner, is based on her physical need and pleasure. Heather becomes pregnant, and has an abortion, in a clinic. An older sister forges the note giving her mother's permission; with this proviso, the procedure is legal.

The book is about Heather's becoming a sexual being, not about emotional intimacy or romantic involvement. This is unusual in a book about a young woman. Linda Christian-Smith has pointed out that "Romance colours the way in which sexuality is presented in adolescent romance fiction. It promotes sexuality as something magical, mystical, and loving that happens to girls" (30). Christian-Smith also notes that romance only tells part of the story: "Although it is certainly true that the psychological is an important aspect of sexual responses, downplaying physiological components removes this dimension as a legitimate aspect of heroines' sexuality" (34). In *january, february*, the physiological components are front and centre.

Heather is not a "bad" girl. Her sexual desire is innocent and natural. The encounters that satisfy it contain no element of rebellion against family or society, but are simply a response to the urges of her maturing body. But the trauma of her pregnancy and abortion is a reflection of her social circumstances: she is constrained by the limited horizons of working class poverty in St. John's.

january, february begins with an epigraph, a quote from Willa Cather: "The summer moon hung full in the sky. For the time being, it was the great fact in the world."[3] The title of the book comes from an old popular song, "Shine on, shine on harvest moon / Up in the sky / I ain't had no lovin' since January, February, June or July" (Porter 24). For Heather, lovin', physical love, is the one great fact in the world for the time being.

There is a veneer of romance on Heather's relationship with Frank, but it is very thin, a product of Heather's expectations of love. She is aroused by the sexually explicit novels her mother brings home, but she feels more comfortable with the perfect happiness and closed bedroom door of L. M. Montgomery's *The Blue Castle* (16). Heather has a crush on Frank: she has cut a picture of his winning hockey team out of the newspaper (27), and blushes when his name is mentioned (8). But when Heather and Frank meet at a party, he only vaguely remembers having seen her once before and has to ask her name. And when she is in his car with him, being driven home from the party, Heather realizes that she

doesn't know him at all. "What did she really know about Frank Marshall? That he was a hockey star, that he was good-looking, that he seemed nice, that he'd saved Donna's party from the police a few months before" (30). Frank is simply a handy focus for her emerging sexual desire, and her crush on him is a suitable cover story:

> She didn't want to think about what was happening to her, but she didn't want the feeling to go away, either. Before, when such a sensation came over her when she was reading about sex, or for no reason at all, she'd tried to abolish it, pretend it wasn't there. Now that it was connected to Frank she didn't want to run away from it any more. (62-63)

Sex and sexual pleasure are something Heather cannot help but be aware of. Her best friend, Debbie, hints that she is already sexually active (14). Her mother, Eileen, brings home Harold Robbins novels, and is engrossed by steamy scenes in soap operas (17). Her sister Shirley encourages Heather to go out so that Shirley and her boyfriend can have the livingroom to themselves, since Shirley doesn't have a room of her own. She tells her "'You might meet a nice fella tonight if you goes to the party. You don't know what you're missin'" (14).

At the party, boys and girls are openly fondling each other. In the livingroom, Debbie's boyfriend has his hand in her blouse, and her mouth is pressed into the opening of his shirt. The boy, holding out a joint, asks "'You want some more Deb, or am I makin' you happy enough?'" (22)

> In the kitchen, a boy and girl were standing next to the refrigerator, arms tight around each other. The boy pushed the lower part of his body against hers. The girl began to move her pelvis slowly and rhythmically against him. Heather thought she recognized her as Darlene Snelgrove, who was a grade below her in school. (23)

Heather goes outside, because she doesn't quite know what to do with herself.

> She supposed that what was going on inside the house should have disgusted her, but she wasn't disgusted at all.... Just for a moment she allowed herself to wish that somebody was touching her the way Harry was touching Debbie, or holding her the way the boy in the kitchen was holding Darlene. (24-25)

When she goes back into the kitchen, Darlene and her boyfriend have changed position: "He had his hand inside her jeans and was caressing her while she gave little moans of pleasure.... 'Let's go upstairs,' said the boy hoarsely. 'C'mon, let's get up there quick'" (27). Heather goes to get her coat. "She'd better get home quick; she didn't like the way she was feeling. Or, to be perfectly accurate, she liked the way she was feeling too much" (27).

Heather has learned to be wary of her physical desire. Her sexuality is both stimulated and repressed by the discourses that constitute and organize the practice of sex in her world. In spite of what she sees around her and feels herself, sex as the misty, private culmination of true love and marriage, as in *The Blue Castle*, is the right kind, safe and socially sanctioned.

Her mother tries to insist on a moral code for her daughters that she does not live herself. When Heather warns Shirley to be careful about what she gets up to with her boyfriend in the livingroom in case their mother gets home early from her own date, Shirley says, "'Mom's funny, ent she? She's after havin' a

hysterectomy now, so she can do what she like. But when she talks about us you'd think she was the Virgin Mary or someone'" (14). And if she saw Shirley's birth controls pills, "'she'd have a fit and a half'" (13).

Good girls don't have sex. Heather wonders to herself whether she should pretend to resist Frank, so that he won't think she's "too easy" (45), and Frank tells her "'You needn't be afraid of me. I wouldn't hurt you. I know you're a good girl'" (66). (With bad girls, men don't have to be careful.) Heather doesn't see herself as a bad girl, and she doesn't think of her sisters, or of Debbie, in that way. But outside of the circle she knows well, and cares about, she applies the good girl/bad girl distinction, in the face of her own experience. When the doctor, who suspects Heather is pregnant, tries to reassure her by saying "'I talk to girls like you almost every day,'" Heather's unspoken response is: "Girls like you. What kind of a girl did she think Heather was, anyway? Someone like Darlene Snelgrove?" (121)

Both Heather and Frank know something about birth control. Although Heather gets pregnant, she is still technically a virgin. "'You won't get pregnant or anything. I won't put it inside,'" Frank says (83). And he doesn't: "'I had sense enough for that.... I don't want anything to happen to you'" (84). Her sister Shirley had advised her to get birth control pills at the planned parenthood clinic, as she herself did when a friend of hers had a pregnancy scare: "'You should go up and get some, too, just to be on the safe side. You never know when you might need 'em. It's better to be sure than sorry'" (13).

But Heather, like most of us, thinks of herself as different. And to some extent she is. "'You never haves any fun. I'd go cracked if I was like you, stayin' in every night studyin' or readin' library books. It's not good for you,'" says Shirley (12). Her mother is pleased that Heather is going to make something of herself, that she isn't running around with boys. "'She don't have time for stuff like that, do you, Heather?'" (39)

Heather had planned a life for herself different from the one her family and friends are caught in. She wants to go to university, get a glamorous job in journalism or broadcasting, get an apartment of her own and then her dream house, with some shadowy man in the background (43). This dream fades in the immediate reality of the physical excitement and pleasure she gets from Frank, "the great fact in the world." But that immediacy itself detaches Heather from space and time, heightens her sense of her particularity so that she can think only of the moment, and not of its implications.

Heather is surprised by the physical pleasure Frank gives her. Her mother's official line on sex is that men only want one thing, and for women it is just an obligation. "'I mean, enough is enough, right?' she'd say to Mollie. 'I mean, you got to keep a man happy to a certain extent, right? But enough is enough'" (45). Heather is worried by her own willingness and the intensity of her desire.

> She had heard so much for so long about men and boys coaxing women and girls, wheedling them, even taking them by force, that she was led to believe that women were passive observers, or at best, receptacles for the lusts of men. What about the lusts of women? She didn't like the word lust, though; it didn't seem appropriate for the way she'd been feeling. (84)

That first evening with Frank, on the way home from the party, when he kisses her and feels her breasts she thinks that "Nothing that had ever happened to her in her life had felt as good as this" (32). And, thinking about it later, "she realized that even when she and Frank had been together on Saturday night *she* hadn't had enough" (45).

Heather looks forward eagerly to each encounter with Frank in the back seat of his car, and does get more.

> Frank hadn't really pushed her to do what she had done last night; she'd wanted to as much as he had. . . . It had felt so good, so warm and hard and alive. Once he'd put his penis against her, she wouldn't have been able to bear it if he'd taken it away too quickly. (83)

Although Frank's respect for her as a good girl makes them stop short of actual penetration, he does lose control once. "'I meant to take it away, just in time, but I couldn't. I just couldn't'" (84). In spite of their being careful, Heather pays the price for their pleasure: she gets pregnant.

If Heather has the baby, she'll be trapped in the hard life, dissatisfaction, and even squalor that she sees all around her. Her sister Lorraine dropped out of high school after grade ten, and found a job in a supermarket. Then she got pregnant and had to get married. Her husband drinks too much, can't find work, and is seldom home. Lorraine is "browned off" all the time (9). She resents her husband and feels tied down by her sticky, clinging young son. Heather looks at Frank's mother, worn by raising six children alone; at her grandmother, obliged to struggle with a violent alcoholic husband; at her own mother, divorced, disappointed, as short of emotional energy and courage as she is of money.

Heather never seriously considers keeping the baby herself. The psychiatrist who has to recommend on her case to the therapeutic abortion committee suggests that perhaps her mother could take it. Heather rejects that possibility. "She doesn't believe in abortion, but she wouldn't be able to look after a baby. She works" (131). Eileen's solution, Heather is certain, would be to make her have the baby and then give it up for adoption; "And muddled and confused though she was, sick, terrified and abandoned as she might feel, she knew she would never be able to do that" (128).

So Heather doesn't tell her mother she is pregnant, and Shirley forges Eileen's signature on the permission form. She doesn't tell Frank, either. The intimacy between them had been physical, not emotional.

> She certainly didn't ever want Frank to know. She didn't really blame him for the freak thing that had happened, felt it was as much her fault as his, but, when she thought about him at all, she couldn't bury the bitterness as she compared his situation with her own. (144)

Heather has nightmares about the abortion, both before and after it happens. In preparation for it she is processed (that is what it feels like to her) by a gynaecologist, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a nurse. All these people are kind, and either matter-of-fact or sympathetic. But to Heather it all seems unreal, somehow inappropriate.

Words like 'termination' and 'pregnancy' and 'sexually active' and 'all the way.' What did all those words have to do with how a person really felt when something like this happened to her? (133)

At home, after the procedure, which is done as day surgery, Heather tries to analyze how she feels.

She was still a bit lightheaded from the anaesthetic and the bleeding; she found it hard to straighten up when she walked. Apart from the physical problems, her main feeling was one of deep relief.... Maybe her conscience would bother her badly. Right now she felt too sore, too tired, too sleepy to worry about future feelings. (182-83)

Porter takes us through all the details of the preparation for the abortion, and of Heather's recovery immediately afterward. Her readers miss only the surgery, for which Heather is under anaesthetic. The reality of this alternative to carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term is made quite clear.

So are the arguments in its favour. Presumably, readers who have entered into Heather's story can understand her choice. Eileen's story from her youth of the girl who jumped off a cliff because she was pregnant, probably by her father, is an even graver instance of dire need. The two other patients who are prepped together with Heather for the same operation are also persuasive examples. One is just a child, a little girl with long plaits, reading a book by Judy Blume (154). (Heather doesn't know her story, only wonders how she got here.) The other is Mrs. Sullivan. She is a Catholic, but she is forty-four years old, anaemic, with seven children already, the youngest of whom is retarded (157). Her husband is a recovering alcoholic, and Mrs. Sullivan didn't tell him she was pregnant because she "'didn't want to bring another worry on him'" (167).

january, february is very concretely located, and Heather's story is shaped by the culture of the community in which she lives. Her family, friends, and acquaintances work at poorly paid, uninteresting jobs when they are able to find work at all. Alcoholism is common, an escape from frustration or despair that only makes things worse. The young people drop out of high school and recreate the hopeless situation that traps their parents. Their resources are limited. The girls become sexually active at a young age — fourteen or fifteen. Sex is a source of pleasure and excitement readily available to them (they embody it), and men are the only thing they have to look forward to. As Shirley tells Heather, "'Since I broke up with Randy there's nothing to do nighttime'" (177).

That social class and economic circumstances are factors in this early beginning of sexual activity is made obvious by the presence in the story of Linda Stone, a middle-class school friend of Heather's whose main function seems to be to stand as a contrast term. Her background is pointedly different from that of the other young people in the book.

Linda hardly ever talks about boys, and she looks younger than Heather, although she is taller. "For one thing, you could never tell if she had breasts or not" (48). Summer or winter, her body is concealed under layers of good clothes. Darlene Snelgrove is Linda's opposite.

Darlene was small for her age; in spite of that, she looked older than she really was. She was wearing lipstick, eye shadow and mascara, as she did every day; her jeans looked as if they had been sprayed on her. (48)

At the age of fourteen, Darlene is defined, objectified, and trapped by her sexuality.

Porter's novel suggests that a life with more choices, rather than stricter control of young women's sexual activity, is the only way out of the trap. The same solution is proposed by Sharon Thompson, reporting on a study in which she interviewed fifteen- and sixteen-year-old girls about love and sex.

Teenage girls are not having too much, too soon. They have too little — too little pleasure, too few options, not enough sexual power.... For feminism the chief goal is not finally to protect young girls from the sexual reality but to protect and expand the possibilities for women's liberation — that is, for equalizing the genders and expanding women's opportunities for knowledge, pleasure, and work — for lives rich with personal and collective meaning. (Thompson, 376)

The second panel of my triptych, *Dear Nobody*, paints a different picture, a sweeter, more acceptable version of Heather's story. Helen and Chris are already in their last year of school and both plan to go to university. They are in love, and sex is a culmination of their emotional attachment. They make love, only once, in Helen's room, with billowing silk scarves and music in the background (1). The physical aspects of the experience are completely veiled in romance.

Helen becomes pregnant. Chris tells her that he loves her, and won't leave her (64), but Helen knows he's not ready to take on the responsibilities of fatherhood. For Chris's sake, she tries to bring on a miscarriage (67), but fails.

When Helen tells her mother she is pregnant, her mother urges her to have an abortion. "'Think of your future.... You mustn't throw it away'" (82). Helen and her mother go to the doctor together, and Helen agrees to terminate the pregnancy. But when she is in the hospital, waiting to be prepared for the operation, she realizes she can't go through with it (89-90). The baby is real to her all along, even at first, when she is frightened and desperate and doesn't want it. (The book begins with Chris as narrator, but from page 37 on Helen's voice is heard as well, in letters written to the baby, whom she addresses as "Dear Nobody". For the rest of the book, Helen's letters and Chris's narrative alternate.)

Helen gets little encouragement to have the baby. Her father tells her "'You're throwing your life away'" (96). He wants her to take up her scholarship to study music, to make the most of the chance he never had. Her mother, emotionally scarred by her own illegitimate birth, for which she has never forgiven *her* mother, feels Helen has let her down (95). Chris feels trapped (64). Only his Aunt Jill, who tells Helen about her own lasting regret after she aborted an unwanted fourth child, indirectly suggests that Helen should consider keeping the baby (74).

Helen's grandfather does accept her decision, and offers Helen, and the baby, a home if she finds her mother too difficult. But he, too, tells her she and Chris are too young for these commitments (148). He is relieved that they aren't going to marry. "'People will get wed. They think it's going to open the world for them.

But it doesn't, you see. It closes all the doors'" (147). There is consensus among the adults that youth is the time to make the most of your chances, and that sex with its attendant threats of pregnancy and marriage can close that future down too early. All of the grownups want something better for the children than they have themselves. A part of the richness and the complexity of this novel is its treatment of relationships. Marriage and parenthood are thoroughly taken out and shaken, and the realities of adult life are contrasted with love's young dream.

Although Helen and Chris love each other, she breaks off their relationship. She is ready for the baby, but she is not ready for Chris or marriage, "for for ever" (122-123). In the end, she lets Chris come to the hospital when the baby is born, and they name it together (198). Little Amy will have a father, although he won't be her mother's husband. And Chris's mother will send money for the baby's support until Chris is able to do it for himself (184).

The last page of the book is a letter from Helen to Chris. She writes that "I think I'm exactly where I want to be, at this moment of my life." And she describes to him four generations together in the same room: Helen's grandmother, her mother, Helen, and Amy, "milky-sweet and sleepy." The rifts between mothers and daughters have been bridged. "It was as though Amy was a fine thread being drawn through a garment, mending tears" (200).

These trailing clouds of healing glory, like the billowing silk scarves in Helen's room, are very different from the stringent and astringent realism of *january, february*. With the obvious exception of the baby growing inside Helen, this book largely ignores the body. Doherty, unlike Porter, spares her readers most of the unpleasant (or perhaps problematic) physical details, although she does a fine job of exploring the emotions. Doherty also glosses over the realities Helen will face as a single mother. Helen's cleverness, her musical gifts, her academic success are repeatedly pointed out. On the one hand, this emphasis makes clear how promising a future her pregnancy threatens. On the other, it seems intended to reassure us that Helen will make it, if anyone can. She plans to go to the local university once the baby is old enough to go to a creche, or maybe even reapply to the music school that had offered her a full scholarship (153). "There's time, there's time, there's time. We'll do it together, little Nobody" (112). I am unpersuaded, even irked, by this optimism, which is firmly nailed in place by the sentimental sledge-hammer of the ending.

Nicholas Tucker, in "Children's Books and Unwanted Pregnancies," expresses a similar reservation about *Dear Nobody*, although, as I do, he likes the book very much.

> Impressionable teenagers reading *Dear Nobody* may get the idea that love is always enough when considering whether to have a baby, regardless of the age or preparedness of the mother. But real life problems caused by unplanned pregnancies out of wedlock can be considerable, and no teenage novel should encourage immature readers to believe otherwise. (4)

He thinks that "some literary recognition that abortion may not always be a terrible thing for those requesting it is surely in order so as to provide all readers,

especially young ones, with a more balanced view," (5) and recommends Rosa Guy's *Edith Jackson*, published in 1979, as a corrective to the sweet fulfilment of *Dear Nobody*. If he had known about it, he might well have recommended *january, february*.

The third panel of my triptych, *Make Lemonade*, does not raise the question of abortion. There is no romance in it, and only a passing mention of desire (154). The sexual vulnerability of young women and the facts of life for a single mother are at the forefront. Like *january, february*, it is a story of the constraints of urban poverty, with the difference that the setting is an inner city, unnamed, somewhere in the United States.[4]

The narrator is LaVaughn, fourteen years old and in grade nine. She and her mother are determined that LaVaughn will go to college, although no one in her whole family, no one in the sixty-four apartments in her building, has ever been to college. The idea came from a movie she saw in school in the fifth grade. "It was about how you go to college and the whole place is clean with grass planted and they have lion statues and flowers growing.... Then you get a good job and you live in a nice place with no gangs writing all over the walls" (9).

College will get LaVaughn out of a place where the people living in her building have to have a Watchdog Committee that keeps the drug sellers and pimps out (14) and teaches a self-defence course for all the girls who are twelve or older (15). LaVaughn's mother runs the building's Tenant Council. She is a strong woman, "a big Mom" (15). "My Mom sunk her teeth into this one, this college idea. Every time I look like I'm forgetting college she reminds me some way. My Mom has an attention span that goes on for years" (12).

To earn part of her college money, LaVaughn begins to babysit for a young woman named Jolly who is only seventeen years old, unmarried, with two small children, and completely without any of the skills that would allow her to make a life for herself and her babies. Sex is not a part of LaVaughn's own life as yet. But Jolly is an object lesson of what sex can mean: a man taking his thoughtless pleasure, sometimes by force. "You end up pregnant because some guy has some nice high for you" (154).

LaVaughn becomes very fond of two-year-old Jeremy and Jilly, the "gooey baby" (6), and she wants to rescue them and Jolly.

> I heard somebody say Jolly didn't face reality. Jolly she says, 'You say that? Reality is I got baby puke on my sweater & shoes and they tell me they'll cut off the electricity and my kids would have to take a bath in cold water. And the rent ain't paid like usual. Reality is my babies only got one thing in the world and that's me and that's the reality. You say I don't face reality? You say that?' (20)

LaVaughn persuades Jolly to enrol in the Moms Up program in her own school so that she can get a better job than unskilled factory work for a boss who gropes the women he supervises. But Jolly is resistant and unreliable, and sometimes LaVaughn loses sympathy with her. One day, she is fed up with Jolly's only doing things partway.

I say to her, 'That the way you did the birth control too? Partway is good enough?' Jolly got shorter faster than I could see but I was an eyewitness and I know she did just before she got taller, layered with camouflage and she could have held hand grenades. Slowly she made her words come out, and there was a weight there I have never heard before on anybody, even as soft as she was talking: 'Sometimes you don't have time. Sometimes they don't let you have time to. They get in a hurry, they forget you're even around.' (131)

We can assume that abortion wasn't an option for Jolly, as it was for Heather and Helen, since she lives in the United States. She is poor, undoubtedly without medical insurance, even if abortion were medically available, and the men who carelessly fathered her children probably wouldn't have provided money. We have no idea whether Jolly was a willing participant in the sexual acts that made her pregnant, although the suggestions are strong that she had little, if any, control over the situation. What we do know is that whoever had the pleasure, Jolly paid the penalty.

Make Lemonade presents young women as potential or actual victims of male sexuality. There is no discourse of female desire. More surprising is the complete absence of romance, which is such a pervasive presence in girls' lives and fiction. There are no boyfriends, not even vague dreams, like Heather's in *january, february*, of a shadowy man somewhere in the future. The women in this book are on their own, and rely only on themselves and each other. Men don't figure in the story at all except as a faceless sexual threat — the pimps who have to be kept out of LaVaughn's building, the nameless men who impregnated Jolly, the predatory violence that necessitates self-defence courses for twelve-year-old girls.

In this dangerous world it is easy to see that for girls puberty is what Janet Lee, writing about menarche, calls "a transition to womanhood as objectified other" (362). She concludes that the process by which young women are sexualized denies them "power to define the body and live in it with dignity and safety; power to move through the world with credibility and respect" (362).

Make Lemonade argues that the way to get that power is through education. College will let LaVaughn move to a cleaner, safer place. Moms Up will teach Jolly confidence and self-respect and the skills necessary to make a decent life for herself and her children. The answer is straightforward in this short, tightly focused, and beautifully written novel. Neither romance nor desire complicates the issue.

In *january, february*, Heather knows university can be her way out of her depressingly limited world. But she is sidetracked by her own sexual desire, for which she is unprepared. In *Dear Nobody*, Helen is expected and encouraged to develop her gifts to their fullest potential by going to The Royal Northern College of Music, but she gets ambushed by romance: Chris would not have kept her from taking up her scholarship — the baby does.

Thompson notes that the search for romance itself may be the greatest inhibitor of a young woman's future.

Most teenage girls' lives are 'ruined by love,' in Elwin's phrase — to the extent that they are ruined, shortcircuited, or pared down — not by the pleasures and dangers associated with sex and not by promiscuity, but by the propensity to stake precious time and lose heart at the gaming table of romance. (352)

That is not the case in my triptych of novels. All three emphasize instead the inescapable fact of heterosexuality for a young woman: sex, whether it is a response to her own physical desire, a progression from emotional intimacy, or an act of violence against her, can lead to pregnancy.

Our society is so structured that the only safe and acceptable way to have children is within a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Sex has often led to marriage in what Thompson calls "the shotgun connection of sex, reproduction, and marriage" (376). Ideally, the order is reversed and love leads to marriage and then to sex and children. Romance is supposed to guarantee that order by insisting on commitment before sex.

> When any new relationship is embarked on, the question always posed is that of its future goal. The experience of pleasure is not seen to represent an appropriate goal — or rather, if it is presented as such, then it is negatively sanctioned. If, as in our story, it is 'impossible' from the start that the two characters will ever become a 'couple,' or indeed where such a union is never striven for in the first place, the bond between them is considered shameful. If, however, the question of whether they intend to *become* a couple can be answered in the affirmative, then further points present themselves for clarification. Are they capable of the union? Can he provide for her? Can they offer security to prospective children? (Haug 223)

For adolescents, the answer to Haug's last three questions is usually "no." They lack the psychological, social and financial resources. For that reason, adults try to control the awakening sexual desire of adolescents by emphasizing the penalties to be paid for it. Those penalties are higher for girls than for boys. Of course, both are equally vulnerable to disease, which has recently been added to the public discussion of consequences of sexual intercourse. But in the case of pregnancy, the girl is left holding the baby.

She suffers the physical and emotional trauma of abortion if that solution is possible and acceptable. If it is not, she is the one who is visibly pregnant, and therefore disgraced as at best irresponsible and at worst shameful. She must cope with the enormous disruptions that pregnancy and motherhood make in a life that is still developing. Shame is part of the punishment. Until recently, a pregnant girl dropped out of school, either because the pregnancy had to be concealed, or because of a general feeling that she had set herself apart from her peers and could no longer expect to behave as one of them. Her life was shortcircuited not purely out of necessity, but because she was expected to live out the consequences of her transgression.

The inequity of this situation is all the more poignant because the desire young women are punished for is not even supposed to be their own. Traditionally, sexual desire has been the prerogative of men. Good men accepted the responsibility to control that desire. Good women hoped and waited for love, and were taught to protect themselves from men.

These expectations are changing, but they are far from gone. In 1988 Michelle Fine published her findings from a study of sex education in public schools in the United States. She found that while the warnings for girls are loud and clear, there is still no discourse of female sexual desire.

The authorized sexual discourses define what is safe, what is taboo, and what will be silenced. This discourse of sexuality mis-educates adolescent women. What results is a discourse of sexuality based on the male in search of desire and the female in search of protection. The open, coed sexuality discussions so many fought for in the 1970s have been appropriated as a forum for the primacy of male heterosexuality and the preservation of female victimization. (40)

In June of 1995, Tamsin Wilson reported on a comparative study of safer sex materials available in Britain:

[The study] reveals that gay men are offered material that represents safer sex as fun, highly erotic, imaginative and pleasurable.... In utter contrast, safer sex materials for 'women' [sic] are devoid of any suggestion of erotic excitement, pleasure, desire or fun. They are weighed down with questions of family responsibility and often suggest that women (should) find sex unpleasurable, difficult or offensive. (18)

The two quotations from Fine and Wilson are describing institutionalized public discourses. Many adults are undoubtedly having conversations with young men and women about sexuality that are very different from the official line. But public discourse both reflects and shapes private conversation, and the extent to which a double sexual standard for men and women continues to be upheld is depressing. Even more depressing is to see sexuality defined predominantly in terms of disease and pregnancy — not as a complex set of desires and pleasures that we must become conscious of and careful about because it is so important in our lives, but as a force that must be controlled because it is dangerous to our health and future economic success.

It is enough to make me head straight back to the romance novels of my own adolescence in the early 1960s, which Christian-Smith found are similar to those of the 1980s. They, too, are a part of the public discourse, and far from satisfactory in their implications. The double standard is there, and they are rigidly heterosexual. Love may be a bargaining chip in the struggle for boys to get sex and girls to withhold it, or a misty veil that obscures desire. But they at least suggest that whatever is going on is more complicated and interesting than the warning on a cigarette package.

The three novels in my triptych support and challenge the dominant discourse on the sexuality of young women in different ways and to different degrees. *Make Lemonade* challenges only our social and literary anticipation of romance. It fits neatly into the dire warning category of authorized sex education as Fine describes it. *Dear Nobody* gives us the romance, but breaks the pattern when Helen ends the relationship with Chris because she is ready to be a mother but not to be a wife. Her decision is very much a reversal of the usual sequence. This novel also turns what begins as the expected disaster of unwanted pregnancy into an unexpected fulfilment.

january, february is by far the most challenging book of the three. It shows a fifteen-year-old girl preoccupied with sexual desire, and is frank about the physical aspects of her sexual response. It makes clear that she is unprepared to cope with her developing sexuality, and blames her mother and the larger society

for her lack of preparedness. It is factual about the penalty a young woman may have to pay for sexual activity, but allows her to refuse to have her life ruined by an accidental pregnancy. And with all that, the book is not didactic. It does not seem intended to do good by informing young readers. Like *Make Lemonade* and *Dear Nobody*, it is a fine novel. It is also a notable contribution to the almost-missing discourse of female adolescent desire.

NOTES

1 A fourth evaluation of this novel appeared in *CCL* in 1992, four years after *january, february* was published. It is not a review of the book as a new publication, but rather a very positive discussion of it in an article on children's books from Newfoundland (Brett 55). Here, too, the book is flagged as "for mature readers only."

2 My thanks to Margaret Mackey, who was instrumental in clarifying my thinking on this point.

3 The source is acknowledged only as "Willa Cather, 1876-1947."

4 Wolff is deliberately imprecise in locating her story. Readers are left to form visual images of the location and characters for themselves.

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Bad Boys and Binaries: Mary Harker on Diana Wieler's *Bad Boy*

Perry Nodelman

Résumé: Dans le présent article, P. Nodelman conteste les conclusions que Mary Harker propose dans son analyse du roman *Bad Boy* de Diana Wieler, parue dans la revue *CCL*. D'une part, l'auteur concède que le comportement du héros, A.J., s'inscrit en faux contre les stéréotypes de l'hétérosexualité; d'autre part, il démontre que le second personnage principal, Tully, conforte la vision traditionnelle de l'homosexualité masculine. Sous des apparences contestataires et modernistes, le roman respecte les dichotomies de la morale occidentale et sanctionne la représentation classique de l'homosexualité masculine.

Summary: A response to an earlier *CCL* article, Mary Harker's "Tweaking the Canon: Diana Wieler's *Bad Boy*," this article challenges the idea that Wieler succeeded in her attempt to "contest the dominant, monologic male discourse of the Bad Boy tradition." While *Bad Boy* challenges conventional ideas about heterosexual masculinity in its portrayal of one of its central characters, A.J., it seems to confirm other conventional ideas — ones about homosexual masculinity — in terms of its portrayal of its other central character, Tully. Wieler's choice of counterpointing Tully's story with A.J.'s in a surprisingly intricate and detailed way ends up implying that homosexual behaviour is always other than and opposite to heterosexual behaviour, in just about every way imaginable. In indulging in this kind of traditional thinking by means of binary oppositions, the novel supports many stereotypical (and surely inaccurate) ideas about the meaning and nature of male homosexuality — stereotypes that are unfortunately still all too current in our culture.

What follows is primarily a response to Mary Harker's essay "Tweaking the Canon: Diana Wieler's *Bad Boy*," which appeared in *CCL*'s recent special issue on boys and men. I felt the need to explore my response to what Harker wrote about Wieler's intriguing novel because I found her ideas about the novel so completely right, and somehow, also, unpersuasive — incomplete. I agree with Harker's thesis — that Wieler's intent in *Bad Boy* "goes beyond the mere status quo" (24) in terms of conceptions of maleness, and that Wieler most significantly wants "to contest the dominant, monologic male discourse of the Bad Boy tradition" (29). But surprisingly, Harker takes it for granted that Wieler's purpose is in itself monological — that Wieler had this one thing on her mind and that she did exactly what she set out to do. Personally, I find *Bad Boy* more complex than that, and in some important ways, a lot more conventional in its expression of ideas about masculinity than Harker wants to suggest — and therefore, I'm afraid, a lot less healthy.

Harker's reading centres on the ways in which the hockey player A.J. comes to terms with his discovery of his best friend Tully's homosexuality, and on how the discovery opens up a space for alternate social codes — for the explorations of other ways of understanding and of being male. But in considering all this, Harker has surprisingly little to say about Tully — about the ways in which

Wieler depicts *him* and *his* alternate way of being male. According to Harker, "Wieler emphasizes distinctness when the action is occasionally focalized through" Tully (27). But the "occasionally" is a little dismissive (and a bit of an understatement), and Harker's insistence on "distinctness" neglects to notice how Tully might not be so distinct after all.

My own actual experience of male homosexual sex is as nonexistent as Wieler's inevitably must be — not necessarily something I'm proud of, but in this context, in which personal bias might well be a factor, I somehow feel obligated to own up to it. I'm not gay. Nevertheless, I've certainly read enough novels and seen enough movies about gay males — as understood, usually, from a straight point of view — to notice how much Tully shares with some common and surely distorted fictional stereotypes of homosexuality.

In understating Tully's presence in the novel, Harker creates the impression that Wieler has replicated a common failing of novels for children and young adults about intolerance. These novels often focus less on the problems of marginalized children who are being subjected to prejudice than they do on the problems of mainstream children who have to deal with prejudice directed at minoritized others. In Paula Fox's *Slave Dancer*, for instance, a white boy hijacked onto a slave ship learns to deal with his new knowledge of cruelty to black Africans; and in Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, a Christian girl protects her Jewish friend from Nazis in Denmark in World War II. These novels imply a white, Christian, middle-class (and in the case of *Bad Boy*, perhaps, heterosexual?) reader, in the process of learning the right tolerant liberal values and responsibilities towards less fortunate (but still marginalized) others. And that silences the voices and feelings of people who are actually oppressed — as Fox silences blacks and Lowry Jews, and as Harker more or less silences Tully's important contributions to the novel in her reading of it. But the reading is inaccurate. In fact, Wieler *doesn't* silence the minority voice. She provides Tully's point of view as well as A.J.'s. The problem is not silence, but what is being said.

If Harker had considered in more detail what Wieler shows us of Tully's thoughts, she might have expressed less confidence about her assertion that Wieler is intent on subverting the conventions of the traditional "Bad Boy" genre, as found in books like Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. True, the aggressively masculine A.J. learns to transcend the Bad Boy image the sports world wants to impose on him as an aggressive hockey player. But as Harker herself says, A.J. isn't the only Bad Boy in the novel. Tully, a boy bad enough in terms of conventional morality to be not only gay but also sexually active, is, exactly, the mischief-maker with the heart of gold ascribed to the Bad Boy of fictional tradition in the quotations from Thomas Kent and Edwin H. Cody with which Harker begins her essay.

Quoting Cody, furthermore, Harker says that, "since character or personality is 'given, static,' the boy does not mature or change dynamically — 'at best he learns to see' " (23). She claims that Wieler subverts this idea, as she clearly does in her portrayal of A.J. Yet Tully ends the novel as he began it, a free spirit dancing in joy despite the society that condemns his sexual orientation and

attempts to repress him. (He dances, furthermore, with a typical Bad Boy's playful imaginativeness, to the noiseless music of an imaginary guitar.)

So Tully is a spirit of eternally delightful and apparently unchanging boyishness. And it's clear that, as in the Bad Boy novels of tradition, we're intended to *admire* him. In his willingness to be so independent of convention and so boyishly playful, he represents a desirable alternative to the uptight machismo that A.J. is learning to see beyond as the novel progresses . But that he is being admired in this way is not necessarily so admirable an act on the part of the novelist.

In explicating this aspect of the novel, Harker might have referred to another relevant tradition of ideas about boys: the one represented by James Barrie's *Peter Pan*, whose refusal to grow up represents, not merely a defiance of social convention, but a somewhat unnerving rejection of everything usually considered responsible or mature. To be a Peter Pan is to be a force of nature, literally Pan-like, absolutely committed to egocentricity and self-absorption, absolutely unconcerned about the feelings or needs of others when they vary from one's own.

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that Barrie's particular celebration of eternal boyishness represents a wish-fulfilling escape from women and heterosexual desire. The eternally boyish hero of Barrie's adult autobiographical novels *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* "is treated throughout each of these astonishingly acute and self-hating novels both as man with a specific, crippling moral and psychological defect [the inability to feel desire for a woman who desires him] and as the very type of the great creative artist" (195). Wieler suggests something surprisingly similar, albeit without any hatred on her part or self-hatred on the part of her character. Tully happily both lacks desire for women *and* is a highly imaginative free spirit, destined to be a boy forever.

Indeed, Wieler suggests, as Barrie did, that the two automatically go together. Tully says that he first realized he was gay at the age of seven when he understood that his parents' boring normal life would never be his. A.J., astonished, thinks, "This didn't have anything to do with sex" (175) — but in this novel, curiously, it does: to be gay here is merely to fulfil one's destiny as an eternally irresponsible and immature free spirit, to not be suburban or "normal" or, therefore, heterosexual.

This is, of course, a stereotype. Not all the gay men of my acquaintance are unconventional or free-spirited. Some even live in suburbs and have accountants (or *are* accountants). Some worry enough to have ulcers. But the plot of *Bad Boy* ignores such possibilities. At the end of the novel, A.J., the heterosexual hero, becomes admirable by learning to change and by maturing, becoming an adult. But Tully, the homosexual hero, remains admirable by refusing to change — by remaining primitive, natural, unsocialized, boyish. He is admired not because he represents maturity, but because he seems inherently incapable of maturing.

Furthermore, Tully is one of only two homosexual characters in the novel — and the other one is shown to be a rather nasty sadist. For the many young readers who don't know much more about homosexuality than this novel shows them, these two portrayals establish a very narrow range of possible ways of being gay: you can be eternally boyish and immature like Tully, or you can be sadistic and vile, like

Tully's nasty friend Derek. While as much an enemy to conventional morality as Tully — and therefore fulfilling Wieler's general characterization of homosexuality — Derek expresses his disdain for convention in terms of despicable treatment of others. He is the eternally irresponsible Bad Boy as Hitler.

In fact, the novel operates throughout in terms of very rigid sets of either/ors: binary oppositions. The title clearly intends to represent ambiguously either or both of the two different Bad Boys whose point of view the novel shows us. Further, there are clear counterpoints between the events of the alternating narrations, as the boys experience different events with surprising similarities to each other. For instance, in two consecutive episodes, Tully and A.J. have confrontations with their fathers; and in two consecutive episodes, A.J. gets violent on the ice after he says, "Don't touch me!" (115) and Tully experiences sadomasochistic sex after someone touches him and he says "Don't" (117). It's clear we're expected to notice the counterpoints and make the comparisons — read the homosexual in the light of the heterosexual, and vice versa.

Harker points out some of the counterpoints in her discussion of how the language of hockey as reported by Wieler sounds suspiciously like men having sex with each other — and therefore, like the interwoven scenes describing Tully's sex life. It'd be interesting to consider the hockey scenes in terms of the relationships between the homosexual and the homosocial proposed by Sedgwick in *Between Men*. Wieler's novel offers classic descriptions of males arriving at the "proper" form of homosociality, or socially-approved nonsexual bonding with other males, by aggressively dismissing the possibility of homosexual attraction — by becoming, indeed, as homophobic as Wieler's hockey players.

Sedgwick suggests that homosocial bonding happens most frequently in classic fiction at climactic moments in which two men meet and reconcile over the body of a dead woman, earlier contested between the two men as a possession, and most often, killed by one of them. Such moments sum up what Sedgwick sees as the traditional purpose that the relationships between men and women have served in the past — to confirm and cement the more important relationships men have with each other. Something weirdly similar happens at the climactic moment of *Bad Boy*. In *Bad Boy*, the woman, Tully's sister, doesn't die—but she is nearly raped by A.J. Furthermore, she is raped as a sort of substitute for Tully, whom A.J. believes he feels desire for; and A.J. so fears and hates feeling the desire that he imagines the rape of the sister as a sadistic punishment of Tully: "'Do you get the message, Tulsa Brown?' ... He wanted to press an imprint of himself on her, on her skin" (170). In this way, even more weirdly, A.J.'s unwanted rape replicates the desired but patently sadistic sexual advances of Tully's sexual partner Derek — which Wieler presents without disapproving comment, presumably as normal homosexual activity. The implication is that what's aggressive and brutal for normal heterosexuals is actually okay fun for those "different" homosexuals.

In any case, the binaries are clearly worked out, and clearly opposite. And since Tully's story represents the homosexual as opposed to the heterosexual as

represented by A.J.'s story, everything that happens to him inevitably seems to come to stand for homosexual behaviour in general. Anyone who believed that it did (and it would seem logical that a young reader interested in a book of this sort would do just that) would have to reach a number of unfortunate conclusions.

First: A.J. feels tremendous rage, which he learns to hold in most of the time but releases in outbursts of violence. He is, in other words, typically "masculine" as traditionally understood — a savage who needs to learn how to control his savagery until the appropriate time for expressing it, in battle (or on the rink). But Tully is the opposite: open, expressive, uncontrolled always — and never, therefore, a victim of his own pent-up rage. Homosexuality is, therefore, essentially a form of eternal self-expression, of hedonism and irresponsibility. (Tully does manage control at one important moment, as he rejects A.J.'s declaration of love; more about that later.)

Second: A.J. is focused, too focused — he sees only how the world relates to himself immediately. He is therefore an extreme but still recognizable representation of conventional goal-oriented behaviour — the kind that supposedly wins men (and maybe also women?) success in our world. Wieler insists that A.J. needs to widen his focus, to learn to view the big picture in order to find a saner way of understanding his place in the world as a whole; only when he enlarges his focus, and becomes both less intensely goal-oriented and less intensely "macho," does he have success in hockey and in his relationship with a girl. Once more, then, Wieler does what Harker suggests: question conventional assumptions about both success and maleness. Indeed, she ties the two together.

Once more, also, however, Tully is exactly opposite to A.J. He is so *un*focused that he wants to totally lose concentration: he has a history of drug abuse, of giving in to the vague pleasure of numbness to normal experience. He apparently needs to learn some focus, develop some goals—but then, Wieler leaves us with that final picture of him remaining triumphantly unfocused. Since Tully is gay and A.J. straight, the unsophisticated implied reader I've been postulating really has no choice but to assume that Tully's lack of focus — his desire to resign from clear perception and enjoy pleasant numbness — is an innate part of his sexual orientation, an aspect of homosexuality that, once more, opposes it to heterosexuality. Homosexuality is essentially—guess what?—a form of hedonism and irresponsibility.

Third: In his life as an aggressively masculine hockey player, A.J. loves to inflict pain, and is a sadist. When he tries to express the same aggressiveness sexually, with Tully's sister, he is clearly shown to be at fault for doing so. Male heterosexuality, then, is not to be perceived as perhaps most people once did — as a form of aggression; this is what A.J. is in the process of learning. But in Tully's sex scenes, we see him as a masochist, being aroused by his partner's sadistic aggression. Homosexuality, apparently, preserves ideas of the masculine and the feminine now outmoded and unacceptable in heterosexuality. A homosexual is either someone who is as aggressive sexually as heterosexual males once were, or someone who passively receives and is aroused by the aggressiveness of that traditional male sexuality, as convention once assumed women are. Once

more, homosexuality, as Wieler envisages it, is peculiarly static and unchanging, while heterosexuality grows and evolves and becomes more mature and humane.

Fourth: That would seem to be contradicted towards the end of the novel, as both A.J. *and* Tully change enough to show some maturity. Both do it through acts of denial. A.J., typically heterosexual to begin with, learns to deny the socially-desirable role of enforcer, goon — Bad Boy. He gives up his aggressiveness, and learns to care more for his personal feelings than for the socially-approved behaviour that made him popular. Tully, however, has to give up something else — indeed, the exact opposite: not socially approved behaviour, but what he personally feels and desires, the opportunity to have sex with A.J.

We are told that Tully has deep, real feelings for A.J., that this declaration of love from A.J. is something he always wanted but felt to be hopeless; and the novel affirms that Tully is noble not to give in to his own desire or what is defined here as A.J.'s confusion. In the peculiar logic of the novel's binaries, it seems that Tully has nobly refused to "rape" A.J. (or as with Derek, be pleasantly raped by him?) as a counterpoint of A.J. attempting to rape Tully's sister. He understands beyond all the evidence that any homosexual activity for A.J., even sex he claims to want, would be a form of rape.

But the novel never implies even for a moment that A.J. might *not* be confused — that his attraction to Tully might be genuine. (If it were, I realize as I consider the possibility, it would probably render the novel unpublishable as a book for young people. Not only might Wieler have to describe what the two boys actually *did* together after announcing their mutual attraction, but the fact that both her protagonists were gay and happy would certainly define the book as publishable only for a small specialized market. We may be more liberated about homosexuality these days than we once were — but it's a sad fact that we're nowhere near *that* liberated yet.) The novel also never implies that there might be something peculiar in Tully's strange act of self-denial, so totally contrary to everything else in Tully's character — and as it turns out, only a momentary aberration, the opposite of what Wieler celebrates about Tully in the final scene. Would we so readily read Tully's refusal the same way if the two characters involved in this situation were of different sexes? Somehow I don't think so.

Consider: a girl whom a boy has always secretly loved suddenly and unexpectedly declares her love and offers herself to him; but he decides she really doesn't mean it and that their friendship is more important than romantic love and sexual satisfaction, and he rejects the offer. I suspect most people would see him as lacking self-confidence or being strangely inconsistent (or being a latent homosexual in denial?).

I conclude, therefore, that the novel is suggesting that it's good when homosexuals give up their opportunities for sex with willing partners, and probably not so good or so clearly healthy when heterosexuals do the same thing.

I tend to read this act of noble renunciation as a variation, and something of an advance, on a pattern traditional for some decades now in novels for young adults about gays: a character discovered to be gay must die before the novel ends, thus renouncing everything. A classic (and notorious) example is Isabelle

Holland's *The Man Without a Face*, in which the gay character dies even after he nobly refuses to give in to the young male protagonist's amorous advances. Here in *Bad Boy* only sex is renounced, and only with one particular partner — but it clearly *must* be renounced in order for readers to understand that Tully has matured. A.J. matures by learning to care less about social conventions and "normal" values, Tully by learning to care more; A.J. wins our praise by becoming less masculinely aggressive, Tully, presumably, by becoming less self-indulgently gay. (Or perhaps he is merely confirming that he is inherently masochistic — that he gets pleasure by depriving himself of pleasure?)

These are dangerous generalizations. I happily admit that Wieler doesn't actually make them. But the novel clearly allows them — even, in a way, demands them. For all of Harker's insistence that *Bad Boy* is opening up new ways of thinking about being male, its main characteristic is its structure of oppositions and counterpoints and, therefore, its adherence to the basic structures of traditional patriarchal thinking: the division of everything in the world we perceive into binary oppositions. In this novel, homosexuality is understood to be exactly opposite to heterosexuality in every way imaginable — just as femininity traditionally used to be understood as opposite to masculinity in every way imaginable. Both assumptions are clearly wrong.

It's not my intention to single out Wieler for attack. Quite the opposite. Her novel is subtle, complex, interesting, and brave enough to tackle hard topics. But what it describes so subtly and so bravely nevertheless represents current mainstream attitudes towards homosexuality, in all *their* subtlety and complexity (and wrongness). Like them, the novel expresses tolerance; and it does, as Harker suggests, open the door to different forms of being male. But it also, I believe, confirms some questionable and popular ideas about the nature of at least some of those other forms.

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A Postmodern Argument Against Censorship: Negotiating Gender and Sexual Identity through Canadian Young Adult Novels

Meredith Rogers Cherland

Résumé: D'après les théories postmodernes, les gens créent leur propre identité en réagissant aux discours culturels qu'ils doivent subir. Les adolescents canadiens étant ainsi soumis à des discours contradictoires sur la sexualité, il devient donc impérieux d'étudier en classe des oeuvres qui contrebalancent ces influences parfois discutables. La lecture de romans de bon aloi, sous la gouverne de professeurs attentifs, permettra donc aux jeunes de définir et d'assumer leur identité sexuelle de façon sereine.

Summary: Postmodern theories suggest that meaning is never fixed and constant, and that people are continually creating their own "identities" (their beliefs about themselves, their values, their ways of relating to the world) in interaction with the public and private forms of language which surround them. Canadian teenagers are bombarded by cultural discourses concerning gender, sexuality and violence which may be contradictory, confusing and destructive. Canadian young adult novels studied in school offer alternative discourses which enrich and balance ideas and messages received outside of school. Young people need the freedom to read and study Canadian novels in school in the company of a caring teacher, and in ways which allow them considerable latitude in negotiating and constructing meanings for gender and sexual identity.

An Introduction

The day before I began writing this article, a local murder case became the talk of our town. Two teenage boys (recent graduates of high schools near my university) had been arrested and charged with beating to death a 28-year-old Indian woman. One of the boys was a student in our Faculty of Education, the other the son of a university professor. Needing to think aloud about my emotional response to this event, I spoke at length with a colleague who also works in English Education. We both felt sick and horrified, anxious to sort out and explain to ourselves the complexities of gender, race, class, violence and sexuality that were woven through this case. Because we had both worked with teenagers in English classes, we also spoke about teaching literature. Murder, the heartbreak of death and ruined lives, framed and permeated our discussion of sexuality and censorship in Canadian young adult literature and in Canadian high school classrooms.[1]

Although I have taught high school English, I now work in teacher education. In recent years I have become accustomed to using post-structuralist theories to try to understand the world I live in. I work with notions of the constructed self, trying to understand the multiple cultural discourses that influence and inform my work in preparing teachers of literature and literacy. My argument in this article is framed by certain postmodern assumptions. I will assume a crisis of confidence in western civilization's historical faith in traditional reason and

rationality. I will assume that most teachers no longer feel comfortable telling their students what is "true" and "right." I will assume that language does not reflect pre-existing meanings, but rather that language is the site where meanings are created. I will assume that meanings, even those embodied in literature, are constantly in flux (Eagleton; Cherland, 1994a).[2]

I will also assume that Canadian teens, like all people, create their identities in interaction with the cultural discourses around them; that these discourses (collections of public and private language, both spoken and written) *create* certain meanings, and embody certain political views (Weedon); I will assume that each person is continually constructing a set of conscious and unconscious thoughts and beliefs, a sense of herself, a way of relating to the world. Finally, I will assume that high-school English classrooms are important sites for these constructions of self, places where teenagers ought to have opportunities to engage with the cultural discourses they encounter in literature; where they can have serious discussions about their lives; where they can work through pain and contradiction, constructing multiple perspectives and understandings of events like the murder I've mentioned above. Classrooms should be places where young people feel the horror and anguish of violence, and the joys and complexities of sexuality, and talk about them. They do not need to be protected from exposure to these discourses (indeed, they *cannot* be protected from exposure to them). Instead, they need adult company in engaging them, in considering alternatives, and in battling confusion and despair.[3]

Thus, I want to argue, in postmodern terms, against the censorship of novels in high school English classrooms. This kind of censorship cannot be tolerated, because young people need to encounter in the literature they read at school a wide variety of discourses concerning gender and sexuality and violence. They need to be able to engage with these discourses openly and rigorously, through talk and through reading and writing, in cooperation and in dialogue with an experienced adult reader and cultural critic (their teacher). I fear the consequences if they do not.

And if the construction of identity and the negotiation of meaning are to occur, teachers need to use instructional methods that allow for them. Traditional methods of high school literature study may in fact discourage such work. Teacher lectures, for example, assume that meaning in literature is something fixed that is to be discerned and then transmitted, usually from an adult teacher to a teenage student. Strict teacher control of classroom "discussion" implies that the negotiation of alternative meanings is not welcome. I would suggest that where providing freedom for the negotiation of identity is the goal, processes of instruction which allow students and teachers to construct several possible meanings for gender and sexuality are essential to the success of the enterprise. Fortunately, there are several instructional methods which do.

In this article I will be looking at three Canadian young adult novels, each of which has been the target of censors, each of which presents some meanings for gender and for sexuality[4] that Canadian teens are encountering daily (through films, rock videos, popular magazines, song lyrics, television, and their local newspa-

pers), and other meanings that are for the most part missing from these discourses. I will analyze each novel briefly with regard to gender and sexuality, and then describe instructional approaches which allow students to think about those meanings, to work toward deeper understandings of them, and to construct hope.

Part II: Three Novels and Three Teaching Approaches

Snow Apples *by Mary Razzell (Vancouver: Groundwood Books, 1984)*

Set in 1945 on an island near Vancouver, *Snow Apples* is presented in the first person through the main character, Sheila Brary, age 16. This is the story of Sheila's last year of high school, of her relationship with her mother, of her friendship with a neighbour woman, and of the difficulties she encounters in her emotional and sexual relationship with her boyfriend Nels Bergstrom, the local carpenter's son. In the course of the novel, Sheila battles with her traditional Catholic mother for the opportunity to continue in high school, and decides that she will become a nurse. She also becomes pregnant and, with her father's help, secures an abortion. At the story's end, she leaves home for nursing school in Vancouver.

Snow Apples is, from one perspective, a moving, historically-situated portrait of sexism and gender oppression within the family. Both Sheila and her mother struggle with the social forces that limit their lives. Sheila's mother must feed her children and maintain a home for them, although she receives financial help from their father only when he feels like giving it. When she secretly saves enough money from his Air Force family allotment checks to begin to build a house, and registers the land and building in her own name, he becomes angry and abusive. Sheila's mother suffers at her husband's sexual infidelities, and she fears him physically, but knows that she is bound to him by the church and her community's expectations.

It is interesting that Sheila suffers from sexism primarily at the hands of her mother. Today's teens are likely to be familiar with the kind of sexism Sheila endures outside the family, the unwanted sexual attention she receives from employers on her part time jobs, the double standard for sexual behaviour for the girls and boys in her community. But it is her own mother who gives her less to eat than her brothers, who insists that only Sheila leave school in order to take a job that will add to the family's income, who discourages Sheila from spending her own money at the dentist. Mrs. Brary's anger at her own suffering is directed against her daughter Sheila, rather than against her sons. Sheila registers this: "But it was the rage my mother directed against me that was hardest to bear. It was as if I was being pounded by her words, and it got so bad that I couldn't think, couldn't do anything except wish desperately that she would stop" (113).

Snow Apples makes gender oppression concrete, and introduces an idea that may or may not be new to Canadian teens in the '90s: Sexism is enacted, not only by the society, but also within the home; and girls may suffer not only at the hands of men, but also at the hands of other women. In a similar way, *Snow Apples* offers concrete examples of the belief that female people are the *victims* of sexuality.

Sheila receives countless warnings from her mother about the dangers of acting on her sexual desires (pregnancy, disgrace, the loss of love). And when Sheila becomes pregnant, disaster does follow. Her boyfriend deserts her, and her fears that she will also lose her home and family and her future seem very real.

Snow Apples also offers, however, two discourses which are generally missing from public representations of female sexuality. One is the missing discourse of female desire (Fine). The other is a missing discourse of grief and loss in the aftermath of abortion.

Canadian teens will rarely encounter portraits of female desire as convincing as those offered in this novel. Sheila's passion for Nels is sharp and physical, at times overwhelming, both painful and ecstatic. Razzell presents it as a collage of physical sensation and sensual imagery:

> I cried out with pain. But he didn't stop, and then when the pain lessened, I seemed to loosen, become drowsy. Melted with pleasure, mounted up with pleasure. Stayed there, held there. A sense of danger — or excitement — held while I teetered ... and fell. Such a long way down — my head would crack when I hit. Instead I came down into deep soft water that folded over me, rocked me.
>
> I opened my eyes. The trees were black lace against the sky. A full moon lighted up the woods, Nels' face. His eyes were closed, his face peaceful.
>
> After that we forgot about time. I felt the springiness of moss under me and the pressure of twigs digging into my back. Once I noticed the shape of alder leaves, black against the moon. But always there was Nels. The smell of his hair was grass drying in the summer sun ... (104)

In this passage, and in the pages that precede it, Sheila is not a victim of male desire. She is a sexual agent in her own right, and as such her story offers an alternative discourse of female sexuality, one often suppressed by more dominant discourses which deny the existence of female sexual desire, and in doing so serve the society's need to invest female people with responsibility for the *control* of sexual behaviour.

The other missing or alternative discourse offered in *Snow Apples* has to do with the emotional aftermath of abortion. Where else might Canadian teens experience an account of the pain many women feel after making such a "choice," and of the support women can offer each other in these situations?

> I wasn't hungry, I wasn't anything. I wanted not to bother, or be bothered, or made to care.
>
> Helga sat beside me at the table and buttered my toast. 'Eat,' she said. It was only the sight of her hard brown hand lying at rest on the spotless cross-stitch tablecloth and that look of hers that was like — love, but simple, without hurt — that made me pick up my knife and fork.
>
> It was grief that was overwhelming me. I hadn't expected it. I thought I would only feel relief. A boy ... somehow I thought it would be a girl. All along it seemed — because it was a problem and not wanted — that it had to be a girl (151).

Canadian teens have available to them a number of conflicting and emotionally charged discourses related to abortion. But it is only in literature, I believe, that they will find abortion portrayed as personal experience. Razzell's inclusion of abortion is, of course, one of the features of Snow Apples that has attracted censors. Her character uses abortion in desperation, to save herself and preserve her future, and although she suffers physical and mental anguish through abortion, she

succeeds. This is, of course, an idea anti-abortionist censors wish to suppress.

Here I would like to suggest a two-part instructional approach which supports students in articulating their responses to novels like *Snow Apples*, and which allows them to hear and consider the responses of others: the use of response logs and response circles (Foster). *Response logs* are individual notebooks that students keep while reading in class or at home. Each notebook contains a series of dated entries, made at regular intervals, in which each student jots down "responses" (thoughts, feelings, notes on related ideas, comparisons or connections with other works of literature or with films or videos). The response log, a requirement of the class for which credit is given, then becomes a resource for the student to use in small and large discussion groups with other students. The log can also be a source of ideas for essay topics which are worked out in consultation with the teacher.

Entries in a student's response log for *Snow Apples* might look something like this:

Nov 1:	*I wonder why this title? I like the picture of apple blossoms on the cover. The flowers are white, delicate, very pretty. Is that like Sheila, the girl in the story?*
Nov. 3:	*I hate Mrs. Brary! So mean. But I feel sorry for her too. It must be hard for her to have so many kids to look after and not much money.*
Nov. 5:	*I like the way Sheila spends her pay check for clothes and some things she wants. It makes her feel good. I feel that way too when I get paid and can go shopping. It's good to make your own choices. I like earning money. But it's more than that. It's good when you get what you need. Sort of like I used to feel when the "Little Princess" comes back to her cold room to find a fire in the grate and supper waiting. Very satisfied, and maybe relieved?*

While response logs provide students with a rather private means for working through their reactions to novels like *Snow Apples* (the teacher is the only audience), response circles provide a more public forum for negotiating meaning in the company of others. Students need opportunities to talk with each other about what they read, and what they think and feel as they read. *Response circles* are small groups of students, all of whom have read the same work, all of whom

are willing to share some of their thoughts and responses to it. Response circles are *not* teacher directed, and the teacher need not always be present. They do not require that students write, but the talk that goes on in response circles often supports essay writing because it tends to generate and refine ideas. Students bring their response logs with them to the response circles.

Teachers can keep response logs too, as preparation for class, and participate in response circles with their students. In this way they can serve as models, demonstrating for students ways of thinking about literature, of managing and working through its contradictions. Teachers working beside students in negotiating meaning provide some hope that it can be done, and some evidence that we need not be overwhelmed by life's complexities. Probst believes that in response logs and in response circles students will uncover many more possible meanings for a novel like Snow Apples than any one teacher could provide.

Bad Boy ***by Diana Wieler (Toronto, Groundwood Books, 1989)***

Bad Boy is set in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, a town that values amateur hockey, the backdrop for this story of teenage friendship, sexuality and violence. The main character, A.J. Brandiosa, is 16. The loneliness of his life as the only child of a divorced father is eased when he makes the local Triple A hockey team. But when he discovers that his best friend and hockey buddy, Tulsa Brown, is gay, A.J. allows his anger and fear to lead to violence on the ice. A.J.'s struggle to identify and define his own sexuality, and to enact his gender in culturally-appropriate ways, is at the heart of this novel.

Mary Harker's analysis of *Bad Boy* provides a thorough discussion of the ways in which Wieler subverts traditional gender assumptions and canonical forms. Here I will simply point out that *Bad Boy* does provide Canadian teens with some views of gender that they will encounter elsewhere in the culture, and some they may not, and it presents them in fresh and vivid ways. Bad Boy makes clear the ways in which masculinity is constructed in mainstream culture, the fact that masculinity is enhanced and characterized by violence, and the loneliness of the individuality it requires.

The idea that heterosexuality is *compulsory* in nearly every culture is not a new one (Cucchiari). It has been argued that, for both genders around the world, heterosexuality is rewarded because it is the basis for social organizations built upon kinship systems (Ortner and Whitehead). Failure to comply, failure to be heterosexual, is severely punished because it threatens the social order. Wieler's A.J., whose heterosexual longings are so central in his relationship with Tully's sister, Summer Brown, seems to suffocate with fear that he will be contaminated when his friend's homosexuality is discovered. He fears the consequences of being labeled "gay." This fear, and the revulsion for homosexuality that he has been taught to feel, push A.J. to sever his relationship with his gay friend, a relationship which has been central to his emotional health. A.J. fills the lonely void created by the loss of Tully with the applause and adulation of Treejack and

other boys at school. His violent behaviour in hockey games is something they understand as admirable, and essentially male. This same group of male "friends" does everything possible to encourage A.J. to use and victimize his female friend, Summer Brown. They present a view of masculinity and relationships that Canadian teens will no doubt have encountered elsewhere, because this is one dominant cultural discourse of the 1990s.

A.J.'s belief that homosexuality is an illness is fairly representative of another cultural discourse many teens will have encountered outside of school. Wieler presents this view in sharp contrast with an alternative view of homosexuality, as A.J. and Tully discuss the matter on the phone.

'You can get counseling, Tul. You're seventeen. They wouldn't tell your parents or anything. Just cut him loose and you can get better. I know you can.'

'Look, I know what you're getting at,' Tully said shortly. 'But don't sweat it, okay? You don't know what you're talking about ...'

'Lavalle is bad news!' A.J. insisted.

'He isn't my first lover.'

A.J. stood, his pulse striking his temples like a drum, a bass drum, big and loud and empty.

'What?' he whispered. This was Chicco's all over again, only worse. This time there was no protective layer of doubt.

'You're sick,' A.J. said.

Tully ignited. 'What the hell century do you live in? We're talking about a lifestyle, not a disease.' (123)

If these are perspectives that Canadian teens are likely to have encountered elsewhere, what's new in *Bad Boy*? I see in this novel a presentation of casual gay male sexual encounters, and an understanding of how they can occur, that (I believe) Canadian teens are *not* likely to have encountered elsewhere. I also see incidents of male violence from the inside, and, although I cannot condone such violence, I come to understand it better.

Most Canadian teens are aware that casual male homosexual encounters, like heterosexual encounters, can happen entirely apart from love and connection and relationship. Wieler's novel invites understanding of *how* this can happen. Her descriptions of these encounters, like the one that follows, are not voyeuristic, not entirely positive, but they may foster humane insight.

A.J. was wrong. Sex was never a problem for Tully. Sex was a song that started in his head; he could hear it a long time before he was touched. It had rhythm and tone and heat. It started in his head but it sang in his body, and like all good songs, he could lose himself in it. Sometimes it was loud and fast, hard rock driven by raw guitar. Sometimes it was soft and slow, the very last number they played at the prom. Sometimes it was even air-guitar, a dance you danced alone, just for joy.

The problem was when the music stopped. Tully knew that moment. At a school dance or a wedding, there was sometimes a gap between the ending of one song and the beginning of another. You looked around, feeling stupid and shy, painfully aware you were standing with a stranger. (142)

Wieler doesn't condemn, and she doesn't romanticize. Rather, she contributes to a discourse rarely heard, a perspective rarely portrayed. She does this again in her presentations of A.J.'s violent behaviour in hockey games:

He'd only meant to grab him, shake a little sense into him. But when A.J. took hold of the Viking

jersey, the Winger threw his arms around him, a bear hug to stall A.J.'s swing. Panic drove through the boy like a white-hot spear.

Don't touch me! his mind shrieked. His arms shot up, breaking the hold, slamming the winger hard into the boards ...

The winger was struggling, trying to protect his face. But A.J. was strong. His heart was thumping and the adrenaline was singing and he knew he could have lifted the winger off the ice. Easy. As easy as curling five pounds, again and again and again. He couldn't stop. Even when his hand came back wet he couldn't stop. He felt the linesmen pulling at him, no more important than leaves falling off his back. The whole world was the rhythm of his arm and the love song descending from the stands. (115)

A.J.'s violence is not a conscious choice. It fills a need and gives a form of pleasure with a life of its own. As readers experience A.J.'s violence from the inside, they can begin to know its source. In a similar way, it is greatly to Wieler's credit that readers (male and female) can empathize with both A.J. and Summer in their violent sexual encounter at Treejack's party. Again, we view the experience from the inside, through literature, in ways not provided for elsewhere in the culture.

Although response logs and response circles, the methods discussed in connection with *Snow Apples*, would also be useful and helpful with *Bad Boy*, I would like to suggest something different here: *literature study groups*. If response circles emphasize talk about what goes on in a reader's mind, literature study groups emphasize talk about what goes on in an author's text. Students work in mixed, usually teacher-assigned groups, to analyze a specific work of literature. They are asked to work together to examine the ways in which the author has constructed the text, and comment upon the meanings they find there. Students are responsible for identifying specific uses of literary elements in a given work. Often the teacher listens and take notes while a group works, and coaches students as they learn to do literary analysis. The emphasis in a literature study group is on understanding the author's art and craft, and on constructing rich interpretations that are rooted in the text.

A literature study group working with *Bad Boy* might notice, for example, that Weiler makes use of extended metaphor in the passage cited above which describes sex for Tully. Sex was a song. A literature study group could work together to explicate and tease out the possible meanings inherent in this image. How does Weiler bring to a reader's mind the different physical states that music (or sex) can induce? How is it possible to lose oneself in music? What different moods are evoked through this metaphor, and how does Weiler use imagery and the structure of the passage to evoke them? With practice, students working in literature study groups can not only find answers. They will also learn to ask their own literary questions.

Peterson and Eeds provide full and careful explanations of procedures and record-keeping devices for use with literature study groups. I think that these groups are especially valuable in working with a novel like *Bad Boy* because they can lead students to realize that the meanings in a novel are constructed meanings, not transparent truths, and that all media messages, because they are constructed, can also be contested and resisted.

Two Moons in August *by Martha Brooks (Toronto, Groundwood Books, 1991).*

Set in 1959 in a small prairie town near a tuberculosis sanitarium, the story of *Two Moons in August* is told in the first person by sixteen-year-old Sidonie Fallows, who is grieving deeply and struggling with loneliness one year after the death of her mother. Her doctor father is lost in his work. Her older sister is absorbed in her relationship with a handsome medical student. Kieran, son of the new doctor in town, is caught up in his own anxieties over his father's violence and his parents' separation. Sidonie, speaking in the present tense, provides the reader with an immediate experience of her emotions as she reaches out to others and works toward healing.

The plot of *Two Moons in August* is structured around the relationships of several different couples. These relationships provide fertile ground for exploring gender roles, constructions of masculinity and femininity, and the role of sexuality in relationships. Sidonie and Kieran must work at establishing a relationship that incorporates and goes beyond mutual sexual attraction. Sidonie's sister Bobbi and her boyfriend Phil, because they are older, in university rather than in high school, and so at a different stage of their lives, must think in terms of lasting commitment, of vulnerability and high stakes risk, and of their place in society as an inter-racial couple. Sidonie, the child of a loving relationship, fears the pain of loss that her father has experienced. Kieran, the child of a violent relationship, fears his own violent impulses. And although the reader sees the violent relationship of Kieran's parents only from a distance and through his eyes, the horror of male violence is conveyed with psychological depth.

> Kieran says, 'Sidonie, you're not listening to me. She's going to be in Toronto by herself — with him.'
>
> ... 'The last time my mother and father were together he punched her through our glass shower door,' he says in a soft sickened voice, the side of his face, his lips, brushing the screen. 'And there's blood all over the place and he's dragging her out of the bathtub, out through all that glass and she's screaming. She's crying for him to please stop.' He turns completely around to face me. 'He's real big. I've never dared hit him before, but I did hit him, and when he didn't try to stop me I just kept hitting him and hitting him and hitting and hitting until he held me. Oh, God, what's he going to do this time?' (137, 138)

With a few words (glass, blood, punch) Brooks conveys the extent of the danger and the possibility of death. Kieran's mother's helplessness at this moment (signified by her nudity in the bathtub), his father's physical size, his own impulse to respond with violence, his terrible fear, are all here to be experienced.

Two Moons in August also presents ideas and themes related to sexuality, some familiar to Canadian teens and some, I suspect, not. One familiar discourse is embodied in Sidonie's repeated worrying about Bobbi and Phil "using each other" to fulfil their sexual desires. Sidonie knows that it is possible they may help themselves to each other's bodies without taking care to be respectful of each other's minds and hearts. Another familiar cultural discourse is presented through the repeated references to love and loss woven through *Two Moons in*

August. Sidonie has lost her mother. She's also lost Peter Stafford, a boy killed in a car accident and her first friend at a new school. Phil has lost both his parents. Sidonie fears Bobbi and Phil will lose each other. She worries that Kieran will have to move away. This novel provides teens with ample opportunity to discuss the feelings of vulnerability and risk that accompany caring and commitment in sexual relationships, and to consider them in safe and contextualized ways.

And, like *Snow Apples*, *Two Moons in August* supplies sensitive and vivid contributions to the missing cultural discourse of female desire. Canadian teens are more likely, I think, to encounter cultural discourses which suggest that females are not supposed to feel sexual desire, and that they are wicked and irresponsible when they do. (Many churches, most sex education curricular materials, the remarks of older relatives, are all examples of such discourses.) Brooks, in contrast, provides teens with beautiful and concrete descriptions of female sexual response as it arises in connection with affection and companionship.

> He stops on the little overgrown path. Through the leafy trees the sun dances in little spots on his back. I'm close enough to feel the heat rising from his skin through his T-shirt. 'Just keep going,' I tell him.
>
> 'Cripes, this is a jungle,' he says, winding along in front of me on the foot-wide trail.
>
> I put my hand on his back to give him a playful push, but it sticks there like a magnet. I can feel his shoulder blades, the muscles tightening across them. 'Just a leaf,' I say, awkwardly brushing off his shirt.
>
> He startles me by turning around, catching my hand between his. I'm laughing, and he spins around again. 'Get up on my shoulders,' he says, looking back.
>
> 'What?'
>
> 'Yeah, do it.' He crouches down, pats his shoulders.
>
> I climb on, feeling giddy and a little scared. He's so tall, and in addition to being terrified of deep water I am also somewhat nervous of heights.
>
> He lifts me up. 'How's this? Nice view?'
>
> The tree-tops seem to spin all around us.
>
> Looking over the top of his head, I can see this big terrific grin spread all over his face. 'God, you're small,' he says.
>
> 'Just follow the path,' I say, laughing. I lock my arms around his face, his chin. I want to bury my face in his warm sweet hair. As we slip down the path he hugs my legs closer down around his body and I feel weak. (83, 84)

How could these perspectives be responded to in individually meaningful ways? In working with a novel like *Two Moons in August*, teachers and students could make excellent use of *dialogue journals*: These are notebooks in which students engage in written literary conversations with the teacher. Students make dated entries in which they respond to what they are reading, but they direct each entry to the teacher (or in some cases to another student in the class), who then writes back in the same notebook. Nancie Atwell's descriptions of dialogue journals, and the support materials she offers, are very helpful to teachers who wish to try them.

Here are examples of student entries in a dialogue journal kept while reading *Two Moons in August*, and of a teacher's responses:

Feb. 10

Dear Ms. C:

I finished reading Two Moons in August today. I loved it so much I didn't want to be finished with it. Martha Brooks is my favorite author now, and I am going to read her short stories in that Paradise Cafe book you have.

I have been thinking a lot about Kieran's mother. I think it was really good she left her husband and got a job in another province like she did. My mother told me that at least three out of ten Canadian women are beaten by the men they live with! My aunt left her first husband for that reason (because he hit her). I would never stay with a man who hit me. But you know what bothers me? Why did Kieran's mother wait so long, until he was a teenager, before she escaped? What do you think?

Your friend,
Andrea

Feb. 11

Dear Andrea,

Thanks for your letter about Two Moons in August. Why do I think Kieran's mother waited so long to leave her violent husband? Well, we readers can only guess. But Brooks does give us a few clues. Remember when Kieran says that things were all right when he was little? Maybe the violence didn't start till he was older. And remember how lonely Kieran is when he first arrives in Sidonie's town? All his friends and relatives are back in Ontario. Think how hard it must have been for Kieran and his mother to leave the place that had always been their home. Maybe there are other clues too about why she stayed so long. Let's (both of us) keep thinking about it.

Your friend,
Ms. C.

Feb. 15

Dear Ms. C:

Now I am starting to read Snow Apples. It's OK, but I don't like Sheila as much as I liked Sidonie. I'm not sure why.

Your friend,
Andrea

Feb. 16

Dear Andrea:

I think the reasons you like Sidonie more than you like Sheila may be rooted in style. Think about point of view. How is each of the girls presented to the reader?

Your friend,
Ms. C.

Feb. 16

Dear Ms. C:

Do you mean that Sidonie speaks right to me, and so I feel like I know her better and I like her more? And that I am reading about Sheila sort of from a distance? So I feel like I maybe don't know her as well?

Your friend,
Andrea

I would suggest that dialogue journals work like response logs to allow students to express the feelings and ideas that arise in connection with a literary work. But they also allow students to do some individual analysis of a text, and to ask questions and express concerns. Dialogue journals provide the teacher with a means for engaging in thoughtful and private conversation with the student, for addressing matters that are meaningful to that individual, and for establishing a supportive relationship in which meanings can be negotiated in trust.

Conclusion

I have mentioned only three novels, but there are, of course, many other Canadian young adult novels which contribute to the cultural discourses surrounding gender and sexuality and violence. Kevin Major's *Far from Shore* suggests that alcohol interferes in heterosexual relations, and that male people face issues of self-confidence, anxiety and hesitancy in establishing sexual relationships. Bernice Culleton's *April Raintree* explores the intersection of race and gender oppression, and supplies a terrifying depiction of the experience of rape. I have argued against censorship and for the presence of these novels in high school English classrooms, suggesting that teenagers growing up in postmodern times have a right to encounter the widest possible array of conflicting cultural discourses, and to negotiate the construction of gender and their own sexuality there in the company of a caring adult.

I have tried to suggest that, like concerned parents, like committed librarians, many high school teachers are in the business of battling moral lethargy, confusion and despair. In English and Social Studies classrooms especially, and in the school library where there is a place for their literature, Canadian teenagers can accept an adult's invitation to work together to find meaning in life, and hope for the future.

I will conclude by returning to a point I made briefly at the beginning of this article: I fear the consequences of denying teenagers free access to the discourses of literature, and the opportunities to confront them in school. I worry that the subtleties of our cultural constructions of gender and sexuality, the positive and humane aspects of our cultural beliefs, and a rich variety of cultural perspectives will not be discernible in the flash and flow of media surrounding teenagers outside of school. Faced with the task of creating their own sexual identities, and denied a full range of possibilities, what might they become?

The stakes are high. I am thinking of the two local boys I mentioned in my opening paragraph, who (I believe) negotiated their sexual identities outside of school and in a world without literature. Children of my community, they have grown up to be capable of rape and murder, and I am sick and ashamed. I don't mean to imply that a lack of literature is the cause of all their problems. I do mean to say that they did not have its help. We (the adults of my community) must do better.

NOTES

1 I thank my colleague Dr. Jim Greenlaw for this stimulating and inspiring conversation, and for the suggestion that I write this article.

2 While these views are certainly postmodern, what is not postmodern about my argument is an

emphasis on hope.

I think that other kinds of arguments against (and in favour of!) censorship make different assumptions. Many assume, for example, the existence of a unified, rational, and essential "self" which either can or cannot resist the evil (or the good) embodied in books.

3 I don't want to be naive about the role of the teacher here. The teacher's gender and sexual identity will certainly be a factor in classroom engagements with these discourses. It will make a difference if the teacher serving as the adult companion is a 27-year-old Caucasian male or a 45-year-old Chinese-Canadian female. The teacher's sexual identity and beliefs may well be problematic for some students, and for the teacher herself. At best, the kind of classroom interaction envisioned in this article provides chances for the teacher, too, to engage with cultural discourses and negotiate his or her sexual identity in the company of others.

4 I use both terms because I have different meanings for "gender" and for "sexuality". "Gender" is a compulsory social identity, a category to which a person is assigned at birth (like "race" or "class"). Gender is something people must learn to "do" in all the activities of their daily lives (West and Zimmerman, 1987). "Sexuality", on the other hand, has to do with the physical and emotional desires an individual develops and acquires and constructs, and with the ways in which he or she comes to act in order to satisfy those desires. I believe that the expression of sexuality is shaped and constrained by gender. (See Cherland, 1994b, for a more complete explanation of these ideas.)

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"Anatomy by Braille":[1] An Annotated Bibliography of Canadian Young Adult Literature about Emerging Sexuality

Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie

Résumé: Même si, dans le domaine de la littérature de jeunesse, l'on ne peut signaler aucune poursuite judiciaire invoquant la nouvelle loi sur la pornographie enfantine (section 163 du Code criminel canadien), il n'en reste pas moins vrai que celle-ci pourrait mettre en cause le libre accès à plusieurs romans pour adolescents. Dans cette optique, l'auteur examine un échantillonnage d'oeuvres récentes et déjà célèbres qui traitent de la sexualité des adolescents; elle conclut que les scènes dites explicites sont essentielles à la structure, au sens et à la compréhension de chacun des romans répertoriés.

Summary: No Canadian literature for young adults seems to have been recently challenged under Canada's obscenity law (Section 163 of the Canadian Criminal Code). As teenagers are interested in their developing human sexuality, many of the novels directed to them do contain sexually explicit material. The intersection of young adult reading interests, the values of some adults connected with teens and the emphasis on community standards in Section 163, gives rise to a tension that could result in potential challenges to materials. A sample of award winning and otherwise notable Canadian young adult novels which contain some sexually implicit content is presented. Without exception the inclusion of this material was found to be an important part of each work that helped to further the theme.

In an article in *School Libraries in Canada*, Kevin Major points out that "Sex and strong language play no greater or lesser part in my work than they do in real life. The truth is both are preoccupations of adolescents as are their family life, school, their relationships with their friends" (16). It is not surprising that young adults like to read about sex or that young adult authors think it is important and appropriate to explore this theme in their writing. When does this work unduly exploit sex and thus become obscene?[2] There is no clear answer. When I searched the library, book trade and general periodical literature of the last ten years, I did not find information about any Canadian novel for young adults that had been challenged in court under Section 163 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*, the part that deals with "Offenses Tending to Corrupt Morals." Concern tended to focus on adolescent use of readily available, largely American, adult materials including videos, comic books, and magazines like *Playboy* and *Hustler*, as well as the lyrics of some popular teenage music.[3] Still, it is easy to understand how tension arises, given both young adult reading interests and the somewhat vague definition of obscene material offered in Canadian law.[4] The interpretation of Section 163 is, of course, sensitive to shifts in community-based acceptance of explicit material.[5] Furthermore, young adults are still minors under the law and there are concerns, although these are not strongly supported by research, that

they could, simply because of their age, be adversely affected by exposure to sexually explicit material, even to material that is not considered to be legally obscene for adult audiences.[6] Finally, as reflected in challenges to young adult novels with sexual content,[7] some individuals, including parents and educators, may find such works objectionable because of their personal values.

The following bibliography consists of a sample of materials which include some sexually explicit content. It is not comprehensive. Works intended primarily for an adult audience, such as Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, have been excluded. It was difficult to identify relevant titles. Authoritative subject access to contemporary Canadian young adult fiction is scarce and, even if it did exist, would be unlikely to index this type of content. I used a number of sources to identify prospective titles including the Canadian Children's Book Centre's *Our Choice* lists from 1984/85 through 1994, lists of award winners, and guides to the literature.[8] Works were included if they were prominent [award winning or by a well-known author] or if they helped to show the diversity of topics dealt with in Canadian YA literature that includes sexual content. All titles except *Bird at the Window* were still in print at the time this bibliography was compiled.

As you look through the titles, you will notice that they represent some of our most respected young adult authors, that they come from diverse regions of Canada, and that they have been written by both men and women with both male and female protagonists. While the annotations focus on the sexual aspects of each work, they also describe the general nature of the novel to give some sense of the appropriateness and relative importance of this content within the book. Without exception, I found the inclusion of teenage sexuality to be an important part of the novels. It helped to develop the theme of each work and it was treated both realistically and sensitively. Given the high quality of these works and the interest of young readers in this topic, this bibliography might better be described as an introduction to the treatment of human sexuality in Canadian literature for young adults. I might add that there was nothing particularly Canadian about the sexual scenes described in these works other than that, depending on the season, the back seats of the cars tended to be colder and, of course, some of them took place in French.

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Brett, Catherine. *S.P. Likes A.D.* Toronto: Women's Press, 1989.

Ninth grader Stephanie Powell struggles with her emerging sexuality. She finds herself strongly attracted to classmate Anne Delaney and is confused and intrigued by these lesbian feelings. Stephanie has won a contest to create a large sculpture for her school. During the process of designing and crafting the sculpture she encounters situations which allow her to explore her ambivalent sexual orientation. A long-term lesbian couple loan their studio and personal assistance. Stephanie discovers her art teacher is gay. Interactions with friends

and family expose her to both condemning and accepting attitudes towards homosexuality. Actual sexual contact in this novel does not go beyond an accidental arm brushing between the two girls. The description of Stephanie's response is quite erotic. I include this novel in this bibliography because of the recent problems associated with the importing of gay and lesbian literature for adults.[9] Well written and published by a prominent press, this novel is important because it is one of only a few young adult titles dealing with the theme of sexual orientation.

Our Choice, 1990.

Choyce, Lesley. *Good Idea Gone Bad.* Halifax: Formac Publishing, 1993.

Mick, Dariana and Alex form a band whose "raunchy music and even raunchier lyrics could be heard on any number of headsets all over Halifax and in the far distant parts of Dartmouth" (74). Adult characters in the novel are particularly concerned about the lyrics of their smash hit, "The Condom Song," publicly performed for the first time at an audition for a school dance gig. The lyrics, which encourage the practise of safe sex, are included in the text. This book explores, among other themes, the frequently-made link between obscenity and rock music. Readers will be intrigued by the protagonists' agonizing commitment to well thought out ideals and enjoy the novel's lively description of the teenage music scene.

Our Choice, 1994.

Gravel, François. *Deux heures et demie avant Jasmine.* Montreal: Éditions du Boréal, 1991.
——. *Waiting for Jasmine*, Translated from the French by Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre (Groundwood), 1993.

Nothing actually happens in this award-winning French Canadian novel: Raymond talks into his younger sister's Fisher Price tape recorder as he waits, condoms nearby, for the date with his girlfriend when he is to lose his virginity. This novel offers a compelling description of adolescent male sexuality.

Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Literature, French Text, 1991. *Our Choice*, 1994.

Major, Kevin. *Thirty-Six Exposures.* NY: Delacorte, 1984.

Major's award-winning works are routinely under seige for all sorts of reasons, including sexually graphic scenes. Michael masturbates in *Hold Fast.* Chris thinks about sleeping with a couple of hookers in *Far From Shore.* Major really gets down to business in *Thirty-Six Exposures.* Lorne, an amateur photographer, convinces his group to submit their history project as a series of photographs. A lot more than pictures gets exposed in this novel. Lorne makes out with his

girlfriend (numerous times with a heavy emphasis on zippers being undone), sees his best friend go all the way on a double date, views a stag movie, and has a box of condoms discovered by his mother. Major's writing is very realistic. Rather than just alluding to these activities, he describes them concretely. This faithfulness to reality is probably what makes these works so relevant to readers. While sexuality is a strong, recurring theme throughout most of Major's work, it is usually only one of several related to the lives of his protagonists. *Thirty-Six Exposures* is actually about a young man's struggle for independence and personal identity as he reaches the end of adolescence in his final year of high school. The sexual scenes are just a few of many meaningful events Lorne undergoes in the book, including the tragic death of his best friend and his decision to pursue a university education.

Nielsen, Susin. *Snake* [A Degrassi book]. Toronto: Lorimer, 1991.

The Degrassi Books, based on the Degrassi Junior High / Degrassi High television series, centre around social issues facing young adults today. Unlike the squeaky clean series novels produced by Paul Kropp with school and school library audiences in mind, the Degrassi books take more risks. For example, *Snake* deals with a grade nine boy's worries about his sexual orientation. Snake, the protagonist, although not a star athlete like his older brother, has just made the Junior Boy's Basketball team. The brother, now away at college, announces to his family that he is gay. Snake begins to worry that he may be gay too. There is one mildly graphic scene with a teammate in the showers after a practice. Real-life problem books like the Degrassi series are bound to contain the type of material that is likely to be objectionable to some.

Our Choice, 1992.

Plante, Raymond. *Le Dernier des raisins.* Montreal: Éditions Québec/Amerique, 1986.

——. *The Big Loser.* Translated from the French by Alan Brown. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989.

The protagonist never goes all the way to act on his impulses but freely admits "sex, sex, nothing but sex! I'm a bit obsessed with it, I'll admit" (51). Fifteen-year-old François is a teenage consumer of pornography. His mother discovers issues of *Hustler*, *Penthouse* and *Playboy* which he has stolen from the neighbourhood newsstand. He and a couple of friends switch an X-rated movie for a horror film at a co-ed Halloween party. This behaviour is presented as an ordinary part of a teenage boy's life. A delightful and funny story of a boy's first love, which relates the crazy and heartwarming antics employed by the hero as he tries to win the heart of his beloved over the course of a school year.

Canada Council Children's Literature Prize, French Text, 1985. Nominated for the 1988 Honor List, IBBY. *Our Choice*, 1990.

Porter, Helen Fogwell. *january, february, june or july: A Novel.* St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1988.

This is the story of Heather Novak's first teenage love affair. Heather and Frank never have intercourse, although heavy petting does lead to pregnancy, which Heather ends with an abortion. The sexual activity is described realistically and in detail as are, more importantly, Heather's feelings and responses to these experiences. This is a serious coming-of-age story that uses the protagonist's movement to adult sexuality as one vehicle for growth.

Young Adult Canadian Book Award, 1989. *Our Choice*, 1990

Razzell, Mary. *Snow Apples.* Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984.

Set in coastal British Columbia at the end of the second world war, *Snow Apples* tells the story of sixteen-year-old Sheila Brary's passage to adulthood. Sheila is confronted with the constraints of her gender. Her mother expects her to quit school, work to support the family and marry as quickly as possible to control and protect her emerging female sexuality. This novel includes a few explicit descriptions of sexual encounters with boyfriends and adult men (an employer and a neighbour). Sheila becomes pregnant. Alone, she goes through a self-induced abortion which is graphically described. This is a powerful, well-written story.

Our Choice, 1985/86.

Stacey, Cherylyn. *I'll Tell You Tuesday If I Last That Long.* Edmonton: Tree Frog Press, 1989.

This is a story of early adolescence. Fourteen-year-old Vicky confronts a number of problems such as her mother's remarriage and being dragged into teenage activities which are not yet very attractive to her. These include dates with Blake, a popular boy who cannot remember her name and does not care because he is only interested in one thing, leading to a lot of backseat wrestling scenes. Many young teenage girls will find their experience of emerging sexuality mirrored in Vicky's.

Our Choice, 1990.

Truss, Jan. *Bird at the Window.* Toronto: Macmillan, 1974.

Angela's first sexual relationship with good, steady Gordy is not very satisfactory simply because she does not love him. When she discovers that she is pregnant, she seems to try to ignore this. She continues with a plan to travel to Europe. She does not have an abortion but uses every opportunity to try to induce a miscarriage and eventually has a child which dies shortly after birth. Returning to her home in Alberta, she becomes engaged to Gordy. At the last minute she

decides not to marry him but to pursue what is important to her rather than what is expected of her. Sexual encounters and attempts to auto abort are graphically described, lending realism to a serious novel about the role of love and relationships in young women's lives.

Search-for-a-new-Alberta-Novelist Award, 1972.

NOTES

1 This phrase was taken from Cherylyn Stacey's *I'll Tell You Tuesday If I Last That Long*. Edmonton: Tree Frog Press, 1989: 92-93.

2 For an accessible overview of Canada's obscenity/pornography legislation see "Offenses Tending To Corrupt Morals," 232-238 in *Martin's Annual Criminal Code 1995*, Aurora, ON: Canada Law Book, 1995.

3 See, for example, "Police seizures chill the comic book trade," *Quill and Quire* 57, 6 (June 1991): 13 and "Sons and lovers: In the realm of sex and today's teenage boys," *Toronto Life Fashion* 27, 12 (Summer 1993): 118-120+.

4 Neither the author of this article nor *CCL* nor any member of its editorial staff maintain that any of the works cited in this article are actually obscene according to the provisions of Section 163 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*.

5 For an overview of the history of and current issues associated with obscenity legislation in Canada see James R. Robertson's *Pornography*, Currennt Issue Revue 84-E3 of the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 1993.

6 For an excellent discussion of children and pornography in both Canada and the United States see "Pornography and child protection" (175-197) in Gordon Hawkins and Franklin E. Zimring's *Pornography in a Free Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

7 For an overview of the topic of challenges to Canadian materials for children and young adults see *CCL* 68 (1992), a thematic issue on censorship. Challenges to at least one of the items included in this bibliography, Kevin Major's *Hold Fast*, are described in Hugh Bennet's article "The top shelf: The censorship of Canadian children's and young adult literature in the schools."

8 Including Fay Blostein's *Connections: Paperback Reading for Young Adults*, Toronto: OLA, 1988; Sharon Spredemann Dreyer's *Bookfinder 4*, Circle Pines, Minn.: AGS, 1989; Michele Landsberg's *Guide to Children's Books*, Markham: Penguin, 1985; and Jon C. Stott and Raymond E. Jones *Canadian Books for Children: A Guide to the Authors and Illustrators*, Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.

9 For an overview of a well-known Canadian example of community and government sensitivity to gay and lesbian literature see "Delayed court proceedings frustrating — Little Sisters" in *Feliciter* 40, 1 (January 1994): 31, 44.

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Le retour des sorcières

Suzanne Pouliot

Summary: Witches are back with a vengeance in Francophone children's literature. Though some retain many negative and misogynous characteristics borrowed from our Western tradition, several contemporary witches tend to deconstruct feminine stereotypes and put forward new moral values in a universe previously defined by men.

Résumé: Le personnage de la sorcière est toujours bien présent dans la littérature pour la jeunesse francophone. Même si elles conservent plusieurs traits hérités de la tradition occidentale, misogyne et conservatrice, les sorcières contemporaines remettent en cause, non sans humour, les stéréotypes de la féminité et valorisent un savoir et une compétence qui échappent au monde des hommes.

Les sorcières d'hier et d'aujourd'hui

Depuis la fin des années quatre-vingt, on assiste à un retour des sorcières sur la scène éditoriale (Bordeleau, 1994), car selon Aubin "les enfants ont besoin de magie et de fantaisie. On a donc ressuscité les sorcières et les fées" (p. 18). Un relevé[1] récent a permis d'identifier quarante-trois titres, publiés de 1972 à 1994. Parmi les titres recensés, nous retrouvons près de 35% d'albums et de romans traduits, plus de 51% d'ouvrages originaux franco-français. Finalement, la production franco-québécoise occupe 14% de ce champ éditorial. Au total, la production féminine représente 60% des titres étudiés.

Notre analyse quantitative et qualitative, effectuée à partir des albums et des romans identifiés, présentent différentes représentations de la sorcière, associées aussi bien à son statut social, à ses outils d'identification et d'intervention qu'à ses activités scientifiques.

Nous avons voulu cerner la fonction attribuée à ce personnage et le situer par rapport aux idéologies qui sillonnent nos imaginaires collectifs, marqués, depuis plus de vingt ans, à la fois par le féminisme, le postmodernisme, le nouvelâgisme, *etc.* Le regroupement opéré réunit sous trois rubriques les représentations corporelles, psychologiques et symboliques.

Dans ce contexte de recherche, nous n'avons retenu, pour fins d'analyse, que les ouvrages dont le titre portait l'identification sorcière. Ainsi des références dicibles comme celles qui surgissent au détour des phrases ou des chapitres n'ont pas été prises en compte, lors de l'analyse, comme, à titre d'exemple, celles que l'on retrouve dans *L'Ile au géant* (1995) [2].

Petit saut dans l'histoire

Selon les dictionnaires consultés (*Le petit Robert, le Littré*), les désignations de sorcier et de sorcière, datées du XIIe siècle, signifient d'abord "diseurs de sorts", sens emprunté au latin populaire du VIII siècle **sortiarius*, puis, au fil du temps, l'appellation désignera une personne qui pratique une magie de caractère primitif, secret et illicite (sorcellerie).

Condamnée par l'Inquisition[3] pour activités diaboliques, la sorcière se retrouvera incarnée dans les contes de fées. *Hansel et Gretel, la Belle au bois dormant* et *les fées* illustrent les images dominantes qui caractérisent les sorcières: vieilles, laides, méchantes, mangeuses d'enfants et bizarrement accoutrées.

Outre ces formes stéréotypées, ces personnages sont également porteurs de marques, associées à la sorcellerie comme la présence d'un chat noir, d'une marmite dans laquelle bouillonnent en permanence des herbes, considérées par d'aucuns de maléfices, de sacs à maléfices (*La sorcière verte* dans *Contes de la sorcière verte*).

En somme, la sorcière des contes de fées touille ses mixtures miraculeuses au fin fond des forêts et génère chez les petits des émotions de rejet, d'horreur et de profond dégoût.

Les sorcières contemporaines

Qui sont les sorcières d'aujourd'hui? Comment se distinguent-elles? À l'aide de quels artifices? Ont-elles conservé leur pourvoir médical d'antan? Si, pour l'écrivain britannique Dahl, "Les vraies sorcières s'habillent normalement et ressemblent à la plupart des femmes. Elles vivent dans des maisons qui n'ont rien d'extraordinaire, et elles exercent des métiers tout à fait courants" (Sarfati, 1994, p. 114), celles que nous avons répertoriées manifestent bel et bien des traits distinctifs sans pour autant renoncer à certains attributs ancestraux qui les ont popularisées comme le fait de porter un chapeau pointu, d'être affligée d'un nez crochu ponctué de verrues.

D'ailleurs, c'est en partie la façon dont elle est décrite dans *Ma voisine, une sorcière* (1994): "David l'appelait "la sorcière" parce qu'elle boitait"(p. 14) qu'elle avait une cicatrice au menton, de grands doigts secs et des ongles pointus et qu'elle portait un long manteau noir et un chapeau à rebord par-dessus un foulard noir qui lui cachait les côtés du visage.

Le portrait stéréotypé de la sorcière

Si dans l'histoire littéraire, le personnage féminin vilain, cruel et rusé est rangé sous la seule bannière de sorcière, dans la production littéraire de la dernière décennie, la sorcière, identifiée sur la première de couverture a souvent un prénom du type Amélie[4], Camomille[5], Nesta[6], Ozépine[7], Wanda[8].

Par ailleurs, si certains ouvrages individualisent le personnage féminin par un prénom, une activité, une qualité physique ou morale, les marques de la

spécificité ancestrale de la sorcière imprègnent les romans et les albums étudiés, tout comme d'ailleurs les compagnons animaliers de la sorcière qui constituent à eux seuls des référents symboliques importants: chat noir, corbeau, rat.

À titre d'exemple, nous retrouvons dans la production étudiée, des traces visibles des habitudes culinaires de l'horrible sorcière: "qui passait son temps à manger les petits enfants. Elle les faisait cuire dans une grande marmite. (...) Une fois par an elle venait à la sortie de l'école avec son grand panier à provisions et elle en emportait quatre, cinq, douze ou vingt-deux selon la saison"(*Pincemi Pincemoi et la sorcière*, n.p.). Nous allons examiner plus attentivement les attributs physiques hideux et repoussants, ramassés lors de nos lectures. Ces représentations chargées s'inscrivent dans un contexte de recrudescence misogynique, institué dans le discours religieux (Snyder, 1993).

Les désignations corporelles

La réception des albums consultés suscite des sentiments de peur, d'horreur, voire de la répulsion, dus à l'effet combiné de l'illustration et du texte, car les descriptions corporelles, tant iconiques qu'écrites, attribuées au personnage de la sorcière, insistent d'abord sur la difformité des membres, sur les anomalies physiques, et qualifient de nauséabondes les odeurs émises par le personnage aux allures méphistophéliques. "Fané, fripé, ridé, ratatiné, on aurait dit qu'il avait mariné dans du vinaigre. (...) Face immonde, putride et décatie. Elle pourrissait de partout, dans ses narines, autour de la bouche et des joues. Je voyais la peau pelée, versicotée par les vers, asticotée par les asticots... " (*Sacrées sorcières*, p. 67-68).

Tour à tour, les programmes narratifs introduisent, sous le mode descriptif, les aspects corporels associés au personnage comme la voussure de la colonne vertébrale, la forme du nez, celle de ses mains ou de ses doigts, sans négliger la description gutturale des sons émis.

La tenue vestimentaire

La tenue vestimentaire se résume à quelques vêtements spécifiques: le port quasi obligatoire du chapeau pointu ou du moins d'un chapeau noir, parfois de sept jupons (*La sorcière qui roulait à vélo)* ou encore d'une robe noire, de préférence ample et informe à moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'un manteau ou de grands souliers pointus également noirs. En somme, une tenue vestimentaire inquiétante qui cache sous les gants des griffes.

Le portrait physique

Le dépouillement effectué a permis de retracer la place importante occupée par la salive (bleu myrtille), le nez (bossu ou crochu), le menton double ou fourchu, les dents rares sinon noires (*Coups durs pour la sorcière)*, vertes ou isolées comme cette "seule et vilaine et longue dent qui dépassait par-devant "(*Nicolas*

et la mystérieuse sorcière, p. 9). La typologie physiologique de la sorcière se caractérise par des oreilles en portes de granges, de longs ongles et des doigts crochus en forme de griffes, des poignets pleins de verrues, la voix éraillée comme celle de vieux disques égratignés. Lorsque la voix est de type coassante alors elle crache "des jurons et des imprécations abominables" (*Mouche et la sorcière,* p. 39), puisque la force des sorcières est incontestablement la connaissance de formules magiques.

Lorsqu'elle ricane, elle asperge son interlocuteur "de postillons fétides et de toiles d'araignés venimeuses" (*La Main de la sorcière).* Comme la sorcière se nourrit de pâtés de boue, de fourmis, de vieux fromages moisis, l'odeur qu'elle dégage est répugnante.

Ainsi, les descriptions relevées mettent à contribution les cinq sens pour soulever un mouvement de profonde répulsion chez le lectorat. La vue s'accroche à des formes tordues, crochues, aux lignes rompues qui bousculent les repères esthétiques habituels, faits d'harmonie et de lumière. À elle seule, la combinaison de la noirceur des lieux habités et des objets qui entourent l'univers de la sorcière et de la laideur physique qui la caractérise introduit *tout de go* le personnage dans l'univers infernal, tel qu'illustré par la tradition picturale du Moyen Âge, assorti d'êtres hideux et menaçants. Par exemple, Mouche aperçoit "(...) sur des tablettes et des étagères, des liquides multicolores bouillonnaient en glougloutant dans des cornues alambiquées! Des vapeurs mystérieuses s'en échappaient parfois avec des sifflements aigus! Dans de grands bocaux, des mains, des têtes même, étaient conservées! Des images horribles grimaçaient sur les murs! Par terre, des détritus servaient d'habitations aux cafards et aux souris (...) (*Mouche et la sorcière,* p. 68).

En fait, si le noir domine l'environnement tant physique qu'écologique du personnage, à l'occasion, par contre se trouvent des traces de vert moisissure-vomissure qui imprègnent les aliments utilisés par la sorcière pour préparer ses concoctions ou encore, lorsqu'elle bave une écume verdâtre. Pendant ce temps, ses yeux jaunes de serpents luisent.

À ces représentations visuelles, se superposent les images olfactives qui soulèvent chez les personnages secondaires des haut-le-coeur, dûs aux odeurs émises soit par la sorcière, soit par les bouillies qu'elle concocte dans son immense marmite-chaudron. À titre d'illustration, "je les enduisis d'un mélange spécial: huile de foie de morue, vinaigre de cidre, poivre de cayenne et piment rouge" (Julien, 1994, 102).

Quant aux représentations auditives, elles sont transmises tant par la voix que par les propos tenus, lors des imprécations, constituées de jurons comme "Vorzigola et frakapanouille", de formules magiques introduites ou non par "Abracadabra!" et dont le pouvoir est de métamorphoser les êtres: "Que le venin de mon crapaud s'étale sur ta peau et te change en escargot!". Voix de crécelle stridulante qui racle, roule, grince et crisse.

Les impressions créées par l'odorat émanent des odeurs transmises tant par le corps ou les vêtements crasseux de la sorcière que par son haleine fétide, et se résument à "une odeur de moisi, l'odeur infecte des sorcières, l'odeur de pipi de chat!"

Quant au toucher, il est largement souligné par les mains et les ongles qui sélectionnent, sectionnent et manipulent d'étranges substances venimeuses, dangereuses, voire mortelles. "Un par un Nesta versa tous les mauvais ingrédients dans son chaudron: Hum ... une plume d'oiselle, ça c'est facile...de la ciguë, beaucoup de ciguë, une douzaine de toiles d'araignée...pouah! et deux araignées vivantes...et un litre de jus d'ortie ... Beurk!" (*Nesta la petite sorcière*).

Le portrait psychologique

La véritable sorcière est par essence vieille, laide, perverse et rusée. Néanmoins, ce qui domine par-dessus tout, c'est sa profonde et incommensurable méchanceté. "Méchante sorcière" est l'appellation la plus courante, celle que l'on retrouve régulièrement aussi bien dans les romans que dans les albums. Mère Rapace dans *Le Coffret des sorcières* (1986) en est un bel exemple. Dès l'incipit, on la situe comme suit: "Il était une fois une vieille et méchante sorcière appelée mère Rapace "(p. 4). Lorsque ce qualificatif, associé à mauvais, médiocre, misérable se trouve placé devant le nom, cela signifie "Qui ne vaut rien". En fait, c'est le sens vieilli du terme. Dès 1549, en Picardie, méchant signifie qui fait délibérément du mal ou cherche à en faire, le plus souvent de façon ouverte et agressive. Pour abréger, "son esprit est toujours occupé à comploter et à conspirer à mijoter et à mitonner, à finasser et à fignoler des projets sanglants" (Dalh, 1983, 11-12).

Au sens moderne, méchant réfère à dangereux ou désagréable. On peut aisément penser que ce sont les sens vieillis et picardiens qui persistent dans la production littéraire pour désigner le comportement de la sorcière puisque les ouvrages consultés décrivent les actions et les paroles proférées, lesquelles sont intimement associées à la cruauté, à la dureté, à la malveillance et à la malfaisance du personnage. Compte tenu de ses représentations, la tradition catholique associe la sorcière aux oeuvres de Satan. Ainsi, les traces luciférienes sont-elles notées dans "le rire un peu diabolique de Sidonie"(*Nicolas et la mystérieuse sorcière,* p. 14).

Les représentations symboliques

Les nombreuses images descriptives qui construisent le personnage de la sorcière l'identifient à la fois à la tradition maléfique, constituée de traits sataniques, démoniaques, infernaux. C'est l'image dominante de la femme dangereuse, telle que transmise par l'Église catholique. C'est celle que les théologiens qualifient de succubes, de démon femelle par opposition aux incubes, les démons mâles.

Cette représentation construite à coups de condamnations, de dénonciations et de traités religieux, attestées aussi bien par l'histoire religieuse que civile, a traversé la chrétienté médiévale jusqu'à nos jours. Ces sorcières qui, en d'autres temps, ont connu le bûcher et d'horribles supplices, avaient, croyait-on, le pouvoir scientifique de transformer la matière. On les a alors soupçonnées des pires maléfices.

La Fille de la sorcière (1990) relate avec force détails, par un artifice narratif, les accusations de sorcellerie ou de pacte avec le diable dont plusieurs guérisseuses sages-femmes-herboristes ont été victimes en France, lors de l'Inquisition. Ce roman introduit une distanciation critique à l'égard de l'Histoire, grâce à une télécommande qui permet de remonter dans le temps et plus particulièrement en 1589 à Fulleren, un village de Sundgau où trois femmes furent condamnées pour sorcellerie. La présence lancinante de la télécommande a pour effet d'accroître le caractère fictionnel de l'événement politico-religieux relaté, et de le rendre quasi invraisemblable sinon de le banaliser. Ici, ce qui est retenu, c'est la valeur émotive de l'événement qui sert à la fois de prétexte romanesque et d'ancrage par renforcement stéréotypé.

La Sorcière de midi (par analogie avec le démon du midi) est en quelque sorte une représentation exemplaire tant elle reprend à son compte les pires calamités qui ont pu circuler sur celles qu'on croyait jeteuses de sorts. Elle incarne à elle seule tout l'arsenal de la sorcière, telle que transmise par la tradition des Pères de l'Église. Sa main "blanche et crochue comme une araignée qui n'aurait pas de carapace, (...) un sourire qui montre des dents noires" (p. 125). D'abord, mentionnons que c'est une "horrible vieille", jaune, toute fripée, folle, grande, voûtée, enveloppée dans de vilains haillons, qui jette des ordures, *kidnappe* des enfants et les transforme en poupées rabougries et sales. L'ancienneté d'Amatkine en fait "la plus dangereuse des sorcières. Elle n'agit que pour le mal. Elle est cruelle et rusée. Elle ne s'attaque qu'aux enfants, dont elle se sert pour des philtres mystérieux qui lui permettent de rester en vie"(Idem).

Les sorcières de l'an 2000

À l'opposé de ce personnage, né dans la nuit des temps, surgissent des sorcières modernes qui se démarquent de ce modèle. Un grand nombre d'entre elles, sont jeunes et inexpérimentées. Bien qu'elles lisent les grimoires, ces livres riches en recettes de sorcellerie et qu'elles profèrent des formules magiques erronées, elles sont attendrissantes tant leurs maladresses et leurs bévues renvoient au monde de l'apprentissage et de l'enfance. Quand par ailleurs, elles s'identifient au monde des adultes, elles fréquentent alors, sous le mode imitatif les congrès de sorcières, et circulent en vélo ou dans des poubelles plutôt qu'en balai.

En bref, les sorcières rencontrées appartiennent à deux réseaux idéologiques distincts: patriarcale et postmoderniste. Les premières ont les attributs moyenâgeux d'êtres maléfiques, les secondes ont des allures nouvelâgistes, sinon métaféministes, car les personnages représentés ont rompu avec l'ordre patriarcal hiérarchisé. Dans certains cas comme *Les Mémoires d'une sorcière* (1994), ces personnages historiquement contestés, dénigrés, condamnés et rejetés cherchent désormais à transmettre leur savoir-faire sous la forme d'un récit autobiographique, centré sur une période précise de leur vie. Elles bousculent l'histoire et ses représentations en utilisant des produits, issus de la société de consommation comme le sont les cocottes-minutes (*Les Sorcières de Boisjoli*).

De plus, elles se sont métamorphosées puisque désormais, elles sont qualifiées de "belles, ravissantes, charmantes, délicieuses, adorables sorcières" (Idem).

C'est ainsi que les séries d'images, identifiées dans les titres, renvoient autant à des caractéristiques physiques que chronologiques comme la jeunesse du personnage (*Nesta la petite sorcière*, *Les Trois Petites Sorcières)* qu'à un attribut spécifique (*La Main de la sorcière*), des qualités morales (*Wanda la gentille sorcière)*, la vie émotive (*La sorcière qui avait peur*) et même des activités physiques (*La sorcière qui roulait à vélo*).

Si dans la plupart des ouvrages consultés, la sorcière agit comme actant principal, on la retrouve également comme personnage secondaire. Dans ce contexte de faire-valoir, c'est autant son caractère mystérieux qui est souligné (*Nicolas et la mystérieuse sorcière*) que sa relation égalitaire, établie par la conjonction et qui relègue la sorcière au second rang (*Victor et la sorcière, Mouche et la sorcière*).

Outre ces désignations, on retrouve également des titres dont la valeur est de localiser les origines du personnage (*La Sorcière née du vinaigre*) ou encore de le situer dans l'espace ou le temps fictionnel. Ainsi en est-il de *Sorcière en vacances,* d'*Une sorcière dans la soupe* et de *La Sorcière de midi* .

Sous le mode ludique, parfois fantaisiste, les personnages incarnent des personnages féminins, autonomes. En fait, ce qui se dégage, en trame de fond, c'est leur pouvoir de guérison par la connaissance des herbes médicinales, et la transformation de la matière, par la puissance de la parole, manifestée par des formules alambiquées.

Les auteurs, hommes ou femmes, soulignent le savoir faire et la connaissances de la matière de ces personnages féminins pour le plus grand plaisir des petits et des grands.

Par ailleurs, selon leur lieu d'inscription, albumique ou romanesque, les sorcières se rattachent plus ou moins à la tradition médiévale judéo-chrétienne, selon qu'elles sont incarnées sur papier par des auteurs masculins ou féminins.

Parmi les ouvrages étudiés, nous avons été à même de constater que les auteurs masculins ont plus tendance à inscrire leur personnage dans le réseau maléfique du type vieilles, sordides et rusées, incarné par Amatkine dans *La Sorcière du midi* (1991), que ne le font leurs consoeurs, pour qui les sorcières, qu'elles soient logées dans les albums ou les romans, sont souventes fois jeunes, amusantes, ingénieuses, voire maladroites comme cette sorcière des villes qui dans *Le Congrès des sorcières* (1992), voulant enfourcher son balai, rate son démarrage.

Sur la scène éditoriale, ces nouveaux personnages de sorcières, débarrassées pour un bon nombre de la lourdeur démoniaque du passé, sont d'une certaine façon les filles de papier des sorcières, nées dans les milieux féministes anglo-saxons, depuis les années soixante-dix. Elles s'approprient le pouvoir de la science médicale, explorent de nouvelles avenues discursives, vivent en collégialité et non plus isolées ou en recluses mettent l'accent sur les rapports d'interdépendance. Dans un cas, la sorcière, mariée à un ogre, a enfanté d'un sorcillon.

Une fois de plus, la littérature de jeunesse innove, car elle propose non

seulement de nouveaux modèles féminins, préoccupés par la connaissance, le savoir et le pouvoir scientifique, tout en s'inscrivant, du moins au plan des marqueurs de reconnaissance, dans une tradition régénérée, mais génère également un nouveau discours social sur le rôle et les pouvoirs de la femme.

Cette perspective postmoderne, faite autant de ruptures avec les archétypes et les fantasmes patriarcaux que d'apports nouveaux au plan des projets personnels et des situations explorées, déjoue par le truchement d'un personnage typé comme l'est la sorcière les forces institutionnelles et les idéologies, ancrées depuis de nombreux siècle, en suggérant de profondes mutations, au plan symbolique. Gaboury (1990) conclut, à la suite de l'enquête menée sur le monde des sorcières, qu'il s'agit "de nouveaux voisinages pour l'imaginaire féminin" (p. 133).

NOTES

1 Le relevé a été effectué au Centre des ressources pédagogiques de la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université de Sherbrooke. Nous tenons à remercier pour leurs précieux conseils Marie Gratton, professeure à la Faculté de Théologie de la même université, Françoise De Léséleuc de la Faculté d'éducation et Johanne Lacroix, étudiante.

2 "Dans son dos, une sorcière ricane. Elle lui a jeté un sort, elle l'a entourée de ses fils qui, lentement, tissent un cocon autour d'elle." (p. 41); "La sorcière veut lui mettre de force un jolie robe, lui enfiler des chaussettes blanches et des souliers vernis." (p. 42); "Aurélie imagine le visage de sa mère tordu par la colère. Un visage de sorcière. Elle secoue la tête de toutes ses forces pour chasser cette image." (p. 66); "Elle hurle et hurle, comme une sorcière qui jette des mauvais sorts" (p. 112).

3 Dans le chapitre consacré au Moyen Age et à l'exclusion et à la chasse aux sorcières, paru dans *Des sorcières aux mandarines-Histoire des femmes médecins.* "Les procès de l'Inquisition cernent sans pitié l'image de cette ambassadrice du diable, réputée comme étant le principal obstacle au salut (...)" (Dall'Ava-Santucci, 1989, p. 34).

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Review Articles & Reviews / Critiques et comptes rendus

Judy Blume's 1975 *Forever*, the "explicit" story of a high school girl's first sexual experience, likely holds the record for being the most censored book in English-Canadian schools. However, *Forever*'s notoriety will undoubtedly soon be challenged by the two volumes of *The First Time*. The books' editor, Governor General's Award-winning YA author Charles Montpetit, will certainly not be surprised by any censorship because his initial treatment of the subject, *La Première Fois* (1991), met adult resistance, an experience Montpetit described for *CCL* in "Book banning: A how-to guide for beginners" (issue 68).

Montpetit speaks to his intended audience in the same fashion as the "Degrassi Talks" titles *Sex* and *Sexuality* addressed adolescents — directly and in their own terms. Eschewing nonfiction's traditional "Introduction," Montpetit instead utilizes a "Precautions" section in which he explains why he has produced these two sets of books about real-life, first-time sexual experiences. Montpetit argues that school sex-ed programs may deal with the mechanics of sex, but the cautious, desexualized approach adopted by, or forced upon, teachers does not respond to the real questions students have: how does one get there in the first place; what does the experience feel like; and what kind of impression will be left behind?

The books' contents are, therefore, intended to respond to these questions. *The First Time* largely repeats the format of *La Première Fois*: each volume has

eight stories, four by males and four by females, and one of the sixteen pieces is presented in cartoon format. With the exception of Montpetit's "White on white," a translation of his "Blanc sur blanc" from volume II of *La Première Fois*, the remaining entries are original. Volume II concludes with "A Special Invitation," a call for readers to consider becoming contributors for a projected third tome.

Montpetit, while leaving the definition of a "first time" to the individual, requires that "it must be a significant step in one's sexual awakening." Though most of the writers have interpreted "first time" to mean "losing one's virginity," other understandings are proffered. For example, Franson's "Impeccable taste" and Paw's "The gunshot" both deal with discovering one's gender preference in sex partners whereas Golick's "The only first time Rachel counts" sees sexually-experienced Rachel equating her first time with her eventual first orgasm. In Stephens' "Borders," being repeatedly raped as a child was the narrator's initial sexual experience. Given that the collection is a compilation, it is likely only happenstance that the conclusions of the first encounters are split almost equally between being positive and negative. As the stories' events occurred at various times over the last five decades, today's teens may recognize some seemingly ongoing adolescent "concerns," such as finding a safe place to do "it" away from unexpectedly appearing parents.

If *The First Time* has a weakness, it is that Montpetit ignores other significant questions related to teens and sex. In closing his "Precautions," Montpetit states, "No matter how preoccupied we may be with our society's problems, love should never be too sensitive a subject for discussion." "Love" and "sex," however, are not synonymous terms, and discovering the differences between the two is another important adolescent developmental task, especially when variations of that old line, "If you loved me, you would ..." are still successfully trotted out in the '90s.

While teens may initially gallop through *The First Time* looking for the largely absent "naughty bits," a slower, more thoughtful reading will fill in for them some of the gaps that their parents and/or the school system are unwilling to address. Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge facing *The First Time*'s two volumes will be their reaching the hands of the intended adolescent readers because many adult book selectors in schools, upon hearing about the works' contents, will simply avoid "problems" by practising that most silent of censorship's many forms and deliberately not purchase them. Hopefully, book stores, both independent and chain, will fill the gap.

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The First Time is a collection of short stories that examine, with varying degrees of success, first sexual experiences. Reading these stories for my own personal interest, I found them fresh and highly readable. As a teacher, however, I approached them more cautiously and critically.

Summary: Though *The First Time* shares many striking similarities with *La Première Fois,* one cannot but notice a fundamental difference between the English and the French stories: the young heroes from *La Première Fois*, no matter their age or their milieu, remain autonomous figures, self-defined, and freed from parental and social values — in short, self-assuming adults — whereas the heroes from *The First Time*, even when they challenge moral standards, tend to remain respectful of parents or other forms of authority — in other words, the subtext suggests that adolescents absorb dominant social values.

Fort du succès et de la controverse qui ont marqué l'édition originale de son recueil *la Première Fois*, Charles Montpetit tente de reproduire son coup d'éclat au Canada (anglais), c'est-à-dire de présenter un ensemble de récits traitant de la première expérience sexuelle "complète", celle qu'a vécue chaque écrivain

"*canadian*" qui a bien voulu collaborer à cette entreprise. Cependant, comme pour l'édition québécoise, les participants pouvaient conter l'expérience intime d'un être proche à condition que ce fût une "histoire vécue". D'où la prétention à l'authenticité absolue de la part de l'éditeur.

Deux questions surgiront immédiatement à l'esprit du lecteur francophone: 1) dans quelle mesure le second recueil peut-il reproduire le premier? 2) et, dans ces difficiles lendemains référendaires, peut-on percevoir une différence essentielle, indice d'une identité culturelle spécifique? Deux questions précises, donc, avec, en toile de fond, l'adage d'Horace pour qui la répétition est une des composantes essentielles de l'oeuvre littéraire: qu'on se souvienne du *bis repetita placent* des pages roses du Larousse!

Tout d'abord, les ressemblances semblent l'emporter: d'une part, la présentation reproduit de manière rigoureuse le protocole de l'édition québécoise puisque la préface, les notices biographiques, la note liminaire du second volume et l'appel de la postface aux lecteurs-écrivains sont ou traduits de l'original ou fidèles au style familier et à l'attitude décontractée du présentateur; d'autre part, la multiplicité des expériences, la variété des formes narratives et la sensibilité à l'égard de l'orientation sexuelle participent du même esprit. Il serait facile de souligner les nombreux rapports de similarité: chaque édition contient un récit en bandes dessinées, une histoire se passant à l'étranger (au texte très chaste du Camerounais Polycarpe Ambé-Niba répond le récit très explicite, voire médical, de la Jamaïcaine Linda M. Brisset), un témoignage traitant d'un cas-limite (à l'amour violent et autodestructeur de Lérie Labrosse correspond le cri de l'enfant violé de Martin Stephens), sans compter les similitudes au second degré: par exemple, l'éloignement spatial et le dépaysement culturel qu'offrent les récits "franco-français" d'Élisabeth Vonarburg et de Jacques Pasquet rejoignent en quelque sorte l'éloignement dans le temps des histoires des années 40 et 50 que nous livrent Budge Wilson, Brian Doyle et W.P. Kinsella. Par ailleurs, il serait fascinant d'établir, pour chaque édition, un tableau comparatif des expériences, des formes narratives et du registre stylistique de la sincérité en fonction du "sexe" de l'écrivain. Ni le Québec, ni le Canada n'ignorent l'homosexualité, l'éventail des pratiques sexuelles, les embûches des précautions prophylactiques; en outre, les auteurs canadiens et québécois, couvrent la gamme des niveaux de langue, du familier au littéraire, et, en ce qui concerne l'acte sexuel, savent recourir à tous les degrés stylistiques, de la pudeur à la précision médicale, de l'euphémisme à la franchise la plus explicite. Pourtant, ces parallélismes, qui feraient plaisir aux ténors du fédéralisme pour lesquels n'existent au Canada qu'une seule nation et qu'une seule culture, ne tiennent pas devant un examen plus poussé du texte.

En effet, une différence fondamentale se perçoit bientôt et une certain malaise s'installe chez le lecteur, même bienveillant, lorsqu'il s'arrête au seul texte commun aux deux éditions: *Blanc sur Blanc/White on White* de Charles Montpetit. A l'urbanité de ce récit, à ce qu'on doit appeler, faute de mieux, sa "montréalité", s'oppose la ruralité profonde des textes canadiens; face à son amoralité ou, ce qui est plus juste, à sa maturité, se dressent, même dans les textes "*canadian*" les plus francs, une espèce de rectitude morale et un sentiment de

dépendance ou de soumission à l'égard des générations précédentes et du milieu social. Ce qui frappe, à cet égard, dans les récits québécois, c'est bien l'autonomie des jeunes par rapport aux adultes: peu importe qu'ils vivent chez leurs parents ou non, peu importe même que ces derniers s'opposent ou non à leur désir d'affranchissement, l'adolescent(e) québécois(e) est déjà un être pleinement autonome qui se montre capable d'assumer son choix et de vivre sa différence. Se sentant moins tourmenté et moins coupable malgré les états de crise qu'il peut traverser, il vit déjà comme un adulte. Quant aux malheureux parents qui osent tenir tête à cette poussée d'indépendance, comme la mère inquisitrice de Louise Lévesque, la fausse "maman Plouffe" de Reynald Cantin et le père, professeur de catéchèse et dernier des Mohicans à la Mauriac, de Lucie Papineau, ils ne peuvent que se voir discrédités et se rendre à l'évidence: leur enfant est un être plein et entier, bref, leur égal. La jeune fille handicapée de Michèle Marcoux, qui obtient sans résistance la permission de faire l'amour dans sa chambre même lorsque la famille est présente, serait impensable dans les textes canadiens. Ainsi, malgré les couvertures plus commerciales, plus invitantes et plus franches de l'édition canadienne (la main de la jeune fille qui sonde le pantalon ouvert du petit ami; la main de l'adolescent qui dégage le soutien-gorge de la petite amie), qui nous feront regretter la richesse symbolique et la tendresse un peu mélancolique de l'édition québécoise, malgré la redoutable efficacité de la bande dessinée de Leanne Franson, dont le graphisme approximatif et l'humour doux-amer rappellent, en plus feutré, la *Dirty Plotte* de Julie Doucet, (est-ce un hasard que cette histoire d'initiation à l'identité lesbienne, pleine de drôlerie et se jouant admirablement de la rectitude politique, se passe à Montréal?) et malgré la très haute tenue littéraire de la majorité des récits, on ne saurait oublier l'édition originale.

Car la nouvelle entreprise de Charles Montpetit mérite d'être connue (et reconnue) au Québec: la valeur exceptionnelle de certains textes, l'ampleur et la variété des contributions font de ce recueil, *The First Time*, une excellente introduction à la connaissance d'une littérature étrangère, la littérature canadienne.

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COMING OF AGE IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

Changes in You and Me: A Book about Puberty Mostly for Girls. ISBN 0-921051-95-6. **Changes in You and Me: A Book about Puberty Mostly for Boys**. ISBN 0-021051-03-X. Paulette Bourgeois and Martin Wolfish, M.D. Illus. Louise Phillips and Kam Yu. Public Health consultant Kim Martyn. Somerville House Books, 1994. 64 pp., $14.95 paper. **It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health**. Robie H. Harris. Illus. Michael Emberley. Candlewick Press, 1994. 89 pp., $24.95 cloth. ISBN 1-56402-199-8.

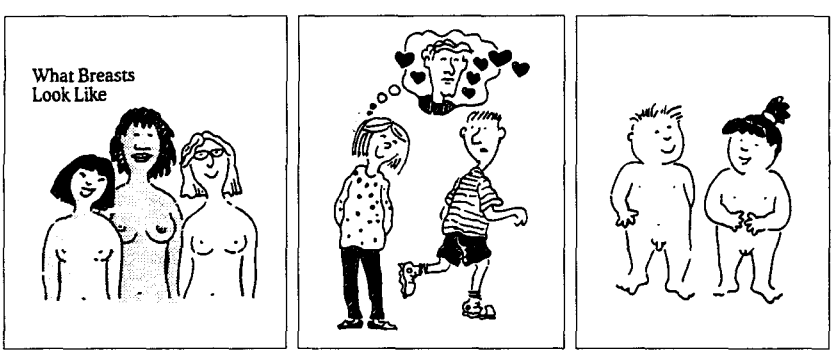
Most of us will recall sneaking books out of the library about sex and human anatomy that were so carefully oblique or scientific that they only served to confuse us further. Talking with peers, and little or no sex education didn't help.

Teens today face a different situation. While sex education continues to be controversial, they are bombarded daily with mixed messages about sex and sexuality. Yet sex is no less confusing in this era of information overload.

Two words come to mind after reading these three books: frank and reassuring. They certainly fill a gap as they provide accessible and clear information at a level that young adolescents and teenagers will understand and appreciate. While much of the basic information is similar, the books differ in their approach and presentation styles.

The first two books are written by Canadian authors Bourgeois and Wolfish who offer separate books for girls and boys. While this may enhance the appeal of the books for gender specific audiences, the books are almost identical, and in the end it is not clear why two books were necessary. This becomes an even bigger question upon reading the American book by Harris which successfully speaks to the whole teen audience. In fact, inclusivity seems to be the key difference as the reader absorbs the text as well as the illustrations in this trio.

The authors all strive to acknowledge the diversities in their intended audience, as well as teens' curiosity about others, but including illustrations featuring a variety of body shapes and sizes, different races, youth with disabilities, as well as gay and lesbian couples; however, the tone of the books differs markedly. The Canadian books are far more cautious and conservative in their content, as well as in their illustrations. Gay and lesbian relationships are acknowledged in one paragraph in these books. The message that comes across is that while same-sex crushes are quite normal for boys and girls, youth who have stronger homosexual inclinations should seek counselling. The American book, in contrast, not only devotes far more space to this issue, but also discusses bisexuality and, most importantly, addresses homophobia. Furthermore, in a very valuable section on families and babies, Harris discusses the varieties of families in North American culture, including the traditional nuclear family, single parent families, gay and lesbian parents, adoptive and foster families. Harris consistently presents a positive yet realistic tone, urging an acceptance of differences at the same time as being clear about risks and responsibilities. Gay



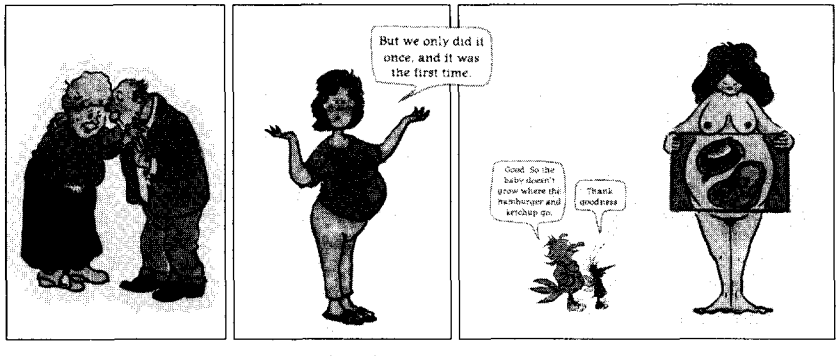
Illustrations from *Changes in You and Me*

and lesbian youth, in particular, need to see themselves in a positive light, and *all* youth need to think about homophobia.

Changes In You and Me features both line drawings and colour illustrations, with transparent overlays illustrating the developing male and female body during puberty. The transparencies are unique and will catch the eye of teen readers, but on the whole the illustrations are rather sterile and bring to mind biology textbooks. *It's Perfectly Normal*, on the other hand, employs a variety of illustrative techniques which blend with the text extremely well. There are cartoon style series which humorously, but accurately, depict the development and travels of the sperm and egg; and two little characters, a bird and a bee, accompany the text throughout with comments representative of teen views of sex: the bird is very curious and anxious to know more, while the bee is the shy and embarrassed one who has heard quite enough!

Adding to the textbook image of the first two books are short quizzes sprinkled throughout the text. These serve to debunk myths about sex and puberty, but they are not nearly as much fun as the humour in Michael Emberley's illustrations in the Harris book. The latter are ultimately more educational in my estimation because they deliver more information and will appeal even to those who will choose the skim the regular text.

The Harris book is more equitable in its treatment of the sexes. Masturbation, orgasms, and the loving nature of sexual intercourse are discussed openly and evenhandedly, with respect to both males and females. Bourgeois and Wolfish employ a more clinical style, stressing reproductive functions over intimacy. This may have something to do with the authors' backgrounds: Harris was trained as a teacher, while the other two authors are both health care professionals. There are some stereotypes that are disconcerting, and this may be a result of having separate books for boys and girls in the first instance. The boys' book, for example, relies on sports language as descriptors: the tubules in the testicles would run the length of two football fields, and semen is compared to Gatorade. While it could be argued that this language will appeal to boys and enhance their learning, it assumes that all boys are sports enthusiasts. Harris uses more neutral



Illustrations from *It's Perfectly Normal*

language: sperm, for example, stop at the snack bar for nourishment in their cartoon strip journey. Both books confuse sex with gender and neither acknowledge that both girls and boys may exhibit varying degrees of masculine and feminine traits, and that this too is "perfectly normal." Each of the books uses both the scientific as well as slang or day-to-day terms for body parts and sexual activities. The Canadian books provide a further service with a helpful glossary. All of the books are up-to-date in their discussion of sexually-transmitted diseases, AIDS, sexual abuse, sexual assault and harassment, although for some reason sexual harassment is named as such only in the book for boys in the Canadian set.

All in all, while each of these books is a valuable addition to school and home libraries and should be read not only by youth but all concerned adults, the Harris book is superior, in my opinion. Harris makes clear from the outset that "sex is about a lot of things ..." and provides a holistic and thorough discussion of all its complexities throughout. She provides historical and cultural context to show how things have or have not changed over the centuries. She also convincingly portrays sex as a positive and valuable human experience as long as it is mutual, loving and responsible. Emberley's illustrations work very well with the text to further convey both the joys and the angst of puberty and healthy sexuality.

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CRASHING AHEAD FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT: TEEN SHORT STORIES

The Blue Camaro. R.P. MacIntyre. Thistledown Press Limited, 1994. 158 pages, $13.50 paper. ISBN 1-895449-23-5. **The Blue Jean Collection**. Thistledown Press Limited, 1992. 240 pages, paper. ISBN 0-920633-94-3.

These two releases from Thistledown Press cater to adolescent browsers. *The Blue Camaro* consists of eleven short stories featuring both male and female first-person narrators; *The Blue Jean Collection* anthologizes nineteen "short stories for young adults" selected from nearly 250 entries in a national competition. Because of their single authorship, MacIntyre's stories, one of which is also in the anthology, provide more consistency of tone: all set in the prairies, some are interconnected and others present the same occurrence from two different points of view. *The Blue Jean Collection*, on the other hand, ranges widely over geography, historical setting and narrative voice.

Possibly owing to Saskatoon-born MacIntyre's experience as an actor and a dramatist, his stories succeed in probing the interior life of apparently tough-talking teenagers and reclusive loners. As disaffected critics or sons and daughters trying to make sense of their family and its traditions, these ingenuous narrators allow the reader to share their moments of insight and grace. Usually MacIntyre assembles the promising ingredients at the outset. In "Doing Something," the opening prohibition delivered by the boy's parents before they leave for the day, that he is not to touch the boat ("Don't even think about it!"),

intersects tantalizingly with his observations about the day, as beautiful as "a great ballad with slow clean guitar riffs," and the glassy calmness of the lake. His meeting a blind girl, whose expertise as a water skier involves them in a TV commercial, propels a terrific day-long adventure. Yet after the headiness of this goofing off, an affectionate friendship links the narrator and Cynthia; not only does their chance meeting at a restaurant, which closes the story, recall their introduction, but the boy's finger-painting with sugar, "'making little islands of skin ... butterfly wings,'" on the girl's arm captures poignantly the closeness between them. Whether trying to impress a girl friend ("Eat, Sleep, Jump High for Smarties"), or recuperating from a gunshot wound ("Shadow Dark Night"), or dealing with a zany aunt's heart attack ("Toy Boat"), or laughing while serving a funeral mass ("Kurt's Mom's Funeral"), the narrators approach an understanding of themselves and adjust their perceptions of others. The title story is one of the best, especially for this sense of self-awareness. The visit of the family maverick, Uncle Jake, prompts the narrator to consider the stories and lies that bind his father and uncle as well as the possibilities for looking to his older, fiercely accomplished, artistic sister as a confidante. Child and adult coalesce in the narrator; his experience of taking Uncle Jake's prized blue Camaro for an unauthorized spin is comparable to being "at the helm of the *Starship Enterprise*, about to go into warp drive," yet his inadvertent discovery of gay magazines hidden under the front seat inducts this young man into the nuances of unspoken recognition and family connivance.

With contributors from across Canada and narratives exploring such diverse material as a child's response to the 1917 Halifax explosion ("I Am Hilda Burrows") and a retold eighteenth-century Tibetan legend ("The Tulpa"), *The Blue Jean Collection* is definitely a mixed bag. Perhaps because it is designed for short visits and because the narrative voices are so eclectic, it makes less overall impact. There is an up-to-the-minuteness in details of a grandparent with Alzheimer's ("All is Calm"), the space shuttle disaster ("A Major Malfunction") and an ecologically stricken world ("Water"). But the treatment of the predictable subject, erupting sexuality, is tame and stereotyped, particularly when teenaged girls — who still "have the hots" and think some guy "is to die for" — are concerned. Though ostensibly about a beach god who is too busy to notice the girl with a crush on him, "Was It Fun on the Beach Today?" really focuses on two watchers from the sidelines, the girl with the crush, Julie, and her unpopular "friend," Alicia, whom Julie silently refers to as "the Whale." Budge Wilson's third-person narration privileges catching the beach god's eye, capturing the male gaze, as more important than the time-filling chatter with Alicia, whose heavy body is catalogued in Julie's derisory mode: "Double chins. Five pimples. Julie counted them. Stomach." Unlike MacIntyre's moments of recognition, there are few instances of redemption or compassion in this anthology.

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NEW-FOUND LAND FOR FICTION

The Dream Carvers. Joan Clark. Viking (Penguin), 1995. 224 pages, $18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-670-85858-7.

In the startling narrative prologue to Joan Clark's *The Dream Carvers*, an unidentified narrator describes the aftermath of his (or her) kidnapping by men painted ochre red, hair and all, who transported him slung on a pole, like dead game, and then, loosed, in a red boat. Where and when could such things be? The answers constitute a sortie into historical territory barely charted in mainstream Canadian literature.

The setting is the northern tip of Newfoundland in the year 1015 A.D. The kidnappers are proto-Beothuks. Their captive is Thrand, a fourteen-year-old who has accompanied his father from Greenland on the recorded timber-seeking expedition led by Freydis, daughter of Eric the Red, and her husband, Thorvard. Thrand, soon re-named Wobee by the Indians, has been taken to replace the young Beothuk whom he chased down and Thorvard killed.

In the imaginative story Clark constructs on a quasi-historical foundation, she portrays an aboriginal family group, the Osweet, as they pursue game offshore and inland, conduct their rituals, tell stories, attend an annual meeting with northern and southern cousins for trade and inter-marriage, and struggle to "civilise" their adoptee — a distastefully white-skinned, blue-eyed barbarian, in their eyes. Simultaneously, she recounts Thrand/Wobee's gradual adaptation to the ways and perspectives of his new family, punctuated by his night-time dreams of home and daylight plottings of escape. The only unrealistic element is an Indian girl's preternatural ability to penetrate his mental life. The device is slightly jarring, although it conforms to the importance given dreams in ancient Inuit myths, facilitates communication between characters, and illuminates the protagonist's evolving psyche.

On the whole, Clark uses and invents from her source material with skill and tact. This reader has only three reservations about the result. One is the pervasive flatness of characterization. The Beothuk are generally idealised. According to the old sagas and latterday commentaries, they were indeed gentle, kindly people. But these fictional representatives match all too well the wise, conservationist, undifferentiated North American aboriginals of countless children's books. The protagonist has one potential enemy among the Osweet, but his hostility peters out. Consequently — another weakness — the middle of the book, between the hero's early escape attempt and his late encounter with much more savage people, lacks threat.

And finally, history buffs may want to know more than Clark tells them about the novel's historical bedrock. But if they are driven to an outside source, like Farley Mowat's splendid *Westviking*, this last may be a good fault.

Frances Frazer *is a retired professor of English with a particular interest in children's literature. She wrote the chapter on children's literature in the* Literary History of Canada, Vol.4.

HUNGRY FOR A GOOD STORY?

The Book of Changes. Tim Wynne-Jones. A Groundwood Book, Douglas and McIntyre, 1994. 143 pages, $7.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-223-8. **Traveling On Into the Light**. Martha Brooks. A Groundwood Book, Douglas and McIntyre, 1994. 146 pages, $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-220-3.

Groundwood has recently released two collections of short stories by two very different writers that nevertheless are both examples of what writing for young people should be. The writers, Tim Wynne-Jones and Martha Brooks, share a penchant for characters with unusual names and a determination to tackle some of the "difficult" issues of growing up. Their individual styles, however, are distinctive.

The Wynne-Jones collection, titled *The Book of Changes*, is written with a light hand. The stories read so easily, the situations laced with chuckles and smiles, that the reader's first impression is of pure entertainment. Yet the tales trigger reflection upon a host of difficult topics. From the opening story, "The Clark Beans Man," where Dwight, the new kid in town, finds himself at the mercy of the school bully, to the penultimate tale of "Dawn," where young Barnsey must deal with the Christmas-time separation of his parents, the stories touch upon genuine crises in the lives of young people. The characters are not heroic nor are they of the rebel, anti-hero mould. Neither are they "average kids." Each is a unique individual attempting to deal with the inevitable difficulties of growing independence and growing knowledge about the world and the people in it—young people coping with the surprises of which daily life is made, learning as they go.

My personal favourite in this collection is a story titled "Mad House," told from the point of view of Solly, an emerging rock and roll guitarist, who just happens to come from a family he finds more than a little embarrassing. Dad paints in the dark, so he's "not influenced by what the palette says" (36); Mom takes electric guitar lessons; sister reads "novels the way most people eat nuts" (36); little brother is, well, a seven-year-old; and Earl, Solly's developmentally-challenged uncle, loves Garfield and never remembers to take his laundry out of the washer. As Solly sets the dryer for the regular cycle, he muses, "Maybe if I put my whole family in the dryer, they'll come out regular ..." (39).

Help comes from unexpected quarters in these stories. It is Solly's Uncle Earl, the pajama-clad detective, who brings to light another family's near tragedy. Dawn, sporting nine earrings, nose rings and a mohawk, "orange along the scalp and purple along the crest" (115), introduces calm when life becomes just so much "rubbish." The class nerd tames the school bully, and the ghost of a prince, in the title story, brings last ditch inspiration for a homework project.

The Brooks collection, *Traveling On Into the Light*, is considerably heavier fare. There is humour here too, but Brooks' characters are much more introspective than those of Wynne-Jones. Brooks has been described as having a "keen eye for detail" and indeed her writing is more dense than is the style of Wynne-Jones. While her stories are not shy on dialogue and action, they dwell more lingeringly on observation, and on reflection: "... now there's more of a warm,

dull ache, the kind that I catch sometimes from certain people. It starts in the middle of my body, and it always dances up and out from there — like the northern lights when they shift and disappear and reappear somewhere else" (58).

We are not allowed to get through a crisis and believe in "happily-ever-after" in Brooks' world. Even in good relationships there is shadow and difficulty.

While Wynne-Jones does take on difficult issues such as parental separation and even the rumour of a small town murder, the themes of his stories appear lightweight beside those of Brooks. In this brief collection she tackles parental rejection, abuse and neglect, homophobia, adultery and betrayal between friends, suicide, alcoholism, inter-racial marriage and more.

Despite the darkness of many of her themes, however, Brooks does write with optimism. When sixteen-year-old Laker is told by his mother that he cannot live at home anymore, he finds comfort in an unexpected relationship with 82-year-old Henry Olsen in "The Kindness of Strangers." The partner of Sam's gay father in the title story helps her to learn to forgive and trust her father again. Again, there are no heroes or villains in these stories, only people who often stumble, and often hurt one another, but just as often help and love each other.

In the final story of the Wynne-Jones collection, "Gloria," the narrator reflects "... some days taste so good they are like promises" (142) and this is so of some stories too. Different as they are, both these new releases by Groundwood taste that good.

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SUPERHEROES SAVED BY HUMOUR

Losing Joe's Place. Gordon Korman. Scholastic Inc., 1990. 233 pp., $3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-42769-5. **The Twinkie Squad**. Gordon Korman. Scholastic Inc., 1992. 194 pp., $3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-45250-9. **Just Call Me Boom Boom**. Martyn Godfrey. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1994. 132 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73081-9. **Wally Strutzgummer, Super Bad Dude**. Martyn Godfrey. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1992. 143 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-74033-4. **Ski Stooges**. Paul Kropp. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1992. 168 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-74062-8.

Dialogue fresh from the halls of junior high, fast moving action, pervasive humour, and lively characters, all contribute to the entertainment value of these books. In spite of these admirable qualities, these books lack subtlety in their characterization and plots. No loose ends are left untied, and any wrong-doing is overshadowed by the humour of the situations. Nonetheless, the moral lessons are there and characters who stray, if they are not punished, do see the errors of their ways.

In the Korman books, Douglas in *The Twinkie Squad*, and Jason in *Losing Joe's Place*, outsmart adults in outlandish ways and in the process accomplish what the adults are unable to do. Not always do plans work as expected, but these intrepid characters tackle the next-to-impossible, from rehabilitating a bunch of

misfit teems to transforming an unpretentious deli into an overnight success. Much of the humour is based on exaggeration both in characterization and in implausible situations.

In *Losing Joe's Place,* Jason and his two friends are on their own for the first time with summer jobs in Toronto. Here is a situation ripe for misadventures and humour where the boys are sometimes at the mercy of other characters: Mr. Plotnick, their mouthy and unscrupulous landlord, shouts his way through the book; Jessica, the romantic interest, fast-talks Jason into doing her summer school home-ec. assignments and who also has perfect aim with a brass knuckles keychain; and the incredible and unexpected house guest, oversized Rootbeer Racinette, who changes hobbies like dirty socks and who endures super-human physical punishment in order to put food on the table when money becomes scarce. The humour keeps readers turning pages, but the unreality of the characters and their zany exploits does tend to wear thin by the end of the book.

The Twinkie Squad shares the same shortcomings. A popular, yet worn theme has the wealthy and spoiled protagonist, Douglas, enrolled in public school by despairing parents after he has been expelled from numerous private schools. His snobbish attitude promptly gets him into trouble again and he is placed in a special self-help group of other misfits known disparagingly by the rest of the school as "Twinkies." Unfazed by the dubious reputation of this motley crew, he soon becomes the centre of a series of giddy antics. The principal and teachers are beset with gerbils running free in the halls, a terrible stink coming from within the walls, and a play which threatens to come apart at the seams and literally does when Douglas' clown suit explodes. All of these episodes are of Douglas' making with the humour here visual and earthy, just the sort of comedy in which most children delight. This book, however, suffers from just too much going on. The shifts from Douglas to Commando and his father each setting booby traps for the other are amusing, but distracting and overdone. I could not avoid seeing the similarities in these episodes to the hilarious scenes in *The Pink Panther* movies between Peter Sellers and his ambushing servant, Kato.

Godfrey's books are only slightly less obvious in the exaggeration of characters and situations, with humour surfacing in subtler ways. It's bad guys beware as Wally in *Wally Strutzgummer, Super Bad Dude* and Boom Boom in *Just Call Me Boom Boom* surprise even themselves by becoming superheroes similar to the ones that they write or fantasize about.

In these two books the plots share the same formulaic outline, with Wally and Boom Boom not really meaning to do wrong, but not always making the right decisions. Wally makes an unfortunate bet, using a dinner with his girlfriend, Carol, as the prize, never dreaming that he will lose, and he steals his brother's valuable comics twice, with the idea that he is only borrowing them. Similarly, Boom Boom breaks into a computer disk and trespasses into the deserted Wilson Mansion more out of curiosity than dishonest intent. Lurking in the background of each of these books are the thieves who switch valuable display items for ones of little value. This latter theme is one of the more obvious similarities between

the two books. With a flurry of commotion and with true superhero pizzazz, Wally and Boom Boom help apprehend the crooks.

Kropp's characters in *Ski Stooges*, if not bigger than life like those in the Korman and Godfrey books, at least manage the heroic and make us laugh in the process. Fred, who is brought on a skiing holiday as baby sitter for Justin and Jason, is a klutz, an improbable hero with a physical appearance that would scare crows. Fun revolves around Fred's love life as the boys attempt to help him connect with Chantal, the gorgeous ski instructor. Along the way they are helped by Oscar, the computer, who gives dubious romantic advice. Much of what keeps interest active in this book is the visual and uncomplicated slap-stick humour. When Jason and Justin's father tries to control a careening snowmobile, a snowman in his path is demolished. When the snow flakes settle, dad has the snowman's carrot nose in his mouth.

Korman, Godfrey, and Kropp have admirable talent for writing funny dialogue, describing absurd situations, and for creating off-the-wall characters, all with which young people can readily connect. However, these books lack open-ended spaces where questions can arise and where imagination can go to speculate on the unknown. All have happy endings where everything is explained, settled, or is confidently resolved. Nevertheless, they are lighthearted romps for youngsters who might otherwise shy away from reading.

Patricia Good *is a freelance writer living in Fredericton and recently received her Master's degree in English from the University of New Brunswick.*

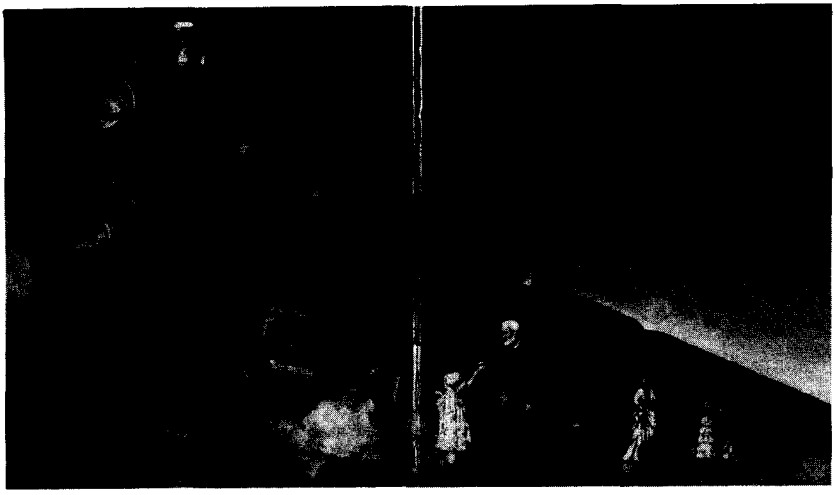
A CHILD DISCOVERS TCHAIKOVSKY

Tchaikovsky Discovers America. Esther Kalman. Illus. Laura Fernandez, Rick Jacobson. Lester Publishing, 1994. Unpag., $16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-895555-82-5.

Tchaikovsky remains one of the most popular of the "classical" composers in North America today. He is also the creator of music that is very accessible to children. This book, based on the award-winning cassette/compact disc produced by Susan Hammond, is an introduction which is admirable on several accounts.

First, the composer is introduced to the North American child on home ground: the fictional eleven-year-old child of Russian immigrants living in New York meets the famous composer during his visit to the United States and (briefly) to Canada in 1891. The details of his trip are true, taken from the letters and diaries of the composer as translated in various publications which the author lists on the reverse of the title page.

Second, the themes brought out in the story are important ones in the life and music of the composer and correspond to what the growing child will learn if he or she pursues this interest in later life. While committed to honesty, the author has omitted a great many details about Tchaikovsky which are unsuitable, in the minds of many, to a children's book. Indeed, the very concept of presenting only



so much of the truth is built into the story itself: the composer tells the young Eugenia part of the story of Swan Lake, but refrains from completing the tragic ending. We could say the same of *Tchaikovsky Discovers America*; the author has managed to catch the spirit of some of Tchaikovsky's music without completing the details of what the fly-leaf calls his "tormented" life.

The most prominent theme in the book is that of nostalgia, for Russia, for an elusive world just beyond one's grasp, for an unnamed, unfulfillable desire. This feeling, not easy to convey to a child, is suggested by Tchaikovsky's conversation with the young girl on the impossibility of either of them ever dancing at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg or its equivalent. Even at eleven, then, the girl must face the fact of an ardently wished-for experience being forever beyond her grasp. For the adult which the child-reader will become, the sense of yearning is evoked in different ways: the young girl is named Eugenia, after Eugene Onegin of Tchaikovsky's tragic opera. The immigrant parents yearn for their homeland where, in words the author puts into Tchaikovsky's mouth, "the roof is falling in." This allusion to unspecified political events, perhaps those of 1861, 1905 or 1917, seems to relate to the author's perceptions of Russia, not Tchaikovsky's, at least as described in recent biographies.

In fact, the second prominent theme in the book is the contrast between the faltering Russia and the successful America. One even begins to suspect a chauvinistic element in the portrayal, especially in light of the events of 1991 and American reactions to them, exactly a century after this story takes place. The suspicion is perhaps unfounded, but it does come to mind. Hence, when the very last illustration of the book, placed on the verso of the last page of text, shows the composer looking back from shipboard at the Statue of Liberty enshrouded in mist, one suspects that the effect is there for American sensibilities. But no, the composer actually did take a final look at the statue as he left New York harbour on the "Prince Bismarck" bound for Hamburg.

The illustrations for *Tchaikovsky Discovers America* are oil paintings, whose textures are evident on the printed page, done in the style of artwork of the late-nineteenth century (specified on the flyleaf). Their historical accuracy constitutes an essential element in the narrative, evoking their own sense of nostalgia for the adult of today. The example of the last illustration, mentioned above, shows the way in which they are integrated into the narration, adding to the story some elements left out of the text. In addition they are beautiful in themselves, presenting wonderful images of trains, drawing rooms, concert halls, and natural settings.

The emphasis on the train as the symbol for all that seemed splendid about America to Tchaikovsky is grounded in his actual amazement at the luxury afforded by American hotels and the straightforward, courteous and genuinely friendly service afforded him. Equally amazing to him was the unaffected modesty of Andrew Carnegie, whose Music Hall Tchaikovsky had been invited to inaugurate (the description of the concert itself is historically accurate) and the way that material interests did not prevent Americans of this type from taking an active interest in the arts. With hindsight, too, the choice of the train has a special resonance because the real-life Russian counterpart of the girl's father, Savva Mamontov (1841-1918), was also an extremely important patron of the arts. In 1904 his railway fortune, source of support for such Russian genius as Diagilev and Chaliapin, was confiscated by the Czarist government on trumped-up charges, and the former philanthropist reduced to poverty. This may have happened long after the death of Tchaikovsky but it illustrates the reality of the theme of America-the-prosperous contrasting with Russia, where the roof is always falling in.

The more one reads this book and checks its presentation of an important composer and his music, the more one admires the way in which the facts and feelings about both have been shaped for the minds of the young.

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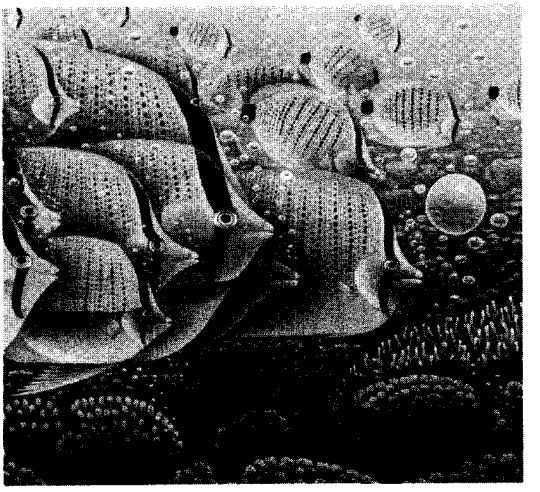
OCEAN, OCEAN, BURNING BRIGHT

Aska's Sea Creatures. Poems by David Day. Illus. Warabé Aska. Doubleday, 1994. 32 pp., $18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-32107-4.

Warabé Aska has produced another brilliant picture book, *Aska's Sea Creatures.* Poetry is provided by David Day, and very good poetry it is. It is not Day's fault that the visuals here overwhelm the text. One cannot help but feel that these little poems deserve a chance to shine in their own right. Here they provide a very quiet oboe accompaniment to a virtual army chorus of powerfully aggressive voices.

From the blinding flash of the opening endpaper to the end of the book, readers are led through one of the brightest colour experiences to be found anywhere. This world is on and under the waves of the sea, and over it all burns the sun, hot red and fiery yellow. Filtered through the waves it casts luminescence and shadows such as we earthbound creatures can scarcely imagine. This sun shines on the sea creatures who love it and play with it. At times it is bounced



on a sea lion's nose, chased by a humpback whale, tossed about by dolphins, swallowed by the great white shark. Its shape is captured in the forms of puffer fish, seaweed bladders, a pregnant seahorse's belly, and in pearly bubbles. At book's end, it is flipped away by the caudal fin of a whale. Reds, yellows, blues and greens occupy 75% of each double page. Animals of the sea are accurately depicted anatomically and behaviorally. Viewers are invited into this world, and are apt to become quite absorbed in under-sea exploration, in identifying shapes half hidden from view.

David Day's poems would stand on their own, but might be best served in a presentation like the "small poems" of Valerie Worth, accompanied by modest visual statements. Here, though, it is their duty to serve the art of Warabé Aska. This is asking too much of them.

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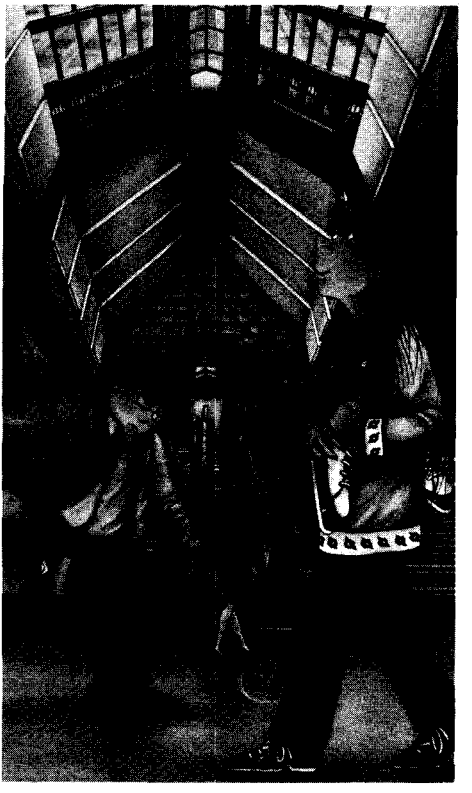
MONTRÉAL, MES AMOURS

Montréal d'est en ouest, textes de Marie-Josée Cardinal, illustrations de Doris Barrette, éd. les 400 coups, Laval, Québec, 1995.

Les librairies Renaud-Bray ont décerné d'emblée à *Montréal d'est en ouest* leur distinction "coup de coeur" au rayon pour enfants. Il faut dire que le livre de Marie-Josée Cardinal et de Doris Barrette est remarquable: les informations qu'on y trouve sont nombreuses, bien organisées et racontées pour les tout jeunes; et surtout la présentation visuelle est étonnante: car si le texte, pégagogiquement habile, tâchant de faire participer le petit à l'histoire, de lui faire revivre par des mises en situations pleines d'atmosphère certains événements marquants, reste tout de même assez traditionnel, les images, elles, introduisent un désordre magique qui



surprend et c'est leur fantaisie, leur charme qui mettent le mieux au monde l'idée de Montréal comme d'une ville rêvée.

La division générale du livre est simple: description des quartiers, qui permet d'aborder tour à tour les grands aspects de Montréal. La perspective pédagogique se fait concrète: ainsi l'évolution de la ville se voit clairement et avec attrait dans les "mues" des moyens de transport, de la calèche au métro, du bateau-vapeur au brise-glace, et l'agitation contemporaine du centre-ville s'observe de façon pittoresque du haut des échafaudages des laveurs de vitres. L'incitation à la découverte de Montréal n'échappe par ailleurs pas toujours aux formules des dépliants publicitaires ("Tu pourrais aller au Vieux-Port où on peut se balader en quadricycle, aller en pédalo dans les bassins, visiter la tour de l'Horloge et même participer à une croisière sur le fleuve", p. 15). Mais les lieux d'intérêt sont en tous cas bien recensés et donnent une vue claire à l'enfant des grandes possibilités de divertissement culturel ou autre de son environnement. L'encouragement au tourisme va de pair avec la valorisation quasi sans réserves de Montréal et en particulier du Montréal d'aujourd'hui dont les améliorations par rapport aux siècles passés sont amplement soulignées: système d'administration démocratique, services d'hygiène (enlèvement des ordures, égouts, traitement de l'eau), de sécurité, (police, pompiers), d'éclairage, de déneigement; et tout cela participe d'une petite élégie pragmatique sur l'évolution des cités et du monde en général. Bref, ce manuel croit au "progrès" autant qu'à la réalisation de la devise montréalaise "Concordia salus", l'harmonie dans la prospérité. Le livre évite en fait l'évocation de problèmes qui pourraient être actuels, de conflits plus récents que ceux des "tensions" entre Iroquois et Français auxquelles la "paix de 1701" avait mis un terme. Les allusions aux problèmes linguistiques restent laconiques, tout commentaire en est prudemment absent: "Le premier corps de police, créé en 1818, ne comptait que 24 hommes. La nuit, ils patrouillaient dans les rues, un fanal à la ceinture, et annonçaient les heures par le cri "All is well", c'est-à-dire, en français, "tout va bien"(p. 13). "Un homme-

sandwich rue Sainte-Catherine, en 1900. A cette époque, le commerce se faisait presque toujours en anglais" (p. 38). Enfin, le texte de Marie-Josée Cardinal, est-il nécessaire de le dire, se veut un amour sans ombrages à la réalité de Montréal.

Cet attachement pour Montréal se ressent merveilleusement dans l'illustration. Non que celle-ci soit naïvement idyllique et se propose en image d'Epinal. Car Doris Barrette fait pour ainsi dire basculer les clartés pédagogiques du texte. Ses images introduisent la personnalité, le caractère de la ville dont les Montréalais, sans pouvoir les définir, sont amoureux. Les angles de présentation des décors les font apparaître penchés, inclinés vers le lecteur, dans une sorte de tangage fantastique: par exemple, le dessin du pont Jacques-Cartier surplombé de mouettes disproportionnées par rapport à lui et qui volent dans tous les sens dans un ciel d'orage mêlé curieusement de jaune et de rose (p. 7); de même du sérieux des bureaucrates de l'Hôtel de ville et leurs rectangulaires classeurs et pupitres, contredit par la pente de la salle de travail aux allures de maison hantée (p. 12-13). Mais ce n'est pas seulement le plan des images qui témoigne d'originalité subversive. Même dans les scènes où le lecteur ne risque pas d'être pris de vertige devant la représentation en contre-plongée, le "réel" sera troublé. Ainsi de cette "apparition" au coeur de l'U.Q.A.M. (Université du Québec à Montréal), de Nelligan aux cheveux bouclés, rêveur, toisé par un jeune "cool" au regard narquois (p. 23). Et quand, par hasard, la représentation se veut résolument réaliste, telle celle qui sert de couverture au livre et qui reproduit un événement de la "petite vie" dans le quartier du Plateau Mont-Royal, [il s'agit d'un déménagement], c'est, il fallait s'y attendre, le désordre par excellence, renversement du quotidien; les objets traînent épars dans la rue, sur le trottoir, les meubles sont "en mouvement". Les couleurs concourent également à l'atmosphère d'irréalité des illustrations: verts éclatants, quasi phosphorescents brisant le grisâtre brun de la ville et ses ciels aux bleus éteints. Ce n'est d'ailleurs paradoxalement qu'avec le Montréal souterrain des galeries marchandes que le bleu du ciel se fait assurément clair (p. 43): on aperçoit un coin de ciel à travers les vitres lointaines d'un puits de lumière; cette percée de plein jour est d'autant plus frappante que déambule, au premier plan, un personnage d'adolescente les yeux levés au ciel. Ainsi Montréal, peint en général sous des couleurs sombres, n'apparaît extraordinairement transparent que de l'intérieur; belle facon de mettre en relief cette nostalgie du dehors qu'on peut ressentir dans les milieux couverts. Et le dessin illustre à merveille les derniers mots du chapitre: " (...) ne crois-tu pas que c'est dommage de vivre sous terre tandis que les voitures roulent à l'air libre?" (p. 42) Il s'agit là d'ailleurs de la seule critique franche faite à la réalité moderne de Montréal dans ce beau livre qui sait si bien la faire aimer. N'est-ce pas symptomatique de l'importance de l'écologie comme problème politique majeur pour la nouvelle génération?

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Louis Riel. Rosemary Neering. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1992. 64 pp., $7.95 paper. ISBN 0-88902-214-3.

Of all Canadians, Louis Riel is the most written about. The Riel literature is massive. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that we have yet another volume on the life of this man who has intrigued Canadians for well over a hundred years. Rosemary Neering has produced a very brief biography that is directed at young readers. The sixty-four pages of text includes some three dozen illustrations, so the actual text — divided into fifteen chapters — is very short. The presented Riel is not inaccurate. At the same time we are not given a particularly full Riel. What we get is a totally politically correct and sanitized Louis Riel. Here is a man who represented oppressed Métis and aboriginals. They did no wrong and the white population of Canada rarely did anything right. Young people will not be harmed by reading Rosemary Neering's biography. At the same time they will get nothing approaching a full picture of this enigmatic Canadian.

Donald Swainson *teaches history at Queen's University. His many publications include "Rieliana and the Structure of Canadian History" in Hartwell Bowsfield, ed.,* Louis Riel: Selected Readings, *Toronto, 1988.*

LESSONS IN SURVIVAL — A LOOK AT *FAR FROM HOME: THE ADVENTURES OF YELLOW DOG*

Far From Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog. Twentieth Century Fox, 1995. 81 minutes, colour. Written and directed by Phillip Borsos.

A boat trip up the coast of Vancouver Island turns to tragedy when rough weather hits, capsizing the vessel, and stranding two of its occupants — fourteen-year-old Angus McCormick and his dog, Yellow — on the remote shoreline, beginning a nineteen-day struggle for survival.

Far From Home is an American/Canadian collaboration that, although not flawless, combines the best of both film styles. The influence of Los Angeles may be felt in the pacing of a tightly-constructed plot which moves expertly, if predictably, from expository sequences that establish character and foreshadow conflict, to a climax riveting enough to satisfy the appetite of an audience weaned on the Hollywood action movie.

The film's Canadian influence may be felt in its subtle characterization, reflective of a more introverted and understated national character. Angus is an attentive, responsible and respectful boy whose often banal words and hesitant demeanour allow us to believe that he is a real adolescent and not the caricature of a teen, delivering witty one-liners and solving the world's problems in eighty minutes. We believe in this boy and welcome the respite from his cocky American counterpart. A further Canadian influence may be felt in the film's portrayal of nature. Nature here is vast, impersonal and uncompromising. Sweeping helicopter views of impenetrable forest, which reduce boy and dog to mere specks, remind us that we are only part of something much greater.

Although fast-paced, genuine and even profound, the film is not flawless. There are indeed moments when our credulity is tested. We wonder, for example, how John McCormick, nature guru, could expose his son to such danger in the first place. Anyone could see the sky growing darker and the wind growing stronger. Why doesn't he head for shore sooner? And then there is Angus. How could a boy, equipped only with a pen-knife, build a splint for his own injured arm and then construct a raft, not to mention a lean-to and a mousetrap? I guess "the child [really] is father of the man"! In the end, though, these inconsistencies are accepted and even add to the enjoyment of the film. Angus must, after all, arrive on the beach somehow, and his efforts to endure are relished by the Robinson Crusoe in all of us. In short, *Far From Home* is a carefully crafted film which appeals to the unsophisticated and sophisticated alike, ranging from those who "just like a good story" to those who value honesty in human relations to those who wonder at our place in the universe.

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ECOLOGY ON VIDEO

Animals, Animals, Animals. National Film Board of Canada, 1995. 71 mins., $19.95 VHS. ISBN 0-7722-0509. **Planet Earth: Caring for our Environment**. National Film Board of Canada, 1995. 26 mins., $14.95 VHS. ISBN 0-7722-0526.

The National Film Board of Canada has taken a well-known ecological slogan and reduced, re-used and recycled several films from its backlist to produce these two video compilations aimed, presumably, at teachers wanting to cover environmental issues in the early grades.

The five short films in *Animals, Animals, Animals* all contain absorbing footage of animals ranging from Beluga whales, wolves, bears and bighorn sheep to the wildlife that can be found within Vancouver city limits. Cinematography of this kind is, for most people in industrialized societies, children included, what constitutes "nature." The Discovery Channel, Disney and National Geographic provide thousands of close-ups of wild animals and birds, often in dramatic encounters with one another. To judge by these films, a walk in the woods is as gripping as any movie from the "action" section of the video store. Yet anyone who spends long periods in "nature" can attest that, even in real wilderness country, actual encounters with wild animals are rare. The essential pleasure of the experience derives, not from high drama, but from close observation of minutiae.

Of these five films only the sixteen minute *Wild in the City* sets out to show that "nature" is not merely to be found in remote areas or in national parks. Exploiting Vancouver's mountain backdrop and ocean frame, it shows us raccoons, coyotes, skunks, deer and waterfowl going about their daily business in harmony with the city's human inhabitants. The voice-over commentary appears to suggest that the animals can adapt almost infinitely to human activities and to the built environment, "Despite the changes to the natural environment wild creatures remain," proclaims the commentary in the opening sequence. But in most cities, Vancouver included, deer crash through plate glass windows or are mowed down by city traffic, skunks are forced into malodorous confrontations with dogs, and coyotes are inclined to kill and eat pet cats. Tellingly too, the one wild animal that is always seen as a threatening intruder when it appears in Vancouver's mountain suburbs, the black bear, is not mentioned. While I wouldn't suggest that *Wild in the City* should have included all such examples of disasters and carnage, it would have been helpful if the approach could have been less blandly optimistic about human/animal interactions.

All about Bears, excerpted from a longer 1985 film *Bears and Man*, provides a better balance in dealing with problems in human/animal interaction. It deals with the issue of "spoiled" bears in national parks whose taste for junk food, often fed to them by park visitors, has made them a danger to themselves and to any human beings they encounter. While the commentary, read by Bronwyn Drainie, is understated, the film footage gives the lie to any notion that a bear can be outrun or outclimbed, and the images of a station wagon ripped apart both inside and out by a bear looking for food should serve as a warning to the unwary.

In both compilations the films without commentary are by far the most effective. Noticeably too, voice-over commentary will date a film more readily than the visual footage. The 1974 film, *Wolf Pack*, has some visual elements that give away its vintage, particularly the invasive use of the camera and lights into a whelping den. The commentary, however, combined with the laboriously matched-to-action soundtrack, is what marks the film as belonging to another age. All wolves, pups and adults alike, are "he," with the single exception of a female whelping or rearing young. In preparation for whelping she even "cleans out the den" while "he and the pack look after the food supply." Similarly, the emphasis in the commentary is relentlessly on competition and a Darwinian "struggle for existence." Today, wildlife films often reflect the more recent view of wildlife biologists that co-operation among species members and even between species plays a larger role in enabling creatures to survive and reproduce.

If I were to pick a single short film from these two compilations as being of lasting value in environmental education, I would choose the *Journey of the Blob* from the *Planet Earth* collection. The ten minute film shows how a "blob" introduced into a stream by an experimentally-minded boy travels to the sea, becomes vapour in the atmosphere, then rainfall, travels into the water supply to eventually appear literally in the boy's own backyard when he's filling a paddling pool with a hose. While I think the film would have had more educational value if we had seen the boy flush the blob down the toilet in the opening sequence rather than put it directly into a stream, this film still does a fine job of showing the connectedness of natural systems and could lead to a very productive classroom discussion.

Despite their shortcomings and tendency to soft-centredness, most of the films selected for these two collections can still serve as valuable springboards for discussion if the teacher has a good grasp of ecological principles. But for many viewers, nature will continue to seem remote from everyday experience and disconnected from the consequences of our actions.

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PIGS MIGHT FLY—*BABE*, A FILM ABOUT HIDDEN POTENTIAL

Babe, MCA Productions, 1995.

The movie version of *Babe*, based on the story by Dick King-Smith, is a triumph of the imagination, both in its form and in its content. If the story of a pig who wanted to be a sheepdog and succeeded were not inspirational enough, the clever animals — real and robotic — the brilliant human cast, and the singing mice who move easily from "Blue Moon" to snippets from *Carmen*, remind us that movies can make anything possible.

With a premise like that of E.B. White in *Charlotte's Web*, King-Smith and the screenwriters George Miller and Chris Noonan manage to convince us that

pigs are "for" many more things than ham and bacon. Lines like "What on earth is Hoggett doing with that gun?" are not so different really from "Where's Papa going with that ax?", the line that begins White's novel. Babe, with the help of Fly, a maternal sheepdog, is taught how to make himself indispensable to Farmer Hoggett, variously known as "the Boss" or "the Boss's husband." He achieves this miracle by becoming a "sheep pig," capable of asking sheep nicely to obey him and getting their respect in return. All power structures, including the food chain, are threatened by this kind of conduct.

Like White's story, this one does not deny the "cold facts of nature," but it does bend them a little to accommodate the needs of the star, a.k.a. "the pig of destiny." Some of the supporting cast, it is true, is not so lucky. A duck who wants to be a rooster or, failing that, an alarm clock, becomes a comical sidekick, but not a miraculous hero. Babe, on the other hand, has what it takes. Although he is shocked to discover what really has happened to his family, who he innocently believed had gone away to paradise, he is able to form his own family and to teach them a thing or two as well.

Fly and Mr. Hoggett and the entire viewing audience are, of course, on the side of the miraculous. There are those, however, who prefer things the way they were. One of these characters is Mrs. Hoggett, who tells us that "Pork is a nice sweet meat" and who suggests that Babe might be just the thing for Christmas dinner. From the animals' point of view, though, "Christmas means carnage." We are definitely with them; in fact, one wonders watching the film if we are not creating a generation of determined vegetarians. Besides Mrs. Hoggett, Rex, Fly's mate, a rather macho sheepdog, is keen on maintaining the status quo. He clearly believes that animals must accept their lot in life and be thankful for it. He is so aggressively opposed to Babe's usurping his role as a sheepdog that he very nearly gets "snipped" by his owner. But even Rex and Mrs. Hoggett, by the end of the story, are happy participants in Babe's victory. It seems that the way things are may be challenged by anyone smart enough to be friendly, polite, and useful to someone else. Education can do wonders, too, even if you are, like Babe, labelled as "definitely stupid." We all apparently have things to learn, not the least of which is that we can be helpful to each other.

The movie illustrates that collaborative efforts and imagination can bring a vision to life. Indeed, the animals and the robots are so well integrated that it is hard to know the real from the unreal. *Babe* is a movie that can topple hierarchies. It will make you think about what the real relation between people and animals is, about what any of us is for, about what any of us can do with some imagination and a willingness to co-operate nicely, and about what you plan to have for dinner tonight.

Joanne Buckley *is English Usage Specialist at The University of Western Ontario and the author of* Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing.

BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE / LIVRES RECENSÉS DANS CE NUMÉRO

ANNOUNCEMENTS / ANNONCES

Tim Wynne-Jones has won the 1995 Boston Globe—Horn Book Fiction Award for *Some of the Kinder Planets*.

The 1995 Bilson Award, given annually for a work of historical fiction for young people, has been won by Joan Clark for *The Dream Carvers*.

The 1995 Governor General's award winners for children's literature are: English text, Tim Wynne-Jones for *The Maestro* (Groundwood); English illustration, Ludmila Zeman, for *The Last Quest of Gilgamesh* (Tundra); French text, Sonia Sarfati for *Comme une peau de chagrin* (la courte échelle); Annouchka Gravel Galouchko, for *Sho et les dragons d'eau* (Annick).

Applications for the $1000 Frances E. Russell award should be mailed to Lissa Paul, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, Bag Service, #45333, Fredericton, NB, E3B 6E3 by March 15, 1996. The $1000 award, to be administered by IBBY Canada, is available to Canadian citizens and landed immigrants. It is to be put towards the costs of research for a publishable work on Canadian children's literature, on one of the following topics: 1/ Studies of individual authors and their work; 2/ Comparative studies of two or more authors; 3/ Subject overviews; 4/ Biographical studies of Canadian children's authors or illustrators; 5/ Studies of Canadian illustrators; 6/ Related subjects including contemporary theoretical approaches to the study of Canadian children's literature. Please include a vita, a letter of reference, and a detailed research proposal.

The Ezra Jack Keats/de Grummond Collection Research Fellowship was established to award grants to scholars engaged in research projects based substantially on the holdings of the de Grummond Children's Literature Research Collection. Information on applying for the 1996 fellowship is available from Dee Jones, Curator, de Grummond Collection, Box 5148, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-5148. Phone (601) 266-4349; fax: (601) 266-4409; e-mail: dee_jones@bull.cc.usm.edu.

The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition is open to unpublished authors submitting a manuscript appropriate for readers aged 8-11, which serves to deepen the understanding of Judaism and reveal positive aspects of Jewish life. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 1996. Entry forms and rules are available from Ms. Paula Sandfelder, Coordinator, 1327 Wyntercreek Ln., Dunwoody, GA 30338. Phone: (770) 394-2060.