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Editorial: Shades of Difference: The Female Characters of Monica Hughes and Paul Yee

A green-skinned woman with lizard-like features is not what you'll find on the cover of this issue. But there might as well be. For the girl we do give you — Paul Yee's Maylin (cook, artist, pioneer) — is not unlike Monica Hughes's Olwen Pendennis (the girl of reptilian complexion): talented, "different," strong, yet absurdly undervalued by her society. In our cover image, Maylin is flanked by the capacious paunches and phallic poles of men who steer her toward a meeting with a Chinese governor. As an image of a woman who is nearly effaced by the constraints of her society, Maylin perfectly captures the subject of this issue's articles: the philosophies of Monica Hughes and Paul Yee as they emerge through their female characters. How does one avoid such effacement? What values do the writers cultivate in their female characters to make them resilient and brave? What are Yee's and Hughes's attitudes toward the societies which supposedly nurture their characters? These are just some of the questions this issue addresses.

At first glance, Hughes's sci-fi fantasy and Yee's socio-historical realism would seem to share little in common. Indeed, Raymond Jones argues persuasively that Hughes's Olwen Pendennis has much in common with Frankenstein's monster; and Chen and Parungao argue that Yee's female characters anticipate those we find in the work of Chinese-Canadian women writers such as SKY Lee and Evelyn Lau. But as the articles in this issue make clear, both Hughes and Yee examine the ways in which female identity is formed in relation to physical appearance, family heritage, and private mission. Further, part of this formation of identity will be coloured by experiences in society; and in each case (Hughes's or Yee's), society can be a hateful force, embodying patriarchal shackles (Yee) or a violent fear of the *Other* (Hughes). But neither Hughes nor Yee gives up on society; in fact, Jones shows us that a central feature of Hughes's philosophy is the necessity for suffering, which promotes moral and psychological growth and helps prepare the likes of Olwen Pendennis for saving and renewing their societies. This philosophy is intimately tied, so Jones argues, to a Wordsworthian theodicy of the private life. Chen and Parungao, by contrast, show us how Yee's female characters are a magical combination of Confucian and Taoist tenets, helping us see in a new light Yee's ambivalent feelings about the tightly-woven Chinese society from which his female characters emerge. Thus, though their Wordsworthian or Taoist influences seem to situate Yee and Hughes miles apart, we think you'll find that the green skin of Olwen is only a more conspicuous shade of Maylin's "difference."

Marie Davis

Présentation: *Les personnages féminins chez Monica Hughes et Paul Yee*

Il s'en est fallu de peu que l'on n'ait trouvé en page-couverture une femme à la peau verte et aux traits reptiliens. Car la jeune fille qui s'y voit, la Maylin de Paul Yee, cuisinière, artiste et pionnière, n'est pas au fond si différente de la créature de Monica Hughes, Olwen Pendennis: talentueuse, forte, "différente" mais cruellement sous-estimée par son milieu social. Sur notre couverture, Maylin est flanquée d'hommes aux panses proéminentes et aux longs bâtons phalliques qui l'amènent auprès d'un gouverneur chinois. Dans cette image de femme menacée par les contraintes sociales, la jeune fille met en relief le sujet des articles du présent numéro: les valeurs morales de Monica Hughes et de Paul Yee telles qu'elles s'imposent à travers leurs personnages féminins. Comment éviter cette menace? Quelles qualités faut-il mettre de l'avant pour créer des héroïnes déterminées? Quelles attitudes ces auteurs adoptent-ils devant les sociétés qui produisent de tels personnages? Telles sont quelques-unes des questions abordées par nos collaborateurs.

Au premier abord, la science-fiction et le fantastique de M. Hughes et le réalisme socio-historique de P. Yee semblent partager fort peu de traits communs. En effet, selon R. Jones, Frankenstein et la Olwen Pendennis de M. Hughes ont bien des caractéristiques comparables; et, selon J. Chen, les personnages féminins de P. Yee annoncent ceux d'écrivains d'origine chinoise contemporains comme Sky Lee et Evelyn Lau. Mais, en revanche, il devient clair que ces romanciers montrent que l'identité féminine se construit en relation avec l'apparence physique, l'héritage familial et la recherche d'une destin personnel. En outre, cette identité en devenir est forgée par l'expérience douleureuse de la vie en société; et pour chacun de deux écrivains en présence, la société représente une force hostile soumise aux diktats patriarcaux (P. Yee) ou à la peur de l'Autre (M. Hughes). Mais ni l'un ni l'autre ne désespèrent de la société; en fait, R. Jones nous montre qu'un élément central de la philosophie de M. Hughes consiste en la croyance à la nécessité de la souffrance, qui permet la maturation morale et prépare les êtres tels Olwen Pendennis à revouveler leur société. Cette philosophie est assimilable à une théodicée de la vie privée à la Wordsworth. À l'inverse, pour J. Chen, les héroïnes de Paul Yee sont une combinatoire de caractéristiques confucianistes et taoïstes, ce qui jette une regard neuf sur les sentiments ambivalents de cet auteur à l'égard de la société chinoise où évoluent ses personnages. Ainsi, bien que les influences du Tao et de Worsdworth semblent à une distance infinie, nous croyons que la peau verdâtre d'Olwen n'est qu'une nuance de la différence de Maylin. Enfin, cette réflexion sur l'identité trouve son complément dans une brève étude de Monique Noël-Gaudreault sur la série Frissons.

Daniel Chouinard

Re-Visioning ***Frankenstein: The Keeper of the Isis Light*** *as Theodicy*

• *Raymond E. Jones* •

Résumé: *Le roman de Monica Hughes,* ***The Keeper of the Isis Light****, partage de nombreuses affinités avec le chef-d'oeuvre de Mary Shelley,* ***Frankenstein****. Notamment au plan de l'histoire: dans les deux cas, il s'agit des mésaventures d'un être créé par la science, qui recherche la compagnie de la société et subit un rejet universel pour finir dans l'isolement complet. Toutefois, si le récit de Mary Shelley sous-tend une "théodicée noire", soit un discours sur l'injustice universelle qui produit des soufrances injustes, donc la monstruosité, celui de M. Hughes débouche sur une "théodicée de la vie privée", où la souffrance aboutit à l'approfondissement de soi et au développement moral et psychologique.*

Summary: *As the story of a scientifically produced "creature" who longs for human society, suffers rejection, and then goes into isolation,* ***The Keeper of the Isis Light*** *is remarkably similar to Mary Shelley's* ***Frankenstein****, the novel generally credited as the first in the genre and the one that introduced the figure of the alien. Although both novels focus on the development of consciousness and on identity-formation,* ***The Keeper of the Isis Light*** *connects society, individual psychology, and morality in a profoundly different way. The creature's story in* ***Frankenstein*** *is a "black theodicy," a discourse on universal injustice in which unjust suffering makes Victor Frankenstein's creature a true monster. In* ***The Keeper of the Isis Light****, however, Hughes critically modifies Shelley's dark theodicy, rewriting its materials to create a "theodicy of the private life," in which suffering leads to psychological and moral growth.*

In 1969, Sheila Egoff declared that "Science fiction for children is not literature; there is as yet no novel in the field that welds scientific fact and/or sociological speculation with strong literary qualities to give it universal appeal. Nothing yet matches the best in other genres, such as fantasy and the realistic or historical novel for children" ("Science Fiction" 384). Twelve years later, Egoff reasserted her opinion, saying that science fiction for children,

unlike that for adults, "has no such touchstones by which it may be measured and judged" (*Thursday's Child* 132-33). Instead, Egoff claimed that children's science fiction, lacking the "'shining successes'" evident in other genres, "tends to ape, in diminishing and diminutive detail, its adult counterpart" (133). Just a year earlier, however, Monica Hughes had published *The Keeper of the Isis Light* (1980), a science fiction novel for children that eventually forced Egoff to revise her position. Writing with Judith Saltman in *The New Republic of Childhood* (1990), Egoff thus praised Hughes for her "outstanding" achievement, declaring that "perhaps her greatest contribution has been to create — in *The Keeper of the Isis Light* — a shining touchstone for judging children's science fiction" (283).

Ironically, in creating this touchstone, Hughes aped adult science fiction, employing one of its staple figures and critically rearranging the elements of the novel generally credited as the first in the genre, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818; revised 1831). John Rieder has noted that, since the publication of *Frankenstein*, science fiction has been "a genre fascinated with images of the fantastic alien" (26). He says that, as "a projection of the Other," the science fiction alien is "usually an estranged or *alienated* figure" because social context, not radical difference of nature, makes the alien "an outsider" (26). In *The Keeper of the Isis Light*, Olwen Pendennis, the central character, is such an alien. Although she is green and has lizard-like features, she does not differ from humans in nature because she was born of parents from Earth. After her parents died in a cosmic storm on Isis, the robot Guardian genetically and surgically altered Olwen so that she could survive that planet's intense radiation. Consequently, as Hughes wrote in "The Writer as Mask-Maker and Mask-Wearer," "Olwen is no longer a typical Earth child. She is, to all intents and purposes, *alien*" (183). Years later, Olwen, who has never seen herself in a mirror, painfully discovers her identity as alien when settlers from Earth, horrified by her appearance, reject her.

As the story of a scientifically produced "creature" who longs for human society, suffers rejection, and then goes into isolation, *The Keeper of the Isis Light* is remarkably similar to *Frankenstein*, the novel that introduced the figure of the alien into science fiction. Although both novels focus on the development of consciousness and on identity-formation, *The Keeper of the Isis Light* connects society, individual psychology, and morality in a profoundly different way. With its frequent allusions to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a theodicy, or attempt to "justifie the wayes of God to men" (*PL* 1.26), the creature's story in *Frankenstein* is what Milton A. Mays calls a "black theodicy" (147), a discourse on universal injustice in which unjust suffering makes Victor Frankenstein's creature a true monster. In *The Keeper of the Isis Light*, however, unjust suffering transforms Guardian's creature, Olwen, into a mature, fully human woman. In an interview published in *Canadian Children's Literature*, Hughes said that Olwen begins as "a very ordinary person" and that "her sense of self and her whole spirituality is not developed at all

because she's had no challenges" (Jones, "Technological Pastoralist" 11). Like William Wordsworth, who gave "Thanks to the means," the terrors, pains, and miseries that were "a needful part" in making up his existence "when I / Am worthy of myself" (1850 *Prelude* 1.351, 348-50), Hughes thus believes that personal suffering is necessary for maturation. Hughes dramatizes her belief through what M.H. Abrams, who traced a similar procedure in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, terms "a secular theodicy" (95). Abrams places this "Wordsworthian theodicy of the private life," as he also calls it, within "the distinctive Romantic genre of the *Bildungsgeschichte*," the novel of development that, he says,

> translates the painful process of Christian conversion and redemption into a painful process of self-formation, crisis, and self-recognition, which culminates in a stage of self-coherence, self-awareness, and assured power that is its own reward. (96)

As an examination of their parallel elements shows, Hughes critically modifies Shelley's dark theodicy, rewriting its materials to create such a *Bildungsgeschichte*, or "theodicy of the private life," in which suffering leads to psychological and moral growth.

The parallels to *Frankenstein* are muted in the beginning of *The Keeper of the Isis Light* because Olwen, having never seen herself or other humans, is unaware of her difference and thus her status as alien. Although the narrator hints about Olwen's physical condition, the reader is basically as unconscious of her appearance as she herself is. By allowing the reader first to experience Olwen's subjectivity independent of knowledge of her physical appearance, Hughes accomplishes the same thing that Shelley achieved through first-person narration. As Chris Baldick says in *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, "The decision to give the monster an articulate voice is Mary Shelley's most important subversion of the category of monstrosity" (45). Hughes's third-person limited viewpoint similarly engenders sympathy for Olwen while it conditions the reader to reject the equation of different appearance with monstrosity, an equation that governs the perceptions of the colonists who arrive from Earth.

The initial scenes also subvert the idea that Olwen is alien. Hughes presents Olwen as a happy Romantic child. Like the youthful Wordsworth, who "had a world about me — 'twas my own" (1805-6 *Prelude* 3.142), Olwen has a proprietary feeling as she looks over and meditates on the landscape of "her world" (2). Having named both its living things and its places, she is a female Adam (Kertzer 25) in an Eden that she thinks is "perfect" (8). This role as Adam is a subtle link to characters in Shelley's novel. In her solitary and sheltered innocence, Olwen first resembles Victor Frankenstein, who enjoyed what Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar show was a sheltered "Edenic childhood" (230). Later, when she becomes aware of her social difference,

Olwen resembles Frankenstein's disillusioned monster, who also compares himself to Adam. Olwen begins with an understandable but naive desire to preserve her prelapsarian world: "'I wish that everything will go on being perfect, just the way it is now'" (8-9). Guardian underlines the impossibility of her desire, however, pointing out that just as nature changes, so must Olwen: "'Stasis is death'" (9). Lacking a sense of change, an appreciation of all facets of nature, and an understanding of the subjectivity of others, Olwen must fall from innocence into painful experience in order to achieve emotional and spiritual maturity.

Once the narrative makes clear the fact of Olwen's appearance (in an episode best examined later), connections to *Frankenstein* become obvious and meaningful. Both Frankenstein's nameless "daemon" and Olwen are manufactured in laboratories, but the factors shaping their destinies are different because Frankenstein occupies the position of a callous deity, whereas Guardian is a benevolent creator. The initial difference is between a scientific endeavour that is an arrogant masculine usurpation of the female role of creation[1] and one that extends the female role and thus is ethically sounder. Victor Frankenstein creates his monster because of patriarchal hubris, declaring that "A new species would bless me as its creator and source.... No father could claim the gratitude of his children so completely as I should deserve theirs" (54). In contrast, Guardian obeys a loving, matriarchal command from Olwen's dying mother and reshapes her to protect her. Like Victor, Guardian defines himself by his relationship to his "offspring," but Guardian is subservient, telling Olwen, "'you are my reason'" (82). The two creators thus differ in their relation to nature and to the way they exercise their talents. Frankenstein bends nature to his will, opposing death by forming his monster from corpses, but Guardian adapts his creature to nature, making her one with her environment. For the selfish reason that minute parts would interfere with the speed of creation, Victor makes his creature physically superior to ordinary humans: the monster is gigantic, and he possesses greater speed, agility, and tolerance for extremes in temperature. Guardian, in contrast, considers Olwen's well-being: he makes her superior to ordinary humans and alters both her features and her metabolism to enable her to withstand the intense radiation of Isis and to breathe unaided in its oxygen-thin upper regions. The "daemon" therefore differs from ordinary humans and becomes an alien because his creator is self-absorbed, but Olwen differs because her creator is considerate of her need to fit into the natural world, a natural world that is, unfortunately for Olwen, alien and hostile to the settlers.

The degree to which each creator realizes his plans also affects the future of his creature. Victor selects features as beautiful, but he botches his task, producing a being so hideous that he himself flees in disgust. By judging his creature on the basis of appearance and then effectively orphaning him, Frankenstein abuses him, forcing him to live alone, to suffer, and to

educate himself. Although the settlers eventually find Olwen's features as horrifying as Victor found those of his creature, Guardian succeeds magnificently in realizing a practical aesthetics: "'You are not ugly at all. Form and function should be as one. You function perfectly. You are beautiful'" (82-83). Each creator's attitude thus shapes his creature's subsequent destiny. By giving birth to a monster and then abandoning patriarchal responsibility for it, Frankenstein violates the family bonds in which Shelley grounds moral virtue (Mellor, "Possessing Nature" 230). In contrast, Guardian fulfils both parental roles perfectly, telling Olwen, "'I am your father and mother'" (6). Frankenstein's creature, who suffers neglect and unwarranted misery, plunges into murderous anger, but Olwen, who experiences security and joy, later acts charitably. Both novels therefore emphasize the psychological and moral consequences of nurture.

Before we compare their reactions to rejection, however, one further difference, that of gender, warrants comment. That Frankenstein's creature is male and Olwen is female may suggest differences in their social relationships and psychological reactions. Some feminist critics have argued, however, that Frankenstein's monster embodies significant female anxieties. Mary Poovey, for example, says that the monster "is doubly like a woman in patriarchal society — forced to be a symbol of (and vehicle for) someone else's desire, yet exposed (and exiled) as the deadly essence of passion itself" (128). Gilbert and Gubar go even further, claiming that "Victor Frankenstein's male monster may really be a female in disguise" (237). They explain that "women have seen themselves (because they have been seen) as monstrous, vile, degraded creatures, second-comers, and emblems of filthy materiality..." (240). For such critics, Frankenstein's monster enacts a symbolic critique of the patriarchal treatment of the female Other.

Although it is clear that "*Keeper* is a complex myth about the development of female identity" (Jones, "True Myth" 170), Hughes has explained on numerous occasions that the novel had its genesis in a newspaper item about a boy named David, who was kept apart from all other humans because he suffered from a deficient immune system. David's situation provided her with the thematic material for a novel exploring "the difference between being alone and being lonely," one that would answer the question, "Is loneliness an essential part of being human?" (Jones, "Technological Pastoralist" 10). Hughes does not explain what prompted her to change her protagonist's gender, but this change is inspired: because of it Hughes can explore both the social and the sexual components of appearance-based relationships far more directly than Shelley does.[2]

Once people see them, both aliens suffer. Seeing is, of course, a common epistemological symbol, a signification of intellectual understanding found in the expression "I see what you mean." In both novels, however, seeing does not indicate understanding of the true nature of the object of

perception but, rather, a projection of meaning on to it. Because males have historically judged females by appearance, the emphasis on seeing suggests a patriarchal value system in which physical beauty signals human value.[3] Frankenstein's monster suffers acutely from such judgments because, as Anne K. Mellor points out in *Mary Shelley*, "Not only Frankenstein but all the other people the creature encounters immediately see his physiognomy as evil" (129). Thus, a shepherd flees in horror, and a group of villagers attack him. To emphasize the superficiality of such judgments, Shelley has the creature find refuge in a lean-to next to the house of an old blind man named De Lacey. The creature eventually tells De Lacey his story, and the blind man sympathizes. However, when De Lacey's son, Felix, sees the monster, the hegemony of the visual again asserts itself: the frightened Felix attacks the creature. Later, in a scene emphasizing even more emphatically the injustice of judgments based on vision, the creature rescues a young girl from drowning, only to be shot by a rustic who sees him near the girl. The rustic equates a monstrous appearance with monstrous acts; seeing the ugly surface, he is blind to the heroic benevolence within.

The scenes in which people reject Olwen are not as dramatic as those in *Frankenstein*, but they too conclude in unwarranted suffering. Olwen does not suffer immediate rejection because the settlers do not initially see her true appearance. To protect her until she and the settlers get used to one another, Guardian makes her wear a suit and mask that give her the appearance of a beautiful Earth girl. The mask attracts a young settler named Mark London, who establishes the shallowness of visual perception when he considers his feelings for Olwen: "Love? That was crazy, completely absolutely off. I've never even really *seen* her he told himself angrily. Just talked to her ... shared some thoughts ... felt ... felt what?" (54; emphasis in original). Mark is like the blind De Lacey with Frankenstein's creature: unable to see her true appearance, he develops sympathy for Olwen because her conversations make him appreciate her character. One day, however, he climbs a mesa and finds her with her back turned to him. He regards her as "the most lovely, the most graceful, the most desirable woman he would ever see in his whole life" (58). When she turns around, though, Mark sees that she is not wearing her mask, and her alien face fills him with such horror that he falls from the mesa. Afterwards he rejects Olwen as a "'disgusting creature'" (110), a phrase that echoes people's judgments of Frankenstein's creature and also "represents the rejection of the Female Other, who will not or cannot conform to conventional patterns of behavior and of beauty" (Jones, "True Myth" 172). Mark's physical fall thus represents a psychological fall into painful experience for both him and Olwen. Olwen's pain is compounded afterwards because Mark's society also rejects her. While she is playing with Hobbit, her pet hairy dragon, a group of settlers frightened by the fearsome appearance of her pet kill it and then, in a scene reminiscent of the rustic's encounter with the daemon, point a gun at the unmasked Olwen.

Their emotional reactions to such unfair judgments further link the creature and Olwen, both of whom come to hate the very society they once desired. After the De Lacey family departs, Frankenstein's creature declares that "feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom" and that "I bent my mind towards injury and death" (138); he then performs his first act as a true monster, burning their dwelling. Olwen, enraged by the death of Hobbit, storms into the village, where the fearful settlers are hiding, throws a boulder through a window, and screams, "'I hate you!'" (74). Although she is not as destructive as Frankenstein's creature, this outburst represents a change in attitude as dramatic as his because it shows that she is no longer the Romantic child of the opening scene, in which she stretched out her arms in a gesture suggesting a loving desire to embrace the world (3).

In addition to being similar in their feelings of resentment, both alien figures are remarkably similar in the way they develop consciousness of themselves. Both are in a sense born free of personal history.[4] Thinking back on his earliest days, Frankenstein's monster has "considerable difficulty" remembering "the original era of my being" because "all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct" (102).[5] Because Guardian erased her memory after her parents died so that she would not suffer grief or loneliness, Olwen, thinking about her life before her fourth birthday, encounters "Just emptiness. Non-existence" (6). The monster learns about his construction when he finds Victor's journal in the coat he took from the laboratory. Reading it, he is filled with disgust and with hatred for the "'Accursed creator'" (130) who was so sickened by his own creation that he abandoned him. If the monster's situation symbolizes a universe in which the deity is callous, Olwen's represents one in which the creator cares for his creatures. When Guardian helps Olwen to recover her personal past by showing her movies of herself with her parents and by explaining how and why he altered her, she recognizes the unselfishness of her creator and expresses gratitude: "'Why should I be angry? You gave me freedom. You gave me happiness. You gave me Isis. I love you for it, Guardian'" (82). Olwen thus gives to her creator the very blessing that Victor Frankenstein desired from his creature.

The greatest and most meaningful difference between these aliens comes, however, in strikingly similar scenes of self-discovery involving reflections. When the monster first sees himself in a pool near the De Lacey home, he is "unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror." Already aware of "the perfect forms of my cottagers," he finds himself "fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am" (114). The monster, in other words, accepts society's vision, even though he continues to long for acceptance based on the inward nobility that no one will permit him to demonstrate. Olwen, who has grown up without mirrors, also sees her reflection for the first time after she suffers rejection. Like the monster, she initially sees her image as alien, snapping "'Who are you?'" and then realiz-

ing that "The Other, the intruder, was herself" (84). The monster, comparing himself to humans, sees himself as a "miserable deformity" (114), and he answers only with groans the question "What was I?" (121). Olwen has a stronger sense of personal worth. Comparing herself to the settlers, she decides that "'I'm better'" (82) because she can move about her dangerous planet without the need for an awkward breathing apparatus and radiation suits. Guardian previously warned her: "'A mirror can only show you what *you* see as yourself. It cannot tell you what another person sees'" (39). Rejection has taught Olwen what others see, but, unlike Frankenstein's creature, she repudiates society's vision and its value system by again expressing gratitude and by accepting herself: "Dear Guardian, thank you for my body. It's beautiful!'" (85).[6]

Because their perceptions differ, these aliens continue to respond to suffering in significantly different ways. The monster persists in seeing himself as a victim and articulates the argument of his black theodicy: "'I am malicious because I am miserable'" (145). Feeling himself to be "'miserably alone'" (100), he seeks a social/sexual solution to his difficulty, and demands a mate because "'the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes ...'" (147). After Victor destroys the woman he had promised to make, however, the monster knows that he will forever be denied the satisfaction of companionship and therefore surrenders himself to "'inextinguishable hatred'" (145). Olwen also feels victimized at first. Mark's fall, which is parallel to Victor's destruction of the female monster because it destroys her hopes for companionship, becomes for her a sign of cosmic injustice: "Guardian had never told her about a God who could do a thing like that to Mark. It was not fair.... How could she pray to that kind of God?" (67). Like the monster, she also puts herself in opposition to society, declaring that she is now an adult who must "'put up defences so as not to get hurt'": "'Why should I leave myself open to hate and fear and ... and disgust?'" (88). Olwen temporarily toys with a social solution to her isolation, one that rings an ironic change on the monster's demand that Victor create a mate: instead of seeking the creation of a mate who looks like her, she contemplates undergoing a painful operation that would make her look more like Mark London. She rejects this operation, though, just as she also rejects a simplistic psychological solution, the loss of conscious awareness of her condition that would follow if she asked Guardian to erase all memory of her unhappy experiences. Both procedures would rob Olwen of her developing identity.

Another reason that Frankenstein's creature and Olwen have significantly different fates is that they embody different experiences with and interpretations of nature. Both are connected to sublime landscapes, landscapes of immense size and threatening power.[7] Frankenstein's creature inhabits such sublime landscapes as "desert mountains and dreary glaciers" and "caves of ice" (100), in which he suffers physical privation and emotional loneliness. Furthermore, as Mellor notes, his appearances "are simul-

taneous with revelations of the sublime," such as a violent storm (*Mary Shelley* 131). Consequently, the creature repeatedly signifies a destructive power beyond human control. Olwen also inhabits a terrifying landscape, the upper regions of Isis, which are low in oxygen and high in radiation. This landscape represents "the green world of female freedom" (Jones, "True Myth" 171), so Olwen does not share the settlers' perception of it as hostile; happy in her freedom and her idyllic life with Guardian, she sees only its romantic beauty. She thus embodies an idyllic union with nature. After Mark and the settlers reject her, however, Olwen plunges into despair, a dark night of the soul, in which she loses her emotional connection to nature because her favourite places have "lost their savour" (89).

Although Olwen's loss of pleasure in nature is similar to the monster's and conveys a similar sense of moral upheaval or cosmic disorder, her reaction is significantly different.[8] The embittered monster embarks on a journey of revenge, murdering all close to Victor and luring his creator towards the Arctic, a cold, desolate landscape symbolically appropriate for two beings whose hearts are devoid of compassion. Olwen also undertakes a journey, but she goes alone into nature, where, as images and symbols suggest, she has a redemptive, spiritual experience. On the third day, an archetypal day for rebirth, Olwen thus discovers a valley whose river mirrors that of her own childhood valley. The wind, a conventional symbol of spirit or godhood, moves among the bamboo, making "a solemn music" (90).[9] Although attracted by the "peace and beauty" (90) of the valley, Olwen feels restless and ascends the next day to higher ground, where she discovers that a "tremendous wind" (91) is blowing from the north. The increase in the force of the wind marks a movement from an experience of the "beautiful" to an experience of the "sublime," and Olwen's recognition of the difference marks a profound change of consciousness. Whereas storms in *Frankenstein* reflect the monster's unbridled fury and hatred, this storm leads to restoration. Olwen seeks refuge in "a deep crevice, almost a cave" (91), a symbolic womb in which she is reborn. When a hairy dragon shelters with her in the cave, she even gets a replacement for the pet that the settlers killed.

More importantly, Olwen undergoes spiritual restoration, abandoning the bitterness and alienation that characterized her fall into experience. Her change comes in a patently religious interaction with nature. After "a day of unusual wonders," she watches, "As if she were keeping vigil," while the night-time aurora becomes "great cathedral pillars and arches carved from translucent jade," and she hears "the faint crackling music of it, like singing ice" (92). This scene is quintessentially Romantic, presenting Olwen with a union of the contraries of light and dark (the midnight aurora is likened to dawn) and of tumult and peace (a cosmic storm rages in the heavens while the land below is still and peaceful).[10] Her religious experience here culminates in an act of devotional charity: Olwen, who could not pray when she discovered the presence of evil in the world, now prays to God to

keep Mark and the settlers safe. Olwen thus succeeds where the monster fails. The monster took to hiding in "a womblike hovel, as if it could be born again into culture by aping the motions of the family it spies upon" (Poovey 129). After being rejected, he thinks only of his own suffering and therefore heaps curses on his creator, whereas the truly reborn Olwen considers the well-being of others.

Although the novel mentions God, it does not, as conventional theodicies do, emphasize the role of the deity and the rewards of heaven. Rather, by focusing on Olwen's acute awareness of her own responses to nature, it follows Wordsworth's secular emphasis on personal feelings and rewards in this life. As Guardian notes, Olwen's ability to sense the coming of storms with her body indicates that she is "'becoming more and more one with the planet'" (113). In essence, Olwen has achieved the union of mind and nature that Abrams posits as the aim of the Wordsworthian theodicy of the private life (27 ff). The moral significance of this merging with nature becomes apparent when the next storm strikes. After learning that one of the settler children is lost, Olwen sets out to find him. A positive sense of her difference creates moral duty: "'I have to go. I'm the only one who can'" (116). Therefore, Olwen violates her own bitter vow never again to descend to the valley, and performs a heroic deed rich in symbolism: by braving the storm, she braves the violent and wilful elements of her own nature; by pulling the child from a sink hole, she symbolically gives birth to the future. In contrast, the monster maintains his vow of vengeance and destroys the future in the forms of Victor's little brother and his bride. Because he accepts the logic of male justice, which demands equality of treatment, the monster inflicts pain as recompense for the pain he feels. He thus supports the black theodicy's image of a universe of evil and unjustified suffering. Olwen's actions, in contrast, support a female ethic of caring and non-violence, supporting the secular theodicy's concept that suffering leads to moral maturation.[11]

Olwen subsequently enters the final stage of the theodicy of the private life, the one that Abrams calls the "stage of self-coherence, self-awareness, and assured power that is its own reward." Olwen demonstrates her self-coherence when she refuses Captain Tryon's offer of surgery because it would entail a loss of communion with the beauties of upper Isis. When the Captain suggests that she nevertheless make her home among them to avoid loneliness, Olwen makes a discovery central to the conclusion of Hughes's theodicy. After Olwen responds that she won't be alone because she has Guardian, the exasperated Captain Tryon explodes, "'He's only a damned robot, after all!'" (131). Understanding for the first time that Guardian is not human, Olwen feels "abandoned, alone" (131). This feeling signals achievement of mature self-awareness, a knowledge of self and others impossible in self-centred childhood. Having lost her parent figure, Olwen must now assume responsibility for herself. Olwen further demonstrates her maturity

with Mark. She tries to relieve him of guilt he may feel for rejecting her by indicating that they cannot share a life together because they differ in appearance and because they cannot share vital experiences: "'Isis is mine, from the valleys to the mountain peaks, summer and winter and cosmic storm'" (135). Her language suggests a mature synthesis of contraries, an acceptance of the richness of experience. Finally, Olwen demonstrates an assured sense of her own power, deciding that she will move to the remote valley, from where she will transmit warnings to the settlers about the storms her body detects. Although she will be remote from the settlers, Olwen believes that she will "'be a part of them, just a little'" (136), a belief demonstrating another mature unifying of the contraries of experience.

Both *Frankenstein* and *The Keeper of the Isis Light* conclude with the alien figure leaving society. Sickened by what he has become, the monster departs for the arctic wasteland to seek oblivion in death. The novel ends with the monster "lost in darkness and distance" (223), a phrase suggesting both that he is a lost soul and that he has departed from the realm of visual perception, the realm of injustice in his black theodicy. Although she too journeys to a remote region and therefore leaves the painful realm of visual judgments, Olwen offers society a chance to arrive at a fairer estimate of her worth by maintaining verbal contact, the kind of contact that enabled Mark to appreciate her true nature.

More important, however, is what this journey represents for Olwen. Although it is a linear physical journey, it is symbolically more like a spiral, conforming to what Abrams calls "the typical Romantic pattern." In this pattern, "development consists of a gradual curve back to an earlier stage, but on a higher level incorporating that which has intervened" (114). Olwen will live in a setting similar to that in which she lived before the settlers arrived; she will again have the landscape to herself; she will again have a pet and the companionship of Guardian. She will thus recover her perfect childhood paradise. Because she will also have the lessons she learned from the joyful and painful experiences that forced her to find this new home, she will exist in it on a higher psychological and spiritual level. Olwen's attainment of this level is evident in her final statement. Informed that a robot can never feel lonely, Olwen whispers, "'Poor Guardian'" (136). Olwen realizes, that is, that Guardian, who previously seemed perfect, is actually deficient because he cannot suffer. Olwen's recognition thus constitutes the conclusion of the theodicy of the private life because it justifies evil and pain as necessary if we are to be fully human. Olwen's loss of innocence, her plunge into division and chaos, and her recovery of a sense of self-worth suggest that suffering enables us to know our mature selves, providing a spiritual reward we earn in this world, and that self-knowledge enables us to create our own Eden here. Without evil and pain, we would be locked into the merely intellectual, as is the rational Guardian, or into self-indulgent emotionalism, as the childish Olwen once was.

Hughes has said that "one of the functions of a good writer for children besides, obviously, being entertaining," is to help them find acceptable answers to such "Big Questions" as "What's life about?" and "What is it to be human?" ("The Writer's Quest" 20-21). She insists that the questions "demand truthful answers" but that "always there must come hope" (21). *The Keeper of the Isis Light* offers the truth that suffering is an inevitable part of life and the hope that suffering humanizes and brings psychological or spiritual rewards. By advancing these ideas, Hughes enters into dialogue with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the fountainhead of much modern science fiction. Although Hughes echoes many of the situations in *Frankenstein*, she rejects its idea that both the universe and society are unjust. She therefore offers a new view, or "re-vision," of it. That is, she critically modifies its materials, imposing on Shelley's dark theodicy the more optimistic pattern of the Wordsworthian theodicy of the private life. Young readers can grasp Hughes's central point without knowing either *Frankenstein* or *The Prelude*. Nevertheless, the fact that our understanding of the novel increases when we place it in the context of such discourses about the meaning of suffering and evil indicates that it is not only a "shining touchstone" for juvenile science fiction but also a genuine work of literature, one of the most stimulating and satisfying books for young people ever written in Canada.

Notes

1 Gilbert and Gubar (232-33) and Anne K. Mellor, in "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*" (220), discuss Victor Frankenstein's usurpation of female biology.

2 The novel can also be read as a discourse on colonialism and the racial Other, but in her interview with Jones, Hughes says that the prejudice theme "arose totally by accident in the course of making the plot work" (11). In "The Writer as Mask-Maker and Mask-Wearer," Hughes claims that she was not even aware of this racial theme until she went into schools and talked to teachers, librarians, and students, for whom her own "theme of loneliness" proved "unimportant" (185).

3 Kertzer discusses what she calls the "theme of perspective" and concludes that "Hughes is not suggesting any superiority of female perception over male" (25), but in "True Myth," Jones shows that Hughes uses the seeing motif to present "the opposition between masculine and feminine perceptions" (172).

4 Gilbert and Gubar cite James Reiger's observation that Shelley's monster has "a unique knowledge of what it is like to be born free of history" (238).

5 Mays convincingly argues that "The Monster's description of his dawning consciousness might almost parody Adam's in Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*" (148).

6 Gilbert and Gubar connect the scene in which Frankenstein's monster sees himself in the pool to that in *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, in which Eve sees herself. They argue, on the one hand, that the scene is a "corrective" to Milton because it implies that women, created second, must see themselves as monstrous. On the other, they claim that it "supplements Milton's description of Eve's introduction to herself" in *PL* 4.465-68 because "the self-absorption that Eve's confessed passion for her own image signals

is plainly meant by Milton to seem morally ugly" (240). For Gilbert and Gubar, the monster's physical ugliness represents both the moral deformity Milton assigns to Eve and the physical monstrosity patriarchal culture forces women to see as characteristic of their sex (240-41). In many ways, Hughes revises both Milton and Shelley. Olwen's acceptance of herself clearly contrasts with the monster's reaction to his own image and therefore suggests an acceptance of female functionality as beautiful. Furthermore, Hughes does not, like Milton, present self-admiration as a moral defect; rather, she clearly sees it as a sign of psychological maturity. In "The Writer as Mask-Maker and Mask-Wearer," Hughes praises such self-acceptance, saying that "personal growth consists, metaphorically, in recognizing the masks we hide behind, removing them, and accepting and being at ease with our naked faces and personalities" (184).

7 For a discussion of this key Romantic concept as it applies to *Frankenstein*, see Mellor's *Mary Shelley*, 131-33. In *Natural Supernaturalism*, Abrams shows the importance of the sublime to the Wordsworthian theodicy of the private life, especially in his discussion of "The Theodicy of the Landscape," 97-117.

8 Mays notes that "A bitter sense of exclusion for all pleasure, and in particular the sensuous beauties of nature characterizes both the Monster and Milton's Satan" (150). Mays refers to the words of the monster, who, after the rustic shoots him, declares that his sufferings "were not alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery ... I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure" (*Frankenstein* 141-42). Discussing further "this interesting Romantic theme of the 'enjoying power,'" Mays concludes that "this 'loss of pleasure,' the sense of being excluded from the healthy range of sensuous response is the counterpart of some 'cosmic' disorder" that the Monster perceives (151).

9 The wind here recalls the gentle breezes that Wordsworth describes in the 1805-6 version of *The Prelude* as the "breath of Paradise" that finds its way to "the recesses of the soul" (11.11-12) and, according to Abrams, assists "in restoring the paradise within" (109).

10 See Abrams (97 ff) for a discussion of the importance of contrary states in developing Wordsworth's mature spiritual understanding in *The Prelude*, and Mellor's *Mary Shelley* (79-80) for an analysis of Shelley's rejection of the romantic dream of fusing contraries.

11 In her discussion of Mary Shelley's moral vision in *Frankenstein*, Mellor quotes from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1982) distinguishing between the male ethic of justice, based on equality of treatment, and the female ethic of care, based on "the premise of nonviolence — that no one should be hurt" ("Possessing Nature" 229). In "True Myth," Jones briefly discusses Olwen in terms of Gilligan's concept of an ethic of self-sacrifice that is characteristic of one phase of female development (173).

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Raymond E. Jones, *Associate Professor of English at the University of Alberta, has written many articles on children's literature and is co-author of* ***Canadian Books for Children*** *(HBJ).*

Autopsie d'une collection policière jeunesse: Frissons

• *Monique Noël-Gaudreault* •

Summary: *In her brief analysis, the author attempts to define the basic components of the "Frissons" series, a Francophone competitor to "Goosebumps": A hybrid narrative containing elements of both detective novel and thriller with a preference for the most banal settings, and for heroes caught in both a real and symbolic quagmire and opposed to an almost demonized antagonist. The more simplistic the formula, the more efficient are the mass-produced pulp novels.*

Résumé: *Dans sa brève étude de la collection "Frissons", l'auteur cherche à définir les composantes de base (la "recette") du genre narratif en présence: récit hybride, tenant à la fois du roman policier et du "thriller", mise en contexte dans un lieu particulièrement banal, protagoniste enfermé dans une situation cauchemardesque au propre et au figuré, et opposé à un antagoniste diabolisé. La formule, malgré ou grâce à son extrême simplicité, est d'une efficacité redoutable.*

Le premier mot du titre de cet article renvoie à l'action de voir de ses propres yeux. Le mot "autopsie" désigne "la dissection et l'examen d'un cadavre, en vue de déterminer les causes de la mort". Certes, le genre n'est pas mort, mais on murmure qu'il a de sérieux rivaux avec "Chair de Poule" et même dans un autre genre, "Dragon Ball".

Comment expliquer l'engouement et la fascination que les livres de la collection Frissons suscitent chez les préadolecents et les adolescents? Comment expliquer la censure dont ce type de livres est victime dans le milieu scolaire et chez les bibliothécaires? Ils s'intoxiquent! dit-on. Qu'y a-t-il de si sulfureux, de si troublant dans ces volumes?

Dans un premier temps, nous tenterons de définir ce genre hybride. Puis nous examinerons les lieux du "drame" dans leur banalité, pour mieux faire ressortir les types de craintes et de cauchemars du personnage victime,

en face de la violence de l'antagoniste, les jeux du mensonge et de la vérité du côté de l'antagoniste comme de la victime, avec une petite place à l'amour. En conclusion, nous parlerons de la fonction de cet échantillon de littérature sérielle.

Un genre hybride

Frissons, comme son nom l'indique est un "thriller" dont chaque volume compte 156 pages. Selon Cuddon (1991), "thriller" est un terme vague qui désigne un type de roman "énervant" (exciting), avec une intrigue pleine de tension dans laquelle l'action est rapide et le suspense continuel.

Pour Dupuy (1974), c'est un nouveau type de roman noir dans la lignée de Dashiell Hammett (*Le Faucon maltais*) ou de Raymond Chandler (*Le Grand Sommeil*) et aussi du roman feuilleton du XIXe siècle (*Vidocq* ou *Les Mystères de Paris*). En effet, "Thrill" veut dire "faire frissonner, frémir", ce qui implique peur et suspense, c'est-à-dire "incertitude" et "attente". L'examen des titres des volumes de la série (annexe 1) montre que ceux-ci comportent des mots comme "fatidique", "terreur", "mutilées", "trompeuse", "mortelle", "venin", "vengeance", "meurtrières", "infernale", "cauchemar", "fatal", etc.

Il s'agit donc d'un récit de type policier (victime, coupable, meurtre ou tentative de meurtre, enquêteur amateur ou professionnel). Ce genre de récit présente aussi une certaine parenté avec le fantastique à cause du rêve qui se confond avec la réalité, à cause des mises en scène de la Mort, à cause du caractère implacable du harcèlement dont sont victimes les personnages principaux. Ce type d'histoire plonge ses racines dans la part obscure de l'être humain. Il raconte les incertitudes fondamentales de l'existence (Monsieur et Baronian, 1982). Il joue avec les convictions rationnelles du lecteur ou de la lectrice.

Un cadre réaliste (banal) pour l'action

Chaque lieu est un lieu fréquenté par des jeunes gens et jeunes filles d'environ dix-sept ans de la classe moyenne. Le décor de ces romans d'origine américaine a été transposé pour les lecteurs québécois; certains noms et adresses des personnages en témoignent: Élise Routhier, Cassandre Rousseau, Jacinthe Martin, Marie Derome et Donald Nadeau (no 21). Leur compagne Sarah Drapeau, a même une adresse: 278 chemin de la Vallée, Latreille, Québec.

Si l'on oppose les lieux ouverts (vastes) aux lieux clos (étroits), dans les romans examinés (voir annexe 2), on peut faire les constatations suivantes, par ordre décroissant d'occurrences: l'action se déroule en partie dans des lieux ouverts tels que le centre commercial, le terrain de stationnement, la route, la plage, le terrain de sport, un bois ... ou, plus souvent encore, dans des lieux plus fermés comme la maison, l'école, les moyens de transport, l'hôpital, le restaurant, etc.

Comme autres lieux ouverts (risques d'agoraphobie et d'isolement), citons la falaise d'où l'on peut tomber, le ravin, le ruisseau, l'île, la mer, le champ, la pépinière, les montagnes russes du parc d'attraction, l'aéroport et la carrière désaffectée. Parmi les lieux clos, du côté de la maison, les pièces fréquemment utilisées telles que le petit salon (sic), la cuisine, la chambre, le bureau et des endroits plus discrets, le sous-sol, la cave, le grenier, le garage ...

Parmi les lieux encore plus clos, signalons le caractère exigu et potentiellement anxiogène de réduits et d'objets comme des vestiaires et casiers (4 mentions), placards (2), cabine de douche (1), malle (1), congélateur (1), salle d'habillage (1), sauna (1) et cercueil (1).

Remarquons ici que plus les lieux sont insignifiants, communs, ordinaires, plus leur pouvoir est grand de mettre en relief le non-quotidien, le grain de sable, l'étrange. Finné (1980) explique que le décor familier constitue un cadre réaliste pour créer la vraisemblance et ensuite produire un effet plus vif avec la percée de l'irrationnel: cauchemar, violence, destruction.

Un personnage principal sous (haute) tension

Issu d'un milieu protégé (ses parents lui prêtent l'automobile familiale, il travaille en plus d'étudier, il va entrer au collège), le récit nous présente le personnage principal tout à coup isolé, en danger et poursuivi, voir harcelé.

C'est un personnage-victime qui a peur. Sur les trente et un romans considérés, vingt-sept des personnages principaux sont de sexe féminin. Le coupable est un personnage féminin dans la moitié des cas.

De quoi le personnage principal victime a-t-il peur? Des événements qui peuvent arriver, de ceux qui arrivent et de leurs conséquences. À l'annexe 3 sont regroupés l'origine de la peur, l'événement craint, l'auteur, le lieu et le moment de cette peur. De façon générale, nous pouvons dire que le personnage craint la souffrance, la destruction physique surtout par des malfaiteurs humains. Par ailleurs, à l'origine de la peur que ressent le personnage principal, il y a des hantises ou des cauchemars à des observations directes qui l'informent d'une menace. Ces cauchemars révèlent la tension à laquelle il est soumis (annexe 3). En créant un certain flou, cet univers onirique mêlé à l'univers réel installe une tension très efficace chez le personnage auquel le lecteur s'identifie.

Un antagoniste haineux

Qu'elle soit verbale ou physique, la violence de l'antagoniste perturbe et finit par bloquer complètement la vie des personnages (Annexe 4). Ces méfaits rythment littéralement l'action du roman et entraînent parfois une perte de contrôle à l'intérieur du camp des "bons".

Dans *L'Invitation trompeuse* (no 21), pas moins de cinq personnages sont victimes de malveillance criminelle. Le narrateur omniscient passe de l'un à l'autre à intervalles réguliers. Le résultat, très efficace est que cela joue sur les nerfs du lecteur ou de la lectrice. Dans ce même roman, la coupable des tentatives de meurtres est Lyne. Jalouse de son ancienne amie qui a changé de ville après un vol où elles étaient impliquées toutes deux, Lyne essaie de la tuer (en faisant preuve d'imagination) ainsi que ses nouveaux amis.

Dans *La Rouquine* (no 19), Sibyle est orpheline, délinquante et jalouse. Elle harcèle Alex qui a commis l'erreur de succomber à son charme vénéneux. Poursuivie par un policier pour homicide involontaire, elle va recevoir les soins psychiatriques que son état réclame.

Dans *Le Bonhomme de neige* (no 15), Marie-Soleil déteste son oncle. Par cupidité, le coupable tue celui-ci et fait ensuite chanter la jeune fille.

Dans *Fièvre mortelle* (no 25), Cynthia veut réussir à tout prix à entrer à l'École de médecine. Elle fouille dans un dossier, mais, surprise par Christophe, elle le tue et veut tuer aussi sa petite amie.

En règle générale, la jalousie, la cupidité ou l'ambition transportent les coupables jusque dans la folie.

Conclusion

La collection "Frissons" appartient à un genre hybride et contesté : le roman policier à suspens mâtiné d'un peu de fantastique. À l'autopsie, il s'avère que le rêve, le mensonge, l'illusion y occupent une grande place. L'action se déroule dans un cadre réaliste pour mieux mettre en relief le surgissement de l'irrationnel. Rêve et réalité, mensonge et vérité en viennent à se confondre.

Comme il fallait s'y attendre dans un récit policier, la présence quasi-obsessionnelle de la mort enferme le héros dans un monde désagréable d'où il sortira plus fort. La raison de l'engouement des préadolescents et adolescents s'explique peut-être par ce rétablissement de l'équilibre à la fin, lorsque le coupable aura été puni. En ce sens, la collection "Frisons" peut-elle être vue comme un conte avec une morale implicite?

Les jeunes y retrouvent-ils les traces d'un "imaginaire archaïque", plein d'une violence originelle, que le rêve ou la fiction serviraient à canaliser? Répond-il aux grands besoins de chacun: bien-être physique, sécurité, amour, estime de soi, estime des autres, auto-actualisation (Maslow, 1968)?

Annexe 1

Titres de la collection "Frissons"

1. Quel rendez-vous!	19. La rouquine
2. L'admirateur secret	20. La fenêtre
3. Qui est à l'appareil?	21. L'invitation trompeuse
4. Cette nuit-là!	22. Un week-end très spécial
5. Poisson d'avril	23. Chez Trixie
6. Ange ou démon?	24. Miroir, miroir
7. La gardienne	25. Fièvre mortelle
8. La robe de bal	26. Délit de fuite
9. L'examen fatidique	27. Parfum de venin
10. Le chouchou du professeur	28. Le train de la vengeance
11. Terreur à Saint-Louis	29. La pension infernale
12. Fête sur la plage	30. Les griffes meurtrières
13. Le passage secret	31. Cauchemar sur l'autoroute
14. Le retour de Bob	32. Le chalet maudit
15. Le bonhomme de neige	33. Le secret de l'auberge
16. Les poupées mutilées	34. Rêve fatal
17. La gardienne II	35. Les flammes accusatrices
18. L'accident	36. Un Noël sanglant

Annexe 2

Lieux

Lieux ouverts : publics ou extérieurs	*Lieux clos : privés*
centre commercial (9)	maison (26)
terrain de stationnement (5)	école (14)
sur la route (5)	moyens de transport (13)
à la plage (5)	à l'hôpital (10)
sur terrain de sport (4)	au restaurant (10)
dans un bois (4)	dans résidence secondaire (7)
dans un parc (3)	dans des boutiques (5)
au cimetière (3)	à la cafétéria (5)

Annexe 3

Peurs

Origine de la peur	Événement craint	Auteur	Lieu	Moment
hantise	tomber lors d'un tremblement de terre	nature	—	—
hantise	tomber	nature	ascenseur	—
hantise	être poussé	quelqu'un	falaise ---	
hantise	mourir	mors-vivants	cimetière	nuit
hantise	mourir	quelqu'un	maison	solitude
cauchemar	être déchiqueté	requins	plage	été
cauchemar	mourir étouffé	quelqu'un	congélateur	---
cauchemar	mourir étouffé	quelqu'un	cercueil	---
cauchemar	mourir gelé	nature	Himalaya	---
cauchemar	mourir noyé	nature	eau	---
cauchemar	être dévoré	rats	---	---
observation directe	être empoisonné	quelqu'un	hôpital	nuit
observation directe	être enterré vivant	quelqu'un	---	---
téléphone: menace	mourir	quelqu'un	---	---
observation (vue)	mourir	quelqu'un	fenêtre	---
sensation	mourir	quelqu'un	bibliothèque	---
observation (ouïe)	mourir	quelqu'un	rue	nuit

Annexe 4

Violence (s) de l'antagoniste

1. matérielles(s)	vandalisme	sur voiture (3), sur casier à l'école sur robe, sur livre
	sabotage	sucre dans réservoir à essence bureau qui s'effondre chapeau
	accident d'auto	causé volontairement
	vol	de robe
	incendie criminel:	poubelle de salle de bain voiture
2. verbale(s)	moquerie, dérision	
	menaces (appels anonymes)	
	perfidie (faire passer quelqu'un pour fou)	
	harcèlement, menace, chantage	
3. physique(s)	harcèlement par présence menaçante (rôdeur)	
	brutalités, agressions, coups et blessures (couteau, poing, pelle)	
	emprisonnement, séquestration, baîllonnement (personnage ligoté)	
	tentative de meurtre ou meurtre (noyade, poignard, pic à glace, acide chlorhydrique dans lotion solaire)	

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***Monique Noël Gaudreault** est l'auteur de nombreuses publications sur la littérature pour la jeunesse et enseigne à la Faculté des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université de Montréal.*

La revue
Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse
est à la recherche d'articles portant sur

Les **enjeux politiques** de la littérature pour la jeunesse

et

• l'attribution des prix littéraires •
• les choix des maisons d'édition •
• la question nationale •
• l'identitaire culturel, historique et social •
• la représentation littéraire de l'histoire •

Parmi les questions à considérer:
Qui gagne les **prix littéraires** au Canada (et au Québec)?
Qui est **publié** au Canada (et au Québec)?
Quelles sont les thématiques favorisées par
Les éditeurs et les jurys littéraires?
La littérature-jeunesse occulte-t-elle la question nationale?
Existe-t-il un déplacement des débats politiques?
Quels choix les auteurs font-il dans l'histoire nationale?
Quel est le discours des romans historiques actuels?
L'idéologie de la survivance est-elle encore perceptible?

Nous sommes particulièrement intéressés aux approches et aux analyses comparatives: grandes maisons d'édition et publications marginales; littératures francophone et anglophone; productions littéraires de la majorité et des minorités.

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Tout article doit nous parvenir en trois exemplaires avec une copie sur disquette.

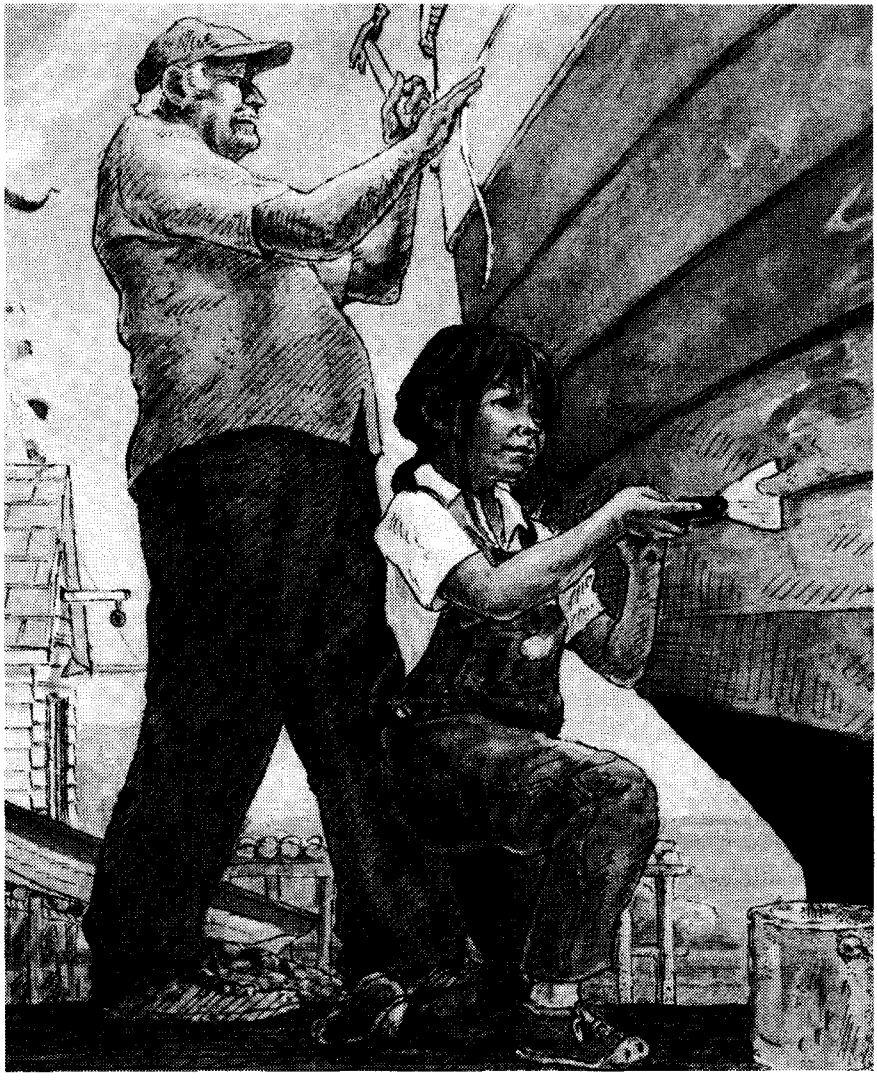


Illustration from ***Fog Cat*** *(see review in this issue)*

Reviews / Comptes rendus

Books / Livres

Navigating Masculinity

The Only Outcast. Julie Johnston. Tundra, 1998. 221 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-441-X.

Julie Johnston's most recent book for young adults, *The Only Outcast*, is her third; its predecessors, *Hero of Lesser Causes* and the popular *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* both won Governor General's Awards. In this most recent fiction, Johnston turns her attention to a turn-of-the-century teenage boy's negotiation of issues of masculinity, ability, and self-esteem. The novel makes inventive use of an historical document, a diary of a sixteen-year old visiting his relatives' cottage on Rideau Lake that first appeared in print in 1996 as *A Boy's Cottage Diary 1904*. Johnston gives us italicized paragraphs — some transcribed from the journal, some fictionalized — as the opening of each of her chapters, and the balance of those chapters delve into what the diary does not disclose. As her protagonist Fred muses, "I've been thinking, maybe a diary is like a photographer's picture. You don't get to see all the stuff that happens before a picture's taken, or after it, either. In a diary, it's about the same. If you want to know everything that goes on in the life of a diary writer, I imagine you're out of luck, unless you can read between the lines."

Johnston's novel reads between the lines most imaginatively, and what it reads is a story about growing up male that young readers at the other end of this century can recognize. Fred, wounded by the loss of his mother, is overshadowed by a patriarch who seems to spring from the pages of Laurence's *Stone Angel* — a harsh, cold man who seems bent on "making a man" out of his ineffectual-seeming, stammering young son. Repeatedly it is made clear to Fred that he is not measuring up to his father's standards of masculinity, but by the end of the novel a perhaps-too-pat transformation occurs: the patriarch, too, is suffering the loss of his wife, like his fictional predecessor Jason Currie of Laurence's Manawaka. And when Fred learns that his own father doesn't measure up to some of the masculine benchmarks he sets his son, a complex look at father-son dynamics is ours for the pondering.

What I found less satisfying in this admittedly accomplished book was the resolution of this masculinity question: bidding farewell to his former love interest, Fred accepts her sarcastic taunt, "You men are all alike," with a certain amount of satisfaction: "*You men*, I was thinking. I liked that, me and all the other men. I'm not a total outcast; I'm like the others, hard to understand." Granted that Fred has had opportunity to see the depths beneath the surface of his father's raging Old-Testament-patriarch performance of masculinity, does this resolution still enforce the notion of manhood as a rite of dissociation and independence? Clearly Johnston's novel also has enough depths beneath the surfaces to keep an adult reader pondering too.

Lorraine York *is a professor of English at McMaster University who has written on Timothy Findley, Alice Munro, and Farley Mowat. She lives with her partner and her seven-year-old expert consultant in Dundas, Ontario.*

Bringing History in out of the Cold

Trapped In Ice. Eric Walters. Viking/Penguin, 1997. 206 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-670-87542-2. ***Across Frozen Seas.*** John Wilson. Beach Holme, 1997. 120 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88878-381-7.

Across Frozen Seas is a young adult (YA) contemporary problem novel crossed with an historical fiction through a dream-fantasy device. Dave Young of Humboldt, Saskatchewan begins having dreams about being Davy Young, one of two cabin boys on the ill-fated Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest passage in the 1840s. A prologue mixes reported dream and present reflection. Then fourteen chapters alternate from real-present (narrated in the first-person past tense) to dream-past (narrated in first-person present tense). The present chapters shrink as the past takes greater hold on Dave/Davy, and as Dave's present life gets more problematic. In chapter fifteen the present Dave gets lost in a prairie blizzard outside his grandfather Jim's house, and Davy's climactic past scene in a similar arctic blizzard merges with the present. An epilogue in the present ties up the loose ends.

While there are creaks at the edges of both genres (undeveloped parental marital problems in the YA present; documentary history book information loosely packaged as fiction in the historical fiction past), the central story is gripping enough. The crossover dream-fantasy device is captivating at the outset as Davy and George run around Dickens's London, and Dave tries to sort out what's going on in his head, and again at the end when the past world and present world merge. For the most part, however, the crossover is simply a device to get into a historical story which otherwise can't be told in the first person since there were no survivors, and the device creaks as

Wilson tries to make Dave's dream situation have consequences in his present life. We get shrinks, bad effects at school, arguing parents, a boring life in Humboldt, Sask., Dave's fears of going crazy, etc. These are finally no match for the potential of the Franklin story, and end up as distractions from the historical account. Perhaps Wilson should have had the courage to just tell the story of the Franklin expedition cabin boy in the first person, and have it end when he dies. No need to explain where it came to us from.

Eric Walters chooses the historical character as his protagonist, and has her tell the story straight. There are no distractions from the historical story, which is the right choice here. *Trapped In Ice* was named a Canadian Children's Book Centre Choice, and it deserved the accolade. It is based on the actual events of the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913, and is a model of what historical fiction for children should be: respectful of the facts but knowing full well that a novel exists to do more than sugar-coat a history lesson. The Canadian government sponsored Vilhjalmur Stefansson's trip of scientific exploration in order to insure that Canada had more than a theoretical claim to any hitherto undiscovered arctic islands. Stefansson's captain was Robert Bartlett, who had captained Peary's ship on his expedition to the North Pole. Other members of the crew had accompanied Shackleton in Antarctica. Their ship, the Karluk, was caught in a huge ice pan and drifted west toward Siberia. Captain Bartlett's wisdom and determination led the ship's company away from the doomed ship, across the ice against immense obstacles, to remote Wrangel Island off Siberia. From there he and one other sledded to the whaling stations on Bering Strait and organized a rescue.

The story is told by Helen Kiruk, the thirteen-year-old daughter of the expedition's seamstress. She and her "almost eleven" year-old brother Michael actually did accompany their mother, against the wishes of Bartlett. Discovering this historical episode must have been like striking gold for Walters. Here we have the archetypal situation of the innocents entering danger without recognizing the implications. Their freshness and curiosity are a natural means of translating the history into a living world. Walters simply lets Helen tell her story, and ask the necessary questions (or have the expected frustrations) at the appropriate times, and we get all the otherwise specialist scientific, meteorological, geographical, or nautical discussion rendered in just the right register for us landlubber southerners. Along with Helen — whether she's listening to adult conversation, or writing in her diary, or nearly succumbing to hypothermia, or saving her brother from a polar bear — we gradually realize just how isolated and threatened they are.

Walters is also clearly fascinated by the character of Bartlett. Originally an outport Newfoundlander, the captain is a brusque, no-nonsense leader who is confident of his ability, yet humble in the face of nature. He also has a gramophone in his cabin and a collection of 200 records, his favourite being Mozart. Helen's insular bookishness chimes with this aspect of the captain. A brief quotation will capture the delicate characterization:

The music came to an end. I looked over and Captain Bartlett opened his eyes.

"Mozart. Beautiful music ... so hauntin', an' majestic an' lonely. It reminds me of —"

"Up here," I interrupted.

A flash of white formed into a smile and shone through his beard. I was thrown by the smile. I didn't think he knew how to smile.

"Exactly. Ya surprised me girl. Didn't think ya'd figure that...."

Trapped in Ice is a fine story, which adds a dimension of genuine humanity to a segment of history dominated by larger-than-life figures.

***Laurence Steven** is professor of English at Laurentian University, and publisher of Your Scrivener Press in Sudbury.*

A Village Nourished by Evil

The Wreckers. Iain Lawrence. Delacorte Press, 1998. 196 pp. $21.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-32535-5.

One stormy night in 1799 the *Isle of Skye*, lured by false beacons, is wrecked on the rocky coast of Cornwall. John Spencer, the youngest member of her crew, survives the wreck of his father's ship only to find that the villagers are more dangerous than the sea. On this barren shore, looting wrecked ships has become the key to survival, and sailors who escape alive are murdered.

The first person John meets is the terrifying legless man Stumps, who hints darkly that he holds John's father prisoner and will kill him if John breathes a word. Spared from the wreckers' knives only by the last-minute intervention of Simon Mawgan, the brooding local lord, John must negotiate a labyrinth of intrigue to rescue his father and save himself. But whom can he trust? The village is full of ambiguous figures like Mawgan and the chilling Parson Tweed, as well as implacable enemies like Stumps. And is John's own father a gold smuggler? What was really in those barrels of wine loaded secretly by night in Spain?

This is a thrilling tale told at breakneck speed. John's quest for survival is set against a vividly-realized historical backdrop of poverty and desperation. This is a grotesque Dickensian world where hanged men wave in the wind and rats gnaw at the heels of a man chained to the wall of a drain pipe. There is even a mad widow who predicts the wrecks and "corpse lights" haunting the rocks. Fans of pirate tales will find much to please here.

Yet there are flaws. John's initial conversations with Mawgan seem inconsistent with the truths that we learn about him later. The premise that

the legless Stumps, despite his great strength, could drag John's unconscious father off the rocky beach and all the way back to town strains credulity. Mawgan's ambiguous portrayal keeps us guessing until the end, but it is almost disappointing to discover that he is really a "good guy" who made one tragic mistake years ago. And John's father is no smuggler after all, but has simply been cheated by Spanish wine-merchants. Ultimately, we are left with a clear assortment of "good guys and bad guys"; there is no beguiling Long John Silver winking at us here.

Nevertheless, most readers will be too immersed in this breathless, dangerous world to notice such shortcomings. They'll be too busy flipping the pages to find out what happens next.

Joanne Findon *teaches children's literature at Simon Fraser University. She is the author of* ***The Dream of Aengus*** *and* ***Auld Lang Syne****, and the young adult novel* ***When Night Eats the Moon****, scheduled for publication in fall 1999.*

Of Gorgons and Peanut Butter

Snake Dreamer. Priscilla Galloway. Stoddart Kids, 1998. 231 pp. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-5981-6.

"Her plumage was like the rainbow, and her face was like the face of a nymph, only her eyebrows were knit, and her lips clenched, with everlasting pain...." Here, Charles Kingsley is describing Medusa the Gorgon as Perseus saw her seconds before he cut off her head. In literature, Medusa is known chiefly as a frightening, though mainly inactive, bit-player in Perseus's triumphant career. But unlike most other monsters of mythology, mere targets for glory-seeking demigods and heroes, she has a touching history, and despite her serpent tresses and petrifying visage, she is often accorded pathos, tormented beauty, and dignity, as in the Kingsley passage.

It is, therefore, a bit of a shock to find her dragged by her snaky locks into a prose equivalent of a B movie — Priscilla Galloway's *Snake Dreamer*, an adventure story about a present-day teenager improbably named Dusa who is borne off to a Greek island to be treated for convulsive dreams of snakes by formidable sisters, Teno and Yali Gordon, medical doctor and psychologist respectively. (Too late, Dusa recollects that the raging, grieving, immortal sisters of the slain Medusa were called Stheno and Euryale.) What has an awesome, sad character of antique myth to do with two brisk mistresses of modern skills and technologies and a young consumer of peanut butter and Hershey bars? Little that's credible.

Nevertheless, Galloway launches her grotesque story efficiently. Necessary tidbits of information and provocative hints are planted with care. In

spite of the characters' loaded names, the reader is held in doubt for a while, as is Dusa, about whether the multi-talented, seemingly empathetic sisters are what they claim to be — dedicated researchers into a specific sleep disorder — or shape-shifting gorgons with a wholly exploitive interest in their subject-patients. Once the author has to start showing her hand, however, suspense is increasingly eroded by unintended comedy, which turns black and ludicrous when the scholarly sisters resort to gruesome, primitive methods ... and achieve their Frankensteinian purpose.

Snake Dreamer transmits some whiffs of theme. It suggests, for instance, that maternal wisdom can live on through generations to thwart the stony-hearted. However, the book's brevity and Galloway's concentration on action hinder thematic development. And some spellings-out of unnecessary, cluttering details, such as the precise location of a plane seat, waste words and subvert effective emphasis.

This mixture of heterogeneous ingredients isn't exactly a dud novel. It has its excitements. But lovers of the majestic, the heroic, the tragic, and the terrible in classical stories are likely to find reading it a jangling experience.

***Frances Frazer** is a retired professor of English with an abiding interest in children's literature.*

Liberating Tale or Cultural Appropriation?

Clever Lazy. Joan Bodger. Illus. Chum McLeod. Tundra, 1997. 204 pp. $8.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-418-5.

Clever Lazy is a cleverly-crafted young adult novel about a girl "in a land that might have been ancient China" who grows up to be the Court Inventor for the Emperor. As a feminist fable about the strength of women in the face of patriarchal oppression, this tale works very well, but as a rewriting of the earlier book, *Clever-Lazy, The Girl Who Invented Herself* (1979), its eurocentric use of Chinese culture is at the very least somewhat anachronistic.

The protagonist, Clever Lazy, first shows her inventive powers when, as a young child, she designs an abacus. Her indulgent parents shelter Clever Lazy from mundane housework so that she can devote more time to developing her special talent. They also kindle in their daughter a great reverence for the Goddess of the Dancing Mountains whose wisdom, passed on through Clever Lazy's mother, helps the girl on several occasions to make difficult choices between good and evil. When Clever Lazy reaches adolescence, her parents die from disease and famine, so she goes to the city to live with her wicked, widowed aunt who runs a shop near the Emperor's palace. Clever

Lazy falls in love with a childhood friend named Tinker and eventually marries him. When a nobleman discovers Clever Lazy's talent for invention, he becomes her patron. She then sets about inventing toys for the Emperor such as an ivory back scratcher in the shape of a tiny hand, a magnifying glass, a kaleidoscope, and a game of chess. Clever Lazy is in the process of inventing a steam-powered piston engine when she is told by her patron to stick to creating toys to please the Emperor. It is at several moments such as this in the novel that young readers may pause to think about how difficult it is for women to achieve their creative dreams in a male-dominated society.

When a lesser Emperor from the South comes to visit Clever Lazy's Emperor, she is ordered to create something particularly enchanting to impress the visitor, so she and her husband prepare and present a dazzling fireworks display. When the visiting Emperor realizes that the Inventor could help him to develop weapons with the magic powder she has used in the fireworks, he attempts to kidnap her. After Clever Lazy manages to fend him off, her own Emperor decides that he too wants her to create weapons for his army. When Clever Lazy refuses, she and Tinker are forced to escape at night with the help of the matches and compass that she has also invented. Their journey back to the land of the Dancing Mountains is made more difficult because Clever Lazy is pregnant. Just as it appears as though Clever Lazy and Tinker will be apprehended by the Emperor's soldiers, they are rescued by the Dragonship of the Goddess and deposited safely in the land of the Dancing Mountains.

Joan Bodger's story contains a number of interesting features. For example, Clever Lazy is an excellent role model for young adolescent girls. She is a courageous and determined inventor who demonstrates an uncompromising passion for her work. She loves her husband, but confronts him when he does not agree with her career plans. And she values the wisdom of the Goddess as it is reflected in the lives of the many women in her life who have helped her to achieve her goals. Finally, Bodger's descriptions of people, palaces, and pyrotechnics are truly enchanting. For these reasons, I think many adolescent girls and boys would enjoy reading *Clever Lazy*.

Nevertheless, I do caution teachers and librarians to consider the fact that several of the pseudo-Chinese characters, such as the two Emperors, the nobleman, the aunt, and the aunt's neighbour, are represented as greedy, deceitful, and violent people. Also, the House of Flowers is mentioned several times in the novel to remind us that Clever Lazy is in danger of being sold into prostitution by her aunt. The stereotypes of the Lotus Blossom Baby, the Dragon Lady and Dr. Fu Manchu need to be resisted by writers and teachers of children's literature. Through the work of Chinese American and Canadian authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Denise Chong, for instance, young readers are able to encounter rich and varied representations of strong Chinese women to admire and emulate. The question which I need to raise about this book, then, is whether or not it is time to stop exoticizing China as a land of mysterious Orientals even if it requires us

to reject at the same time some of the "magic" that a fable such as Bodger's can weave for young readers.

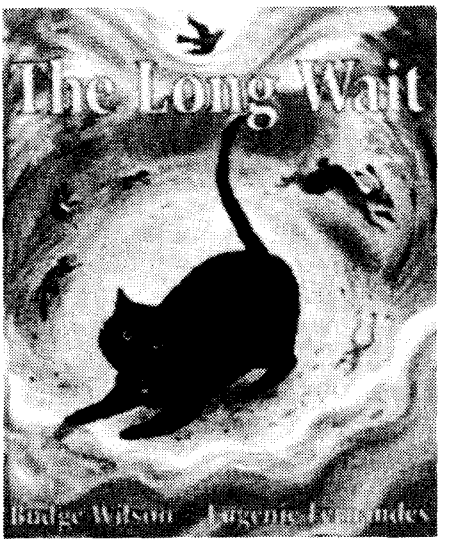
James C. Greenlaw is an assistant professor at the University of Regina where he teaches a course in young adult literature. He has also taught English in China. He has written elsewhere about the importance of postcolonial literary theory for the high school multicultural literature curriculum.

The Return of the Prodigal Cat in Budge Wilson's *The Long Wait*

The Long Wait. Budge Wilson. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Stoddart Kids. 1997. 32 pp. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-3021-4.

The Long Wait, Budge Wilson's delightful tragicomic cat tale of love lost and regained, tells the true story of Deirdre, an endearing feline antiheroine with a big tummy, a split left ear, a leathery black nose, and a mind of her own. Returning home to Ontario with Mr. Wilson (the author's husband) from the annual family summer holiday in Nova Scotia, Deirdre throws caution to the wind (expending at least *one* of her nine lives) and escapes from the proverbial bag — in this case, her much-hated cat carrier. Dodging the lethal wheels of the TransCanada highway, she eludes her frantic master and seeks refuge in the New Brunswick wilderness. After frenzied efforts to entice Deirdre back to the car, Mr. Wilson is forced to rejoin his wife and daughters empty-handed. This apparent catastrophe in fact precipitates Deirdre's miraculous transformation from cossetted house-cat into sleek miniature panther.

An adept storyteller in the best oral tradition, Wilson immediately takes her readers into her confidence. Using strong clear prose with touches of poetry, wordplay, rhetoric, subtle verbal cadences, and a distinctly Canadian context, Wilson spins Deirdre's disappearance into an intimate story of suspense, pathos, and humour, which begs to be read aloud. Eugenie Fernandes' wonderful swirling illustrations in vibrant pastel colours are a feast for the eye and the perfect marriage with Wilson's engaging text. When we first encounter Deirdre and her people, Fernandes's drawings mirror Wilson's words exactly. After the pussycat's escape, there is a subtle shift in this relationship: gradually what we see and hear are wonderfully at odds. As the Wilsons broaden their long-distance search (assisted by many kind denizens of a small Maritime community) and frosty fall weather closes in, the despairing family struggles to remain hopeful; meanwhile, Deirdre is tasting the wild life and loving it. Fernandes undercuts the Wilsons's woeful imaginings with joyful scenes of a feral Deirdre frolicking with chipmunks,



pouncing on minnows, and communing with skunks. The climactic juxtaposition of the writer's question — "How far can an old cat walk before the snow comes?" — with the artist's rendering of Deirdre resplendent in her new-found glory, is visual irony at its comic best.

In *The Long Wait*, both Wilson's two- and four-footed characters are well drawn, and delicately fleshed out with Fernandes' lovingly-rendered illustrations. The author paints cosy scenes of domestic harmony at the Wilsons', with Marie and Kathryn and their parents always at the ready with warm laps, tummy-rubs and food. An unabashed cat lover, Wilson captures the essence of the feline species at its most endearing; Deirdre is the apple of her doting family's eye. For anyone who has braved long-distance travel with a basketted cat, this tale rings uncannily true.

Based on fact, *The Long Wait* has a happy ending to rival the best fairy tale. When the vagabond puss and her family are finally reunited, both Deirdre and the soft-hearted Mr. Wilson share the identical expression of utter contentment. As drawn by Fernandes, we can almost hear them purr.

Sarah Gibson-Bray *is a specialist in English-Canadian theatre for young audiences. She wrote her doctoral thesis on Vancouver playwright Dennis Foon (University of Toronto, 1992). She is currently compiling an index and guide to "child advocacy drama" in Canada.*

Messages for Our Times: From a Cat and a Cove

Fog Cat. Marilyn Helmer. Illus. Paul Mombourquette. Kids Can, 1998 . 32 pp. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-460-7. ***Driftwood Cove.*** Sandra Lightbourn. Illus. Ron Lightbourn. Doubleday Canada, 1998. 32 pp. $19.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-25626-4.

While *Fog Cat* and *Driftwood Cove* share a maritime setting (the former uses the east coast and the latter the west) the spiritual difference lies in how profound their respective lessons are: "realizing how to accept the ebb and flow of life" versus "consumerism isn't shared by all." Although *Driftwood Cove* figures more immediately as the timely instruction, it fails to connect to the heart. *Fog Cat* quietly accomplishes the deeper, lasting mark.

In *Driftwood Cove* we are given a carefully revealed adventure of discovery thanks to Sandra Lightbourn's word-smith expertise. It has just a touch of mystery to justify the dreamy realism of Ron Lightbourn's art. From the driftwood endpaper stock to the scruffed-edge visuals (thanks to software-induced rustification), this is a relaxing read; the pace is fluid and a nice change from the jolts-per-second school of "youth literature." However, it is more of an indictment of our society that a children's book must be engaged to preach the obvious — an act which does not automatically ennoble the instructive vehicle, no matter how lavishly and mystically it is illustrated.

Ron Lightbourn's art (for his work undoubtedly rises to this level) displays a beautiful use of light, colour, reflection and masterly tonal control. Yet Lightbourn's people are so exact, almost too close to mechanical renderings of a carefully-staged photo shoot. Their accuracy sadly pre-empts the artistic interpretation Lightbourn so obviously demonstrated in his exquisitely composed *How Smudge Came* (Red Deer P, 1995). Editorial decisions at Doubleday may have dictated the strangely weak front cover (especially when compared to the potentially stronger back cover) and there are disturbing echoes of Ewokland in the treatment of the Driftwood Cove forests. It appears as if the artist has traded his earlier quasi-primitivism and film-noir perspectives for the photographic reproduction of self-consciously atmospheric reality. The style leaves an unwelcome hint: a Disneyfication of the dream-catcher crowd? — a grim prospect.

Meanwhile, on the east coast in *Fog Cat*, we have a story appealing to any animal (especially cat) lover. Made without sentimentality, it has plenty of the plain, honest sweetness you'd find in a cosied teapot on a chrome-edged kitchen table. The slightly misguided publicity from Kids Can Press suggests the theme as an "if you love it, let it go" type, an unfortunate interpretation using formula schlock that simply does not exist here. Rather, the lesson lies in what animals can teach us, if we pay attention.

The story explains the adoption of Hannah and her grandfather by a semi-feral cat. Practical events unfold in an endearing tale of how lives interweave. While Marilyn Helmer's verbal restraint allows the reader ponder-

ing room, Paul Mombourquette's visions lovingly capture the weather-filled look and feel of an east-coast environment. God remains in Helmer's elegant details of word ("raspy, rusty voice") and Mombourquette's thoughtful images (the aluminum door hinge, among many others).

Grandfather reminds me of some chronically unsung character actor, familiar and comfortable. Hannah is slightly less successful as she suffers from the illustrator's toughest challenge — consistency. She may also be based on a real person, but her facial features and head size lapse erratically into adult proportions peculiar on her supposedly eight- to ten-year-old figure. Had the artist chosen a model who aged beyond her role before the book's completion? Technical problems aside, Hannah's uniqueness pleases.

The cat's articulation is remarkable, although its texture tends too often to look gooey and claylike instead of full-bodied, which layered line strokes would produce. Throughout, Mombourquette's beautifully evocative colour and tone, carefully used angles and luminescent light enrich *Fog Cat*'s reverberations. Watch and note, the artist and author seem to say together: the dramatis personae in our next hour of crisis may feature a four-footed furry one.

Epilogue: it appears the *Driftwood Cove* creators, the Lightbourns, have quit the forested BC coasts for the Annapolis region and so we may yet see the peculiar eastern magic of *Fog Cat* inspire even greater books of beauty and mystery.

***Robin Baird Lewis**, an established children's book illustrator (**Red is Best**, et al), inoculates herself regularly with heavy doses of P.G. Wodehouse and Hunter S. Thompson.*

"Thus Grew the Tale of Wonderland ..."

> ... Thus slowly, one by one,
> Its quaint events were hammered out —
> And now the tale is done,
> And home we steer, a merry crew
> Beneath the setting sun."
>
> (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)*

On Tumbledown Hill. Tim Wynne-Jones. Illus. Dušan Petričić. Northern Lights/Red Deer College P, 1999. 30 pp. $17.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88995-186-1.

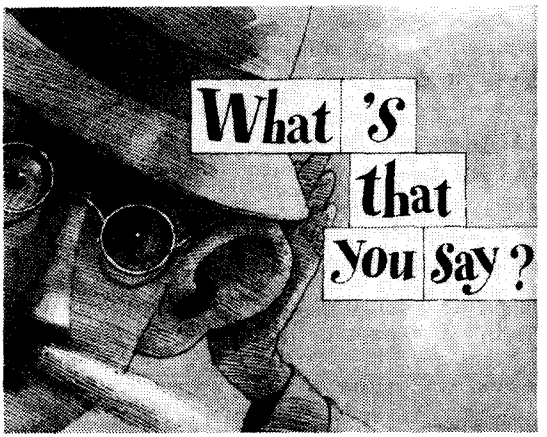
On the cover, colourful, anarchic, paint-splash children tumble across the black tabula rasa of the background. Are these the monsters mentioned on the book jacket? If so, this is going to be a fun book.

You open the book and there they are — 26 monsters — filling the first page with their large black shapes, jumping out at the reader in their oversized type, each one boxed in its own frame -- 26 *words*! And not a picture in sight: "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?" The number of words is decreased by one with each succeeding page, and the balance of illustration to text changes as does the way in which we "read" the book, right down to the last page which contains — you guessed it — no words at all. The narrative is seemingly straightforward: an artist walks up a hill in the early evening accompanied by his pet rabbit and paints a picture of the landscape in spite of constant interference from a group of mischievous children. This *is* a picture book, but it is also a commentary on what books *are* and on what they *mean* to the young child discovering them for the first time, on the relationship between words and illustrations, and on the creative process for author and illustrator.

The book begins by recreating for the skilful reader some of the experiences of learning to read and decode the language of books, both text and illustrations. There is so much to think about — how, for example, does a young child make sense of our language when a long word like "Tumbledown" counts as one word, while the contraction "they'd" counts as two? Try reading the first page out loud. Can you do it without stumbling? It's not easy, one word at a time, in the large print that makes it impossible to use the over-learned eye-movements that allow the experienced reader to "read ahead" so that the physical act of reading flows seamlessly into meaning.

As the book progresses, the relationship between illustration and text changes from its "one picture = 25 (if not 1,000) words" second page, through its sly contradictions between pictures and text, to its final invitation to readers to participate with their own interpretation of the illustrations. The single illustration on the second page does little more than confirm what is in the text. On the third page, text and illustrations complement each other: there is no need to describe the tree-covered hillside — a picture is more economical here. Bun's nervousness is described in both words and pictures on the fifth page and this time words are more economical than pictures — the hiccups are hard to illustrate — but there is a reason for including the illustration here — it's funnier. By the sixth page, pictures and text begin to diverge because the monsters, when they appear in Petricic's illustrations, are not as author Tim Wynne-Jones described on the first page. By the end of the book, the narrator is addressing the reader directly. "Well, do you see any monsters around?" he asks. And we don't, until the final page when he shows us the picture he has painted.

The view the narrator seeks is of trees and fields, and the pet he takes with him is a rabbit, a wild animal that should be at home here in the countryside. He might be the author, out for an evening away from his desk, and away from the stresses of battling with the plot and characters of the narrative and the words he must use to represent them — the "monsters" he must subdue in order to create. If so, he is also the illustrator (the illustrations show him sporting the author's beard and the illustrator's moustache),



plagued by the paint-splash monsters that mischievously upset his paints, obstruct his view, and just won't let him get the peace and quiet he seeks. But for the child reader of this book, these don't look like monsters at all. They are children like themselves, playing and having a good time. So perhaps the monsters do indeed represent Wynne-Jones's and Petričić's work — their books — "monsters" for them in the task of creation, but there for us, their readers, to enjoy. They would be well understood by the "merry gang who attended 'summer camp' at Red Deer College" to whom the book is dedicated. And Bun? He is surely the author's and the illustrator's daemon in Philip Pullman's sense of an external representation of the soul (see Pullman's *The Golden Compass*), but also part white rabbit leading the reader into Wonderland, part magician's rabbit popping out of a hat — playful, nervous, and a bit of a coward when faced with 26 monsters.

What else is this book? Well, it's a counting book — 26 words, 25 words, 24 words ... etc. And at the end you can try to count the hidden monsters in the narrator's painting. It's also a funny book — the incongruity of a rabbit on a leash, the slapstick of the mischievous children, along with more subtle humour for the older reader.

It may not be enjoyed by all beginning readers — those big words are scary! And that's a joke too, because the big type caricatures the large print children encounter in beginning readers, but it's a joke that doesn't entirely work — that big print really *isn't* very pleasant to read. Also, having one word fewer in each succeeding sentence gives a rather choppy feel to the story when read aloud, particularly because its being in rhyme leads one to expect some consistency to the rhythm, and, of course, that can't happen given the constraints Tim Wynne-Jones has placed on himself. That's disconcerting at first, but after a few readings the rhymes pop out and act as guides along the way.

Are these monsters just a comment on the relationship between the creator and his tools — the writer with words, the artist with paint? Do they also represent the worries and concerns of daily life? The years of civilized living that must be stripped away before the view can be appreciated for what it is? The lifetime of experience that we can't leave behind us to "just paint what's out there," because the monsters insist on getting in the way of the view? And maybe the final word is that we shouldn't try — that painting at the end looks awfully empty with the monsters painted out. Finally, it is for us, the readers, to interpret them as we wish, and we have the author's and the illustrator's invitation to do just that.

And there you are! You've taken your own voyage through Wonderland, and you didn't even have to tumble down a rabbit hole to get there.

Gay Christofides is an avid reader of Canadian children's literature and the administrator of this journal.

Realism, Magic, and Magical Realism (for Those upon Whom Such Distinctions Are Lost)

Lollypop's Potty. ISBN 2-921198-44-4. ***Lollypop's Baby Sister.*** ISBN 2-921198-45-2. Joceline Sanschagrin. Trans. Judith Brown. Illus. Hélène Desputeaux. Éditions Chouette, 1993. 20 pp. $7.95 board. ***Once I Was Very Small.*** Elizabeth Ferber. Annick, 1993. 24 pp. $14.95 cloth $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-5037-318-8, 1-55037-321-8. ***Aa-Choo!*** Wendy Orr. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick, 1992. 32 pp. $14.95 cloth, $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-209-2, 1-55037-208-4. ***Lullabyhullaballoo.*** Mick Inkpen. Stoddart, 1993. 22 pp. $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-2753-1. ***Just You and Me.*** Eugenie and Kim Fernandes. Annick, 1993. 28 pp. $14.95 cloth, $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-324-2, 1-55037-327-7. ***Good Morning.*** ISBN 0-000224003-5. ***Good Night.*** ISBN 0-00-2240003-3. Jan Colbert. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. HarperCollins, 1994. 14 pp. $5.95. ***The Good Night Story.*** Andreas Greve. Illus. Kitty Macaulay. Annick, 1993. $4.95. ISBN 1-55037-288-2.

Although one suspects most children would endorse the postmodernist insight that the distinctions we make between realism and fantasy are purely arbitrary, it is surprisingly easy to divide a recent group of picture books into these two discrete genres. There are, on the one hand, a number of examples of domestic realism. With protagonists who "stand in" for the reader, and who live through familiar vicissitudes and challenges, these books are primarily designed to teach, to reassure, and to encourage. A second group, on the other hand, entirely subordinates the ups and downs of ordinary life to a sphere in which delightful impossibilities are the order of the day. For the most part, books in this second group are less concerned to promote the

reader's identification with a given character, and are more invested in the narrative virtues of suspense, symmetry, and surprise. With only one exception, none of these books crosses party lines. It is a shame, because only in childhood is the boundary between reality and magic fluid enough to make ordinary life seem as improbable and diverting as fiction.

The purest and best examples in the realistic mode are to be found in the Lollypop series, created by Hélène Desputeaux. Lollypop is a small boy with a very round head to whom unforeseen difficulties present themselves. It is decided on his behalf, for example, that the time has come for him to learn to use the potty. Still less predictably, a baby sister enters his life, usurping his rightful function as fulcrum of the domestic world. With his thoughtful but puzzled expression, his endearing attempts to cope, and his stout-hearted determination to maintain his identity in the face of random circumstance, Lollypop is the existential two-year-old. The pen-and-ink illustrations of Desputeaux and the simple straightforward text of Sanschagrin (English translation by Judith Brown) capture the intensity and surprise with which the toddler responds to the world — and convey something of the human condition as well.

Like the very popular Lollypop series for still younger children, these are practical and comforting books. By watching Lollypop succeed, despite his occasional slips and frustrations, children will learn both confidence and sympathy. The realism of these stories is, in fact, the best thing about them: when Lollypop flings his doll against the cupboard (in lieu of baby sister), or uses his potty as a crash helmet, he acts as a role model that is credible because it is familiar, and that is useful because it is within reach.

In a similar realistic vein, though without quite the impact of the Lollypop books, is *Once I Was Very Small,* written and illustrated by Elizabeth Ferber. This, Ferber's first book, is the forthright autobiography of three-year-old Vanessa, who guides the reader confidently through the milestones and achievements that have brought her to her current admirable state of self-sufficiency. Very much Her Own Person, and blessed with parents who are content to shun the limelight, Vanessa will impress young children with the delights of autonomy. Ferber's cartoon-style drawings are witty and uncluttered; her text is pure deadpan. And although Vanessa is not the child one might choose to dandle on one's knee in a fit of sentimentality, she serves as a reminder that cuddliness is not the whole end of a toddler's being.

A third portrait from the domestic life of young children is vividly sketched in *Aa-Choo!* by Wendy Orr and Ruth Ohi. When Megan wakes up with a sore throat and runny nose and cannot go to daycare, the inevitable gap between parental work and paid work is exposed, and then inventively bridged. Megan's mother has an important meeting and cannot stay home; Megan's father has an important delivery to make and cannot stay home — but Megan can and does go to work with her mother. Her visit to the office is convincingly rendered from the child's point of view: Ruth Ohi's drawings of elongated grown-ups bustling about with sheaves of paper, and her close-

ups of the legs and feet of the participants in a business meeting (as seen from below the boardroom table) suggest both the mystery and the futility of most adult activity. Megan remains delightfully unmoved by it all; her best moment arrives the following morning when her mother is immobilized by the same cold that set the plot in motion, and she and Megan get to spend the day at home.

On the whole, I prefer the realism of this group of books to the whimsy and fantasy of *Lullabyhullaballoo, Just You and Me, Good Morning,* and *Good Night,* each of which attempts to do justice to the quirky imaginings of young children. But the breathless illogicality of the childish thought process is almost impossible to pin down in words and pictures. When it is done well (as, for example, by Maurice Sendak or Lewis Carroll), one suspects it is done at a level far below deliberate design — unselfconsciously, and without calculation.

Though engaging and amusing, the fantasy of Mick Inkpen's *Lullabyhullaballoo* is not quite of that calibre. Inkpen makes comical use of many of the ingredients of the fairy tale. A tiny blonde princess is beset by a dragon hissing and snorting outside her window. No sooner is the culprit silenced, than two rambunctious knights in full armour begin a noisy game of leapfrog. And so on — through ghosts who wail, giants who dance the hornpipe, and goblins and trolls who snarf down quantities of burgers and shakes. In addition to the illustrations, which are gently hilarious, the great virtue of this book is that it invites participation. The foldout pages — with their appropriate but still surprising solutions to each new difficulty—are bound to involve children in the story. And the repetition of increasingly emphatic commands ("Yes, you!" "YES, YOU!" *YES, DO!*") creates just enough tension to make the story's outcome both a pleasure and a relief.

The zaniness of *Just You and Me* by the mother-and-daughter team of Eugenie and Kim Fernandes is more pronounced than that of *Lullabyhullaballoo,* but still errs on the side of restraint. The book's premise is that a tiny baby will not go to sleep, thus preventing Heather's planned excursion with her mother. The river, the wind, the moon, and the birds are invoked to put the baby to sleep. Each in turn offers a colourful solution to the problem; each must confess itself defeated by the relentlessly crying baby. But the sheer predictability of the sequence works against the fantasy. Although it is charming to see the protagonists blown high above the clouds by the well-intentioned wind, or tacking across the face of the deep with a diaper as a sail, we are already anticipating the next logical stage in their adventure. There is one surprise: a disreputable looking cat "selling garbage by the side of the road" presents the baby with a brace of "yummy fish heads" — yet the effect of this incident is so out of kilter with what has gone before that one is less delighted than simply bemused.

That being said, it must be pointed out that the artwork in *Just You and Me* is very fine indeed. Eugenie Fernandes uses a series of flat watercolour sketches for the preliminary and closing scenes of the story; these are

then contrasted with the more colourful and detailed applique montages that depict the excursion into fantasy. The technique suggests a real commitment to the truth that imagination enhances everyday experience. One wishes only that imagination in this case had been allowed a slightly larger compass.

Good Morning and *Good Night*, written by Jan Colbert, exhibit similar virtues, and suffer from similar defects. Both books depict a daily routine which takes off into the realm of the fantastic. A child, on waking, is transformed into a bird, a seal, a turtle, a frog, and a dragonfly; a child at the end of the day becomes a pig, a duck, a dog, a calf, and a cat. Once again, Fernandes's drawings are vivid, colourful, and rich in detail. Once again, the sequence is so logical and formulaic as to curtail the flight of the imagination.

The intrusions of fantasy and magic into ordinary experience are much more successfully rendered in Andreas Greve's *The Good Night Story*, the one book in this collection that dares to merge the standard genres. This is a sophisticated book, and somewhat beyond the grasp of fans of Lollypop or the sleepless princess. As well as overtly combining the domestic with the surreal, Greve executes some interesting variations on the classic frame narrative. A story told within the story takes on a life of its own — to the point of drawing the protagonist of the main story into its action, and requiring some diplomatic manoeuvres on his part to shut the whole thing down before it gets out of control. That elusive synthesis of consistency and reckless abandon that seems to be missing in the work of Fernandes and Colbert is deftly accomplished here. The blurring of bedtime story with dream, and of narration with participation, is admirable — as is the characterization of some rather artful animals who are first stalked by, and then insist on stalking a hunter. Aided by the watercolour illustrations of Kitty Macaulay, Greve has accomplished the difficult task of balancing fantasy and realism in such a way that each complements the other.

***Hilary Turner** teaches English at Simon Fraser University.*

Little Liars and Big Adventures

Mud Puddle. (New edition). Robert Munsch. Illus. Sami Suomalainen. Annick, 1996. 32 pp. $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-468-0. ***Mom, the School Flooded!*** Ken Rivard. Illus. Jacques Laplante. Annick, 1996. 32 pp. $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-474-5. ***On the Go.*** Roger Paré. Illus. author. Trans. David Homel. Annick, 1996. 24 pp. $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-408-7.

Mud Puddle is a revised edition of a story first published in 1979. Munsch has lengthened the text and while Suomalainen's artwork has definitely improved from the clumsy and unattractive pictures of the first edition, some

problems remain. There is a discrepancy between the repetitive and unnecessarily wordy description of the protagonist's shirt and pants which she must repeatedly button up the front, even though, as any observant two-year-old will be quick to point out, none of Jule Ann's shirts sport any buttons, nor are they visible on her pants. Other additions to the original text are more successful and fascinating to toddlers who are learning the names of body parts and enjoy their baths. Every time the omnipresent mud puddle ambushes Jule Ann and jumps on her, covering her and her dog from head to toe, she must have her ears, eyes, mouth and so on, washed out by Mummy, thereby increasing both the pleasure of getting muddier each time, and having more parts to wash, until even her belly button needs cleaning, and we all know how significant the omphalos is to little ones whose bellies are so rotund that they haven't yet noticed other areas of interest.

While Munsch's story is really about a little liar who loves wallowing in mud, we are spared any explicit moralizing on that count and can just enjoy the discrepancy between the text that insists on Jule Ann's innocence in the face of the mud puddle's awesome powers, and the illustrations which successfully depict her delight both with being submerged in mud and subsequently in bath water. At the end, those in search of a moral — cleanliness is next to godliness? — will find satisfaction when Jule Ann finally conquers the mud puddle by throwing two bars of smelly soap at it, after which she sits under a tree with a pail of suds blowing bubbles for her dog to catch. On the whole, this is an entertaining story that should be read in the dramatic mode to get lots of laughs, although you may find yourself skipping lines that seem superfluous both semantically and euphonically.

Mom, the School Flooded! is another story about a little liar who enjoys getting messy and, like small kids tend to do, attributes his state to natural disaster. Gus comes home soaking wet and proceeds to tell his mother some tall tales about a great flood that first engulfed his geography class, then the gym, the entire school and finally the school yard. The text is structured as a dialogue with Gus's stories "scrawled" in free-hand print and his mother's limited interjections ("Now, Gus, honestly ...") in regular typeset. The drawings are also imitative of children's art, brightly coloured and dynamic, El Grecoesque people with long spaghetti limbs and bodies like Poky and Gumby dolls. An attractive feature, for children who are old enough to assume the role of active text-maker, is the open-endedness, and the offer of different options: "Do you think Gus's mom believed his story? If you do, close the book. If you don't turn the page" followed by two more far-fetched scenes and a final invitation for children to join in the storytelling and come up with their own version of Gus's adventures. (Not recommended as a late-night bedtime story!)

On the Go is an entertaining little book written and illustrated by Québécois Roger Paré who is quoted on the back cover as saying: "What I really want for a children's book are illustrations that will have the quality of

a painting. I think that children are sensitive and feel what an artist can say with images. When the illustration is explicit enough, what writing I have to add is little in terms of quantity." The illustrations are indeed rich enough for much commentary, while the four rhyming lines to each are short and snappy enough to easily maintain the interest of very young children. The story deals with two little mice — Georgia and Gigi — who, after contemplating a globe, decide to take a trip to a forest, a jungle, a field of wheat, a mountain top and even the moon: a kind of Thelma and Louise duo who, however, set out on their travels not as the result of any conflict, but for sheer pleasure and adventure. They live in utopic harmony with a big black cat who sleeps curled on a rug between the two mice's beds and then flies them "over strange new lands." Their adventures include such challenges as scaling a steep mountain slope and participating in a race as passengers tucked away in the pocket of a kangaroo. Paré achieves a perfect balance between not saying too much and providing child and reader with images full of vocabulary and endless observations.

Martha J. Nandorfy *is the author of a book-length study on Garcia Lorca and the apocalyptic, and has published widely in Hispanic studies, literary theory, and cultural studies. Currently at work on a study of Pedro Almodovar, the aesthetics of camp, and film theory, she has three daughters under the age of four and a ten-year-old son, all of whom share her passion for reading.*

More Reviews (from New Brunswick) that Make Good Reading

Rise and Shine. Raffi, Bonnie Simpson and Bert Simpson. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Random House, 1996. Unpag. $20.00 cloth. ISBN 0-679-30819-9. ***Back to the Cabin***. Ann Blades. Orca, 1996. Unpag. $6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-051-7. ***The Patchwork House***. Sally Fitz-Gibbon. Illus. Dean Griffiths. Orca, 1996. Unpag. $6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-090-8. ***Foster Baby***. Rhian Brynjolson. Pemmican. Unpag. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-921827-54-7. ***Grandpa's Visit***. Richardo Keens-Douglas. Illus. Frances Clancy. Annick, 1996. Unpag. $6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-488-5; ***Stephanie's Ponytail***. Robert Munsch. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Annick, 1996. Unpag. $5.95 paper. ISBN 1-550357-484-2. ***Albert's Old Shoes***. Stephen Muir. Illus. Mary Jane Muir. Stoddart Kids, 1996. 32 pp. $6.99 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5777-5. ***Yancy & Bear***. Hazel Hutchins. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick, 1996. Unpag. $5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-502-4; ***Boy Soup or When Giant Caught Cold***. Loris Lesynski. Illus. author. Annick, 1996. Unpag. $5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-416-8.

For the second time, students in my "Access to Literacies" class at the University of New Brunswick have collaborated with the editors of *Canadian Children's Literature* to produce "Reviews Worth Reading." The first set of reviews (*CCL* Spring 1997) were so good, we decided to try the exercise again. The benefits are mutual. Readers of *CCL* gain access to reviews which have been well-researched and developed in the context of attention to contemporary critical discourses. The students are able to engage in school work with real-life applications.

The people I teach are training to be teachers. Since they are charged with the responsibility of making people literate, their abilities to articulate critical responses to texts, to make value judgements, are extremely important for the literacy education of our children.

When, as a class, we looked at the books, we were able to categorize them into definable genres. The first group bears an uneasy relationship to travel brochures, with a "see Canada (especially British Columbia) first" caption all but printed on the covers. Included in this group are: *Back to the Cabin, Rise and Shine,* and *The Patchwork House.* After these home stories come family stories for the multicultural market: *Foster Baby* and *Grandpa's Visit.* The third group is on fashion trends (*Stephanie's Ponytail* and *Albert's Old Shoes*), while the fourth group is on the contemporary fantasy lives of young children (*Yancy & Bear* and *Boy Soup*). I write around the reviews — and introduce the students.

Travel Brochures

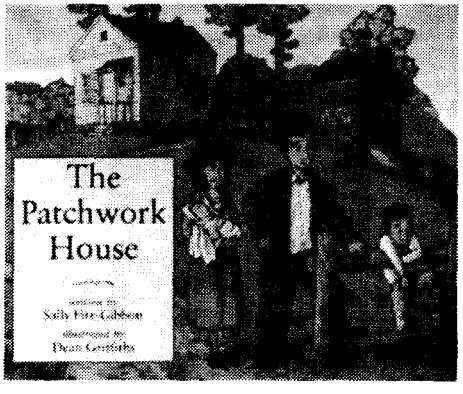
Although *Rise and Shine* didn't receive government support, the message of upbeat multiculturalism is very much in evidence, as the review by Tanya Moules, Andrea Martin, Melanie Ryan and Calvin Chaisson demonstrates. They recognized the "feel good" focus of the story:

'Rise with the bluebird, / Shine like the sun. / Now's the time to rise and shine.' Come and sing along with Raffi, one of North America's most successful recording artists, on an upbeat swing across Canada. Give *Rise and Shine* to beginning readers and they will be able to read it back to you in no time. With the help of Eugenie Fernandes's illustrations, painted in sunny colours, readers will be taken on a journey by the bluebird of happiness. They will be touched by many different cultures and landscapes and accompanied by other animal tour guides: from the puffins in the east, to the huskies in the north, from the wheat fields of the prairies, to the bears and rams in the west.

Cultural diversity, from Ukrainians in the west to Inuit in the north, is very much in evidence.

The next two books in this see-Canada-first series were funded in part by the government of British Columbia. The students in my class, all trained to attend to the peritext, were quick to notice that the British Columbia Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture had a hand in the development of *Back to the Cabin* and *The Patchwork House*. Both books are good on landscape and on evocations of family life. *Back to the Cabin* (I'll write about this one) plays on the difference between "fun" in the city and fun in the country. The students also noticed that it looks like it is the story of a single mother and her children: no daddy is in evidence.

Sonya Langille, Scott Macklin and Corinna Marquardt, in their review of *The Patchwork House*, focus on the culturally specific imprints families stamped onto the house which grounds the story:



'Right beside the garden gate they planted a cherry tree.' That tree grows throughout the pages of the book marking the passage of time. Just as storms uproot trees, so may outside forces uproot a family. This book, which is supported by the British Columbia government, marks the coming and going of culturally diverse families who live in the 'Patchwork House.' Yet, as each

family adds a personal patch to the patchwork of the house there remains one constant sentiment: 'This is the place for us.'

The warm tone watercolours by Dean Griffiths remind readers of the comforts of home. The translucent illustrations are like old photographs stored in a box capturing memories of days long gone. The text acts almost as a series of captions for the full page pictures that commemorate the evolving family. *The Patchwork House* is an invitation to discover why families love to call British Columbia home.

Family Stories for the Multicultural Market

As you will see, *Foster Baby* (reviewed by Alison Caldwell and Maxine McConnell), is the worst book in the bunch. Here's why:

This is not a book. It is a manual, a pathetic attempt to introduce the concept of foster families to young readers. The story is insulting to First Nations people because it portrays them as 'dirty' — and implies that foster children come from households plagued by drug and alcohol abuse. The publication presents its topic in a patronizing and condescending manner. It implies that people are stupid or do not possess the intellectual ability to handle the straight facts on foster care.

Why would Rhian Brynjolson jeopardize her reputation as a respected illustrator by creating something so embarrassing? The Manitoba Arts Council and The Canada Council should be ashamed to be associated in any way, with this publication.

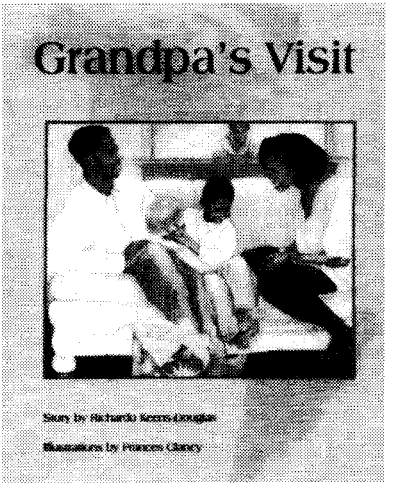
The students hated the book. I think they've learned to be wary of didactic diatribes dressed up to look like picture books.

The other book exploring family dynamics, *Grandpa's Visit*, avoids such pitfalls, because it is written by a "real" storyteller, Richardo Keens-Douglas. Here is the review by Jennifer Higgins and Craig Pitts:

'Then one evening, out of the blue, the doorbell rang and standing in the middle of the entrance was Jeremy's grandfather, with the biggest smile you have ever seen and a missing front tooth.'

The unannounced visit from Grandpa was not something Jeremy's parents planned, but it turned out to be just what the family needed. Before Grandpa's visit, Jeremy's Mom and Dad were busy with two jobs. The house was equipped with all the latest appliances and electronics. Mom and Dad did not even notice that Jeremy's two best friends were Tellie, the TV and Victor, the VCR. It took Grandpa's visit, a simple toy ball, and a power outage to show that spending time together with people we love is more important than spending time and money on material things. Richardo Keens-Douglas, in his funny and lyrical text, captures this middle class family's change in attitude.

Keens-Douglas celebrates his Caribbean-Canadian heritage here as he does in his other works, , *The Nutmeg Princess* and *La Diablesse and the Baby*. Frances Clancy's realistic pencil crayons on gesso illustrations heighten the cultural



connections. African masks hang on the living room wall and Grandpa's gift of a toy ball is in the tricolour green, yellow and red.

The lesson is clear: family values are more important than keeping up with the neighbours. Yet being cool and "like" your friends is a fundamental part of childhood.

Fashion Trends

Any new book by Robert Munsch deserves a mention. His perfectly observed renderings of the lives of North American children in the late twentieth-century are always worth noting. Here Donna Retson, Alva-Lee Patterson, Scott Tingley and Susan Somerville comment:

> Who gets the last laugh after a bunch of 'brainless copycats' take advantage of Stephanie's ingenuity? Robert Munsch explores the world of childhood politics and manners in *Stephanie's Ponytail*, as he has in other books in the same genre, *Thomas's Snowsuit* and *I Have to Go*. In *Stephanie's Ponytail*, Munsch turns the game of follow-the-leader into a warning example about the dangers of conforming to peer pressure: today's foolish trend of broccoli ponytails 'sprouts' into tomorrow's fad. Munsch uses the single joke to motivate the page turning as readers seek to discover what new style the 'hair-oine' will come up with next.

Albert's Old Shoes is another fashion statement story. Maggie Kelley, Mary Jane Muir and Wendy Meldrum explain the moral.

> This is an 'Ugly Duckling' story. Albert is a lonely and misunderstood little pig. His old shoes seem to be holding him back, pinching his ability to fit in. His schoolmates are always two steps ahead while his mother is always two

steps behind. However his old shoes become a new trend because of an outburst of frustration. Eventually, all the pigs realize that even followers can be trend setters.

Throughout the book Albert is portrayed off to the side. The text mirrors this separation until the end when Albert joins his peers.

Contemporary Fantasy for Young Children

Another follow-the-leader story, *Boy Soup*, written and illustrated by Loris Lesynski. Cheryl Craib, Leigh-Ann Mabie, Christine Nelson and Jennifer Pollack are on the trail here of another warning example, this time turning traditional tales to the service of changed contemporary sensibilities.

'A sweet boy, a neat boy, a boy so delicious — A giant might find himself licking the dishes.' In the tradition of 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' Loris Lesynski turns the threat of tragedy into comic celebration. What harm could come to a cartoon-character who speaks in rhyming verse? Follow Kate and her friends on an adventure of trickery and teamwork. In this modern feminist Jack tale, Kate takes the lead. The joke is on the giant as Kate discovers the power of words. She doctors the boy soup in order to 'save all her friends from this hideous fate.' With help from her friends, the old recipe is erased, and the heroine creates something new.

And finally, not a follow-the-leader story, really, but another kind of mimicking, one that plays out a me-and-my-shadow relationship between a boy and his bear. Here Kelly Terris, Erma Brian, Denise Stymiest, Kim Allen and Doreen Parker review *Yancy and Bear*.

'My you're cute and curly this morning!' When Yancy comes to breakfast dressed in Bear's sailor suit, and Bear shows up at the table in Yancy's sleeper is it only the reader who knows there is something different about them? This tale of role reversal is based on Hutchins's own childhood memories.

What a way for a Bear to spend his birthday, turning thirty-three thousand somersaults! No wonder he looked like someone who 'crammed a whole year of living into just one day.'

Ruth Ohi's playful illustrations make it possible for even nonreaders to engage in the story. The young reader can identify with this story because it explores adult roles through play, while parents will enjoy the opportunity to reminisce about their own childhoods.

In writing these reviews, students learned to articulate value judgments. They demonstrate to themselves that they recognize a "good" book when they see one, and that they also know how to talk about it.

***Lissa Paul** is a professor in the division of Curriculum and Instruction within the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick.*

Farley's Follies

A Farley Mowat Reader. Farley Mowat. Illus. Richard Row. Ed. Wendy Thomas. Key Porter kids, 1997. 192 pp. $26.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-899-5.

In his short foreword to this new collection of excerpts from several of his books, Farley Mowat acknowledges his own misgivings about the volume's title; a "reader," he suspects, would have sounded too much like duty, like scholastic "work," to have enticed him as a child: "If it had been me, I'd have called this book *Farley's Follies*" (9). I don't think young readers will be much deterred. For all the implied dustiness of the title, *A Farley Mowat Reader* will give them ample selections from his works to encourage further explorations.

The volume's editor, Wendy Thomas, has ensured that this book will be no random potpourri. She has carefully arranged the selections, grouped under headings, so as to suggest a narrative movement from early life and a discovery of the beauties of the natural world, to a pressing need to write of that world and its inhabitants.

In the last section, "Becoming a Writer," selections from *Born Naked* tell the story of young Farley's early attempts to form a naturalist club (somewhat dampened by parental discovery of rotting animal parts in the family domicile) and to edit a small mimeographed newspaper. Although these episodes are told with the sure comic touch familiar to readers of *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be* or *Owls in the Family*, there's an important message of respect for young adults' activism operating here too. With the proceeds from the paper (the princely sum, in 1934, of $25.45), the club supplies sick or wounded wintering ducks and geese with enough corn and grain to keep them alive. I began reading this collection knowing I would encounter by-now familiar and important concerns in Mowat's works: the environmental

costs of commercial and technological overproduction and shame at human interruption of that bounty through hunting and killing. But I had forgotten how much respect and importance Mowat also gives children's writing and activism.

Still, as Mowat suggests in his foreword, let's not forget the fun. To quote my seven-year-old expert consultant, "I liked it. It was funny, especially the part ["The Coming of Mutt"] where the boy says 'would you want to buy a duck?"' Arf!

Lorraine York *is a professor of English at McMaster University who has written on Timothy Findley, Alice Munro, and Farley Mowat. She lives with her partner and her seven-year-old expert consultant in Dundas, Ontario.*

Permission to Celebrate: Embracing Puberty for Girls

Sweet Secrets: Stories of Menstruation. Kathleen O'Grady and Paula Wansbrough. Second Story, 1997. 231 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN: 0-929005-33-3.

Sweet Secrets: Stories of Menstruation is a comprehensive tapestry of facts, short stories, and personal anecdotes that explores what is all too often a source of embarrassment or shame. This unique book celebrates the passage to womanhood while answering many of the questions teenage girls and young women have about their changing bodies.

In the empowering preface, Kathleen O'Grady and Paula Wansbrough briefly outline what each section in the book offers, and encourage their readers to start with a topic of interest. The text begins with a focus on facts, while touching on the cultural and social baggage associated with puberty and the female experience. A variety of personal vignettes and discussions work well at relieving the sometimes too earnest tone in the book's early narrative.

O'Grady and Wansbrough have compiled a great deal of practical information. Employing frank and non-judgmental language, they deconstruct myths and explore a wide range of issues surrounding female sexuality. Many of the scenarios and examples used are excellent, and are certain to spark discussion.

This is not a book for squeamish adults, however. "Thirteen and Normal," a compelling story by Carmen Rodriguez, includes a young girl's first view of sexually explicit material and a description of fellatio. Within the context of the story, it works quite well, but its inclusion may limit young readers' access to the book.

Nonetheless, O'Grady and Wansbrough have produced a rich resource of topical information that would easily serve as an addition to family health and sex education studies. The authors clearly wish to encourage dialogue, and they have integrated environmental, multicultural, social and health perspectives throughout the text. Their matter-of-fact approach is liberating, especially for those who may have difficulties getting straight answers to simple questions. Practical advice is prefaced with a heading, and is often boxed and highlighted within the text. This invites the reader to simply skim the book, and then stop and read when something attracts her attention.

Several of the stories and memoirs are exceptional. Mary Helen Stefaniak's "Outrunning Gravity" is a bittersweet coming-of-age tale, attaining its freshness when told from a father's perspective. "Blood," by Jane Eaton Hamilton, uses contemporary teen language and attitudes to effectively explore the ambivalent territory of curiosity and disgust. While the literary merits of the stories in *Sweet Secrets* vary in strength, each conveys important truths about women's complex relationships with their bodies.

The book finishes with an excellent glossary that includes medical or "real" words and several corresponding slang terms. The book is refreshing in its approach to anatomical and sexual considerations, though it is surprising that it contains no references to homosexuality. In every other respect, *Sweet Secrets: Stories of Menstruation* is an inclusive and affirming resource that will engage, enlighten, and inform its readers.

***Ruth E. Walker**'s story, "Traditions," won **Canadian Living**'s 1996 short fiction award. The mother of four children and a former foster parent, she is completing an English/Cultural Studies degree through Trent University.*

Exploring Nature: Jaws, Paws and Claws

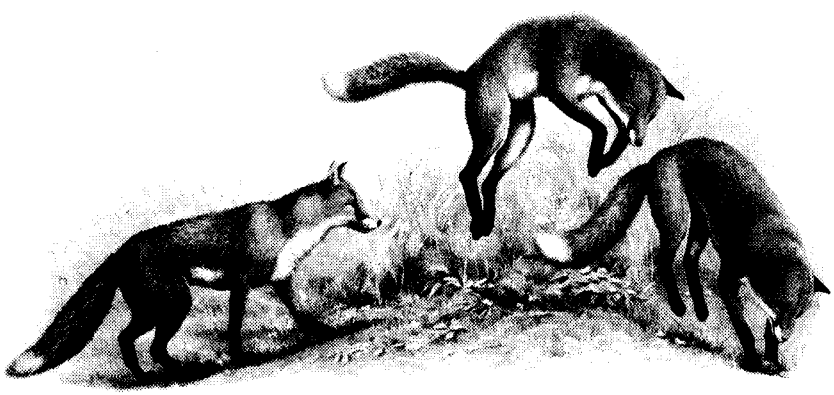
What's a Zoo Do? Jonathan Webb. Key Porter Kids, 1995. 90 pp. $18.95 paper. ISBN 1-55013-609-7 (cloth), 1-55013-664-X (paper). ***By the Seashore.*** Tessa Paul. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-587-4 (RLB), 0-86505-595-5 (paper). ***By Lakes and Rivers.*** Tessa Paul. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-586-6 (RLB), 0-86505-594-7 (paper). ***In Woods and Forests.*** Tessa Paul. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-584-X (RLB), 0-86505-592-0 (paper). ***In Fields and Meadows.*** Tessa Paul. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-585-8 (RLB), 0-86505-593-9 (paper).

Author Jonathan Webb, in *What's a Zoo Do?* presents an excellent introduction to all aspects of the zoo, from its early beginnings as a playground for kings to its current role in the conservation and preservation of endangered

species. Webb takes the reader behind the scenes of today's "zoo as modern city," to reveal the surprising range of workers: keepers, vets, kitchen help, security personnel, guides, researchers and designers.

Well-researched and thorough, the book presents the material in an engaging and often humorous manner. Webb has chosen many high quality photographs of zoo animals as well as archival illustrations, such as a drawing of the bear pit in the London zoo in 1835. Side bars contain intriguing tidbits of information : "Should zoo animals do tricks?", "Which is the most difficult animal to keep alive in a zoo?". The scope of the book is international, with zoos featured from throughout the world, including the Metro Toronto Zoo.

Overall, this is the kind of book that will spark enthusiasm for the natural world in any animal-loving child. It is an impressive work of solid research that is well written and presented in an attractive package.



The four titles in the Animal Trackers series by Tessa Paul are also designed to spark the imagination of the curious child. Each of the four books is devoted to a different habitat (seashore, meadow, forests and freshwater environments) and showcases the community of animals to be found within it. This ecological approach to writing about animals is an interesting and logical way to describe wildlife.

The books are attractively designed with large illustrations of each animal (mammal, bird, fish, amphibian, invertebrate) in its natural setting. A unifying border of paws, claws, webbed feet or eggs appears on each page. Side bars provide information on intriguing aspects of the animal's biology or behaviour.

Each book begins with a two-page introduction, inviting the young

reader to become an "animal tracker," and search for the often elusive clues these animals leave behind. This is a great concept, but unfortunately it isn't carried through. Most of the descriptions of the animals do not indicate in which part of North America they are to be found. A map showing the geographical distribution of the animal seems an obvious piece of information and yet it is lacking. One can imagine the disappointment of a child on Canada's east coast out looking for prairie dogs, magpies and pronghorns. There seems to be a slant towards focusing on western species, but this is never made explicit.

A "footprint" of each species is given if feasible, but it is not drawn to scale, although this is not mentioned. Likewise with the eggs of birds, there is no mention of size.

Each book contains a very brief index and a not very helpful glossary. One is left with the impression that the series, while attractive, is lacking in serious research and attention to detail.

***Marilynn Rudi** is a librarian with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in St. Andrews, New Brunswick.*

Destroying the Plot

Struwwelpeter Tales of Hoffmann. Trans. Seanair. Iolair Publishing, 1996. 64 pp. $19.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-099-5.

There are only a few German books which are recognized as worldwide children's classics — one of them is Heinrich Hoffmann's picture book *Struwwelpeter.*

In 1844, H. Hoffmann, a former medical doctor, became a children's book author. When, just around Christmas, he started to look for a present for his son and couldn't find anything he bought a little empty booklet and started to write and paint the verses and drawings which would later become so well-known. In 1845, when the book was published, a classic was born.

Hoffmann has succeeded in creating something of an archetype — his *Struwwelpeter* has something for everyone. He has been, at various times, forced into uniform as a *Militärstruwwelpeter,* or has metamorphosed into the German Emperor William II, "Swollen-headed William;" he has even changed into *Struwwel-Hitler,* and a little girl, *Struwwellotte.* Not long ago, Struwwelpter got to be gay and at last, very successfully, became Anti-Struwwelpeter.

Very recently, Canada's Iolair Publishing has produced another variation — Struwwelpetriade — translated by Seanair and published as *Struwwelpeter Tales of Hoffmann.* From Seanair's long preface we learn:

> My translations are not word for word translations. Instead, they try to give the exact original stories in modern English. It would be criminal to alter or try to 'improve' these classics: the words and surroundings are changed only slightly, just enough to bring the REAL stories to the late 20th century North American reader.

Well, let us examine whether he is right.

Seanair honours H. Hoffmann very much in that his stories generally leave things uncertain and undetermined. They are short and simple and invite the reader to follow the pictures. But Seanair also tends to make those things clear and evident which have been left open-ended by Hoffmann. His sequels to the stories result in there being only one meaning left. I must disagree with Seanair in this, because it is the power of Hoffmann's picture book that it offers only short moments without reference to anything that has happened either before or after the story is told.

Hoffmann shows dramatic episodes, and he reveals strong emotions — hate, anxiety, anger, violence, and loneliness. Seanair attempts to put "observed facts" in the place of those emotions. Seanair's ideas concerning the stories' endings tend to demonstrate "friendly possibilities (3). But by changing Hoffmann's tales in this way the drama and the grotesque get lost. For example, Seanair invites the reader to discuss whether the hunter has been drowned, and proposes that the reader accept that help arrived just in time to save the hunter's life. This attempt to suggest new endings to the stories and to change the settings in order to make them fit for twentieth-century North America seems to me a failure.

What Seanair seems to perceive as wrong in these stories in reality is not wrong at all; the "mistakes" are part of the power of the story: they affect our feelings and they attract our minds. H. Hoffmann's pictures and verses are not perfect, but they aren't boring either. Nevertheless, after a long life of many trials and tribulations, *Struwwelpeter* is still vital enough to survive even Seanair's attack.

Winfred Kaminski *(Germany) received his PhD from Frankfurt University in 1975. He is a Professor of Literary- and Language-Education at the Fachhochschule Koeln. Among his publications are several books on children's literature, and in 1997 he published a study on fairy tales, "Vom Zauber der Märchen."*

Making Railways, Mapmaking and Navigation Intelligible and Interesting to Kids

The Railways. Robert Livesey and A.G. Smith. Stoddart Kids, 1997. 96 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5901-8. ***Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation***. A.G. Smith. Stoddart Kids, 1997. 96 pp. $17.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5836-4.

Railways have shaped Canadian political and social history as significantly as advances in mapmaking and navigation have altered relations among nations. Yet history teachers have been faced with the challenge of conveying this awareness to young students who may be more familiar with the information highway than the Intercolonial Railway or Sandford Fleming's system of Standard Time.

Two recently-published books, *The Railways* by Robert Livesey and A.G. Smith and *Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation* by A.G. Smith, have made such concepts meaningful and interesting to young readers. Both writers have written extensively on Canadian history, bringing the subject to life most notably in the Discovering Canada series. Their collaboration here has resulted in yet another successful work which promises to be informative and enjoyable for children.

The Railways conveys in ninety-six pages what many Canadian historians have failed to present in much longer works. It also includes a variety of activities — such as building a model locomotive, solving a switching problem and playing a board game — which will be sure to interest many young readers. The impact of the railway on Canadian transportation, industry, politics and society is presented clearly and effectively. The real strength of this book lies in the authors' ability to include so much detail in such a short space. The reader is taken rather quickly from the actual logistics and functioning of the railways to more difficult aspects involving their impact on the career of John A. Macdonald and other politicians, their impact on the livelihood of native peoples of the Northwest and their impact on the industrial tycoons who financed the project. The final section on four women who influenced, albeit indirectly, the development of the railway, provides fascinating insights comprehensible to most young readers, though overlooked by many Canadian historians. This is not a departure from the traditional interpretation of the railway as the cement of Canadian Confederation — only a more meaningful and accurate explanation of its wider socioeconomic importance.

A.G. Smith's book, *Where Am I? The Story of Maps and Navigation*, adheres to a more chronological approach and does not include as many layers of interpretation as *The Railways*. Rather, it presents the key moments in the development of cartography and navigation from the clay maps of Babylonian times to the satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS)

developed within the last twenty years. What this book lacks in social and political context it more than makes up for in the detail of its descriptions and illustrations. Another strength of this work lies in its inclusion of non-Western forms of mapmaking and navigation. Fortunately for the reader, Smith has supplemented his discussion of Greco-Roman and European technological advances with reference to the contribution of Arab, Chinese and Norse cartographers as well as the mapmaking techniques of Eurasian, Pacific and Arctic aboriginal peoples. No doubt, young readers will find the birch-bark maps of northern Siberian tribes and south-pointing carriage of ancient China as interesting as Mercator's projection and Harrison's chronometer. The glossary of specific terms is most useful to students who wish to further their knowledge of cartography and navigation.

Both works are richly illustrated by A.G. Smith, whose line drawings complement and enhance the lucid text. A clear asset to any school library, either work could be used as a teaching aid because of the considerable detail of analysis and explanation.

John Meehan *is a PhD candidate in Canadian history at the University of Toronto. He has helped prepare several works for publication including a history of Lord Beaverbrook's Canadian years and works on the political implications of North American free trade.*

Women in Profile

Scientists. Carlotta Hacker. ISBN 0-7787-0007-0. ***Musicians***. Leslie Strudwick. ISBN 0-7787-0031-3. ***Writers***. Shaun Hunter. ISBN 0-7787-0007-0. ***Political Leaders***. Janice Parker. ISBN 0-7787-0030-5. Crabtree, 1998. 48 pp. $10.95 paper.

The books noted above are four of a six-part series entitled *Women in Profile* published by Crabtree Press. As the Crabtree catalogue informs us, the *Women in Profile* series is intended for a grade 4 reading level. The books are large in print and format, and include maps, photographs, a bibliography, and an index. All four books are beautifully laid out, with a pleasant flow of text and pictures. Each book begins with a general introduction on the respective theme, followed by six major profiles of notable women plus a number of mini-biographies at the back. The major profile contains biographical sketches and columned sections on key events, background, and quick notes. The text also includes highlighted terms that could prove challenging to a fourth grader, the definitions for which are provided in a glossary at the end of the book.

Young readers undoubtedly will enjoy these colourful and informa-

tive books. They will delight in fun words such as "ichthyology" (the study of fish) and "boogie woogie" music. The stories provide some fabulous surprises, from the secret concert given by Liona Boyd to the jurors of the O.J. Simpson trial, to the discovery made by Mary Leakey of a 25-million-year-old skull of an ape. Less pleasant but equally fascinating are the references to the imprisonment of Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto, the assassination of India's Indira Gandhi, and the murder of the American primatologist Dian Fossey. Readers will also learn that sometimes hard work is rewarded to others, as was the case for Chien-shiung Wu and Jocelyn Bell Burnell, both of whom were bypassed for the Nobel Prize in physics despite their great discoveries.

Although the profiles are presented in a cheerful and celebratory vein, the biographies highlight a number of serious subjects, including feminism, the persecution of Jewish citizens, censorship, racism, and sexual assault. Critics who find these themes unsuitable for young readers should consider the words of Judy Blume who is quoted in *Writers*: "I hate the idea that you should always protect children. They live in the same world we do" (12).

Not that these profiles are without their shortcomings. At times the writing style is sentimental, while at other times it reflects problematic suppositions. Thus, we are told in *Political Leaders* about Eva and Juan Perón that "they fell in love immediately" (32) — gag! — whereas the introductory essay in *Writers* informs us that "until quite recently, a woman's primary work was raising children and looking after her family" (4). No more foolish assertion could be made, unless the writer is referring to some nebulous middle-class ideology in vogue in western suburbia in the 1950s. Interestingly, the occupation of fathers of the profiled women is more often recognized than that of the mothers, especially in the volume on *Scientists*. It is doubly ironic that a series with the noted aim to inspire young readers does so by downplaying the historically diverse roles of women on the one hand, and by turning the story of a dictator's wife into a fairy tale, on the other.

The fairy tale quality of several of the stories is disappointing. It is doubtful that many young readers will relate to stories of women who were raised by nannies or governesses, women whose families — with some exceptions — never lacked money and influential friends. In short, judging by the four books under review here, the series could use more examples of individuals who succeeded despite their multifaceted marginalization. It is unfortunate, for example, that only one disabled woman was profiled, the writer Jean Little.

Two final comments will suffice to outline some of the problems with this otherwise enjoyable series. First, for reasons that are not all that clear, all women discussed in these books are referred to by their first names. Is this familiarity appropriate in a series that aims to highlight the great accom-

plishments of some great women? What messages are we giving young readers about the status of women and about the seriousness of women's work/identity? Second, and perhaps most importantly, there is a sense of tokenism to this series that is disconcerting. Why women writers, women politicians, women scientists, or women musicians? Why not a series on writers, politicians, scientists, or musicians that includes women and men?

That such questions should be raised by a professor of women's history is almost sacrilegious, but the questions merit some consideration. Certainly one of the reasons for the existence of women's history courses in universities is the lack of reference to women in mainstream history texts. Is this still the case at the elementary level as well? The *Women in Profile* series promotes the notion that there are scientists, and then there are women scientists, women called Jocelyn, Rachel, and Margaret. If the aim of this series is to inspire young girls by showing them role models, should this goal not transpire in a context that does not render the role models exceptional, unusual, far-fetched? The series resembles too closely the old Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew dichotomy. Very few boys read Nancy Drew; will many of them pick up a book on *women* musicians? Yet, boys, too, need to appreciate the potential of both sexes.

Darlene Abreu-Ferreira *is a professor of women's history at the University of Winnipeg, specializing in early modern European women with a particular focus on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Portuguese women.*

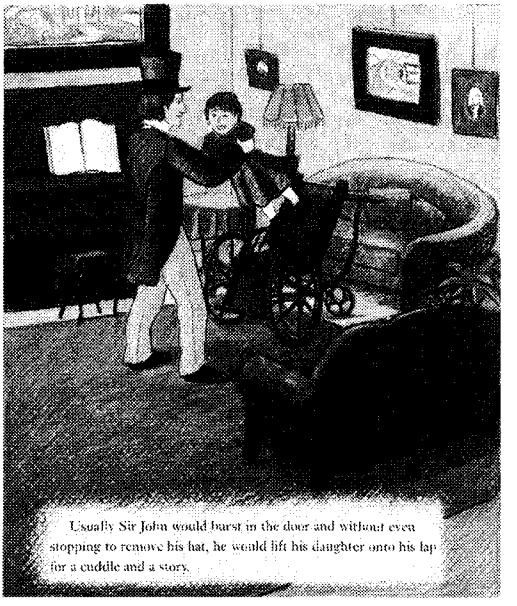
Prime Ministers, Baboo and Canadian History Brought to Life

The Kids Book of Canadian Prime Ministers. Pat Hancock. Illus. John Mantha. Kids Can, 1998. 55 pp. $18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-473-9. ***Baboo: The Story of Sir John A. Macdonald's Daughter.*** Ainslie Manson. Illus. Bill Wand. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1998. 32 pp. $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-329-3.

According to its critics, political history has become an intellectual pursuit of the past. It is often claimed that this approach to history has provided too narrow a focus for a proper understanding of past events. It is further alleged that political history — especially Canadian political history — is dull and only remotely related to everday realities — obviously unsuitable material for stimulating a lively interest in history among the young. *The Kids Book of Canadian Prime Ministers* written by Pat Hancock (illustrated by John Mantha) and *Baboo: the Story of John A. Macdonald's Daughter* by Ainslie Manson (illustrated by Bill Wand) do much to dispel such myths about Canadian history. They bring the history of Canada's prime ministers and

their families to life by relating them to the wider historical context in a colourful and meaningful way.

A comparison of the two books is rather difficult given the different age groups of the intended audience. While Hancock's detailed explanation of the lives and contributions of Canada's prime ministers is geared to a readership of eight- to twelve-year-olds, Manson's far more simplistic account of the life of John A. Macdonald's handicapped daughter, affectionately known as Baboo, appeals to a younger age group (four- to nine-year-olds). Richly illustrated by John Mantha, Hancock's book provides a detailed analysis of Canada's system of government and an excellent overview of each prime minister's career. Hancock does an admirable job of explaining representative democracy, cabinet government, and other difficult concepts to a young audience in simple, accessible language. Depending on their importance in Canadian history, each prime minister merits between one and five pages of historically-accurate description, which is accompanied by vivid illustrations of the leader, his main associates, and, in some cases, family members to personalize the historical figure. A box of "quick facts" is included to provide the key points of each prime minister's career, in addition to a well-chosen quotation indicating his outlook on Canada. In such a way, a great deal of information is provided on each prime minister without giving the impression that all of these useful and fascinating tidbits have been crammed in. Some readers may chuckle at Sir John Abbott's quotation that "I am here very much because I am not particularly obnoxious to anyone." Boxes marked "Did You Know ..." provide interesting trivia on several prime ministers such as the fact that Mackenzie King was Canada's



longest-serving PM and the only one with a PhD. Complex historical events such as the Northwest rebellion, the Boer war, and the October crisis are explained in simple, direct language. The inclusion of a time line and index at the end of the book provide useful tools for the avid young historian.

Manson's picture book on the life of John A. Macdonald's handicapped daughter provides a touching glimpse of Macdonald's home life and relationship with his wife and Baboo. Although the prose is not particularly gripping for a young child, the inclusion of Macdonald's letters to his daughter remedies this weakness somewhat and brings the subject to life. In fact, they are perhaps the most sensitive part of a narrative which jumps from descriptions of Baboo's home life to Macdonald's knighthood, from her much-prized gift of a typewriter to her father's parliamentary career. Youngsters may not remember these various aspects of life with a prime minister's family, but they will get a good sense of the Macdonalds' love for their child.

John Meehan *is a PhD candidate in History and Academic Don of Social Sciences at Trinity College, University of Toronto. He has taught Canadian, European, and Japanese history and is fascinated by biographies.*

Flights of the Imagination

McCurdy and the Silver Dart. Les Harding. University College of Cape Breton P, 1998. 126 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 0-920336-69-8.

Many children still respond to airplanes as they did eighty years ago. At the sound of engines in the sky, they bound through the screen door and into the backyard, excitedly speculating on where the airplane might be going. Only later do they lose this sense of wonder, and come to associate flying with lost luggage, crowded departure lounges, and debilitating jet lag. Douglas McCurdy belonged to an earlier age, and Les Harding's charming book reminds us what it was like to live at a time when aviation was regarded with unbridled enthusiasm. McCurdy was the son of a distinguished Cape Breton family whose hometown of Baddeck had the good fortune to become the summer residence of the great inventor Alexander Graham Bell. The Bells grew fond of young McCurdy and, when he returned to Baddeck from university, he was brought into the Aerial Experiment Association, organized for the sole purpose of building a flying machine. In this, the AEA succeeded: McCurdy became the first person to pilot an airplane in Canada, and went on to add a string of other achievements to his credit. When he died in 1961, he was widely regarded as one of the greatest aviation pioneers in the world.

Harding's account is unembellished, and eschews the purple prose

lavished on McCurdy by his contemporaries. This sets it apart from much aviation literature: the plain diction focuses attention away from the text and towards the events themselves, allowing the reader to experience vicariously the excitement that flying generated in its early days. We sense the emotions of the thousands who flocked to air shows before 1914, drawn by the wonder of seeing a human ascend into the heavens (and perhaps also by a morbid desire to see him crash to the earth). We appreciate the sheer inventiveness of McCurdy and his fellow designers, who crafted rickety flying machines out of materials that could be found in most Canadian farmhouses. And we see the intense curiosity of these inventors, who responded to every setback with the question, "What would happen if...?"

The book works so well, not simply because it is clearly written for children (a glossary is added to define the various technical terms used) and full of engaging characters, but because it returns us to a time when flight generated powerful emotions. In the 1930s, aviation pioneers like McCurdy were heroes to a whole generation of youngsters, who saw in flying the potential to improve the human condition. Harding's evocative portrait rekindles that same optimism of an era when many believed that flight could, so to speak, elevate humanity to a higher plane.

Jonathan F. Vance *is an assistant professor of history at the University of Western Ontario. Among his publications are* ***Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War*** *(UBC P).*

Lessons in the Past: Women's History in Fiction

Janey's Choice. Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic Canada, 1998. 198 pp. $5.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-12497-8. ***Wings to Fly.*** Celia Barker Lottridge. Illus. Mary Jane Gerber. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1997. 209 pp. $15.95, $9.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88899-293-9, 0-88899-280-7.

Historical fiction ideally illuminates both the past and the present so that readers can contrast their modern lives with those led by previous generations. Young people, especially girls aged eight-twelve, will be able to engage in this process while reading *Janey's Choice* and *Wings to Fly*. Reflecting on the stories in these books can show them how opportunities for girls have changed over the last few decades, and can encourage them to strive for their own goals. Of course, young readers care more about the story than the feminist message that slides in sideways. A tight, well-told story like the one in *Wings to Fly* captivates the reader while offering instruction on the lives of girls and women on the Alberta frontier in 1918.

Everything is just right in this novel about Josie Ferrier, a spunky,

imaginative girl who is beginning to discover the nature of women's choices and their dreams of success. The details of women's work, particularly its variety, are accurate and compelling. For instance, Josie's teacher, Miss Barnett, could "build a coal fire to keep the school warm, referee a hockey game, catch ornery horses and even help the children stay calm and cheerful when an early snowstorm threatened to keep them overnight" (33). Miss Barnett is a good teacher because she uses her skills with pride. Josie's mother considers herself a "good farm wife" even though she says, "Surely there are more important things to do than get up at three in the morning to make bread. I have enough money on hand to buy bread from the baker for the threshing crew and I will'" (62). In such an atmosphere of female competence and self-assertion, Josie doesn't hesitate to butcher twelve turkeys to help feed their neighbours suffering from the flu epidemic. She also rides alone to town to pick up parcels, and helps organize a tea party for a dispirited neighbour. Despite her ability to manage farm life, Josie dreams of flying an airplane, and eventually receives a letter from her role model, pilot Katherine Stinson.

Josie sorts out her goals and aspirations against a beautifully detailed backdrop of pioneer Alberta. The descriptions of the landscape, light, and weather are exactly right, as are the historical details, such as the dissolving and dripping of a sod roof in a rainstorm. Lottridge seamlessly integrates her historical research into the strands of the plot that weave the story of a mystery and an account of a developing friendship. *Wings to Fly*, with its pleasant illustrations, satisfies on many levels.

Janey's Choice is not so rewarding. This story of interpersonal dynamics, set in 1931, concentrates on the troubles and divisions in a family whose children were separated after the death of their mother. Janey Phair, the youngest child, calls both Winnipeg and Toronto home because she had lived with an aunt and uncle in Winnipeg after her mother died, while her siblings stayed with their father in Toronto. This novel finds her back with her father and siblings after the death of her aunt. However, she soon yearns for her home in Winnipeg. Both she and her brother Harry move between households as they try to find a comfortable place in the absence of a mother. All this travelling seems gratuitous, however. Hunter does not address the social and geographical distinctions between the two cities, even though the title refers to Janey's choice of where she would like to live. Janey finally chooses to live with her father and siblings in Toronto.

The novel's plot then shifts to work out how a new stepmother, Mrs. Flowers, will become integrated into the family and how Janey's sister, Amy, will approach the change to her role as housekeeper. By the end of the novel, Amy is free to go to Kingston Normal School while her new stepmother takes over the domestic duties. Because of the portrayal of Amy's life as a household drudge, this novel does address girls' aspirations. The female characters discuss changing opportunities for women, but the novel does not give a sense of variety and possibility in women's lives. Amy is only free to leave the housekeeping behind because her father's new wife is willing to take it on.

The story has a strong oral flavour and is told primarily in dialogue. As a result, the descriptions of a particular place and time are lacking. Details of setting are likely correct but seem unauthentic because they are stuck onto a plot that doesn't require them. The least convincing details are the letters that Janey and Harry write: they are far more narrative and evocative than real children's letters, which tend to stick to a recitation of events. The book also has a serious editing error. In the midst of a conversation between Janey and her friend Norma, Mrs. Flowers arrives, and the conversation takes a disconcerting jump — something is obviously missing. The engaged reader will be able to zip along undeterred, however, as the story continues, informal and chatty, but not offering the same substance for thought as *Wings to Fly*.

Barbara Powell *is Coordinator of Women's Studies at the University of Regina. Her many publications include* ***Piecing the Quilt: Sources for Women's History in the Saskatchewan Archives Board.***

Bread and Butter, and Chocolate

Project Disaster. Sylvia McNicoll. Illus. Brian Boyd. Scholastic, 1990. 90 pp. $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73742-2. ***Starshine on TV.*** Ellen Schwartz. Polestar, 1996. 136 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-896095-13-5. ***Crazy for Chocolate.*** Frieda Wishinsky. Illus. Jock McRae. Scholastic, 1998. 68 pp. $4.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-12397-1.

Sibling jealousy, school projects, relations with parents and grandparents, day-to-day ups and downs, and the need to be "special" — these are the bread-and-butter topics of children's leisure reading, if the proliferation of inexpensive paperback series that feature child heroes in contemporary domestic settings is anything to go by. Typically, the story begins with the child's difficulties in school or at home, continues with a description of a number of minor, often comic disasters, and concludes with the newly-enlightened child achieving success and enhanced self-esteem. Sylvia McNicoll's *Project Disaster* follows this pattern of events in the life of Neil Boisvert whose mother (in hospital for most of the book's duration) has just presented the family with a new baby. During her absence, Neil has to contend with his own less-than-stellar performance at school, the intrusions of his pesky little sister, Tara (suffering from her own insecurities and competing with Neil for the attention of a much-loved grandfather), and his longing for a pet dog which, his father insists, will only become reality if his school marks improve. When his school project on pets turns into a disaster, Neil seeks consolation behind the wheel of his grandfather's treasured red Firebird, with results that narrowly avert tragedy. McNicoll has written a number of children's books,

including *The Big Race*, a sequel to *Project Disaster*. In the latter, she achieves a nice balance between having Neil recognize and take responsibility for his own shortcomings and at the same time giving him strong reassurance that he is loved and valued by his family.

Ellen Schwartz's *Starshine on TV* is intended for slightly older children and is the third in this series about a ten-year-old who has ambitions to be on television and a serious interest in spiders. She also has a pesky little sister who manages to steal the limelight, even getting the leading role in a TV commercial for which Starshine has auditioned. The plot is more complex than McNicoll's, as befits a book for more experienced readers, and it has a heavier agenda: Starshine's ambition to be on TV is shown to be misguided — she just doesn't have that kind of talent — but she has many other important qualities, including her determination to carry out an experiment to see which food helps her nephila, Goldy-legs, spin the strongest web. After a series of misadventures, Starshine learns to recognize what she is good at doing and where her real interests lie, and she learns too that her parents value her accomplishments just as much as those of her little sister.

Both of these books are entertaining and convey ideals that most of us would support in that they aim at helping children to grow into responsible, self-aware adults. At times, however, various social agendas seem to hang somewhat heavily on the plots, especially in Schwartz's book. Here the parents are environmentally-concerned artists who run a studio from their home. They are so attentive to their children, so affectionate and good-tempered, that one rather longs for them to have a few failings. Minor characters are determinedly multi-cultural (true also to a lesser degree of McNicoll's book); teachers and parents are concerned with liberating children from gender stereotypes. There is, of course, nothing wrong with these aims — quite the contrary — but one might wish for writing where they are subsumed within a more profound realization of character and incident. But perhaps that is beyond the requirements of this genre.

Frieda Wishinsky's *Crazy for Chocolate* focuses on one of the main themes of McNicoll's book: the ubiquitous school project. Anne has to complete a project on something she loves, and decides to write about chocolate. Library books make heavy reading, but a CD given to her by a strange new librarian turns out to have magic properties, and when Anne slides it into her computer, she finds herself on a more than virtual trip through history as onlooker and participant in the discovery and marketing of chocolate. Her adventures are lively and suspenseful; historical details are filled in painlessly for the reader, and at the end of the story, with Anne safely home again, we are given the actual project that she submits to her teacher (Grade: A). Unlike the previous two books, this one focuses on the external world rather than the child's emotional growth. Its agenda may be to encourage parents and children in the use of computer resources as well as more traditional sources of information. Parents faced with the supervision of their children's

school projects may well wish for a magic CD like Anne's to bring the research to life; failing that, they might find in this book some ideas and encouragement for a reluctant project writer.

Mary-Ann Stouck is associate professor of English and Humanities at Simon Fraser University. Recent publications include an anthology, ***Medieval Saints: A Reader,*** *published by Broadview Press.*

Ginette Anfousse's Rosalie

Rosalie's Catastrophes. Ginette Anfousse. Illus. Marisol Sarrazin. Trans. Linda Gaboriau. Ragweed, 1994. 93 pp. $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-921556-47-0. ***Rosalie's Battles***. Ginette Anfousse. Illus. Marisol Sarrazin. Trans. Linda Gaboriau. Ragweed, 1995. 91 pp. $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-921556-50-0. ***Rosalie's Big Dream***. Ginette Anfousse. Illus. Marisol Sarrazin. Trans. Linda Gaboriau. Ragweed, 1995. 89 pp. $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-921556-50-0.

The lively and impulsive Rosalie is an orphan who lives with her seven aunts. *Rosalie's Catastrophes* introduces us to the heroine who complains "It's just not fair cause my seven aunts decided to be like seven mothers to me." Rosalie gradually comes to appreciate her loving family, in which each aunt fulfils a different parental role. Aunt Beatrice, for example, runs the household like a "traffic cop" while gentle Aunt Alice sneaks two molasses cookies into Rosalie's bedroom every night. The one-dimensional, slightly farcical descriptions of the aunts (reminiscent of adult characters in Robert Munsch's stories) make for many humorous moments in the book. I laughed out loud at the description of seven "mothers" interrupting the annual Christmas pageant with a standing ovation for Rosalie.

The hilarious moments which occur between Rosalie and her aunts in *Rosalie's Catastrophes* give way to a focus on Rosalie's relationships and dreams of future stardom in *Rosalie's Battles* and *Rosalie's Big Dream*. As in the first book, humorous situations arise from Rosalie's tendency to speak before thinking and her inexhaustible enthusiasm.

The light-hearted and upbeat nature of these books is reflected in Rosalie's frequent exclamation "Holy hopping horrors!" in response to her predicaments. However, a didactic tone is more evident in the sequels, where Rosalie learns about the evils of war and the importance of friendship. The illustrations in all three books accurately reflect the spirit and lively imagination of the heroine, especially the depiction of Rosalie's wild, wavy long hair which she calls her "Javanese Indian curls." While the two sequels do not completely live up to the quality of their predecessor, the complete series

is still entertaining and would be ideal for adults and children to read together as an introduction to chapter books.

Kathleen Donohue *received her Master's Degree in English from the University of Guelph and teaches in a private school in Aurora, Ontario.*

The Pleasures — and Perils — of Being Invisible

The Invisible Harry. Marthe Jocelyn. Illus. Abby Carter. Tundra, 1998. 128 pp. $14.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-467-3 ***Vanishing Act***. Cora Taylor. Red Deer College P, 1997 (Northern Lights Young Novels). 199 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-165-9.

Making someone, or something, disappear is a popular element in fiction for young readers. Our hero discovers a formula or a magic spell and literally works wonders. The joy and power, however, are soon tempered by the reality of unpredictable results. Two new novels by Marthe Jocelyn and Cora Taylor explore this theme. Though they are very different in approach, content, audience and style, both succeed in suspending the young reader's disbelief and in spinning believable and entertaining yarns.

The Invisible Harry is a sequel to Marthe Jocelyn's popular first book *The Invisible Day* (1997) , though it easily stands alone. This time Billie Stoner makes a new puppy invisible, so as to buy herself enough time to convince her mother to let her keep him. Intended for eight- to twelve-year olds, this is a fast-paced funny story told throughout from the resourceful Billie's viewpoint. In twenty-one short chapters with large readable print and plenty of accessible dialogue and humour, we tumble from one escapade to another. In short, lively scenes, Jocelyn shows us the invisible puppy at school, at home, or on the street with other dogs. Again, the New York City background is well drawn, and the book sparkles with humour and with suspense to keep young readers turning the page.

While most of Jocelyn's characters ring true, Sam the dog-sitter, who agrees to "work" for Billie but never appears to be paid, perhaps too conveniently does what's needed without asking questions. Also, one of the joys of finishing a good story is to imagine what happens to the characters afterwards. The Epilogue tacked on here gives the author's view of "what happened next," but robs the reader of that flight of imagination. On the whole, though, this is a delightful story. The illustrations by Abby Carter are a perfect fit for the breezy, light tone of the text.

Cora Taylor's *Vanishing Act* aims at an older audience, and is, there-

fore, much longer and more densely plotted. Set in smaller print and divided into two parts with a total of forty-four chapters, it will appeal to young teens and fluent readers. The plot follows twin sisters Jennifer and Maggie and their friend Sam on a mystery which eventually takes them from Canada (Part One) to a Greek cruise (Part Two). The style is fluent and often leisurely, with plenty of background material woven in. Dialogue is believable, and the interactions between the young characters ring true.

The mystery elements in Part One — wondering about the father, and looking for the mother's lost watch, which has sentimental value — do not have the heart-thumping importance of the conflicts later in the book. The focus here is on discovering and perfecting Jennifer's ability to disappear and reappear at will, and achieving the kids' goal of going on a Greek cruise with "Grand," the mother of their missing father (another variation on the "vanishing" theme). The way in which the boy, Sam, is able to join the girls on their cruise — a convenient invitation to England, another to Italy, inherited money, etc. — seems contrived and awkward, but for the most part Taylor handles the intricacies of a complicated plot well. Part Two has a much faster pace, with the constant drama of mysterious strangers and hints of spies, plots, kidnapping, counterintelligence, and a beloved father in danger. Taylor writes deftly, letting these courageous kids stay in control: the twins switch for each other when needed; Jennifer disappears and reappears at will; Grand is always on the scene, helpful and understanding. Along the way, readers experience daily life on a cruise ship; though as with real travellers, they may sometimes feel overloaded by information about those ancient sites and places visited. Each chapter in *Vanishing Act* is told from a different viewpoint. This allows the reader to enter into the head of all three main characters in turn, and to revisit some scenes. Mostly this works well, though sometimes it can be confusing. The situation with regard to the missing father is also sometimes hard to keep track of, with a plethora of murky characters whose relationships and motives are unclear. But there is no doubt of the tension and drama as the young trio escape kidnapping and worse, and Taylor does well at keeping the story unpredictable. Both books, for two different age levels, work well for their intended audiences. Both authors do a wonderful job of describing the pleasures and perils of being felt, and heard, but not seen. The "vanishings" in both stories are totally believable, and beautifully handled. And in both books, by the end, the characters are pretty much the same as in the beginning — none the worse for their experience, not particularly changed by it, but ready for their next adventures, whether visible or not. Young readers will be eager to join them.

Margaret Springer *is an author and writing teacher whose books for young readers include* ***Move Over, Einstein*** *(Puffin Books, 1997). She is also widely published in children's magazines.*

Pre-Teen Reality Check

Do You Want Fries with That? Martyn Godfrey. Scholastic Canada, 1996. 154 pp. paper. ISBN 0-590-24699-2. ***Why Just Me?*** Martyn Godfrey., Scholastic Canada, 1996. 146 pp. ISBN 0-590-24919-3 Ltd., Richmond Hill.

Martin Godfrey's novels, *Do You Want Fries with That?* and *Why Just Me?* are written for a pre-teen, female readership. Both books use the first-person accounts of twelve-year-old girls to tell their stories. This is a compelling technique, and draws the reader into the intimate details of the day-to-day lives of girls on the brink of young adulthood. As with so many young peoples' books, the stories capture the increasingly common reality of single-parent families. Each of these stories centres on the girl's relationship with her father. In *Do You Want Fries with That?*, Brittany and her best friend have travelled from Toronto to Florida for Brittany's annual visit with her father. It is highlighted by a trip to Disney World, where the girls will visit a live studio show with their teen idol. In *Why just me?*, Shannon pours her concerns about impending puberty onto the pages of her language arts journal. She is also negotiating a relationship with her mother who now lives in the US with her new husband, and seems to have little time for her daughter.

Both books deal with serious relationship issues, coming of age, adjusting to personal and family changes. There are funny and entertaining sections, as well as some suspense and a few surprises. Despite all of these positive attributes, the writing is uneven, particularly in *Do You Want Fries with That?*. The young female characters do not always sound authentic, the vocabulary fluctuates between believable adolescent banter, and sometimes jarring adult talk, which feels preachy and moralistic. Further, the girls, while occasionally showing some spunk and independent thinking, are distressingly stereotypical. In *Fries*, they are "ga-ga" over an adolescent male TV star, while in *Why Just Me?* Shannon finds herself going to endless hockey games to watch her boyfriend play, when she has no interest in the game. While the stories do a good job of delving into complicated relationships with separated parents, they still revolve mainly around infatuations with boys. The novels do not acknowledge the rich and varied lives of contemporary Canadian girls. Girls, too, play sports, and participate in countless other activities and organizations.

Why Just Me? is the stronger book of the two. It has some good introspective moments as Shannon writes in her journal about her first bra, waiting for her first period, and yearning for a mother who cares about these major events in her daughter's life. If the purpose of novels for young teens is to reflect back to them their everyday lives, *Why Just Me?* does a better job of that, while *Do You Want Fries with That?* indulges in the fantasy of meeting a male teen star face to face. These books, however, do not challenge the reader to think critically about issues in their lives, or to look beyond fairly narrow, stereotypical confines. While some girls will find Godfrey's books entertaining, they are light fare for the more sophisticated and adventurous adoles-

cent reader. The books provide the occasional poignant glimpse into the complexities of young people's lives, but the reader is left wanting more depth.

Aniko Varpalotai is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario. She currently teaches and researches in the area of gender and education.

Silence: Hiding a Father's Abuse

Of Things Not Seen. Don Aker. Gemini Books Stoddart, 1995. 197 pp. $5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7435-7. ***Brad's Universe***. Mary Woodbury. Orca, 1998. 191 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-120-3.

In the young adult novels, *Of Things Not Seen* and *Brad's Universe*, Don Aker and Mary Woodbury write about teenage boys who have abusive fathers. Each of the narratives, which focus almost entirely on the boys' perspectives, revolve around single-child families where the father has either left and then been replaced by a stepfather or, in the case of *Brad's Universe*, where the father has been in and out of jail. In Aker's novel, the abuse is blatant as the protagonist, sixteen-year-old Ben, spends every waking moment trying to avoid both his stepfather's violent beatings and the imminent discovery of the abuse. The sexual abuse in Woodbury's novel is more subversive as it occurred in a past that neither of fourteen-year-old Brad's parents want him to know about.

The problems of hiding the abuse and not revealing the past are key themes in both novels. In *Of Things Not Seen* , Don Aker deals explicitly with how terrifying and invasive physical abuse can be. He uses his characters to reiterate and refute common arguments that are a part of the abuse-victim mentality: when Ben's mother states that the stepfather's abuse is only a result of his love "Ben sneer[s]. 'Look at those marks on your face! That's not love! Not anything like it!'" (144). Though Aker stereotypically situates the abuse within a poor family where money is figured as one of the primary solutions to ending the abuse, he does challenge this class distinction by making one of the wealthiest of Ben's classmates, someone that Ben envies throughout the novel, also the victim of fatherly abuse. Thus, Aker points out that having money does not end abuse. In fact, the only solution that Aker provides to escape the abuse is exposing it — breaking the silence — especially to the police.

The sexual abuse in *Brad's Universe* is figured more as an elusive element that, when revealed, will serve to order Brad's world. Brad himself is not abused by his father. Woodbury's narrative maintains the suspense of

the secret abuse until the end of the novel — only allowing brief flashbacks to a childhood memory of Brad's father, a gifted pianist, and some of his music students in a hot tub which Brad remembers: "The tub was full of big boys, music students, the ones with talent, the ones who got cookies and milk and special help" (171). *Brad's Universe* is not explicitly about the abuse; instead it is about a son who wants his father's love and approval. Woodbury uses the sexual abuse as an ambiguous trope that signals the complexity of the interplay between the paedophilic father and the son: Brad's father excludes his son from his affection, particularly from his sexual affection, because Brad is not musically gifted. As a reader, one is left with the disturbing impression that, had Brad been good in music, he too would have been an object of his father's affection/abuse.

While each of the novels reaches resolution, the abuse itself is not resolved: in the last pages, Aker has the wealthy teen calling Ben for help, and Woodbury leaves open the possibility of future abuse by Brad's father even though he is in counselling. Though Aker's book is written for an older teenage market and Woodbury's is written for younger teens or pre-teens, both books successfully convey elements of abusive situations that may allow others to read and recognize the abuse in their own lives and to possibly get help by breaking the silence.

Jennifer Ailles *is an MA Candidate in English at the University of Guelph. She is currently working on her thesis which involves re-figuring Shakespeare's* ***Romeo and Juliet*** *from a queer perspective.*

To Dream in Canada

Melanie Bluelake's Dream. Betty Dorion. Coteau, 1995. 214 pp. $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55050-081-3. ***Dreamcatcher***. Meredy Maynard. Polestar, 1995. 138 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-896095-01-1.

These two first novels are remarkably similar: each protagonist struggles with the demands of early adolescence on childhood; Native identity is called into question by a hostile, non-Native world; the single-parent family feels the strains of paternal absence; a change of place disrupts the child's world of routine, stability and friendship. In both stories, a central dream clarifies for the child that personal, emotional struggle can be resolved through internal growth. The children in these books learn to be reflective, independent young adults: in their attempt to escape the bondage of parental attachment, they learn to value friendship.

Some readers may be annoyed that Meredy Maynard and Betty Dorion — non-Native writers — choose to write about Native characters and themes

or worry that Native identity has become a metaphor for Canadian children in general, such as the two friends in Welwyn Wilton Katz's *False Face* (1987). We should be aware of these issues but also be hopeful that Native issues in this country can no longer be ignored by non-Native writing. When Fran, the thirteen-year-old hero of *Dreamcatcher*, moves from Toronto to the small town of Newcastle after the death of his father, a conflict between the city and town adds to his troubles. He secretly adopts an injured baby racoon, but can't cope with this task until he is befriended by Jo, a girl of the same age whose mother is half French-Canadian, half Mohawk and whose father has returned to his grandparents on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford. Jo's mother lives close to the land in a forest clearing, and although Jo has been held back in school because of slow reading, she eagerly reads anything she can find on Native identity (which explains why so much of the Indian lore in this book sounds like textbook knowledge)

Fran hates his mother's new boyfriend for reasons he can't exactly explain; his relationship with his mother seems almost nonexistent. Maynard fails to provide the book with enough emotional subtext. Children's literature, by definition, gives the power of representation to children, but parents ought to be given some depth of characterization if they are to be the target of youthful anger and resentment. The friendship of Fran and Jo is entirely innocent — no sexual tension whatsoever — as their bond is based on the common absence of a father. Everything that Jo teaches Fran about Native Culture — respect for nature and supernatural forces, interest in the past — finds its place in the novel's plot. The Native coming-of-age ritual of isolation, starvation and vision becomes the book's climax when Fran becomes lost in the woods, knocks himself out in a fall, and is given a dream that allows him to come to terms with the loss of his father. During this scene, the pet racoon returns to the wild, symbolizing the end of childhood in acts of independence, self-reliance, and freedom.

Melanie Bluelake's Dream is a lovely book that teaches us a lot about how the mother-daughter relationship can sometimes take a wrong turn. Melanie's mother has not finished high school. In an effort to make something of her life, she has taken her daughter from the Elk Crossing Reserve in Saskatchewan to Prince Albert, where she hopes to finish grade 12 and get some job training. Early in the novel, Melanie gives us a list — "Why I Hate My Mom" — and for the duration of the book we learn of the difficult relation between Melanie and her mother. Melanie dearly loves Kōhkom, her grandmother, whose loving attention is the source for Melanie's intense homesickness. Feelings of doubt and limited self-respect have led Melanie's mother to retreat from the authority of parenting. The knowledge of Native culture here is disseminated entirely within the book's emotional subtext: homesickness becomes a profound theme. In what is perhaps the novel's most affecting scene, Melanie's mother can't bring herself to attend a meeting with Melanie's new teacher: "I don't want to go because I can't afford to get your supplies yet. And I don't know what to say if she asks me about it. And then she'll

probably ask me if I found a place to live yet. And I'll have to say no to that too. And I haven't started school." Slowly, Melanie comes to learn of her mother's emotional frailty, but not before she plays a few games with her anger. A visit by two social workers, prompted by accurate reports that there isn't enough food at home to feed Melanie, leads Melanie to exaggerate her mother's poverty as an act of revenge. Melanie thus earns a trip for herself back home to Kōhkom and Elk Crossing. Back in the protective arms of her grandmother, Melanie experiences something new: she misses her mother.

There are many well-crafted scenes in *Melanie Bluelake's Dream*: a sudden recognition that the Saskatchewan River (Cree for "swift flowing water") flows between Prince Albert and Elk Crossing, an attempt to save a trapped Canada Goose, a developing close friendship with another displaced Cree girl, a birthday celebration that falls flat suddenly, and a reconciliation with a classroom bully. The book ends with a consideration of home — the content of Melanie's dream — and a new recognition of complex, often contradictory emotions. Betty Dorion is to be congratulated for her easy recognition that Cree is one of the many languages spoken in this country and for her representation of some feelings that are distinct to Native Canadians.

Gregor Campbell *teaches English at the University of Guelph.*

Safe in the Belonging Place

The Belonging Place. Jean Little. Viking, 1997. 124 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-670-87593-7.

Jean Little's readers know that they can trust her to make things come right in the end. Her protagonists are what Sheila Egoff called safe survivors — children who, whatever their troubles, can ultimately depend on loving and wise adults to help them put the world together. But *The Belonging Place* is too comfortable. In *From Anna, Different Dragons,* and *Mamma's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird,* to name only three of Little's many books, the central characters struggle with real difficulties. We worry for them, suffer with them, and cheer at the satisfactory resolution of their problems. Unfortunately, Elspet, the narrator and protagonist of *The Belonging Place,* doesn't command that sort of engagement.

The story begins at the happy ending. Elspet is sixteen, living on a small farm in the wilderness of Upper Canada. She tells us that she is writing down the events of her life because she has a broken leg and Granny has given her ink and paper to keep her occupied. A novel that begins at the end may still be full of tension: although we know the final situation, how the characters got there and what the concluding circumstances mean to them

can keep us guessing. But Elspet's prologue answers most of the key questions in advance, and in the subsequent story of her young childhood in Scotland and her family's emigration to Canada her own uncertainties are unconvincing.

Elspet's mother is killed by a runaway horse in the streets of Aberdeen when she is four years old. Elspet's sailor father takes her to her uncle and aunt in Glen Buchan, where she immediately becomes absorbed as a daughter into the warm, competent, welcoming family. Her occasional fear that she doesn't really belong is obviously ungrounded. There is ample demonstration of the love that surrounds her. As a result, she seems self-absorbed and even a little whiney whenever she worries about having a belonging place. Is she really loved? Will they go to Canada? Will she never see her beloved Granny again? Will someone catch cholera when they arrive in Montreal? The questions are answered before they even arise. The only real discovery for the reader is Elspet's mother's story, which is gradually revealed and works well.

The charm of the book lies in the details of its historical setting, especially in Scotland. The Canadian half of the story is not as engaging. I kept comparing it (to its disadvantage) with two much stronger novels set in roughly the same time and place: Marianne Brandis's *The Quarter-Pie Window* and Janet Lunn's *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*. *The Belonging Place* is no more than a pleasant story that leaves the reader with a cosy feeling.

Anna E. Altmann *teaches children's literature in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta.*

Dramatized Biography: Fact or Fiction?

Nellie's Quest. Connie Brummel Crook. Stoddart, 1998. 128 pp. $6.99 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7469-1.

Nellie's Quest is the second in a series of dramatized historical biographies (author's term, *CCL* 83:84) on Nellie McClung. Through the accessible medium of a life story, Crook presents this important Canadian activist and author to a new, young generation of readers. To recreate Nellie in 1895-6, the author draws, sometimes loosely, on McClung's autobiographical writings. Crook cites her references — thanks due to her and her publisher — thus making further reading on Nellie, by Nellie, possible.

Crook clarifies Nellie's political concerns well, explaining, for example, the connection between WCTU membership and female suffrage. Women, typically the victims of drunkenness, would vote for its ultimate solution: Prohibition. Crook's descriptions of the seasons, the Manitoba countryside,

and especially schoolroom life, create a believable setting for Nellie's ideas and experiences. The descriptions of social life, however, although believable to an uninstructed reader, can puzzle the historian.

There are anachronisms, resulting sometimes from McClung's writings. For instance, McClung used "shoes," perhaps for her 1930s audience; but the items that she, and Crook, thus label are boots. The wrong term evokes the wrong image, especially in an ignorant audience. The terms chosen have more than descriptive value: women wore different styles of clothing for different social functions, and one would not wear shoes to a lacrosse game. Elsewhere, a woman is described as having hair down to her waist: no woman would have gone outdoors so, unless in great distress; only girls wore their hair down. Again, this seemingly small mistake has great social meaning.

Other inaccuracies, in matters larger than looks, give greater historical misinformation. Crook douses Nellie with cold well water to shock her out of a (faked) hypnotic trance. What rudeness for her and her friends thus to damage a hostess's carpet, what stupidity to soak her clothing and gain at least 22 additional pounds of weight, and what danger to go, wet, into a sleigh on a frosty Manitoba night. McClung's book says nothing about water. Furthermore, there is violence in *Nellie's Quest*, perhaps for an audience used to today's entertainment, that is not found in McClung's writings: Crook's lacrosse game has fights on and off the field; McClung's game is tamer, and she even has a player apologize for accidentally blackening another's eye.

These and other instances raise a more fundamental question, of this and similar books. Can, and should, one "dramatize" biography? In the above examples, historical accuracy is sacrificed for descriptive colour or plot. Also, Crook has altered the actual time progression of certain events in McClung's life. Yet Nellie was who she was in 1895 because of what she experienced in 1892. Indeed, are there any events in a life so unconnected to all others that they are "movable" and thus generic? Who decides?

In this case, however, because Crook relies heavily on McClung's autobiographies, there may be some latitude allowable. Are these autobiographies the truth? Besides relating her life story, McClung wrote for an audience, and wrote to sell; she also wrote as a woman known for certain achievements. How much did she shape her material: how much was life, and how much story? Maybe (auto)biography is to a great extent fiction after all.

Social and cultural historian ***Virginia Careless****, also Research Officer & Policy Analyst for the BC government, has published on BC's pioneering families as well as on various Canadian women authors.*

What's in a Name?

The 6th Grade Nickname Game. Gordon Korman. Scholastic Canada, 1998. $18.99 cloth. ISBN 0-590-03875-3. ***Hope Springs a Leak.*** Ted Staunton. Red Deer College P, 1998. 120 p. $9.99 paper. ISBN 0-88995-174-8

While they differ slightly in intensity of characterization and reality of situation, the plots of these books follow similar episodic paths in which adults and kids collide with humorous results. Both novels raise questions related to theme: in one, it is if nicknames accurately encompass more or less what they imply, and, in the other, whether actions define character.

Korman's plot revolves around nicknames as Jeff, and his best pal Wiley, amuse themselves and classmates by assigning names to everyone around them by referring to distinctive personality quirks or some obvious behaviour pattern. Mr. Hughes, the new teacher who has difficulty leaving his football coaching out of the classroom, is noisy, exuberant, and larger than life. He becomes Mr. Huge, which fits both his personality and size. Jeff and Wiley's class become the Dim Bulbs as these students are not considered as bright as those in other classes, and Charles Rossi's habit of hiding in bushes and keeping tabs on everyone else's business wins him the name of Snoopy. Red-haired Cassandra, the bouncy new girl in the class who wears heavy boots and numerous pictorial skirts, gives the friends the most difficulty in assigning her a nickname. Her unconventionality makes her difficult to contain, but in the end the friends agree that "Carrot-top" best suits her. This makes everyone happy but seems a tame nickname for such a lively character. The boys, when challenged in their choice of names, argue that giving someone a name is no guarantee that it will stick. No one is more surprised than they are when they name Mike Smith "the Iceman," for he not only takes on the coolness the name implies, but wins the coveted Cassandra, too.

In Staunton's book, Sam, the sixth grader, attempts to give himself a nickname, yearning to be called "Truck" after his Maple Leaf hockey-player hero. Yet, doing nothing to deserve it, even his broad hints fall flat to everyone except his admirer, Amanda. Sam, like the legendary Walter Mitty, allows his imagination to enliven his image through dreams of performing impressive deeds, yet, in reality, when he attempts to impress, everything goes wrong. When Sam encounters the town's most famous citizen, J. Earl Goodenough, secretly quoting Shakespeare in the park, he wonders if this man is really the blustery curmudgeon that he appears to be. In this book, characters' names are playfully related to personality. J. Earl Goodenough certainly thinks of himself in the most positive of terms even though those around him find him otherwise. It is Sam who never seems to be quite "good enough." On the other hand, Miss Broom, the new teacher with her enthusiasm for sports and her all-too-many toothy grins, sweeps Sam and his best pal, Darryl, into a whirlwind of competition as each attempts to outdo the other for her affections.

If readers are looking for books which stretch imaginations with well-rounded characters, having tightly woven and challenging plots, they must look elsewhere. The value in these books is that they have a lot going on which leaves little time for readers to become bored. They also convey a zany sense of awkward situations and the absurdity of overblown characters, which most young people should enjoy. Even though the plots tend to be simplistic, with conflicts resolved in the end, they will be popular with the not-quite-teens for their simple language, humour, and fast-moving action.

Patricia Good *has had a longtime interest in literacy and children's literature. She has a Master's of English degree from the University of New Brunswick.*

Finding You, Finding me

Sins of the Father. Norah McClintock. Scholastic, 1998. 190 pp. $5.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-12488-9. ***Janey's Girl***. Gayle Friesen. Kids Can, 1998. 222 pp. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-461-5. ***Drowning in Secrets***. Brenda Bellingham. Scholastic, 1998. 180 pp. $5.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-12487-0.

The need to know our origins bears heavily on the human psyche. Parents in particular play a vital role in our development of a sense of self. For the protagonists of these young adult novels, the path to an independent adult identity has been blocked by unresolved questions about an absent mother or father. In McClintock's capably written mystery, fifteen-year-old Mick turns sleuth to prove that his father, incarcerated for most of Mick's childhood, was wrongly convicted of murder. The seemingly irrefutable evidence poses a tough puzzle and Mick's journey to the solution is sufficiently fraught to keep readers glued to the trail. What the author shows us about Mick himself is equally engrossing. His self-worth is defined by his father's reputation. His belief in his father's innocence is merely an uninformed legacy from his mother. He is the pawn of adults in his life, first his father who abruptly dumps him on an embittered, unwelcoming grandfather and disappears, and then a deceitful uncle. In a strange town where people hate his father and look unsmilingly at him, Mick is resentfully aware of being disenfranchised by his ignorance of the past; when he learns something which seems to confirm his father's guilt, it is a personal blow. So, when he stumbles on an inconsistency in the evidence, it is for his own sake as much as his father's that he is compelled to unearth the real murderer. In the end, with his father vindicated and a closer relationship growing between them, a newly confident Mick faces his forbidding grandfather.

Bellingham's tale is a delicious modern Gothic thriller in which the heroine's search for the past becomes a lethal threat to her future. Sixteen-

year-old Chloe endures panic attacks as the result of suppressed memories relating to the sudden loss of her mother when Chloe was five. Bellingham ably builds an atmosphere of creepiness and the dramatic tension escalates through a series of frightening events designed to drive Chloe away before she can uncover the truth. Chloe is well written as the traditional ineffectual heroine beset by forces beyond her control, but in this case a large part of her inability to act in her own defence stems not from external threats, about which she is fairly brave, but from the psychically crippling fear that she may have caused her mother's death and may also have inherited her mental illness. She meets a boy who cares about her, but she can only cling to him, childlike, for support. Eventually her pursuit of the truth catapults Chloe into a terrifying encounter with the architect of her nightmares, and the past is finally laid bare. As the story closes, Chloe, emerging from her mother's shadow, can at last express her anger and grief to her father, and even assume the more adult role in her relationship with Danny. Some may find that the author telegraphs the central plot twist too early, but most will find this a gripping read.

In part because of her tempestuous dealings with her own father, Friesen's Janey has remained resolutely close-mouthed about the man with whom, at eighteen, she made a daughter. Now, after raising Claire alone on the other side of the country, she has returned home on vacation so that Claire can visit her grandmother, secure in the knowledge that her lover has long since left the area. She is dismayed to learn that he is back and, moreover, that he has a young son, Claire's half-brother. When Claire chances on father and brother, an emotional tug-of-war begins. What ensues is fourteen-year-old Claire's evolution into a young woman determined to make her own decisions and forge her own relationships. At the end of the novel, she is not just her mother's girl. She has found a father and in doing so learned to be her own person. The power of the story is in Chloe's learning how a proclamation of adult independence can bring tribulation as well as joy. In loving her father, she nearly drives away the mother who has found strength to build a life for them by burying the past. When she defies her mother and allies herself with her newly-found brother, giving him bone marrow to battle his leukaemia, she makes a commitment of the heart which may end devastatingly. The interplay of Friesen's characters is deft; the juxtaposed perspectives of three female generations in one family — grandmother, mother, daughter — is particularly affecting. She has written a deeply satisfying first novel through which readers will learn with Claire that growing up is a bumpy process wherein people can make mistakes, learn from them, and go forward.

Dinah Gough *is the Head of Children's Services at the Oshawa Public Library.*

Diana Wieler's *Magic Nation*: Text as Life versus Text as Game

Ran Van Magic Nation. Diana Wieler. Douglas & McIntyre, 1997. 229 pages. $18.95, $7.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88899-317-X, 0-88899-316-1.

Ran Van Magic Nation is the conclusion to Wieler's trilogy about the quixotic Rhan Van. While Cervantes' hero is inspired by tales of chivalric gallantry, Wieler's Rhan visualizes the world according to the quasi-medieval lore of his favourite video games. He sees himself as "a knight, an employee of the Universe." In *Ran Van the Defender* and *Ran Van a Worthy Opponent*, Wieler complicates her hero's quest, forcing him to confront the ancient dilemma of Free Will and Destiny, of whether he is just "'a bit of light on some celestial screen — the video game of the gods'." By the end of the second book, Rhan's quest is to "'find out what it's for.'"

In *Ran Van Magic Nation*, Rhan is still trying to figure out "where he was supposed to fit in the world" and "who he was supposed to be." But he has unfortunately acquired paraphernalia that would exclude him from serving as a legitimate role model for Every Young Man's quest: he is now a super knight of the video board and comic book, capable of incredible speed, agility and strength, of clairvoyant visions and x-ray intuition. He wields the powerful two-handed sword of truth, the video camera, like a "wunderkind," and acquires a toy store chainmail gauntlet destined to fit him perfectly. At the end, he is happily ensconced in his "Magic Nation": "He had all that he needed — the sword, the armor, a kingdom and a princess."

But the process of Rhan Van's consummation into his Magic Nation, sealed with the sentimental heavenly benediction by Gran and Lee, is shabby narrative gimmickry, inconsistent with the palpable realism of Wieler's fictional world. When the bellicose, fast-driving, hard-drinking, heavy-smoking eighteen-year-old that is Rhan widens his life agenda with the fierce determination to "'find out what's for,'" his story has the potential for an even deeper kind of excitement and suspense. Rhan does burn all the juvenilia of his Magic Nation early in the concluding volume of the trilogy, but this unfortunately does not anticipate a mature understanding of how fantasies and myths are to be reconciled with real life. Towards the end of Rhan's story, his fellow knight, Lee Dahl, is inducting him into pinball: "'Pin ball is real. What happens, happens. You're not playing against somebody else's brain, their idea of what should happen. This is physics, It's real life. That's the challenge'" (178). Neither Rhan nor Wieler pick up this challenge. They both duck back into the flashy insubstantiality of the video arcade.

Diana Wieler's *Drive*: Willy Loman as "The Chocolate King"

Drive. Diana Wieler. Douglas & McIntyre, 1998. 245 pages. $18.95, $7.95 cloth, paper. ISBN-88899-347-1, 0-88899-348-X.

Diana Wieler's latest novel, *Drive*, is a return to the frank realism of *Bad Boy* and the dynamics of that interface between young developing psyches and

the society in which they are learning to function. Eighteen-year-old Jens Frieson, a born salesman who believes Willy Loman's mantra, "personality always wins the day," has that enviable "drive" that society typically endorses with success and money: "'All I want is to get the ball'" he tells his first employer, Jack Lahanni. But in the course of one long weekend, Jens loses both his job as a car salesman and a compensatory role as rescuer of his younger brother from a ruinous music contract. "'I had the ball, I had it in my hands. And there was no game'," he cries desperately to himself. Unlike Willy Loman, Jens is rescued from his attempted suicide by a younger brother, Daniel.

Daniel, the quiet, sensitive, shy, prodigally artistic but socially maladept antithesis of his elder brother, is seen through Jens's narrative. The weekend-long odyssey both brothers share is a chilling dialogue, not just between the two distinctly different brothers, but between Jens's superficial success-driven self he would flaunt to the world, and his soft, indeterminate inner self that yearns for affirmation of his birthright, of his place in his family, of his ability to form a relationship. In this almost allegorical interaction with the younger, suppressed Daniel, Jens comes to recognize the "cardboard man" he had been building: "'I had nothing to prop me up now'," he says to himself, "'It was just me'." Acknowledgment of his endless and furious denigration of Daniel marks the process of reconciliation between the brothers and between the divisions in Jens's own psyche. At the end of the weekend, Jens has recovered some of his former driving enthusiasm, but his priorities and values have shifted: "'It all depends on where I was headed, and who I took with me'." As he says to himself earlier, "'I wondered if [Daniel] was the older brother and I had just been born first'."

Drive is not without some of the prurient grit that has become a trademark of social realism. But unlike Cormier's *Chocolate War* or Foon's *War*, where the focus is on the endless sociological loop of violent power brokering and domination, Wieler probes the hidden layers of the young emerging psyche as it reflects and deflects its social determinants. In this respect, Jens, the "Chocolate King" of his small prairie town high school, is the protagonist of a unique parable about growing up, successfully.

Mary J. Harker *teaches children's and young adult literature at the University of Victoria. She is currently working on a book about the fantastic in children's literature.*

Canadian Plays for Young Audiences

TYA 5: Theatre for Young Audiences. Mira Friedlander and Wayne Fairhead, eds. Toronto: Playwrights Canada P, 1998. 268 pp. paper.

Mira Friedlander and Wayne Fairhead's anthology of Canadian plays for young audiences offers readers and potential producers scripts which illus-

trate the variety and scope of the genre from 1981-1993. Each play boldly investigates struggles faced by young people with heart, wit, imagination and common sense. The anthology begins with plays which reflect traditional form and content and then moves towards scripts reflecting contemporary issues and structures.

The first play, "Ti-Jean" by Peter Cummings, is an animated fairy tale steeped in Quebecois culture. The sad King, bewitched princess, villainous giant and trio of brothers on a quest are familiar elements of a classic story. It's no surprise that the youngest brother, Ti-Jean, uses his wits and humour to win the girl and the crown. Despite this recognizable formula, the script leaps off the page with live fiddle music, song, dance, life-size puppets and clever language play in both French and English.

"Firebird" by Rose Scollard blends classic elements — mythical beasts, rival suitors, a kingdom in jeopardy — with contemporary issues — environmental disasters, consumerism and apathy-bred ignorance. The characters play out their traditional roles with present-day attitudes and humour. Elements of Ukrainian culture are used to provide a contextual anchor and visual metaphor. Deep within a giant Matoushka doll the solution to saving the kingdom is finally discovered, reminding us that there are no instant solutions to environmental problems created by years of mistreatment and neglect.

Aboriginal traditions and contemporary culture collide and combine in "Coming Around" by Lorre Jensen & Paula Wing. The art of storytelling is at the heart of this play as two Native children wrestle with how to fit traditional teachings into their lives. Traditional stories offer the characters a cultural map through which to navigate difficult conflicts. Vibrant visual elements and music help to conjure the stories on stage but, strangely, important offstage action and characters never appear and are only discussed.

Rollerblades and rap music set the scene for "Ruby and the Rock" by Vivienne Laxdal. Ruby is dealing with the sudden death of her best friend, Jade. With help from "Rocko," an imaginary friend conjured by the on-stage "spirit" of Jade, issues of grief are addressed. Rocko's advice is offered through rap songs. The musical interludes lighten the mood around this difficult subject but run the risk of trivializing the insights and Ruby's painful adjustment.

The final play, "Loon Boy" by Kathleen McDonnell, is the strongest dramatic script of the collection. Set in the context of displaced children and foster parents, it is a hard-edged depiction of one child's search for a sense of family. Cycles of mistrust and hurtful actions are played out against a parallel story of a family of endangered loons trying to survive in a shrinking and hostile environment. A believable balance of brutal honesty and fragile hope makes this script a strong final statement for this collection and the TYA genre in general.

Kathleen Foreman *is an associate professor in the Department of Drama at the University of Calgary. She is a performing artist and teacher specializing in improvisation, mask performance, theatre for young audiences and educational drama.*

Canadian Anthologies for Young Adult Readers

Winds through Time: An Anthology of Canadian Historical Young Adult Fiction. Ed. Ann Walsh. Beach Holme, 1998.162 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88878-384-1. ***This Land: A Cross-Country Anthology of Canadian Fiction for Young Readers.*** Ed. Kit Pearson. Viking, 1998. 320 pp. $25.00 cloth. ISBN 0-67087-896-0.

Dedicated to W.O. Mitchell, Walsh's anthology attempts to bring Canadian history to life in vignettes that intersect with social studies curricula. With one exception, all the stories are post-confederation and divided between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In terms of setting, the book is more regional than national — nine stories set in British Columbia, one in New Brunswick, one in Saskatchewan, two in Manitoba, two in Ontario. In content, the anthology strikes a more even balance between local interest and national relevance as authors focus upon the World Wars, the internment of the Japanese, the influenza epidemic, and the uncertainties of multiculturalism. The quality of the stories, which are all new publications, is uneven. The majority paint history in convincing and vivid detail, but others have a "written-to-order" feel — as if they are stories written to illustrate history rather than good stories that happen to be historical. The heroine of Holeman's "A Horse for Lisette" is vivid and sympathetic; Findon's "The Scarletina" is a wrenching tale of a mother's arrogant and tragic trust in "medical reform" before vaccines and antibiotics; and the dilemmas of culture and identity faced by Allison in Hatashita-Lee's "Remember, Chrysanthemum" and Waldron's David in "One Candle, Many Lights" will be familiar to many readers. However, I found the young Nellie McClung portrayed in "Higher Ground" uninteresting and unconvincingly precocious and Melanie Roberts in "Polly's Frippery" is a cardboard character at best, while no convincing reason for Polly's time-shift is offered.

Young readers will find the book user-friendly: the stories, though uniformly brief (nine-ten pages), appeal to a range of reading abilities, the type is large and clear, and an appendix offers historical context and background to answer questions that may arise.

Pearson's anthology features maps of Canada and each of the provinces; stories are grouped according to province; Sheila Egoff is hailed as the "first cartographer" of Canadian children's literature; and Hugh MacLennan's assertion that "This land is far more important than we are" precedes the introduction. These geographical images and references stress the physicality of Canada (always a strong element in Canadian literature and self-conception) and ensure each province's representation, but they also reinforce the vision of Canada as a country of competing regions and seem rooted in a traditional political and literary status quo—British Columbia and Ontario represented by four and five stories respectively, while other provinces and "the North" are allotted one or (at most) two selections.

The quality of writing in this anthology is very high. The authors selected include classic figures like Montgomery, Roberts, and Mowat and

modern award winners like Doyle, Lunn, and Wynne-Jones. The selections have an impressive range, featuring male, female and animal protagonists drawn from different backgrounds so that a wide variety of classes, races, geographical, and historical perspectives represent the mosaic of Canada past and present. The stories vary from about ten to twenty-five pages in length. Of twenty-two selections, only eight are self-contained stories (three are the texts of picture books); the others are drawn from novels (which Pearson hopes readers will peruse in their entirety [xi]). The success of this excerpting is uneven. The snippet of *Owls in the Family*, for example, stands alone as a hilarious short story, but the excerpt from White Jade Tiger left me rather confused — though I did want to read the complete novel. Still, the high number of excerpts in the anthology probably makes it more attractive to schools and libraries than to general readers who may be slightly annoyed by confronting so many unfinished stories after spending twenty-five dollars.

Erika Rothwell *is a sessional instructor at the University of Alberta where she teaches children's literature and composition.*

Face-to-Face with Ourselves

Gifts to Last: Christmas Stories from the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Selected and introduced by Walter Learning. Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1996. 212 pp. IBSN 0-86492-206-X .

I had — perversely I admit — expected to experience something distinctive, different, perhaps unique. For somehow the words "Maritime" and "Newfoundland" have about them a promise of peculiarity; and the word "Christmas" conjured up memories of what I thought were experiences unlike those enjoyed and endured by any other children anywhere else in the world. But I was wrong; I admit it and I should have known it. For what this book of twenty Christmas stories illustrate is that the Christmas "spirit" — real or dissembled — is universal: as Walter Learning suggests, we turn the pages, step into different towns with different cultures, experience poverty and plenty, meet all kinds of people we have never known, yet recognize in it all our own Christmas pleasures and pains, "come face to face with ourselves" as children and adults.

This is, of course, what good stories should do, and we are rarely disappointed in this instance; knowing, as we do, the abilities of the many fine writers included here to recreate universality by particularizing its hopes, fears, loves in the lives and relationships of "real" people. It might be Alastair MacLeod's "To Everything There is a Season," with its poignant portrayal of that moment when belief in Santa Claus is (happily, in this case) naturally

replaced by an understanding of the real significance of Christmas: "The boxes are filled with gifts neatly wrapped and bearing tags. The ones for my younger brothers say 'from Santa Claus' but mine are not among them any more, as I know with certainty they never will be again. Yet I am not so much surprised as touched by a pang of loss at being here on the adult side of the world. It is as if I have suddenly moved into another room and heard a door click lastingly behind me. I am jabbed by my own small wound. But then I look at those before me. I look at my parents drawn together before the Christmas tree. My mother has her hand upon my father's shoulder and he is holding his ever-present handkerchief. I look at my sisters who have crossed this threshold ahead of me and now each day journey farther from the lives they knew as girls. I look at my magic older brother who has come to us this Christmas from half a continent away, bringing everything he has and is. All of them are captured in the tableau of their care. 'Everything moves on,' says father quietly, and I think he speaks of Santa Claus, 'but there is no need to grieve. He leaves good things behind'." There are few writers who have captured that universal moment any better than MacLeod.

Or it might be Clive Doucet's humorous story of Christmas in St. Joseph de la Mer where Father Aucoin's hopeful decoration of the church altar is based on a handwritten scrawl from his Bishop to the effect that he will be "sending the Bishop's candlesticks" for Christmas, only to discover, rather late, that the Bishop does not underline the titles of books. "The priest held the book in his hands as if it was a small and very heavy weight. 'Very thoughtful of the Bishop,' he said. 'Very thoughtful'." But, the joy in Christmas, is not thereby diminished in the least. For "the sun was coming up. Like another storm at sea, another Christmas had been weathered. The priest felt rather fine, as if he had said enough prayers, as if God were pleased."

Or, to cite one of my favourite writers, it might be M.T. Dohaney's "Mr. Eaton's — Only What I Ordered Please," with its subtle blend of humour and pathos, in which Hilda O'Conor Pike MacCarthy, flushed by the news that her son is coming home for Christmas and bringing his "mainland" girlfriend, decides she must have a new chesterfield to replace the old wooden settle. Mistakenly, however, she orders from the Eaton's catalogue (at $45.99) a slipcover only, an embarrassment somewhat eased by the unexpected kindness of seemingly uncharitable neighbours. "In the days leading up to Christmas, Hilda cleaned and scrubbed her house, washed curtains and painted walls.... When she was finished, she surveyed the room, allowing herself one brief moment to envision the Eaton's chesterfield instead of the old wooden settle sitting between the windows." And, as she is singing the carols at Midnight Mass, the bits of Latin ("I hopes they never does away with it") punctuate her thoughts: "*Venite adoremus* ... oh my, but I'd be some happy now if only I had that chesterfield sitting home in me parlour.... *Venite adoremus, Dominum.* Hell's flames with the parlour. I still have me son. All this worrying about a bloody couch.... *Cantet nunc io Announcements* still, it would have been nice." The dilemmas of Christmas have rarely been so touchingly vivified.

And so we could continue. From the creative imaginations of twenty good writers —well-known and lesser-known— such as L.M. Montgomery, Alden Nowlan, Lawrence O'Toole, Helen Porter, Ray Guy, David Adams Richards, Ellison Robertson and Herb Curtis, we share in the Christmas spirit, celebrated in its manifest guises, both sad and happy. There is a Christmas feast here that should be shared, as all Christmas feasts are meant to be, with others. And if it is, and if (as I must still admit I am) we are a little disappointed that our own personal Christmas experiences —the mummers, the Christmas concerts, the religious awe— are not represented in this collections of stories, then we must remedy that deficiency by resurrecting another old Christmas tradition: we must tell them to our children at the foot of the tinsel-covered tree on Christmas Eve.

***R. Gordon Moyles**, PhD, FRSC, is professor of English literature at the University of Alberta, specializing in Canadian literature, children's literature, and textual studies. He has published extensively in all three areas, his most recent publication being an anthology of Canadian prose, **"Improved by Cultivation": English-Canadian Prose to 1914** (Broadview, 1994). With Patricia Demers he has published **From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850** (Oxford, 1982), as well as three articles (and several book reviews) in **Canadian Children's Literature**.*

Mini-Reviews

Doggerel. Sheila Dalton. Illus. Kim LaFave. Doubleday, 1996. Unpag. $12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-25533-0.

Any child who has a dog or wants one will probably like this cheerful picture book. Really just a rhyming list of dogs — not by breed, but by, oh, shape, or temperament ("burly dogs, curly dogs, and dogs without hair" for example), it is particularly well-designed, by Roger Handling. The text roams across the page like a dog roams, slantwise, across a street, or squares off against itself, on facing pages, like a hostile meeting. The words are simple and felicitous, if sometimes a little too colloquial for my taste (doesn't "dumb" ever mean "silent" anymore?). And Kim LaFave's illustrations, in a gentle palette aimed at younger children, are full of energy and humour. These dogs have chutzpah, and a repertoire of facial expressions that some people should probably envy. A happy book, its words and images have found soul-mates in each other.

If You Could Wear My Sneakers. Sheree Fitch. Illus. Darcia Labrosse. Doubleday, 1997. Unpag. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-25597-7.

Children's rights are a good thing; children's verse is a good thing. But they don't necessarily come together to make a good thing. This is an odd book, one in which the ostensible purpose — to illustrate the United Nations' children's rights with verse — sits uncomfortably with the result. Perhaps that is because poetry called upon to be a vehicle for propaganda usually balks at the task. Now, of course it is worthwhile educating children about their rights, but I don't think this is the way to do it, and I don't think this book manages it. Reading through the poems, which are very uneven in quality (as often with Fitch), I could not usually tell which right was being discussed! So, for instance, "One little firefly/In a jar/ Lovely lonely/Fallen star" is one half of a poem illustrating Article 37: "Children have the right to fair treatment by the law." Huh? Others, like the poem entitled "Whoa!", which illustrates the right to protection from abuse and violence, succeed more happily, and this little verse is indeed one of the best in the book. But on the whole I am afraid this project was ill-conceived, and does not succeed either as poetry, or as a billboard for children's rights.

Melody Collins *is author of a young adult novel,* ***The Magic Within.***

Mary Norton. Jon C. Stott. Ed. Lois Kuznets. Twayne, 1994. 158 pp. cloth. ISBN 0-8957-7054-2.

In this first book of criticism on Mary Norton's preeminent contribution to children's literature, Jon C. Stott retraces the recurring patterns of Norton's "improbable fictions." While revealing the congruencies between her life, her times and her storytelling, Stott juxtaposes Norton's bildungromans with those of other literary giants and adopts contemporary theories of narrative including reader response and feminist criticism, to enable his reinterpretation of the timeless qualities of Norton's canon. Thus according to Stott, Norton's innovation in female character development is to portray female experience the way a feminist would. Stott also argues that story and storytelling acquire central theme stature in her novels and readers respond as active co- and re-creators. Further, Norton's use of the frame narrative, her clarification of the relationship of narration to meaning, and her creation of intertextuality between her novels result in superior literature exemplifying Barthes's notions of *scriptible* and *jouissance.* Stott's literary expertise make this critical text an important scholarly reference.

Joyce A. Wilkinson *is a professor in holistic and aesthetic education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto where she teaches graduate courses in Canadian children's literature.*

Scary Science. Sylvia Funston. Illus. Dušan Petričić. Owl Books, 1996. 64 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-895688-53-1.

The author starts with a fantastic topic and proceeds to treat it in a fun way. This is a fascinating look at vampires, witches, UFOs, ghosts, and legendary monsters. Scattered throughout are sidebars, whimsical drawings, and photographs packed with interesting tidbits of information. There are a few quizzes to encourage participation, and simple yet effective activities that require minimal equipment. The text encourages a healthy skepticism while maintaining a sense of wonder and curiosity about many of the unanswered puzzles in our world. Particularly well-done are the speculative what-if scenarios and questions, and the use of puns and witticisms. This book is highly recommended as a great read for those eight years old and above.

Space. Bobbie Kalman and Niki Walker. Illus. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. Price unknown. ISBN 0-86505-638-2 (library bound), 0-86505-738-9 (paperback).

The hardcover version of this book is sturdy, attractive, and bright. Its high-quality illustrations are enticing. The fact that the captions are printed at the

back of the book, however, is not obvious, unless you read the table of contents first.

The title holds the promise of a glimpse at our next frontier, but the text does not venture much beyond our solar system. Important items are left unmentioned. For example, in the discussion of the Big Bang, only the theory that the universe is eternally expanding is described; the alternative theory that the universe will undergo multiple Big Bangs is omitted.

The text is suitable for a child in the primary grades. It is simple and clear, even though somewhat pedantic. It contains many statistics, but does not project much of the wonder generally inspired by visions of outer space.

The excellent pictures in this book can be a starting point for discussions about the planets and the sun, even though the text may be unable to supply answers to the questions that may be raised.

Lynne Quon-Mak *is the associate editor of* ***The Annals of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.*** *This review was made possible with the aid of Gwyneth Mak, who is in grade two.*

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