

the babe in the manger represents spiritual movements. Spiritual and mythical materials are dominant themes in all societies. My own cultural background happens to be Christian based, so I drew on it. One parent who was not there when I told the story complained that it had religious overtones.

The Ontario Ministry has made it clear that indoctrination is the issue, not the total ban of all "religious" references. Yet many schools now avoid religion in stories. It seems that no-one is comfortable with the Ministry ruling so it is easier to censor "religious" material. Yet this does not appear to be the case for Native stories which contain what in essence is their religion. In fact, these stories are encouraged.

My stories are positive and promote good morals. My stories show downswings which touch experiences we all share: grief, loss, fear, disappointment and anger. Then the characters rise through experience and they bring listeners back to equilibrium and laughter. My bathroom humour tales also teach lessons as they romp through life's funnier side.

"Big Bully Billy Blundell," for instance, has the audience joining the actions as the bully goes to school. The kids complain and then see a way to resist. Billy cannot take it. He becomes totally dejected and has the audience's empathy for a champion fallen. Finally, he rises anew to become the school hero.

Censorship hurt me. I was not offered my day in court. I feel I have been found guilty without a trial.

John Batt is Canada's only licensed "Monster Hunter." He also writes and tells his own stories to children of all ages. Variation in styles has earned him the reputation of a one-man variety show.

From Welwyn Wilton Katz

Obviously I know from first hand what it is to encounter people determined to censor. Sometimes people won't let themselves call it censorship, but when an entire school board, such as the Catholic School Boards of London and Middlesex County, refuses to allow *Whalesinger* to be purchased for its schools because Marty and Nick used a condom (I was told this was the main reason; the actual sexual episode didn't seem to bother them nearly as much), it seems to me that the word "censorship" applies very well. There are other examples. *False face* was not censored, but certain native groups would have liked it to be, because they said I had appropriated a native voice. I hadn't, of course. I had merely invented an individual, a boy with his own unique background that was both white and native, and I spoke with that *individual's* voice. *Witchery Hill* has given me considerable difficulties over the years, because of the witchcraft. If the would-be censors read the book they would realize that I'm not exactly good

press for the subject.

But they don't read it, of course. They only read it in bits, to find a passage to read aloud to their friends and be horrified over. People will find what they want to find in any book. *The Owl and the Pussycat* has been censored for cohabitation. Yes. Truly. Remember, they got married AFTER they sailed away in the beautiful pea-green boat? *The once and future king* had magic (another apparent no-no to some religious folks.) *The wind in the willows* had the animals appealing to a non-Christian god, and being blessed by him. Look in any great piece of literature, and you will find something that will offend somebody. It is usually only the pablum that doesn't have any potential for censorship. Is that what we want in our society, a library full of pablum that has nothing to say about the real problems of real readers who turn to literature for comfort or example or just plain enlivenment?



I find the whole issue of censorship quite unbearable. It saps me of the energy I need to write, and drains the strength and courage I need to tackle difficult issues. I try to think about the problem as little as possible so as not to let it have any influence on my writing.

Welwyn Wilton Katz, for seven years a secondary school math teacher in her native London, Ontario, is the author of seven adolescent novels and adult short fiction. She has won awards for *Falseface* (Ebel Award; International Fiction Contest; runner-up, Governor-General's Award for Children); *The third magic* (Governor-General's Award for Children; runner up, Ruth Schwartz Award); *Whalesinger* (nominee, Governor-General's Award). Her latest novel, *Come like shadows*, is set in Stratford, Ontario, during a production of *Macbeth*.

From Claire Mackay

I have no easy answers to the problem of censorship. All I can do is to raise some questions, based on three experiences.

Experience 1: An otherwise sensible parent recently said to me, with a straight, even solemn, face, that censorship should begin at home. He went on to describe (or prescribe) a set of rules that sounded to me like a kind of intellectual and