

significant point.

While Yoshiko cares for her own sorrowful feelings, the curious reader will also notice from the misty illustration, that Yoshiko passes a roadside stone figure dressed in a (real fabric) pink apron. Martenova Charles explains at the back of the book that this is one of many *dosojin*, images found in Japan and believed to be the guardians of communities and the roads that lead to and from them, often honoured by children in a January celebration. It appears from the illustration that the *dosojin* know that Yoshiko is leaving, and will keep watch on her. Young readers can feel safe if they have the feeling of abandonment by their parents or displacement by a new sibling. The beauty of the tale is that first, the feelings are normal, second, parents sometimes do not show their love enough, and third, soon things will return to normal among loved ones. In fact, the cranes, the *omamori*, the *dosojin* all celebrate the responsibilities of parents to be eternally—quietly—vigilant of their beloved young. So, if *The crane girl* is a cautionary tale at all, it is addressed to crane-parents.

WORKS CITED

Anonymous. *A book of women poets from antiquity to now*. Eds. Alike Barnstone and Willis Barnstone. New York: Schohen, 1980.

Marlene Kadar is an assistant professor at York University.

FOOTNOTES IN CANADIAN HISTORY

Bonanza gold, The Klondike stampede. Pierre Berton. Illus. Henry van der Linde. McClelland & Stewart, 1991. 88 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1432-5, 0-7710-1433-3. **Parry of the Arctic, Jane Franklin's obsession, A prairie nightmare, Steel across the plains.** Pierre Berton. Illus. Paul McCusker. McClelland & Stewart, 1992. 92 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1434-1, 0-7710-1435-X, 0-7710-1440-6, 0-7710-1441-4. **Dr. Kane of the Arctic seas, Trapped in the Arctic.** Pierre Berton. Illus. Paul McCusker. McClelland & Stewart, 1993. 83 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1447-3.

Pierre Berton's series of popular history books for twelve- to fourteen-year-olds, "Adventures in Canadian History," keeps expanding, even as their "Canadian content" shrinks. While earlier titles in the series chronicled significant moments in the building of a nation (notably Berton's four books on The War of 1812), some of the more recent ones have little to do with Canada at all. For example, *Dr. Kane of the Arctic seas*, the third in the "Exploring the North" series, tells the story of an American from Philadelphia who searches for a lost Englishman in the seas off the Greenland coast. The connection with Canada is tenuous at best.

Indeed, it seems as though Berton is driven in his choice of subjects less by their historical relevance than by the personal appeal of a character. Berton likes stories of the Promised Land, stories of ambitious mavericks doomed to disillusionment who engage in wild, idealistic quests for honour, fame or

wealth—the search for Klondike gold and for the fabled North West Passage to the East are the subjects of two series within the larger “Adventures in Canadian History” series.

That these questers weren’t Canadians or that their exploits weren’t formative events in Canada’s history seems incidental to the interest Berton creates in his roguish, sometimes cruel, but always persistent characters, such as Robert John McClure (the discoverer of the North West Passage in *Trapped in the Arctic*) and Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, both of whom lead expeditions into the polar regions, braving ferocious hardships and driving their crews to the brink of death to satisfy vaulting ambitions.

In *A Prairie nightmare*, Berton describes the plight of 2,000 Britains who become dupes of a scheme by the Christian missionary Isaac Montgomery Barr to start an all-British colony in the area of the Saskatchewan-Alberta border. Barr, more interested in personal profit than the plan’s practicality, convinces his “flock” that harsh prairie life is much like the pastoral agrarian life of rural England they are leaving behind.

Barr is a representative Berton “anti-hero,” one whose ambitious cravings have consequences beyond those he intended. Barr’s Colony of naïve tenderfeet eventually prospers to become the site of the city of Lloydminster. Berton’s interest here, as in his popular adult histories, is in the role personal ambition played in Canada’s development.

Still, with the exception of *Steel across the Plains*, about the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway from Winnipeg to Calgary, the later books in the series remain examples of Canadian marginalia, stories of flawed and flaky individuals, rather than nation-builders. Essentially, they are footnotes to Canadian history.

Invariably, the characters who occupy centre stage in Berton’s histories are British, and to a lesser degree, Americans, perhaps giving young readers the impression that the contribution of people of other nationalities to Canada’s unfolding nationhood has been minimal to non-existent.

One also notices a disturbing tendency toward racial stereotyping. Whenever Swedes appear in the two books on the Klondike gold rush and in *Steel across the Prairies*, they are described as bear-like, hard-drinking oafs; “feelings of superiority” accounted for the inability of the British to survive in the Far North, according to Berton in *Parry of the Arctic*.

Americans, too, or “Yanks,” as Berton refers to them at one point in *The Klondike stampede*, are victims of similar stereotyping. Americans objected to the interference of the Mounties as they crossed into Canada to take part in the 1897 Gold Rush. “In keeping with the American tradition of individualism ... they wanted to drown themselves if they wished,” says Berton, engaging here in a train of censorious moralizing also present elsewhere. In *A Prairie nightmare*, for example, he cautions his young readers to “remember ... that even today Canadians sometimes want to reject new arrivals because they seem

unsuitable for life in Canada.”

Each book is accompanied by drawings and maps. Occasionally, the illustrations reveal an inconsistency with the text. For example, two maps in *Jane Franklin's obsession* purport to show the area of the Arctic charted by Sir John Franklin. But in the first map, showing the known Arctic before Franklin, King William Island (where Franklin was believed to have disappeared) is drawn as an island, and Berton has already noted that Franklin believed it to be a peninsula.

One drawing in *Parry of the Arctic* is a scene from a high-spirited theatrical performance held on board Parry's ship, the *Fury*. Berton has described the ship's isolation, a gloomy landscape without birds, animals or “cheerful natives.” Yet Inuit appear prominently in the drawing, gesticulating in bafflement at the Englishmen's on-stage antics.

Berton's ability to animate the past through his portrayal of strong, magnetic characters is, perhaps, his major trademark. Many of the books in the “Adventures in Canadian History” series succeed in this aim and will undoubtedly maintain the interest of young readers who would ordinarily never read history outside of the classroom.

But if these books are ever to be used as tools for learning, they need to focus more sharply on significant events in Canadian history. In addition, Berton should try to convey greater historical authenticity. Far more useful than the somewhat pretentious indices that accompany the short books would be a list of recommend readings for students.

Such a bibliographic resource would not only enable Berton's readers to pursue an interest that developed out of their reading, but would also allow students and teachers alike to examine what Berton calls his “unimpeachable,” though unnamed, historical sources.

Eric Henderson is an English instructor in Victoria, B.C. He has written biographies for “Highlights for Children” and writes children's stories for educational software.

COLOURFUL TALES DESERVE PERFECT DESIGN

Follow that bus. Susan Reid. Illus. C.L.A. MacKenzie. Orca Books, 1993. Unpag. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-920501-88-5; **Follow that hat.** Pierre Pratt. Trans. David Hamel. Annick Press, 1992. Unpag. \$15.95, \$5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-261-0, 1-55037-259-9.

Teachers are keenly aware of scarier issues beyond the indiscriminate media bashing and “edu-flavours of the month” from faceless bureaucrats ... I speak of the dreaded field-trip! However, anyone who has organized a tour will identify with Susan Reid's *Follow that bus* and the resourceful Mrs. Tardy's pursuit of her charges in progressively wilder and woollier vehicles of transport, ever one step behind.

Reid builds tension and laughs as C.L.A. MacKenzie's cartoony illustra-