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Jennifer H. Litster is writing her PhD Thesis on the Scottish context of L.M. Montgomery in the History Department at the University of Edinburgh. She and her thesis director, Owen Dudley Edwards, are preparing a joint essay on Montgomery for "Lucy Maud Montgomery and Canadian Culture," a collection of essays being prepared by Irene Gammel and Elizabeth Epperly to be published with the University of Toronto Press.

The Perfect Abuser

The Primrose Path. Carol Matas. Bain & Cox, 1995. 152 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-921368-55-0.

This story for adolescents is certainly no "primrose path" but a slippery tunnel into the adult world of parental discord, religious fervour, and venal lust.

As in her previous books, Matas uses a young Jewish protagonist. Instead of a Holocaust theme she has a topical one — child abuse. Debbie's abuse is at the hands of her teacher, who is also the principal of the religious school she attends and the rabbi of the adjoining synagogue, as well as the father of one her classmates. This is strong stuff!

From the start we enter Debbie's world. Her parents are experiencing marital problems. Reluctantly she confides in her rabbi and receives kindly advice. Shortly after, her grandmother dies and the family experiences a

wrenching move to a new city and an orthodox Jewish community. The speed of the changes is overwhelming.

In order to be included and feel accepted in the orthodox community Debbie goes along with some of her classmates and joins their exclusive, closed-door sessions with their teacher-principal. They are the privileged ones. As well, her mother accepts comfort in the arms of the same man who is a charismatic leader to his congregation.

The storyline is plausible but somewhat contrived. The marital discord is certainly realistic and helps to explain the tensions between Debbie's parents and the biased view she has of her father. However, her mother's push for the family to embrace orthodoxy seems forced. Yet, it is key to the plot, as mother and daughter pay for their trust in the "religiously pure" as represented by the rabbi and his followers.

It seems unusual to me that young Debbie does not confide in anyone at all about her feelings of unease around the sessions in the rabbi's office and that she does not react more when touched by him in the car. At the beginning of the story she is portrayed as a budding leader, but by this point she is a follower.

This is a complicated coming of age story involving bigotry, betrayal, family love, and — most disturbing — sexual abuse of women. The sleek way the rabbi insinuates himself into both mother and daughter's affections is horrifyingly believable. The abuse is credible. But, I am still left with my concerns about who is the intended audience of this cautionary tale. Without tactful, reassuring, informed adult guidance, this book could have a very reactionary effect on young readers.

Judith Carson, a professor of English and Communications at Seneca College in North York, Ontario, teaches children's literature and writing, as well as reviewing books.

The Tensions of Growing Up: Beached Whales and Cougar Cries

Keri. Jan Andrews. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1996. 96 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-240-8. *Cougar Cove*. Julie Lawson. Orca, 1996. 144 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-072-X.

Jan Andrews's first novel, *Keri*, examines an adolescent's resistance to change. Thirteen-year-old Keri lives in a small outport community in Newfoundland. The book begins with a convincing portrait of Keri's anger at her mother; however, Andrews quickly establishes that Keri's anger encompasses more than her mother's nagging. Her father, his fish traps ruined by icebergs, unable as a result to make the payments on his boat, has sold the boat and left home to work on a transatlantic ship. Keri's paternal grandmother, who told Keri stories of the Riley family going back to the eighteenth century, has died. When Keri's mother insists that the changes facing the family and the province must be accepted, that her father's experience is not unusual but a pattern of things to