

somewhat false. There is, after all, a long literary tradition (Arion, Orpheus, and so forth) demonstrating music's power to move the non-human, a tradition that had its uses in articulating the transcendental ideal associated with music. Similarly, the notion that human music is somehow out of place in the world of nature contradicts another venerable notion regarding the complementarity of all forms of music in producing the *harmonia mundi*. In fairness though, the book ends with a vision of mutual and shared song, Simon's earlier failures to address the animal and the natural worlds having been transmuted into the collective magic of which music is capable.

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Wildflowers in a Meadow: Five Poetry Books You Ought to Read

Save the World for Me. Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield, 1991 (1995). 75 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-919001-70-X. *IOnce Had a Pet Praying Mantis.* Leonard Gasparini. Mosaic, 1995. 47 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88962-592-1. *Images of Nature: Canadian Poets and the Group of Seven.* David Booth (compiler). Illus. Kids Can, 1995. 32 pp. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-272-8. *Songs for Survival: Songs and Chants from Tribal Peoples around the World.* Nikki Siegen-Smith (compiler). Illus. Bernard Lodge. Key Porter, 1995. 80 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-695-X. *Poets in the Classroom.* Betsy Struthers and Sarah Klassen, eds. Pembroke, 1995. 128 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55138-055-2.

Like wildflowers in a meadow the five books included in this review are afire with colour and variety and energy. As a poet and teacher I am encouraged by the growing enthusiasm for reading and writing poetry in schools. These five books all make strong contributions to this growing interest. Every school ought to purchase copies of all five books — there is something here for teachers and students of all ages. Four of the books are collections of poetry, all lively with the poets' commitment to exploring themes of human experience, all experimenting with craft and form, all illustrated in inviting ways. The fifth book is filled with timely advice for writing poetry.

Maxine Tynes is one of my favourite Canadian poets. A teacher in Nova Scotia, rooted in the heritage of Black Loyalists, she writes about themes of family, ecology, school, community, heritage, racism, and relationships. Her poems often sing in a humorous voice, as in "Stop Eating Those Poems!":

Stop eating those poems!
Save some for me —
I like mine with mustard
I like mine with cheese.

But the poems embrace and evoke a wide range of emotions. All politicians ought to read "Dear Mr. Premier, and Mr. Minister of Education, This Is a Test":

Will you let my teacher teach me?
Will you give us the books and buses that we need?
Will you put the history and literature
of Native People and
of Black People and of Acadians
centre stage in our textbooks
And in our classrooms where they belong?

My favourite poem is "The Profile of Africa" in which Tynes sings her proud heritage:

we wear our skin like a fine fabric
we people of colour
brown, black, tan coffeecoffee cream ebony

Save the World for Me reminds readers that poetry is a way of opening up the world and making the world a safer place to be. Tynes writes in "I Am a Poet":

To write is powerful medicine, magic,
weaponry and love.
To write poetry is the ultimate in that
power

Tynes illustrates her poems with line drawings that are both humorous and poignant, confirming in readers the power of poetry working dynamically in the imagination and heart and conscience.

I Once Had a Pet Praying Mantis is a treat for the eyes and ears. Leonard Gasparini calls his poems "nature lessons in verse," and each poem invites the reader to see and hear with the attentive watchfulness that Gasparini has brought to his observations of nature. Carefully crafted with attention to rhyme and regular metre, the poems are vivid sketches of nature, enhanced by pen-and-ink illustrations by Robert Dykstra. These poems help readers know the natural world around them. Gasparini and Dykstra remind readers to look: "We hope this book encourages you to explore nature and enhances your appreciation of the splendid wildlife heritage of this continent."

It is one thing to read a biology textbook about earthworms, and another thing to read Gasparini's poetic description:

This wriggly pink invertebrate
Has no eyes, no ears, nose, nor chin;
But no matter, it has five hearts
And breathes through its sensitive skin.

Gasparini's poems do not anthropomorphize nature, or belittle nature, or create the sense that nature is just a garden for the amusement of people. Instead, Gasparini presents nature with a keen sense of its magic:

If I were a dragonfly,
I would hover and skim
Over a white-lilied pond
Where black whirligigs swim.

One of my favourite poems is "Spring Morning" because Gasparini evokes the wonder of spring:

My soul goes out
To meet what I see.
The spring morning swells
Like a choir inside me.

These are poems for filling the spirit, for helping us see and hear the world, bountiful and beautiful, all around us.

Images of Nature: Canadian Poets and the Group of Seven is a visual and verbal feast, a sensual celebration of the seasons. David Booth has selected twenty-seven poems about nature by F.R. Scott, Elizabeth Brewster, Earle Birney, Bill Bissett, Margaret Atwood, M. Nourbese Philip, Jean Little, and others, and linked them with twenty-four works by member of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson. The book is a pleasure to read and view, to savour really. The poetry is rich with the idiosyncratic voices of many of Canada's best-loved poets, rooted in an abiding sense of fascination with nature. Canada is written in its geography, inexhaustible, colourful, diverse, like Tom Thomson's "Wildflowers." No one has done more to construct the sense of Canada than the poets and painters included in this book. These are poems about silence and stillness, ice and fire, distance and communion, rural and urban. Geography, as "writing the earth," is understood in this book as an active and ongoing process that has more to do with poets and painters than cartographers and textbook authors.

I am delighted to see Canadian poets and the Group of Seven connected. Too many boundaries have been erected to separate the visual and verbal. Booth has demonstrated how students can compile their own collections of poetry and art, thereby reclaiming a cultural heritage that was once revolutionary, in order I hope to continue to write the geography of Canada in transformative ways. Perhaps Booth will next compile collections of poetry and painting that extol other parts of the Canadian experience, such as the city and the north and the Atlantic region.

Songs for Survival: Songs and Chants from Tribal Peoples around the World combines the spirit and dynamics of the other books in this review. There is poetry and music and art (colourful and playful and moving illustrations by Bernard Lodge), and there is a commitment to poetry as political. To read this book is to be reminded that the world is very big, and yet very fragile. As the title suggests, "Songs for Survival" are songs about the history of surviving as well as songs that need to be sung and heard if we are going to continue to survive. Compiled for children, these songs represent the world-wide experience of singing about the natural world. They are guaranteed to inform and inspire, especially with regard to lessons about respecting differences among people

while still seeking ways to live harmoniously, all creatures together. There are many themes expressed in the songs, but a theme of seeking the way pervades many of the songs.

The Chinook of North America sing:

We call upon the earth, our planet home, with its beautiful
depths and soaring heights, its vitality and abundance of
life, and
together we ask that it
teach us, and show us the Way.

The Garifuna of Central America sing:

I'll not abandon my homeland.
My footprints are there by my parents' door.
My relatives are there.
I'll visit from time to time.
I'll come home to seek my town.

The Yoruba of Africa sing:

Enjoy the earth gently
For if the earth is spoiled
It cannot be repaired.

These are songs for inspiring the writing of new songs. Poetry is a way of remembering the past in order to live more successfully in the present with abundant hope for the future.

Every teacher needs *Poets in the Classroom*, a collection of writing strategies and exercises by some of Canada's best-known poets, all connected with the League of Canadian Poets, including Fred Cogswell, di brandt, Patricia Young, George Elliott Clarke, Anne Burke, and Robert Gibbs. This is a book for reading and returning to. Exuberant with passion for poetry, it is also affectionate with desire for helping others explore their poetic voices. The poets commend the wonder of words, the significance of personal experience, the multiplicity of poetic forms, the fun of making poems. They provide strategies for getting started, finding ideas, seeking responses, using journals, reading models, experimenting with the writing process, and publishing poetry. They connect poetry to the body and performance and music and voice.

It is a book for carrying in a back pocket, for frequent returning to. On my first reading I found confirmation of many of my practices as a poet and writing teacher. The explanations of strategies and exercises complemented my own practices, but there was more. And I think *Poets in the Classroom* will continue to have that effect. There will always be new riches available as I need them. For example, di brandt's "The Poetics of Adolescent Desire and Lost Love" is a wise and eloquent call for writing that is transformative: "Love poems, real love poems, are revolutionary. The erotic is dangerous to this culture, not because it's destructive, but because it locates us in our bodies and

in our real lives." As brandt knows, "Teaching poetics without politics is fairly useless."

These five books are like wildflowers in a meadow, resplendent with riches, verbal and visual and visceral, treasure troves in which poetry and art and music are connected in order to explore themes of politics, heritage, ecology, and living poetically in the world. All students and teachers will be challenged and enriched by these books.

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Five Problem Solvers

Fred's Dream Cat. Marie-Danielle Croteau. Illus. Bruno St-Aubin. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac, 1995. 61 pp. \$5.95 paper, boards. ISBN 0-88780-304-0, 0-88780-305-9. *Maddie in Danger.* Louise Leblanc. Illus. Marie-Louise Gay. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac, 1995. 62 pp. \$5.95 paper, boards. ISBN 0-88780-306-7, 0-88780-307-5. *Mooch Forever.* Gilles Gauthier. Illus. Pierre-André Derome. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac, 1995. 60 pp. \$5.95 paper, boards. ISBN 0-88780-308-3, 0-88780-309-1. *My Homework Is in the Mail.* Becky Citra. Illus. Karen Harrison. Scholastic Canada, 1995. 82 pp. \$4.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-24446-9. *Video Rivals.* Sonia Sarfati. Illus. Pierre Durand. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac, 1995. 59 pp. \$5.95 paper, boards. ISBN 0-88780-314-8, 0-88780-315-6.

Each of these five early chapter books focuses on a young person faced with a problem of major proportions. These problems range from learning to face loneliness in a new situation to dealing with strict and unsympathetic parents.

Parents are an issue in *Maddie in Danger* and *Fred's Dream Cat*, although the respective authors, Louise Leblanc and Marie-Danielle Croteau do not succeed equally well in their efforts. The children in Leblanc's tale, Maddie, Alexander, and Julian, are not allowed to watch *The Exterminator* on television, due to its violent content. We follow Maddie as she arranges a way to view the video, challenges the "leader" of her gang at school for his place in the sun, and discovers that real violence is threatening one of her classmates. With violence threading through the storyline, events are tightly woven and keep the reader interested. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the narrative seem exaggerated and do not fit harmoniously with others. In contrast, Croteau's telling of Fred's efforts to overcome parental resistance to the adoption of a cat is constructed with skill and grace. Fred plans, plots, and schemes. With each attempt he is certain his parents, finding him irresistible, will give in. He even gets his friend William involved and, for a time, contemplates recruiting some hapless baby mice from the farm where William and his father live. Fred is desperate in his desire for a companion animal and the reader finds him infinitely human, humane, and endearing as he struggles to realize his dream. Croteau's style is lively and engaging. *Fred's Dream Cat* is a pleasure to read.