story of his having been driven through Quebec. But what shines out of every page is the white heat of selfless commitment that impelled Fox and everyone around him. It was this that drew a response reserved only for heroes and saints. One surprising omission is any reference to the deep Christian faith and motivation that Terry Fox expressed to television news interviewers after his return to Vancouver.

A final yet no less strong reason why children should be enabled to see this tribute is the superb collection of photographs, which leave unforgettable impressions not only of the runner but of the eastern and central landscape through which he made the longest marathon run in history.

That the body of Terry Fox can survive seems at this time unlikely, but like the martyrs of old he has lit a fire of the spirit that will not be put out. In this brutal and cynical age, he has set an example to inspire not only our medical research teams but Canadians of all succeeding generations. The authors of this tribute can take pride in having placed this example before us.

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Dreams and Reality in *The Lady of the Strawberries*

ANN BOLTON

The Lady of the Strawberries, Helen Chetin. Illus. by Anita Kunz. Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1978. 89 pp. $8.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-88778-183-7.

The world of the child is an intricate combination of dreams and reality. In her recent book for children, *The Lady of the Strawberries*, Helen Chetin has captured the essence of the world of the child by masterfully juxtaposing fantasy and reality. The result is a sensitive book which sets familiar themes of children's literature – loneliness, isolation, and divorce – in a richly textured Canadian landscape.

Early in life, young Jessica Conrich is confronted with the harsh realities of the frightening adult world. Her parents obtain a divorce as a result of her mother's inability to adapt to rural life in Alberta. When her mother returns to the city (Toronto), Jessica experiences acute feelings of abandonment and loneliness. She loses her trust in humanity and bestows her feelings of love upon the land. "Jessica knew she loved . . . [the land] in a different way than she loved the people with whom she shared it. She couldn't explain how or why this was so but she felt that the land loved her, too . . . . This wasn't the same with people who sometimes didn't love living and working together. The land never want away and left you" (p. 1).

Although Jessica maintains her most basic relationships with family members and close friends, she begins to devote a great deal of her time and energy into raising a crop of strawberries. Originally, the strawberry crop was important to Jessica because she felt that it would act as an incentive that would convince her mother to return to the farm. "She would write to her mother about . . . [the strawberry garden] so she'd understand what a nice place to live the farm could be" (p. 13). Gradually, however, the garden becomes much more significant. The "scare-robin" that she and her teacher, Shirley Dutton, create to discourage robins from eating the strawberries takes on the characteristics of a human being in Jessica's mind. Using a dressmaker's form, old clothes, and a wig, Jessica and Shirley create the mystical figure. Jessica's initial reaction to the "scare-robin" was one of wonder; "the scare-robin in the garden seemed like a real person. It was truly beautiful" (p. 30).

In Jessica's mind, the lady of the strawberries takes on the characteristics of a perfect human being; the lady becomes an idealized version of the mother whom Jessica misses so intensely. Jessica feels that the lady takes care of her in the same way that she takes care of her younger brother, Kevin; Jessica's acute longing for maternal love is particularly visible in this instance. Jessica also feels that the lady has the ability to understand the inner conflicts which she is experiencing, as a result of the developing love relationships between her father and Shirley Dutton. It is only when she is confronted with a real-life conflict that Jessica is able to realize the limitations of her relationship with the lady.

When Jessica's father informs her that he has received a letter from her

mother stating her intention to remarry and requesting a visit from her daughter, Jessica feels as if she is being torn apart. She is confronted with the necessity of visiting her mother but she fearfully clings to her fantasized responsibility of taking care of the lady of the strawberries. When she tries to discuss her dilemma with the lady, she finds that it is no longer easy for her to communicate with her. It is at this point that Jessica is initially able to admit to herself that the lady is not a real person but, as Jessica herself expresses it, an "almost person" (p. 49).

The conflict between dreams and reality climaxes when a prairie storm destroys her strawberry crop and the lady of the strawberries disappears. When she goes to bed that night, Jessica irrationally directs her bitterness for the loss of the lady and the destruction of the strawberry crop towards Shirley. Jessica feels that it is Shirley's intrusion into her life that has been responsible for the destruction of her dreams. When Jessica awakens in the middle of the night, she thinks that she can hear the voice of the lady, calling to her from the pond. She leaves the house and begins to wade deeper and deeper into the water, looking for the lady. She swims out to reach the lady, but she is not strong enough to tow the lady to shore. She feels the lady beginning to sink and she realizes that any attempt to save the lady shall result in her own death. Quite suddenly, Jessica becomes able to face reality. She regrets having attempted to save the lady by herself, realizing that the others would have been willing to help her. She eventually comes to the conclusion that the lady is "not like . . . [her] mother, not like Shirley" (p. 82). After the others rescue her from the pond, they attempt to reconstruct the lady whom they present to Jessica, nervously awaiting her reaction. Jessica demonstrates her ability to face reality when she admits to them that she is able to accept the truth about the lady, and about her mother. " 'I guess I needed a good strong wind to show me . . . well, that it wasn't a person,' " Jessica comments. " 'I'm going to visit my mother, like she asked.' " The conflict between dreams and reality is thus resolved in the last pages of the book.

Helen Chetin's attention to detail as she recreates the world of the child is impressive. She realistically develops Jessica's relationships with the important people in her life, delving deeply into the mind of the child to make Jessica's emotions both touching and believable. Because of her insight into the mind of the child and her ability to confront realistically the problems which surround divorce, Helen Chetin has made an important contribution to children's literature in *The Lady of the Strawberries*, a book that shall likely become a classic in the years to come.

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