

shaft to comfort a dying miner. If anything, the tragedy serves to reaffirm Jason's sense of importance.

F.G. Paci's novel, *The father*, succeeds where Huggan's and Wilson's novels fall short. It is a tale with several levels, each one complementing the others. On the cultural level, we witness an Italo-Canadian family's attempts to come to terms with a bewildering new world. The "Father," sentimental Oreste, wishes to preserve forever the tiny community bakery which recalls his youth in the Abruzzi, while his wife wishes to import all of the latest North American technology for the manufacture of bread. On the personal level, the oldest son, Stephen (whose correspondence to Joyce's Stephen is, I think, obvious), contains within himself the conflicting principles of reason and emotion which divided his parents. He opts for philosophy and pure reason, while his younger, reckless brother takes a similarly destructive emotional path. Interwoven throughout the tale are the key religious symbols of bread and wine; Oreste, the "Father," is associated with both. Bread, for him, is community, and wine — the substance which ironically leads to his early death — is his refuge when modern technology dictates that he shall no longer shape his precious loaves of bread with his hands. Stephen, at one point, reflects of his philosophical abstractions, "Thinking is working without any hands." One of his own hands is, significantly, deformed.

Thus, Paci's novel forms an implicit commentary on novels such as Huggan's and Wilson's. One *can* shape an original tale out of an expressly Canadian experience and secondly, one *can* employ religious symbols and parallels in a subtle, satisfying manner. Only after we finish Paci's *The father* do we begin to sense the deeper truth, about who or what "The father" really is.

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MULTI-PURPOSE READING

Canada home: Juliana Horatia Ewing's Fredericton letters, 1867-1869, edited by Margaret Howard Blom & Thomas Blom. University of British Columbia Press, 1983. 455 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7748-0174-3.

It is generally agreed that one of the chief characteristics of a *good* book is its multidimensional appeal; one can expect to enjoy it on several levels — practical or aesthetic, stylistic or thematic (on some or all of these). *Canada home*, being a very good book, is no exception to that rule.

One can, for example, read this collection of letters by the wife of a military

officer stationed in eastern Canada as a revealing bit of Canadiana — as a glimpse into the life of a military garrison, with its transposition of English customs to an un-English setting, its class consciousness, its local customs and pastimes, and that inevitable conflict between the local inhabitants and soldiery:

A girl here, the daughter of a butcher, has been “walking with” one of the 22nd [regiment], a smart young fellow. Her parents & her brother were against it & wanted her to accept the offers of a young civilian, Shaunessy by name. She would not — & the other evening Shaunessy & her brother (a lad of 18) saw her walking with a soldier, and they fell upon him & cut his head open. He lived a few hours, but insensible, I fancy. At 2 this morning the brother was taken — S. having been captured — & they were brought up before the Mayor today. The soldiers have been rioting rather: they are so enraged, & there is generally a certain amount of “feeling” between the Civil and Military inhabitants (p. 219).

Without any doubt, those interested in the early history of Fredericton will find Mrs. Ewing’s letters — the very stuff of history — fascinating in the extreme.

One can also, and I expect there are many who will want to, read these letters as autobiography — as an essential supplement to the several biographies already written about this well-known writer of children’s books. Mrs. Ewing’s stories (primarily those in *Aunt Judy’s magazine*) were extremely popular, were worthy of being illustrated by such a master as Randolph Caldecott, and won deserved praise from such other writers as Rudyard Kipling. They are, perhaps, only remembered by a few people now (or known only to students of nineteenth-century children’s literature), but *The brownies*, *Christmas crackers*, *Lob lie by the fire*, *Jackanapes* and *Daddy Darwin’s dovecot* were eagerly devoured by many thousands of Victorian children.

In *Canada home* we are not only treated to some factual details concerning the composition of some of Mrs. Ewing’s stories (for example, *Mrs. Overtheway’s remembrances* was written in Canada), also we but find that her “Canadian experience” became the inspiration for several of her works and find her discussing some of her ideas about writing stories for children:

One of my theories is that..all real “fairy stories” should be written as if they were oral traditions taken down from the lips of a “story teller” — This is where modern editions of Grimm — vide “Grimm’s Goblins” — otherwise a delicious book) fail.. (p. 257).

She knew quite well what children liked, was a keen analyst of style and a diligent observor of “real life.” Her letters offer many valuable insights into the mind and method of a popular nineteenth-century writer of children’s books.

But, important as those reasons are for reading *Canada home*, I would like to suggest that here is a book which can be read and thoroughly enjoyed for its intrinsic value. Mrs. Ewing’s letters are as delightful to read now as they must have been to her mother, father and family; they are far-ranging and personal, funny and sad, witty and engaging. Her own curiosity informs every

moment, whether it be her interest in Native Indians, her husband's military aides, her dog's misdemeanours, her eccentric neighbours, her church activities, the winter snow, the sleighing and tobogganing, the sudden spring flowers. She was, it seems, a vivacious (though often sickly) woman, with a lively mind, a keen sense of humour, and a vivid imagination. And, as if another talent was needed, she was an excellent sketcher as well — many of her sketches illustrate this book.

It is, then, certainly a book packed with information, a treasure for the devotee of either Canadian history or children's literature; and to enhance its value as such the editors have provided an excellent introduction, ample footnotes and several valuable appendices. Clearly, *Canada home* can be read by the student of history or literature with great profit. But, again, I suggest that it is also a book to be read at leisure — to be picked up and read in moments of relaxation, and if put down it will be picked up again with renewed anticipation and pleasure. What more could be required of a book?

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ROMANCE AND REALISM: NOVELS BY PAUL KROPP

Baby baby, Paul Kropp. Collier Macmillan Canada, 1982. 91 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 02-997640-5; *Gang war*, Paul Kropp. Collier Macmillan Canada, 1982. 93 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 02-997620-0; *Snow ghost*, Paul Kropp. Collier Macmillan Canada, 1982. 93 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 02-997610-3; *Wild one*, Paul Kropp. Collier Macmillan Canada, 1982. 91 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 02-997630-8; *Wilted*, Paul Kropp. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980. 111 pp., \$10.50 cloth. ISBN 0-698-20493-X.

The last of the five novels listed above, *Wilted*, is by far the most sophisticated, while the remaining four belong to Paul Kropp's "Series Canada" and feature the limited vocabulary characteristic of the series. Despite the fairly broad