

l'enfant d'Yvonne morte en couches. Telle affinité n'est pas si surprenante cependant si l'on considère l'influence du fantastique de Nerval et de Charles Nodier sur l'auteur du *Grand Meaulnes*. L'hommage se fait explicite quand le héros croit discerner au cimetière de Granverger une inscription funéraire improbable: Henri Alban Alain-Fournier, 1886-1914.

Ce changement de public autorise l'auteur à passer outre aux interdits de la littérature de jeunesse, le sexe et la violence. La relation charnelle entre Pierre et Isabelle est sobrement mais clairement signifiée. Les scènes de torture et de sabbat ne font pas l'économie des détails horribles; les nombreux morts du récit sont envisagés dans leur réalité de cadavres informes ou mutilés.

Selon son habitude, Sernine utilise les concepts de satanisme et de sorcellerie et s'y trouve très à l'aise. Les rares échanges de point de vue des protagonistes font la part belle aux tenants du démonisme. Les "bons" Davard même, qui n'ont pas suivi les membres du Cercle Violet dans leurs atrocités, concèdent à ces derniers une "philosophie du Mal très convaincante et, somme toute, très intelligente." (p. 219)

Malgré les réserves qu'on peut formuler sur la thématique de Daniel Sernine, *le Cercle violet* est une oeuvre d'envergure, une sorte de *compendium* des figures, objets et motifs du fantastique serninien. Comme *Ludovic*, roman de *fantasy* paru en 1983 chez le même éditeur, cet ample récit fait ressortir les qualités stylistiques et le sens la narration de l'écrivain.

Il faut mentionner en terminant le soin accordé par la maison d'édition à la mise en pages et à la présentation typographique, ainsi que l'abondance des illustrations exécutées par l'auteur lui-même, avec un bonheur inégal, qui donnent au volume le charme d'un journal de famille.

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THE MAGIC OF SELFLESSNESS

All kinds of magic, Florence McNeil. Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. 155 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-035-9.

Magic serves as an instrument of change for a rather oppressively rational and unsympathetic eleven-year-old girl spending the summer with her father, step-mother and step-brother. *All kinds of magic* is chiefly about Gen, a whiz at computers, machines, and all things scientific, but a perfect dunce at understanding her own or anyone else's emotions. The stumbling block to a

good holiday, as she sees it, is her eight-year-old step-brother, Mark, who shares none of her cherished intellectual gifts and proclivities but is nonetheless insightful in his own way and certainly more lovable. By immersing herself in the cause of Molly, a strange old woman about to lose her house and property, and helping to unravel the mystery surrounding Alonzo, a legendary magician and Molly's husband, Gen learns to feel the warmth necessary to bring the "magic" of love to her life. Alonzo's tale itself, a parable of selflessness, becomes a sort of key to understanding the design of the rest of the book.

Florence McNeil's highly readable fantasy is set in Barkerville, a restored gold mining ghost town in northern British Columbia. The setting is central, providing the characters with just the right sort of atmosphere — solitary as well as enigmatic — within which to decipher mysterious puzzles, pursue elusive clues, and encounter magic. The mystery is cleverly done and will intrigue most readers of about nine to twelve who will undoubtedly enjoy the unholy combination of computers and magic. Many will also be able to either identify themselves with or at least understand the child of divorced parents whose concerns range anywhere from an unwished-for younger sibling to unfamiliar breakfast food.

More demanding readers — probably adults — will find *All kinds of magic* a bit too predictable. We know on page one that Gen will never get to that computer camp she banks on just as we know she will come to love her step-brother in the end and come to believe in a world that transcends the rational. Predictability itself, of course, may occasionally be a narrative strength. In this case, however, it is not, partly because, I think, the characters of Gen and Mark are too schematic and insistent. The critical point of awakening for skeptical Gen is disappointingly obvious: in the final stages of the tale she suddenly recalls "Molly's voice saying as clearly as anything, 'Remember you are surrounded by magic. Believe in it, and it will be there.' And she closed her eyes very tight, made her hands into fists and said, 'I believe, I believe'" (p. 152). We don't. Finally, I suspect, one must be something of a C.S. Lewis fan and genuinely enjoy the subversion of science and skepticism to fully appreciate McNeil's essentially religious story. Rationalists all, beware!

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