Since his earliest days Korman has been deft at comic invention, and Artie's scams provide some of his best mischievous fantasy. The model car race betting escapade, with its elaborate set, has just enough added complication to be hilarious. Some may be disturbed by the hero's seriously illegal tactics, but the fantasy is so wild it would be difficult to take such an objection seriously. Nevertheless, the author uncharacteristically does take his hero into a situation where he cannot win; even though the chastised Artie seems set to mobilize his fellow tourers at the end, we feel it will not work without his personal style.

Is the maturing Korman seeing a larger world where even in the glitz of Las Vegas fantasies cannot come true? This disenchanted view seems further evidenced in giving the conscience to a young adult rather than to the hero's peer. For all his emphasis on light fun, Korman's paired juvenile heroes always projected the truth of two strong parts of the child's makeup: the part that dares to be individual and the part that holds society's starchy values. Identification and sympathy were at once engaged as one dragged the other into adventure. It is difficult to feel the same interest and sympathy for the older Rob; after all, his motives are tainted by necessity for summer employment and the desire to attract girls. Neither are Artie's touring peers interesting enough to provide the emotional tension which gives spice to the adventures of Boots and Bruno or Rudy Miller and Mike Webster in *I want to go home.*

No coins, please delivers much of the old fun but destroys the dream of childhood invincibility. It is not comfortable and certainly not fun to look at the world through Rob Nevin's anxious eyes. Has the author outgrown the magic of innocent egotism to be mired in the stifling mundane? A new Korman book should be on the stands now. Will it tell us what has really happened to Gordon Korman?

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KEVIN MAJOR: A WRITER TO WATCH

Thirty-six exposures, Kevin Major. Delcorte Press, 1984. 156 pp. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-29347-X.

Kevin Major, a Newfoundland-based writer, won critical accolades and a national literary award for his first two works *Hold fast* and *Far from shore,* and the reason for such acclaim is Major's willingness to experiment with forms and styles as he explores the problems and preoccupations of contemporary teenagers. His latest novel, *Thirty-six exposures,* is no less ambitious.

With each succeeding novel, Major complicates the problems of his prota-

gonists as he explores the growing pains of different age groups. In *Hold fast,* fourteen-year-old Michael runs away with his cousin from his legal but brutal guardian to join his younger brother and grandmother. In *Far from shore,* sixteen-year-old Christopher, troubled by poor grades and family break-up, takes up booze and bad company. In *Thirty-six exposures,* eighteen-year-old Lorne, trying to find his niche in the last year of high school, hides behind his camera and poetry until several traumatic events force him to reevaluate his goals.

Major sets all three novels in Marten, Newfoundland, a fictional small town, perhaps not unlike Sandy Cove, his birthplace. He has an ear for speech patterns, and his language has not only the realistic saltiness of boisterous teenagers but also the regional flavour of Newfoundland dialect. Some readers may take issue with Major's use of "coarse" language. Nevertheless, his characters sound like today's teenagers.

To his credit, Major does not shy away from topics that may offend some parents and educators. In *Thirty-six exposures,* Lorne's preoccupation with sex is delicately but realistically explored. Moreover, Lorne and his friends drink a lot, swear often, and smoke marijuana on occasion. Major neither condones nor condemns the actions of his characters.

Finally, what is interesting about Major's three novels is the way he tells his stories. In his first novel, he chose third person narration. In *Far from shore,* he preferred multiple narrators, showing Christopher the protagonist from different points of view, including his own. In *Thirty-six exposures,* the writer draws a very complex pattern, mixing narrative structure, poetry and symbols. The title refers to 36 chapters in the novel and to a roll of 35mm film. Each chapter is a snapshot, exposing certain facets of Lorne's actions. Major demands that the reader bridge the gaps and catch the symbolism in the actions of his main characters. The reader must understand that Lorne's camera is not only an instrument by which he sharpens his view of society, but also an albatross, like the Ancient Mariner's in Coleridge's ballad. *Thirty-six exposures* begins and ends with Lorne's blank verse. And in between, the writer uses Lorne's poems in a number of chapters to advance plot and feelings. Like soliloquies, Lorne's poems reveal the spirit of adolescence more concisely and deeply than conventional third-person narration.

Besides telling a good story, Major takes care in crafting his art subtly and unobtrusively. In a field fraught with tidy formulas, with slick but empty prose, and with worn-out values, he has helped change the tarnished reputation of young adult fiction.

Gary Engkent, *who teaches writing at the University of Guelph and writes short stories, has a keen interest in children's literature.*