

tion!!!” lit-on dans l’Avertissement de l’auteur (et il ne nous avertira pas deux fois!). Va pour la récréation, mais il nous semble qu’on apprend — outre la recette du Bloody Mary — quand même quelque chose dans ce roman. On apprend surtout que les rapports entre père et fils, sans être simples, peuvent être autre chose qu’une incompréhension mutuelle, que les adolescents — comme, d’ailleurs, les vieilles dames — sont des êtres humains et que Gilbert Millaire, qui se sent peut-être plus près de la mort que de son adolescence, est encore capable d’apprécier les bonnes qualités d’un fils lui-même très compréhensif sous son masque d’insouciance. Et quand — une heure et quarante-trois minutes plus tard, si on ne lambine pas en chemin et si on saute le chapitre 8 — on pose le roman sur la table à café, il y a toujours ces deux portraits qui nous lancent leur défi énigmatique de la page couverture-arrière: d’une part, les yeux souriants du jeune homme sérieux, d’autre part la forme joufflue du bouddha qui rit. Qui est donc l’auteur? Expliquez votre choix en deux temps trois mouvements.

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## A WOMAN WHO DARED

*Kate Rice prospector*, Helen Duncan. Simon & Pierre, 1984. 200 pp. \$22.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88924-134-1.

I am hesitant about promoting exemplary biography for children, for my own early experience of the genre was depressing. As a young child showing some promise in music I was fed the lives of the great composers. It was demoralizing to learn that by the age of three Mozart was playing the piano and that at nine Chopin was already performing in public, while I, at age eleven, was still working my way through “Easy graded pieces”. Perhaps this is why I find this biography of Kate Rice so refreshing. Here was a woman who dared, but left little to show for her courage; the biography celebrates her daring rather than her worldly success. This is, I believe, an important emphasis if we are considering the book’s impact on young girls.

Kathleen Rice was an intelligent, university-educated and very attractive young woman, born into a middle-class family in 1882, who abandoned a comfortable life in small town Ontario, and the traditional roles of wife and mother or school teacher. Instead she set off alone into northern Manitoba, joining the prospectors and miners who followed the gold rush trails. She lived like them, a gun-toting woman in men’s clothing, dealing with tough men in harsh conditions, trapping, hunting, surviving in the Northern bush. Eventually

this very unconventional woman set up in partnership with another prospector, one Dick Woosey. This sort of partnership was common among prospectors. However, the unconventional nature of this relationship between a man and a woman who lived together caused as much head shaking as her venture alone into the bush.

Kate Rice was never a success in worldly terms. She published one or two scientific articles in journals and newspapers and achieved a little notoriety in her time as a woman who moved in a man's world. Her story is in fact a rather tragic one. The determined, bouyant young girl declined into a middle age filled with the tough and lonely routines of bush life. Finally, after the death of her partner she apparently gave herself up as insane and spent the rest of her days in a nursing home. Helen Duncan does not show this final act in the biography. The book celebrates a woman who rebelled and, lonely though it might be, lived her life as she wanted it. Duncan prefers to end with the heroine symbolically setting out after her partner's death, alone in her canoe, for the even further north.

This book is something between a novel and a work of non-fiction. The author has frankly let her imagination take over the facts of the life of this extraordinary woman. Records were sparse and contradictory, so the author, as well as visiting the North, talking to locals and searching old newspapers and records for references to her characters, has soaked herself in background research into mining and living conditions. Detailed descriptions of northern conditions in the early part of this century are a fascinating part of the book emphasising the realities of the prospector's life.

Kate Rice, as recreated by Helen Duncan, is a striking person, brave, abrasive, stubborn and somewhat insensitive to others; a very human mixture of weakness and self sufficiency. Here is a heroine whose success is within anyone's reach. Her courage and self-assurance in the face of the world which did not comprehend or approve makes her stimulating as a role model.

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## LA PRINCESSE DE LA TOUR POUR ENFANTS MODERNES

*Amour, réglisse et chocolat*, Marie Décary. Illus. Claude Cloutier. Montréal: La courte échelle, 1985. 94 pp. 4,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-051-0.

Que penser d'un monde qui se limite aux quarante-neuf étages d'un magasin nommé de Kitchi-Ketchup? Ou d'une jeune fille qui, à seize ans, habite seule au dernier étage de ce magasin? On dirait la princesse de la tour dont le château médiéval s'est transformé en super-magasin moderne. Serait-ce le prix de notre