

isemblable). Néanmoins, l'auteur n'hésite pas à sortir des sentiers battus, comme le montre le rôle primordial accordé aux femmes à l'inverse de (trop) nombreux ouvrages de science-fiction. Enfin, et en ce qui concerne surtout la seconde partie, l'habileté avec laquelle Johanne Massé mène son récit est remarquable et fait que *De l'autre côté de l'avenir* se lit d'un trait. **Patrice Mothion** enseigne le français à *Queens College (N.Y.)* et à *York College (N.Y.)* et termine son *Ph.D de littérature française au Graduate Center de CUNY (City University of New York)*. Il est originaire de *Vire (Normandie, France)*.

#### LITERATURE BY ANALYSIS: CAN IT WORK?

***In my world series***, Bobbie Kalman, Susan Hughes. Illus. Karen Harrison, Allan & Drew-Brook-Cormach. Crabtree Publishing Co., 1985. 32 pp. \$10.95 ea. cloth. ISBN 0-86505-060-8, 061-9, 062-7, 063-5, 064-3, 065-1.

Through "curriculum analysis," says the publisher's letter, these books have been designed "to fill a gap in the primary social studies curriculum." The gap is not identified, but the books do bring up topics which a teacher may wish to discuss with students. To be useful, however, such books should also point the way to understanding. The "In my world" books, though fulfilling every requirement of teachers and curriculum analysts, are not only based on premises children will either see through or be unable to recognize, but are also written according to superficial values, which will of course be transmitted to their vulnerable targets.

The immensely boring texts deal with a topic such as cleanliness, for example, by discussing how to take a bath. The volume on this subject starts from the premise that children play in order to become dirty. An exasperated parent may momentarily entertain such a thought, but how many children actually play in order to become dirty? They just play. Dirt is incidental until an adult notices what the child is up to. Thus, children will not recognize the premise, which will prevent them from relating the book's teaching to their day-to-day lives.

Lack of logical thinking seems further evidenced by the fact that the book seems designed to sell the idea of baths. Now, there may be a child somewhere who doesn't like to splash around in the tub, but that child has not crossed this writer's path. If this is the book's purpose, it works against itself by suggesting that the child might fall in the tub and chip a tooth,

thus instilling fear into a previously happy experience. Such confusion of purposes suggests that the book is probably not doing what it set out to do, whatever that may be.

Throughout the series, values seem confused. One book teaches children to be tidy. Why should you be tidy? Because then you can find things when you want them. Well, we have all met the untidy person who can put his or her hand on anything he or she wants in the stack. Worse, the deeper value of tidiness — the sense of order which brings a secure feeling which then overflows into the person's relationships and approach to studies or work—all of this is missed.

The *In my world* texts are backed by expensive, full colour and full-page renderings which carefully fulfill all of today's requirements with regard to avoiding sexual and racial bias. They are rather nice, with the sort of detail which very small children enjoy pointing out when they can't read.

Simple-minded, formulaic books like these result from a management style currently out of favour in large corporations and industry, but apparently still with us in the arts. According to Tom Peter's and Mary Austin's *A passion for excellence* (Random House, 1985), the latest bible of the world of big business, there is nothing like good old impossible-to-predict human inspiration for producing successful new products suited to customer needs. Translated to the publishing of educational books, this means publishers, instead of telling writers what and how to write, should turn to the unsolicited manuscript pile, looking for books which fit the requirements and which have that certain something we all love but cannot adequately describe. Under this philosophy, books would be published quickly, on modest budgets, and publishers would take chances on manuscripts that appealed to them. Hardly innovative, but very soon authors who are now channeling their creativity into baking bread would again write. The resulting books would help us teach, would be topical, and would pass on our deeply held values and our strongest convictions.

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## UNFAMILIAR WORLDS

*A boy called Nam: the true story of how one little boy came to Canada*, Leo Heaps. Macmillan, 1984. 95 pp. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7715-9799-1; *An enduring heritage: Black contribution to early Ontario*, Roger Riendeau. Dundurn Press, 1984. 48 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-