and another boy share their personal histories, thereby averting the black hole of self-annihilation, and forging a bond which, we are led to assume, will sustain them on the road ahead.

The adults in the story — social workers, policemen, counsellors — are a well-meaning lot, yet their efforts often fall short, and they have their own problems and frailties. One notable exception to this portrait of fallible humanity is Cecile, Marl's social worker. She wafts in and out of the story like a heavenly breeze, arousing in Marl both a longing for maternal affection, and a nascent sexual attraction. Compared with the other characters, Cecile is insubstantial and unconvincing. She is not human, but an idealized vision of providence. Wieler wants the reader to see that even in a situation as desperate as Marl's, one is never utterly lost.

Despite the novel's static situation, the narrative moves briskly, mainly due to psychological tension. Apart from the occasional stale expression ("a shiver ran down his spine"; "his stomach lurched") the prose is refreshingly spare. The substance of the story makes it one for fairly mature readers, though the very act of reading will help foster some of that maturity.

Douglas Thorpe *has taught at the University of Toronto, Mount Saint Vincent University, and the University of Saskatchewan, and is currently writing a book on George MacDonald.*

ROMANCE AND REBELLION IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Nobody asked me, Elizabeth Brochmann. James Lorimer, 1984. 182 pp. $12.95, $5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88862-753-X, 0-88862-752-1; **Storm child**, Brenda Bellingham. James Lorimer, 1985. 124 pp. $12.95, $5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88862-794-7, 0-88862-793-9.

Elizabeth Brochmann's *Nobody asked me* and Brenda Bellingham's *Storm child* are novels in James Lorimer's "A time of our lives" series aimed at the ten-to-fourteen-year-old-market. Each deals with a teenage girl who is wrenched abruptly from her familiar environment and forced, in new surroundings, to reevaluate her sense of self.

Nobody asked me is set on the west coast. Rachel lives with her parents in a remote fire station on Vancouver Island. Her grandmother's illness takes the parents away to Europe and Rachel is sent to stay with Aunt Ev, a family friend, in a small coastal town. Rachel's Uncle Sharky, a dance hall bouncer, lives in the same town and Rachel immediately sets about match-making between Ev and Sharky. Her failure in this project and her growing friendship with the young fisherman Bosco form the plot, which is ultimately about Rachel learning to deal with a society larger than the

small circle of her family.

Storm child is an historical novel, set in Alberta in the 1830s. Twelve-year-old Isobel is the daughter of a Scottish father and a Peigan Indian mother. Her settled life at Fort Edmonton is disrupted when her father abandons the family. When Isobel's mother chooses a new white husband Isobel rejects her and goes to live with her Peigan grandparents. Here she becomes involved with a Cree boy who has been captured by the Peigans and also with the jaunty Jamey Jock Bird, a fur trader who straddles white and Indian worlds, playing off each against the other for his own profit. Both these intrigues wind towards possible attack of the Peigan camp but Isobel is able to help avert disaster for both her peoples. At the conclusion of the book she has achieved the peace of mind that lets her look for a way to live both parts of her heritage.

These two stories contain familiar elements of young adult fiction, notably romantic interest and disillusionment with the adult world. Brochmann handles Rachel's growing attraction to sixteen-year-old Bosco delicately, capturing the awkward tentativeness of early romance and providing an innocent counter point to the rougher adult world of the dance hall. Bosco himself is a nicely-drawn minor character, delightful in his computer whiz-kid vagueness. Bellingham provides a dual romantic focus. Paralleling Isobel's tensions — between native and white, the Great Creator versus the Christian God, Peigan lore versus formal education — is her attraction to Henry Rowand, son of the Chief Factor at Fort Edmonton, versus her new friendship with Comes Alive Again, the captured Cree boy. In the character of Henry, Bellingham pays her young readers the compliment of creating a complex character, capable of great understanding and kindness and appalling ignorance.

That other staple of young adult fiction, rebellion against adults, is handled quite differently in the two books. Isobel has strong reasons to be disillusioned with her father (who has abandoned her) and with her mother (who has remarried swiftly). Her relationship with Jamey Jock Bird is a fine portrait of a young person confronting a particular moral issue for the first time. Is Bird simply a self-serving cheat who betrays his own people or do his self-profiting activities actually benefit those same people? Bellingham provides no easy answers and the story of Isobel's growth from rage to understanding is the emotional heart of the book.

In Rachel's case the revelation of adult weakness and vulnerability is not as clear. She resents her parents leaving and distance from them allows her to see her father in particular in a more balanced way. She is angered by Sharky's independent behaviour. But not all these feelings really worked for me. I found myself growing impatient with Rachel. She undergoes major changes and revelations, perhaps even a few too many, but the plot does not seem sturdy enough to support them.

Rachel is a photographer and the style of *Nobody asked me* is reminiscent of a photo album in its minute observation and succinct description: Rachel lying in bed as though she was doing the dead man's float; her mother "clutching her purse in front of her, standing in her chipmunk pose," (p. 23); her father twitching his pant legs up before he crouches, people at the dance, "using their hands to catch the crumbling glaze of their doughnuts as they bit into them" (p. 119). The description of Rachel and Bosco digging up a giant clam is so clear and evocative that you start to feel grit under your fingernails. Detailed drawings of objects head each chapter and are a welcome touch in a young adult novel.

Bellingham uses a more wide-angled lens in her description of landscape, as befits the prairie. *Storm child* invites comparison with Jan Hudson's *Sweetgrass* in historical and geographical setting and in clarity and dignity of language.

Lorimer books have a tendency to hammer their message home a little too neatly. Writers as skillful as Bellingham and Brochmann could have trusted the power of their stories and edited out the preachier bits. But, this minor annoyance aside, both the books are significant examples of Canadian young adult fiction.

Sarah Ellis *is a Vancouver librarian, writer and storyteller who occasionally lectures on children's literature. Her first book for children,* The Baby Project *(Groundwood) was published in 1986.*

FROM CITY TO COUNTRY

Sandy, Nancy Freeman. Borealis Press, 1984. 95 pp. $23.95, $8.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88887-886-9, 0-88887-888-5.

Nancy Freeman's *Sandy* is about achieving goals. When protagonist Sandy's grandfather suffers a stroke, she is given the opportunity to realize her secret wish "to run a farm." Sandy is, however, still a seventeen-year-old student, unprepared to face the world on her own. But Sandy's seriousness sufficiently impresses her father so that he too seizes the opportunity to pursue his own goal of writing a book. Thus the entire family moves to the farm for a year.

The novel dwells on the inevitable problems of city people adjusting to rural life, and on Sandy's expected periods of doubt, although always her "motivation and commitment" carry her through. Sandy's younger sister, Linda, is a different story, as she never really wants to leave Ottawa and the athletics which are so much a part of her life, although she does find a replacement for them in singing and acting in the local school production.