

her mother. Buzz's father, distraught with these crises, extends practice sessions, and Buzz sees himself trapped in a bubble where there is no life but practice. Buzz runs away. He makes some vital discoveries about himself and his music: he finds that people like him, and that he likes them. And he also finds that he perceives the world around him as music: the majestic Spiral Tunnel is, for him, a symphonic composition of the sounds of rails and wheels and echoes.

Myra Paperny became an award-winning writer with the publication of *The wooden people* in 1976. She also scooped up not only the Canada Council Award for Juvenile Literature, but also the Little, Brown Children's Book Award. She has earned an Alberta Award for Achievement in Literature, and *Take a giant step* has been chosen by the Canadian Children's Book Centre for inclusion in their "Our Choice" collection. Paperny seems to have almost total recall for the world as seen through the eyes of a child, and a near-perfect way with children's speech patterns. These two books are jam-packed with little, local details which make the families and their settings seem familiar. The pacing of both stories is quick; once the family situation is established, the plot unravels with a flamboyant series of crises and events not seen much since Saturday serials at the local cinema. Both books are suitable for Grade 5-6 level readers, and beyond the sheer appeal of the action, the humour and realism of the stories will have young readers looking around for the next Paperny book.

**Carol Munro** is a freelance writer and broadcaster who taught *Children's Literature* for many years. She lives with her family at "Lambfold", their sheep farm in the Frazer Valley of British Columbia.

## FRIENDS FROM FAMISH GUT



**Fanny for change**, Jean Hayes Feather. Breakwater, 1987. 79 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-920911-31-5.

*Fanny for change* is a wise and puckish book. Fanny Grace is eleven. She lives in Famish Gut, Newfoundland. She is a spirited little girl, built like a tree stump. She brings a quick mind and a courageous will to the serious business of coping with childhood humiliations, and in the process, she develops commonsense and insight.

This is a well-written story. It opens with Fanny's sensibility as she groans inwardly at the annual "What

I Did For My Summer Holidays” writing assignment, and it stays with her. Descriptions are appropriate to an 8-to-12 year old’s vocabulary, and the dialogue is fresh and lively.

Letter-writing is only one of the uncongenial rituals Fanny must submit to. She has to write the hated name “Famish Gut” at the top of every page in her scribbler. She has to play ball during breaks, and put up with being jeered at and called “Fatty” by Sarah Thorne. Feather makes the discomfort of these things real without making a fuss over them, and it is plain that nobody else expects Fanny to make a fuss over them either. Her grandmother advises her by gentle parable to change those things she can change, and accept the rest graciously.

Fanny does change. On her own initiative she learns to throw a ball properly. She learns to run. She learns to eat less, and she runs faster, grows slimmer, and looks better. She writes to the Prime Minister asking him to change the village’s name, and she carries a petition for this around the village. She sees that she is not alone in facing obstacles when her older brother needs help to make the hockey team. Their father coaches him, and coaches Fanny too when she shows interest. (One of the joys of this book is its complete lack of sexism. Another is its sense of community: Fanny invites half the village to listen to a hockey game on radio at her house; arriving there, she finds the other half of the village already installed.)

The story moves smoothly because it is well-plotted, and both internal and external conflicts are resolved. Fanny takes fine revenge on Sarah for years of tormenting: she lands a hockey puck squarely and deliberately in Sarah’s stomach. This is convincing. Fanny’s natural generosity and compassion drive her to visit Sarah the next day, and the squalor of her tormentor’s home makes its own point. Fanny learns that her judgement is often based upon incomplete information. This applies to the world beyond childhood, too, as she discovers that there are reasons to be proud of her own name and the name of her village. These points are never forced; they slip into place as gently and inevitably as Fanny grows. The effect is very satisfying.

**Elizabeth B. Montgomery** *has taught schoolchildren in the West Indies and now, dreaming of sun, teaches English at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.*

## JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

**The secret of Sunset House**, Sharon Siamon. Gage Educational Publishers, 1987. 160 pp. \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-7715-6870-3. **Fishing for trouble**,