

About time

On the threshold of the new year, let's talk about time. Not time as it passes--with its winged chariots hurrying near--for that is only a marginal concern with young readers, who know in their bones that they have all the time in the world at their disposal. Not time in the past: for nostalgia is pretty well confined to adults, especially critics and parents. Children grow restless when we preach to them about the good old days; and bibliographies of children's books show us how scanty the crop of historical fiction is, compared to fantasy or animal legends or social realism. The special twist in this business of time, as it concerns children's literature, is that we are principally concerned not with the past but with the future--the time to come, when this year's child readers become the 20th century's citizens, shaped in part by the books we give them now.

So let's talk instead about taking time, time to analyze, understand, gain perspective. Rod McGillis, in his survey article in this issue, stimulates just such a timely stock-taking. Taking time now to analyze our annual bibliography will help us see the trends in publishing, the regional shifts, the preferential production for certain age groups, the career developments of well known authors and illustrators, the emergence of new names. In this issue also, Joan Weller takes an evaluative look at recent work in illustration, and Stephen Coopman at two experiments in theatre.

In our next issue, we will focus on the persistence of memory, the influence of early childhood readings on the imaginative processes of writers such as Alice Munro. Yet writing in-depth criticism for a journal like *CCL* always means being behind the times in some ways, for while we examine an author's work, the author herself may have seized the time to move forward to a new concern.