

Although the actual success of May's campaign is mentioned as if an afterthought within the last thirty words, the punch line gently matches an illustration which is a perfect example of how the humorous, visual completion of a tale can be the most illuminating one.



Any review of Khalsa's work would be remiss if a word was not said about her visual style. In *I want a dog* especially, there is an arresting mix of boldly coloured tempera and pastel or chalk. The views of May's world are right out of the 'forties and 'fifties by way of Khalsa's remarkable memory for detail. Anyone sympathetic to the tiny visual minutiae which identify our cultural history will enjoy themselves immensely as

they appreciate the cheap spotted kitchen lino, the vinyl and chrome dinette set, the frigidaire, the taxi interior as well as the other cars, the sparse "rec" room where May sets up her training course (the titles on her prop books are a hoot!), the decor in Sam's luncheonette--even the clothing style, fabric choice and colour combinations, speak of the corduroy and flannelette age before this poly-cotton era.

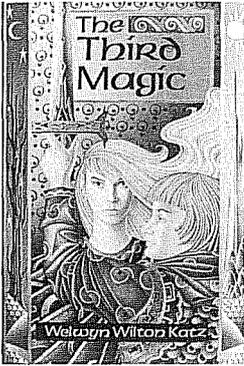
While only a cad would criticise Khalsa's flat, thick brush style of tempera, one might quibble with her renditions of the various dog breeds which seem to be too often in show-dog profile, as if an *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Dogs* was too close to hand. Her natural poses are far more fun. Certainly her work overall is simply delightful.

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## THE CIRCLE, THE LINE AND THE THIRD MAGIC

**The Third Magic.** Welwyn Wilton Katz. Douglas & McIntyre, 1988. 204 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-068-5.

*The Third Magic*, award-winner Welwyn Wilton Katz's most recent fantasy, combines the same elements that ensured the success of her earlier works: a deep interest in mythology, a careful attention to psychological characteriza-



tion and a simple ability to tell a highly suspenseful and wonderfully unpredictable story.

Even to begin to sketch the extremely complex story that Katz provides would be virtually impossible. Her hero, Arddu, lives outside of time in the magical world of Nwm, while the heroine, Morgan Lefevre, is from modern-day Canada, mistakenly summoned to Nwm because of her psychic affinity to one of her own ancestors, Arddu's twin sister, Rigan. Ultimately the protagonists' adventures bring them to the magical world of Arthur and Merlin, where Katz provides an absolutely fascinating retelling of the legend of Arthur's claim to kingship.

There is much to praise in Katz's ambitious tale, but there are also problems. The major difficulty is that the story, particularly in its early stages, often becomes bogged down in creating tantalizingly complex mythologies. The primary antagonists in Arddu's world, for example, are the Circle and the Line, a conflict delineated by a series of evocative but often unresolved associations: Moon vs. Sun, Ice vs. Fire, Encircling vs. Alignment and most importantly, Male vs. Female. The Circle, possessors of the First Magic, and the Line, possessors of the Second Magic, are described as equally cruel, selfish and brutal, necessitating the rebirth of the Old Magic, the Third Magic, which comes to be associated with Morgan and Arddu. Though the ultimate need for harmony in the world is made quite clear, the full implications of this Nwmian battle of the sexes are somewhat ambiguous, particularly when it is related to the very sketchy account of the relationship between Morgan's earthly parents, a charismatic television producer and his stereotypically repressed wife.

I don't think it is coincidence that the story truly comes alive only when the ambiguities of the Nwmian mythology are left behind and the protagonists begin their final quest to return the sword of the Third Magic to its rightful place and, by doing so, rewrite the Arthurian legend. Here, especially in the final scenes, one realizes just how gifted a story-teller Katz can be and why she truly deserves her place as one of Canada's most renowned children's fantasists.

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