

êtres humains. Seule apparaît l'image de Woody Allen affichée sur un kiosque à journaux (tableau 10). Au signifiant (la photo) correspond un signifié bien précis: la présence du comédien a la fonction de filtre et elle enlève au tableau son aspect cauchemardesque. Le sérieux de la vision apocalyptique se transforme en blague. Cependant, l'enfant voudra en savoir davantage. Il faudra donc interroger le tableau et retrouver le véritable acteur derrière l'actant, c'est-à-dire l'être premier, celui du jardin d'Eden. Il n'est pas étonnant d'ailleurs de trouver le serpent dans un kiosque, métonymie du jardin et, par extension, du début de l'humanité. La définition de kiosque (*Le Robert*) est très révélatrice: "Pavillon de jardin ouvert de tous côtés, en Turquie et au Moyen-Orient."

Ce tableau s'organise donc autour des signes justificateurs de la réalité de l'être, celui-ci représenté par le piéton lisant son journal. Le piéton ne se doute pas du danger, mais révélation! Nous savons que rien ne lui arrivera, car il est debout sur une croix, l'image bien connue du salut. Le pédagogue qui sait déchiffrer ces signes réussira à rassurer l'enfant en lui inspirant la confiance dans le bien. En dernière analyse, le but de l'auteur est d'ordre éthique.

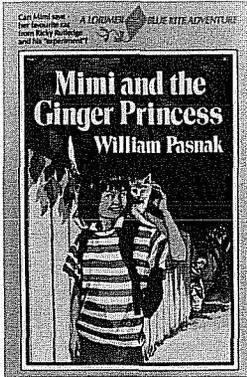
Le tableau 12 vient corroborer l'interprétation donnée. Mis "en abyme," le nom du célèbre peintre PICASSO et la colombe avec une branche dans le bec sont respectivement des signes de création, d'amour, de paix et de réconciliation.

Pour conclure, nous pouvons avancer que ce nouvel album de Darcia Labrosse est extrêmement riche en signes référentiels, traditionnels et culturels. Nous n'avons touché qu'à quelques aspects marquants de l'oeuvre. L'auteur a le pouvoir de transmettre un message dépourvu d'équivoques: le triomphe de l'amour et de la vie sur la violence et la mort. Pinocchio, dernière image du livre, n'est qu'une version moderne du mythe de Pygmalion. L'amour a donc ce pouvoir ultime d'engendrer la vie. Rappelons que cet amour n'est qu'un enfant au début du livre, Cupidon. L'autre enfant, Pinocchio, ne représente cependant pas la fin, mais c'est l'appel à un autre commencement, à un autre mouvement. L'amour et la vie sont possibles seulement grâce à l'isotopie de l'enfance. D'une valeur ludique indéniable, cet album de Darcia Labrosse a aussi une grande valeur esthétique et pédagogique.

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#### EARLY NOVELS: ADVENTURES IN READING OR LESSONS IN LIFE?

**Mimi and the Ginger Princess.** William Pasnak. James Lorimer, 1988. 117 pp., \$14.95 \$5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-107-0, 1-55028-105-4; **Casey**



**Webber, the Great.** Hazel Hutchins. Illus. John Richmond. Annick Press, 1988. 120 pp., \$7.95 \$4.95 cloth paper. ISBN 1-55037-023-5, 1-55037-022-7; **Pop bottles.** Ken Roberts. Douglas & McIntyre, 1987. 87 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-059-6; **Hiccup champion of the world.** Ken Roberts. Illus. VictoR GAD. Douglas & McIntyre, 1988. 96 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-071-5.

The "junior novel" represents an exciting step for the young reader. Moving from picture books, classroom readers, and novels read aloud, many eight to ten-year-olds are stepping up into their own first

novels proudly referred to as "chapter books."

The quality of books for these young readers cannot be overlooked. Here is the best time to get them hooked: to challenge, excite, stir laughter, entertain – all with reading. No small feat for the writers of junior novels. Unfortunately, the challenge to produce quality books for this age group appears to be overwhelming for some authors whose stories are either overly simple and sweet or filled with heavy-handed morals. These writers either ignore or under-estimate the sophistication of children and produce novels which are uninspiring. The reader would rather turn on the television set than turn to another book.

*Mimi and the Ginger Princess* has the possibility of being a good novel. Unfortunately for junior readers, the author presents the story in an oversimplified manner and then reveals the ending in a parallel story. When Mimi, a nine-year-old cat lover, comes to the rescue of a sleek ginger stray which is being pursued by the neighborhood "bad boys" who want to use the cat in their science fair experiment, her rescue attempts are at first impeded by family responsibilities and failed plans. Mimi's adventures are paralleled with a Japanese fable read by her Grampa Takeda: the Peach Boy journeys to Ogre Island to save its inhabitants from their monstrous oppressors. His kindness is rewarded with treasure which he gives to his parents.

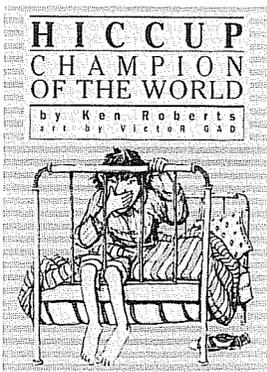
With the help of a friend, Mimi frees the Ginger Princess just as the science experiment is about to take off. The boys are reprimanded by their mother and Mimi leaves with the Ginger Princess. Like the Peach Boy of Grampa's story, Mimi gives away her treasure: the Ginger Princess becomes a companion to an ailing family friend and breathes life into his lonely existence.

In *Casey Webber the Great*, Casey develops his magic show from a frontyard production to star billing at the city's summer festival. Casey's sister Morgan, who is suffering from a severe case of summer boredom, discovers the source of Casey's magic and uses it on a shop-lifting spree. She realizes her error, returns the merchandise, then teams up with Casey for his grand finale as Mr.

Invisible at the festival. After the curtain falls, the secret of Casey's magic is revealed: a high-collared jacket left at the bottom of the dress-up box, a jacket which renders the wearer invisible.

While Casey's adventures could certainly supply him with years of material for his annual "What I did during my summer holidays" essays, this novel falls flat due to overly moralistic undertones. Mrs. Webber tells the erring Morgan, "It isn't always easy to do the right thing." Lesson number one is logged, to which the narrator replies, "It was just the kind of sappy thing mothers say." Unfortunately, the author did not follow her own lead and provide the reader with a great summer adventure story minus the sappy things adults so often say.

But all is not lost for the young reader. Ken Roberts is an excellent example of an author who does appreciate the complexity of writing early novels. His books build around a dilemma which the characters resolve mostly through their own ingenuity without heavy handed input from adults. His wacky situations, fascinating characters, surprise endings, understatement, and humour are blended together with subtle themes to leave his readers asking for more. *Pop bottles* is the story of Will McCleary, a twelve-year-old boy living in Vancouver during the Depression. Will discovers that his new house is surrounded by a sidewalk and patio of buried pop bottles – a discovery worth a fortune in returns. Unfortunately Will isn't the only kid on the block who realizes that there is a gold mine planted around the house. The neighbourhood bully wants more than his fair share of the loot. The rights to the bottles must be determined by a duel; but instead of a fist fight to the finish, the chosen weapons are bolo bats (aka paddle balls). The boys compete in the finals of a Park Board sponsored Bolo Bat Contest. The added attraction is that the winner will receive a new bicycle. Will handily out-bats the bully; but fate deals a cruel blow. Will's elastic breaks and his ball sails into the audience. He doesn't win the bicycle, but clearly has won the rights to the pop bottles – or so he thinks!



*Hiccup champion of the world* is another Ken Roberts' novel bound to delight young readers. Maynard Chan, an average twelve-year-old, gets a not-so-average case of the hiccups which just won't quit.

His mother, his best friend Simon, his neighbours, plus his entire school join in providing every known remedy for Maynard's malady. He is subjected to horror moves, séances, haunted houses, and loads of salted cold oatmeal (to name a few), but all to no avail.

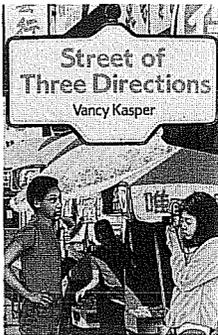
Maynard survives three months of hopeful cures and lands a spot on a late night talk show. He ex

periences a new form of fear while waiting alone in the studio dressing room. And you guessed it, he stops hiccupping. Maynard fakes the hiccups throughout the show and the return trip home; then he elicits Simon's help for one last scare which will appear to successfully relieve his hiccups.

Simon rises to the challenge and remembers that it was the fear of embarrassment which cured Maynard's hiccups. Now, what would you do if the seat of your pants were super-glued to a bench in a very busy shopping mall on the middle of Saturday afternoon and your best friend has left you to bare all??

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## IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION



**Street of three directions.** Vancy Kasper. Overlea House, 1988. 141 pp., \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7172-2481-3; **Heartbreak High.** Nazneen Sadiq. Lorimer, 1988. 158 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-125-9.

The problems faced by the recent immigrant to Canada seem especially poignant when that immigrant is simultaneously confronting the challenges and complications of adolescence. The adolescent's "search for identity" is compounded by the closely connected search for identity of the immigrant. The theme of immigration and integration is obviously not a new one in Canadian children's literature: Catharine Parr Traill's

*Canadian crusoes*, for example, like *Street of three directions* and *Heartbreak High*, links the assimilation and integration of the immigrant with the growth and development of the youth.

Both of these new novels concentrate on the conflict between generations, with the older generation upholding the traditional values not just of a previous generation, but of a former homeland, unfamiliar and even alien to the young Canadian. The young people in these novels learn respect for the original culture, and willingness to retain its values. Rachel, in *Heartbreak High*, agrees to a trip to Israel, while Amanda, in *Street of three directions*, accepts her father's views without being intimidated by them. The compromise between overly rigid and "racist" parents or relatives, and unaccommodating and embarrassed adolescents results in an idealistic hope for assimilation. Both books deal with the survival of the traditional Canadian "mosaic," in a society complicated by the volume and diversity of those mosaic pieces.