

# Notes

## *Letters to the editors*

From Anne Cameron:

The article by Kevin McCabe "Neopaganism, feminism, and children's literature" is disturbing. I make no comment on Kevin's research into or knowledge of "classical" mythology, although I would suggest his research sources and his education are products of the current culture and political system and can, at best, be based only on what that culture and system have allowed to be taught.

I take strong objection to his interpretation of "North American Indian" mythology and society. He says my retellings of West Coast myths "are sufficiently feminist in that they change the character of Raven from male to female". Put bluntly, Kevin McCabe doesn't know what he's talking about when he says things like that. The languages of the many different indigenous peoples did not contain gender specific pronouns. No "he", no "she", no "his", no "hers", nor any concept which would even suggest such a thing. Gender was easily enough indicated when required, but not by so simplistic a fashion as our current language contains. The native storytellers who taught me and gave me some stories often used "he" and "she" indiscriminately. They certainly knew the difference between male and female, and they spoke English very well, and still mixed "his" and "hers", often in the same sentence, and in reference to the same thing, or person.

If Raven is viewed as a "male" character, it is because the first non-natives to appropriate and present in English the stories were products of our foreign system. In short, they were patriots who could not break the conditioning of the society which had produced them, who viewed anything important as being automatically male, and thought anything female quite unimportant. They also met with, talked with, and heard stories from, only the men in the native community. Not only would they not have been eager to meet with the women, in many tribal communities the women would not have wanted to share with them any stories.

Kevin McCabe says, "North American Indian mythology reflects the animistic beliefs and ritual practices of native people". Again, he does not understand WHY native people used animals to tell certain stories. "Raven and Raven's Spouse" is not the same as "Raven and his wife" or "Raven and her husband". There is a place in "Raven and Raven's Spouse" for both boys and

girls to identify with wit, courage, intelligence, and humour. In many stories Coyote goes home to a litter of babies; would Kevin prefer to suggest Coyote is a widower trying to raise HIS children alone?

Kevin falls into the trap of thinking the native people were simple-minded children of a simple culture. What was destroyed on this continent compared to any civilization ever known. What survived will save us from drowning in our own sewage or choking on oxygen depleted polluted air.

I could probably grab a soapbox and rip into Kevin's attack on feminism but I'm not going to bother; his misogyny is so clearly demonstrated it destroys itself. I will, however, say that his blast at what he sees as the "occult" and the purported dangers of non-christian beliefs is bigoted, and does no credit or service to himself, his academic credentials, or your magazine. Yes, "supposedly harmless pursuits such as acting out roles from Dungeons and Dragons have ended in suicide"; what evidence do we have these kids weren't already in serious mental and emotional trouble before starting to play? The suicide rate among children is skyrocketing, but not because of Dungeons and Dragons. Is Kevin so steeped in Greek mythology he is going to do as did the Greek rulers, who if they did not like the message killed the poor slob who delivered it?

Kevin attacks the idea of presenting homosexuality as something other than a mental illness. One out of eight men and women in the world are not heterosexual; this suggests, to me at least, there is a good chance one of eight teen-agers is not heterosexual. Fair representation alone would suggest one of eight stories for teen-agers include the idea there is nothing inherently "wrong" or "bad" or "evil" or "dirty" or "perverted" in alternate sexuality. It might cut the suicide rate with which Kevin is concerned.

I would ask if it is true we are all created in the image of God "man and woman created he them in His image", and if God is, indeed, a God of love and forgiveness "judge not that ye be not judged", "insomuch as you do even unto one of the least of these so do ye to me". How could God make such an enormous mistake as to reject one in eight of his children?

The dinosaurs are extinct. Hopefully the day will come when bigotry and enforced sexual determination will also be extinct. Maybe then we will all be able to live in a loving world where we do not sit by with self-righteously pursed lips and closed minds while 28 children every minute die of malnutrition and war. Maybe then academics will turn to native people to find out about native heritage rather than quoting from a book written by yet another white male academic.

Sincerely,  
Anne Cameron

Reply from Kevin McCabe:

In writing my article I had two aims: first, to point out how contemporary psychic, political, and sexual trends were influencing children's literature; and, secondly, to state my own reservations about these trends. I am still concerned about an apparent tendency to feminize traditionally male mythic heroes such as Hercules, about the fact that the homosexual movement is making a strong appeal to teenagers to "come out of the closet", and about the resurgence of occult and psychic topics in children's and teens' books.

Anne Cameron's letter certainly clarifies her views and enhances this discussion. I would hope that others who are widely read in myth and children's literature might wish to address these topics again.

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From D.H. Jenkinson:

In Brian Doyle's *Easy Street* the central character's nickname is *Hubbo* not *Hullo* as was used throughout the review (ICCL, #54, pp. 71 & 72. Certainly the winner of the CLA Book of the Year for Children Award and the runner-up for the Governor General's Award deserves better treatment. A small point, but I would question Prof. Adey's explanation of "Feel" Street. Prof. Adey links the name to Fleurette's mother's occupation as a prostitute, but I believe that Doyle ties the term directly to Fleurette herself (see bottom p. 10 and top of p. 20). The suggestion that Fleurette is, herself, of easy virtue explains Doug's interest in Fleurette because his actions then reflect the stereotyped attitude of "rich" males who see all "poor" girls as being "easy" targets.

Reply from Lionel Adey:

Though justly rebuked for a careless slip re the hero's name, I see the evidence re Fleurette as equivocal. On page 19 we are told that her "no" means "no", and on p. 20 we have hearsay to the effect that she allowed liberties at her previous school, yet that her whole street was immoral. She never behaves immorally when "on stage", whereas her mother does continue to practise as a prostitute, so I would give her the benefit of the doubt.

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*Nouvelles/News*

La publication de la revue *Vidéo-Pressé* a repris l'automne dernier après l'intervalle coutumier des vacances d'été. *Vidéo-Pressé* s'adresse aux jeunes ado-

lescents et adolescentes qui cherchent à agrandir leurs connaissances. Cette année, *Vidéo-Press* s'attache entre autres à présenter les multiples communautés culturelles du Québec. Pour s'abonner: Vidéo-Press, 3965, boul. Henri-Bourassa est, Montréal, Québec H1H 1L1.

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Dans sa livraison d'automne, la revue *Lurelu* fait le compte des années 80 dans le domaine de la littérature pour la jeunesse au Québec. Un bon dossier et surtout une liste complète des éditeurs québécois spécialisés dans le domaine. Ecrire à *Lurelu*, case postale 340, succursale de Lorimier, Montréal, Québec H2H 2N7.

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*Notable Canadian Children's Books: 1980-1984*. Prepared by the Chief of the Children's Literature Service at the National Library of Canada, this bilingual publication is a cumulation of five earlier works that list some of the most outstanding books produced in Canada for children and young people in English and French from 1980 to 1984.

The reviews indicate age suitability for readers, publishing history and the availability of translations where applicable. Indexes to the English and French sections are bilingual and provide access to the books by author, title, illustrator, subject and literary award.

*Notable Canadian Children's Books: 1980-1984* is available at a cost of \$12.25 in Canada and \$14.70 elsewhere. To obtain this publication, please send your payment to the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9.

*Un choix de livres canadiens pour la jeunesse: édition cumulative 1980-1984*. Préparé par le chef du Service de littérature de jeunesse de la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, cet ouvrage bilingue est une refonte de cinq publications antérieures qui répertorie quelques-uns des meilleurs livres pour enfants ou adolescents produits au Canada, en anglais ou en français, de 1980 à 1984.

Les analyses critiques indiquent le groupe d'âge auquel convient chacun des livres, les différentes éditions et, le cas échéant, l'existence de traductions. Les index des sections de langue anglaise et de langue française sont bilingues et donnent accès aux livres par auteur, titre, illustrateur, sujet et prix littéraire.

*Un choix de livres canadiens pour la jeunesse: édition cumulative 1980-1984* est disponible au prix de 12,25\$ au Canada ou 14,70\$ à l'étranger. Afin d'obtenir cette publication, veuillez faire parvenir votre paiement au Centre d'édition du gouvernement du Canada. Approvisionnement et Services Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9.

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The Canadian section of IBBY announces that the winner of the 1989 **Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award** is Ken Nutt (Eric Beddows, pseudonym), illustrator of *Night Cars*, authored by Teddy Jam (pseudonym).

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**Janet Lunn**, author of *Amos's sweater*, was awarded the **1989 Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award**. Ms. Lunn was selected by a jury of six Grade 6 students from Hillcrest Community School in Toronto. The students chose the book from the following list of titles all published by Groundwood books: *Amos's sweater* by Janet Lunn, *Easy Avenue* by Brian Doyle, *The third magic* by Welwyn Katz, *Night cars* by Eric Beddows and Teddy Jam.

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Un prix prestigieux remporté par Gilles Tibo pour l'album *Simon et les flocons de neige* (Livres Tundra): le prix Owl 1989 attribué au meilleur livre illustré lors de l'exposition internationale du livre pour enfants à Tokyo au Japon. Le livre de Gilles Tibo existe en version anglaise sous le titre *Simon and the snowflakes*.

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*Forthcoming conference:*

Serendipity '90: Theme "Cultural Roots/Routes". This is an IBBY Regional Conference hosted on the Pacific Rim by the Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable & The Department of Language Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. It will be held on May 17, 18, 19 (1990), and will feature among other writers and illustrators, Margaret Mahy, New Zealand; Patricia Wrightson, Australia; Paula Fox, New York; Marie-Louise Gay, Montreal, Quebec; Barbara Reid, Toronto, Ontario; Ted Harrison, Whitehorse, Yukon; Monica Hughes, Edmonton, Alberta; Janet Lunn, Hillier, Ontario; Michele Lemieux, Montreal, Quebec; Stéphan Poulin, Montreal, Quebec. Registration will be limited. For further information contact: Dr. Ronald Jobe / Dr. Wendy Sutton, Dept. of Language Education, Faculty of Education, UBC, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z5. Telephone: (604) 228-5233, 228-5229.

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