the distance between traditional tales of a boy's coming of age and the contemporary one we are reading: in it the pluck of three boys is tested on a canoe trip in the Canadian wilderness, but the dangers of bears, rapids, and Indians seem touchingly remote from those Red realizes he will confront in the emotional wilderness of his mother's house: "They were in a book, and everything would turn out happy-ever-after. Real life wasn't like that."

While the Calgary of *Red* is not so vividly evoked as the rural setting of *Summer goes riding*, Truss's descriptive powers are put to impressive use when she does turn her eye, if only occasionally, to the natural world. It is that which is unseen, however, that is of central interest – the fears and musings that make up the landscape of Red's mind are followed closely by a narrator who is both clear-eyed and compassionate. Red's response to the discovery that Celeste is a slow learner is explored delicately, and the palpable tensions between him and his mother are not quickly and remarkably resolved. Indeed, when these tensions reach a climax in the novel's most arresting scene, the scene in which Louise and Red finally confront the past, they are handled with startling honesty. Swooping back and forth on a swing in a deserted playground in the rain, Louise, soaked to the skin, her red hair flying, yells out her apologies and explanations to her frightened son: "Do you hear? I don't care about horses and lonely places. And I didn't think I cared about you. A kid. A nuisance. I didn't want you." The characterization of Louise is one of the novel's triumphs. It is partly through her that the novel explores the need for freedom and independence and insists on an appreciation and respect for individual differences.

The novel succeeds as a convincing story of a boy's education in the moral and social complexity of things; it doesn't offer pat answers, but it is affirmative. The characters do not divide themselves easily into those on the side of freedom and those who sanction restriction, and the shape of the story is right; it ends where it began, at the bus station, where, at the end of his two-week visit, Red boards a bus alone, without his mother, bound for his father's isolated horse farm. Truss writes partly, she has said, as "the passionate protector of the inside child": this novel, perhaps more than Truss's other richly varied works, impresses one with this appealingly humane facet of the writer.

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FOR THE TEEN READERS

Bad Boy. Diana Wieler. Douglas & McIntyre, 1989. 191 pp., $6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-083-9. **Paddy Martel is missing.** Beverley Spencer. Gage, 1989. 194 pp., $4.25 paper. ISBN 0-7715-7015-5.

In *Bad boy*, her first novel since the award-winning *Last chance Summer*, Diana Wieler writes about some critical issues facing young people today: finding one's sexual identity, developing tolerance for other's differences, and accepting oneself and others. The story revolves around sixteen-year-old, A.J. Brandiosa and his best friend, Tulsa Brown. A.J. knows that there are "rules to being sixteen and male" (33) and he's playing by them. He and Tully have just made the roster for Moose Jaw's Triple A hockey team. The future looks promising until A.J. unwittingly stumbles upon his friend's secret. Tully is not playing by the same rules: Tully is gay.

Reacting in a way that many teenaged boys will relate to, A.J. rejects Tully. He withdraws into his own lonely and confused world. His anger explodes onto the ice and he becomes more add more violent during games. Ironically, his aggressive behaviour wins the approval of his coach and peers at school. The local media dub him "Bad boy" Brandiosa and he appears to be riding on a wave of popularity.

While there is a message about misplaced violence in hockey, *Bad boy* is primarily about the importance of relationships. It deals with the conflicts that inevitably arise within these relationships and the growth that comes from facing the conflict and working it through.

A.J. struggles with the difference in Tully. In the process, he comes to terms with his own budding sexuality through his relationship with Summer, Tully's younger sister. He is also faced with his single father's sexuality. When his father first brings home his new girlfriend, A.J. can barely hide his disgust. But she confronts him with an important truth: "Your dad doesn't need your permission to be happy" (152).

His father's heart is warmed by his new relationship and he begins to reach out to his son. The turning point for A.J. comes with some much needed fatherly advice. "It's good to fix your sights on something and then run after it. But you can run so far and so long by yourself that the day comes when you realize you don't know how to be with people anymore. You want somebody and you need somebody but you don't even know what it's supposed to be like" (186).

As A.J. becomes more comfortable with himself, he finds it easier to accept others' differences. He eventually comes to realize that Tully's choice of sexual partners is part of his own uniqueness and that his best friend is indeed "an especially resilient human being" (191). In *Bad boy*, Diana Wieler has handled the difficult subject of homosexuality with compassion and sensitivity.

In Beverly Spencer's *Paddy Martel is missing*, Liz Rider is convinced that something terrible has happened to him. Paddy is no ordinary friend: he and Liz are kindred spirits who share a love of whimsy and magic. Investigating his deserted apartment, Liz discovers that Paddy has left behind his keys and his favourite gnome-shaped pipe. These clues confirm Liz's fears.

In his last journal entry, Paddy writes of his suspicions of his fellow tenants and the ominous sounds he hears echoing through the building at night. "If there is indeed magic (as I now believe)," continues Paddy in his journal, "then magic exists everywhere . . ." (119). But magic is a force that can be used for good or evil. The magic that dwells at 99 Crowley Close soon threatens not only Paddy but also the children who are searching for him.

This mystery for readers from approximately ten-to-twelve years is fast-paced and delves deeply into the realm of the supernatural. It takes place in and around 99 Crowley Close, the old apartment building where Paddy Martel and the children live. The setting creates and sustains tension throughout the story. The ancient building with its carved stone figures and eery, darkened hallways comes alive and grows more and more sinister as the story progresses. "The walls seemed to lean forward as if listening. Shadows reached long fingers toward the children. Stone lips murmured. Wood and mortar replied" (83).

Occasional brief passages in which Paddy himself describes his strange prison and speculates on his fate give the reader glimpses of Paddy's danger. Halloween is three days away and we learn that Paddy fears that his captor will be observing it by sacrificing him. We also learn that the other residents of the strange old building are in danger. And as Liz, her younger sister Gem and aspiring detective Shamus Hefferling get closer to the truth, the evil does indeed loom larger around them, especially when Liz Rider follows her gut feeling – and her friend – right into the witch's lair. When the smoke clears, Paddy and Liz are reunited and new friendships have been established. Beverley Spencer writes simply and naturally. Her plot holds the reader's interest until the last word. For young readers who like their mysteries with a strong supernatural flavour, *Paddy Martel is missing* is highly recommended.

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NEW IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Next-door neighbours. Sarah Ellis. Douglas & McIntyre, 1989. 123 pp., $7.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-084-7.

Like Margaret Drabble's *The radiant way*, Sarah Ellis's second novel *Next-door neighbours* takes its name from a grade-school primer. And Ellis, like Drabble, has laden her title with irony.

We get to know three next-door neighbours in Ellis's book. The protagonist Peggy's open, trusting and unusual friend, George Slobodkin, is pleased to discover that he bears this title, although he lives next-door on the lane