

Karin is passive and accepting.

For a contemporary young adult novel, *Night fires* perpetuates far too many stereotypes of male and female roles; what's worse, it doesn't balance them with examples of healthy, equal relationships between men and women. It can only be hoped that young readers are critical enough to recognize this lack of balance. We can also hope that Mary Razzell's next novel will reach the standards set by the first two.

Anne Louise Mahoney is an Ottawa editor.

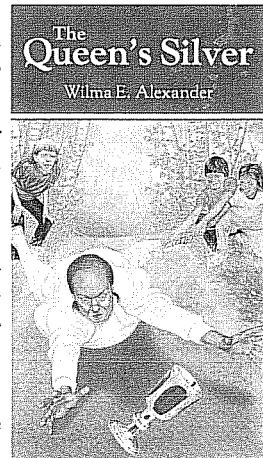
TREASURES FROM THE PAST

The Queen's silver. Wilma E. Alexander. General Paperbacks, 1990. 128 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7285-0.

This book uses the structure of the junior detective story to tell of an eleven-year-old boy's first steps in resolving the adolescent crisis of identity. Jon Sinclair is a Toronto boy who ignores his Mohawk mother's stories and the heritage program at his school, seeing himself as simply one of the boys, all of whom are "something – Jamaican, Chinese, East Indian, Greek" (7), that "something" being irrelevant to his identity. Jon reluctantly spends a few days on the Tyendinaga Reserve visiting his uncle, not a Mohawk, but a white chaplain, an indication that the past Jon will discover is not solely Indian but that of the centuries-old relationship between the two races.

Jon knows he won't find the people on the reserve living in tipis, but he is amazed that they live in "ordinary" houses. The readers of this story who feel little shocks at how much life on a reserve resembles their own may reflect on how little they know of such life and on why they have assumed it must be different from theirs. Some combinations of traditional Indian culture and modern North American ways are shown as amusing, but never as the source of disrespect – thus Jon enjoys the sight of an elderly friend hitching up her long skirt to fish money out of the pocket of the jeans she wears underneath, but he doesn't laugh at her.

The story is based on actual history of this inter-racial relationship. The title refers to communion silver given by Anne, George III's consort, to members of the Wolf Clan living in Mohawk Valley in 1711 which they buried for safekeeping when American soldiers attacked them, driving them from their homeland, in retaliation for siding with the British. Five years later, a few



braves unburied the treasure and bore it back triumphantly to their people, by then established on the Bay of Quinte. Thus the silver is an emblem of their loyalty to the British crown and of their Christian faith.

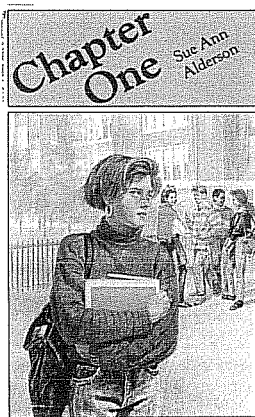
The villain of the story is an antique dealer who perfectly represents the corruption arising from the modern trend to value historical treasure only in material terms. The silver is worth a lot of money, but the author is careful to make clear the distinction between the two value systems by revealing that it is fully insured and that this knowledge brings no comfort to the bereft clan.

As Jon and his new Indian friend, Rick, follow clues and bravely confront the enemy to restore the clan's relic, they re-enact the courage of their ancestors, and Jon begins to recover the buried treasure of his neglected heritage. He takes home a token of that heritage – a replica of the wolf's head carved over the door of the reserve chapel, a treasure he will undoubtedly show with pride to his Chinese, Greek, East Indian and Jamaican friends in Toronto.

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READ IT ANYWAY

Chapter one. Sue Ann Alderson. General Paperbacks, 1990. 160 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7283-4.



In its attempt to depict the emergence of a young girl from her self-centered world, *Chapter one* adeptly reveals the insecurities and complications that accompany life as a young teenager. It is entertaining, yet it becomes interestingly so when we consider the number of problems the story must shoulder. For example, the teens of *Chapter one* are hardly representative; one struggles to find a good person among them. And Beth, the young protagonist, does not emerge from her self-centered world as much as she is forced from it, mistakingly perceived as a "goody-goody" – this of a girl who is devastated over having to spare time for her sick grandmother. It doesn't end here. The language and behaviour of Alderson's teens, far from being real, border on parody or caricature.

For instance, the same grade-eight teen who exclaims, "drat," and "double-drat," is also capable of referring cleverly to the "surreal relationship between art and reality." Another teen is serious when he refers to a battered girl as a "mega-wimp," and to a senile, old woman as a "nerd." A third teen, not to bel-