

was trying to lighten the mood. 'Perhaps. But what if this traveler takes us for his adversary,' the idea was left hanging, 'We should consider our approach. Just in case?' Quei was asking for an opinion more than making a statement. (43,Bk.2)

Munsey also attempts to create a dialect for the Riders, characters in his tale who come from the desolate Ice Barrens. However, his difficulty with consistency in this dialect makes passages of extended Rider dialogue cumbersome.

Taken side by side, the books suffer from similar difficulties and show the same glimmers of promise. Book One, *The Flight of the Stoneman's Son*, does have two problems the second one escapes. Munsey opens the first book with first person narration, placing Julian by his hearth to tell us a tale. He drops this point of view as he opens chapter two, opting for a wandering omniscient style, never returning to Julian and the first person narration that opens the book. It may be that he plans to make such a return in Book Four, but here it makes for an abrupt jump and a disjointed tale.

The other error concerns a lost sword which makes a brief re-appearance in the owner's hand some 20 pages before it is found.

No such glaring inconsistencies show up in Book Two, *The Keeper of Three*. This second book is more sharply focused as well, using the trick of converging travelers to bring three story lines together. But I found myself wearying of the quest at this proposed halfway point in the series. Munsey's writing is not the smooth and confident kind that carries a reader through. The tale may be worth telling, but the telling is too often awkward.

As juvenile literature these books have another responsibility that makes the copy-editing concerns more than just nit-picking. The written word should be modeled well for young people. Even as characters in a fantasy are burdened with rules as they pursue their quests, so are writers of fantasy. Munsey forgets the rules too often.

**Bonnie Ryan-Fisher** *is a free-lance writer and editor who also currently teaches philosophy, writing, and life skills.*

#### "GRANDMA WENT A-TRAVELLING"

**Gifts.** Jo Ellen Bogart. Illus. Barbara Reid. North Winds Press, 1994. 32 pp., \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-24177-X.

The success of *Gifts* may be measured by its versatility: it may be integrated into a lesson plan, and it will entertain an audience. The text is a series of apparently random and unconnected memories, narrated in short, descriptive sentences by a first-person voice. There is no conventional plot.

The artwork tells of the loving relationship between the aging grandmother who travels the world and the growing granddaughter who requests souvenirs or gifts from those travels. The joy and intimacy of shared moments that make



and the whirr of a hummingbird's wing."

a bond of love between them is conveyed not, for example, by the granddaughter's request for a gift of "the roar of a jungle king," but by the scene of the old and young kneeling face to face on the scrambled rug roaring at each other.

The illustrations do more than accompany the text. They open up the world of the characters created by the text; and, they give a non-linear text its shape. The plasticine illustrations have both painterly and sculptural qualities. Indeed, they are narrative and may be read. For instance, the text does not mention time, but the art portrays its passage. It is only when we see that the child has grown to a woman with a child of her own that *Gifts* has a resolution. The first person narration that seems to be present time is actually memory—a grown woman is telling a story of her own childhood to her child. The woman says she will teach her child what she has learned from her grandmother: that life is a journey of discovery, that there is adventure in the everyday world as well as the exotic, and that every experience may be translated into a poem.

*Gifts* will appeal to librarians and storytellers with its musical rhyme scheme and its arresting illustrations. Also, the text is didactic in the most appealing way. By speaking of the exotic in casual terms it arouses curiosity. What *is* a didgeridoo? Could *I* eat a baobab seed? The culture-specific vocabulary may be difficult but it may prompt children to share their home culture in the multicultural classroom or library.

**Rachele Oriente** is a librarian with a special interest in children's literature.