

language: sperm, for example, stop at the snack bar for nourishment in their cartoon strip journey. Both books confuse sex with gender and neither acknowledge that both girls and boys may exhibit varying degrees of masculine and feminine traits, and that this too is "perfectly normal." Each of the books uses both the scientific as well as slang or day-to-day terms for body parts and sexual activities. The Canadian books provide a further service with a helpful glossary. All of the books are up-to-date in their discussion of sexually-transmitted diseases, AIDS, sexual abuse, sexual assault and harassment, although for some reason sexual harassment is named as such only in the book for boys in the Canadian set.

All in all, while each of these books is a valuable addition to school and home libraries and should be read not only by youth but all concerned adults, the Harris book is superior, in my opinion. Harris makes clear from the outset that "sex is about a lot of things ..." and provides a holistic and thorough discussion of all its complexities throughout. She provides historical and cultural context to show how things have or have not changed over the centuries. She also convincingly portrays sex as a positive and valuable human experience as long as it is mutual, loving and responsible. Emberley's illustrations work very well with the text to further convey both the joys and the angst of puberty and healthy sexuality.

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#### CRASHING AHEAD FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT: TEEN SHORT STORIES

**The Blue Camaro.** R.P. MacIntyre. Thistle-down Press Limited, 1994. 158 pages, \$13.50 paper. ISBN 1-895449-23-5. **The Blue Jean Collection.** Thistle-down Press Limited, 1992. 240 pages, paper. ISBN 0-920633-94-3.

These two releases from Thistle-down Press cater to adolescent browsers. *The Blue Camaro* consists of eleven short stories featuring both male and female first-person narrators; *The Blue Jean Collection* anthologizes nineteen "short stories for young adults" selected from nearly 250 entries in a national competition. Because of their single authorship, MacIntyre's stories, one of which is also in the anthology, provide more consistency of tone: all set in the prairies, some are interconnected and others present the same occurrence from two different points of view. *The Blue Jean Collection*, on the other hand, ranges widely over geography, historical setting and narrative voice.

Possibly owing to Saskatoon-born MacIntyre's experience as an actor and a dramatist, his stories succeed in probing the interior life of apparently tough-talking teenagers and reclusive loners. As disaffected critics or sons and daughters trying to make sense of their family and its traditions, these ingenuous narrators allow the reader to share their moments of insight and grace. Usually MacIntyre assembles the promising ingredients at the outset. In "Doing Something," the opening prohibition delivered by the boy's parents before they leave for the day, that he is not to touch the boat ("Don't even think about it!"),

intersects tantalizingly with his observations about the day, as beautiful as “a great ballad with slow clean guitar riffs,” and the glassy calmness of the lake. His meeting a blind girl, whose expertise as a water skier involves them in a TV commercial, propels a terrific day-long adventure. Yet after the headiness of this goofing off, an affectionate friendship links the narrator and Cynthia; not only does their chance meeting at a restaurant, which closes the story, recall their introduction, but the boy’s finger-painting with sugar, “making little islands of skin ... butterfly wings,” on the girl’s arm captures poignantly the closeness between them. Whether trying to impress a girl friend (“Eat, Sleep, Jump High for Smarties”), or recuperating from a gunshot wound (“Shadow Dark Night”), or dealing with a zany aunt’s heart attack (“Toy Boat”), or laughing while serving a funeral mass (“Kurt’s Mom’s Funeral”), the narrators approach an understanding of themselves and adjust their perceptions of others. The title story is one of the best, especially for this sense of self-awareness. The visit of the family maverick, Uncle Jake, prompts the narrator to consider the stories and lies that bind his father and uncle as well as the possibilities for looking to his older, fiercely accomplished, artistic sister as a confidante. Child and adult coalesce in the narrator; his experience of taking Uncle Jake’s prized blue Camaro for an unauthorized spin is comparable to being “at the helm of the *Starship Enterprise*, about to go into warp drive,” yet his inadvertent discovery of gay magazines hidden under the front seat inducts this young man into the nuances of unspoken recognition and family connivance.

With contributors from across Canada and narratives exploring such diverse material as a child’s response to the 1917 Halifax explosion (“I Am Hilda Burrows”) and a retold eighteenth-century Tibetan legend (“The Tulpa”), *The Blue Jean Collection* is definitely a mixed bag. Perhaps because it is designed for short visits and because the narrative voices are so eclectic, it makes less overall impact. There is an up-to-the-minuteness in details of a grandparent with Alzheimer’s (“All is Calm”), the space shuttle disaster (“A Major Malfunction”) and an ecologically stricken world (“Water”). But the treatment of the predictable subject, erupting sexuality, is tame and stereotyped, particularly when teenaged girls — who still “have the hots” and think some guy “is to die for” — are concerned. Though ostensibly about a beach god who is too busy to notice the girl with a crush on him, “Was It Fun on the Beach Today?” really focuses on two watchers from the sidelines, the girl with the crush, Julie, and her unpopular “friend,” Alicia, whom Julie silently refers to as “the Whale.” Budge Wilson’s third-person narration privileges catching the beach god’s eye, capturing the male gaze, as more important than the time-filling chatter with Alicia, whose heavy body is catalogued in Julie’s derisory mode: “Double chins. Five pimples. Julie counted them. Stomach.” Unlike MacIntyre’s moments of recognition, there are few instances of redemption or compassion in this anthology.

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