traditions come from holidays, more from the process of courtship and marriage and still more from the settlers' efforts to remember their past. Here a black-and-white drawing of a modern family is included with the colour ones about the settlers, encouraging readers to start their own family or classroom journal, surely a positive step in encouraging an interest in history. In *Settler Sayings* we learn that the kitchen produced the saying "Upper Crust" and the print shop produced "Top Drawer," both for interesting reasons. Even the strange saying "Mind your Ps and Qs" is explained in the pages on Inns and travel. Settler bartenders used it when a customer was behaving badly: beer was sold in pints and quarts and the customer was encouraged to pay attention to how many Ps and Qs he or she had already consumed. Now it simply means "mind your manners."

Each book in the series is a delight to read and a joy to view. The drawings and photos are very expressive and show very clearly ideas that may be new to young people. The text is divided into easily-digested paragraphs that present the past as just that, not portraying our forbears as heroes or poor people, not as superior or inferior, but just as people getting on with their lives in their way. In this series, their way is very interesting indeed.

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WILDERNESS ODYSSEYS

Annie. Luanne Armstrong. Polestar, 1995. 336 pp. $16.95 paper. ISBN 1-896095-00-3. **The Women on the Bridge**. Mel Dagg. Thistledown, 1992. 112 pp. $16 paper. ISBN 0-920633-99-4. **With the Indians in the Rockies**. James Willard Schultz (repr. 1912). Fifth House, 1995. 136 pp. $6.95 paper. ISBN 1-895618-64-9.

Ever since Catherine Parr Traill penned *Canadian Crusoes*, authors have created wilderness odysseys, journeys of discovery. Here, in three novels with Western settings, we voyage into the past and cross from known worlds to uncharted ones.

Annie, a strong first novel by Luanne Armstrong, focuses on a voyage of self-discovery as a solitary girl on horseback travels through a sea of prairie grass. Armstrong's style is deceptively simple, at times laconic. This lends power to the story of Annie's struggle for physical survival, and her internal odyssey. For example, Annie's sense of painful isolation is deftly drawn by Armstrong, who writes: "Loneliness clutches her with shining sharp talons" (63). No excess verbiage exists here, yet this image mirrors Annie's battle to stay alive.

Armstrong is particularly successful in showing Annie's encounter with an aboriginal community, one which offers her a replacement for her lost family. Though it would be easy to slip into sentimentality, Armstrong does not, instead sketching a vivid picture of a close-knit group, adding small details which pull

the reader into the story. Her imagery is memorable, as " tipis glow from inside, luminous and huge in the darkness. Silhouettes of people move against them" (204). In this short passage, the perspective is definitely that of an outsider, looking in and yearning to be part of this world.

By contrast, Mel Dagg uses a dispassionate style in his novel, *The Women on the Bridge*. Though his intent may be to magnify the inevitable escalation of hostility between a small band of Plains Cree and white settlers at Frog Lake in 1885, Dagg's style is so understated that the tragedy of conflicting cultures is minimized.

Like Annie, Theresa Gowanlock, the central figure in Dagg's novel, crosses from her culture into an aboriginal culture. However, Theresa enters a world which is under siege. The Plains Cree are desperate since the buffalo and their way of life are disappearing.

Dagg attempts to make his novel's structure reflect the disintegration of the traditional life of the Cree people. But fragmented stories of various minor characters fail to form a coherent whole. Occasionally, Dagg's images of mountains of buffalo bones transmit a powerful feeling of a culture lying in ruins. The author tries to create a sense of despair as Theresa travels farther into the aboriginal world. Unfortunately, Theresa is a character without depth, resembling a female cut-out, silhouetted against a painted prairie background. Unlike Annie, Theresa makes no progress on her internal journey of discovery, but remains a puppet, manipulated by her creator.

With the Indians in the Rockies by James Willard Schultz is a far less ambitious work. This reprint of a novel which was originally published in 1912 definitely shows its origins, as it is written in the style of a "Boys' Own" adventure story. It bears some resemblance to Farley Mowat's *Lost in the Barrens*, as Schultz documents the experiences of Thomas Fox, a young teen who survives a winter in the Rockies with the tutelage of a Blackfoot teenager named Pitmakan. But Schultz does not succeed in contrasting the Blackfoot culture with Thomas's world. Though Pitmakan is sympathetically portrayed as knowledgeable and skilled, there is little sense that Thomas grows and develops as a character.

The omission of George Varian's original illustrations, which were part of the first edition, and the attempt to update the story with a melodramatic front cover which does not mesh with the text, serves to create a book which is lacklustre.

All three novelists show us characters on wilderness odysseys, but only Armstrong succeeds fully in creating a robust adventurer, who develops independence and self confidence. Annie's internal voyage leads her to discover unknown realms in her own psyche, and gives her an appreciation of an aboriginal community. Dagg attempts to cross the bridge, taking Theresa into an aboriginal world, but his journalistic style prevents him from fully developing her character. Schultz tells of the teens' struggle for survival, but gives little inkling of their development as rounded human beings.

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