sonne du singulier. Il est par conséquent difficile pour le premier de s'identifier au héros du récit:

> Tu recules lentement vers le fond de la boutique. Dans ton désarroi, tu heurtes un meuble qui se renverse, entraînant dans sa chute un service de porcelaine. (p. 70)

Une autre critique est à souligner, celle-ci visant essentiellement cette liberté de choisir, selon nos préférences, la conclusion de l'histoire. Bien que l'auteure, comme elle le dit si bien, se soit amusée à semer quelques pièges dans son ouvrage, ceux-ci manquent d'imagination et ne constituent pas réellement des éléments de suspense que l'on retrouve habituellement dans une intrigue.

En d'autres mots, lire *Annabelle, où es-tu?* n'est pas tâche facile, surtout lorsque vous n'êtes pas habitué à ce genre de récit et que vous n'avez jamais été forcé à effectuer des choix pour en connaître la conclusion.

Par ailleurs, le style relativement soutenu fait preuve de rigueur; on y relève des expressions bien formulées et des comparaisons amusantes. Quoique les descriptions permettent d'imaginer des situations surprenantes et même cocasses, elles figurent pauvrement dans les illustrations, qui demeurent en définitive sans éclat et manquent de finesse. Elles donnent l'impression que l'ouvrage n'a pas été conçu pour attirer le regard.

Enfin, de par sa forme plutôt "labyrinthique", ce genre de récit conviendra admirablement au type de lecteur qui ne se nourrit que de bandes dessinées. Il peut en effet servir de transition entre la B.D. et le roman à proprement parler. Ce livre s'adresse davantage à des élèves de 8 à 10 ans, francophones ou en programme d'immersion.

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A MISLEADING PACKAGE

Sixty-four, sixty-five. Norah McClintock. McClelland & Stewart, 1989. 156 pp., $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7710-5446-7.

The title of Norah McClintock's novel, underlined by the jacket notes, suggests that the story will unfold against the background of the 1960s, a period of painful struggle to bring about corrective shifts in racial consciousness or at least to reduce racial prejudice by de-institutionalizing it. In fact, although the novel concerns the impact of the first black student, a boy named Orlando Verdad, on an all-white high school in Montreal in the middle sixties, there are only two brief acknowledgments of the developing civil rights movement in the United States and there is no attempt to present or to resolve problems of

prejudice by locating its roots in sociological units such as the community, high school or family.

Montreal figures minimally in the novel, as a generic city, forty-five minutes by bus and a sociological light year away from the fictional suburban setting of St. Jacques. One trip into Montreal, particularized by mention of Sherbrooke Street West, significantly suggests that cities are big enough to allow racial elbow room, whereas St. Jacques, an anglophone suburb long since distanced from its roots in an old French village, has little or no racial diversity. Further, the sole community response against "people like [Orlando's family]" comes early and is not developed. In the high school, the student body does little beyond gawking when the other members of the basketball team totally ignore Orlando; there is no crowd approval or disapproval: there is only a stunned silence. Finally, the family is not presented as the major shaping ground for the welcoming acceptance of diversity, or for bigotry. The drama of the clash between tolerance and rejection of difference is worked out on a reduced, individual level.

The focus of the story is on the way Orlando's presence strains a once-strong friendship between three girl students, Cally, Carolyn, and Luce. Since the three girls are used as the novel's alternating perspective, the reader only learns what they learn about the feelings and motivations of Orlando and the other male character, Pete. Yet until the end of the story none of the girls have any conscious impact on the main action. It is Pete in whom Orlando's presence releases and shapes a pre-existing irrational racial prejudice. There is a strong suggestion that this grows out of Orlando's challenge to Pete's athletic and sexual self-image. There is also, however, something close to "motiveless malignity" about Pete's hatred that is frighteningly authentic.

Although there is a suggestion that Orlando's original simmering anger stems from his father's insistence on civil rights as much as from the hurtful reaction of students who have never seen a black person except on a movie or television screen, Orlando's relationship with Cally illustrates McClintock's consistent attempt to individualize her theme. On a first date, inspired by Orlando's wish to make someone else feel as thoroughly isolated and invisible as he does, Cally finds herself abandoned by Orlando at an all-black party in Montreal. The resolution of the anger and hurt of this evening becomes the basis of a mutual attraction that has great repercussions. Carolyn totally accepts Cally's relationship with Orlando, while Luce mimes Pete's prejudice and parrots his racist language. Pete ultimately exposes Orlando to "jokes" that amount to attempted murder, a fact that opens Luce's eyes and creates the climate for reconciliation between the girls. Carolyn's part in the story is complicated by the apparent animosity of her own great-grandmother, herself once involved in Irish-English prejudice.

Carolyn's troubled relationship with her great-grandmother is another instance of what could have been developed as a sociological theme in the man-

ner of the adolescent problem novel. But ageism, like the novel's more central theme of racism, is not worked out in any thematic way. McClintock skirts the issue of learning to understand the problems of the elderly; she consistently works against the expectation that the adolescent novel will involve its main characters with "isms." Her one complete indulgence in adolescent fiction is that each of her three heroines is more than aware of young men.

Generally, McClintock avoids the more obvious stylistic ploys for creating the texture of an adolescent world. She attempts to create the feel of the sixties through the language the adolescents use. But this amalgam of teenage slang is not overdone. Not done at all, however, and perhaps leaving something of a damaging hole in a novel with a period setting, are descriptions of popular clothes and music and movies and television shows – all the stuff of historical particularity, including cultural manifestations of and reactions to racism.

Sixty-four, sixty-five shrinks any sense of the historical period its title evokes, just as it avoids dealing with racism in sociological terms. What it gains by its focus on a small group of teenagers is something like the clarity of a morality play. What it surrenders is the richness of developing its theme against a more fully-elaborated background. After considering these trade-offs, however, I recommend *Sixty-four, sixty-five* as an interesting attempt to humanize an experience all too frequently deadened by fixation on theme.

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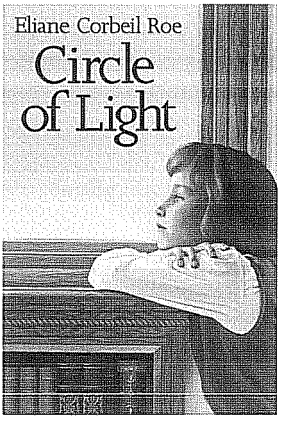
A TIMELY CONTENDER

Circle of light. Eliane Corbeil Roe. Harper & Collins, 1989. 248 pp., $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-223498-X.



A serious contender for the Governor General's Literary Award, Elaine Corbeil Roe's semi-autobiographical first novel *Circle of light* marks an impressive debut. Rich, introspective and intense, it charts the self-growth of Lucy, the French-Canadian "brain" of her eighth-grade class, as she studies for a regional school championship in post-war Ontario. Initially, Lucy is spurred on to accept the challenge because she feels she cannot compete with another girl in attracting the handsome Gabriel's attention. But by the end, she has learned that a girl can be bright intellectually, academically ambitious and popular too. More importantly, by learning