

tural isolation and maltreatment of the British orphans. Ellen's homesickness never hits home, and her frustrations seem "tacked on" after her kind reception.

Young girls will enjoy these books, but there remains much more to be said about teenage pioneers. I hope other young adult writers will take up the challenge.

Elaine Ostry teaches young adult literature at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. She received her PhD from the University of Toronto.

Growing Up in an Earlier Canada

The Doctor's Apprentice. Ann Walsh. Beach Holme, 1998. 150 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88878-389-2. *The Shacklands* Judi Coburn. Second Story, 1998. 287 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-896764-13-4.

Maturing into the adult world poses many difficulties for contemporary young people. These two lively new historical novels show some of these difficulties in a rather different context, as faced by young Canadians in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Both novels affirm the resilient spirit and courage of their leading characters, and emphasize the possibilities available to them in a rapidly-changing land. *The Doctor's Apprentice* is set during the Gold Rush in Barkerville, BC, in 1868; *The Shacklands* takes place in Toronto between 1908 and 1910. Although the difference in the nature of the two communities is almost as great as their geographical distance from each other, both novels show their young characters facing similar challenges: resisting family pressures regarding their future careers, reacting to addiction and other problematic behaviour in the people around them, and facing their own dark memories and anxieties about the future.

The two novels are, however, very different in tone and focus. Walsh's, a sequel to her *Moses, Me and Murder*, is essentially an adventure story and climaxes with a ghostly visitation during the great Barkerville fire. Its humour, plot and sketchy characterizations are aimed at younger adolescents. Coburn's novel, considerably longer and more complex in its cast of characters and presentation of social issues, has no dramatic climax and no real resolution. Rather, it reflects the ongoing encounter of its heroine with the decisions and conflicting loyalties presented by everyday life. While both novels make effective use of their period settings, involving the reader in the social environment, Coburn's does so in far greater depth.

Coburn and Walsh are careful to detail the physical locality of their stories; both give the impression of having walked patiently over the sites, tracing the past beneath the overlay of the present. Hills and marshy ground become again as significant as they were to the foot traveller before the automobile erased them from consciousness. Both books end with historical notes on the locations, events, and real-life characters included. Coburn's book is further enhanced by many photographs and two maps. The maps unfortunately did not reproduce well, but the photographs contribute greatly to the novel's sense of almost documentary realism. The striking cover photograph of a young woman in Edwardian dress catches the viewer with her direct, intelligent gaze and aptly suggests the character of Jessie Robertson on whom the novel centres.

The Shacklands is not, however, told in the first person, and although it focuses on Jessie, the point of view occasionally shifts rather jarringly to other characters. Coburn might have been wiser to stay with Jessie, presenting other characters' points of view through dialogue and letters as she already does to good effect. Frequent time-shifts early in the book may also confuse less-skilled readers, though Coburn helpfully dates most of the episodes, and the narrative eventually continues in a more linear fashion. Although *The Doctor's Apprentice*, on the other hand, opens with a shocking nightmare based on Ted's previous experiences with a murderer, its first-person narrative proceeds in a straightforward, often humorous, style.

Coburn presents Jessie's experiences with education, family life, and in the workforce from a moderate feminist and socialist perspective. For example, she leads the reader to empathize with Jessie's resistance to her uncle's pressure to give up school and stay home to care for the family after her mother's death. This attitude is an interesting contrast to L.M. Montgomery's approving presentation of Anne's decision at the end of *Anne of Green Gables* to give up her college scholarship and stay home to look after Marilla. Although while employed at clothing factories Jessie realistically accepts working conditions which seem arduous, even outrageous, to modern readers, her participation in a strike is presented with great sympathy. *The Shacklands* thus tends to look at the past from a contemporary point of view, revealing how attitudes and freedoms we now take for granted came about from the efforts of previous generations.

The Doctor's Apprentice does not deal with such large social issues, but resembles *The Shacklands* in showing its young protagonist coming to understand an adult who is haunted by guilt. Younger than Jessie, Ted quickly finds relief from his nightmares in working for an eccentric Barkerville doctor who has his own problems dealing with troubling memories. Despite its dark subject matter of guilt, anxiety and drug addiction, however, the novel retains the jaunty tone of an adventure tale, and problems are resolved by the end. This book presents neither the difficulties nor the rewards of Coburn's novel, whose open-ended conclusion appropri-

ately reflects the complexity of the choices and decisions facing its young characters. For different readerships, however, both novels provide a vivid and well-researched encounter with the challenges facing young Canadians in an earlier time.

Gwyneth Evans teaches in the Department of English at Malaspina University College on Vancouver Island. Her articles and reviews have appeared for many years in such journals as *CCL*, *Children's Literature Quarterly*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, and *Quill and Quire*.

Selina Returns

Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie. Barbara Smucker. Illus. Janet Wilson. Quilts by Lucy Anne Holliday. Stoddart Kids, 1998. Unpag. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-3018-4.

Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie attempts to recreate the delight of *Selina and the Bear Paw Quilt* (1996). However, when it is read in isolation, both the significance of Selina's close relationship with her grandmother and the importance of the quilt designs framing each illustration are lost.

The story's prosaic language results in unexceptional characters who never really come alive. Rudimentary dialogue like Mother's "Be more careful. You are growing up. Already you are seven and this fall you will start grade two" may be intended to give the feeling of someone new to English-speaking, but the effect sounds mechanical. Bumps in the narrative, such as the letter from Grandmother informing her Mennonite family that "We Mennonites are against slavery ... yet we cannot take sides and be part of the terrible fighting. For this we are resented and sometimes even hated," interfere with the flow of the story. Since Selina's family fled to Canada because of the American Civil War, they know first-hand the war's effects upon their culture. Although this letter provides background information for the reader, such information would have been conveyed better in an historical introduction. Finally, the story's climax is flawed. While the main theme highlights the importance of living in a land of freedom, the rejuvenation of cousin Henry — traumatised by the conflict — is not satisfactorily explained: it seems unlikely that the ravages of war can be overcome by an afternoon's visit to a sawmill coupled with teasing Selina about accidentally smashing her Shoo-Fly Pie.

Janet Wilson's paintings provide a welcome respite from the story's