demonstrated implicitly in the moving reconciliation at the end of the piece when the characters reveal their fears through the use of poetry. Deverell clearly believes that words and language genuinely matter and can effect change, whether they be the arguments a group of children use in a mock trial, or the thoughts children craft into poetry to express their fears. In *Belonging* he appears to have developed a greater faith in the words — a faith that bears dividends in this simple, moving tale of poetry and friendship.

Clem Martini is a playwright and instructor of play writing at the University of Calgary. His plays include ***Illegal Entry, The Life History of the African Elephant*** *and* ***Turnaround.***

Stories to Dream By

What If ...? Amazing Stories. Selected by Monica Hughes. Tundra, 1998. 199 pp. $7.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-458-4.

Monica Hughes, the elder statesperson of Canadian juvenile SF and Fantasy, has used her long reach to draw together a cross-section of fourteen fantastic stories by some of Canada's finest writers of speculative fiction for young people, as well as two SF poems which frame the collection. On the basis of this selection, readers discover that Canada produces a good number of solidly competent writers in this realm, a few that stray into tired themes and style, and some who are just first-rate yarn-spinners. Some stories are more or less hard SF (plausible impossibilities based on space travel or scientific extrapolation); here we have such pieces as "Lukas 19" by Jean-Louis Trudel, about what it's like to grow up as the clone of a famous musician, and "The Book of Days" by Lesley Choyce, about an intergalactic fisherman. Others are largely fantasy (secondary worlds with their own logic), like Edo van Belkom's "The Stone Scepter," about a young, impetuous wannabe magician, or Eileen Kernaghan's "The Road to Shambhala," about saving a magic snow leopard. Most stories, however, are hybrids of these two genres, or hybrids with traditional realism. They gain their effects from the crossover of the logic of the one into the other.

Perhaps the finest story in the collection is "Eternity Leave" by Tim Wynne-Jones. The story of Amber Lightstone discovering her calling in life delicately weaves together a number of thematic strands: the love of writing, inter-generational friendship, the specialness of oddness, second sight, the power of the imagination, and alien visitation. The tone is languid and suggestive, reminiscent of Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* or *The October Country*. Here's a bit:

> There was a harvest moon and, in the cornfields, the propane guns were firing at regular intervals to scare off the raccoons. *Boom, boom.* You get used to it,

but that night I couldn't sleep. The night seemed to be whispering at me, 'Amber Lightstone, there's huge stuff going on out here, and you're up there counting sheep.' I got up and went to my window.

Two stories rework traditional folk-tales with excellent results. Priscilla Galloway's retelling of Red Riding Hood in "The Good Mother" is a fine piece, which, by dovetailing SF and folktale, rings a number of changes on our expectations. Jason Kapalka's "Frosty" brings the fantasy snowman across the divide into a realistic suburban backyard, out of a sinister realm.

Two other stories are characterized by a juxtaposition of a quirky and whimsical tone and situation with an ordinariness of human reaction that has affinities with magic realism. The titles of both Charles de Lint's "A Wish Named Arnold" and James Alan Gardner's "Muffin Explains Teleology to the World at Large" give you a hint of what I mean. These are fine, fun stories.

The framing poems, by Alice Major and Robert Priest, are more condensed, concentrated examples of the tone of wonder that wafts through this collection. I wish there had been more poems, but then again, maintaining the standard set by Major and Priest is a tall order. As it stands, Monica Hughes has made another important contribution to our literature.

Laurence Steven *is professor of English at Laurentian University, and publisher of Your Scrivener Press in Sudbury.*

Fair Women, Foul Monsters, Great Stories

The Serpent Bride: Stories From Medieval Danish Ballads. K.V. Johansen. Thistledown, 1998. 187 pp. $14.95 paper. ISBN 1-895449-82-0.

Not very often does a book reviewer luxuriate into a fan. At first glance *The Serpent Bride* does not promise a lot. The cover blurb and introductory materials suggest a combination of shaman appreciation and female empowerment (both subjects which I prefer in small doses). But I read through the whole book (with critical faculties in abeyance) because I was simply wrapped up in the stories. On second reading, the critic started to kick in, and I noted that some of the dialogue had a too-contemporary feel to be an accurate transcription of mediaeval Danish ballads. Nonetheless, the pleasure remained.

The Serpent Bride introduces the reader to the not-widely-known world of Danish ballads. This in itself would be a valuable exercise. Danish ballads have distinct qualities that set them apart from the parallel but better-known literatures of England, France, and Germany. They retain elements of Scandinavian folklore, but adapt these to the days of knighthood.

They were composed to be sung by groups of people dancing together in