ping gophers and selling their tails (at a time when there was a bounty on gophers because they ate grain) will give young readers an insight into some experiences of children who lived through the "dirty thirties." As older readers will know, such narratives of Canada's "lost years" generally focus on the plights of adults.

There are, of course, moments where a reader could use more information (for example, the date of Stella Whelan's "The Ballad of Mary March"), but these are quibbles compared with the wealth of information and imagination that *The Spirit of Canada* will bring to its readers.

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Up-to-date Adventures

A Nose for Adventure. Richard Scrimger. Tundra, 2000. 184 pp. $8.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-499-1. ***Cat's Eye Corner***. Terry Griggs. Raincoast, 2000. 168 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55192-350-5. ***The Great Laundry Adventure***. Margie Rutledge. Illus. Maxine Cowan. Napoleon, 1999. 176 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 0-929141-67-9.

Adventure novels have come a long way since Jim Hawkins set off for Treasure Island in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel. Where the heroes of the past tended to slough off family obligations in pursuit of pirate gold, the protagonists of three recent adventure novels return home not with Flint's buried contraband but rather with a renewed understanding and appreciation of their fathers and grandfathers.

In Richard Scrimger's *A Nose for Adventure*, Alan Dingwall is reunited with Norbert, the alien from Jupiter whose residence in Alan's nose is chronicled in Scrimger's earlier novel *The Nose from Jupiter*. Having returned from an unsuccessful visit with k.d. lang (who dismissed the little voice emerging from her nose as a symptom of incipient schizophrenia), Norbert helps Alan bust a ring of antiquities dealers in a suspenseful if somewhat predictable series of chases and kidnappings. The twists and turns of the plot take second place here to Alan's friendship with Frieda, a tough-talking New Yorker whose sharp eyes and brittle courage make her an ideal counterpart to Alan, a reluctant adventurer whose constant polite apologies mark him as a Canadian visitor to the Big Apple. Alan has been sent to New York to spend time with his father, but when Dad fails to meet his plane at the airport, Alan teams up with fourteen-year-old Frieda. Like Alan, Frieda is stranded without a ride — her mother is too engrossed in her Tutankhamen Society meeting to fetch her daughter from the airport. The two children set off together on a trek across the city, trying to evade Skinny and Slouchy, two sinister airport workers who dog their steps in pursuit of an ancient Egyptian artefact that Frieda has unwittingly smuggled across the border in her wheelchair.

The growing friendship between the children is nurtured by their shared sense of parental rejection: while Alan wonders uneasily about his father's appar-

ent neglect, Frieda worries that her parents will be unwilling to ransom her if she is kidnapped. As she admits to Alan, she once overheard her mother complaining to a friend about her daughter's expensive operations: "the child is still broken," her mother had said. "Who's ever going to care about her?" (75). Although the children eventually succeed in bringing Skinny and Slouchy to justice, the true resolution of the adventure occurs when they are reconciled to their parents. With Norbert's help, Frieda realizes that her mother's apparent hostility is rooted in the fear that her daughter will resent and reject her. Alan's relationship with his father is resolved more easily, as Dad's absence from the airport is eventually explained by a simple misprint on the itinerary. For Alan, the experience of wandering the streets of New York City without adult assistance has developed a sense of independence, but it has also underlined his continuing longing for adult protection. Reconciled to their parents, Alan and Frieda subside gratefully into the sheltered lives of children protected by adults from adventure and danger.

Family relationships also form the background to *Cat's Eye Corner*, a novel in which Terry Griggs recounts the adventures of Olivier, who visits his grandfather at the home of his new wife (rumoured to be a witch), Sylvia de Whosit. Sylvia devises a scavenger hunt for her new grandson that takes him into the Drak Woulds, an enchanted corner of the world inhabited by the Inklings, a mysterious crew whose mischievous meddling with words is wreaking havoc with the language. Assisted by his pen pal Murray Sheaffer (a pen with a mind of his own), Olivier must gather the items on his list and discover how to use them to foil Mr. Mirific, a book-burning egomaniac who wants to remodel the English language to reflect his own personality. Drawing upon sources as diverse as *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Sword in the Stone*, *Cat's Eye Corner* is a patchwork of cryptic references to the annals of children's literature. Most significant, however, is the influence of Lewis Carroll's Alice books. Where *Through the Looking-Glass* is based on the moves of a chess game, Griggs's novel portrays the Drak Woulds as a world reproduced in miniature on a boardgame played by Gramps and his new wife. Thus, although Olivier wanders far afield in the course of his adventures, he is never far from adult supervision; indeed, his adventures are scripted for him by his inventive and solicitous step-grandmother.

While Alice finds in Wonderland a region of freedom from adult rules, Olivier uses his adventures not to escape from adults but rather to find ways of meeting their expectations. In a scene reminiscent of *The Sword in the Stone*, Olivier becomes an eel and, clad in his new skin, discovers that he can overcome his fear of the water. As he hesitates at the water's edge, he imagines his father urging him on; as Griggs makes clear, Olivier's parents "had been after him for years" to take the plunge, conniving at swimming lessons and trips to the beach to force him out of his phobia (124). Olivier's adventures thus develop in him qualities of courage and resourcefulness that please his parents and grandparents, and at this end of the novel he returns to *Cat's Eye Corner* no longer suspicious of his new step-grandmother. Relentlessly playful with language, this novel has the hard sparkle of Lewis Carroll's nonsense books; it is witty and unsentimental, yet it depicts adventure as an endeavour in which child and adult interests merge harmoniously.

Much simpler and more earnest in style is Margie Rutledge's *The Great Laundry Adventure*. As the title implies, this novel takes its protagonists on an

adventure in housekeeping: rather than killing pirates or fighting smugglers, Rutledge's characters sort laundry, tidy up kitchens, and amuse babies. Abigail and her brothers, Jacob and Ernest, discover that they can travel through time by hopping in their laundry baskets and chanting "Apper Dapper Apper Do!" Their destination is determined by the item of laundry they happen to be holding, so when Ernest apper-dapper-apper-do's while wearing his great-grandmother's apron, the children travel back eighty years in time to Texas, where they help young Aline with her chores. Each adventure introduces them to their relatives at an earlier stage of life; after abducting their infant father, for instance, the siblings attend the wedding of their maternal grandparents. Though their adventures are unpredictable and occasionally frightening, the children are reminded at every stop of the love that surrounds them, for a curious property of "laundry magic" is that the children remain invisible to most people in the past, appearing only to those who love them. When they seek their Grandpa's assistance, for instance, the groom readily promises to cut short his wedding reception. "I'd do anything for you kids," he promises, though he looks askance at his infant future son-in-law (74). Love is palpable and powerful in this novel, which is often genuinely moving though it does not aspire to the verbal cleverness of *Cat's Eye Corner*.

Over the course of their adventures, the children begin to develop empathy. Having stolen baby Brian (their father) from his carriage, the siblings work hard to return him to his frantic mother, yet they are readily distracted by the opportunity to ride in the side-car of a police motorcycle. They are stopped short, at last, by the constable's evident distress: "A chill ran through each and every child in the sidecar. Even Baby Brian looked at the constable with concern. In that moment, our children finally understood (if only temporarily) adult worries and distress" (114). Like Olivier, these siblings grow in ways that allow them to conform to adult expectations. Rutledge takes their moral development seriously (though that seriousness is occasionally undercut by the cartoon-like character of Maxine Cowan's chubby-cheeked illustrations).

The parents of Abigail, Jacob, and Ernest spend much of the novel lying prostrate on the bedroom floor (a nasty side-effect of too close a proximity to one's past self). Their presence is nevertheless felt as the centre ring of love surrounding their adventurous children. In *Treasure Island*, the death of Jim Hawkins's father signals the beginning of his son's adventure, but in this novel the children spend much of their time struggling to return baby Brian to his own time so that their father can recover from his near-disappearance. In *The Great Laundry Adventure*, as in all these recent adventure novels, childhood adventures serve to enhance parent-child relationships; whether by wandering alone in the big city or by travelling through time, children learn the value of family and return home grateful for the adults in their lives.

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