neither the boxcar nor the oil sketch still actually exists the reader is swept up in the era of Canada's finest painters. The non-fiction boxes and the plot blend together seamlessly. Though initially I was prepared to dislike this marriage of fact and fiction, I found myself captivated by it.

Sophie Sea to Sea is the story of ten-year-old Sophie LaGrange and her family's cross-Canada move from Montreal in 1949 to start a new life in British Columbia. Sophie is entraced by her hero Star Girl, a female version of the comicbook hero Johnny Canuck. As the family moves west they stay and visit with relatives in each province. Sophie is a strongly drawn character who has one adventure after another in each province as she crosses the country. She resolves each situation by emulating Star Girl whenever she can. She stares down vicious dogs or takes on bullies who call her pea soup. In each chapter historic and geographical facts are sprinkled through the story. For example, in Alberta we are introduced to oil strikes at Leduc in 1947, western cowboys, and the Drumheller dinosaurs. While there are some well-crafted evocations of landscape in the book, the plot is not captivating. Early on we are introduced to how Sophie feels about her brothers getting to do things she can't. "Boys get to do more interesting things than girls and that's all there is to it. It just isn't fair." We are also introduced to the reason why the family moves west: despite her father's university training, he can't get a good job in Quebec like her friend Marcie's father: "Marcie's father is English. That makes all the difference. All the good jobs are reserved for the English." Neither this depiction of the reality of Quebec in 1949 nor the gender issue are carried through in any way. While Sophie is a strong character, the plot and factual inserts do not work as effectively as in *The Lost Sketch.*

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The Routes of War: Three Novels of Distance and Displacement

The Wolves of Woden. Alison Baird. Penguin, 2001. 352 pp. $19.99 paper. ISBN 0-14-100067-8. ***The Road to Chifla.*** Michèle Marineau. Trans. Susan Ouriou. Red Deer, 1995. 142 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-129-2. ***Flying Geese.*** Barbara Haworth-Attard. HarperCollins, 2001. 192 pp. $14.00 paper. ISBN 0-00-648573-1.

> **rout** (rout), *n., v.* — *n.* a defeat attended with disorderly flight... *v.*, to force or drive out... [<<L. *rupta* broken, fem. ptp. of *rumpere* to break]
>
> **route** (root, rout), *n., v.* — *n.* **1.** a course, way or road for travel... [<<L. *rupta* broken, fem. ptp. of *rumpere* to break]

Flying Geese, *The Wolves of Woden*, and *The Road to Chifla* all involve journeys precipitated by war. During wartime, borders and boundaries become blurred; landmarks disappear and the landscape becomes disfigured beyond recognition. Added to this is the accompanying emotional wasteland that must be traversed: an inner landscape equally scarred and mined with fear, anger, sorrow, and loss. The young protagonists in each of these books, having been routed from their homes, are forced to discover their own routes through unfamiliar and dangerous territory, with each traveling a broken road fraught with danger and hardship.

A prequel to Baird's acclaimed *Hidden World*, *The Wolves of Woden* constitutes a brilliant premise, incorporating the unique sensibility of Newfoundland culture (simultaneously mystical and pragmatic), its fairy folklore, and haunting landscape with a whole array of myth cycles from Britain, Ireland, and Scandinavia. Unfortunately, this novel suffers from "too much of a good thing" — in this case, mythical references and story-lines. In her desire to tap into myth and then to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all things (a predominating theme in the novel), Baird draws in and overlaps a plethora of myths that include Arthurian elements (Merlin, the Grail, the Knights Templar, the enchanted sleep of the Once and Future King), Norse myth, the Welsh *Mabinogion* (the Spear of Lugh, Gwyn ap Nudd, etc.), Newfoundland fairy and folklore (including mummers), a multitude of Irish references (the Sidh, Druids, banshees, Tir nan Og, the Singing Stone, etc.), and even the mystical, mythical elements associated with Catholicism (Saint George, Saint Michael, angels, etc.). The list does not end there: from Valkyries to Selkies, there is simply too much, even for a fantasy aficionado like myself.

As a result, there is a lot of lengthy dialogue in which the characters explain to each other the background and significance of all these references. I began to get the feeling that it might be more expedient just to read Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* or to take another crack at Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Ultimately, *The Wolves of Woden* falls prey to that pitfall of prequels: the desire to explain and account for *everything*. That said, Baird's depiction of wartime Newfoundland is poignant, and here the character of Jean MacDougall retains a sharpness and immediacy that fades when Newfoundland fades into Annwn. Baird's portrayal of Newfoundland's inherent mystique is wonderful and the scene with the mummers and the Hobby Horse is transfixing. One only wishes that there was more of it and that it wasn't lost in the maelstrom of myth that sweeps this novel.

The Road to Chifla does an admirable job of bringing home the fact that Western, predominantly white, middle-class reality is not the only valid reality, and that the wars "over there" involve real people with real lives. However, the characters often lapse into long, impassioned speeches about war and racism. Although the content is thought-provoking, the language does not always ring true in the mouths of these teen-agers. Even making allowances for translation, and for the more formal speech patterns of Karim and Maha's Lebanese/Muslim upbringing, the language frequently sounds stilted. Take Karim's musings on the fiery Maha, for example:

> "I don't understand her," he murmurs to the night. "She's cheeky, full of flaws, but she's also got guts and smarts...and something mysterious. Something like an awareness that doesn't fit with her frail body and her clear voice..."

Apart from the fact that these qualities have already been demonstrated through Maha's actions and don't need to be restated for the benefit the reader, the image of a teenage boy talking out loud to himself in these terms lacks authenticity.

There is also the problem of point of view. The book begins in the first person from the perspective of a nameless girl who narrates events as they happen after Karim arrives in the Quebec high school. However, this narrator remains an enigmatic, undeveloped character who remains outside the action and has no relationship with Karim other than her observation of him, thus confusing and disappointing the reader's expectations. The novel occasionally switches to Karim's first-person viewpoint via his journal entries and flashes back to a third-person account of his journey to Chifla in Lebanon, all of which makes for a rather choppy narrative. Nevertheless, the story is compelling, and the ideas and issues are relevant, timely, and clearly articulated, making this book an excellent vehicle for discussion in a classroom setting.

In *Flying Geese*, Barbara Haworth-Attard does a marvelous job of depicting the complexities of family dynamics — from the conflicted father, crushed between pride and abject poverty, to the exhausted mother whose worry translates into a sharp tongue, to the icy friction that can exist between relatives. Uprooted from her beloved prairie farm and transplanted in suburban London, Ontario, Margaret Brown clings desperately to the conviction that if only she can finish piecing together a quilt with its pattern of flying geese returning home in the spring then she, too, will somehow be able to return home to Saskatchewan.

The characters and the dialogue in this novel carry a poignancy and authenticity that immediately draw the reader in and bridge generation gaps. The emotion that swirls around the dinner table when eldest brother Edward announces he has enlisted is punctuated by fussy toddlers and squabbling siblings. This scene sets the standard for the rest of the book as Haworth-Attard deftly creates a recognizable and believable reality that anyone who has ever sat at a large family table can immediately relate to. References to Nellie McClung and Edith Cavell breathe life and significance into this important segment of Canadian history. Margaret's loneliness is palpable, and the spirit of perseverance that wings its way through this story does not dull the gritty, jagged blade of reality that cuts through sentimentality and tidy endings.

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They Shoot, They Score!

Slam Dunk. Sports Stories 23. Steven Barwin and Gabriel David Tick. James Lorimer, 1998. 88 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-598-X paper, 1-55028-599-8 cloth. ***Cutting It Close. Sports Stories*** 24. Marion Crook. James Lorimer, 1998. 93 pp. $8.95 paper.