

diacy to the events. Dialogue is most rare in diaries, however, and Little justifies this stylistic choice by making her narrator a gifted observer and recorder of everyday events. Her diarist, Victoria Cope writes, "Since I plan to become a writer, I'll put in lots of talking. I hate books where there are pages without anyone saying a word" (9). Victoria becomes quite polished at her handling of dialogue, writing as well as an accomplished author; her imagined narrative self becomes subsumed under the facility of Little's practiced authorial hand. Young readers, however, would not be familiar with actual diaries, and may welcome this book's conventional novelistic form with its exciting plot.

The books are grounded in solid historical research. They include epilogues that tell what happened to the diarists, their friends, and their families after the conclusion of the book, thus moving the stories beyond the immediate. Historical notes emphasize the background and importance of the events described. *Orphan at My Door*, set in Guelph, Ontario, in 1897, is the story of a family that took in a Home Child, an orphan from the Barnardo Home in London. Little has chosen to narrate the story from the perspective of the comfortable Canadian child who comes to understand the difficulties experienced by an orphan just her age. She does not shy away from the dark side of the Home Child scheme, and puts the abuse of a child at the centre of the story. *A Prairie as Wide as the Sea* explores the initial hopes and frustrated expectations of English immigrants to southwestern Saskatchewan in 1926. Ivy Weatherall, the fictional diarist, concentrates on the daily ways she found to cope with her difference from Canadian children, especially in vocabulary. Within her funny diary entries runs a thread of family disappointment, as the lush farms promised in immigration propaganda were impossible in arid land where they settled. Both authors draw on their own family's experiences, and the reader will be drawn into these stories that make history immediate and personal.

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Gender Benders: Forced and Fun

Mommy Works, Daddy Works. Marika Pedersen and Mikele Hall. Illus. Deirdre Bettridge. Annick, 2000. Unpag. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-657-8. *Fairy.* David Bouchard. Illus. Dean Griffiths. Orca, 2001. Unpag. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55143-212-9.

Mommy Works, Daddy Works by Marika Pedersen and Mikele Hall is a relentlessly up-beat challenge to gender stereotyping. It is also a comfort book for young children who must endure daily separations from working parents. In brief paragraphs with a recurring pattern, the authors tell what means of transportation a mommy or daddy uses to go to work, what his or her job is called, and what that job entails. For example: "My daddy rides a subway to work. My daddy is an architect. He designs buildings and skyscrapers." The final line of each paragraph is the refrain, "But there is always time for me." Jobs listed are police officer, construction worker, dance teacher, writer, homemaker, president of a company, chef, letter carrier, ar-

chitect, another homemaker, musician, pilot, farmer, computer salesperson, bus driver, and fitness instructor — in that order. Jobs are assigned to genders with mechanical regularity: the first is a mommy, the second is a daddy, the third is a mommy, and so on. Thus, a mommy is the pilot and a daddy is the dance teacher, and both a mommy and a daddy are homemakers. There is no development in the text; it is simply a loose list. Deirdre Bettridge's illustrations in mixed media contain a wide range of colours and intensity from the pastel to the vibrant in a mood that is perhaps also best described as relentlessly up-beat. They contain a recurring motif of cats watching or participating in the action. The illustrations are deliberately naive, almost as though they were imagined or drawn by a happy child, but the distortions of proportions can be confusing, as when, for example, a side mirror on the farmer's tractor looks like an animal or a fat child's legs look as narrow and weak as those of a rag doll and her face looks like a pear.

David Bouchard's *Fairy*, illustrated by Dean Griffiths, also confronts gender stereotyping and children's fears, but with humour and panache in both the text and pictures. The fairy who "take[s] care of the magical and mystical needs of the kids on [her] street" is a mischievous young woman with long blonde braids who rides a Harley and wears a black helmet and sunglasses. The text informs us that the fairy watches over the Stubbs family because their little girl Victoria "is just adorable," but the reader suspects a symbolic connection between the fairy's unorthodox means of transportation and the motorcycle that Victoria's rough, tough dad drives. When Victoria's tooth is loose one morning, the fairy arrives on the breakfast scene in a "burst of exhaust," and secretly decides to teach Victoria's skeptical dad a lesson about letting "his kid believe in magic." Later that day, when Victoria is showing off her wiggling tooth to her schoolyard friends, and "Bruno and his bruising buddies" are "bent on bursting Victoria's bubble," the fairy deals with the bullies by making their pants fall down. When Victoria's tooth finally comes out and she puts it under her pillow, the fairy makes Victoria's dad rise "like a puppet on a string" and float (grimacing "in horror" and prancing and pirouetting) to his little girl's bed where he leaves a silver coin. The marvelously detailed watercolour illustrations are hilarious: the fairy's black, shining Harley is lovingly rendered; the bullies' pants falling down provides a harmless but effective burlesque; Victoria's tattooed, beer-bellied, hairy dad floating in a ballet tutu is a laugh-out-loud treat. Evidently political correctness does not have to numb the mind.

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Surviving the Stings

In Spite of Killer Bees. Julie Johnston. Tundra, 2001. 253 pp. \$21.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-537-8. Ages 11-16.

When the three Quade sisters explode into town, the inhabitants of Port Desire have no idea how much the girls will disrupt their staid lives. The sisters have come to attend their grandfather's funeral and, so they believe, claim his millions.