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*Roderick McGillis teaches children's literature at the University of Calgary. He is the editor of *Children's Literature and the Fin de Siècle* (Praeger, 2003).*

### *Windows and Words: A Description of a Scene / E. Holly Pike*

*Windows and Words: A Look at Canadian Children's Literature in English*. Ed. Aïda Hudson and Susan-Ann Cooper. Reappraisals: Canadian Writers 25. U of Ottawa P, 2003. 239 pp. \$22.00 paper. ISBN 0-7766-0556-9.

This collection of essays and commentaries does not make any claim to be comprehensive in scope or approach, as indicated by its subtitle. It is essentially a snapshot of a moment in the study of Canadian literature for young people. Like any snapshot, this one both reveals changes in the landscape and reinforces earlier impressions of the permanent features of the scene.

The editors' description of the book as "celebrating the wealth, the multitudinousness of our imaginative literature for the young" (1) is a fair description of some parts of the collection, since some of the essays (such as Judith Saltman's survey, Beverly Haun's article on Aboriginal voices, and Gregory Maillet's article on multiculturalism in Saskatchewan) seem to zoom in on a portion of the view, describing what exists in particular categories and bringing to our attention previously unknown works. Tim Wynne-Jones's piece on "The Difference Between Writing for Adults and Children" addresses the challenges writers face without being too dogmatic about the choices they should make. Articles by Janet Lunn and Michael Solomon focus on the elements of book production, drawing attention to the variety of expertise and talent involved in the creation of picture books rather than analyzing particular texts, thus revealing what is going on in the under-examined background of the scene.

The editors also acknowledge the immovable presence of L.M. Montgomery, since the six articles on her work in this volume "confirm the central place" she holds in the field of Canadian children's literature (2). These articles cover a wide range of topics and critical approaches — analyzing her works in relation to W.O. Mitchell and William Wordsworth, imperial motherhood and religion, through the lenses of body theory, canonicity, and history — as one would expect given the current state of Montgomery criticism. Certainly, we should not complain that Montgomery is now getting the attention she deserves. However, the effect within this "Look at Canadian Children's Literature in English" is to draw attention to the imbalance of the picture and to make us wish that other writers were getting the same level of critical attention. In fact, the editors describe the articles on Montgomery as a "model for the kind of attention subsequent writers of children's

literature deserve" (8), so we are left wondering why that attention has not been attempted in this collection. Given the sheer number of writers referred to by the authors of these articles, there must be interesting critical work on newer writers that could be collected, which would help us see the Canadian children's literature scene from a different angle, a scene which would not be dominated by the monolith of Montgomery.

The collection indeed freezes a moment in time, and what it shows is a strange insistence on identifying works as Canadian in some essential way. Given the range of content covered in this collection, we have to wonder whether it makes sense to insist on the Canadianness of the works discussed. In his commentary, John R. Sorfleet states, "Home ground. . . . That's what Canadian literature is trying to articulate" (224), while Margaret Steffler seems to assume that there is a uniformity of experience that can be called Canadian ("Canadian small-town society" [89], "Canadian prairie" [93], "receptive Canadian landscape" [89]). However, at the same time, individual writers within the collection lay claim to regional and ethnic uniqueness. For instance, in her discussion of multiple versions of Little Red Riding Hood, Sandra L. Beckett describes as peculiar to Quebec "autumn colours, early snowfall, long winter, wild berries, and streams that remains [sic] icy even in the summer" (70), even though these are features of other parts of the country as well. In some of the articles on Montgomery in particular, the word "Canadian" seems to be used to assert a particular Canadianness that is not present in the analysis (see Irene Gammel's article, for instance [112, 114]), and there is little peculiar to Canada in the discussions of book production and the difference between writing for children and writing for adults.

There is an implicit tug-of-war in the articles between a desire to see literature that is "recognizably Canadian," as Judith Saltman puts it (26), and a desire to show the diversity of our population and experience. The commentaries at the end of the volume in particular seek a uniformity of judgment and interpretation that simply may not be possible in a country this large and diverse. The risk in even hoping for a commonality of experience or a recognizably Canadian experience is that such a wish will skew our vision, either making us overlook interesting parts of the landscape or making us look so hard for the things that we want to find that we miss the overall composition of the picture.

If taken in the right spirit, *Windows and Words* could be an important book. By freezing Canadian children's literature in a snapshot at the turn of the twenty-first century, it gives us something to measure by for the future. Central studies about Canadian children's literature, from the various editions of Egoff and Saltman's *The Republic of Childhood* since 1967 to Elizabeth Waterston's *Children's Literature in Canada* (1992), have provided a solid base of information, and the surveys in this volume continue that work. However, there is a greater need now to zoom in on particular works and writers than to show the big picture. We should hope that some future "Look at Canadian Children's Literature in English" will show a mature landscape, probably still with that mountain anchoring the scene, but with several other large and noticeable features and adequate attention to the new growth in the foreground.

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*E. Holly Pike is an Associate Professor in the English program at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook, NL. She has published several articles on L.M. Montgomery.*

### Speaking of the Speechless: Babies in Canadian Literature / Janice Fiamengo

*Making Babies: Infants in Canadian Fiction*. Sandra Sabatini. Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2003. 264 pp. \$59.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88920-423-3.

Sandra Sabatini bases her study of infants in Canadian literature on two premises: the first, that representations of childbirth and babies reveal the myths, modes of self-understanding, and social organization of a culture; the second, that the considerable body of Canadian fictional texts about infants has been almost completely neglected in literary criticism to date. Theresia M. Quigley's *The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel* (1991) and Laurie Ricou's *Everyday Magic: Child Languages in Canadian Literature* (1987) are studies of children rather than infants, and the tendency of most critics is to ignore the pre-linguistic child, seen as outside agency and consciousness and therefore of negligible literary or social significance. Yet just as cognitive psychologists of the past 30 years have increasingly recognized the complexity of infants' affective, cognitive, and communicative abilities, Sabatini argues that infant representations are a powerful index of changing social and literary assumptions. These assumptions pertain not only to the meaning of babies themselves — which Sabatini argues has undergone a profound change — but also to the changing relationship between the female body and power as well as the shifting social roles of women and men.

Sabatini begins by noting that, in tandem with medical successes in reducing infant mortality and social efforts to protect and regulate infant health in the early twentieth century, the child assumed a new value in North American society. An explosion of statistics and advice books brought public attention to the baby as a precious resource and potential citizen; at the same time, infants emerged in Canadian literature as a sustained focus of narrative interest. Sabatini organizes her study in decades to chart an ever-increasing proliferation of fictional infants. Her first chapter establishes the binary poles structuring infant depictions early in the century. In L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* books, babies are mainly idealized creatures who bestow joy at their birth or grief when they die; however, a counter-narrative emphasizes the drudgery, exhaustion, and ill health they represent for poor women. Frederick Philip Grove emphasizes the burden of repeated childbearing for rural women in *Settlers of the Marsh*, but he includes a romantic narrative linking mature love with desire for children. In the 1940s and 1950s, Sinclair Ross, Charles Bruce, and Gabrielle Roy explore the meanings of illegitimacy in narra-