Sadlier's books also appear here. MacLeod organizes the short biographies under nine groupings: Heroes, Exploration, Science and Technology, Business, Arts, Government, Sports, Nobel Prize Winners, and "More Great Canadians." Each biography focuses on the successes the Canadians had in their respective field, with special attention given to Canadian innovations. For example, Alphonse Desjardins is included for opening the first *Caisse populaire* (or credit union) in North America, Pauline Johnson for being the first Native poet published in Canada, and Banting and Best for discovering the use of insulin as a treatment for diabetes.

The book is a celebration of the lives of famous and important Canadians. The lesser moments in Canada's history have been set aside for discussion elsewhere; the hanging of Louis Riel, for example, is an "event [that] still causes arguments among Canadians" (44). Canada is presented as a place of freedom from slavery, rather than a place that also practiced slavery. Some Canadians, like Tom Longboat, "faced criticism and racial insults" from anonymous sources (50). As her title suggests, MacLeod is interested in the greatest of the people instead of the failures of their nation.

If the success of a book is gauged by the number of people who see it, I expect these books to be quite successful. My mother, a grade-four teacher in Brampton, Ontario, had already ordered the Kids Can books for her classroom before I was asked to review them. A copy of Christopher Moore's book will also be in her classroom by September.

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Gordon Lester *is a Ph.D. student at the University of Guelph. His M.A. thesis was on early modern cartography and utopian geographies. He was recently Project Manager for the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare project <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca>, directed by Daniel Fischlin.*

Waiting and Running in Canadian Books for Boys / *Roderick McGillis*

Theories of Relativity. Barbara Haworth-Attard. HarperTrophy, 2003. 200 pp. $15.99 paper. ISBN 0-00-639299-7.

Torn Away. James Heneghan. 1994. Orca, 2003. 266 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-263-3.

Take the Stairs. Karen Krossing. Second Story, 2003. 184 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-896764-76-2.

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The Losers' Club. John Lekich. Annick, 2002. 249 pp. $18.95 cloth, $10.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-753-1, 1-55037-752-3.

Hold Fast. Kevin Major. 1978. Groundwood, 2003. 201 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-580-6.

Waiting for Sarah. Bruce McBay and James Heneghan. 2002. Orca, 2003. 170 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-270-6.

The Journey Home. Mike McCarthy. 1978. Tuckamore, 2003. 206 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 1-894294-67-X.

My Name Is Mitch. Shalagh Lynne Supeene. Orca, 2003. 171 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-255-2.

And in the Morning. John Wilson. Kids Can, 2003. 198 pp. $16.95 cloth, $7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55337-400-2, 1-55337-348-0.

> Danny always found himself running over an endless plain toward a tall tower on the horizon. If he could only reach the tower he'd be safe, but he never could. Panting and gasping, he'd run as hard as he could, and almost be there . . . and the tower would move. Even as he reached out his hand to touch it, the tower would recede into the distance and he'd have to run faster and further. . . .
>
> Andrea Spalding, *Finders Keepers* (23)

The books by Kevin Major and Mike McCarthy under review here first appeared in 1978. Each of them begins with a boy on the run. Major's *Hold Fast* opens at the funeral of Michael's parents, and young Michael tells us that he "couldn't stick it anymore," and so he ran "till [he] was that far away it was like none of them would ever get the chance to see [him] again" (10). McCarthy's *The Journey Home* begins with David Carr's memory of the time he was living with sadistic Mrs. Benson and he and his friend Red made plans "in case we ever decided to cut and run" (4). Of course they do decide to cut and run. In fiction for boys, not a lot has changed in the 25 years since these books first appeared.

Perhaps books for boys have always been sensitive to the boy's desire to run, to have the opportunity to escape the confines of what Huck Finn called "sivilization." At least this is what the Good Bad Boy does, the boy who is rebellious enough to catch our admiration and safe enough to give us the confidence that he will turn out to be a pillar of the community once his pirate days are over (see Fiedler). This boy finds the constraints of conventional home life difficult to accept, and so he sets out for territories where he can find room to roam or where he can find acceptably unconventional homes. In the books by Major and by McCarthy, the boys run from abusive situations and find refuge in the natural world. In more recent books such as Martine Leavitt's *Tom Finder* and Barbara Haworth-Attard's *Theories of Relativity* or Peter McPhee's *Runner* (1999), boys and girls have nowhere to run beyond the mean streets of contemporary cities, the holding tanks with space enough for running nowhere. Boys can run while they wait for something better than the wrecked lives they have experienced in home and school to come along. Interest-

ingly, we now see alongside these runners boys who cannot run, boys with disabilities of one kind or another, boys who can only hold on to hope that things will be better in time, and boys who need to find new ways of running. Moreover, in Karen Krossing's *Take the Stairs*, we can see that the constraints experienced by boys also touch girls. This book begins with a girl running away from home. We are beginning, slowly, to understand that boys and girls do not inhabit separate spheres.

But let's go back to 1978 when boys were boys and we expected them to run and sort things out for themselves. *The Journey Home* is an adventure story for boys in which the main character, David Carr, avoids the authorities and finds refuge with a wise old seaman named Silas, a man David calls "real." Silas is "real" because he is strong, calm, gentle, and "as solid and ageless as the massive cliffs surrounding his little cove" (34). The echo here is to Wordsworth's ancient leech-gatherer, that mysterious old man as solid as a huge stone and as elemental as a seabeast. The difference between Wordsworth's leech-gatherer and Silas reposes only in their respective calls to action. Unlike the ancient and passive gatherer of leeches, Silas is a wily, active seafaring man who is capable of violence when necessary, as it is when Silas and David escape capture in chapter fifteen (106). He is a man "bound only by a code of honour so strict that it allowed no exceptions" (128). Living with this man, David learns to hunt and fish and to be resolute and strong. He also manages to participate in the uncovering of an elaborate smuggling ring. David Carr is an example of the Good Bad Boy, on the lam from the law, who is really a good boy in need of a strong father figure. Once David happens upon Silas, he can stop running for he has found home. As Silas tells David, "running away won't solve a problem ever" (124). At some point, David, like all of us, must stop running and face his situation.

But running away has the virtue of alerting others to your plight. At the end of *Hold Fast*, an uneasy relationship exists between Michael's cousin, Curtis, and Curtis's father, but the unease shared by father and son strikes us as more acceptable than the previous unease felt only by the son. And Michael has achieved what he wanted, a return to the small community of Marten where he is reunited with his brother. In this book, as in *The Journey Home*, running away proves efficacious; it accomplishes something. Despite Silas's remark that running away won't solve a problem, the act of running seems preferable to immobility. The females in these books stay close to home, while the males set out to find or forge a home. Home is perhaps the key. Death of parents cuts both David and Michael adrift. The stories of both boys are set in Newfoundland, and the proximity of the sea is a constant reminder of fluidity, drifting, movement, and travel. It is no accident that both boys are connected to fishing and fishermen. The boys' world is one of hunting and fishing, a world where violence is not unacceptable. In fact, to make a home a boy or a man has to be prepared to fight for his space. Michael puts it this way: "I mean, fighting never done anybody much good when you sizes it up, but there comes a point where you got to stick up for who you are, whether it means a racket or not" (77-78). Michael is willing to fight for his rights, and he sees such fighting as justified. It is as justified as the killing of rabbits in wire traps; the rabbits are necessary food. If the animals suffer, their suffering is unpleasant for the hunter to contemplate: "But when that happens there's nothing you can do about it" (172-73). In *Hold Fast* and *The Journey Home*, squid jigging, rabbit hunting, and the shooting of black ducks for Christmas dinner are normal activities for healthy boys. These boys reflect what we might call a continuing Rousseauism, the belief in natural educa-

tion as opposed to enforced book-learning. As Michael asserts, "Everything people knows don't come from books" (57). Michael learns from his father and grandfather and David learns from Silas, and they learn skills of the hunter and fisherman — survival skills. Michael has learned about the Beothuck people from collecting flints that may have been used by those people (69).

Meanwhile, the girls remain close to home to keep the hearth warm. Jeanie, in *The Journey Home*, is the voice of David's conscience, the female he can feel responsible for. As his future, she represents stability, domesticity, and affection: by marrying her, David will one day have the home life he lacked growing up. She also serves to have him show his mettle and his quick thinking when the two of them are nearly captured by the villains late in the book (actually David is captured and Jeanie hides in a nearby bush). As for Brenda in *Hold Fast*, she too provides occasion for the male to demonstrate his strength of character. Michael can confess that he does not have sex on the brain all the time when he's alone with her, and he can also demonstrate his normalcy by masturbating in bed with Brenda on his mind (90, 88-89). At the end of the novel, Michael asserts that his mind "hasn't had much room for [Brenda] lately," but that he'll write to her "as soon as I get chance" (200). In other words, both David and Michael are young males who come close to ideal masculinity, the masculinity that is strong, independent, self-contained, and self-controlled. Michael, along with his cousin Curtis, steals a car, and as far as the reader knows, this criminal act goes unpunished; it is a mark of Michael's strength of character that he can steal a car and turn this into an act of "borrowing." David, too, engages in criminal activity, but because of circumstances, he receives only a suspended sentence. These males are thus above the law, to a certain extent. We are close here to what masculinists such as Bob Connell and Stephen Whitehead term "hegemonic" masculinity, a version of masculinity that sets itself as a standard for male power. The boys in these books resist the power of others, power represented by the law or by adults or by restrictive codes of behaviour set by state apparatuses, and their very acts of resistance result in their accruing power. In sum, they get what they want.

If we turn to the book from our list that appears next (in 1994), we find a familiar view of masculinity and boyhood. James Heneghan's *Torn Away* tells the story of Declan Doyle, a thirteen-year-old boy from Belfast whom the police capture because he has participated in terrorist activities. Declan has joined a young IRA group known as the Holy Terrors because his mother and sister have been killed in a bomb blast. He sees the Protestants as his enemies and killing Protestants as his duty. In the first chapter, he slips from a pair of police handcuffs and tries to run away. He's caught and sent to Canada to live with relatives, but his one objective is to run away and return to Ireland where he thinks he belongs. Declan's experience resembles Michael's in *Hold Fast* in that he finds himself in a strange place where the way he speaks sets him apart from others. Similar to the way Michael finds friends in Curtis and in Brenda, Declan finds friends in Ana the domestic diva and Joe Iron Eagle the compadre, who helps Declan hone his already impressive fighting skills. After Declan treats a bully to a "Belfast kiss" (essentially a head butt [109]), Ana defends him to his guardians. But the book tries to speak out against violence: when Declan kills a squirrel, Ana is distressed, and when his Uncle Matthew teaches him to shoot a rifle, his aunt Kate complains. Joe also teaches Declan patience. He tells Declan that he does not fight, but he is willing to wrestle with Declan and the two engage in a tussle worthy of Birkin and Crich. It seems the male

must learn to control his penchant for violence but not turn away from it completely.

The binary set up in this book is Canada/Ireland, the land of eagles and squirrels and mountain lakes versus the angry land of sectarian hatred and violence. We've seen this before in books such as Janet Lunn's *The Root Cellar* (1981) and Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada* (1977); Michael Moore's film *Bowling for Columbine* (2003) delivers a similar message. In these three texts, the binary is United States/Canada, but the fantasy that Canada is all forest and pastoral haven is similar. A man can be strong and active and aggressive in Canada because he is in control here. This land is a fantasy, a symptom of a desire for symbolic order. In *Torn Away*, we can see this best, perhaps, in the explicit comparison between Uncle Matthew and Christ. Declan remembers the funeral of his mother and sister: specifically,

> He remembers that picture of his mother's — the Sacred heart, that sad suffering Jesus face on the wall.
>
> It looks a lot like his Uncle Matthew. (154)

In *Torn Away*, Ireland is the Lacanian Real, a place of chaos and disorder. To live there is to lose a sense of human order and community. It represents death, as the reference to Joyce's "The Dead" makes clear (219). Canada, on the other hand, is symbolic of life, order, and freedom. Canada is the Imaginary no one lives in outside fiction. The Doyle household is also an Imaginary household. Matthew and Kate are Fixers; "They fix animals all the time," we are told (176). And they fix the lives of broken people — the orphan Ana, the Down's Syndrome child Thomas, the dotty and dispossessed Miss Ritter, and of course Declan. The Doyle household is the Imaginary community, a disparate collection of "others" that coheres and becomes a family, a replacement for human lack and loss. This is Canada's multicultural image of itself.

The book rises to a climax when Matthew tells Declan that Declan's father had been an Informer and that the IRA had shot him as a traitor. This news sets Declan on the run. He heads for home on a "Canadian Airways 747 airplane" (251), but before the plane departs, he has second thoughts. As he sits on board he recalls the many experiences and the gift of people he has had in Canada, and suddenly he leaves his seat, leaves the plane, and runs back toward the Imaginary family:

> He ran up the rubber-matted slope of the tunnel into the waiting room. . . . He dashed through the barrier and burst into the terminal. . . . He ran out of the terminal, down the steps, and across the road to the parking lot. (255)

He runs in the direction of his Imaginary, and away from the Real that can only threaten to absorb him into nothingness. Declan has become a Canadian boy, one who feels "the vast strength and peace of the land melting into him" (243). His masculinity, finally, is an aspect of the land: strong and rugged and independent and resourceful. Declan has come home, and home, as Aunt Kate says, "is where the heart is, after all" (202). And the heart is in no man's land in the sense that it rests in a place only fiction can conjure.

So we have come from 1978 to 1994 without seeing a lot of change. Two books from 2002 shift the perspective from hegemonic masculinity, a masculinity of capable boyhood, to what one of these books classifies as "loser" masculinity. These two books are Bruce McBay and James Heneghan's *Waiting for Sarah* and John Lekich's *The Losers' Club*. The main character in both these books is disabled: Alex Sherwood in *The Losers' Club* has cerebral palsy and Mike in *Waiting for Sarah* has lost both his legs in an automobile accident. The notion of disability takes an interesting dimension in the former of these novels because Alex is a member of a group of guys who think of themselves as "losers." Members of this "losers' club" are the Chinese boy, Winston Chang, who is constantly locked inside his school locker by bullies; Manny Crandall, the "horizontally challenged" one (7); Tin Face Facelli, who "has been wearing braces for half of his natural life" (63); and a few others including Howard Beal and Basil Whiting. The main focus of the story is on Alex, Manny, and Winston. Not only does each have a "handicap," but each also lives in a dysfunctional family. Alex's mother is dead and his father is on the lam avoiding a loan shark. Winston's parents are wealthy and never home. Manny lives with his mother who is an alcoholic. Set against these three is Jerry Whitman, the school bully and the story's hegemonic male. Add to this mix Harry Beardsley, also known as the Beast, a reclusive writer who lives next door to Winston. Harry is also a loser because he has written one critically acclaimed novel and has yet to write a second one, although he writes many potboilers under the name of Harriet Winterbottom. The masculinity that this book reaches for is perhaps best exemplified by the Marx Brothers, especially Groucho Marx.

Invocation of the Marx brothers cues the knowledgeable reader to the theme of freedom. At one point in the novel, Alex refers to his "addiction to freedom," and in the next sentence he says that in difficult situations he asks himself, "what would the great Groucho Marx do?" (142). The allusion also works to underscore the tone of this book and gives us a standard of masculinity that is anything but hegemonic. As Harry Beardsley says, Groucho is "the greatest sloucher in history" (120), and his slouching is in the direction of Bethlehem. Groucho is sly, salacious, sardonic, and slippery. He is certainly not the type of male who looks to stand and fight. Groucho is something of a loser, like the boys in this book. He usually manages to find success even using the most unorthodox of tactics. Being a loser appears to mean, among other things, being able to fend for oneself. These boys can cook and sew. Their competition with the hegemonic males of the story is to see who can mount the best Christmas light display. We can see what is shaping up here. Alex, Winston, and Manny are three boys, and with Coke, Winston's dog, they form three boys and a dog. Like the three men and a baby, these boys prove to be self-sufficient. The male fantasy continues to be a vision of men without women. Alex has a friendship with the gothic-looking Julie Spencer, but this relationship merely serves to assure the reader that losers too can attract the opposite sex. As Julie tells Alex, far more people in school are losers than there are people like Jerry, star pupil and leader of the bullies (202).

What connects the masculinity in *The Losers' Club* with what we have come to think of as hegemonic masculinity, the masculinity of characters such as Michael in *Hold Fast* and David in *The Journey Home*, is the fantasy of capable boyhood. The boys' world is hermetic, sealed in attractive immaturity, which constitutes the fantasy of freedom. As Alex says in *The Losers' Club*, "Immaturity is the ultimate form of rebellion" (235). At the end of *The Losers' Club*, the losers are winners. They win

the Festival of Light Competition; Alex receives a kiss from Julie Spencer; the hegemonic male, Jerry Whitman, is running from Winston's dog. The fantasy is that the last shall be first: given that it is Christmas, a time for suspended running, the fantasy is that the good guys do not need to run. Moreover, good guys do not have to be versions of the hegemonic male. Even a nerd deserves consideration as an attractive type of masculinity. Thus, we see an attempt on the part of recent authors to transform the loser into the hegemonic male without altering each of these visions of masculinity.

For the most part, good guys resemble Indiana Jones, as played by Harrison Ford. This fellow is the standard for masculinity in *Waiting for Sarah*. Sarah tells Mike that he looks like Harrison Ford, and Mike's overweight friend Robbie thinks of his father, whom he has never seen, as Indiana Jones. Indiana Jones is as good an example of the hegemonic male as we could ask for. The two male protagonists of *Waiting for Sarah*, however, are closer to the losers of the previous book than they are to hegemonic males. Mike resists rehabilitation after his accident, which has made him painfully aware of the Lacanian Real, that unruly and uncontrollable chaos that threatens to drag us into non-being. The accident is what precipitates Mike into an awareness of this chaotic Real, and recurrent news reports of plane crashes, cyclones, or mass murders in Kosovo keep reminding him that non-being lurks just beyond the horizon, waiting to draw him in. To counter this aspect of the Real, Sarah arrives from an equally Real — that is, chaotic and ambivalent — place. But Sarah represents honesty, beauty, and clarity. She is an attractive non-being, someone to seek and wait for. Once again, waiting is preferable to running in this novel. But one cannot wait by shrinking into oneself "like a garden snail" (7); instead, one needs motivation. To wait for someone like Sarah is to prepare to meet her, and preparation requires movement. By the end of this novel, Mike has prosthetic legs. I won't move through the plot of this book, except to say that Mike proves worthy of capable manhood. He moves from despondency to strength of purpose, and he demonstrates that he is a successful detective. The comparison with Harrison Ford continues to inform our perspective. Success for the male has to do with perseverance and initiative. Clearly Mike will succeed. And Robbie, as Mike says, is on his way to becoming "a well-known tycoon and billionaire, renowned film producer, creator of *Casablanca 2* and other fine movies" (161). Ultimately, these stories deliver male characters who learn to survive in a tough environment. Males are the entrepreneurs and the protectors of females. The focus has shifted from the aggressively strong male to losers and disabled males, but this shift does not suggest, as it might, that the loser is genuinely different from his Ideal-I counterpart, from the Indiana Jones of our collective fantasy. These losers continue the fantasy of capable manhood in which the male is the leader of the pack.

The five boys' books I have looked at so far are all written by men. We now move forward to 2003 and four books by women that offer something different from what we have seen so far. The male characters in these books — Shalagh Lynne Supeene's *My Name is Mitch*, Karen Krossing's *Take the Stairs*, Barbara Haworth-Attard's *Theories of Relativity*, and Martine Leavitt's *Tom Finder* — are losers. Losers, remember, are just boys who find difficulty of one kind or another in their daily lives. *My Name is Mitch* continues the loser theme, presenting us with sixth-grader Mitch MacLeod, who is so small that he can fit into what he thinks is a desk designed to accommodate second-graders. He also has reading problems that

place him in Special Ed. To make matters worse, Mitch discovers his biological father, whom he has never known, and has to come to terms with a new relationship between them. *My Name is Mitch* is the most conventional of the four novels under scrutiny here. Mitch is small, but every inch a boy with his interest in *Star Wars* and Swiss Army knives and PlayStation 2 and pizza. By the end of the book, we can see that his interest in girls is just about to blossom, as it were.

The other three books are somewhat more daring. *Take the Stairs* is unusual in that various young people who live in a dilapidated apartment block narrate separate sections. The narrators are a mix of males and females, and among the males we have no lack of the manly virtues. For example, Louis is a daredevil bike rider, Roger likes pizza and kung-fu movies, Tony is a great ball player, David does not want his friend to think he is "soft" (87), and Asim wants "to belong to the culture that I had grown up in" (109). Here is where things take a turn. Asim signals the multicultural mix in the apartment block. Asim's family is from Egypt. Roger is black. Petra is Chinese or part Chinese. This is the first book we have seen that surfaces the issue of race. *Torn Away* does have a First Nations character, the wise and patient Joe Iron Eagle, but he is presented in a rather stereotypical way to offer Declan an outsider friend who can teach him values associated with stereotypical Canadian compromise and passivity. In *The Losers' Club*, one character is Chinese and we might assume that his troubles at school stem from his racial otherness, but this topic is not front and centre in the novel. In *Take the Stairs*, the racial mix of the apartment dwellers draws attention to the mixture of peoples in multicultural Canada, but it does so to signal the homogenous nature of this multiculturalism. Asim, for example, experiences racist attitudes from the white population, but he proves impervious to such ugliness. The story has him rescuing a poor mother and daughter and driving them home one night instead of going to meet his friends. But perhaps Krossing's point has something to do with breaking expectations. One section of the book is narrated by a character named Sidney, arguably the most macho character in the book. Sidney is on a canoe trip when disaster strikes, and I have to give the situation away by using the female pronoun "her" when I explain that Sidney must save her father's life by paddling a long distance in difficult circumstances to get her ailing father to a doctor. *Take the Stairs* wants readers to think about such questions as racial and gender stereotypes, but ultimately the book ends with a male voice: Tony makes friends with a couple of rich kids, including a girl who was "invading [him] like a virus" (173). He does not want them to know where he lives, in the grungy old apartment with its collection of down-and-out characters. But the rich kids insist on driving him home. When they get to the apartment, Tony sees Petra's father harassing Petra, her mother and grandmother. Tony comes to the rescue and in doing so, he impresses the rich girl, Sue, and the story ends on an upbeat note. Tony will see Sue again, next week at the ball field. Sue has responded positively to Tony's skill as a ball player and to his macho rescuing of Petra and her mother from the threats of the abusive father.

The main characters in *Take the Stairs* are underprivileged. Petra manages to escape the apartment by hitching a ride in the back of a pick-up truck. She chooses a life on the street over life with an abusive father in the apartment building. Life on the streets is likewise the subject of *Theories of Relativity* and *Tom Finder*. As you might expect, these are books with a message, a warning about drugs and alcohol and dropping out of school and losing one's way. They present tough stories of dysfunctional families and predatory characters on the make and on the streets.

Sixteen-year-old Dylan, in *Theories of Relativity*, is a "throwaway" (10), an unwanted kid whose mother tosses him out of her home. Dylan is an older, latter-day Oliver Twist, a street kid who is temperamentally not suited to the streets. He has an innate sense of goodness that keeps him from descending into prostitution and into the drug culture. He sees himself as "the white knight" rescuing the street waif, Jenna (48, and again on 49). A page later, Dylan changes the comparison; he thinks he is Robin Hood and Jenna is his Maid Marion. In any case, he thinks in terms of the heroic male. If the novel overturns our expectations and our sense of gender traits, then it does so when we realize that Dylan cannot save Jenna and that he can only be saved by the pregnant street urchin, Amber, who tells him that "it's every man for himself out here [that is, on the streets]" (195). Once again, the book suggests that females rather than males just might offer us models of characters capable of extricating themselves from ugly situations. In *Take the Stairs*, Petra gets away from an abusive situation, and in this book we have the example of the social worker, Ainsley, who has "some guts." Amber tells Dylan that Ainsley "fucking clawed her way out" of life on the streets (195). In contrast, Glen's young brother died of an overdose, unable to take advantage of Glen's support.

Nevertheless, the streets remain a man's world; on the streets, it is every man for himself. *Theories of Relativity* raises the issue of male masochism. Dylan continually puts himself in situations that are certain to result in pain, either physical or emotional. The culmination of this is when he insists on courting Jenna despite her assurances that her pimp, Brendan, will have him beaten up. Sure enough, Brendan's stiffs give Dylan a good going over, and he experiences the worst that street life can offer: he loses his "entire life" (165). Early in the book, Dylan remarks that he lives "in constant fear of losing" himself (15), and when he receives the beating by Brendan's boys, he does. The fiction of male masochism, however, has something spiritual tucked into it. A good beating leads to a finding of the self — the male loses himself to find himself; through abjection comes redemption. Something deeply masculine is at work here. The male rules the world, but such rule breeds guilt. To rule, one must disenfranchise others; to rule means to subjugate, and what one subjugates is both the other and the self. A good beating is bracing; it scourges the body to purify the soul. Despite countless examples of such male sacrifice, I am not comfortable building this myth of the male hero as sacrificial lamb into books for the young. We are, I think, supposed to conclude that life on the streets is a great educator in that experience is always more basic than theory. We are back to the old notion that all the books in the world won't necessarily prepare you for lived life, that only lived life can prepare you for more lived life, that only through an acceptance of suffering can the male come to a sense of purpose and control.

At one point in *Theories of Relativity*, Dylan returns to his school and as he looks to leave, he sees the way blocked by the computer teacher, Mr. Crowe. Dylan's "leg muscles tense, ready to run" (30). And we might conclude that life on the streets is life on the run. Should we conclude this, however, we would be wrong. Life on the streets is life going nowhere: "seconds and minutes disappear and time is measured by light and dark, by relief and fear" (38). The condition of life in limbo is well captured in *Tom Finder*, the most unusual and striking of these books. On the first page, we learn that Tom has forgotten his past, even his own last name. He is on the streets and he "couldn't run anymore" (9). Of course he has to run from various authority figures such as the Transit Policeman or the gang leader Sasky, but mostly he is lost and invisible, stuck in a strange and eerie world of street life. Tom has lost

"his house and his memory"; he is, in short, a "Loser" (11). But we remember that one has to lose oneself before one can find oneself, and so Loser Tom is also Finder Tom. He meets Samuel Wolflegs who is seeking his son and who sets Tom on a quest to find the missing Daniel, convincing Tom that he is a Finder. The search for Daniel drives the plot, but the interest is in the world the book invokes. Leavitt's prose strains at the edges of realism. Her use of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* as intertext helps to give *Tom Finder* a fantastic quality, and the downtown of Calgary, Alberta, the city in which I live, becomes defamiliarized. "Uncanny" is perhaps the word to describe the city in this book. Life on the streets is an uncanny life; it is familiar and yet completely dissociated from familiarity. This is a world in which running gets you nowhere, just as it got the Red Queen nowhere in *Through the Looking Glass*. Running is endemic to life on the streets, but running also indicates that our environment is unfriendly and unstable.

The wise Native person, Samuel Wolflegs, speaks of the wisdom of the river and "the rhythms of the earth" (28). We are back to the fantasy of the land as opposed to urban dislocation. The streets breed boredom, which leads to death. Samuel advises Tom: "Stay close to the earth, Tom Finder. Sleep near the river; learn from it" (31). Tom also values language; he learns to read his surroundings and writes in his notebook. The book is about remembering through literate activity, and what we remember must connect us to the past, to history, both personal and collective. Tom is a poet, and poetry has something to do both with language and with spirit. Poetry can cope with gravity. This is a story about a boy who thinks he can fight but who finds that the best way of fighting is through remembering: "Real power wasn't in forgetting. It was in remembering" (137). And remembering is what writing is. Tom resolves to write what he has seen and experienced, and in writing he will remember the people he has known on the streets, and "make people see that here were good hearts" (137). Words reach back to "what had been real all along" (137). And the Real always waits.

Despite its emphasis on writing and language, *Tom Finder* is also aware of "male hormones" (see 81, 82). Samuel strikes the precise note when he tells Tom that males on the streets think they are invincible; they are at one and the same time "Running scared and thinking [they're] so tough" (86). This novel finally finds a way to circumvent the hegemonic male. It contains what we have seen already — the male who values his ability to fight, the male who suffers a beating, and the male who is independent and skilled in survival. However, it relocates this view of masculinity in softer virtues. The name Tom invokes a literary lineage of poor Toms plagued by fiends of stealing and dumbness, of mopping and mowing. Tom is touched with an otherworldly sensibility that ensures he will sing. He is a member of the singing school. This male will speak rather than fight.

Fighting is the theme of the final book I look at here — John Wilson's *And in the Morning*, a clever recreation of what it meant for a young male in the first decades of the twentieth century to experience war. The novel reminds me somewhat of Stanley Kubrik's film *Paths of Glory* (1957). Both the novel and film present anti-war stories in which innocent young men find themselves the objects of war's stupidity and insanity. If a difference exists in the messages of these two texts, then the difference lies in the notion of "glory." No glory exists in the story told in *Paths of Glory*; the title is deeply ironic. In *And in the Morning*, young Jim Hay is eager to go off to fight, and he cannot understand his mother's hatred of war. He asks: "What's the

matter with her? Doesn't she see the Glory of it all?" (11). His words carry ironic import here and even more so at the end of the book. However, Wilson's story is not as thoroughly anti-war as Kubrik's film. I might invoke another text, John Ford's 1952 film *What Price Glory*. The story in this film derives from a play about World War I by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings (1924). In Ford's film, any irony we might sense in the film's title is muted because of Ford's celebration of the military. Ultimately, this film champions a masculinity that puts comradeship, honour, and fighting prowess before love and domesticity. We watch as the weary soldiers gallantly return to the front at the film's end. The film's two heroes choose fighting and male comradeship over the female and domestic life. Something similar is at work in Wilson's novel when, late in the book, we read a news report titled "Canadian Soldier Cited For Bravery" (169). According to this report, a soldier named Private Arthur Hewitt threw himself on a grenade to save a number of men from death and others from injury. A few pages later, Jim finds himself before a firing squad sentenced to death for being a deserter. We might see this as an indictment of war, but Jim goes to his death nobly, suggesting that war cannot darken a man's soul or tarnish his glory. Both Private Hewitt and Jim Hay deserve the reader's respect for their heroic facing of death.

And in the Morning suggests that the war changes people, especially men. At one point, Jim writes in his diary that he realizes "how much this war is changing us all." He then asks, "Will we change back after it is over, or is this the birth of a new kind of man?" (127). Later in the book, Jim has a conversation with his friend, Iain, about just what kind of man will emerge from the war. Jim speaks first:

> "Millions of men torn from a normal, peaceful existence have been given guns and bombs. Their friends are killed before their eyes, and they are taught to kill other human beings. How are they ever going to go back to being bank clerks or carpenters?"
>
> "I don't know," Iain said, "but the longer the war goes on, the more different people will become."
>
> "Yes," I agreed. "Fortunately, the Big Push will put an end to it." (147)

Frankly, I am not certain what the "new kind of man" is supposed to be like. But I note that the Big Push is a euphemism for an attack on a large scale. Jim thinks a Big Push is what will end the war, perhaps all wars. As we can now see, however, the incentive that this Great War would be the war to end all wars soon became seen as wishful thinking.

And in the Morning contains the familiar fantasy of a Canada that represents the opposite of war-torn old Europe. Jim and his fiancée imagine a future in which they emigrate to Canada and start a new life. Canada is described as a "different world," a place "of wide open spaces, and mountains and forests, of skating on the river in winter and canoeing in the summer. It seems a magic place" (65). Canada holds out the promise of a life without the violence and brutality of the Old World. In this new world, men are still men. They labour. They wrestle. They hunt and fish. They commune with nature. They protect women and children. They end up on the streets. They lose fathers. They are abandoned by mothers. The Imaginary and the Real are alive and well in Canada. Perhaps *Take the Stairs* expresses the current state of things as well as any of the books under review here. The Monteray, the dilapidated apartment with its disparate collection of peoples, is a place of

dreams and nightmares, fantasy and reality. In the Monteray, Imaginary lives fold into Real lives, and the young men we meet perform an array of masculinities. The single sense of what it means to be a male that we might have seen in *The Journey Home* and *Hold Fast* has not disappeared, but it is no longer the only way for writers to imagine masculinity. Losers, too, can be winners in the ongoing footrace. The last can be first if only they keep on running.

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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)..*

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