

whose breastplate lacks only a “baby on board” sign, and carrying a spear slung with a diaper bag, Ogo learns there’s glory in changing diapers. Sound improbable, unpalatable? In Priest’s capable hands this story is both funny and moving.

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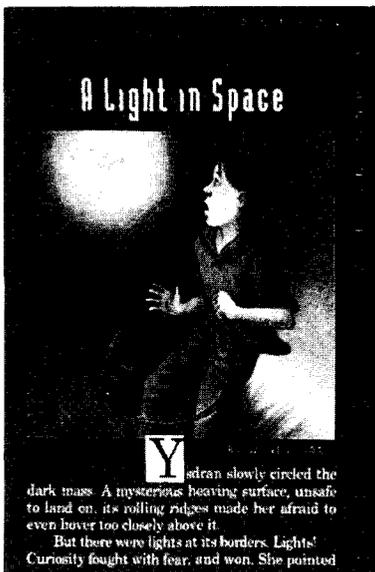
HEAVY SUBJECTS IN ZERO GRAVITY

A Light in Space. Wendy Orr. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick Press, 1994. 188 pp. \$14.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-368-4, 1-55037-975-5.

Wendy Orr is an experienced author of juvenile fiction and she has tackled some tough themes in *A Light in Space*: the value of freedom; the importance of love, friendship and loyalty; the attraction of power; the capacity for evil in ordinary people. Whew! Sounds like a heavy, possibly depressing tale. But *A Light in Space* is neither of these things. While giving serious consideration to serious subjects, Orr manages to make her tale quite weightless. This is suitable for a story that alternates between twelve-year-old Andrew on earth and a treacherous journey in a mini-spaceship with a bad-tempered alien named Ysdran and her long-suffering Companion, Caneesh.

Andrew’s problems and the dual settings of the story are made possible by the telepathic communication that links the two main characters. No need for translators or the clumsiness of “codes” as Ysdran refers to languages, “We’re simply exchanging thought waves. It’s not nearly as complicated” (47). That last point, however, is the heart of the issue. While different languages may make communication difficult, skipping that hurdle altogether certainly doesn’t mean that understanding between vastly different beings is less complicated. Andrew thinks of his “cute and cartoony” (51) alien friend as a potential pet, a step up from Max, his dachshund, and much more exotic. Ysdran, on the other hand, has her own sinister plans, as she trains Andrew for his eventual role as her personal assistant and headslave.

Orr’s style is breezy and relaxed. Her pre-teen characters have believable voices; moms and



dads are not type-cast as the enemy, nor are they super-parents. The earthling characters are just people with the coping mechanisms of the well-intentioned but often stumbling humans that they are. The bantering style of dialogue carries over to the spaceship where the relationship between Ysdran and Caneesh gives dimension to these alien beings.

The use of telepathy for much of the dialogue in the book presents Orr with a unique opportunity and challenge. Lacking the possibility of facial expression and tone, and the suitability of many words traditionally used to convey speech, she develops some striking metaphors. "Ysdran's confusion was like butterfly wings against his brain" (76). "I can teach you lots of tricks,' [Ysdran] purred, and her mind rubbed his like a furry cat" (50). "... [A] warm wiggle passed from her to Caneesh and back again" (172). *A Light in Space* may have a nondescript title, but the story is captivating. And the ending? Well, individual readers will have to judge its plausibility.

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THE "GRANDFATHER PARADOX" IN FOUR YA TIME WARP NOVELS

Within a Painted Past. Hazel Hutchins. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick Press, 1994. 160 pp., \$4.95 paper; \$14.95 library binding. ISBN 1-55037-989-5; 1-55037-369-2. **Time Ghost.** Welwyn Wilton Katz. A Groundwood Book, Douglas & McIntyre, 1994. 172 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-216-5. **The Summer of the Hand.** Ishbel L. Moore. Roussan Publishers Inc., 1994. 135 pp., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 2-921212-37-4. **Garth and the Mermaid.** Barbara Smucker. Penguin Books, 1994. 135 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-14-036168-5.

I think that at that time none of us quite believed in the Time Machine.

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895)

The question of *belief* is central to the success of time travel (or, as they are variously called, time slip or time warp) novels. As with other forms of fantasy or science fiction, the reader must believe in what Tolkien called the "secondary" or created world, in this case the world of the past and/or future; but she must also be convinced that "travel" (or slippage) between the primary world, usually the world of the reader's present, and the secondary world is possible. As Paul J. Nahin points out in his fascinating and idiosyncratic book, *Time Machines: Time Travel in Physics, Metaphysics, and Science Fiction* (1993), any convincing time-travel novel must address what is known among time-travel aficionados as the "grandfather paradox." This classic change-the-past paradox "poses the question of what happens if an assassin goes back in time and murders his grandfather before his (the murderer's) own father is born? If his father is never born, then neither is the assassin and so how can he go back to murder his grandfather...!?"