

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...!?"

Another way of putting this dilemma is this: how can an individual travel to the past without altering the conditions which have made her and her travel there possible? One of the most haunting explorations of this paradox can be found in Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" (in *The Golden Apples of the Sun*). The story takes place in a world in which time-travel has become a form of tourism and in which big-game hunters travel to the past to bag now extinct animals, in this case a *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Time Safari, Inc. ensures the historical continuity of species and life-forms by identifying animals which would have died no more than two minutes after their arranged encounter with the big game hunter. It also insists that its clients remain on "the Path, laid by Time Safari for your use. It floats six inches above the earth. Doesn't touch so much as one grass blade, flower, or tree. It's an anti-gravity metal. Its purpose is to keep you from touching this world of the past in any way. Stay on the Path. Don't go off it. I repeat. *Don't go off*" (103). Naturally, the protagonist panics, runs off the path, returns to a 2055 which is utterly changed, and discovers — to his horror — a crushed butterfly embedded in the mud on his boot. Such are the consequences of playing with time.

Despite the centrality of the "grandfather paradox" to the persuasiveness of time-travel novels, only one of the four young-adult novels under review here acknowledges and addresses this central paradox. Not surprisingly, it is the most satisfying and intellectually coherent of the four. Welwyn Wilton Katz's *Time Ghost* is also the only one of the four in which the protagonists live in our future and travel *back* to our present, their past. *Time Ghost* describes a future in which overcrowding, pollution, and the destruction of natural environments have made it impossible for people to go outside, except in one of those "last bits of natural Earth" (11), the North Pole. Even the North Pole, however, is threatened by the Greysuits, corporate businessmen determined to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean. The novel's main protagonist, eleven-year-old Sara, is an agoraphobe (the result of a life lived completely inside) who loves horses, though she has never seen a live one, and resents the environmental activism of her grandmother, former Supreme Court justice Gwyneth Green. Gwyneth, a member of Grassroots (a Greenpeace-like organization), takes Sara and three other children with her to the North Pole where she hopes to interrupt the Greysuits' oil-exploration ventures. It is at the North Pole that Sara commits the action which propels her into the past.

The novel is constructed around a series of parallels: Sara, who turns twelve during the trip to the North Pole, travels back in time to the summer in which Gwyneth turned twelve; just as Sara's moment in history represents a possible turning point for the environment (will the Greysuits be allowed to drill for oil?), so was her grandmother's twelfth birthday a turning point (she learns that her father has sold her beloved lakeside country home to a lumber mill). The notion of parallels — parallels which paradoxically *touch* or meet — is central to the narrative but also to the novel's theory of time travel. Sara's best friend's brother, Joshua, postulates that because "all the time zones in the world meet at the North Pole" (12), it is possible that "either there *is* no real time up there at all, or it's all times at once" (13). When Sara finds herself abruptly propelled

back to her grandmother's twelfth year, and into her grandmother's twelve-year-old body, she and her best friend Dani (who, unlike Sara, is bodiless in the past) must confront time-travel's grandfather (in this case, grandmother) paradox:

Dani thought for a long moment. 'So maybe the only way you can really go back in time is if you *can't* do something while you're in the past that would change the whole course of history. But bodies are always doing something. So for us to come into the past, either we can't have a body at all — like me, or —'

'Or — like me — we have to be inside someone who actually lived in the past,' Sara finished for her. (80-81)

Significantly, the two girls are able to come to this conclusion in part because they are already familiar with the generic demands of the time travel story. Their conclusions are prompted by their dissatisfaction with Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder," here unnamed: "'I saw a televid once,' [Dani] said slowly, 'where a man went back in time and stepped on a butterfly.... A whole bunch of things happened because of the butterfly dying, one thing causing the next, and each new thing getting bigger and more important, until finally the whole path of history changed, and the man's future no longer existed'. 'So where did he come from then?'" (80). Katz seems to be suggesting here that, perhaps from its origins in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, the twentieth-century time travel story is about *consequences*; this makes it an almost perfect genre through which to explore environmental issues.

The other three novels under review here are less concerned with consequences than with making history come alive for their readers; in fact, one has a sense that these are essentially historical novels using the conventions of time travel as a way of seducing readers who might normally gravitate toward fantasy and science fiction. Barbara Smucker's *Garth and the Mermaid* is an excellent and persuasive account of daily life in late-medieval England. The novel is particularly strong in its evocation of what contemporary readers might feel as the claustrophobia of medieval life, the near impossibility of venturing outside of one's inherited occupation or rank and village. Although the time travel motif frames the novel, it hardly touches the central narrative and is certainly not essential to it. The main protagonist finds himself in medieval England — a subject he has been studying as part of a school project — when he is hit by a car; he finds himself back in late twentieth-century Guelph when the central tower of a great medieval cathedral crumbles and falls upon him. Although his experience of the hardships of medieval life reconciles him to the dourness of his soon-to-be step-father, the relationship between the two has never been fleshed out enough for the reader to have much interest in its resolution. At heart, *Garth and the Mermaid* is a fine historical novel wearing the borrowed, and quite unnecessary, feathers of the time-warp novel.

Although each of the remaining two novels has certain strengths, neither satisfactorily resolves, or even acknowledges, the grandfather paradox. Isabel L. Moore's *The Summer of the Hand* has a slight edginess which lends it a kind of raw authenticity. Its central character, twelve-year-old Shona Drummond, is, with her immediate family, preparing to immigrate from Moodiesburn, Scotland

to Winnipeg, Canada in 1967. Together with her cousin Davey, she travels back in time to the Scotland of 1567 where they witness the horrific murder of two young people, Lady Rose Boyd and her brother Hamish, victims of the intrigue and political machinations surrounding the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots. This double time frame enables the contemporary young-adult reader to explore two pasts, 1967 and 1567. Moore's evocation of the trepidation created in a family on the brink of economically-motivated immigration is convincing, and she also does a nice job of delineating the tension between the pubescent Shona (in love with her first cousin) and her anxious mother. However, this novel is perhaps the least satisfactory in its treatment of time travel, primarily because its protagonists actually *change* a major historical event (with no discernible consequences). *The Summer of the Hand* crosses a number of genres — problem novel, ghost story, historical novel, time travel novel — and this affects its overall coherence.

I was prepared to love Hazel Hutchins' *Within a Painted Past*; it recreates a part of the country which is not much represented in Canadian children's literature (Alberta's Canmore and Banff), and the novel's vehicle for time travel is hugely evocative. Twelve-year-old Allison, visiting her aunt who runs a going-out-of-business tourist store in Banff, finds herself in the Canmore of 1898 after contemplating a painting in her room: "Small and self-contained, it showed a mountain cabin lost in the swirls of a winter snowstorm, and every morning the snow had floated out of the picture frame" (7); "The snow was so wonderfully real against her face, and there was more — the smell of it, and that special silence that settles on the world with the falling of it. It was then, softly at first, from the depth of that silence, that she heard a sound. Someone was crying. Small and woeful, the sound reached out to touch her; reached out, yet with such hopelessness that, almost against her will, Allison took a single step forward" (15). This device suggests the creative but also dangerous power of art to recreate other times and cultures, to draw us into its world. I was prepared to love this novel, and in the end I liked it. Its main weakness is a conclusion which is little prepared for in the body of the narrative and which, as with *The Summer of the Hand*, ignores the centrality of the grandfather paradox to the time travel genre.

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#### TRAVELLING THROUGH TIME WITH MONICA HUGHES

**Where Have You Been, Billy Boy?** Monica Hughes. HarperCollins, 1995. 136 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-224389-X.

In her latest novel Monica Hughes (to paraphrase *Star Trek*) "boldly goes where [she] has not gone before," and in so doing has produced a novel that will win her new fans as well as praise from educators. Instead of using the techniques of