

ers, while retaining her own individuality — and keeping her penny. The story allows children to participate in the character's dilemma, and most should certainly enjoy the ending.

Rossitza Skortcheva Penney's fanciful illustrations visually complement the fluctuations between the child's inner and outer worlds, and the criss-crossing back and forth between the imagination and practical reality. Firmly drafted figures and outlines spill over the pages and are coloured over in a manner reminiscent of a child's blithe refusal to stay within the lines while colouring. The images become a part of the text and extend the rich imagination of the little girl beyond the words on the page.

Both of Shenaaz Nanji's books celebrate the family and the individual and, at a time which sometimes seems more preoccupied with the atomization of the traditional family unit, they are welcome affirmations of basic values.

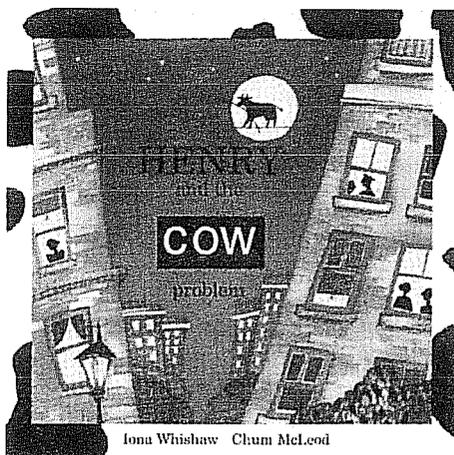
**Kerry Vincent** teaches English part-time at Saint Mary's University and the Nova Scotia Teachers College. His article, "Decoding the hieroglyphics: naming and meaning in Margaret Laurence's *The Prophet's Camel Bell*" is forthcoming in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.

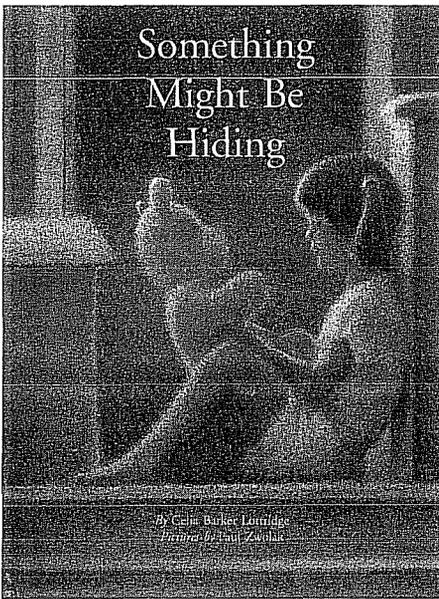
#### LAUGH AT IT OR ADOPT IT: TWO VIEWS OF FEAR OF THE DARK

**Henry and the Cow Problem.** Iona Whishaw. Illus. Chum McLeod. Annick Press, 1992, 1995. Unpag., \$15.95, \$4.95 library binding, paper. ISBN 1-55037-375-7, 1-55037-374-9. **Something Might Be Hiding.** Celia Barker Lottridge. Illus. Paul Zwolak. Groundwood, 1994. Unpag., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-176-2.

Fear of the dark, or, rather, what could be hidden by the dark, is a common fear of childhood, and one way to handle it is through storytelling. *Henry and the Cow Problem* and *Something Might Be Hiding* are two very different, yet effective, stories about that particular fear.

*Henry and the Cow Problem* is a funny, absurd little story about a boy afraid to go to bed because he thinks a cow will come and get him. The only problem with his fear is that he lives in a city, on the third floor of an apartment building. Whishaw takes the childhood fear of monsters in the dark





and stretches it to its utmost ludicrous lengths; cows are usually portrayed as “good” animals because of their milk production, not as monsters. That in itself puts the story into the realm of the absurd, and so the book takes the fear and makes readers laugh at it.

*Something Might Be Hiding* takes a far different tack to fear of the dark and its monsters. A little girl thinks she hears different kinds of monsters in different spaces in her new house, but when things are cleared away, there is nothing there. The story portrays the little girl’s fear seriously without building it up, and in the end, shows her acceptance of it by having her metamorphose it into a secret pet, so she is no longer afraid. The boy in *Henry and the Cow Problem* also learns to accept

his fear of cows and work around it — only the readers laugh at his wild imaginings. Both books are careful not to make light of their subject matter.

The tones of the two books are very different. *Something Might Be Hiding* is serious without being solemn or melancholy. *Henry and the Cow Problem*, on the other hand, is wild and exuberant. Both use dialogue effectively, and both have a sense of mild suspense to them. The illustrations of both are completely different from each other, and match both the tones and the story lines very well. The illustrations of *Something Might Be Hiding* are dark and textured, with lots of warm browns, golds, and oranges, and so are soothing to the eye. Those of *Henry and the Cow Problem*, on the other hand, jump out at you in caricatures with lots of hot pink and purple, in which both people and cows have flat heads, and everything is distorted and warped. Despite the differences, both books make good reading for youngsters afraid of the dark.

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## UNCLE SMOKE STORIES

**Uncle Smoke Stories: Nehawka Tales of Coyote the Trickster.** Roger Welsch. Illus. Cathie Bleck. Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. 93 pp., \$19 cloth. ISBN 0-679-85450-9.

Roger Welsch takes on the daunting task of creating a children’s literature rooted in North American aboriginal culture. In today’s political and social climate this task assumes added significance, because the dominant culture of the Americas