

the society in which they are learning to function. Eighteen-year-old Jens Frieson, a born salesman who believes Willy Loman's mantra, "personality always wins the day," has that enviable "drive" that society typically endorses with success and money: "All I want is to get the ball'" he tells his first employer, Jack Lahanni. But in the course of one long weekend, Jens loses both his job as a car salesman and a compensatory role as rescuer of his younger brother from a ruinous music contract. "I had the ball, I had it in my hands. And there was no game'," he cries desperately to himself. Unlike Willy Loman, Jens is rescued from his attempted suicide by a younger brother, Daniel.

Daniel, the quiet, sensitive, shy, prodigally artistic but socially maladapted antithesis of his elder brother, is seen through Jens's narrative. The weekend-long odyssey both brothers share is a chilling dialogue, not just between the two distinctly different brothers, but between Jens's superficial success-driven self he would flaunt to the world, and his soft, indeterminate inner self that yearns for affirmation of his birthright, of his place in his family, of his ability to form a relationship. In this almost allegorical interaction with the younger, suppressed Daniel, Jens comes to recognize the "cardboard man" he had been building: "I had nothing to prop me up now'," he says to himself, "'It was just me'." Acknowledgment of his endless and furious denigration of Daniel marks the process of reconciliation between the brothers and between the divisions in Jens's own psyche. At the end of the weekend, Jens has recovered some of his former driving enthusiasm, but his priorities and values have shifted: "It all depends on where I was headed, and who I took with me'." As he says to himself earlier, "I wondered if [Daniel] was the older brother and I had just been born first'."

Drive is not without some of the prurient grit that has become a trademark of social realism. But unlike Cormier's *Chocolate War* or Foon's *War*, where the focus is on the endless sociological loop of violent power brokering and domination, Wieler probes the hidden layers of the young emerging psyche as it reflects and deflects its social determinants. In this respect, Jens, the "Chocolate King" of his small prairie town high school, is the protagonist of a unique parable about growing up, successfully.

Mary J. Harker teaches children's and young adult literature at the University of Victoria. She is currently working on a book about the fantastic in children's literature.

Canadian Plays for Young Audiences

TYA 5: Theatre for Young Audiences. Mira Friedlander and Wayne Fairhead, eds. Toronto: Playwrights Canada P, 1998. 268 pp. paper.

Mira Friedlander and Wayne Fairhead's anthology of Canadian plays for young audiences offers readers and potential producers scripts which illus-

trate the variety and scope of the genre from 1981-1993. Each play boldly investigates struggles faced by young people with heart, wit, imagination and common sense. The anthology begins with plays which reflect traditional form and content and then moves towards scripts reflecting contemporary issues and structures.

The first play, "Ti-Jean" by Peter Cummings, is an animated fairy tale steeped in Quebecois culture. The sad King, bewitched princess, villainous giant and trio of brothers on a quest are familiar elements of a classic story. It's no surprise that the youngest brother, Ti-Jean, uses his wits and humour to win the girl and the crown. Despite this recognizable formula, the script leaps off the page with live fiddle music, song, dance, life-size puppets and clever language play in both French and English.

"Firebird" by Rose Scollard blends classic elements — mythical beasts, rival suitors, a kingdom in jeopardy — with contemporary issues — environmental disasters, consumerism and apathy-bred ignorance. The characters play out their traditional roles with present-day attitudes and humour. Elements of Ukrainian culture are used to provide a contextual anchor and visual metaphor. Deep within a giant Matoushka doll the solution to saving the kingdom is finally discovered, reminding us that there are no instant solutions to environmental problems created by years of mistreatment and neglect.

Aboriginal traditions and contemporary culture collide and combine in "Coming Around" by Lorre Jensen & Paula Wing. The art of storytelling is at the heart of this play as two Native children wrestle with how to fit traditional teachings into their lives. Traditional stories offer the characters a cultural map through which to navigate difficult conflicts. Vibrant visual elements and music help to conjure the stories on stage but, strangely, important offstage action and characters never appear and are only discussed.

Rollerblades and rap music set the scene for "Ruby and the Rock" by Vivienne Laxdal. Ruby is dealing with the sudden death of her best friend, Jade. With help from "Rocko," an imaginary friend conjured by the on-stage "spirit" of Jade, issues of grief are addressed. Rocko's advice is offered through rap songs. The musical interludes lighten the mood around this difficult subject but run the risk of trivializing the insights and Ruby's painful adjustment.

The final play, "Loon Boy" by Kathleen McDonnell, is the strongest dramatic script of the collection. Set in the context of displaced children and foster parents, it is a hard-edged depiction of one child's search for a sense of family. Cycles of mistrust and hurtful actions are played out against a parallel story of a family of endangered loons trying to survive in a shrinking and hostile environment. A believable balance of brutal honesty and fragile hope makes this script a strong final statement for this collection and the TYA genre in general.

Kathleen Foreman is an associate professor in the Department of Drama at the University of Calgary. She is a performing artist and teacher specializing in improvisation, mask performance, theatre for young audiences and educational drama.