ought to be!" One pun does not a story make.

Clyde by author illustrator Lindee Climo tells of a working horse threatened by technology when his farmer buys a tractor. In a series fantasies Clyde the horse wishes he had the legs of a cheetah for speed, a fish tail to escape and so forth. The fun here lies in the increasingly absurd illustrations of a horse-fish, a horse-frog, etc. The plot is child-like and well-shaped, the solution is logical and believable and the moral is blessedly understated.

The effects are similarly subtle in *Emily*, a picture-book biographical sketch of painter Emily Carr by Susan Gaitskell, illustrated by Kellie Jobson. Gaitskell has made wise choices of details from Carr's own autobiographical writings to introduce children to the whole idea of artistic endeavour. The text is simple and poetic and the pictures match the mood of a quiet celebration of a unique vision.

Sarah Ellis *is a Vancouver writer, librarian and reviewer. Her most recent book is* Next-door neighbours (*Groundwood*); *her previous novel,* A family project, *was selected for the U.S.A.* Hornbook "*Fanfare List.*" *She writes a critical column, "News from the North," for* The Hornbook Magazine.

PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY AS PLOT MOTIF

Round the bend. Mitzi Dale. Douglas & McIntyre, 1988. 117 pp., $6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-069-3; **Promises to come**. Jim Heneghan. Overlea House, 1988. 189 pp., $3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7172-2297-7.

Thirteen-year-old Deirdre sets fire to her bed and is consequently sent to a group home for psychiatric treatment. Two years later, to commemorate the first anniversary of her release, she retells the story in *Round the bend.*

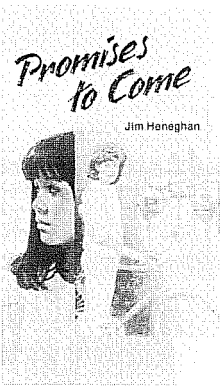
In an unconvincingly colloquial style, Deirdre takes the reader through her childhood, the stealing escapade in kindergarten that led her parents to move to the suburbs, her lack of interest in a new school, her reclusive habits at home. In a series of retrospective anecdotes which interrupt the narrative, Deirdre reveals that she has an anorexic mother, an ever-absent father, and above all a fixation with other people's nervous habits. In order to escape from the world of "sniffing and coughing or . . . scratching and jerking" (13), Deirdre slips into what may well be the epitome of adolescent female fantasies: a continuous

day-dream that finds her as a tough ranch-owner who is abandoned in a male-dominated world but bent on survival.

As a result of sudden screaming fits, Deirdre is taken to see a psychiatrist. Subsequently she is passed around from psychiatrist to group home to psychoanalyst until the reasons for her disturbed behaviour, or non-behaviour as she calls it, are fully revealed and her day-dreams fall into oblivion. Unfortunately, however, Mitzi Dale includes every conceivable cliché about psychoanalysis and psychotherapy since Freud on this voyage through the memories of a now 15-year-old girl. From the smug, matronly doctor to the "leftover from the sixties" group home parents, Deirdre shows nothing but contempt for them all. She is finally saved by a smiling young therapist who uses the very original approach of treating patients like human beings: "Here was this guy actually listening and agreeing with practically everything I was feeling. It's a great shock" (112).

The first person narrative, presumably intended to keep the story within the perspective of a teenage girl, results in Deirdre's problems being presented by one too young and – according to herself – too disturbed to realistically perceive the story in its entirety. Instead of a more solid development of secondary characters, we find, for instance, an 11-year-old commenting on the nanny of her psychiatrist's children: "an energetic young thing with a certificate in Early Childhood Education" (17), a 12-year-old explaining her mother's anorexia away: "It was the only thing she could control. She couldn't control my father, she couldn't control me, but she could control exactly how many calories she took in and sweated off" (27), and a 13-year-old with "hippie lingo" down to a fine art: "It's okay man (. . .) I know where you're coming from. I hear you. Hang loose" (57). These examples stand in direct contrast to Deirdre's otherwise lackadaisical (but grammatically impeccable) teenage jargon, a combination that is not all together convincing.

Mitzi Dale has packed every conceivable angle on the problems of a troubled teenage girl into the very character who cannot cope with the world. This unfortunate choice of narrative voice undermines an otherwise astute rendition of the illogical behaviour adults – including professional psychologists – often display towards children.



Psychological counselling is again a plot element in Jim Heneghan's *Promises to come*, a study in culture shock.

We usually associate culture shock with something that happens when we go to a foreign country. But when that foreign culture is unexpectedly deposited on our own front doorstep, the shock can be doubled. Jim Heneghan's story is a touching tale of Kim, a Vietnamese refugee in Canada, and Becky, the daughter of

Kim's adoptive parents. Becky and her parents, having decided to a adopt a Vietnamese refugee, (a "Boat People" orphan as Becky calls them,) have chosen a little girl. After a long run through the bureaucratic mill, Nguyen Thi Kim finally arrives in Vancouver and, much to Becky's disappointment, turns out to be 12 or 13 years old, a year older than Becky herself. "Thirteen! She'd wanted a *little* sister, had imagined her as a cute five-or six-year-old" (14). Kim is not entirely at ease in her new surroundings either: "Her new family scared her. They were so loud. And so big, grinning down at her with their white, perfect teeth, and waving their arms and hands about like pelicans out of control" (18).

Try as they might, the two girls cannot get along. Becky tries to make contact, Kim backs away frightened. Becky feels rejected, Kim feels pushed. While Becky is upset at not yet having a mountain bike, Kim remembers her escape from Vietnam. Becky misses her brother who is away at university, Kim's family is dead. For the first time in her life, Becky discovers loneliness: her parents are preoccupied with Kim. Kim, meanwhile, slowly unravels a more complicated set of emotions: fear, anger, hatred, guilt, pain. Memories of a war-stricken Vietnam unfold under the guidance of a concerned doctor who wants Kim to exteriorize her grief-laden past. The story takes several unexpected turns, however, before the two girls slowly begin to sort out their differences.

Thankfully, Heneghan does not sweep to an instant happy end. Anger and guilt are not so easily swept away, and the learning experience for both girls is just beginning. They are learning to face up to the realities of life, one in the Oriental way one in the Western way, until they finally realize that there is more that unites them than that separates them. Heneghan's skill at interweaving two such very different characters make *Promises to come* a pleasure to read.

Barbara Kraus *has been working at the Université canadienne en France since 1987, as language co-ordinator.*

LA CULTURE DES ENFANTS DE 10 ANS

Des histoires d'hiver avec des rues, des écoles et du hockey. Marc Robitaille. Montréal, VLB éditeur, 1987, 144 pp. 14,95$ relié. ISBN 2-89005-289-3.

Rien de plus limpide, mais aussi rien de plus retors que le livre – autobiographique – de Marc Robitaille: un enfant nous raconte sur le vif, un peu à la