

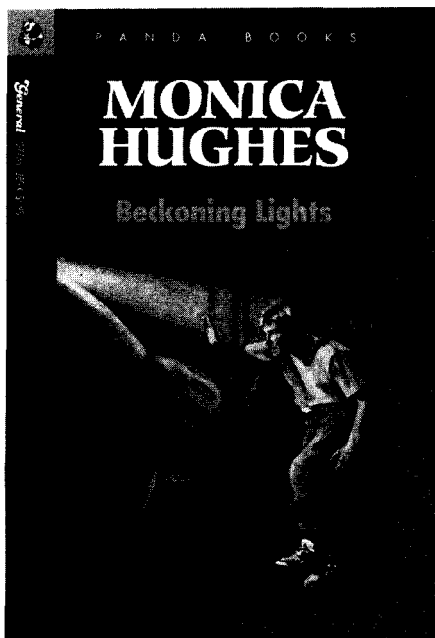
shut him out. Opiel is a good storyteller, always holding enough back to maintain interest and suspense. One does not, for example, discover who Alexander is for some time, even though Opiel provides a lot of hints. The struggle with Coil in the tunnels under the city, while echoing several recent television programs and films, is nonetheless action filled. Perhaps the only disappointment is the rather maudlin ending in which Eric, possessing new understanding, is able to rebuild his relationship with his father. Nothing in life is that easy.

The novel is sufficiently fast paced, and possesses enough science fiction and fairy tale to appeal to any adolescent. For the more thoughtful young reader, Opiel's message is not obtuse, yet he avoids being preachy or too obvious.

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WHAT IS AN ALIEN?

Beckoning lights. Monica Hughes. General Paperbacks, 1990. 104 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7280-X.



Julia Christie tells how her foolhardy twin brother races to a landed UFO and is captured by aliens, leaving her with the mission of rescuing him, their father, and, ultimately, an entire race. She is a timid girl, particularly fearful of dark enclosed spaces – and she must face head on her claustrophobia to fulfill her quest by crawling through a narrow tunnel to collect a life-saving fungus. The gripping story delivers moral messages that are neither trite nor simplistic; indeed, Hughes shows remarkable skill in conveying sophisticated concepts in ways accessible to a young reader.

For example, she illustrates the essential aloneness of all human beings by Julia's discovery of how cut off she feels when her brother is for the first time too far away to be reached telepathically. As she realizes that the terrible isolation she

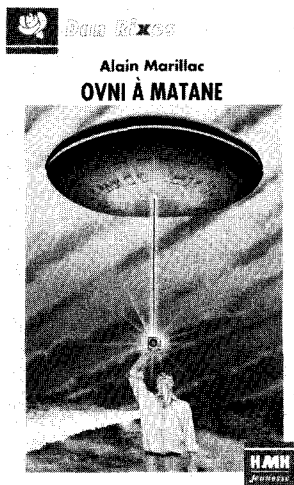
experiences is the human norm, she feels a rush of pity for her fellows. To com-

fort her, her Stoney Indian companion, Doug Smalltree, tells her how his people pass into adulthood by undergoing a period of solitude when they must face their own strengths and weaknesses to discover who they really are. Thus Hughes conveys the idea that we are all alone inside our own skins and afraid, and that this circumstance gives us an opportunity to develop moral courage.

The source of Julia's identification with non-telepaths is her empathic imagination; and it is Barry Trevor's refusal to exercise his that marks him as the antagonist of the story. He disbelieves Julia's story because she is four years younger and a girl; and he is incapable of appreciating the tragic plight of the Brinians, who, as it turns out, are aliens in the sense of being of a different race, and yet not aliens because they evolved on earth millions of years before homo sapiens emerged. It means nothing to Barry that they are doomed to extinction because their colony planet lacks a mineral trace element available only on earth and that they voluntarily exiled themselves from earth to allow the human race its own unimpeded evolution. He can see them only as the Other, not as fellow earthlings, and therefore as objects of fear and hatred. His reactions to Julia and to the Brinians reflect common human behaviour, and he is rewarded with the usual object of human desire – wealth. Without falling into a moralistic tone, Hughes encourages in her readers disdain for such behaviour and such desire, as well as an acceptance and appreciation of difference.

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DANS UN PROCHE AVENIR



Ovni à Matane. Alain Marillac. Illus. Richard Jalbert. Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, 1990. 166 pp., 8,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89045-870-9.

De la métropole de Paris au parc de Matane dans le nord du Québec, c'est un grand pas. Mais ce voyage dans l'espace n'est rien à côté de celui que les protagonistes de *OVNI à Matane* doivent faire dans le temps. En effet, ils se trouvent transportés en 2188. Avec l'effet de serre et la pollution générale provenant des pesticides et d'autres produits toxiques, la terre a subi une série de modifications: tous les continents sont brisés, San Francisco a disparu, le Japon est englouti et le Québec n'est plus qu'une île parmi d'autres plus