there are different kinds of intelligence, creative ability, and ways of living. He realizes that people should not be judged inferior simply because they do not appear to be "normal" in behaviour, thought, or speech. Indeed, in the process of learning to accept differences in others, Harper is accepted for who he is by the other members of the class. In an open, non-judgmental environment, Harper's creative and writing abilities improve, and he becomes more honest about his own faults, prejudices, and fears. In his essay, Harper faces issues such as social responsibility, effective communication, parental authority, goal-setting, and personal freedom (112-20). But the essence of Harper's essay — and, indeed, the main thrust of Trembath's novel — is the importance of taking control of one's own life. Ironically, Harper learns this lesson from the people he previously underestimated — the members of the Tuesday Cafe: "I started to realize that life changes for people, and I can control how it will change for me" (118). By being open-minded, by listening to what other people have to say, and by being honest to himself and others, Harper attains a higher level of maturity — and humanity.

Korman, Roberts, and Trembath strive to emphasize values that are in danger of becoming obsolete in the often cynical and pessimistic climate of today's society. Personal integrity and freedom, respect for the rights of other human beings, and social responsibility are lofty concepts that are difficult to maintain in a far from perfect world. Indeed, achieving personal freedom while at the same time remaining acutely aware of one's obligations to society is a challenging task, demanding introspection, honesty, and a good sense of balance. But as Isabelle Holland's character Justin McLeod emphasizes to another confused boy in *The Man Without a Face* (1972), "Just don't expect to be free from the consequences of what you do, while you're doing what you want" (87). With any luck, this cautionary note will not be lost upon the young readers of Korman, Roberts, and Trembath.

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Revisionist Fairy Tales for Contemporary Young Readers

The Gypsy Princess. Phoebe Gilman. North Wind P, 1995. 30 pp. $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-224398-9. ***Princess Stinky-Toes and the Brave Frog Robert.*** Leslie Elizabeth Watts. HarperCollins, 1995. 32 pp. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-224398-9.

Cinnamon, the gypsy girl who for a short while becomes a princess, belongs to the new variety of heroines that resist being co-opted by the traditional fairy tale's concept of happiness. While she does at first yield to the seductive vision of the aristocratic existence appearing in her crystal ball, the actual experience of stepping into that world does not constitute the usual happy ending, but her temporary downfall and loss of identity and freedom. Upon accepting an invitation to leave her gypsy community to join a typical princess in her palace

of artificial wonders, Cinnamon discovers that all that glitters is not gold and that even if it is, instead of bringing happiness it stifles the spirit.

While one would be justified to observe that the free and happy gypsy life is just as idealized as the princess shtick, the two worlds are diametrically opposed in significant, ideological ways. Cinnamon's relation to the earth is represented through her dancing with a wild bear, whom she dreams of replacing with a prince, but the palace dances turn out to be boring and empty rituals, devoid of the creativity and spontaneous energy characterizing gypsy dances. Cinnamon's body image is another effective vehicle for expressing the ideological change implied in manipulating natural appearance by forcing it into a luxurious but restrictive mold, represented by stiff, tight clothing and heavily pomaded hair. When she finally escapes from the golden cage and finds the bear, her alienated image causes him not to recognize her, and she throws herself into the river to purge herself of artifice and uncover her former identity. The illustration of her splashing ecstatically in the water effectively communicates the abstract notion of losing and finding a sense of self.

The affirmation of authenticity embodied by the gypsy has a long literary tradition that can also be classified as idealizing romanticism, but this milieu still contrasts with the palace fantasy in that it bespeaks such values as communal existence, proximity to nature, and the simple pleasures associated with a humble but free lifestyle. Both Gilman's text and illustrations suggest a vision akin to magical realism, in that fantasy, beliefs, supernatural communication, and the power of premonition all belong to the gypsy ethos instead of being excluded from reality as nonsense.

The technique of layering oil and egg tempera on gessoed watercolour paper does, as claimed on the information page, give the colours their luminosity. The images, that often verge on kitsch, don't simply duplicate the text, but succeed in representing abstract concepts in concrete, visual terms. An example of this technique appears on page 21, where the statue of a cherub in a fountain suddenly assumes a longing and tragic expression, reflecting Cinnamon's emotional state. Illustrations that manage to materialize subjective reality are not common in children's books, and this talent of Gilman's compensates for some of the shortcomings in her artwork. Some of the drawings are clumsy and don't capture Cinnamon's likeness consistently, but on the whole, they are expressive and richly detailed.

As suggested by the title, *Princess Stinky-Toes and the Brave Frog Robert,* this story is another subversive rendering of the classic fairy tale. The premise of a queen promising her first-born child to the witch who thereby will save her ailing husband is familiar, but how the little princess saves her own skin is a story of determination and perseverance not traditionally representative of a female character's realm of power. It is true that she gets some good sound advice from a frog who is actually a bewitched knight, but to follow through on his suggestion that she not bathe for a whole year takes courage and strength. Her parents don't seem to understand her plot to escape the cruel destiny of being fed to the witch's dragon in payment for the long-forgotten promise, and the princess must stand her ground and reject their orders to wash. Fortunately, the creature is a finicky eater and since he only indulges once a year, his meal must be grade A, and that means tender, royal flesh.

In this case, change of identity involves a change in appearance, for the princess starts looking more and more like the most destitute street urchin. She also smells so fetid that she is relegated to a high tower where her parents only visit her when there is a good stiff breeze. She is marginalized and loses all her friends save the loyal frog who obviously has a stake in her destiny, since he too is the victim of the same witch. The radical change in appearance, however, effects a change in character because the protagonist goes from being a pampered child to being a stigmatized outcast. But solitude and impending doom force her to find the inner strength required for self determination, and while in the end she does end up back in the castle in a nice hot bubble bath with a maid scrubbing her stinky toes, this resolution of conflict is wholly achieved through her own endurance and versatility.

When at the end, the enraged dragon rejects his unappetizing meal and swallows the scheming witch instead, all her victims are transformed into their former selves: the dragon into a bunny and the frog into Sir Robert, "a fine-looking knight with a big grin," who in the accompanying illustration bears a slight resemblance to Mel Gibson. Instead of fulfilling his traditional role as the crowning glory for any female who has suffered through hard times, the knight simply remains princess Lunetta's good friend. This narrative device allows little girls to concentrate on the story of maturation without having Sir Robert imposed as an unlikely object of desire.

Watts tells an engaging story whose liveliness and humour is enhanced by the illustrations. The princess, surrounded by flies, looks so filthy you can smell her, and such details as the fountain cherub holding his nose as she passes provide nice comic relief from the weight of her struggle.

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Pride and Peanuts and a Plethora of Ps

Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut. Margaret Atwood. Illus. Maryann Kovalski. Key Porter, 1995. 30 pp. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-732-8.

Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut, Margaret Atwood's fourth children's book, is as distinctive from its predecessors as they are from one another in terms of type, style and tone, and corroborates that Canada's premier novelist is as eclectic in this genre as in her adult literature. Atwood has moved from a Seuss-like charm in her versified tale for pre-schoolers, *Up in a Tree* (1978), through the probing of more complex themes such as the role of all creatures in the universe in *Anna's Pet* (1980) and current environmental concerns in *For the Birds* (1990), to a whimsical, twisted fairytale in *Princess Prunella.*

Prunella is the pretty but spoiled protagonist who in addition to stumbling about the royal palace because she is constantly peering into a pocket mirror and to torturing her three plump pussycats and her puppydog, Pug, inevitably renders herself eligible for another of those intriguing spells from fairyland when she refuses to give a Wise Woman some food. The spell is especially irksome to the petulant heroine, for it features a purple peanut sprouting and growing larger each day, on the end of her nose. Moreover, the spell cannot be broken until Prunella performs the requisite three Good Deeds, and if her pedigree and previous performances are any indication, Prunella's purple proboscis appears permanent. In fact, Prunella does manage to break the spell by performing a series of deeds all prompted by her concern for others, culminating in her saving a prince from diving into a polluted pond populated by "ponderous pointy-toothed pike." The tale ends with Prunella sans peanut frolicking with her prince who allows that he might be prepared to propose to her when she is older.

In a note by Atwood on the work she identifies two origins for the tale. The first was the "Letter Language" game the writer's daughter and her childhood friends played at age nine or ten in which they spoke only in words beginning with a chosen letter. The second was the "Princess Prunella, the saga," an invented story Atwood used to tell her daughter while she washed her hair which involved a vain and stupid girl who got into all sorts of trouble and who invariably had "foreign objects sprouting from her nose" ("A Word on Princess