

à produire des moments émouvants où la poésie se mêle de façon assez naturelle aux descriptions des événements de la vie quotidienne. De plus, l'intérêt est soutenu et le style coule de source, ce qui donne envie de lire l'histoire d'une seule traite. Le rythme de l'action a été capté avec délices dans la traduction et imprime à l'ensemble un élan qui est des plus motivants à la lecture. La mise en situation opérée par le biais d'un flash-back a d'une part, le mérite d'avoir été bien posée: le vieillard revoit défiler sa vie devant ses yeux comme le train qu'il ne cessait de contempler en rêvassant. D'autre part, la technique a été utilisée pour remonter dans le passé sans avoir à faire appel au passé surcomposé qui aurait alourdi le style. A travers tout le texte le leitmotiv du passage du train associé à l'assouvissement de la soif d'aventure apparaît très clairement. L'on note par endroit une grande minutie dans la rédaction, comme c'est le cas à la page 53 pour la description de la production de sirop et de tire d'érable.

Si l'on note des anglicismes ici et là, ils ne semblent cependant pas ternir l'ensemble, car ils sont du genre qui prévalent dans la langue parlée en français canadien dans certaines régions. ex.: "prennent charge" (202) pour "prennent en charge", "Anne porte ses cheveux courts" (203) pour "des cheveux courts" etc. De temps en temps dans la traduction on trouve un usage non approprié de mots, bien que le sens général n'en soit pas affecté outre mesure. ex. "les chevaux s'ébranlent" (64), on dirait plutôt "la carriole s'ébranle" dans le sens de "mise en marche" etc. Enfin le choix de termes, soit familiers soit argotiques ou faisant partie d'idiolectes, mais ne figurant pas dans le dictionnaire, pourrait créer des difficultés au lecteur consciencieux qui éprouve le besoin de comprendre chaque mot. La question qui se pose ici est relative au choix qui doit se faire au moment de la traduction, à savoir s'il faut préférer le mot propre avec les particularités que cela implique ou s'il serait préférable d'utiliser un terme permettant la compréhension chez un public de lecteurs plus vaste.

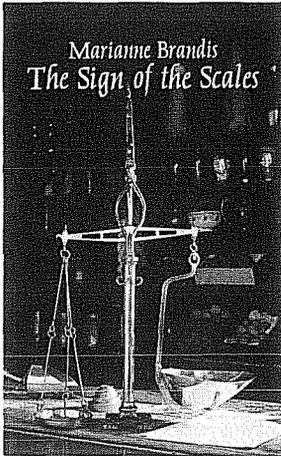
Il va sans dire que "La passion de Blaine" est un ouvrage que nous recommandons très vivement à tous les jeunes lecteurs qui pourront probablement s'identifier à Blaine, ou profiteront de la description de ses expériences, et qui plus est, à travers un livre très bien écrit.

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WEIGHING GIRLHOOD PROBLEMS

The sign of the scales. Marianne Brandis. Porcupine's Quill, 1990. 160 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88984-103-9.

Like the other two young adult historical novels in Marianne Brandis's series tracing the growth of Emma Anderson in Upper Canada of the mid-1800s, *The*



sign of the scales has at its heart (and in its title) an important image; in this case, scales. The scales act as both the symbol for justice, a concept with which Emma grapples in this novel, and a metaphor for the particular stage of consciousness and sensibility in the process of Emma's growth and learning that is depicted in the novel.

Emma, at fifteen years old, is neither fully adult nor fully child. In her work at her aunt's hotel and at the Freemans' store (where she is sent by her aunt to help out and to safeguard her aunt's investment), she is expected to be a responsible adult, but on occasion feels tugs of childlike helplessness. And this is what the book is about: Emma's balancing act, her learning to balance what she feels with what she knows, her impulse with her reason. Marking this stage in her growth are her realization of some instinctive adult impulses such as the urge to mother her younger brother John, her desire to assert her ideas, and her recognition of the complexity of social relations and of human justice.

The image of the scales enters the novel when Emma finds a depiction of them on an old sign in a back room of the Freemans' store; as part of her work at the Freemans' store she must also learn how to use the actual weighscales. Emma's final triumph in coming to grips with the concept of justice and with her own transition to adulthood is marked when the sign is cleaned and put up again, and when she finally polishes the scales and learns how to use them properly.

Altruism often strikes at fifteen, a difficult age in any century. But as a jaded adult, I have one difficulty with Emma: her altruism often takes the form of puritanism. This is most apparent in her horror – almost disgust – at the idea of smuggling, and in her impatience with Charlie Freeman's passivity and with the invalid Rose Freeman's lack of motivation, as well as in her reaction upon encountering drunkenness. In other words, having had to struggle and take more than her share of responsibilities up to the age of fifteen, she has little patience with the hopelessness of other people's lives.

It is difficult to tell whether Brandis intends to present such puritanism as a quality of the sensibility of a typical fifteen-year-old. Assuming that the often black-and-white moral judging and stereotyping of people and events is a function of Emma's inexperienced perception and not of the writer's sensibility, the reader finds a subtle measure of Emma's growth in her gradual awareness that such moral judgement does not do justice to the complexity of human life and ethical responsibility: true justice, Mrs. Morgan tells her, is meant to be impartial and to weigh fully all evidence.

Social consciousness in the novel is presented ambiguously at times. For instance, when Emma meets some disoriented immigrants traveling to York from England, she notes that these, among the many others that arrive daily, will be met by the "committee of substantial people in York" (124) formed to help integrate the immigrants into the New World society. But, she realizes, while the impulse behind the setting up of this committee was partly benevolent, it was mainly born of a desire to keep the streets clear of low-life. What does Emma think of this? We do not know.

But the reader is certainly led to sympathize with Emma, not because she has not attained what she thought was "her rightful place as a gentlewoman" (*Quarter-pie window* 9), but because of her workload, which increases daily, and of the nature of the tasks she must perform, made particularly difficult by the era in which she lives. Brandis has achieved a good balance of narrative and historical detail. The details of the material culture of Toronto past are fascinating in their own right.

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OF POST HOLES AND FENCES

Dare. Marilyn Halvorson. Stoddart, 1988. 191 pp., paper \$9.95 ISBN 0-7737-5216-0; **Sixteen is spelled O-U-C-H.** Joan Weir. Stoddart, 1988. 138 pp., paper \$9.95 ISBN 0-7737-5229-3.

Bad boy reluctantly spends the summer on a ranch where he learns the value of hard work and, after a crucial incident involving a horse, makes an important discovery about himself. Add that the boy is sixteen and the first-person narrator of the novel, and you have a sparse but accurate account of both Marilyn Halvorson's *Dare* and Joan Weir's *Sixteen is spelled O-U-C-H*. But, as the titles suggest, this is where the similarity ends.

Weir's title indicates the relative simplicity and naivete which mark her story – perhaps because her narrator Tim lacks insight. That's clearly her intent, but it limits the telling of her tale. More difficult to justify is the story's didacticism, even in the romantic sub-plot. Tim tries to fit into ranch life, in order to fit into the heart of the ranch owners' sixteen-year-old daughter Hilary. En route he learns about the value not only of hard work, but also of community and racial tolerance. In a modern jousting tournament at the mid-summer rodeo, the chivalric virtues of honesty and brotherhood are strongly touted: consequently, after a prolonged struggle Tim admits his responsibility for an accident involving the ranch owner's favorite horse.