

## Editorial

In this issue of *Canadian Children's Literature*, we introduce you to the literature of Newfoundland and Labrador and its contribution to the wider world of books for young readers. Here you will encounter a body of writing that reflects Newfoundland literature as a whole. It carries with it a memory of the recent colonial past and a desire for a distinctive regional voice.

The early literature of Newfoundland and Labrador came principally from outsiders or visitors. Only in recent decades have resident writers redefined the local experience. But as William Westfall has pointed out in an essay in the *Journal of Canadian Studies* (Summer 1980), writers can no longer be expected simply to reflect the identity of a region. They help create it. By so doing, they challenge the notion that there is somehow a central myth that serves the country as a whole.

We begin with an essay on children's magazines of the nineteenth century, wherein Gordon Moyles demonstrates how magazine literature has reflected British and American colonial interests. Here, Newfoundland and Labrador are featured as overseas territories beyond the experience of readers – sometimes beyond that of the writers, many of whom had never visited there. These writers helped to invent a Newfoundland that consisted of certain familiar features: ice and snow, sea monsters, and genial inhabitants who welcomed the stranger. Literature associated with the outsider or visitor established a kind of writing that would fix the literary boundaries of Newfoundland for decades. In these pages, Newfoundland became not so much a place as a *topos*: what Edward Said defines, in *Orientalism* (1978), as "a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work...or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these."

There is no better example of the representations of the visitor than the writings of Wilfred Grenfell, the British missionary and social reformer who arrived in Newfoundland en route to the Labrador coast at the end of the nineteenth century. Through his relentless appeals for funds throughout Canada, Britain and the United States and his frequent contributions to juvenile magazines, Grenfell was the chief non-resident exponent of Newfoundland and Labrador for several decades of this century. His prolific journalism, fiction and non-fiction identified a rugged and sometimes cheerless place in-

habited by a race of Anglo-Saxons who had somehow been "refined" by their exposure to the elements, a genial people calling out for assistance. Grenfell's ideas for Newfoundland and Labrador required a sympathetic readership. His portraits of the region and its people were calculated to give an impression of overwhelming need.

In the years following Confederation in 1949, especially since 1970, the process of regional identification through literature grows more complex. From this point, we encounter a growing number of resident writers torn between regional identity and the desire to seek out new ground in keeping with North Americans elsewhere. Lloyd Brown, in his essay on the novels of Kevin Major, reveals how Major is able to evoke his immediate surroundings yet reach outside. Brown takes issue with Major's portrayal of moral and social attitudes, but he never dismisses Major's skill in revealing the operations of the teenage mind.

*Ask me no questions*, by Linda Phillips, Peter Ringrose and Michael Winter, represents a different kind of regional expression. These three authors surmount the constraints of regionalism through what we might call, for want of a better term, the therapy novel, one that evokes the Newfoundland experience but occupies itself with a social problem of interest to young readers everywhere. These authors must balance the problems of narration with the larger task of resolving a case of sexual abuse. And they must do something more; create a sense of how young readers conceive of the law. Such readers will not usually regard the law the way adults do. They are not usually interested in claiming real estate or establishing corporate boundaries. But the law will make sense to them as a protector that must be permitted to serve them.

Finally Betty Brett's review essay and Cathy Simpson's bibliography provide some sense of the range and diversity of Newfoundland writing for young readers over the past twenty years. These two contributions are by no means exhaustive, but they show that the best writing and illustrating seem to work when they break out of the regional vacuum; transcend provincial boundaries and evoke the universal.

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