

Fantasy and Farewell

What young child, who may have begun by looking at clouds and therein seeing elephants, ducks, faces, and many other forms, has not later gazed out a window and daydreamed of another reality; or voyaged in his imagination to another time, another place; or built castles in the air and inhabited them with figures from his imagination? What such child has not, in moments of great stress, created some imaginative world where, though besieged by outside forces and subjected to strenuous trials and tests, he not only endures but eventually triumphs, gains recognition – and can return to the everyday world with new strengths, new confidence, new sense of self-worth? Or, to put it another way, what child has not stepped through a gateway into the narrative realm and found there a spiritual and psychological reality at least as real as the material one? For fantasy, as a creative power, attempts to pierce the skin of the ordinary world in order to reach the flowing life-blood and spirit of the real world within; and fantasy, as a literary product, derives its force and significance largely in so far as it deals satisfactorily with the qualities of the human spirit, with the moral struggles through which we attempt to bring into harmony the material and the ideal. As both power and product, fantasy is of immense importance to the child, and accordingly it is fitting that this special double issue¹ be focused on fantasy in Canadian children's literature.

In more ways than one, however, this issue is "special". For example, it marks a kind of anniversary: six years have passed since *CCL* was first conceived, almost five since our first issue appeared. But it is also special, at least to me, because it is my last issue as Editor. In future I will continue my relationship with *CCL* through the Editorial Board and occasional guest editorship of special issues, but no longer will I maintain the intensity of involvement I have had to date. Children's literature will not be neglected, but my other research, writing and editorial interests (e.g., Editor of the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*) – as well as my family and myself – will get a little more of my time.

¹*CCL* has more material than we were able to include even in a double issue; consequently, a substantial portion of our next general issue will also be devoted to fantasy.

When one starts on a journey after staying long in one's place, one's feelings are often mixed: a sense of relief, an excitement at what is ahead, but also a curious regret in leaving, and fond memories of what has passed. As I look back, I think of what has been accomplished by Mary, Elizabeth, Glenys, and me — for we have worked *together*, in *partnership*, and the magazine is a *shared* success, the product of our *collective* efforts.

What we did was, and remains, unique in Canada: we founded a scholarly journal devoted to the serious study and review of Canadian children's literature. We were aware that Canadian children's literature is an essential element in Canadian cultural survival and that serious literary art — for any audience — deserves serious critical attention. We dedicated ourselves to producing such attention, and the results have been staggering. *CCL* has built up an expanding and irreplaceable network of writers, critics, and reviewers to the point where, in sixteen issues, we have published over 70 articles, interviews and bibliographies plus more than 175 review-articles and reviews by about 180 Canadian writers: actors, authors, illustrators, librarians, teachers, professors. In the words of one SSHRC assessment, *CCL* is "the most important scholarly journal dealing with literature that has been initiated in recent years"; while, according to another, "the journal makes a unique contribution In some ways it has gone far to create its own field of interest, and that is an important one for our country."

Further, we have published a number of special issues, among them ones on The Works of L.M. Montgomery, on Canadian Children's Drama and Theatre, on The Loughborough International Seminar devoted to Canadian Children's Literature, and — of course — on Fantasy. Other special issues are being prepared and will be published in the near future: examples include a definitive edition of Frederick Philip Grove's boy's tale, *The Adventures of Leonard Broadus*; The Best of the *Snow Drop* (Canada's first children's magazine); The Papers of the ACQL Conference on Children's Literature in Canada; and so on.

Overall, *CCL* has left me with a sense of meaningful accomplishment plus many good memories which far outweigh the occasional frustrations with printers and the various other ills that editors are heir to. What made things so much easier during these grim times was the unfailing congeniality, dedication, and hard work of my three fellow editors, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have worked with them. Because of these three people, it is clear to me that *CCL's* future will be at least as successful as its past.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the continuing inspiration I have received from my twelve-year-old son, Winston, with whom I have shared many adventures in fantasy and who has taught me some important things about goodness, truth, and beauty — not to mention computer science.

JOHN R. SORFLEET