

duire en une solution moderne et réelle: le verdoisement de la ville pour le plus grand épanouissement des gens et des bêtes.

Voilà donc un album à recommander sans réserve par ses qualités littéraires et visuelles.

Il me semble, en outre, que si on élimine de nos jours les messages sexistes dans la littérature scolaire, on devrait faire disparaître aussi, de cet amas de livres qui exploitent l'attrait qu'exercent sur la jeunesse les animaux, les messages irréfléchis et néfastes pour notre faune menacée.

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GROWING UP IN THE SADDLE

Boss of the Namko drive, Paul St. Pierre. Douglas & McIntyre, 1986. 115 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88894-494-2.

At the very start of a drive which will take nearly 200 cattle from the British Columbian hinterland to the railhead at Williams Lake, the boss is thrown by his singularly bloody-minded horse and fractures his leg. To the consternation of his wife, and more especially his fifteen-year-old son Delore, he then insists that Delore, rather than one of the older cowboys, take charge on the 200 mile trek. And so begins a tale which is essentially a familiar one: that of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Faced with adult responsibility for the first time, Delore makes his share of blunders and misjudgements, but comes through in the end, leading the drive into town with the loss only of his boots (thrown in the campfire) and one of the cowboys (who stays behind *en route* to indulge in a prolonged drinking bout).

The main strength of the story lies in its descriptive realism. The routine details of the journey — laying a fire, setting up camp, the awfulness of the cooking — all are vividly evoked with an economy and sureness of touch which makes the book a pleasure to read. The actual mechanics of the drive — who does what, and how — are likewise impressively brought to life. Yet this strength, paradoxically, is also a source, if not of weakness, at least of a certain tension which exists between the setting and the actual events of the narrative. Laid against so convincingly sketched a back-

ground, the plot itself tends to seem oversensational — the stuff of juvenile fantasy, rather than the realistic portrayal of a young man coming to grips with experience. There is a near escape from drowning, a confrontation with an escaped murderer, and a narrowly avoided beating-up by a drunken Indian (a rather distasteful racial stereotype, this) — not to mention a stampede, and the discovery that the devoutly religious cowhand on whose advice Delore chiefly relies is a secret alcoholic. All this, in the space of little more than 100 pages, begins to undermine the suspension of disbelief which Paul St. Pierre's command of descriptive detail has created.

While the elegance of St. Pierre's writing ensures that the book remains an absorbing read, this cramming of events into so short a space makes Delore's initiation into adult responsibility begin to seem a nightmare which any normal fifteen-year-old would go a long way to avoid, rather than an experience with which he or she might identify. One or two fewer crises, and a little more variety of pacing, would go a long way to rectifying this. Nevertheless, one is reluctant to be too critical of a work with so splendidly downbeat an ending as this one, with the bedraggled Delore riding into town wearing running shoes and soaked to the skin, to be greeted by the grumbling of a father who seems almost as ornery as the horse that threw him. That very absence of parental recognition is a touch which many of St. Pierre's readers will no doubt find all too realistic.

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AN IMPORTANT ANIMAL STORY

Red Fox, Charles G. D. Roberts. Illus. John Schoenherr. Scholastic-TAB, 1986. 187 pp. \$3.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-71604-2.

Some four or five years ago when I tried to re-order Charles G.D. Robert's *Red Fox* for a class, I discovered that the Puffin edition had gone out of print. Mildly annoyed, I looked elsewhere for an appropriate example of the realistic animal tale, but soon realized how unsuitable the other representatives of the genre were for a young audience. Now, in 1986, *Red Fox* has come back into print, this time as a Scholastic-TAB Publication.

This new edition provides no critical apparatus, or introduction. It simply