

"moi j'ai toujours tort", "il ne pouvait rien refuser à son petit chouchou", etc. Mais la leçon de psychologie familiale vaut-elle autant pour les enfants, à qui le livre est destiné? Les enfants à qui nous avons fait lire *Le chouchou* n'ont pas su prendre le recul nécessaire: Zunik, le mal aimé, l'incompris, est vraiment victime de la machiavélique Ariane qui vient voler crayons, paix et père. Le thème de la jalousie y est bien exploité; nous aurions cependant préféré que le livre propose une solution, qu'il soumette à l'enfant une explication, une dédramatisation de ce qu'il éprouve face au sentiment d'injustice dont il se croit victime lorsqu'il a à partager quelque'un qu'il aime.

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WILDERNESS SURVIVAL

Canadian Crusoes: a tale of the Rice Lake Plain, Catharine Parr Traill. Ed. Rupert Schieder. Carleton University Press, 1986. 324 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88629-035-X.

This edition of Catharine Parr Traill's long-out-of-print juvenile novel, prepared with great scholarly care by the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts at Carleton University, will be welcomed by those interested in broadening the canon of early Canadian literature. Very popular during the Victorian era, *Canadian Crusoes* remained in print in many British and American versions from its original publication in 1852 until its first Canadian edition in 1923. In his fine preface and introduction, editor Rupert Schieder reveals the thoroughness of his research into the history of the book's composition, publication, and reception, from 1837 when Traill apparently first contemplated writing a story of lost children to Schieder's own boyhood enjoyment of the tale many decades later.

Today the book is less likely to appeal to the Judy Blume generation of juvenile readers than to adults interested in Canadian cultural history. In common with most children's literature, its narrative transparency openly proclaims the values of the society in which and for whom it was written, giving us a clear view of its code of political, racial, sexual, economic and religious values. In this case, Traill's account of the survival of a quartet of adolescents--a pair of half-Scottish, half-French siblings, their French-Canadian cousin, and an abandoned Indian girl--is infused with the Protestant work

ethic (although the children are nominally Catholic) and the implicit supremacy of white, Anglo male power. In characterizing the children Traill subscribes to the racial and gender stereotypes of her era. Louis is given the "French" qualities of instability, inventiveness, and love of fine food; Catharine is dependent and motherly and the only one to suffer serious injury; Indiana is a pure noble savage prepared to sacrifice herself for her white benefactors; and stalwart Hector Maxwell is ever the prudent, nation-building Scot.

Traill's overt purpose is to teach her young readers about the natural history of Canada while entertaining them with a fantasy describing how her heroes manage to enjoy two full years on their own in the wilderness near Rice Lake, their survival skills enhanced by those of the Mohawk girl who fortuitously joins them. On their own level, the white children re-enact the pioneer fable that had brought their parents (and their author) to the New World: reason and knowledge, properly applied to the natural abundance of North America, will inevitably produce relative prosperity. The plot is fleshed out with encyclopaedic nature lore, instructions on conduct, and Christian proselytizing as the white children gradually convert their Indian friend. Once baptized, Indiana becomes an acceptable spouse for one of her playmates. After the children are found their adventure eventually culminates in a double marriage blending the country's British, French and Indian heritages, the latter two being subsumed into the dominant white, English-speaking order, thus on a personal level replicating the projected national pattern of their country's social history.

For its inscription of the mindset of early Victorian Canada, *Canadian Crusoes* should quickly acquire an essential position in the field of Canadian Studies as well as on the shelf of significant texts in Canadian literature, history, and, of course, children's literature.

Carole Gerson, *author of A purer taste: the reading and writing of fiction in English in nineteenth-century Canada (forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press), is currently researching early Canadian women writers.*

TRIUMPH OF COURAGE

Different Dragons. Jean Little. Illus. Laura Fernandez. Viking Kestrel, 1986. 123 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-670-80836-9.

The title notwithstanding, *Different dragons* is a gentle story with an uncomplicated story line and asatisfying conclusion. The action is lively, the dialogue natural, the humour refreshing.