

conclure: *Beaucoup de bruit pour rien*. Permettons-nous ce reproche d'autant plus volontiers que nous nous empressons d'ajouter que, par ailleurs, Francine Pelletier est un authentique écrivain. Ses nouvelles en font foi. Mais la preuve la plus forte sera sans aucun doute son deuxième roman *Mort sur le Redan* (1988) qui par son style alerte et son intérêt dramatique soutenu fait augurer pour l'auteur une heureuse carrière. Il fallait se lancer et assumer les risques. C'est fait. Francine Pelletier semble maintenant bien partie!

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## BEYOND SKATEBOARDING

**Skateboard shakedown.** Lesley Choyce. Formac Publishing, 1989. 98 pp., cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88780-073-2, 0-88780-073-4; **The rock.** Paul Kropp. Stoddart, 1989. 160 pp., cloth, paper. ISBN 0-7737-2366-8, 0-7737-5312-5.

In this novel, Lesley Choyce takes advantage of the present skate board craze in North America to write a story about innocent but rebellious youth in conflict with the traditional forces of law and order. *Skateboard shakedown* is a story about a skateboard aficionado, Gary Sutherland, who, along with a gang of his friends, one of whom happens to be his enterprising girl-friend, Sheila, take on a corrupt mayor who wishes to turn an abandoned public swimming pool site – now a natural skateboard haven – into a shopping mall. The thrill of reckless and potentially dangerous skateboarding at this site comes to symbolize for the readers, if not for the skateboarders themselves, "the feeling of freedom, independence, and even power" that is so much a part of youth. For Gary and his friends, the town does not need "another crummy shopping centre," especially when this shopping centre threatens the innocent fun that this youthful group experiences as they fly through the air on their skateboards. Reader sympathy for the children's cause against the forces of capitalism, big business, and trade and commerce becomes stronger when we learn that the land on which the future shopping centre is to sit has been sold to the developer in a shady way by a corrupt mayor.

Initially in this story it looks as if the forces of youth and young love are going to be pitted against the restraining adult world, with little or no qualification: as the novel opens Gary is caught by the police skateboarding at the pool site and taken into custody; in order to get himself out of this uncomfortable situation without his parents' knowledge, Gary phones his girlfriend and trickster soul-mate, Sheila, who comes to the police station impersonating his sister, manages to have him released by telling the police a couple of lies, and without a licence drives Gary home in her parents' car which she has

taken from their driveway without permission. When her parents find out about this escapade, they prohibit their daughter from seeing Gary any longer. In addition, Gary is *persona non grata* with the school principal who finds a sleazy comic book in Gary's school locker. Even the local television station turns an attempt on the part of the gang to publicize their cause and "dream" into an indictment of skateboarders.

However, as the novel reaches its climax, parents and children come together to work against corruption in high places. Gary's father, who has shown glimmers of sympathy for his son's goals and behaviour throughout the novel, finally gives his wholehearted support to his son's attempts to expose the corruption behind the shopping centre scheme. As a result of his experiences with the seamy side of big business, and following his rescue of Sheila after her near tragic skateboard ride into the pool, Gary comes to learn (rather too suddenly some readers might feel) that there is more to life than skateboarding and that "Maybe nothing lasted forever" except the love that he and Sheila have for each other. Gary's dream to have the "Grave" reserved as a skateboard centre is itself buried, the author seems to suggest, because of what Gary has learned about the world of experience that exists beyond the perimeter of the abandoned swimming pool.

Paul Kropp's *The rock* is a story about the inevitable end of youthful friendships (another "nothing lasts forever" saga) as well as a warning to all of those who "quaff the cup of life too quickly" or, indeed, too recklessly. The story's hero, or anti-hero as it turns out, is Anthony LaRoche, or the Rock as he is affectionately called by all of his friends. The Rock is tough, lousy at school, ready to risk all for his honour, loyal to his friends, formidable with enemies, and prepared to tell the world to "sit on it" if the values of that world collide with what he regards as his or his friends' code of conduct. He is a born leader, at least for those impressed by youthful daring, strength, and courage as are his gang of three followers: his sister Nikki, and his two close friends Simon and the Beak, the novel's narrator. However, for those of us who have already read or read about *Skateboard shakedown* or numerous other children's stories which employ the *ubi sunt* theme, nothing is certain in life but change, and those qualities which initially endear the Rock to his friends and to the reader inevitably lead to his downfall and untimely death. Following the failure of his father's business and the success and upward mobility of Beak and his family who move away from the neighbourhood to a better part of town, the always daring and unconventional Rock joins up with a gang which was initially his enemy and ends his days hooked on various non-prescription chemicals, cocaine and crack being the two most often mentioned in the novel.

The novel is in the form of a flashback with the narrator Beak telling it after visiting the cemetery where the Rock is buried. Now more mature after having completed his first year at McGill University, he can capture in his story both the appeal that Rock had for all of those with whom he came in con-

tact as well the naïvete and carefree recklessness of youth who regard themselves as immortal, invincible, and all too certain of the rightness of their actions. This novel about a youthful Bussy D'Ambois would be a good gift for children whose parents want them to recognize the dangers of their carefree actions and of drugs but who are reluctant to get on their kids' case for fear of alienating them. And as an added bonus, it is also a well-written story.

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### YOUNG ADULTS AND FAMILY STRESS

***I'll tell you Tuesday if I live that long.*** Cherylyn Stacey. Tree Frog Press, 1989. 160 pp., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88967-064-1; ***Thirteen never changes.*** Budge Wilson. Scholastic-TAB, 1989. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-73134-3.

Canadian novelists are exploring the Young Adult novel with some success. At its best, the typical YA story relates a coming-of-age theme with sensitivity and insight, using humour, light dialogue and provocative situations to hold the young reader. The genre, unfortunately, may often be riddled with angst, genuine but unpalatable, trendiness and terminal cuteness, and the poorest language.

*I'll tell you Tuesday if I live that long*, by Cherylyn Stacey, and *Thirteen never changes*, by Budge Wilson, both focus on adolescents approaching womanhood. The titles reflect the catchiness needed to grasp the fleeing attention of a volatile audience. Both books describe very loving families but only one family is intact and traditional. Both books ignore the multicultural nature of modern Canada.

*I'll tell you Tuesday if I live that long* is a first book by a single mother of two daughters who attempts, in a determined but awkward way, to deal with the hard realities of growing up. The opening sentence, "Mom's boyfriends were the pits," sets the tone of the book, a crude rather charmless patter that is meant to reflect the mores of today. Fourteen-year-old Vicky is confused, angry, and out-spoken. Her mother is remarrying a kind man, but Vicky, while aware of her own father's shallowness, still loves and misses him. After the wedding, Vicky travels with her own dad to Disney World and then must rejoin her new family on a teen beach in California – a minor version of hell. Vicky is incredibly alone in this very crowded place and woefully insecure. Totally self-absorbed, she is afraid to eat outside, afraid to be seen as a loser and absolutely terrified that she won't present the right image. As a book stressing the importance of "image" at the moment of moving into a new family