

Editorial: The Energy of Response

One trend contributing to the increasing focus on children's literature is the rise of "reader response" criticism. Once critics recognize that a book is not simply a text fixed on the page but also an experience lifted off that page into the imagination of the individual reader, it is a short step to developing a particular interest in the responses of beginning readers. In *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*, pioneering critic Louis Rosenblatt focused on the intensity of reading responses in school children. This issue of *CCL* expands that focus, with particular reference to Canadian books and to young Canadian readers. Our contributors explore the implications and ramifications of response theory vis-a-vis the children who experience Canadian books in French or English.

Claire Mackay muses over the catharsis reported to her by readers who identify intensely with disturbing experiences in such a book as *Exit Barney McGee*. Françoise Lepage reports the paradox of an illustrator, James McIsaac, virtually unknown as an individual artist, yet capable of drawing intense and significant responses from virtually every Quebec child over a fifty-year period. University lecturer Elin Elgaard retraces her efforts to stimulate comparable responses in a college class reading a Canadian children's classic, and S.R. MacGillivray discusses the way a Canadian author's response to reading books for boys was transmitted into a very different kind of fiction. Finally, author-illustrator Patricia Quinlan speaks to an interviewer of the energy she feels in little children's response to her work, and links this with the energy she herself finds in life elements that impel her to artistic creation. As a post-script, we include a response to our earlier issue on "Reading Remembered" (*CCL*, # 53). Here a British critic recalls reading, while in school in England, a book by a now-obscure Canadian novelist: her remembered response illuminates and enriches some of the assumptions of transactional theorists.