

Jeremy travels the inner road to maturity in *Jeremy's decision* by flouting family tradition in making a career choice. He's flustered and guilt-ridden every time he's asked by well-meaning adults if he intends to become a conductor like his famous father. After one of his father's concerts and four such queries in one night, Jeremy is delighted and relieved to meet an adult who notices the book he carries everywhere and asks if he's interested in dinosaurs. As Jeremy responds enthusiastically, his plans for the future coalesce and he blurts out his decision to become a paleontologist. The guests are shocked but Jeremy's parents seem pleased. The clever twist at the end of the book is the revelation that Jeremy's sister is the child who eventually follows in her father's footsteps.

Adults don't appear too intelligent in this farcical send-up, but the horrible truth is that this *is* a standard and tempting question for adults to put to children. Martchenko's wacky characters are just right, especially the corpulent balding gent who snoozes through the concert and the overdressed fat lady. Brott's tale is lightweight, but certainly breezy and amusing and he does touch on something that concerns every child.

For the most part, these books with their insouciant, take-charge protagonists promote the concept of the child as arbiter of his or her own fate. Not only are the characters effective and enterprising but their willing acceptance of magical conditions reinforces the buoyant belief of children that wonderfully strange things not only can but will happen to them.

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PRIMITIVE FANTASY

The incredible Mungwort quest. Moe Price. Illus. Norman Eyolfson. McClelland & Stewart, 1990. 128 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7710-7154-X.

A good witch and a bad witch competing for power over the world, two children (of different sexes, to insure an identification object for the reader) and an odd companion on a quest that only humans can accomplish, playing against time just before Halloween/New Year's Eve/Beltane. [Check one]. This is *The incredible Mungwort quest*, predictable from the very first page, an unexciting outline for a primitive computer game.

The children in this novel are just instruments in a superficial quest who go obligingly wherever they are sent, move neatly from station to station [Insert disc 2], pursued by enemies and assisted by friends, until they reach the final destination, fight a quiet combat and are brought back safely by a magic ring. Not even the scientifically minded Danny gets any wiser, while Louise

just thinks "This was better than any romantic fantasy." All memory of the experience is just wiped from them. [Press DELETE to clear screen].

Moe Price has evidently ignored the evolution of the modern fantasy genre. After Alan Garner, Madeleine L'Engle, Diana Wynne Jones or Michael Ende, you cannot possibly write fantasy in the good old unsophisticated C.S. Lewis style. Modern authors use the fantasy form to investigate the inner landscape of young protagonists, to discuss existential questions where good and evil are never absolute categories.

This fantasy is not, of course, without humour and it is certainly enjoyable for a less demanding reader. But to every story there is a question: why has it been written? Does it contribute anything new to the genre it participates in? Does it say something essential to the reader? If most of the answers are "no" the book is nothing but speculative. It is not a coincidence that Danny is keen on computers and *Star wars*. It is also symptomatic that a male author portrays the evil as a female figure – a pattern deeply rooted in the unconscious where the opposite sex, we are told by psychoanalytically interested critics, is instinctively felt as not totally human. [Press ESCAPE to quit].

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VOYAGE TEMPOREL: LES RACINES IRLANDAISES

Le passé en péril. Johanne Massé. Montréal, Paulines, 1990, 116 pp., 6,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89039-460-3.



Johanne Massé vient de nous livrer son troisième roman pour la jeunesse et son troisième récit de science-fiction. Les titres des trois romans – "De l'autre côté de l'avenir" (1985), "Contre le temps" (1987) et "le Passé en péril" (1990) – témoignent du choix sans équivoque d'un axe thématique: le voyage temporel.

Parmi les grands thèmes de la science-fiction moderne, l'exploration du temps, de l'Histoire et des multiples possibles historiques, est celui qui a le moins attiré les auteurs québécois pour la jeunesse. *Patrick et Sophie en fusée* (1975), cette plongée de Monique Coriveau dans le passé des Mic-Macs de Gaspésie, est longtemps resté sans postérité. Puis, ces dernières années, nous avons pu lire *Simon Yourm* (Gaëtan Leboeuf, 1986), *le Voyage*