

## TALL TALES

**Covered bridge.** Brian Doyle. Douglas & McIntyre, 1990. 117 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-8889-122-3.

*Covered bridge* is the sixth novel for young readers (10-15) by Ottawa high-school teacher, Brian Doyle. Of his previous novels: *Hey, dad!* (1978); *You can pick me up at Peggy's Cove* (1979); *Up to Low* (1982); *Angel Square* (1984) and *Easy Avenue* (1988), two won the Canadian Library Association's Book of the Year Awards.

Brian Doyle writes about Irish-Canadian life in Ottawa and the Gatineau hills. He is a natural storyteller with a lively sense of caricature, fantasy and descriptive language. Take, for example, the following description of the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club at the close of *Easy Avenue*:

...I was remembering how the early morning sun used to be on the wet putting green glistening silver off the dew. The green slopes down and the fairway rolls away down into the mist and then comes up again soft and green.

The little tin flags sticking up out of the holes on the putting green. And a spider string or two, beads of dew glistening down on them.

And maybe there's one golfer out there practicing his putting, the ball making little rainbows when it plows its little way, throwing up a spray in the early morning. (117)

Hitting his stride as a writer by finding the material most congenial to him in his third novel, *Up to Low*, Brian Doyle has since then worked a vein of nostalgia prompted presumably by his own experience of growing up in Ottawa and the Gatineau hills. *Covered bridge* is, in fact, a sequel to *Easy Avenue*. Doyle simply continues the story of orphan-narrator Hubbo O'Driscoll and his adoptive mother Mrs. O'Driscoll. But with the return from the war of O'Driscoll that ended *Easy Avenue*, the family move from the Emergency Shelter outside Ottawa to a farm in the Gatineaus. Hubbo's sweetheart Fleurette Featherstone Fitchell has disappeared and the novel ends with Hubbo, at last, receiving a letter from her. Brian Doyle, like Dickens, favours the sentimental ending.

Hubbo and the O'Driscolls manage to save a covered bridge from demolition. In the words of their petition the bridge is saved "for Posterity. For, without a past, we have no future" (93). Believing, albeit at times sentimentally, in the possibility of human love, Brian Doyle stresses traditional values of family loyalty and the need to link the past in the present to the future. The covered bridge symbolises this connection. It is linked to the postman Oscar McCracken's love for Ophelia Brown who leapt to her death from the bridge as a consequence of her terminal illness. Harshly, Father Foley refused to bury her in consecrated ground. Hubbo and Oscar rectify this and significantly it is Oscar who in the last lines of the novel hands Hubbo his long awaited letter

from Fleurette. Love triumphs over death.

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## UN ROMAN POLICIER HUMORISTIQUE

**La licorne de Pékin.** Yves E. Arnau, Illus. Caroline Merola, Montréal, Tisseyre, 1990. 128 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89051-313-1.

Avec *La licorne de Pékin*, Yves E. Arnau nous offre la troisième aventure de son fameux détective, Edgar Allan. L'intrigue de ce roman policier pour jeunes entre 10 et 12 ans se résume assez facilement. Lors d'une enquête antérieure, Edgar Allan avait réussi à retrouver et à rendre à ses propriétaires la licorne de Pékin. Au début de notre roman, on annonce dans la presse que la licorne est une réplique. La redoutable équipe du No 1, l'ennemi juré d'Edgar Allan, croyant que notre enquêteur a conservé l'original lui tend un piège. Comme il se doit, notre détective et son jeune assistant Ben Saïda ne peuvent s'empêcher de tomber entre leurs mains. Il revient donc à Colbert, le chien-détective de Ben, et à Marguerite, la tante d'Edgar, de trouver une façon de les secourir tout en réglant le mystère de la licorne.



Suite à ce court résumé, une conclusion s'impose: il ne s'agit pas ici d'un récit policier dans le sens strict du terme. Nous sommes même assez éloignés d'une enquête traditionnelle à la Conan Doyle. On assiste plutôt à une série d'aventures assez stéréotypées qui ont comme but principal la libération des protagonistes et la résolution finale de l'énigme de la licorne. Par ailleurs, le lecteur ou la lectrice qui s'attendant à rencontrer un enquêteur de la trempe de Sherlock Holmes seront déçus. Edgar Allan ressemble à un de ces éternels adolescents comme Tintin ou plus précisément comme Jérôme K. Bloche, ce jeune détective parisien, très populaire en ce moment dans l'univers de la bande dessinée. D'un point de vue générique, il va sans dire que le texte prend certaines libertés avec le genre. Notre roman s'apparente ainsi à un récit