

locate the reader in terms of place or time. The other was what seemed an over-reliance on the theories of Piaget as markers of childhood development, though perhaps that is quibbling given the wide acceptance Piagetian stages have in the popular mind. Despite these flaws, the work offers the reader a comprehensive, straightforward appraisal of masses of material from past to present and a perceptive look at Canadian identity.

Joanne Buckley teaches children's literature at The University of Western Ontario.

CLAIRE MOWAT: ALIENATION-BY-THE-NUMBERS

The girl from away. Claire Mowat. Illus. Malcolm Cullen. Key Porter, 1992. 92 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-428-0.

Claire Mowat's *The girl from away* is well-intentioned, completely positive fiction: it is also conventional, predictable, and dull.

One problem is that thirteen-year-old Andrea Baxter, despite repeated complaints that her life is irrevocably ruined because her widowed mother is remarrying, seems a painted-by-the-numbers alienated teenager. Another problem is that the two strands of the plot, both of which involve Andrea's coming to a satisfactory sense of identity, are completely predictable and unconvincing thematic contrivances. In the first, Andrea's mother sends her to spend Christmas with relatives in Newfoundland while she honeymoones in Florida. This, and the fact that her uncle is away at sea, intensifies Andrea's oft-stated bitterness. Mowat probably intends the cheerful acceptance of vicissitudes that Andrea's hosts display to contrast with Andrea's self-absorption, but the cousins never come alive and the fleshy Aunt Pearl remains a stereotypically jolly fat woman.

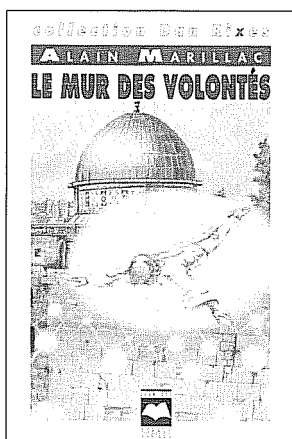
The other plot strand depends on set pieces to show Andrea's feelings of exclusion and then her awareness that she belongs. In the first of these, an anemic piece of local colour lifted from Mowat's fictionalized account of her own stay in Newfoundland, *Outport people* (1983), Andrea discovers the quaint Christmas custom of mummering, donning a disguise to fool neighbours. Although its thematic connection to the identity theme is obvious, this scene is static, developing insight into neither Newfoundlanders nor Andrea. In the second scene, a more positive version of the central episode of Farley Mowat's *A whale for the killing* (1972), Andrea joins in the rescue of a beached whale. Despite an attempt to increase tension by temporarily lapsing into the anthropomorphism of presenting a dog's feelings, this episode lacks drama, and Andrea's sudden overcoming of her unaccountable fear of boats defies belief. Furthermore, the overt parallels between the whale, which is out of its element, and Andrea, who decides to help the whale go "home," are mechanical and ineffective. In fact, Andrea's role is negligible, and her personality transformation during the rescue

hasty and implausible: told that she has acted like a fish out of water and recognizing that she is being treated as if she were one of the settlement's own people, Andrea adopts a positive attitude that carries over to her reunion with her mother. Having discovered what her mother calls her "roots in The Rock," Andrea predictably makes an overt move to accept her stepfather. Despite the good intentions evident throughout, such predictability, combined with the numerous missed opportunities for colourful and meaningful scenes, makes *The girl from away* a very disappointing novel.

Raymond E. Jones, Associate Professor of English, University of Alberta, specializes in children's literature. His publications include Canadian books for children (HBJ), which he co-authored with Jon C. Stott.

DAN RIXES ET LA MENACE DES SIÈCLES

Le Mur des volontés. Alain Marillac. Illus. Stéphane Turgeon. Éditions Hurtubise HMH Ltée, 1991. ISBN 2-89045-928-4.



Le Mur des volontés est le volume le plus récent dans la "collection Dan Rixes," d'Alain Marillac. Ce roman est destiné aux enfants de 12 ans et plus, ce qui me semble fort approprié pour des raisons de contenu et de difficulté de lecture.

Le roman commence au moment où l'on fait exploser la première bombe "électro-magnétique à effets vibratoires" dans le désert israélien. La détonation déclenche une série d'événements extraordinaires et complètement inattendus: les "formes-pensées" enfermées dans le mur des lamentations se trouvent libérées. Il en résulte que les morts, les guérisons, les miracles et les catastrophes obéissant aux vœux des fidèles se produisent de manière anarchique. Daniel Rixes, jeune magicien parisien, et Nathalie Laurent, journaliste montréalaise, sont emportés par les événements dans un monde de surnaturel et d'intrigue internationale. L'avenir du monde est entre les mains de Dan Rixes qui doit vaincre une force néfaste qui remonte au début des temps.

Le roman est très lisible dans le sens qu'il retient facilement l'attention du lecteur ému par la complexité de la tâche du héros. Le roman, avec son intrigue très bien tressée et son abondance de référents, demande un certain niveau de culture chez son lecteur. L'auteur touche à plusieurs sujets pour raconter son récit: la parapsychologie, l'archéologie, l'histoire biblique, l'histoire musulmane et même le déplacement temporel. Un des atouts de ce roman est l'absence de stéréotypes ethniques beaucoup trop fréquents dans les livres dont le décor est