

Margy, on the other hand, provides a panoramic, albeit nostalgic, look at small town Ontario during the Great Depression when appearances mattered and ladies were still ladies even if their dresses were “turned” (resewn with the inside out for renewed wear). It is a gentle story of a growing warmth between a bewildered young girl and her frosty aunts but, unlike *Corinne*, it is hard to imagine *Margy* in a 1990s setting. There is a decided “glimpse of the past” feel to this story.

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“ANGELS WATCHIN’ OVER ME”

My Mother’s Ghost. Margaret Buffie. Kids Can Press, 1992. 215 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55074-091-1.

Following the death of her younger brother Scotty, Jessica Locke’s family leaves Winnipeg to start anew in Willow Creek, Alberta. Jessica’s father, a former RCMP officer, has chosen to re-start their family’s life in the horse ranching and recreation business. No one else is feeling his outdoor enthusiasm, least of all Jeanie Locke, Jessica’s mother, who has fallen into a deep depression penetrated from time to time by what she thinks are ghostly visions of Scotty—hence the novel’s title.

What is unique and refreshing about this particular ghost story is its linking of two generations—both mother and daughter—in their quest for the supernatural, as opposed to the more standardized plot scenario of the isolated protagonist whose ghostly experiences few would believe. In the context of books for young adults, the novel’s culminating in such a partnership is significant in that it breaks away from the alienated teen motif and allows for the incorporation of multiple perspectives while still focusing the story on the experiences of its young protagonist. Interestingly, Jeanie Locke’s perspective is highlighted by the extension of her professional career as a photographer into the realization of the novel’s supernatural sequences, all of which are seen in photo negative—an effect which simultaneously rationalizes, yet dramatizes, the silhouetted figures and glowing white pupils of the otherworldly characters.

Paralleling the structure of Margaret Buffie’s first novel for young adults, *Who Is Francis Rain?*, *My Mother’s Ghost* also deals with a modern-day family in crisis which learns to cope by developing an understanding of an historical family, from their home’s past, which experienced similar domestic difficulties. In this case the link to the past is Ian Shaw, the young, crippled son of a British remittance man and his bitterly disillusioned wife, Augusta. Augusta’s bitterness towards the pioneering life of the Canadian west, combined with her overprotectiveness of Ian, lead to his virtual imprisonment in the family house with only a journal as a temporary means of escape.

While the novel’s surrealism is delightful, the realism of its plot construction

strains credibility. The overloaded plot includes four families—three present and one past—who have experienced a collapse due to the loss of a family member. Not only are these families all connected with the ranch, but all are well on their way to healing at the end of the novel. Nevertheless, the suspenseful development of each of these plots is riveting, and the novel as a whole has much appeal for both male and female young adults.

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NEW AUTHOR WORTH WATCHING

The Prism Moon. Martine Bates. Red Deer College Press, 1993. 165pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-095-4.

The second novel by Martine Bates, *The Prism Moon*, is a sequel to her superb first novel, *The Dragon's Tapestry*. Although clearly showing the influence of writers such as Ursula Le Guin, David Eddings and Anne McCaffrey, *Tapestry* is a well-written and compelling first novel, showing many strengths of both composition and content. Characterization, particularly of the heroine Marwen, is excellent, and shows Marwen developing slowly and convincingly from an embittered loner into a heroine ready to risk her life for the lives of others. In *Moon*, Bates continues to develop the still incomplete character as Marwen makes more mistakes and learns and grows through them. Other characters from the first novel also develop, particularly the ugly Maug who chooses to become truly evil and the lovelorn Prince Camlach who becomes a hero in his own right. As explorations of the development and growth of a young person searching for and establishing her own identity, these novels cannot be topped. And as a female role model, Marwen is excellent with all her strength, courage, determination and compassion, but also her very human failings with which readers can identify.

The plot is also exciting in *Moon*. For the most part, the story is handled convincingly, and the action is rivetting. However, there are a few lapses in *Moon* that were not present or at least not so visible in *Tapestry*. Occasionally actions do not seem to follow logically from each other or connections between certain events are obscure, such as when Zephrelle, Marwen's winged steed, dies after laying a premature egg. No explanation for this unlikely death is ever given. Likewise, some of the secondary characters are not consistent. Bashag seems to change from a completely competent and certain worker of magic, to an easily ensorcelled pawn, to a despairing, weak woman who takes to her bed and waits to die. As no explanation for these changes is given, the character loses credibility. Also there are places where the dialogue is weak, so that it becomes either trite or difficult to follow.

Overall, however, the weaknesses of *The Prism Moon* do not negate its