

liner City of Benares. The pace of the book quickens appreciably when the ship is torpedoed by a German submarine, but Heneghan never loses his grip on the narrative. With such skilful control, we can forgive an ending that is perhaps a little too happy to be credible.

Janet McNaughton is an equally skilled writer, and this sequel to *Catch Me Once, Catch Me Twice* continues the story of Evelyn McCallum, a schoolgirl in St. John's, who must deal with a succession of trials that were all too common during wartime. Her father is posted as missing in action, but she nurses the hope that he will one day return. That her mother is the object of the attentions of a local doctor complicates things, especially when most of her friends encourage her to let go of the past and move on with her life. Eventually, she becomes convinced that she is the only person who cares about cherishing the memory of her father, a terrible burden for any teenager to bear. Evelyn should be an immensely sympathetic character, for McNaughton too places her in some delightfully-rendered situations. She perfectly captures the awkwardness of the maturing Evelyn, whether it be in her relations with her old friend Peter, her new friend Stan, or Dr. Thorne, the almost-too-good-to-be-true bachelor who has taken an interest in her mother. Yet despite these very engaging character sketches, I was unable to overcome the impression of Evelyn created by the cover illustration, which shows a mawkish and sullen teenager (with a decidedly 1990s aura about her) sulking in front of a school. As a result, the Evelyn of the text came across as churlish, unreasonable, and spoiled; I lost patience with her when I should have sympathized with her dilemmas and growing pains.

The impression is unfair, and certainly does not reflect upon McNaughton's ability as a storyteller. Nevertheless, it is powerful. I opened *Wish Me Luck* with a warm feeling of nostalgia for a simpler time; by the time I got to the first page of *Make or Break Spring*, I already had a vague dislike for the main character. It is a big obstacle for even the most capable writer to overcome.

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### New Wine from Old Wineskins

*The Hunchback of Notre Dame.* Tim Wynne-Jones. Illus. Bill Slavin. Key Porter, 1996. Unpag. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-773-5. *Dracula.* Tim Wynne-Jones. Illus. Laszlo Gal. Key Porter, 1997. Unpag. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-900-2.

Adapting literary works in order to attract to them a young readership is a venerable tradition dating back to at least 1807 when Charles and Mary Lamb published *Tales from Shakespear*. More recently, the Classics Illustrated series of the 1950s and 1960s offered children an (albeit lurid) introduction to a wide range of works. In their current Classic Horror Series, Key Porter aims somewhere between these,

offering children an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the plots of some high-end Gothic novels in a glossy hardback format in which the illustrations are attractively wrapped around the text. Two of these, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) and *Dracula* (1997), have been (re)written by Tim Wynne-Jones.

Victor Hugo's novel has been reworked in other media recently, notably Disney's 1995 animated feature *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Luc Plamondon's stage musical, *Notre Dame de Paris*. In adaptations the original text is disassembled and a new, and often different, construction put together from its parts. Disney's *Hunchback*, for example, elevates Hugo's vain and egocentric Phoebus — with whom Esmeralda is fatally obsessed — into a romantic hero, omits Quasimodo's (eventually tragic) deafness, and leaves Esmeralda happy and in love, rather than hanged. Is that problematic? Does a text have some sacrosanct quality, some inviolable integrity, which makes all adapted, abridged or re-told texts inevitably travesties of the originals? Or are the quintessential or mythic elements in classic tales really public property, inhabiting the collective consciousness as amorphous entities, each retelling as valid and as individual as the next? Whichever the case, Tim Wynne-Jones has retained the essential qualities of the original texts, and one hopes that these abridgements might encourage younger readers to tackle the complete novels eventually.

Wynne-Jones's longer original work, such as *The Maestro* (1995) and *Stephen Fair* (1998), is concerned with characters repairing, or at least understanding, flawed or fractured relationships, and with their forming the connections with others which help them connect with themselves. Of the two "classic" novels which he has retold for Key Porter, *Notre Dame de Paris* is the one most concerned with off-kilter relationships, and, perhaps consequently, Wynne-Jones's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is the more powerful of these adaptations. The central and tragic love/obsession rectangle at the heart of Hugo's novel is that formed by Esmeralda, Phoebus, cleric Claude Frollo and Quasimodo: girl loves boy, priest loves girl, bell-ringer loves girl, and boy loves himself. Wynne-Jones deftly relates the interplay of this (inevitably unfulfilled) set of desires but in the knowledge that Hugo's ante-Hardy concern with "ANATKH" (fate) and irony would probably be lost on young readers. Consequently, he manages to contrive a relatively happy outcome to the text, which involves Esmeralda's long-lost and self-incarcerated mother — a character often forgotten in other re-tellings. However, he does not shrink from the poignancy of the conclusion which, in his version, leaves the lonely Quasimodo wishing that he — like *Notre Dame* itself — were made of stone.

Inevitably, he has had to trim the novel to fit the format, so Esmeralda's erstwhile husband in Hugo's text, Pierre Gringoire, is reduced to a walk-on part, and the original narrator's "anti-Scrape" remarks on the need for preserving Gothic architecture have disappeared entirely. However, the strength of the original text is maintained in Wynne-Jones's powerful yet economic prose, and complemented by Bill Slavin's vivid illustrations. Slavin details both the society and architecture of mediaeval Paris from ground level while also — like Hugo — giving a bird's-eye view of the city from *Notre Dame*. His panoramas add to the text's epic quality, as do his carnivalesque, Brueghel-like depictions of the Feast of Fools and the truands' Court of Miracles.

The vulgar vivacity of Slavin's crowd scenes would, of course, not be ap-

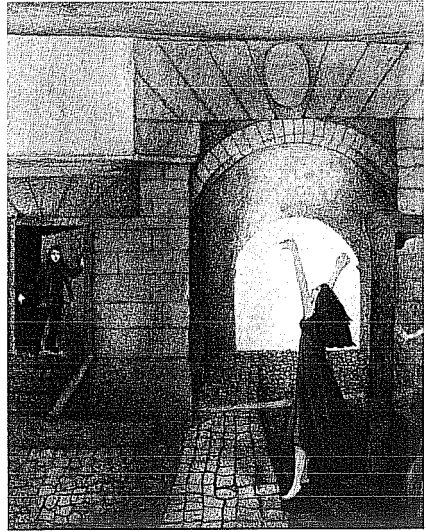


Illustration from  
*Dracula*

appropriate in the macabre and gloomy *Dracula*. Its artist, Laszlo Gal, has therefore opted for illustrations in crayon and in somewhat sombre shades. Unfortunately, while complementing the mood of the text, Gal's illustrations are less sharply defined than Slavin's and tend to have less vitality. However, since *Dracula* is a tale of the undead, perhaps the flat lifelessness of the illustrations is the very effect which Gal intends.

Whereas Hugo's *Notre Dame* is told in the third person, the narration of Stoker's *Dracula* is more complex in that it has multiple narrators. They have recorded their accounts variously in journal, diary, letter, and phonograph form. Wynne-Jones, presumably as a gesture toward respecting the integrity of the original work, has incorporated several different narrators in his version, each of whom has recorded his or her contributions on a phonograph, and whose accounts tell the tale more-or-less chronologically, from early May to the autumn of 1897. However, the text begins, ends, and is interspersed with entries from co-protagonist Jonathan Harker's journal, covering the pursuit of Dracula across Eastern Europe, beginning October 16<sup>th</sup> 1897 and ending on All Saints' Day (Wynne-Jones having suitably had Dracula despatched on Hallowe'en). This particular device is Wynne-Jones's own, and appears to be an attempt to use the chase sequence of the story's end to generate suspense through the text as a whole. While this is partially successful, there are one or two points where the narrative becomes a little confusing; for example, one page ends with Mina in pursuit of Dracula, while the next begins with her in Budapest, much earlier in the story. A more straightforward narration, in which the story's chronology was closely reflected in the ordering of its plot, would be easier to follow. Moreover, he also adopts an approximation of Stoker's Victorian — and stilted — prose which, when combined with his own typically staccato writing style, sucks some of the life from the story.

As in *The Hunchback*, Wynne-Jones has to reshuffle story elements for the sake of brevity. Two of the unfortunate Lucy's suitors, Holmwood and Morris, are conflated by Wynne-Jones in his representation of the former. Dr. Seward becomes Lucy's father, rather than her would-be lover, and his asylum — like Dracula's English base, Carfax — is located near Dracula's landfall at Whitby in the North, rather than near London. While this latter move does not detract greatly from the plot, it does orphan an earlier statement by the vampire in Wynne-Jones's text, that he has "business in the greater London area," and it consequently removes the threat to the metropolis of an epidemic of vampires. Appropriately for his multi-cultural audience, Wynne-Jones has trimmed back the original's Catholic trappings, so that Mina Harker's badge of her defilement by Dracula is not the scar left on her forehead by Van Helsing's Sacred Wafer (Stoker, Ch. XXII), but the (now) more conventional "hideous [fang] marks on her neck."

Otherwise, Wynne-Jones has stayed quite faithful to the original, and includes the macabre scene in which the un-dead Lucy's sanguinary depredations on children come to a pointedly sticky end. He even hints obliquely at the sexuality embedded in Stoker's story by referring to the "voluptuous crimson lips" of the three female vampires who threaten Harker in Dracula's castle. In fact, while Wynne-Jones's *Dracula*, for the reasons already stated, is less satisfying than his *The Hunchback*, it is not because he has failed to retain important elements of the plot. Rather, he tries to remain true to the form of the original as well as to its content when, to my mind, what makes Stoker's *Dracula* memorable is its plot rather than its author's somewhat contrived style. With *The Hunchback*, however, Wynne-Jones is not haunted by the original author, and simply (re)tells the story. To great effect.

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### **Bullies, Bugs and Beginning Readers**

As a child, I scoured the library shelves for engaging books while my father read magazines and waited patiently for me. My job was easier (and quicker) when I discovered a series: I could then read all the Anne books, for example, and lament that there weren't more. It wasn't at the library, though, that I discovered Nancy Drew. These series books were passed among my friends and we competed to see who could read the most.

Writing books for beginners is about engaging readers in various ways, and series books are certainly one way to entice children. The *business* of producing beginning novels is thriving, but it causes many of my fellow educators and academics some distress. I use the word "business" advisedly. Publishers, even here in Canada, are always looking to expand their customer base, to find a hook as