

that he skates close to creating a thoroughly dislikeable central character. Kip is a high school elitist, scorning lesser gamblers, uncool teachers and people who simply don't share his interests. Kip's opinion of an English teacher as "crabtooth, Mr. Cheese, a.k.a. Belch Face, a.k.a. Fart Machine, a.k.a. Most Boring Turd on Earth" is so acidic, so nasty, it condemns both the object and the speaker.

Foon sets up Kip's arrogance in passages such as this so that the youth's fall is the more dramatic. Along with Kip's early winning streaks, his superiority goes unchallenged, until the stakes are raised. Inevitably, he starts to lose. At first, the losses are small, then they compound and become frightening. Kip begins to test the strength of his second gambling lesson: *Never get ahead of yourself. Don't start thinking about what will happen if you win or if you lose.*

Naturally, he does begin to worry, especially after his addiction threatens his relationship with the two women in his life: his mother and his girlfriend. His mother, a self-sacrificing woman who adores her son, becomes the measure of his degradation. As his gambling addiction grows, he steals from her bank account of hard-earned cash. Once he begins to steal from her, he cannot stop. His downward spiral becomes inevitable and depressing.

This is an edgy book. The reader's journey into the psychology of a young gambler is convincing and full of tension. The plot moves relentlessly to a conclusion that is both foregone and yet suspenseful. Much of the success of the story is due to Foon's taut writing. When Kip is withdrawing money from his mother's account, he almost turns away from the bank machine but is unable to resist its lure:

The screen reads: END OF TRANSACTION?

Before I can stop it, my freed finger flies, hitting everything in sight. It punches the NO button, the WITHDRAWAL button and then ... the \$500 button.

Ten crisp, clean fifty-dollar bills emerge from the slot. I stare at the money, stunned. What just happened? How did my fingers manage to do all that so quickly?

This novel is fast-paced and entertaining, yet serious. In the end, the reader wants Kip to kick his habit and build a new, happier life.

Lyle Weis is the Edmonton author of several books for young adults and a collection of adult poetry. He teaches writing to students of all ages, across the country.

The Colours of Awareness

The Colors of Carol Molev. Beth Goobie. Roussan, 1998. 194 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 1-896184-40-5.

Sixteen and teetering on the edge of discovery, sexual and otherwise, Carol Molev

feels the wild oscillations between confidence and fear that most teens experience. For Carol, however, this discomfort is based on much more than the usual crisis of self-identity that comes with this stage of life. Carol is truly different, and knows it.

She has visions, strange disruptions accompanied by what she calls The Colours. When she is in one of these altered states, she experiences new levels of perception, which allow her to read other people's thoughts and guide their energies. "I am not crazy," Carol asserts to herself, but she often has trouble keeping everything together:

Around five pm., Carol lay on her bed, waiting for supper. She was in the middle of The Colours, fighting, but this time there was no talking them away. They came and went, thoughts without words, deep throbs of Colour ... it was too intense, she couldn't breathe. (13)

Author Beth Goobie succeeds with this dark fantasy in revealing the feelings of confusion assailing the central character. Carol eventually discovers that her internal battles are not localized after all; rather, they are a personal manifestation of an epic, global struggle between good and evil. Other people experience these visions. The evil forces are "gods" who feed off the energy of crowds of people and individuals like Carol.

Carol learns that the fragmentation she feels is due to something called the "Division." The Colours are not naturally external:

If you have to spend your life being sucked dry, losing the best part of yourself, sacrificing your Colours, wouldn't you rather not know? So you divide, push your Colours out and away from you. (157)

With this explanation, the reader sees the full scope of the epic confrontation and what is at stake: the unified individual. As she discovers her role as a "Connector," one who is able to heal the fragmentation brought on by the gods, Carol experiences the triumph of unified self-awareness.

Only one thing limits the clear achievement of this novel: the pace of revelation. The author waits too long to share with the reader the contours of the world she has created. Readers are forced to wonder for too many pages why all this is happening. In fairness, more of the details of this alternative reality should have emerged earlier.

Beth Goobie's writing is strong, her characters engaging and real. Dedicated fans of dark fantasy will likely go along for the ride with no objections. Mainstream readers may not be able to suspend their disbelief while the author withholds from them the essential groundwork of the world she presents.

Lyle Weis is the Edmonton author of several books for young adults and a collection of adult poetry. He teaches writing to students of all ages, across the country.