

more diffuse and less sharply delineated than Friesen's. Their motivations and actions are intriguing and thought-provoking, as well as unpredictable, and frequently lead to morally ambivalent dilemmas. "Shasta" in which perfect, popular Hayley becomes a reluctant accomplice to a rape is an uneasy, emotional story and Hayley's actions (or lack thereof) are likely to cause debate amongst readers. The caustic narrator of "Sweet Bird of Youth," who takes steps to protect his younger cousin from suspected sexual abuse, but never speaks of the possibility, is also a memorable character. Overall, Holeman has created an interestingly varied gallery of adolescent characters and experiences which ring true.

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All Rumours about a World outside Britain Are False

Children's Literature: An Illustrated History. Ed. Peter Hunt. Oxford University Press, 1995. 387 pp. £22.50 in UK. ISBN 0-19-212320-3.

There has been quite a debate recently about writing the general history of literature, originating from contemporary critical theories, in the first place feminist and postcolonial. While traditional histories have been "histories of texts," today's critics demand "histories of readers" — that is, examination of what has actually been read and enjoyed, which incorporates popular fiction, minor female writers, and other marginal texts.

Paradoxically, the histories of children's literature have always been written with this point of departure, which means that many texts not originally intended for children, but read and enjoyed by them, have been included, such as folktales and the so-called classics, like *Robinson Crusoe*.

Another specific question about the history of children's literature is that while we seldom interrogate the very notion of literature and therefore start histories with the earliest written texts, there is still no agreement among scholars about what children's literature is and when it starts. Quite a few scholars have been recently trying to extend the scope of children's literature to fourteenth century Bibles and tracts.

The new illustrated history of children's literature edited by Peter Hunt is an formidable project, which elegantly addresses these complicated issues. Written by one of the world's leading experts, richly illustrated (as the subtitle suggests), with excellent auxiliary materials (chronology, bibliography, index), it is a welcome contribution to the wide scope of recent publications in the field.

What naturally strikes me as an outsider is its British-American bias. One word in the title, like *English-language* children's literature, would have created a more honest trade description, even though "peripheral" English-language literatures are also treated like Cinderellas: Australian on eleven pages, Canadian on ten, New Zealand on nine. I admire the contributors who have managed to

squeeze their national histories of literature in this meagre space! However, to be fair, I must admit that some important influences from abroad, like Hans Christian Andersen, are cautiously mentioned in the book. On the other hand, a statement like "Enid Blyton, the world's most popular children's author" (216), causes a strong reaction on my part: "Hey, there is a world outside Britain!"

But taking the volume for what it is, a history of *British and American* children's literature, the impression is totally positive. The basic concept of this volume — letting various scholars write a chapter each, thus utilising their special knowledge and insight — is more fruitful than many previous endeavours, including such distinguished works as John Rowe Townsend's *Written for Children*. Children's literature is thus set in a variety of contexts: historical, social, educational, aesthetic, in accordance with the modern view of literary history mentioned above. The chapter on early American literature makes a point of the specific conditions of the New World, causing the specific traits of American children's literature. It feels slightly odd — although understandable — that the last two chapters, dealing with the periods 1945-1970 and 1970-present, treat British and American literature together, not even trying to pinpoint the differences, which, at least for American writers who are denied entry into the British market, are obvious. Incidentally, where does this neat chronology come from? 1945 marks of course the end of World War II, but what happened in 1970 to draw a boundary there? A dilemma which no historian of literature can circumvent.

Often, histories of literature tend to lapse into an enumeration of names and titles, making them at best a useful reference. In this case, each chapter presents an enjoyable reading. It is also tempting to allow more space for "touchstones," and I am pleased to note that the contributors (or possibly the general editor) have refrained from this simple solution; after all, writers such as Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott, Kipling or Milne have all been subjects for a number of special studies. Possibly the genre categories in some chapters (e.g. "The Emergence of Form") are too conventional; I prefer more overview treatment of texts, allowing comparison and cross-reference beyond the restrictive genre patterns, like in chapter 7, "Transitions." This difference doubtlessly reflects the attitude of individual contributors.

A history of literature is inevitably subjective, not to say personal. In the case of this volume, I see this as a merit, not a drawback.

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The Storyteller Preserves: Alice Kane's Wonder Tales Transcribed

The Dreamer Awakes. Alice Kane. Broadview Press, 1995. 185 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 1-55111-047-4.

Alice Kane has told stories for sixty years, but only now has she published a book of her tales. These tales were recorded in live performances and transcribed; in