

ception could have led so boisterous an imaginative life in childhood? Children will surely love these stories, especially with their comic illustrations. But for the rest of us, these juvenilia should help to remind us that behind the facade of the most socially adaptive Austen heroine — behind the mask of the much maligned Fanny Price, for example — is someone who refuses to keep the rules if her conscience demands otherwise, someone who arouses the strictures of an amazed member of the patriarchy, who sees in Fanny “wilfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women, and which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offence” (*Mansfield Park*, London: Penguin, 1996, 318). This doesn’t sound much like Fanny Price, externally at least. But it certainly reminds us of the feisty heroines from the “beautiful Cassandra” onwards, charting their own courses heedless of all obstacles, the heroines whom the maker of Fanny Price created in her childhood. Hidden but not forgotten, these early adventurers influence all the Austen protagonists who follow in their footsteps.

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Happy Gathering

The Party. Barbara Reid. Illus. author. North Winds/Scholastic Canada, 1997. 30 pp. \$17.99 cloth. ISBN 0-590-12385-8. *Come to the Fair*. Janet Lunn. Illus. Gilles Pelletier. Tundra, 1997. 21 pp. \$17.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-409-6.

A strong sense of pleasure in being part of a community pervades these two stories; in *The Party*, the community is an extended family; in *Come to the Fair*, it is the population of a small town and its surrounding farms. These books vibrate with a joy in diversity and a celebration of unity.

The Party tells the story in simple verse, of the celebration of Grand-ma’s 90th birthday. The narrator and her sister are reluctant to attend and to be greeted and kissed by a parade of relatives. Once they run this gauntlet, they are free to renew their acquaintance with their cousins, and the fun begins. The children are in league against their elders, sneaking chips and hiding in hedges and under tables, but everyone is in a jolly mood and the day goes marvellously well. In *Come to the Fair*, the children are involved in some of the work to prepare for a country fair and are eager to participate with their parents. The sense of friendly competition is between families, rather than between generations. Who will win the prizes for the biggest



pumpkin, the crispest pickles, or the healthiest pig? In both stories, rivalry is only playful, and connection is the highest implicit value.

Both books are wonderfully illustrated. Reid's amazing plasticine art is appealingly tactile and offers the adult reader some interesting topics of conversation with young listeners about how some of her effects were created, and about such details as the smocking on a girl's dress (something they probably have never seen) and the number of candles on Grandma's



cake. Pelletier's "naive" art offers a wealth of fascinating images of country life in a past era, plus the fun of trying to spot a mouse hiding in each picture. Again there are plenty of potential talking points, such as the sulky horses and handmade quilts. His style, like Reid's method, encourages children to see the possibilities in their own art work.

Adults Moving On

Lavender Moon. Troon Harrison. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Annick, 1997. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-9, 1-55037-0. *Jeremiah Learns to Read*. Jo Ellen Bogart. Illus. Laura Fernandes and Rick Jacobson. North Winds/Scholastic Canada, 1997. 32 pp. \$17.99 cloth. ISBN 0-590-



24927-4.

These stories about people who make a decision to change their lives give children an interesting perspective on the adult world. When *Lavender Moon* decides to find out where the highway bus goes, it is after she has run a bus-stop café for twenty years; and by the time *Jeremiah* starts to learn how to read, he is old enough to have grandchildren to help him. Children are aware that they are constantly changing, but it will be illuminating for many of them to discover that "grown-ups" may not be finished growing, even when they are grey-haired.

The resolutions of these adult quests offer an interesting contrast. *Lavender Moon* is a bit of a flower child, wearing a star in one ear and a moon in the other; and the bus she drives through fields and desert to the ocean is gradually transformed by her art. At the conclusion of her story, she