

informative while remaining always interesting and frequently amusing. The text is complemented throughout by photographs, both black and white and colour, as well as a sprinkling of drawings and diagrams. A bonus is the centrefold, a stunning close-up of the named young animal that is the special focus of the book. One of the chief strengths of the books is their simple, attractive format and the clarity and cohesiveness of their design: this greatly facilitates ready access to the wealth of content, and should make the books useful and popular in classroom, library and zoo, with or without help from the accompanying teacher's manual. The *Zoo Book Kits* are, in the best sense of the term, a scholarly series of nature study texts that succeed in communicating their subject matters with verve and style: we need more of them. Along with *A Day in the Woods*, the *Zoo Books* are among the finest publications for children of the last decade.

NOTES

¹Margery Fisher, *Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), p. 51.

²Robert Thomas Allen, "We Liked Animals Better Than People", *Maclean's*, December 5, 1959, p. 28.

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Monsters in the Bush

GWYNETH EVANS

Sasquatch Adventure, Sheila Rolfe. Hancock House, Saanichton, B.C. 1974. 128 pp. \$2.95 paper.

The monster is a pervasive figure in the mythology of many cultures, and the hairy humanoid monster seems particularly fascinating to the post-Darwinian and post-Freudian era. We respond to this image of "the missing

link” between us and the animals with an odd mixture of fear, pity and a kind of longing – people *want* to believe in Bigfoot, Piltown Man and the Abominable Snowman. Our own Canadian monster the Sasquatch, reportedly sighted every so often in the B.C. interior, might seem a prime subject for children’s fiction. But the great Sasquatch novel has yet to be written.

Sheila Rolfe’s *Sasquatch Adventure* has some good moments, but is seriously flawed in its basic conception. It describes the adventures of two Fraser Valley children who are kidnapped by a band of Sasquatches and forced to live with them for some days. Perhaps the chief problem with the book is that it ought to be a fantasy, but is presented as a realistic adventure. The author tells us in her “Foreword” that “the evidence that the Sasquatch exists is so convincing I know it is only a matter of time until man’s curiosity unravels his secrets.” This assumption itself is highly questionable, and there are too many inconsistencies and illogicalities in the book to make the reader willing to suspend disbelief.

Rolfe’s presentation of the creature itself is inconsistent: should such a being actually exist in the Fraser Valley, all the evidence indicates that it could only do so by being very retiring and avoiding human contact. Rolfe’s Sasquatches, however, come into a farming community and steal two children, with no apparent motive, and later quite as inexplicably reveal themselves by shouting and hurling rocks at a boat.

The children’s behaviour, too, is often implausible. Although we are frequently told of the terror and horror they feel, we never are made to feel it ourselves, and their responses and actions are frequently unconvincing. When they are first snatched up by the Sasquatch and carried off “slung over the hairy shoulder like a bag of laundry,” the author has them fall asleep. Later, about to be roasted for Sasquatch supper (young Tom has unwisely taught his captors how to make and use fire), the children agree that, should they somehow escape, they will never reveal the whereabouts of the Sasquatch lair, as to do so would be inhumane and unecological. In the resolution of the book we are expected to accept that the children come back happily to their farm, untroubled by the prospect of the Sasquatches’ return, and that the adults, who have now been given proof that Sasquatches exist, are quite prepared to let the matter drop.

The attitude of Tom to his primitive captors has some disturbing connotations. His tone of superiority as he scolds and instructs the hulking savages is not mitigated by his Olympian decision to leave them unmolested. Why do the children learn nothing from the Sasquatches? Their ordeal merely provides Tom, the Boy Scout, with opportunities to practise morse code, first aid and fire building. One would think that if a Sasquatch race really had managed to survive and keep itself concealed in the Fraser Valley during the last century, it might have something to teach us.

Sheila Rolfe has a gift for humour: the figure of Mr. Donnelly, an advertising stunt-man dressed in a suit of pink feathers who accidentally descends by balloon into the Sasquatch lair, is an amusing invention in the style of Joan Aiken. His obsession with his baldness, his longing for peppermints, and the comic verses he makes up might be charming in an Aiken-like fantasy, but are out of place here when the rest of the action is so serious. Can we accept, in the final chase scene, Mr. Donnelly's inclination to linger and be eaten by Sasquatches rather than appear in public in his red polka-dot underpants (especially as he had previously appeared in a suit of pink feathers)?

In some respects *Sasquatch Adventure* follows the model of Farley Mowat in *Lost in the Barrens*: children isolated in the wilderness rely on survival skills which the author describes in careful detail, and eventually struggle back to civilization. The model comes from *Robinson Crusoe*, but Rolfe has nothing like Defoe's, or even Mowat's, sense of structure, character or realism. Her characters are stereotypes – the resourceful Boy Scout and his fearful, dependent sister with her appealing blond pigtails. The book does convey a sense of the community from which the children come, and uses identifiable features of the local landscape. But realism in details can not compensate for the implausibility of the central action and its resolution; despite the assurances of the "Foreword," we are never brought to believe in the Sasquatch, so *Sasquatch Adventure* succeeds neither as fantasy nor as realistic adventure.

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Pour un récit lucide

FRANÇOIS PARÉ

Les Cailloux voient du pays. Suzanne Rocher. Coll.: Albatros. Montréal: Fides, 1980. \$6.95. ISBN 2-7621-0974-4.

Le livre de Suzanne Rocher, le second de la série des Cailloux, est un récit de voyage linéaire, parfaitement chronologique et parfaitement horizontal.