

# Review articles & reviews/ *Critiques et comptes rendus*

## SELECTION TOOLS FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

***Choosing books for young people: a guide to criticism and bibliography 1945-1975***, John R.T. Ettlinger and Diana Spirt. American Library Association, 1982. 219 pp., \$25.00 cloth. ISBN 0-8389-0366-5; ***Girls are people too! a bibliography of nontraditional female roles in children's books***, Joan E. Newman. Scarecrow Press, 1982. 203 pp., \$12.50 cloth. ISBN 0-8108-1500-1.

As the output of books for young people increases, more bibliographies and critical publications are appearing to aid in book selection. *Choosing books for young people* and *Girls are people too!* are two such tools, though their scope and focus differ widely.

As its subtitle, *A guide to criticism and bibliography 1945-1975*, indicates, *Choosing books for young people* aims to record and describe books which list, select, and evaluate books for children. It is thus more than a bibliography of bibliographies including as it does titles as diverse as Paul Hazard's *Books, children & men*, Wilson's catalogs and the AAAS book list. Important titles published in Canada, the United States and Great Britain are included, as well as a smattering from Australia and New Zealand. A few French language books from Canada are also described. Some Canadian titles described are *About Indians*, the first edition of *Canadian books for young people* and listings published by the Canadian Library Association. Among the few French-Canadian lists are Louise Lemieux's ground-breaking *Plein Feux sur la littérature de jeunesse au Canada Français*. Excluded from the book are publications under 16 pages in length, periodicals issued more frequently than once a year and audio-visual listings which do not also include books. The compilers claim to have physically examined all of the approximately 600 titles. The excellent annotations give a thorough description and brief evaluation of the books listed, with particular emphasis on the usefulness of each book for current selection purposes.

Arrangement is alphabetical by author, followed by complete bibliographical information. A subject index and an added entry index provide additional access.

For public and university libraries interested in maintaining comprehensive collections of children's books this is an excellent tool. Researchers in the area will also find the book a helpful source for its comprehensive and critical

coverage. Because of the time period covered (1945-1975), it will be of less value to school librarians whose budget is ordinarily stretched to cover more recent materials.

According to the introduction, *Girls are people too!* is a selective bibliography of nontraditional female role models in children's literature for primary and intermediate grades. Its major criteria for selection are "the female character's nontraditionalism — that the characters are not only different, but also possess dignity and intelligence." Also included are books in which the female character demonstrates understanding, caring and loving and rejects neither feminism nor femininity. An added feature is a 32 page chronology of notable women (mostly American) with an indication of their accomplishments.

The 540 books listed were chosen after searching *Horn Book*, Huck's, *Children's literature in the elementary school*, *The bookfinder*, *The liberty cap* and *Little Miss Muffet fights back*. Other non-sexist bibliographies and individual Iowa librarians were also consulted. As may be expected the majority of the books included are American. The four Canadian authors represented are Christie Harris, Jean Little, Barbara Smucker and L.M. Montgomery (whose Anne is noted as hailing from Prince Edward Island in Newfoundland!). A few British titles are also included. Full bibliographical information and suggested age level obtained from *Books in print* are given after each entry.

Arranged alphabetically by author the book is divided into two major parts, fiction and non-fiction (biography). Each part is further subdivided into four sections — general, Black, Native American, and other minorities and still further broken down by (a) primary and (b) intermediate grade levels. A two star symbol is an indication of excellence, a single star for very good. Since these ratings refer to non-sexist content as well as literary quality, the value of the symbols is limited. For example, *Carrie's war* by Nina Bawden is unstarred whereas Blume's *Starring Sally Friedman as herself* receives one star rating, though one might question its inclusion on either count. One might also question the starring of such titles as Paula Danziger's *Can you sue your parents for malpractice?* and *The cat ate my gymsuit*. Blume's *Blubber* is another questionable inclusion.

The annotations are uneven in quality as well as choppy and uneconomical in style. A typical example begins as follows:

Cornelia is the most popular person in the fourth grade. Everyone likes her. Ruthie is probably the least important person in the fourth grade. No one likes her because she is poor.

In some cases the annotation does not adequately describe the content of the book. The description of Bette Greene's *Summer of my German soldier*, for example, omits all mention of Patty's unsympathetic parents, though that fact is an important element in the story.

The bibliography would be useful as an awareness source for libraries in-

terested in acquiring non-sexist materials published mainly in the 1970's. It would be prudent, however, to check critical reviews before the purchase of individual books.

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## UNE RESSOURCE INDISPENSABLE

***Le Canada français et sa littérature de jeunesse***, Claude Potvin. Editions CRP, 1981. 185 pp., 16,50\$. ISBN 0-9690939-0-X.

En 1972, Claude Potvin a publié un ouvrage intitulé *La littérature de jeunesse au Canada français* dans lequel il fit un bref historique de cette littérature à partir de ses débuts, au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, jusqu'à la fin des années 60. L'historique était suivi d'une liste de sources bibliographiques, d'un répertoire de livres et de pseudonymes et d'un index des auteurs.

Dans sa nouvelle édition, publiée en 1981, l'auteur reprend le même thème et suit de près les mêmes divisions de la première édition, mais il ajoute, cette fois, la production littéraire des années 70 et un index des titres. Il fait quelques légers changements ou mises au point dans son résumé sur l'évolution de la littérature de jeunesse canadienne-française. Il cite, par exemple, la date de la parution initiale de la revue *Abeille* (1925) et celle de la parution finale de la revue *La ruche littéraire* (1945). Il ajoute, aussi, ses commentaires sur les livres pour jeunes publiés entre 1970 et 1979 et corrige l'épellation des noms de certains auteurs, comme Paul Desmarins et Adèle Bourgeois Lacerte.

Dans le chapitre sur le répertoire des livres il fait le recensement de 1 900 titres, divisés par périodes de dix ans. Dans plusieurs cas, des titres omis dans la première édition sont maintenant inclus dans la deuxième.

Le chapitre sur les sources bibliographiques n'est pas exhaustif mais il permettra, toutefois, de retracer, d'une façon plus complète, la documentation qui existe sur la littérature de jeunesse canadienne-française.

La disposition générale du texte a été améliorée et, par conséquent, ce dernier se lit plus aisément.

Livre de référence plutôt qu'une lecture, *Le Canada français et sa littérature de jeunesse* est un outil précieux qui réunit en une seule source une foule d'informations à l'usage des bibliothécaires, des spécialistes en littérature de