

tidienne entrent aussi en jeu: méprise, qui vaut à Octave de se voir embauché chez Rosario, étonnement des enfants devant la multiplication des Pères Noël, querelle amoureuse qui prend fin sur le dos d'un tiers, le Haïtien et le taxi, l'Italien et la mafia. — Troisième élément du comique, et, de toute évidence, non le moindre dans l'intention des créateurs: le calembour, présent à chaque page, mais un peu facile.

Les auteurs se sont sans nul doute amusés à composer cet album. Le lecteur s'amusera-t-il autant? Pas sûr. Beaucoup de clichés et de gags prévisibles; ne serait-ce que le parcours ruineux qu'impose Octave à son client dans les rues de Montréal. (Pourquoi, à cet égard, ce rapprochement gratuit, lui, entre la topographie de Montréal et celle de Paris?)

Octave, en voiture est un livre québécois à forte couleur locale, dont la langue empêchera l'humour de traverser les frontières. Plus que cela, sera-t-il compris pleinement au Québec? Pas sûr là encore, car s'y mêle de l'argot d'outre Atlantique pas encore vulgarisé chez le francophone du continent américain.

En conclusion, *Octave, en voiture* n'est certes pas un livre triste mais il manque de relief. Heureusement, le dessin, très agréable, compense la faiblesse de l'histoire.

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TWO CANADIAN PAINTERS

Paul Kane, Mary Lile Benham (The Canadians, a continuing series). Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977. 64 pp. paper. ISBN 0-88902-233-X; *William Berczy*, Florence M. Burns (The Canadians, a continuing series) Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977. 64 pp. paper. ISBN 0-88902-237-2.

Apart from exhibition catalogues, it is often difficult to obtain detailed accounts of individual Canadian painters. Fitzhenry and Whiteside has tried to rectify this problem by offering a series of brief but informative works on artists whose pictures have made a significant historical contribution.

Fitzhenry and Whiteside have put out a continuing sequence of small paperback books written specifically for young readers, and entitled "The Canadians", with the apparent intent of appealing to a burgeoning sense of nationhood. Since the entire collection includes only two creative painters from the nineteenth century, Paul Kane and William Berczy, the choice suggests an interest beyond a purely artistic one. The disconcerting use of first names seems to be an editorial convention for all the texts, designed to appeal in a particularly

immediate way to the current generation of readers, despite the fact that it is often misleading, especially if the biographee's children happen to have the same name. The surname, on the other hand, is the one used in the captions to an artist's work, presumably in order to avoid confusion. Each 64-page book is well illustrated, however, in black and white plates that reproduce original works of art representing the period as well as a particular artistic style: Paul Kane's sketch of the Red River Settlement, for example, and a view of Istanbul used to portray Bercezy's journey to the Black Sea. A reference page at the back of each volume provides a semi-documented list of credits, along with a short but very useful bibliography. The general format will appeal to the curiosity of the intelligent student, a fact underlined by the challenging questions placed along the borders of the main account.

The artists themselves seem to have been conscious of their historical potential. Thus, having been inspired by George Catlin, an American painter of western Indians south of the border, Kane devoted his own life to recording "pictures illustrative of the North American Indians and scenery," in the belief that in Canada, too, the old west was rapidly disappearing. Bercezy, on the other hand, was initially concerned with the actual settlement of the country, rather than with his particular ability to record it in paint, but difficulties besetting his own land claims in Upper Canada increased to a point where he was forced to turn to an artistic career for survival.

Neither painter was born in Canada. Kane received his basic artistic training in this country, after emigrating to Toronto from Ireland; after travelling through the eastern United States as far as New Orleans, he went overseas in 1841 to study the works of the old masters in the galleries of Europe. He was both a European by heritage and an easterner by upbringing, so that he could only regard western Canada with the transient eyes of a visitor. His observations were not based on a scientifically objective approach. For, although by travelling with the Hudson's Bay Company he was able to capture very colourful aspects of the Red Indian way of life, he seems in his mind to have freely interchanged the customs of one tribe with those of another. Unfortunately the biographer Mary Lile Benham accepts the artist's visual record in the same factual way as she accepts topographical landscapes such as the view of Kakabekka Falls near Fort William. As a result, her assessment of Kane's objectivity in relation to that of a more honest and gifted successor like William Hind is greatly distorted. As a verbal portrayal of the period, on the other hand, her account is vivid and revealing, not only in relation to the people involved, but concerning Kane's ability to find patronage for his work.

The emphasis of the Fitzhenry and Whiteside series, in fact, would seem to have been on character as much as on achievement. Bercezy was also a natural topic for the series, therefore, especially since his pioneering perseverance has now been acknowledged by the German Council for the Arts, an honour that

prompted the City of Toronto to name a park after him. William Berczy was born in Swabia in 1744, but grew up in Vienna, becoming both an Austrian citizen and a student of art and architecture at the Vienna Academy of Arts. In 1766, he even travelled to Poland on an Austrian diplomatic mission, before fleeing to Constantinople for safety, when war broke out between Germany and Russia. In 1785, he went with his wife to London, worked there as a portraitist and art teacher until 1791, then became involved in the settlement of a large area in Pennsylvania known as the Genesee Tract.

At Queenston in 1794 he met John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, who encouraged him to bring his large colony of German settlers from Pennsylvania to the Markham area, just north of York, on the understanding that Berczy himself would receive a grant of over 25000 hectares of land for his trouble. In the process of establishing this German community in Upper Canada, he and the other settlers became deeply involved with the building of Yonge Street as a main artery of trade, and Berczy even designed a number of houses, including one for Peter Russell on Palace Street known as Russell Abbey. All these enterprises, however, ran the architect deeply into debt, a debt that could not be paid without the successful resolution of his land claim. In 1798, Berczy finally returned to England, to take his case directly to the foreign office but to no avail. His later life was spent as an architect and portraitist in Montreal, where he won a competition to design the new Anglican Cathedral of Christ Church.

Both Berczy and Kane may be regarded as having contributed to the development of the land, as much as to the establishment of an artistic tradition. "The Canadians" as a series has actually been designed to develop a social as much as an artistic understanding of the Canadian story, a breadth of appeal that is certainly enhanced by the historical data provided.

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