

Editorial:

The world of/on/in children's books

There is a world of books for children — and one function of *CCL* has been to map the Canadian section of that world. Each year, as we present our bibliography, we note the national range of writers, publishers and titles. Indeed the world of Canadian books is filling up so rapidly that we are hard-pressed to do more than simply note the numbers in our annual bibliography. Yet it is manifestly a shame to by-pass the job of reviewing many excellent books; we therefore are beginning a “mini-reviews” series: very brief notes on groups of books to augment our indepth reviewing process. The first set of these mini-reviews appears in this issue.

Meantime of course the world beyond Canada produces excellent work on children's literature. We often worry about our decision to limit rigidly to the Canadian scene. In Australia, for instance, critical work in children's literature proceeds in its own very different path from ours. In this issue we present Professor Kenneth Goodwin's review of one Australian critical text as a small door into a big world of criticism. The sense of the scope of the field is clarified also in an article on definitions-an article pulling together what critics around the world have written on children's literature as a field. This article, like the one on humour, pulls Canadian writing into a wider context.

We have also been puzzled, often, by the appearance of excellent books, co-published in Canada, but in fact coming originally from non-Canadian artists and illustrators. It seems a pity not to alert our readers to these often beautiful books; in this issue we have asked a group of our Canadian reviewers to evaluate these “co-productions” as a contribution to awareness of the full range of new literature available to young Canadian readers.

As for the world “in” children's books — the universe, animal, vegetable, mineral, human, and superhuman, described and presented by Canadian authors — we still find ourselves unable to generalize about the whole or the parts of this world. We read and enjoy reviews of animal stories, of fantasies, poetry, historical fiction, regional realism; books about particular art forms such as ballet, books on sports such as hockey; plays, mystery stories, romances: a great harvest for children of different ages, interests and reading levels. The range of the world in children's books is caught in the title of the interview with Monica Hughes: she is a “technological pastoralist” — and that title implies how far our writers for children stretch — toward the past and the present, the immediately here and the possible fantastic future.