

humoristique celui-ci saura tenir compte de celle des rôles sociaux qui inconsciemment structure la pensée des jeunes.

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BACK TO THE PAST, AND OUT INTO SPACE



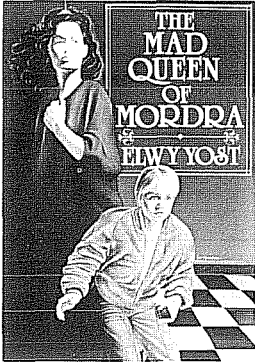
Marion Davison & Audrey Marsh

Smoke over Grand Pré. Marion Davison and Audrey Marsh. Breakwater Books, 1988. 208 pp., \$11.95 paper. ISBN 0-920911-11-0; **The mad queen of Mordora.** Elwy Yost. Scholastic-TAB, 1987. 164 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-71787-1.

Smoke over Grand Pré is in the genre of the historical novel; it deals with the expulsion of the Acadians in the 18th century by the British. The authors focus this tale on one Acadian family--the Cormiers--and especially on the exploits of two sons of that family, Paul and Gerard. The teenage boy, Paul Cormier, sets off one day from Grand Pré with his faithful Indian companion Swift Arrow to visit his great-uncle. After a series of remarkable adventures--much of *Smoke over Grand Pré* is in the tradition of the on-the-road, *bildungsroman* story--Paul Cormier the man returns, one year later, to witness the death of Grand Pré--symbolised by the death of its resident matriarch, Grandmère herself--and the English ships carrying the remnants of his family into bondage. The other brother, Gerard, leaves home before the novel opens, but we catch up with him working on behalf of the zealot-priest Le Loutre, whose hatred of the English leads him finally to betray and lie to his own Acadian people. One of the novel's weaknesses is that it seems unable to know where it wants to concentrate its attention. There is an unresolved and unsatisfactory tension between the exploits of Gerard and those of Paul as each moves in and out of focus in what seems to be a random way. Finally, Paul's story wins the day because the authors conveniently get rid of Le Loutre and relegate Gerard to prison.

Although a not altogether carefully constructed novel--and not carefully proof-read either--*Smoke over Grand Pré* does succeed in building reader sympathy for the destruction of a way of life by forces largely beyond the control of anyone. The most demonic figure in the work is the fiendish priest Le Loutre; certainly the English military come off perhaps better that they de-

serve, as they too seem swept up in the play of forces beyond control. Finally, the authors win our sympathy by exploiting the pastoral tradition, showing us the before and after of the Acadian expulsion and the way in which it relentlessly dismantled family life.



Elwy Yost's *The mad queen of Mordora*, first published under the title *Billy and the bubbleship* in 1982, represents an opposite extreme in children's literature. *Smoke over Grand Pré*, using the raw material of history, builds an imaginative construct which, to some degree at least, is bound by the "facts" of verifiable past events; *The mad queen of Mordora*, clearly in the romance mode, is bound only by the limits of the author's own imagination. Yost makes use of conventional and familiar romance material to build his story. At various times in *Mordora* one hears distant echoes of both Lewis Carroll and C.S.

Lewis. The story's hero, Billy Brown (no marks for originality for that name, Mr. Yost), discovers a magic liquid which, in bubble form, transports him to a new world where his life-saving adventures begin. To set the work squarely in the second half on the twentieth-century, Yost replaces Alice's rabbit hole with a black hole; Billy's adventures in a strange new world, like the Narnian explorers', are timeless. Yost conflates Carroll and Lewis material and presents us with a beautiful but mad Queen who rules over the city of Mordora but whose final plans are to conquer the kingdom of Zomara. And the pièce de resistance of the story is a life-and-death chess match (with real "humans" as the chess pieces) between Billy and the mad Queen herself.

Yost has obviously read a good deal of traditional romance material and has done a creditable job blending it with twentieth-century technology. He has produced a story that will appeal to those who have a more active fantasy life than I do.

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