

the dodo.

Emily Murphy's expressive and forthright personality shines through in this account. More attention is devoted to family life than to her acts a public individual. Emily Murphy's commitment to improving the status of women makes her a person worth knowing more intimately.

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BIKES AND BARRELS, BASEBALL AND BATS

It isn't easy being Ms. Teeny Wonderful. Martyn Godfrey. Scholastic-TAB, 1987. 160 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-71674-3; **Baseball crazy.** Martyn Godfrey. James Lorimer, 1987. 160 pp., \$4.95 \$14.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-023-6, 1-55028-021-X.

Some years ago I worked in a library where the novels were clearly labelled "Girls" or "Boys", according to the gender of the main character. Probably this was a common practice at the time, but fortunately today such sexist designations are discouraged. Faced with books like *It isn't easy being Ms. Teeny Wonderful* and *Baseball crazy*, librarians would be hard-pushed to decide whether these books should be marked "Girls" or "Boys," because Martyn Godfrey has so skillfully balanced the role of the protagonist between the male and female characters.

It isn't easy being Ms. Teeny Wonderful is the sequel to *Here she is, Ms. Teeny Wonderful*, in which Carol Weatherspoon won second place in a teen pageant, impressing the judges with her prowess in clearing six barrels on her BMX bike. Now Carol has been asked by the popular magazine, *Canada Woman*, to teach a prospective sponsor's son to jump his BMX bike over an equal number of barrels. Throughout the story, Carol's friend Wally Stutzgummer plays a very supportive role. He comes up with ideas, gives advice, and by his good-natured bantering and joke-making shows a maturity which Carol has yet to achieve.

Carol's commission to teach young E.Z. Putton proves to be a real challenge which culminates in a life-threatening situation for them both. Again, it is Wally who arrives on the scene in time to get help and supports Carol in the spate of publicity that ensues.

There is a similar boy/girl relationship in *Baseball crazy*, between Brent

Hutchins and his friend, Cheryl Robinson. Cheryl's brother has won a contest to become Special Batboy to the Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Team; he is accompanied to the Florida Spring training camp by Cheryl and her father. Although the story is told by Brent, Cheryl's bright personality shares the spotlight and plays an integral role in their adventures. Like Carol and Wally in *It isn't easy being Ms. Teeny Wonderful*, Brent and Cheryl tease each other, turn to each other for help with their problems and face danger together, but they are not sentimental nor are there any overt romantic overtones.

Both stories, however, go beyond winning contests and superficial fun. They deal with growing up and the mixed emotions of adolescence. Carol discovers the "real" world of business deals and relentless publicity. She learns how people can be used by others to promote their own success, and that having wealth does not necessarily make families happy. Brent, on his part, finds dishonest people even in what appears to be paradise and learns that trust can sometimes be misplaced. He has to learn to take his initiation into the Blue Jays' organization with good grace and humour and to sort out his relationship with Clyde, the ballboy, especially when it is complicated by jealousy and misunderstanding.

Both protagonists are faced with taking responsibility when they find themselves in dangerous situations, Carol in saving the life of the headstrong E.Z. Junior, and Brent in preventing the theft of team members' equipment.

Martyn Godfrey brings to his writing a freshness and authenticity derived from his research at the Blue Jays Spring training camp in Dunedin, Florida. He is able to describe details of the area, the grounds, the facilities and the players which satisfy the curiosity of young readers who want facts combined with their fantasies. The practical jokes played on Brent in the story are typical of the good-natured camaraderie between the players and their batboys. Godfrey's knowledge about BMX bikes stems, in part at least, from his experiences while teaching in Alberta. The children with whom he worked were BMX bikers and both *Here she is, Ms. Teeny Wonderful* and this sequel fill a need for stories related to their interests.

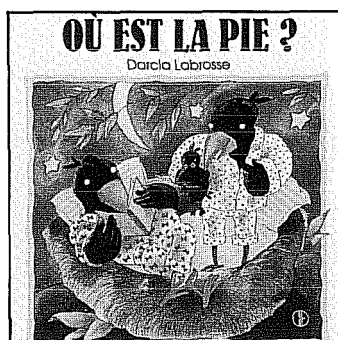
These books are highly entertaining for boys and girls, grades 4 - 7. They will have a special appeal for young people who have difficulty sustaining their interest in novels with more traditional themes. The chapters are short and the stories move along at a good pace with humour and also suspense. If there is a weakness in these books it lies in their preoccupation with the contemporary. Living as we do in a time when fads and fashions are very transitory, stories like these become dated very quickly; but on the other hand, if they fill a present need there is justification for making good use of them and enjoying them now. They are also very detailed in their locale and while this may be an added attraction for the reader in Southern Ontario or Alberta, it should not lessen the enjoyment of a child elsewhere.

There is still a dearth of junior stories with sports themes which satisfy the

readers' desire for vicarious fun and excitement. Martyn Godfrey's books should be, therefore, welcome additions to any collection.

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LA FORCE DE L'ÉVOCATION



Où est la pie? Darcia Labrosse. Illus. auteure. Montréal, Tisseyre, 1988. 24 pp., 5,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89051-346-7.

Publié en 1988 sous le titre *Où est la pie?* cet album de Darcia Labrosse est destiné aux enfants de deux à six ans. C'est un court livre qui se lit avec plaisir. L'enfant aussi bien que l'adulte sont sans cesse invités à relever le défi provoqué par la combinaison de la lecture des textes et de l'évocation magique des images. Comme tout ouvrage de ce genre, cet

album s'organise autour de trois catégories de signes: le texte, les illustrations et l'enfant, celui-ci étant présent sous forme d'hypogramme, sans être nommé. Ce court livre a une puissante valeur évocatrice grâce à son organisation en tableaux, ce qui confère à l'ouvrage un aspect de faux désordre et un sentiment de malaise, malaise que nous sommes tenté de caractériser de salutaire. Pourquoi? L'enfant, ne pouvant pas suivre un récit linéaire, est obligé de poser des questions pour atteindre la signification de chaque tableau, de chaque microcosme.

Il y a, cependant, dans ce labyrinthe de couleurs et de mots un fil conducteur phonétique: la lettre "P", le vrai personnage du livre. Elle apparaît quelques soixante et onze fois dans le livre. Cinquante-sept fois elle évoque l'oiseau, le pie avec tout ce que ce signe comporte de poétique et de philosophique. La première image (Cupidon) ainsi que la dernière (Pinocchio) sont hautement significatives. La magie des évocations tout au long du livre invite l'enfant au voyage initiatique dans l'univers secret des mythes. Il faut aussi avancer que, si l'enfant semble être sans cesse tenté par les jeux de mots avec la lettre "P", les valeurs ludiques ne sont pas valorisées au détriment des valeurs fonctionnelles; l'équilibre entre les deux est, en effet, remarquable.

Il faut enfin souligner un autre aspect du livre, c'est-à-dire l'absence des