

La soirée de danse organisée à l'école occupe l'esprit de Rosalie et de ses copains et copines. Du côté de Rosalie et de ses amies, on se demande bien quels gars y seront présents. Après avoir changé d'opinion plusieurs fois, Rosalie finit bien sûr par aller à cette soirée de la St-Valentin. Cupidon jouera en sa faveur en la personne de Pierre-Yves, son beau voisin et compagnon de classe. On regrette seulement que les gars soient encore ceux qui prennent la décision et l'initiative de demander aux filles de leur accorder la dernière danse.

En présentant Rosalie et sa bande, Ginette Anfousse ouvre une porte sur la réalité des jeunes adolescents et adolescentes. Une réalité bien douce tout de même, où n'est abordé aucun des problèmes sérieux qui peuvent aussi faire partie de leur réalité: la solitude, le rejet, la pauvreté, la délinquance, la drogue, etc. Ce petit roman est plutôt léger et ne pose pas de grandes questions. L'humour contribue avec succès à cette sensation de légèreté et de douceur. Le personnage de Rosalie est fort attachant, répétons-le, avec ses sautes d'humeurs et ses contradictions. Notons également que le vocabulaire employé risque fort de plaire aux jeunes. Le style aussi d'ailleurs. Et l'absence de coquilles et de fautes d'orthographe mérite bien d'être soulignée. Finalement, je m'en voudrais de passer sous silence les illustrations de Marisol Sarrazin, qui sont fort bien réussies: elles sont drôles, sympathiques, actuelles et attachantes, tout à fait à l'image de l'héroïne de ce roman.

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I AM A WOMAN. SEE ME STEP ASIDE

Say cheese. Mary Blakeslee. Scholastic-TAB, 1989. 144 pp., \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-73176-9.

The hardest part of writing criticism is being critical. The second hardest part is deciding who, when a book does not work, most deserves the criticism. Authors accept responsibility for anything between the covers but at times there is strong temptation to suggest editors and publishers must share some of that responsibility.

Say cheese by Mary Blakeslee is a competently written novel with a realistic plot. Granada, a high school student, becomes infatuated with good-looking Steve, editor of the school newspaper. She lies about non-existent photographic skills to get on the paper's staff. Gary, the not-so attractive but sensitive fellow in charge of photography, falls for Granada. Ignoring Gary,

Granada molds herself into something she hopes Steve will like by spinning lies. Eventually, she realizes Gary is much nicer and begins to date him, after they have a little talk about honesty.

While the treatment may be a bit heavy-handed, to this point the plot of *Say cheese* is workable. The kicker comes in the last chapter. Granada, now a fine photographer with a natural eye, better than Gary as everyone agrees, has been compiling her best work for an important contest. Gary, not Granada, wins the contest. Why? Well, Gary doesn't know it, but Granada never submits her work, choosing to step aside silently so Gary can win.

This submissive act is presented as worthy of a heroine we have been encouraged to admire. Granada explains her action by saying "No, I didn't do it because I felt sorry for Gary or anything else that could be considered noble. I did it for me. You see, I knew that my stuff was top quality, not because I'm so great, but because Dad showed me how to do all that wonderful stuff to my shots in the darkroom. If I'd been on my own, as Gary was, I might have won anyway. On the other hand, I might not have. The thing is, I just didn't want to get involved in any more deception."

Granada seems to have forgotten that Gary spent a fair amount of time with her father too and that he was a photographer and a darkroom user long before she knew an "f stop" from a focal length. To avoid "deception" then, Granada threatens Steve so he won't ever tell Gary she never entered the contest. To avoid "deception" Granada is willing to smile as Gary accepts the award, telling her how surprised he is that she didn't win.

Say cheese is a morality tale in which one teenage problem – lying – is exposed and a lesson supposedly learned, and then at the last moment a much larger problem emerges. Granada is a good photographer. Gary knows she's good. Gary likes her in part because of their shared interest. What a chance for two characters to stand as equals! Unfortunately, it does not happen: the idea that a girl should be quietly submissive is strongly reinforced.

The last few lines in *Say cheese* are instructive. Granada, who only took up photography to impress a boy, writes:

Oh, and there's one other thing. I bumped into this terrific looking guy yesterday – literally. He was carrying a violin case and a bunch of sheet music. . . . I wonder if I should try to persuade Dad to buy me a flute.

In 1970 Whitney Darrow Jr. wrote and illustrated a picture book called *I'm glad I'm a boy! I'm glad I'm a girl!* The book, which made the American Library Association "best books" listing that year, contained such memorable lines as "Boys are policemen. Girls are metermaids." "Boys invent things. Girls use what boys invent."

There was no outcry at the time, but the book would not have been published several years later. Publishers and editors have been encouraged to develop a sensitivity concerning manuscripts with such blatant sexual stereotyping.

It doesn't particularly disturb me that Mary Blakeslee wrote *Say cheese* and included a submissive element. It is hard, at times, for writers to stand back from their manuscripts and notice all possible implications. It does disturb me that the not-so-subtle nuances of this story were not caught by either the publisher or the editor. It is the responsibility of publishers and editors to view manuscripts with detached objectivity. In this instance, they goofed. In most respects *Say cheese* is a decent book. It could have been salvaged. Instead, I hope it becomes, like Darrow's picture book, an example to be used when publishing history is discussed.

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SURVIVRE À L'APOCALYPSE

La mémoire des hommes. Jean-Michel Lienhardt. Montréal, Paulines, 1988. 132 pp., 6,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89039-175-2.

Premier roman de Jean-Michel Lienhardt, *La mémoire des hommes* raconte les vicissitudes d'une existence sur laquelle règnent des images évoquant dans toute leur furie les conséquences d'une catastrophe nucléaire. *Bildungsroman* à l'ère contemporaine, le récit met en vedette les joies aussi bien que les désespoirs de Daniel Morin, âgé de 13 ans, et qui, s'étant retrouvé vivant par un hasard miraculeux, mais seul le lendemain d'une guerre nucléaire entre l'U.R.S.S. et les U.S.A., doit accepter à sa façon des vérités fondamentales et horribles qu'amènent ses expériences avec quelques survivants. De dures épreuves que doit ainsi endurer l'adolescent, mais non sans leurs récompenses pour autant, car si ce dernier doit en venir à des conclusions peu flatteuses par exemple sur la nature de l'homme, il réussit toutefois à se réintégrer à la vie familiale, grâce à la bonté d'un vieillard et de sa petite fille, adolescente.

Un jour fatidique en plein été torride, Daniel descend chercher un peu de fraîcheur dans le sous-sol du chalet familial, situé dans les Laurentides. Pourtant, grâce à ce sous-sol, qui sert également d'abri anti-atomique, Daniel survit à une guerre nucléaire déclenchée subitement et sans préavis. Les parents du garçon, partis faire des achats à Québec, y trouvent la mort alors que le jeune, enfermé dans l'abri, ressort vivant de la catastrophe survenue à son insu. En effet, par mesure de sécurité la pièce souterraine se trouve équipée de tout ce qu'il faut à Daniel afin de vivre claustré pendant le temps nécessaire à la disparition des radiations nocives.