

tion in the second title. Raven here is treated quite roughly by her companions, which children will appreciate because she was so nasty, but children will mind the sad note of lack of resolution in the final image: Raven is alone and distrusted. To have hope of resolving problems oneself, the child wants to see examples of how others do it. As it is, I suspect children will not be terribly interested in reading this book a second time.

Cameron's language is spare, controlled, yet humorous (Raven did not simply eat, she "chomped and snuffed, she munched and burped, she smacked her lips and slurped"). The illustrations are graphically strong, rich in texture and demonstrate that black and white techniques have special uses. The covers designed by Gaye Hammond are distinctive for they have the bold punch of road signs and this style is used to set off complex west coast designs. Unfortunately, these aboriginal designs are not identified, leaving us to wonder whether Hammond is borrowing, inventing, or reflecting personal history. Furthermore, the publisher provides information about the author. Since the illustrator contributes as much as the author in picture books, similar details about her would be welcome.

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POST-MODERN FAIRY TALE

Mr. Kneebone's new digs. Ian Wallace. Groundwood Press, 1991. Unpag., \$14.95 laminated boards. ISBN 0-88899-143-6.



Masterful writing and illustration in *Mr. Kneebone's new digs* depict the urban world in a state of decay and fragmentation. In Wallace's narrative an eclectic and sometimes psychedelic phraseology is a device which conceals and even distances meaning. The book's textual and visual off-centeredness is appropriate for the post-modern world without centre that Wallace depicts. Characters speak in their own idiosyncratic versions of an

urban psychosis, never awakening to the state of decay around them. Only April Moth has powers of self-realization. Through her, Wallace has created a kind of post-modern fairy tale heroine: her search for "new digs" is constituted

by the acquisition of powers of self-definition. The quest for home is the quest for centre.

April Moth's name and appearance (she has antennae on her hat and a moth design on her skirt) provide a clue to the nature of her dilemma. Like the moth, she is suspended in that space between dark and light; she finds herself symbolically caught by society's conception of her as homeless. She and her dog, Mr. Kneebone, seek not only to find home but to define "home." Like the trials of fairy tale lore, the people and places April Moth encounter offer her the opportunity for self-realization. In one place, an apartment April and Mr. Kneebone investigate, cats of every description "seep out of every doorway" and shower down upon them; the physical repulsiveness of the cats makes them further embodiments of the dangers of the urban world. Having escaped that "sickly cat stew," they encounter Sweet Daddy Three Times, whose verbal idiosyncrasies and contorted gestures accentuate the decay of the urban world around him.

April Moth's choice of a final home in the city park is an act of deconstruction and creation. She has defied the societally based notion of "home" by transforming it into her own conception of the natural world as home. Although Wallace's solution to April Moth's dilemma is perhaps too idealistic for the realities which confront our own society, he has created a heroine of remarkable strength and a picture book that challenges the traditional boundaries of its genre.

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BERTON'S CANADIAN HISTORY

Canada under siege. Pierre Berton. McClelland & Stewart, 1991. 86 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1431-7. **Revenge of the tribes.** Pierre Berton. McClelland & Stewart, 1991. 89 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1429-5.

Two of a four part set, these titles feature the events and people involved in military confrontations along the Great Lakes border during the War of 1812. *Canada under siege* covers the attacks on York and Fort George, the battles of Stoney Creek and Beaver Dams, and the legendary walk of Laura Secord. *Revenge of the tribes* highlights the events and attitudes that prompted the Indians to throw their support and force behind the Canadian and British cause. Other titles not reviewed cover battles at Detroit and Queenston Heights.

Berton covers this historical material in a manner both vivid and engaging. As adults have been drawn to his popularized histories, so too should a younger readership. The third-person narrative form, interspersed with direct quota-