

Each tale is prefaced with the teller/author's anecdote about the tale's origin, or about finding and learning the tale. The chatty entries exude a love for the craft.

As do the stories. Ojibway, Chinese, Jamaican, Gaelic, Spanish, Franco-Ontarien, Cree and a variety of other cultures and traditions are represented here. *Va Attacher la Vache* by Justin Lewis made me laugh out loud, made me want to tell—ah ha. Yes, this is the power of a good story—the desire (*the need*) to pass it on. Surpassing the definitions of orality and literacy, sharing is the underlying power of story. These stories will continue to catch the ear, be refashioned and retold, despite their codification.

Those in *Next Teller* range from formulaic, repetitious, incremental folktales, to sophisticated and highly literate stories such as Yashinsky's *The Devil's Noodles*. He details a particular time and place, rather than use the universal imagery of folktale. "The sidewalks were packed, a priest led a choir, a marching band played "I'll do it my way," a Cadillac full of soccer players drove by, everyone shouted *Viva Italia!*" Good luck to aspiring storytellers! Schlanger's cover illustration is lively but the colours are pale, and I'm unsure what the airborne candies contribute. Will the quality of binding and paper withstand the countless thumbings these stories warrant?

Art and its processes has the capacity to build community in ways that most politicians and business-folk can't comprehend. It's good to enter different Canadian communities via these stories, to laugh with the people and situations of these stories told "in small villages, on northern traplines, in downtown coffee houses, in seacoast outports and onstage at storytelling festivals."

Cornelia Hoogland is a poet whose publications include *The Wire-Thin Bride* (Turnstone, 1990) and *Marrying The Animals* (Brick, 1995). She is a professor of English Literature and Drama at the Education Faculty at the University of Western Ontario.

TEENAGE SOUL SEARCHING—A TIRED PLOT

Ellen/Eléna/Luna. Paul Kropp. Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992. 186 pp., \$15.95 paper. ISBN 0-02-954137-9.

Paul Kropp's *Ellen/Eléna/Luna* targets eleven-to-fifteen-year-old readers and introduces them to the two alternate identities that Ellen Bertrand, the sixteen-year-old protagonist, has invented to supplement her purportedly boring everyday life. That her life is boring, however, is quickly revealed to be a self-induced verdict—not an uncommon phenomenon in teenagers. It is, furthermore, not uncommon for teenagers to temporarily reinvent who they are or, rather, who they think they would like to be. With the help of her best friend Janey, who is editor-in-chief of a city-wide student newspaper, Ellen places an ad in the

personals section, inviting responses from “good-looking, creative, and definitely not boring” (29) guys, the ostensible reason being that Janey wants a research article on this type of contact.

The originality of Kropp’s story lies in the fact that Ellen can not only dream about who she would like to be but also actually transform herself into new characters in keeping with the type of responses she receives to the ad. However, the tension between Ellen’s life and Ellen’s perception of herself, both woven into the first-person narrative, falls short of being convincing. The dialogues are often stilted and supported by too many comments introduced, it would seem, to close the gap between the sparsity of what teenagers vocalize and what they are actually thinking: “‘You did, Ellen.’ Janey’s voice sounded like she thought I was an early victim of Alzheimer’s” (18). Ellen suggests, for instance, that she was “starting to enjoy being Luna more than [she] ever liked being plain Ellen Bertrand” (71). The commentaries surrounding her dialogue, however, suggest that she is less than comfortable: “I felt this was one of those conversations where I was digging myself in with my own shovel” (72). These vacillations are no doubt real but the emphasis they are given in the narrative stands in juxtaposition with the character we are repeatedly told is boring and unimaginative. Conversely, when Ellen discovers at a party that her father was once the “king of the Screaming Poets” (83), her reaction is subdued.

Having spent an evening in the punk rocker scene as Luna, Ellen responds to a second ad and becomes Eléna, “Somebody artsy . . . somebody with flair and style and, uh—panache” (104). Once again, the discrepancies between Eléna’s actions and Ellen’s thoughts are larger than life and difficult to follow. The story culminates with the moral implication that Ellen must confess her pretences to all she has involved in her fabrications. But the fact that her first date, her father, her grandmother, and her best friend all converge at a gala event that her second date has asked her to, in order to bring about her “confession” is heavy-handed at best. A further irritant which adds to the confusion in the narrative is the allusion to places in and around Toronto that only a native of Toronto could interpret in terms of the social implications they are evidently meant to project.

Kropp’s story embraces many levels of duality. On the surface, there are the various roles that Ellen plays. These in turn are embedded in their respective narrative voices which serve to reflect the inner conflicts of the protagonist. It seems, however, that these literary devices have been extrapolated at the expense of clarity, which may not be particularly helpful to the age group the book is trying to reach.

Barbara Kraus is a professor of English and French language and translation at the Universities of Karlsruhe and Mainz in Germany. Her own research is in the area of Canadian literature.