



Outside Looking In, Inside Looking Out

—Perry Nodelman

Our big news since the last issue of *CCL/LCJ* is the announcement by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ) at last winter's Modern Language Association conference naming the journal as runner-up for the Council's Phoenix Award for Significant Editorial Achievement. CELJ makes the award to journals that have launched an overall effort of revitalization within the previous three years. In citing *CCL/LCJ*, the CELJ judges noted that "the change between former and current versions of this journal is immediately apparent, both in content and in aesthetics," and added that "serious reflections about the mission and nature of the journal" are evident in a new mission statement that "redefines and tightens the journal's focus," and in "improved writing and more pointed emphasis on the relationship between theory and children's literature which deepens and enriches the scholarship." The judges also noted *CCL/LCJ*'s rededication to its goal of providing bilingual content about materials in both of our country's

official languages.

We're delighted that our efforts over the last few years to make a good journal better have been honoured in this way—and not least because the award signals interest in a journal devoted to studies of Canadian literature and culture beyond the borders of Canada. CELJ, an organization of editors of scholarly journals devoted to study in the humanistic disciplines, has a membership of over 450 editors located not just in Canada but across North America and elsewhere. It's traditional and rather unfortunate that we Canadians tend to have less respect for the opinions of Canadians about our endeavours than for those of people outside Canada. We generally don't acknowledge the wonderfulness of fellow Canadians like Pamela Anderson or Michael Ondaatje or Jim Carrey or Glenn Gould or Avril Lavigne until fame and respect outside Canada have confirmed it for us. But I think my pleasure in the journal having been singled out by a non-Canadian organization

represents more than just that very Canadian and very parochial sort of self-disrespect.

The difference for me is in the nature of the respect. Glenn Gould, Pam Anderson, and the rest became known outside of Canada for the excellence of their various talents—in other words, for reasons which had nothing obvious to do with their being Canadian. But as its name announces, *CCL/LCJ* is obviously and insistently Canadian. That CELJ should honour us implies an acceptance of the cultural and intellectual significance of our subjects—the Canadian texts for young people that the journal focuses on—in the context of scholarship generally, not just inside Canada but beyond our borders.

That's especially pleasing to me because encouraging scholars outside of Canada to become aware of Canadian texts and to include them in their research in the texts and culture of childhood is an important part of the *CCL/LCJ*'s mandate as a journal of scholarly communication. I find a great deal of truth in Frank Kermode's suggestion that literary texts remain alive primarily in the medium of continuing discussion of them. Such texts, Kermode says, share

“an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions” (44). In other words, readers continue to make new interpretations of them, find as-yet-unconsidered possibilities of meaning within them. But that can

happen only if the texts are known and therefore available for reading by people willing to interpret them and thus take part in the ongoing discussion that keeps them alive—and it's even possible to argue that it's merely the fact that people do continue to discuss them and (perhaps inevitably?) come up with new interpretations of them that suggests they are open to accommodation.

Might not *any* text widely read and discussed by lots of people suggest different meanings to those different readers that would make the texts seem intriguingly interpretable, and thus intriguingly worthy of continuing attention?

In any case, it's an unfortunate truth of the hierarchizing world of children's literature and childhood studies that, while Canadian and Australian scholars usually know and feel free to study American or British texts as well as those produced in their own countries, Canadians aren't usually expected to



Canadians aren't usually expected to know Australian texts, or, most significantly in this context, Americans or Australians or citizens of the United Kingdom to know Canadian ones. We here at *CCL/LCJ* think that's a pity.

know Australian texts, or, most significantly in this context, Americans or Australians or citizens of the United Kingdom to know Canadian ones. We here at *CCL/LCJ* think that's a pity. We'd like to change it. We'd like the texts produced in this country to be a significant part of the context in which scholars internationally do their studies of, and make their generalizations about, what children's literature or childhood culture is generally, and to be aware of how Canadian texts do or don't depart from those generalizations.

To that end, I'm pleased to note that the current issue of *CCL/LCJ* includes a goodly amount of discussion of Canadian texts by scholars outside Canada, often in the context of texts from elsewhere. Cynthia James, who teaches at the University of the West Indies, writes about both Canadian and Caribbean young adult books, and Clare Bradford of Deakin University in Australia describes depictions of Aboriginal characters in novels not only from Canada, but also from Australia and New Zealand. The French scholar Jean Perrot focuses his attention especially on one Canadian writer, Laurent Chabin. There are also review essays by Maria Nikolajeva, a Swedish scholar writing about picture books referring to specific Canadian places and institutions, Debra Dudek, a Canadian academic working in Australia and, appropriately, discussing Canadian picture books about encounters with the other, and David

Rudd, an English scholar writing about Canadian picture books about animals. All of this work offers both Canadian readers and others fascinating insights into how Canadian texts look to non-Canadians.

Interestingly, furthermore, the remaining work in the issue represents moves across the Canadian border in other directions. Elizabeth Galway writes about books published in Canada by Canadian publishers but set in other places, Renée Englot discusses texts of historical fiction about Canadian responses to war at home and abroad, and, in an article that passed through *CCL/LCJ*'s refereeing process prior to his appointment as a member of our editorial board, Benjamin Lefebvre focuses on *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, a TV show produced and set in Canada and widely watched in the U.S.A. The essay by Suzanne Pouliot represents a different and distinctly Canadian version of border crossing by reviewing a group of French-language books from Canadian publishers, some of which have been translated from English texts, including one by an American originally published in the U.S.A.

In an earlier editorial, I suggested that "[t]here was never a time when Canadian children's literature existed in isolation from other kinds of Canadian literature or from all the other kinds of literature, including children's literature, produced elsewhere. . . . We need to be aware of and attempt to understand the wide range of Canadian and non-

Canadian contexts that affect Canadian writing and publishing and the reading of Canadian children" (1). In the light of the contents of this issue, I can add

that Canadians can only benefit when others outside Canada are also aware of those things and support our attempts to understand them.

Works Cited

Kermode, Frank. *The Classic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983.

Nodelman, Perry. "'Canadian'? 'Children's'? 'Literature'?" Editorial. *CCL/LCJ* 32.1 (2006): 1-4.