



**Children's Books For Learning:
A Bibliography of Multi-Ethnic Resources
for Classroom Use**

By Nomi Wall

The Cross-Cultural Communication Centre has produced a bibliography of books for children in the areas of multiculturalism and working class curriculum materials. Our aim is to provide books which contextualize multiculturalism in a class perspective; which illustrate and tell about different cultures; which demonstrate to children the class nature of our society; which deal realistically and critically with the hardships faced by working people, women, and immigrants in this society; which reflect the resources and strengths which they bring to coping with and changing their situations; and which counter the stereotyped characterizations so prevalent in reading material for children.

The books collected are for use in multi-ethnic classrooms, and with working class children. They have been categorized according to grade level. The list of books in the grades 1-6 category includes storybooks suitable for the grades designated, but these can also be used with older children. All of the books are useful in ESL classes and remedial reading clinics. This is also true of the books listed in the grades 6-8 category. For more information, contact:

Librarian

**Cross-Cultural Communication Centre
1991 Dufferin Street
Toronto, Ontario**

Graphic from *Aekyung's Dream* by Min Pael from the Fifth World Tale series published by Children's Book Press, San Francisco, California.

others are more serious. One of the women in the book speaks of immorality with regard to low women's wages in the factories, but appears to find nothing immoral about the fact that she worked at Boeing Aircraft after the war, helping to make the planes that carried the atomic bomb. Many of the narratives are jarringly self-congratulatory, and in one of them Hallie Iglehart, decrying what she terms patriarchal medicine, insists that she has cured a pre-cancerous cervical condition by '[using] Adele Davis nutrition and [drinking] herb teas . . . and [consulting] a psychic healer.' This kind of misinformation can be downright dangerous.

In the epigraph to the book Karol Hope and Nancy Young state that it is 'brief and fragmented'; they don't go far enough, for although the occasional voice speaks with urgency, this book is in the main composed of careless and repetitive interviews and represents a cheap jumping onto the feminist bandwagon. For my money, *Out of the Frying Pan* should go straight into the fire.

Beyond Reason, by Margaret Trudeau, Paddington Press, 1979, pp. 256, hard-cover \$10.95.

Joan Baril

This is a very interesting portrait of a woman. Although Margaret refers to herself as a 'child of the sixties' and a 'flower child,' her character emerges as one of a typical woman of the Fifties, passive and other-directed, whose rebellions are reactions against situations created with her own collusion.

She writes, 'My trouble is I don't like to disappoint anyone.' So as an adolescent she gave up dating because she could not bear the stress of saying no to back-seat romances. She became a tomboy to please her father and a university radical for her first lover. Her next man was a mystic hippy and for him she became the hippiest. She journeyed to Morocco, lived on the beach and made the obligatory trip to Marrakesh. She poured her energy into this in order 'to show him how truly worthy of him I had finally become.' This desire to turn her personality inside out to *prove herself worthy* is a *leit-motif* of the book.

Society encourages women to be other-directed; it grooms them and holds up two rewards, fulfillment through the two great ideals: romantic love and the conjugal dream. Margaret bought the myths completely and, as any feminist knows, it's downhill all the way from there.

There is a strange, almost eerie tone to this book — it is an overlay of self-deprecation. Margaret is constantly putting herself down and often refers to herself as a child, 'a shy but eager girl,' 'a dizzy girl,' 'a little bitch,' 'a flighty girl.' Her poetry

is labelled adolescent: she 'sobs like a little girl,' she makes scenes, or chatters and does all the talking.

Pierre, on the other hand, is referred to in fatherly terms. He is a 'perfect listener' and 'understands her completely.' He 'sets tasks,' 'speaks sternly' or 'speaks to her patiently as to a child.' He is 'more father than friend.'

From the beginning, Pierre and Margaret's relationship was one of parent and child, a very common structure for relationships in our society. Society encourages young women, especially beautiful, purposeless young women, to give free rein to the Child aspect of the personality to the detriment of the Adult. And what an unconscious power trip for the male — to become lover, father, teacher and guru rolled into one. Pierre encouraged Margaret's child-personality and in return, his parent was 'hooked.' The relationship then continued on its stereotyped way. Margaret campaigned hard to win Pierre. On the strength of one date she left behind Vancouver (and her counter-culture, clothes and philosophy), to take a job in Ottawa. Her gamble paid off. Margaret prepared for marriage by throwing herself with frightening intensity and dedication into 'proving her worth.' She learned about haute couture; she learned to ski; because he 'objected passionately to birth control' she went off the Pill, though still unmarried. She became a Roman Catholic. He 'set tasks' and she proved and proved.

However, Margaret did not learn to speak French well and remained completely ignorant of politics. ('My strength for him lay in my innocence, my ignorance of politics.') Nor was she given much advice on official protocol, that system of politesse as rigid and old-fashioned as Queen Victoria's corset. Without a social secretary or protocol briefings and surrounded by an incredibly paranoid security system, Maggie was both cut off and set up.

Naively believing that with Pierre she could remain an unofficial person involved only with babies and housework, she made one official faux pas after another. She was also confused about her relationship with her husband. She tried hard to be the perfect wife; every day she dressed up in her best and waited for him to come home but he spent his evenings working and she was 'forbidden to interrupt.' When she was 'rebellious' she went off to visit friends. Everything is sad and predictable. In a memo to herself she wrote, 'I *should* be happy. I am married to a man who loves me and I have a wonderful baby. But I am terribly unhappy.' But even after this realization it was several years and two more babies before the final break.

And Pierre, the man who 'understands everything' could not understand the lack of growth (and the lack of personal power) inherent in the life they had chosen. 'You

can do anything you want.' For someone with Margaret's personality, who had had three babies in three years and was locked into a tightly defined life under a spotlight of publicity, the advice was fatuous. Using the parent-child format they had long ago chosen, it was easy for Pierre to cast himself as Mr. Reasonable and consider her complaints illogical. The child rebels childishly. 'Overnight I turned into a child, a quirky, spoiled rebellious child who must be humoured, yet kept in place.'

There were public scenes, hints of a lover, extravagances and then the Rolling Stones, the indiscreet interviews, the black eye. Downhill all the way.

Beyond Reason was ghost-written by Caroline Moorehead of Paddington Press. At present, it still ranks high on the best-selling non-fiction list. *Beyond Reason* sells because it is packed with anecdotes of famous people such as Castro, Prince Charles and Mao. But there is little self-knowledge in the book. The theme, Margaret's search for purpose, is only a vehicle to carry the saleable gossip. For Margaret, the book is part of another project, this time to recreate herself as a media personality. For Canadian women, the book is a revealing portrait, not only of a woman but of our society.

Kids Like Us, by Beverley Allinson and Barbara O'Kelly, Methuen (Click, Flashback, Trips, Wallpaper, 1976), (Shortstop, Small Talk, Groaning Ups, Turkey Pops, 1977).

Margaret S. Evans

In *Kids Like Us* Beverley Allinson and Barbara O'Kelly have created a series of eight books that are much needed on the Canadian educational market. Unlike most books for young readers, these volumes are about the everyday experiences of *real* children. There is a roughly even balance between text and photographs in all the books. The text is well written and appropriate for a wide range of age groups, but particularly suitable for 8-12 year-olds. The photography is superb throughout.

Each of the first four books of the series, *Click*, *Flashback*, *Trips* and *Wallpaper* deals with the adventures of four school friends from different cultural backgrounds. In *Click* one of the children learns to use a camera and puts his newly developed skill to use on a visit to the zoo and during his friends' participation in a magnificent Caribbean Carnival. *Flashback* shows the children re-enacting aspects of Canadian history from pioneer days to the present for the benefit of Miguel, a new friend who has just arrived from Chile. *Trips* finds one of the quartet in Vancouver exploring that city's magnificent Chinatown and waterfront and corresponding with three friends who are spending their summer at home. In *Wallpaper* all

four children cooperate in the production of a multilingual newspaper which, because they cannot afford the printing costs, is stuck up on the wall for all to read.

The four books handle the richness of the diversity and similarities among people beautifully. After reading them I was left feeling very much as the writers put it in *Flashback*, ['The immigrants] bring their languages and arts and food and customs and skills — and adapt them to their new land. And the land is richer as a result.'

The second series of four books, *Shortstop*, *Small Talk*, *Groaning Ups* and *Turkey Pops* are about the real and imagined adventures of three friends who attend the same school and live in the same big apartment building. Their escapades are amusing, realistic and easily related to by any child who lives in the core of a large city. The children play hockey and get mischievous on boring, rainy days. They explore a car wreckers' and make themselves peanut butter and jam feasts. They solemnly purchase a pet goldfish because they are not allowed to have cats or dogs in their building. Perhaps their most marvellous adventures occur when they ride the apartment elevator. Although they are never able to find the 13th floor button on the panel, the elevator has a habit of stopping there for the three friends. There, in *Shortstop*, Anna, who worries a lot about being short for her age, becomes very tall and leaps over huge towers, eats giant hamburgers and carries an elephant in her hand. In *Small Talk*, Darcy, who is upset about all the attention her baby brother is getting, finds that, when the elevator stops on the 13th floor, she has become small again and can do all kinds of fantastic things. After becoming really fed up with nagging adults in *Groaning Ups*, the trio finds that their visit to the 13th floor makes them invisible and that they thus have access to such things as free food and free movies. Finally, in *Turkey Pops*, Paolo, who has been ill, acquires a double on the 13th floor and has a great deal of fun with his identical partner. These fantasy sections are not only highly entertaining and just the sort of thing that young people fantasize about but are well-integrated into the realistic stories about kids living in the city.

These eight books are an excellent addition to the materials available for young readers in school.

Listen to the Old Mother, by Helene Rosenthal, McClelland and Stewart, 1975, pp. 95, paperback \$3.95.

Ray Ellenwood

There I was, armed to the breastplates
with my wit!

Quite a good offence, also, in this, the first poem of the collection, 'Lament

Reading *The Energy of Slaves*:

Leonard laments
lost music
He talks of cunts
as though they were women.
He used to talk about women
as though they were cunts

or at least holes
for his flute.

His guitar is gone.
The good days are gone
though he hasn't lost
his style

Pure fuck
but wasted
on an empty room
a cold tiled public one at that
(it still reads: MEN)

Those are hard lines, as they should be. The same can be said of 'Listen To The Old Mother,' solid steel. But the real toughness has to be in the head and the flesh, and if you want the genuine article, read 'Not to be Borne,' one of the most bitter, poignant poems I have read, which begins:

It was easier
to recognize him as my father
after he had died.

and ends:

To tell the truth,
what lingers
more real than epitaph, is
that the only growth
he ever experienced
was cancer.

Or read the poems of unlove such as 'Intermedia Warehouse' or 'Two's a Trio a Quartet a Crowd,' or again the complex, double-edged and allusive ironies of 'Political Poem':

Though born from an egg, not all
of us beautiful women
can boast a bird
for father. Rather we
construct our own
births of tragedy, eschewing superman,
his wars.
The lover we take
in our own image
of what a man should be
to deserve us, seldom is. Like a god
dressed up in feathers, he betrays
his pure-white promise of ascent
in patriarchal foment. He's an attack
of need, a wish, an itch that wants
scratching.

I may be over-emphasizing the toughness, but it caught me by surprise. I'd forgotten that one is many people and that a lady (with all the mannerisms and actualities that implies), flustered