

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

to be caught at noon all unprepared to meet the day, could also be 'just a fuckin real good poet.' Now I look back through the armour and remember what it necessarily implies. There is a reciprocity; the best defence is a good offence, the steel can be in the armour or at the core.

These are idea poems, often polemical even in their eroticism, dealing with time-honoured subjects, but from the point of view of woman and mother. There is a triad made up of 'The Poet as Beaver-Elect,' 'The Poet as Process' and 'The Poet as She,' which shows a kind of dialectical progression towards poetic and womanly self-awareness. The poet as Old Mother is a motif running through the whole collection, allowing all kinds of play on that magnificent verb 'to bear' with its connotations of giving birth, tolerating and carrying. This leads to what I consider the major quality of the poems: their wit, their delight in ambiguity, irony and multiple meanings, as in 'There Are No Lovers':

I was born female, born
to suffer my kind, be kind
to others.

No sister gives
me charity,
nuns are discredited.
Brothers ask.

I give
what I, too, a little despise

having nothing else left
to offer in exchange for humanity.

And then there is paradox, as in 'The Way':

... To guard love
is a way of making
it. To make it is a way of ending
it. For us no object
comes between; unnamed
love has no chart or claim,
only the inward
touch as bond, the bearing ground
a birthday to us both
though I die

falling.

A glance back over the quotations I have given, and at 'Listen to the Old Mother,' will show the qualities of metaphysical wit that please me most in this collection. When erotic wordplay turns to jingle in 'Playroom,' 'Reel Gone Jump' and others, I get a little impatient, even though they are fun.

I like these poems and they can speak for themselves. Judging from 'Rhapsody of the Fire-escape,' Helene is moving towards a much looser, narrative form with less obtrusive wit. A certain shedding of the armour.

Rhapsody

How we danced — at fifteen, in the park
that was like a secret place, half-hidden
behind the Children's Library on St. George,
flared skirts hooping our hips. . .

White whirling
flowers we must have seemed, Florence and I,
under the canopy of great elms in the dusk —
while Rose, her new friend,
watched: languid Rose
of the half-closed liquid brown eyes
and long curved neck.

And then — in a time-space just born
he was there, a sudden Byronic boy
on the rim of the dancing wheel,
face ivory in a frame of dark soft hair,
voice a bass chord rich in pedal as
he spoke:

to me! Singled *me* out
in that beginning instant of first love,
tuning the wires loose in my breast and
tightening them
for the arpeggio ecstasies;

as when we climbed
high up the fire-escape
on the side of the four-story building fronting on College
a block east of Spadina,
where the prisoners' voices leaned out summer nights
(their faces, arms, behind the bars a blur of white)
singing, the open windows
carrying the loneliness out as far as a train whistle:

If I — I-I-I had the wings of an angel
Far from these prison bars I would fly

the sadness
ineffable in the scented
humid air already burdened
with longings

... And how the world disclosed
new treasures to me at fifteen, when Danny
who said he was a poet (of course! I hadn't
thought! . . . expecting some embodiment
of music: like poor sensitive Tchaikovsky, or suffering
Beethoven in the novel *Jean-Christophe*) —
and that he was a journalist
for a Communist paper!

... when he, his best friend
"Knopfy" (yes, related to the publisher!) and I
went to see Peter Lorre in *Crime et Châtiment*, my first
foreign film, how I spun
in a new eminence of being
included in their male world of intellect
and friendship, me, a girl
cold with excitement as they walked me home
enthusing, the three of us, the boys
flailing the air with exuberance, paying homage
to youth and
culture — an inheritance I recognized
at once, though all those years in borrowed
books it had lain foetal