

contemporary Japan is, if not evil, at least disappointing; the second, corollary point is that this lamentable state of affairs can be avoided" (15).

The author's summaries and commentary on the various works by Oe and Mishima which best illustrate her thesis are intelligent and well considered. Her remarks on Mishima's infamous tetralogy, *The Sea of Fertility*, are especially worthy. To those who seek a single-volume introduction to the literature of these postwar Japanese artists, no book could be more valuable than *Escape from the Wasteland*, if but for this commentary alone. However, given the scope of Napier's study and scrutiny of Oe and Mishima, long-established scholars of the modern Japanese literary tradition will also be well pleased with the excellence and thoroughness of this work.

Theresia Quigley

The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel

Toronto: NC Press, 1991. Pp. 183. \$17.95

Reviewed by A. Knoenagel

The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel takes as its origin an observation Ronald Sutherland made twenty years ago in *Second Image*: Canadian novels hardly ever present children as happy human beings. Quigley sets out to demonstrate the truth of Sutherland's statement by examining English-Canadian and Quebecois novels of the past four decades. The novels in question are explicitly not children's books but novels for adults which feature children as main protagonists (this is meant by the somewhat unusual term "child hero" in the book's title). It is, of course, impossible to give a comprehensive account of all texts that might be studied in this framework, but Quigley's approach raises some doubts. She "attempted to choose representative works which exemplify the prevailing attitude of the decade" (4). Unfortunately, the reader does not receive any information why the particular books were selected, and why others were rejected. As is the case with every thematic study (and *The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel* very clearly identifies itself as one), the question whether the selected material supports the book's basic statement or not remains in the reader's mind throughout the book.

Quigley selected 18 texts—equally divided between English-Canadian and Quebecois—which range from W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* to Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and examines them in six chapters that take up 134 pages. Possibly to pad up the rather slim book, Quigley included plot summaries of the books she discusses. Comparing these summaries to the various chapters, one discovers numerous identical passages. Quite often, for example in the cases of *Cat's Eye* and Louis Caron's *Le bonhomme sept-heures*, the critical discussion is little more than an extended plot summary. Quigley's plot summaries alert the reader also to another problem. Particularly Robertson Davies's *What's Bred in the Bone* and Yves Beauchemin's *Le Matou* do not focus on the child protagonist as Quigley's reading suggests, and make one wonder if Quigley does the texts proper justice.

Going through the texts decade by decade, sometimes comparing between English-Canadian and Quebecois novels, other times dividing them into separate chapters, Quigley manages to show that Canadian novels indeed present a negative picture of childhood. One obvious question comes to mind here, a question that Quigley never seems to have asked: Since happiness has hardly ever been a topic for good literature, why should the novelistic treatment of childhood differ from this rule? Even in the most positive portrayal of childhood, *Who Has Seen the Wind*, interest is evoked through conflict and problems. Quigley seems surprised at the obvious. The reason may be that she puts her discussion of literature into a nonliterary context: studying childhood as presented in fiction is intended to "provide insight and, hopefully, a better understanding of this very important period in the life of every individual" (7). Quigley reads the texts as representative portraits of actual childhood. She is thus forced to disregard—admittedly—the artistic quality of the texts under consideration. In addition, she has to combine her literary criticism with the discourses of sociology and psychology, which she attempts by relying quite heavily—but rarely successfully—on Neil Postman (*The Disappearance of Childhood*) and Alice Miller (*Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*).

Something else is remarkable about *The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel* in a negative sense. Quigley cites interpretations by other scholars to support almost every major point she makes. Eventually one wonders whether Quigley's book really makes any new contribution to the study of Canadian literature.

Anthea Trodd

A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature

Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991. Pp. 144

Reviewed by Camille R. La Bossière

This volume with neither "preface" nor "acknowledgments" has the look of reader's guide. Subheadings such as "Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*," "Kipling: *Kim*," "Bennett: *Clayhanger*," "Wells: *Ann Veronica*," and "James: *The Wings of the Dove*" give the impression of a book designed to allay whatever anxieties unseasoned travelers might experience as they approach regions Edwardian. The "summary" of "Edwardian writers and books" (125-33) provided in appendix points the way to contiguous sites worth exploring, and there is a list of "suggestions for further reading" (134-39) which will certainly be useful to students unfamiliar with some of the better-known recent studies of the period.

But appearances are somewhat deceiving in this case: *A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature* is misleadingly titled. There are in fact no potted summaries in this book, nor is its organization merely serial. Trodd has an integrating thesis, which is developed in a measured Marxist-feminist narrative, clearly, vigorously, evenhandedly. Her gathering of texts focuses attention on what is arguably the central complication in Edwardian literary culture—"the breakdown," more or less explicitly recognized, "about what English literature was, and who produced it for whom" (112). Brief yet eloquent readings—those from *Heart of Darkness*;