Newfoundland Studies

Deannie Sullivan-Fraser and Hilda Rose (Illustrator), *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth* by Teya Rosenberg

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Volume 25, Number 1, Spring 2010

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds25_1rv02

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Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

0823-1737 (print)
1715-1430 (digital)

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Cite this review

Rosenberg, T. (2010). Review of [Deannie Sullivan-Fraser and Hilda Rose (Illustrator), *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth* by Teya Rosenberg]. *Newfoundland Studies*, *25*(1), 145–147.

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Deannie Sullivan-Fraser and Hilda Rose (Illustrator), *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth*. St. John's: Tuckamore Books, 2009. ISBN 1-897174-40-3

REVIEWING A PICTURE book or illustrated story for children presents many possibilities for evaluation. Does one assess how the supposed audience will receive the work? To what degree should the review address aesthetic concerns? How important are cultural and historical contexts? Limits on those possibilities may come from the final destination of the review — a periodical focusing on pedagogy (for educators) or distribution (for librarians) usually gives more attention to the needs of the audience than do periodicals focusing on literary or cultural topics. A focus on aesthetic and cultural concerns shows that the book in question here, *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth* written by Deannie Sullivan-Fraser and illustrated by Hilda Rose, is a pleasant book in which the verbal text (words) and visual text (pictures) are both well executed and have interesting tensions within themselves and with each other. It also speaks of and shows a piece of Newfoundland's past; and in doing so, represents some of the tensions inherent in that past.

Johnny and the Gipsy Moth's story fulfills many of the conventions of stories for children. Its main character, Johnny Sullivan, is a child who feels isolated and lonely. His family has recently moved to a new community, and he has no friends yet. His initial attempts to make friends with the boys in his neighbourhood are met with derision. Only when he is placed in an extraordinary position, singled out for a ride in the eponymous Gipsy Moth biplane, do the other boys accept him. This story thus has the familiar theme found in many children's stories of the isolated child gaining a community.

The story's unique qualities come from its setting, both in geography and in time. Set in Grand Falls in the early twentieth century when airmail delivery first began in Newfoundland, it suggests the isolation of the place, similar to Johnny's own, and the potential for connection through shared technology. Johnny and his new friends at the end of the story are together building model biplanes and a tree house. With the Newfoundland setting are a number of elements that take the universal theme and make it particular: one of the reasons the boys reject Johnny because he is a townie. Particular attention to class difference intensifies that urban-rural rivalry. Not only is Johnny from St. John's, but clearly his family is well-to-do, as signified by his velvet and lace suit. The Morrow brothers, Kevin, Georgie, and

Jimmy, with whom Johnny wants to play, are "dressed in hand-me-downs, patched sweaters and pants, and boots stuffed with newspaper so that they would fit" [n.p]. The end of the story does not suggest the elimination of that class difference. When Johnny lets each brother wear a piece of his flying clothes: goggles, helmet, and scarf, Jimmy Morrow signals the brothers' acceptance of Johnny by saying: "Now, Master Johnny, I knows you be a gentleman!" Class superiority ("Master," "gentleman"), once acknowledged, might be put aside but it does not go away.

Some might object to reinforcing the stereotype of St. John's as upper class and Grand Falls as lower class, but the dedication at the start of the book undermines the objections somewhat: the author of the written text communicates that the events of the story happened to her father. Thus, the interactions between the boys reflect a reality that existed at the time the events took place. The tension between what one might hope is communicated to young readers and the realities of a historical event is one of a number in the book.

Another tension lies in the nature of tests that feature words and illustrations. The fact that only Sullivan-Fraser has the dedication at the start of the story as well as the author description on the back cover indicates that this book is not, strictly speaking, a picture book but rather a short story with illustrations. Uri Shulevitz, author-illustrator and commentator on the picture book form, calls this a storybook. Shulevitz makes the distinction between the two forms; with the picture book, "words cannot stand on their own; without pictures the meaning of the book will be unclear" (100). Examples of picture books are Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) or Peggy Rathmann's *Officer Buckle and Gloria* (1995). With a storybook, "the words carry the story (which can be fully understood without the pictures), the pictures enhance it" (99). While the differences between the two forms may not be crucial for casual readers, this difference in form does affect how authors create the books (101), and thus should also play some role in assessing them. Evaluating how well the pictures in a picture book convey narrative elements and interact with the words is important. For storybooks, one pays more attention to how the words create story and then considers the ways in which the pictures contribute to tone and possibly to characterization and setting. In general, the illustrations play a supporting role.

In the case of *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth*, the written part of the story is complete unto itself — the pictures are not necessary to understanding it and, taken alone, the pictures do not convey narrative. However, the illustrations in this book do contribute interesting tensions in their own right. Hilda Rose has used mixed media, a combination of cartoon-like drawings for the characters and some of the background elements, with photographic reproductions of maps, stamps, diagrams, and objects such as aviator goggles and an actual model biplane to represent Johnny and the Morrow boys playthings. The combination of drawn and photographed elements creates a balance between the personal and historical that echoes the story as

a whole, with some of the objects, such as the 1931 Newfoundland fifty cent biplane airmail stamp, picking up multiple threads of the story.

At the end of the book, the glossary of lesser-known Newfoundland vocabulary used in the story, such as "fish scales" and "yaffles" is helpful, although the mini-narrative using them all that has no direct connection to the story ("Ye stunned townie, stop tossing ye fish scales and trade me your sausages for my yaffle before the crackie gets them") is not really necessary. Having instead some brief historical notes about Newfoundland Airways and the postal system would have been more interesting and useful. Still, visually smart with a well-written story and high production values, *Johnny and the Gipsy Moth* is among the stronger illustrated books produced in Newfoundland in the past ten years. It will not set the world of children's literature on fire, but it is a solid addition to a growing body of works that portray elements of Newfoundland's history for younger readers.

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Jeff A. Webb, *The Voice of Newfoundland: A Social History of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). ISBN 0802095534

WEBB'S *THE VOICE OF NEWFOUNDLAND* is an important and welcome contribution to the fields of Newfoundland and broadcasting history. A member of Memorial University's Department of History, Webb has long examined the history of broadcasting, having completed a doctoral thesis on radio broadcasting in the Maritimes and Newfoundland and publishing an article on *The Barrelman* show that has been reprinted in two popular collections of readings. Here he provides a monograph-length treatment of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN) during the critical years leading up to Newfoundland's entry into Confederation.

While the primary audience will likely be regional scholars, this is a book that will have resonance beyond the Atlantic Canadian scholarly community since a