

Andy Jones, *The Queen of Paradise's Garden*

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writer (and that aim is not explicit). Deliberate metaphorical or imagistic flourishes habitually describe the everyday; the modes clash, like a tuxedo at bowling. Often stiffness results, as in the relation of Lillian's return from Hannah's funeral:

She burst right into one of her philosophical rants, but all he wanted was the details of the service: Who wept and who stood stoic? Had the circumstances of her death polluted the atmosphere? Trimmed down the attendance? His head was full of uncouth questions he couldn't bring himself to ask. They'd have to sit there like burning embers.

Dialogue, too, which has even more demands of verisimilitude than exposition, often reads archly, like a 1950s teleplay, unbalanced by attempts at colloquialism like the misspelled "fucken."

Despite the seeming negativity of this review, Pelley's book overall is a good effort. It improves as it progresses. The last forty pages, in particular, are strong, most successfully conveying the muddled darkness of Owen's world. The best quality of the whole novel is the detail brought to the individual scenes, not necessarily with breathing persuasiveness, but which attempts an observed fullness. *Away from Everywhere* does not fulfill its high aims, perhaps by trying too hard to do so, but that intent can be feelingly understood. There is here intelligence, craft, and promise. The next book will test that promise.

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Andy Jones, *The Queen of Paradise's Garden*. Illus. Darka Erdelji. St. John's: Running the Goat Books and Broadides, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-9737578-3-5.

THE QUEEN OF PARADISE'S GARDEN, adapted by Andy Jones and illustrated by Darka Erdelji, is a delightful retelling of a folktale collected in Newfoundland. It is a beautiful picture book and an intriguing expression of both the specific and universal nature of the folktale. The verbal and visual texts work together in ways that are signatures of good picture books: they complement and counterpoint each other, conveying and expanding the themes of the story. *The Queen of Paradise's Garden* is a book with much to offer readers of many ages and satisfies cultural, aesthetic, and audience demands.

For the written text, Jones has adapted two similar versions of the story found in *Folktales of Newfoundland* (No. 29 and No. 30, both titled "Queen of Paradise Garden"), adding elements that give the story continuity and logic somewhat missing in the collected oral versions. In the book, the wife of an old, childless couple miraculously gives birth to three sons. The youngest is unusual, as folktale third children often are, in that he is born two days after his brothers. When the three

boys, Bill, Tom, and Jack, grow up, they are “shockin worried” about their parents’ age (11). With help from “Old Blind Pew,” a basket seller, they learn of a fruit that could make their parents younger, but “it only grows in the Queen of Paradise’s garden and that is three miles this side of the end of the world” (11). And thus the quest of the story is introduced and the three boys set off to seek the fruit. As is usual in folktales, of the three, only Jack, the youngest, has any luck, a result of his kind nature and willingness to be tricky if he needs to be. Not only does Jack succeed in getting to the Queen of Paradise’s Garden and finding the magic fruit, but he also picks up magical objects — an enchanted fiddle, a regenerating loaf of bread, and an everlasting bottle of wine — and brings them to poor people on his return journey. When he gets home, his family does not recognize him and he becomes their pantry boy, feeding his parents and Old Blind Pew the fruit he has retrieved until his parents are young enough (but not too young) and the old guide becomes “Young Seeing Pew” (33). When the Queen of Paradise comes looking for the man who took her fruit and magical items, she tests all three boys, marries Jack, and they have “babies in basketfuls” (41).

Throughout the story, non-standard uses of language and punctuation signal Newfoundland origin. When Jack’s two older brothers refuse to help a little bird, they both yell: “G’wan, git away wit ya” (12, 13). In other places, shifts from past tense to present tense: “He whistled and called but there was no sign of the bird. So Jack sits down on the stump of a tree, hangs his head ... but when he looked up again he saw an old man” (16-17) help to convey the voice, and particularly the Newfoundland voice, of the storyteller. Dialect is communicated by the dropping of final letters: “ol Tom” (15) and “diamonds sparklin in it” (23). The editorial decision to drop the final letters but not add an apostrophe is a good device in that it keeps the pages clean and isn’t as distracting or discouraging as having the apostrophes littered throughout, a problem for many written narratives that seek to emulate spoken dialect. In the Publisher’s Note for *Peg Bearskin*, retold by Philip Dinn and Andy Jones, Marnie Parsons, also publisher of *The Queen of Paradise’s Garden*, notes that “By using punctuation in a musical, rather than a “standard” grammatical way, we hope to have made it possible for readers to hear the pacing and lift of the language as a celebration of the human voice.” The same principle is used in *Queen of Paradise’s Garden* to good effect.

This book, however, differs from *Peg Bearskin* in that it is much more heavily illustrated, which adds further dimensions to the story. The colour scheme of greens, blues, and greys is evocative of Newfoundland landscape. The occasional jolt of red — in the roofs of buildings, a bottle of wine, the vests on three little birds — conveys energy and highlights action or theme. Further evoking the Newfoundland setting are saltbox houses that dot the landscape, perched on the sides of hills, and little spikes of fir trees. Many of the characters wear salt-and-pepper style caps, though in this book the hats are green rather than the usual black and white. There are European influences apparent in the pictures (the artist is from Slovenia and

trained in Prague) that complicate the sense of place. Those influences are apparent in the shapes of the figures and in some of the clothing they wear, such as the old woman's head scarf or Jack's tunic-like jacket and wide trousers drawn tight at his ankles, which in some pictures look Newfoundland (8, 10) and in others suggest eastern Europe (13, 30). The landscape also has elements that signal some place other than Newfoundland: lush deciduous trees, for example. That sense of "not Newfoundland" may undermine the book for Newfoundland purists, but it is effective on other levels. The Queen of Paradise's castle has a domed turret and is surrounded by tall trees (19), signaling that Jack is not in his outport any more; it is appropriate that the magical place, "three miles this side of the end of the world" (11) and a place that "no one's ever gotten into" (17, 18) should be a bit different from the home landscape. On another level, though, the mixing of visual cultural signifiers is appropriate to the folktale form; while folktales do come from specific places, their fundamental elements, or motifs, are universal, showing up in tales from around the world. *The Queen of Paradise's Garden* is of Newfoundland but it is also of the European folktale tradition. Jones's narrative voice grounds it in Newfoundland, while Erdelji's illustrations nod to that origin but also indicate its universality.

The visual text also serves to highlight and add to themes throughout the story. The most obvious example is the three little birds that echo the three brothers, drawing attention to elements of the journey as they show up regularly in their bright red vests. When Old Blind Pew tells the three brothers about the magic fruit, the birds are just above them, breaking the border of the picture and clearly beginning a journey that foreshadows the brothers' own quest. The birds also play roles separate from the brothers' actions. When the verbal text describes people in Paradise waking up after Jack has enchanted and tricked them — the blacksmith's beard whitened with ash, the teacher's chalk put in her ear, the cook's pie eaten — the pictures show the birds mimicking the reactions of the people (24), creating humour and further mocking the characters Jack has already mocked once.

Fun details such as the three birds to trace throughout the story in addition to many other elements in the pictures help to suggest the young audience usually associated with picture books. However, as with many folktales, and in fact much good children's literature, this book works on multiple levels for the dual audiences of children and adults who often read together. Commonly with folktale retellings for children, tellers tone down elements considered too "adult." In the oral version of this tale, the sexual elements of the story are already subtle and Jones retains those subtleties. When Jack finds the Queen's castle, he not only takes the fruit that will make his parents young from her garden, he also tours through the castle, entering her room and taking the magical objects, and, by implication, her virtue. With the magical loaf of bread, "Jack eats a big slice o' bread, because who's going to miss a slice off a cut loaf" (23), a euphemism for having sex with a woman who is no

longer a virgin. Then, the Queen of Paradise shows up “nine months later” looking for “the man who had been to her garden” (35)¹ and the final words of the story include the comment that “they were havin babies in basketfuls” (41). The pictures pick up some of the sexual elements of the story with the depiction of the Queen, who is very voluptuous as Jack sees her sleeping (22) and as she looms over Jack’s community (39 and cover).

The clues are there, but not overtly stated. More obvious a change for the child audience is the removal of the word “ass” from the beginning of the story, which in Keeping’s version has “pigs run about, forks stuck in their ass” (*Folktales of Newfoundland* 316) while Jones has toned it down to “pigs run about with forks stuck in their backs” (8). However, “ass” remains at the conclusion, which in both stories is a formulaic refrain signaling the end of the story: “and all they give me / is a slipper and a glass. / And I come all the way slidin on me ass” (41). When asked about dropping the first ass but keeping the second one, Jones said that the wording started when he and Erdelji were performing the story as a puppet play in schools; he didn’t want to offend teachers or parents at the start of the performance but figured by the end, there was nothing the adults could do, plus the kids really enjoy the naughty word. So, while removing the first mention of ass might seem calculated to protect the innocence of the child audience, it is more a nod to the sensibilities of many adults.

There is plenty more to say about both the story’s content and the ways in which the illustrations work. The book has multiple levels to explore, as a children’s picture book and as a folktale. It preserves and re-presents an old tale from the Newfoundland repertoire, thus serving a cultural purpose. At the same time, it is a beautiful piece of art, fulfilling an aesthetic function, and it is fun and entertaining. Whether someone is a collector of Newfoundlandia or looking for a good gift for a friend of any age, this book is well worth getting. And watch for the next in a series of books from Jones and Erdelji, *Jack and the Manger*, a Christmas story in which Jack meets Jesus. From a short preview the author and illustrator gave me, it looks to meet or possibly exceed the fine quality of this first venture.

Note

¹In Keeping’s oral version, when the Queen questions Jack, he admits that he saw her, and, when the Queen says “I knows you did,” there is laughter in the room, signaling that the audience gets the unspoken implications of how much Jack saw (*Folktales of Newfoundland* 316).

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Sean T. Cadigan. *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8020-8247-3

IT IS NOT AN EASY task to write a narrative history that covers the span of several centuries, as Sean Cadigan has done for Newfoundland and Labrador. Having just completed a book that covers the history of Canada for a similar period, I understand how Cadigan must have struggled with which periods and themes to emphasize and which ones to leave out of his survey. I appreciate, too, how books such as this depend on the scholarship of colleagues and graduate students, and here the work of Jerry Bannister and Peter Pope in addition to Cadigan's earlier research is obvious. The sections on the legal history of Newfoundland are among the strongest in a book that offers a useful narrative of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Cadigan begins his history with a 1946 quote from Joseph R. Smallwood, "We are not a nation" and he selects part of that phrase "Not a Nation" as the title for his conclusion. Nationalism is the dominant theme in the book, but aside from a brief description of the concept as "an ideological construct partially based on the fabrication that peoples of diverse interests are really one and should mobilize in support of a particular interest group or party" (296) he offers little discussion or analysis of a concept that has generated much scholarly debate and analysis in recent years. He argues that the nationalist rhetoric has served to obscure the real issues in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador; the history of the peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador, Cadigan maintains, is defined "far more by their class, gender and ethnicity than by the mythical nationalist identities invented by political elites." While Cadigan's history reflects much of the new research on women, Aboriginal peoples, labour, and various ethnic groups in Newfoundland and Labrador, his attempt to impose a Marxist, gendered and ethnically based interpretation on the history of Newfoundland and Labrador does not always succeed. Although his narrative refers frequently to the labouring classes, class antagonisms and divisions in Newfoundland society, the mercantile bourgeoisie, and numerous examples of exploitation based on class and ethnicity, Cadigan's book remains primarily a political and economic narrative history of Newfoundland and Labrador.