Towards a History of Design in Canadian Children's Illustrated Books

• *Judith Saltman and Gail Edwards* •

Résumé *: Le présent article replace le développement de la conception graphique des albums pour la jeunesse dans le contexte plus vaste de l'histoire du livre illustré et du graphisme au Canada anglais. L'influence du Mouvement des arts et des métiers de William Morris et Walter Crane fut longtemps prépondérante, et ce, de l'époque victorienne au milieu du vingtième siècle. Après 1950 et pendant deux décennies, une nouvelle génération d'artistes a délaissé le style international en faveur de nouvelles approches qu'a favorisées l'émergence d'une production littéraire destinée à la jeunesse. Des concepteurs comme Frank Newfeld et des éditeurs comme William Toye, Patsy Aldana et May Cutler, tout comme Michael Solomon dans les années 1980, ont préconisé une conception graphique franchement innovative. L'article tente ensuite d'identifier un style spécifiquement canadien, si tant est qu'il existe, et examine enfin le graphisme des maisons d'édition qui ont fait école.*

Summary*: This paper places the development of design in Canadian children's illustrated books within the broader history of graphic design and general book design in Canada. The influence of Walter Crane and William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement in the nineteenth century had a long period of influence on Canadian book design. In the mid-twentieth century, the International Style held sway. Throughout the 1950s and into the 1970s, a generation of book designers converged with the emergence of specialist publishing for children. Notable children's book designers such as Frank Newfeld, publishers such as William Toye, Patsy Aldana, and May Cutler, and designer Michael Solomon moved illustrated children's book design into innovative territory. The paper considers the question of whether there is an identifiable Canadian design style in picture books and examines the house styles of seminal publishers.*

Responses to the question "How would you describe your personal aesthetic of book design and what you hope to achieve in Canadian picture book design?"

Frank Newfeld: "My personal aesthetic of book design: Lovely. What I hope to achieve: Effective successful communication, with as much freedom of flight-of-fancy as the traffic could gainfully bear." (Mail interview, Sept. 2002)

Michael Solomon: "Taste and a sympathetic relationship with a given text and suite of illustrations; ready and apt communication of theme, mood, period; but also sometimes surprise and dissonance when fruitful and interesting." (Mail interview, Oct. 2002)

From the beginning of the development of picture books in the nineteenth century as a distinctive publishing genre, designers have integrated text and pictures within the physical totality of the book, creating a balanced aesthetic and facilitating communication. The design movement in picture books has a shared history with graphic design and general book design and has been deeply influenced by trends in the wider design community. While very few children's books by Canadian authors and illustrators were published in Canada before the 1960s, the rapid growth worldwide of children's publishing in the last 40 years has been paralleled in Canada by the development of children's book lists by trade publishers and the foundation of publishers specializing in Canadian children's books. This new interest in children's books within Canadian publishing has been particularly strong in the area of children's illustrated books, most notably the genre of the picture book (Saltman, *Modern Canadian Children's Books* 19-20). Many Canadian illustrators, editors, and designers, who began their work in graphic design, commercial art, and general trade book publishing, have moved into the specialist area of children's publishing and have contributed to the development of a distinctive Canadian children's picture book design aesthetic. While some scholars have largely dismissed children's illustrated books produced in Canada before the 1970s as unworthy of serious consideration, it is clear that a closer study of the role of graphic and book design in Canada will document the small but important body of children's illustrated books produced in this country before the 1970s and will locate these works within broader trends in Canadian publishing and design. Thus, an understanding of the history and development of graphic design and general book design in Canada can illuminate the context in which the publishing of Canadian illustrated books for children has developed and can begin to document the contributions of Canadian illustrators, editors, and designers to the creation of the picture book as a design genre.[1]

Precursors: Aspects of Illustrated Book Design in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The development of the picture book as an aesthetically integrated whole in which pictures and text mutually expand and extend one another is a

relatively recent phenomenon within the specialized realm of publishing for children, although precedents existed in the work of several artists who worked as illustrators. Books designed explicitly for children emerged on the market in England in the eighteenth century. While some of these early books, particularly the more expensive publications, were carefully designed and illustrated with steel or copper engravings, the majority of children's books were cheap chapbooks and tracts illustrated with a few crude woodcuts that were often only vaguely related to the text, with little visual or aesthetic appeal. One exception was the work of John Newbery, the first children's publisher, printer, and bookseller in England, whose books incorporated lively texts and illustrations. Newbery used elegant flowered Dutch paper for bookcovers in a deliberate attempt to appeal visually to his young readers.

Another significant development in early book design for children was William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789), in which Blake experimented with the integration of image and text to produce what he called an "Illuminated Book" (*Early Children's Books* 174) (see Image 1). Each page featured a hand-lettered poem by Blake framed by an illustration that extended and expanded on the mood of the text. Unlike the majority of early illustrated books, in which letterpress and engravings were printed separately, the hand-lettered text and pictures for each page of *Songs of Innocence* were hand-engraved on a single copper plate, hand-printed in coloured inks, and then hand-coloured. Although Blake's work did not reach a wide audience among his contemporaries, *Songs of Innocence* may be considered one of the first articulations of an integrated picture book design aesthetic in which the page design, letter forms, text, and images all complemented one another.

Blake's view of the book as a handcrafted object of aesthetic integrity was deeply influential on subsequent generations of artists who designed illustrated books for both adults and children. It is possible to trace a genealogy of design from Blake's illuminated books, in which words and images were harmoniously blended, to the consciously medievalizing illustrations of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the 1850s and 1860s. Rossetti had studied Blake's work and contributed commentary on his illustrations to the second edition of Alexander Gilchrist's 1880 *Life of Blake* (Rossetti 170). In his own work, Rossetti explored the dual relationship of text and image throughout his paintings and poetry, creating images that explicated texts and texts that commented on images (Ainsworth). Like Blake, Rossetti saw the potential of the book as an aesthetic object, designing every aspect of his 1870 *Poems* from the selection of typeface to the endpapers and the cover.

Rossetti's aesthetic theories influenced William Morris's belief in the importance of handcraft and his dedication to reviving the medieval role of the artist as craftsman, which in turn directly inspired William Crane,

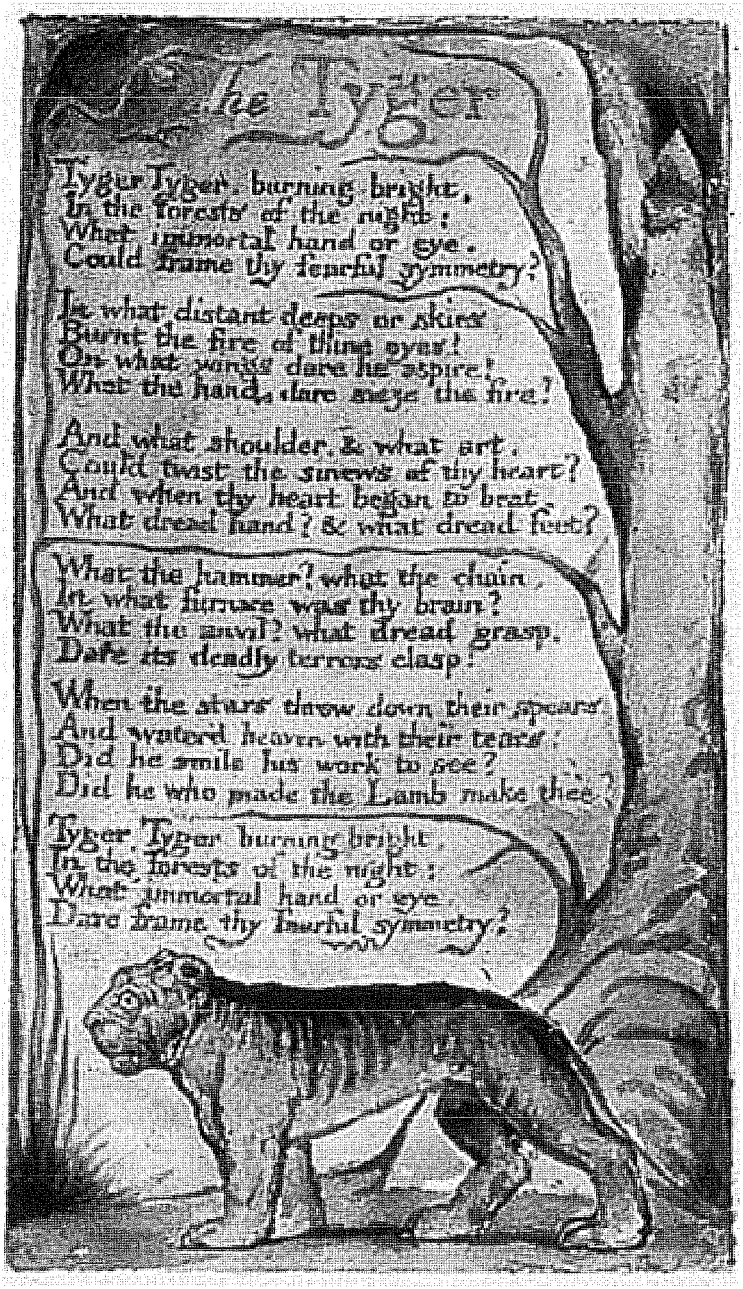

Image 1: William Blake, Songs of Innocence (1789)

perhaps the first real illustrator-designer of the picture book for children. Although Edmund Evans, the noted printer and engraver, also worked with illustrators Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldecott in the production of a revolutionary series of handsomely produced toy books, it was Evans's collaboration with Walter Crane that would transform graphic design in the picture book. In books like *The Baby's Own Aesop* (1887), the meticulous integration of text and illustrations into an overall decorative image, the innovative page layout, and Crane's calligraphic treatment of text revealed Crane's debt to the Morrisean tradition and in turn had a profound influence on the emergent aesthetic of picture book design. Crane's design career, which consistently revealed his interest in handcrafts and a loosely interpreted historicism, extended beyond children's books to encompass painting, illustrations for books, and designs for wallpaper, furniture, and clothing.[2] While Randolph Caldecott's lively line, humorous caricatures, and experiments with visual subtexts were influential in the development of picture books in England and North America, it was Crane's interest in the possibility of illustration as a decorative element that enhanced the book as a total aesthetic object that was widely adopted by his design peers, who were attracted to his goal of turning artists into craftsmen and craftsmen into artists (Pantazzi 6) (see Image 2). Crane's aesthetic theories received wide circulation through his 1896 publication *The Decorative Illustration of Books*, in which he argued that successful illustrators integrated text and image with the architecture of the printed page.

The Early Canadian Scene

In a two-part article published in 1996, Will Novosedlik suggested that graphic design in Canada between the late nineteenth century and 1940 was primarily influenced by the design aesthetics and ideals of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. The Canadian Society of Applied Arts, organized in 1903 by artist G.A. Reid, was founded with an explicit commitment to original design and expression as exemplified by the Arts and Crafts movement ("Part I" 31). An Arts and Crafts design aesthetic, transmitted from England through the medium of influential design magazines like *The Studio* and through Arts and Crafts-influenced American publications, heavily influenced designers working with Canadian publishers and printers in various genres, including calendars, exhibit catalogues, magazine illustrations, book covers, book illustrations, and commercial art. For example, the work of many of the Canadian illustrators who published their work in the Toronto Art Students' League calendars between 1893 and 1904 exhibits the direct influence of an Arts and Crafts design aesthetic in their deliberate adoption of decorative flatness (as opposed to painterly dimensionality) as well as in the heavily decorative borders, consciously medievalizing typefaces, and highly ornamental

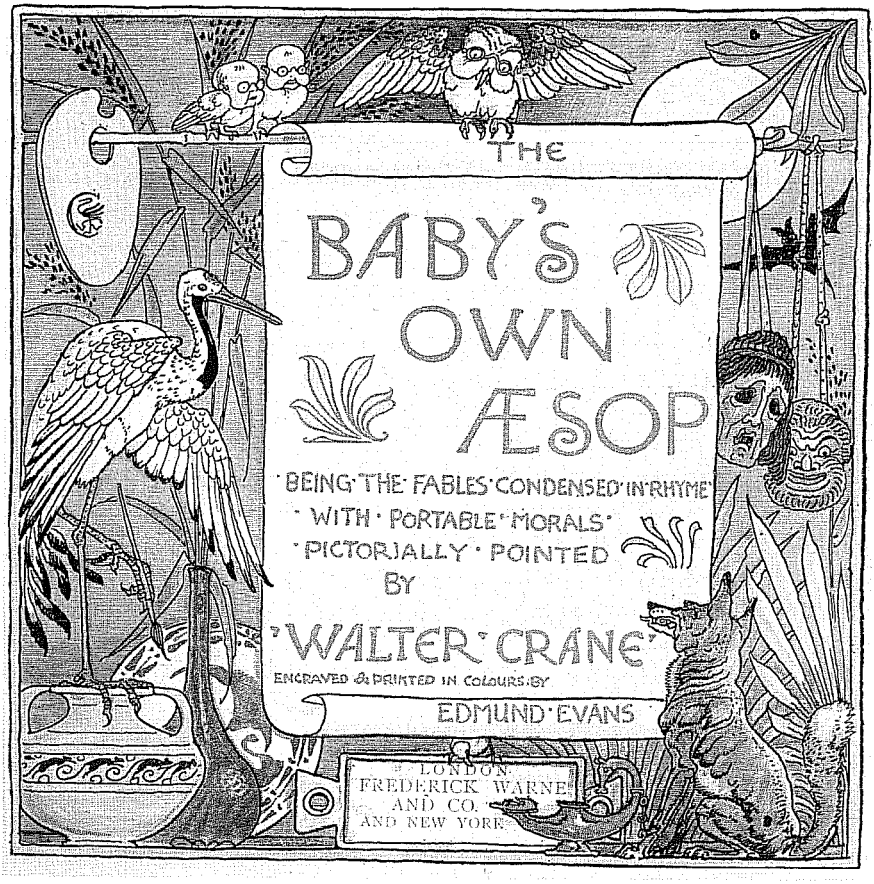

*Image 2: Walter Crane, **The Baby's Own Aesop, Being the Fables Condensed in Rhyme with Portable Morals** (1887)*

surfaces that characterized Morris's designs for the Kelmscott Press (Pantazzi 6). Canadian designers working for the major publishers in Toronto also incorporated a combination of wood-block illustration with hand-lettering, a stylistic aesthetic that dominated Canadian book design into the 1940s and that was arguably a mark of the movement's "preference for the hand over the machine" (Novosedlik, "Part I" 31).

Although the design aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts movement was to influence Canadian design for several decades, at the same time a distinctively Canadian idiom was introduced with the deliberate use of images and motifs drawn from the local natural world, clearly evident in some of the very few illustrated children's books published in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. For example, in David Boyle's *Uncle Jim's Canadian Nursery Rhymes* (1908), the book designer and illustrator Charles W. Jefferys (who would later illustrate Canadian history textbooks, historical novels, newspapers, and magazines) skilfully combined Canadian nature images with hand-lettered text, recalling the design aesthetic of the picture books of Evans and Crane. According to Sybille Pantazzi, Jefferys's "decorative use of stylized Canadian motifs" anticipated the work of the Group of Seven (7), a similarity further reinforced by his own determination to create distinctly Canadian art for a new generation (Stacey, *C.W. Jefferys* 25). Pantazzi further notes that the marginal vignettes and title pages of the naturalist works of Ernest Thompson Seton, equally popular with adults and children, showed some similarity to the work of Jefferys (7).

Jefferys's interest in the use of Canadian imagery, hand-lettering, and woodblock illustrations was also evident in the illustration and design work of J.E.H. MacDonald. One of the founding members of the Group of Seven (Reid 142; Hunter), MacDonald was employed by Grip Limited, the famous Toronto commercial design firm. MacDonald, whose commercial and fine arts careers were inextricably intertwined, designed and illustrated books for McClelland and Stewart and for Ryerson Press, skilfully incorporating decorated end-papers, illustrated title pages, and vignettes in attractively designed trade publications that appealed equally to adults and to children. For example, the strongly rhythmic and lively endpapers that MacDonald designed for the 1922 edition of E. Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver* combine a frieze of conifers and jagged mountain peaks with bands of undulating waves, reminiscent of Celtic interlace, that bear canoes propelled by paddlers seen in silhouette, in a design of considerable complexity and energy suited to Johnson's vigorous reinterpetation of Coast Salish stories. Similarly, MacDonald's design for the title page design of Bliss Carman's *Ballads and Lyrics* (1923) combines hand-lettering with a Kelmscott-style decorative border that prominently features a stylized image of an Ontario trillium, effectively fusing Morris's decorative principles with Canadian themes (Stacey, *J.E.H. MacDonald* xii). Both works also dem-

onstrate the commitment of McClelland and Stewart at this period to excellence in book design and production (Spadoni and Donnelly 30).

Hand-lettering and woodblock illustrations were also employed in the work of MacDonald's son, Thoreau MacDonald, renowned for his work in Canadian book design. The work of the younger MacDonald exhibited a greater simplification and stylization of form that had begun to move away from elaboration of the page surface favoured by the earlier generation. Although predominantly recognized for his design and illustration work in texts for adult readers, MacDonald illustrated and designed one of Canada's first alphabet books, *A Canadian Child's ABC* (1931), written in verse by R.K. Gordon. MacDonald's strong design sense is evident in the integration of his hallmark hand-lettering with elegantly simple pen and ink illustrations, each alphabet letter illuminated with characteristically Canadian images of landscapes and wildlife and scenes of sugaring-off and outdoor hockey games, thematically integrated with the text in a unified page design (Edison 71-72) (see Image 3).

According to Novosedlik, although the simplicity of Thoreau MacDonald's work "betrays a more modernist hand than that of his immediate predecessors, his interest in natural and rural imagery reflects the distance that separated Canada from the revolutionary developments concurrently taking place in European design" ("Part I" 32). In his emphasis on the natural world, MacDonald shared an interest with the majority of Canadian designers of the period, whose work reflected natural themes and motifs and continued to favour "handwork" rather than the deliberate modernism, mechanization, and rejection of ornamentation popularized by the Bauhaus in Europe ("Part I" 32). As Margaret Edison notes, MacDonald's art persuades us "to pause and consider a little before sweeping away everything in the name of material progress" (22). And, indeed, MacDonald's experimentation in the 1930s with his own private press, the Woodchuck Press, and his interest in the graphic possibilities of the woodcut have closer affinity to the work of contemporary British artists and designers like Eric Gill and Paul Nash (Selborne), who were dedicated to art as fine craftsmanship. As Edison notes, it was in the private press that "author, designer, artists and printer all come together" (14). MacDonald's design aesthetic was not limited to small-scale private press work, however: his influential work for trade projects exemplified Canadian books in the interwar period, as in the 1938 English-language edition of Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (Macmillan of Canada). In 1944, he wrote and designed *The Group of Seven* (Ryerson Press), which brought the work of his father and contemporaries to a wider audience. MacDonald's stylized pine tree, featured prominently on the title page, was a design element that had appeared in varying formats throughout his career.

*Image 3: Thoreau MacDonald, **A Canadian Child's ABC** (1931); Text by R.K. Gordon*

Canadian Graphic Design in the 1940s and 1950s

Throughout the interwar period, the small community of professional graphic design in Canada was centred in the Toronto and Montreal areas. The very few book designers of the period also worked in general graphic design and commercial art, and there continued to be a symbiotic relationship between graphic arts and the book trade. The expansion of graphic design in the postwar period paved the way for the expansion of design work in the book trade and laid the foundations for the nascent children's book industry, which would flourish in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s.

It was only in the 1940s that an interest in industrialism, combined with a more European abstraction, and the influence of modern American design appeared for the first time in Canadian design, promoted by discussions of the social role of the graphic designer and of the place of abstraction, symbolism, and modernism in art in the pages of *Canadian Art* magazine (Novosedlik, "Part I" 33-34). The growing role of design in Canada in the 1940s was evidenced by the establishment of Canada's first design firm, Eveleigh-Dair, in Montreal (Cossette). Though largely self-taught, Carl Dair had a "broad knowledge of typographic history and an awareness of modern European design," whereas Henry Eveleigh, who had completed formal art training at England's Slade School, had a "flair for concepts and illustration" (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 11). Although the Eveleigh-Dair partnership only lasted a short time and was dissolved in the early 1950s, Dair's subsequent solo work included the design of the first completely Canadian typeface, "Cartier," for the centennial in 1967, as well as the publication of a highly influential book, *Design With Type* (1952; 1967).[4]

Throughout the 1950s, the now-established influence of European modernism was also evident in the work of designers belonging to the Art Directors' Club of Toronto. As Novosedlik notes, "Designers enthusiastically imbued their work with the shapes, colors and structural schemes of established modernists such as Mondrian and Miro" ("Part I" 34-35). However, until the mid-1950s, modernism was not particularly reflected in Canadian publishing. The majority of books were "modelled on other books or relied on the creativity on the part of Miss Jones in the production department or the printer's choice," according to Leslie Smart (6-7). The situation was compounded by the limited type range of many printers and by the relative isolation in which the few professional book designers worked (Smart 7), although the publishing world in Toronto was too circumscribed to prevent designers and artists from encountering one another's work.

The situation began to change in the latter half of the 1950s. There was a new interest in Canada in the role of typography in design, influenced by the European studies of Carl Dair and Allan Fleming. Fleming, who worked in the 1950s for the typographical firm Cooper and Beatty and then as art director for *Maclean's* magazine until joining the University of Toronto Press

in 1968, was keenly interested in creating designs in which "every element on the page [was given] a voice" (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 17). Fleming promoted a new creative use of type as a medium of visual communication rather than as a textual element subordinate to and supporting visual design (Novosedlik, "Part I" 35; Rueter 48). Interest in typographical innovation was further encouraged by the formation in 1956 of the Society of Typographic Designers of Canada (TDC), based in Toronto, which held annual shows that brought the work of new designers to the attention of the design community (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 23; Toye, "Book Design" 53, 57). Canadian interest in typography and type design also resulted in the formation of the Guild of Hand Printers in 1959, which influenced contemporary design through its preservation of and play with "the rapidly vanishing medium of metal type, hand typesetting, and the privately owned, hand-operated letterpress," harkening back to the earlier interest in handcraft among Canadian designers (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 24). Nonetheless, illustration (particularly narrative illustration) rather than bold typographic experimentation remained the predominant visual method of communication in commercial art and design throughout the 1950s (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 16).

These developments in general graphic design, particularly in the field of typography, had an effect on book design of the period and strongly influenced the Canadian book designers of the 1960s. The overall output of illustrated children's books produced by Canadian publishers in the 1940s and the 1950s, however, remained very limited, and no significant Canadian picture books were published in this period. What children's publishing existed was concentrated in the textbook market and in the trade publications of McClelland and Stewart, Oxford University Press, and Macmillan of Canada. Typical of the work of this period are the colour and black-and-white illustrations by Clare Bice for his *Across Canada: Stories of Canadian Children* (1949). Egoff somewhat unfairly described Bice's work as "conventional pictures of Canada" that were "realistic in a narrow sense" (*Republic of Childhood* [1967] 228) (see Image 4), although she also praised his earlier *Jory's Cove* for its "type, wide margins, illustrations, and pictorial end-papers" (229). In *Across Canada,* the straightforward, workmanlike quality of Bice's illustrations, the rather poor registration of the colour printing, the plain grey cloth binding, and the stripped-down serif typeface convey a design aesthetic allied to the textbooks of the period rather than to an aesthetically integrated work. More visually exciting were the well-designed illustrated books for children issued by Oxford University Press in Toronto in the late 1950s, including Cyrus Macmillan's *Glooskap's Country and Other Indian Tales* (1959), illustrated by John A. Hall, and James McNeil's *The Sunken City and Other Tales from Round the World* (1959), with black-and-white illustrations by noted graphic designer Theo Dimson, both of which are stylistically reminiscent of contemporary European graphic design in

Across Canada

STORIES OF CANADIAN CHILDREN

By CLARE BICE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY · NEW YORK

1957

Image 4: Clare Bice, Across Canada: Stories of Canadian Children (1949)

their play of scratchy fine lines against areas of solid black.

However, despite Oxford's artistically innovative publications, the majority of Canadian children's books of this period were noted for their rather pedestrian, textbook-like design and limited production values. Further study of publishing history in the immediate postwar period is needed to determine why Canadian publishers so notably lagged behind their American counterparts in the creation of appealing full-colour picturebooks and illustrated books for children, although it is clear that the small market, relative to the United States and Britain, and the primary role of many Canadian publishers as agents for foreign presses inhibited the development of robust children's lists.

Canadian Graphic Design in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s brought new innovations in design in Canada, influenced by the "Swiss International" movement, one which "promoted universal adherence to a streamlined design expression — specifically the use of flush-left, sans-serif typography positioned within a functional grid" (Novosedlik, "Part II" 81-82). Its adoption in Canada was influenced by immigrant European designers and, by the mid-1960s the Swiss International aesthetic predominated in Canada in commercial art and graphic design. Its influence on young designers was spread through instructors at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NASCAD), the Ontario College of Art (OCA), the University of Alberta, and the University of Montreal ("Part II" 82). In the 1970s, specifically design-oriented programming would be further established at many Canadian institutions of art. As Brian Donnelly notes, young Canadian designers of the 1960s and beyond were no longer typically self-taught but were formally trained art school graduates ("At Forty" 71). In Canada, the Swiss International aesthetic was widely disseminated through the official design for Expo 67 (which also saw the premier of Dair's "Cartier" typeface) and through the adoption of modernist graphic design and typography by the federal government during the late 1960s and the 1970s. Canadian graphic design gained significant force during the 1960s with the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC), which developed from the earlier Society of Typographic Designers of Canada (Donnelly, "At Forty" 68). During the 1970s, the GDC would expand to become an association with strong regional membership across the country.

Canadian Children's Picture Books in the 1960s and 1970s

This new emphasis on design training had consequences for Canadian publishing. Many significant Canadian picture book artists claim both careers as picture book illustrators and as designers in the broad field of graphic design, book design, and commercial illustration. The influence of

an education or career in graphic design is evident in their choice of style, design sense, and typographical sensibility. This is particularly true with the pioneering illustrators and designers in the 1960s and 1970s, who had been exposed to the new Swiss International modernism through commercial art and graphic design work and who had brought a new sensibility to the creation of the first Canadian picture books in which text and image were fully integrated, as opposed to illustrated books for children in which text predominated and images were relegated to vignettes.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a rapid proliferation of children's titles published by Canadian publishers and written, illustrated, and designed by Canadians. At the forefront of this new industry trend were a small number of highly design-aware illustrators, designers, and editors who brought their knowledge of general book design in Canada and the international field to the emerging field of Canadian picture book publishing. Many pioneering textual editors also worked as typographical and art designers as well as holding senior management positions in publishing houses. For example, Frank Newfeld was art director, director of design and production, creative director, vice president of publishing, as well as a member of the board of directors at McClelland and Stewart from 1963 to 1982. Newfeld has been recognized as one of the most significant book designers in Canada, working first with adult and later with children's titles.

Another senior editor of this period who played a critical role in the development of the Canadian picture book was William Toye of Oxford University Press. Toye, who described himself as a self-trained designer, nurtured the development of picture books in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, publishing the work of illustrators Frank Newfeld, Elizabeth Cleaver, and Laszlo Gal, often with texts he had written (Toye, "Book Design" 61). Newfeld, Cleaver, and Gal, the three pre-eminent illustrators of the emergent Canadian picture book from the 1960s and 1970s, all had extensive commercial design experience and brought an international perspective through their training and design interests: Gal worked as a graphic artist for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Cleaver worked for an advertising agency in Toronto, and, as noted above, Newfeld had worked as a freelance graphic designer and stage designer (Saltman, "Imagining Ourselves"). Their books reflected their interest in the total aesthetic impact of the book as a material object.

Gal's illustrations reflected his education in drama and graphic design employment. Beginning in 1970 with his illustrations for Toye's *Cartier Discovers the St. Lawrence*, Gal brought a distinctly European sensibility to the creation of Canadian picture books, perhaps as a result of his work for the Italian publishing house Mondadori (Egoff, *Republic of Childhood* [1975] 263-64). Later in the 1980s, in such works as Margaret Crawford Maloney's *The Little Mermaid* (1983), the classic elaborate borders enclosing his romantic images of fairy and folktales harken back to the golden age of gift book

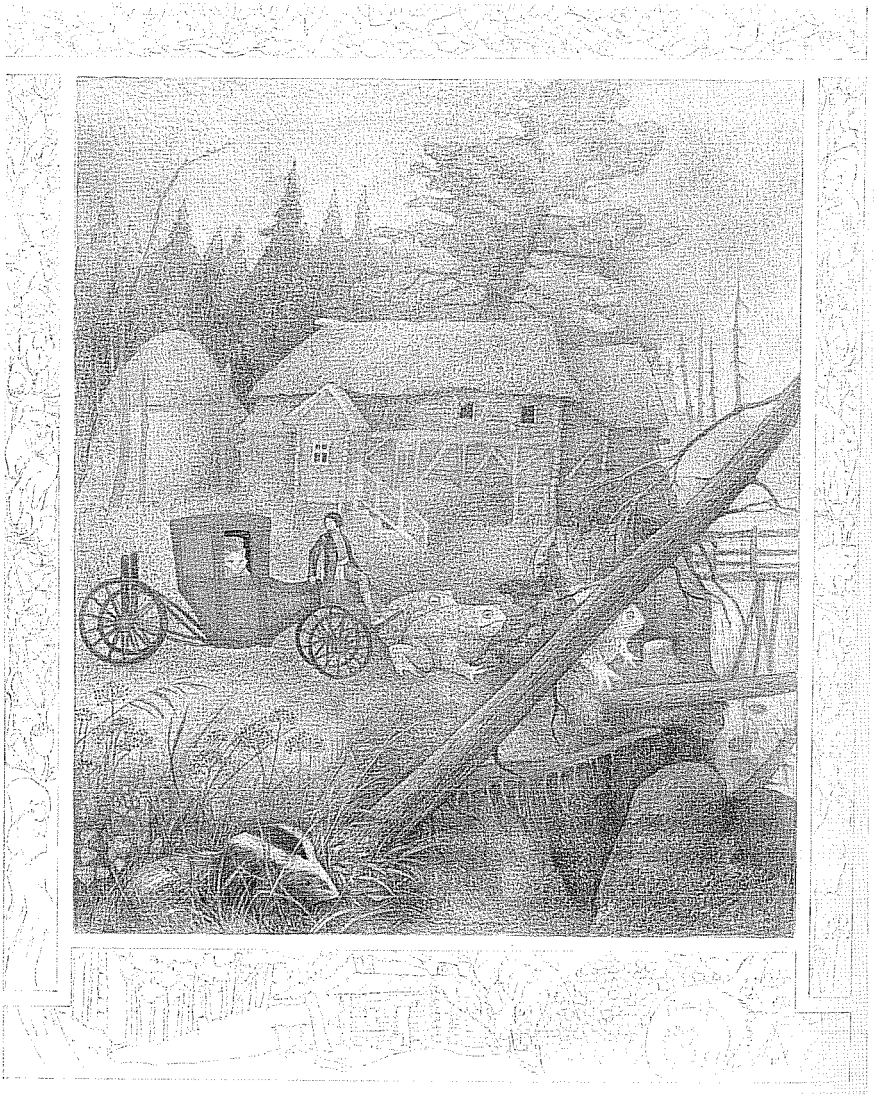

*Image 5: Laszlo Gal, **Canadian Fairy Tales** (1984); Text by Eva Martin*

illustration at the turn of the twentieth century. In his innovative full-page illustrations for Eva Martin's *Canadian Fairy Tales* (1984) (see Image 5), Gal's theatrical design expertise is brought to his selection of visual emblems of the Canadian pioneer experience and to his integration of these emblems within the framing device of the borders that visually extend the narrative (Saltman, "Imagining Ourselves").

Beginning in 1969 with *The Mountain Goats of Temlaham* and *How Summer Came to Canada*, Toye collaborated with Cleaver in a series of innovative picture books that retold Canadian Aboriginal legends. Cleaver's research into Aboriginal art traditions and Toye's commitment to Canadian images carefully integrated with text were unique for their time and represented a deliberate and conscious decision to create books that spoke to the traditions of Canada while achieving in great measure Toye's design goal of "producing strong-looking books that are not only appropriate but are completely and permanently pleasing to the most critical eye" (Toye, "Book Design" 61) (see Image 6). For example, Cleaver's illustrations for *The Mountain Goats of Temlaham* evoke with great accuracy the Chilkat blankets, totem poles, and the architecture of the longhouse appropriate to the story of the destruction of a Gitksan village on the Skeena River in Northern British Columbia while simultaneously reflecting the design aesthetic of its period in its use of bright, intense colours, modernist serif typeface, abstraction and use of collage, echoing the saturated hues and striking simplicity of the illustrations of Brian Wildsmith in England and the tactile collage work of Ezra Jack Keats and Eric Carle in the United States. Cleaver, who also published her own private artist books, went on to greater experimentation with typography, collage, hand-lettering, and design in *The Miraculous Hind: A Hungarian Legend* (1973), published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada (Cleaver 7-8).

The possibilities of integrating illustration and typography into an aesthetically pleasing whole was developed to its fullest extent in this period by Frank Newfeld. When Newfeld arrived in Toronto in 1954, the majority of Canadian publishing houses did not have professional book designers on staff. According to Randall Speller, "Newfeld quickly emerged as a central figure in the post-war history of the Canadian book. Although he is best known today as a children's book illustrator, Newfeld's contribution to design of the Canadian book was far more significant"; he has been called "the most productive book designer in Canada, and the most broadly talented," whose career "transformed the history and development of English-Canadian publishing" (5-6).

Newfeld studied in England at the Brighton College of Art in Sussex and then studied stage and graphic design at the LCC Central School of Art in London. In Toronto, he established the Frank Newfeld Studios and was a founding member of the Typographical Designers of Canada (Speller 9). Newfeld eventually became an art editor at McClelland and Stewart,

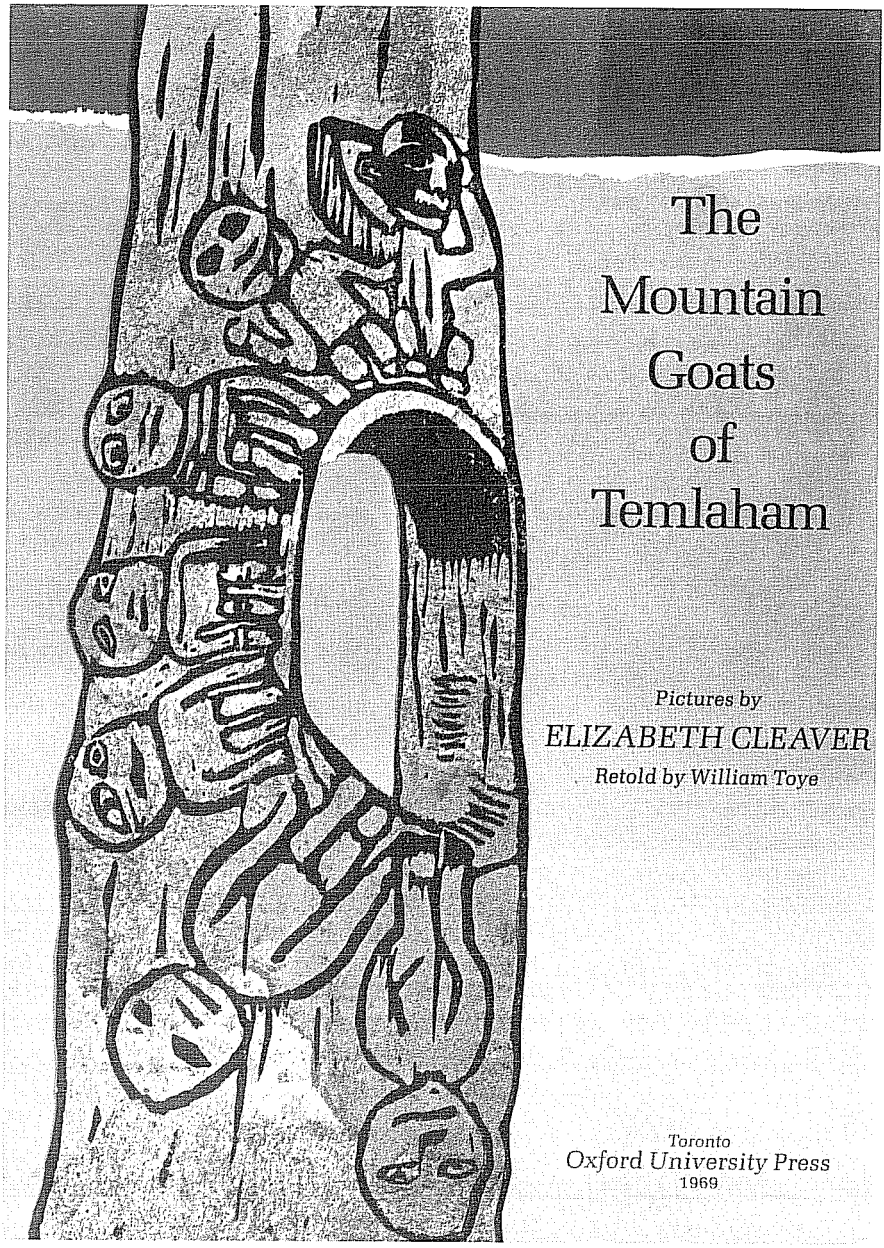

Image 6: *Elizabeth Cleaver, **The Mountain Goats of Temlaham** (1969); Text by William Toye*

where from 1963 to 1970 he transformed the graphic design and visual look of the publishing house. He also taught a new generation of artists, typographers, and designers at various Ontario art colleges. Unlike many book designers, Newfeld was also an illustrator and would work on overall design, typography, layout, as well as his own artwork for his book designs. This combination of roles and responsibilities gave him a measure of creative freedom. As he stated, "I really considered myself as a graphic designer-cum-art-director, so the dual role came easily. Luckily, I was on McClelland & Stewart's board of directors; and Frank Newfeld, the Creative Director, was on pretty good terms with Frank Newfeld, the illustrator. It usually worked out fine; we formed a mutual admiration society" (Mail interview; see also Ghan 4).

Toye brought Newfeld into the field of children's book design and illustration in 1959, when he asked him to illustrate one of the first picture books in Canada, *The Princess of Tomboso* (1960). Toye said of Newfeld:

> He is an illustrator-designer, not merely because he often decorates or illustrates the books he designs but because he brings to the ones that contain nothing but type forms an inventive flair for evocative detail, for ingenious yet pleasing and disciplined type patterns, for graceful solutions to fussy textual problems, and these things show both the painter's eye and the designer's taste. In the best of his work designer and artist are balanced and a kind of inspired rightness prevails. (Toye, "Frank Newfeld" 18)

Newfeld's focus on communication, his delight in experimentation with imagery, and his ability to synthesize typographical elements with illustrative content catapulted him into a picture book career with numerous publishers, most notably Oxford University Press, Macmillan, McClelland and Stewart, and Groundwood. His picture books and illustrated children's books include *The Princess of Tomboso* (1960) and *Simon and the Golden Sword* (1976), both collaborations with Toye at Oxford University Press; the illustrations for Peter Desbarats's *The Night the City Sang* (1977); and the text, illustrations, and design for *Creatures: An Alphabet for Adults and Worldly Children* (1998) (see Image 7). His most famous design and illustrations, however, are for Dennis Lee's three influential collections of children's poetry: *Alligator Pie* (1974), *Nicholas Knock and Other People* (1974), and *Garbage Delight* (1977), all for Macmillan. Newfeld's empathetic design work with poetry collections has been a recognized strength, notably the groundbreaking design and graphic illustrations for Leonard Cohen's *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961), in which the publisher, designer, printer, binder, and papermaker combined to produce a limited edition volume of elegance (Davies 26; Newfeld, "Whose Book?" 46). His illustration and design work for the poetry collections of Dennis Lee cleverly utilized a variety of layout formats from the traditional double-page spreads to interwoven text and

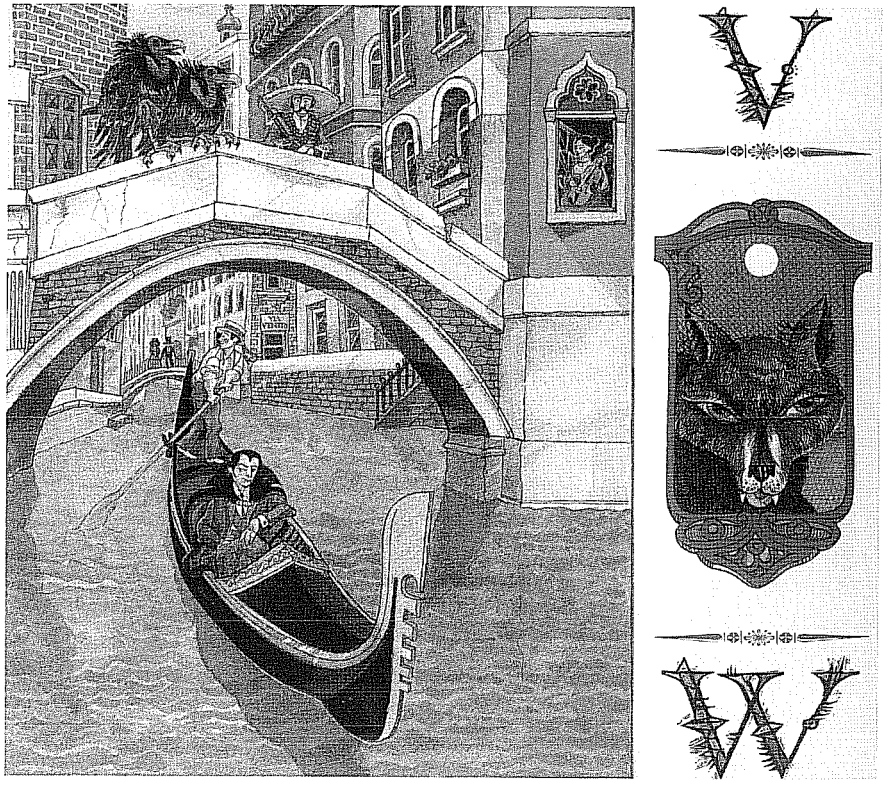

*Image 7: Frank Newfeld, **Creatures: An Alphabet for Adults and Worldly Children** (1998)*

illustrations to enliven the page and visually echo the sound of the words while reinforcing the totality of the volume through recurrent images and design motifs (Stott 74) (see Image 8). As Newfeld explained, in his book design, he considers "the look of the word, and the sound of the illustration" (Mail interview).

Having multiple roles at McClelland and Stewart was not an experience unique to Newfeld. In the 1960s and 1970s, small specialist children's publishing houses such as Tundra Books may have had only one individual working as art editor, textual editor, and business manager; in fact, editors such as May Cutler of Tundra often doubled as visual designers. Working almost entirely on her own, Cutler created a recognizable visual look for Tundra's multicultural and regional picture books, beginning with Ann Blades's *Mary of Mile 18* (1971) and William Kurelek's *A Prairie Boy's Winter* (1973). She called her line of picture books "Canadian Children's Books as Works of Art." The artwork was the obvious focus of early Tundra books, enhanced by the use of good quality paper, excellent colour reproduction, hardcover bindings, and superior production values. Tundra books were marked by big blocks of illustration facing pages of text printed in small typeface. The variable quality of the text and typography versus the consistently high quality illustrations meant that the books were sometimes more visually than textually appealing. Tundra, however, produced the most "glossy" and internationally recognized of the early Canadian children's picture books (Saltman, *Modern Canadian Children's Books* 22-24).

Also beginning in the 1970s, Patsy Aldana of Groundwood Books was keenly interested in the visual design of the picture books, although she, like Cutler, was acknowledged primarily as a textual editor and a publisher. Due to Aldana's double role as editor of text and visuals at Groundwood and to her meticulous attention to detail, the press was particularly skilled at integrating the paratextual elements of picture books, resulting in design work that gained sophistication with each new publication. In a work like Ian Wallace's *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance* (1984), typeface, borders, end-papers, and vignettes on the half-title and the title page were all carefully coordinated to further the reader's pleasure in the text and illustrations and to extend the narrative impact of the work. For example, Wallace's illustrations incorporated a running scroll-like border that visually unifies each page opening while echoing the spiralling motion of the dragon dance and of the spiralling tail of the small dragon vignette on the half-title, which in turn is repeated on the last text page.

After Michael Solomon began to work as designer at Groundwood in the 1980s, attention to all aspects of the design of picture books became even more noticeable, and the house developed a distinctive design aesthetic. A typical Groundwood picture book from this period was nearly square in format, with innovative use of differing perspectives in the illustrations, carefully chosen typefaces, non-traditional arrangement of text

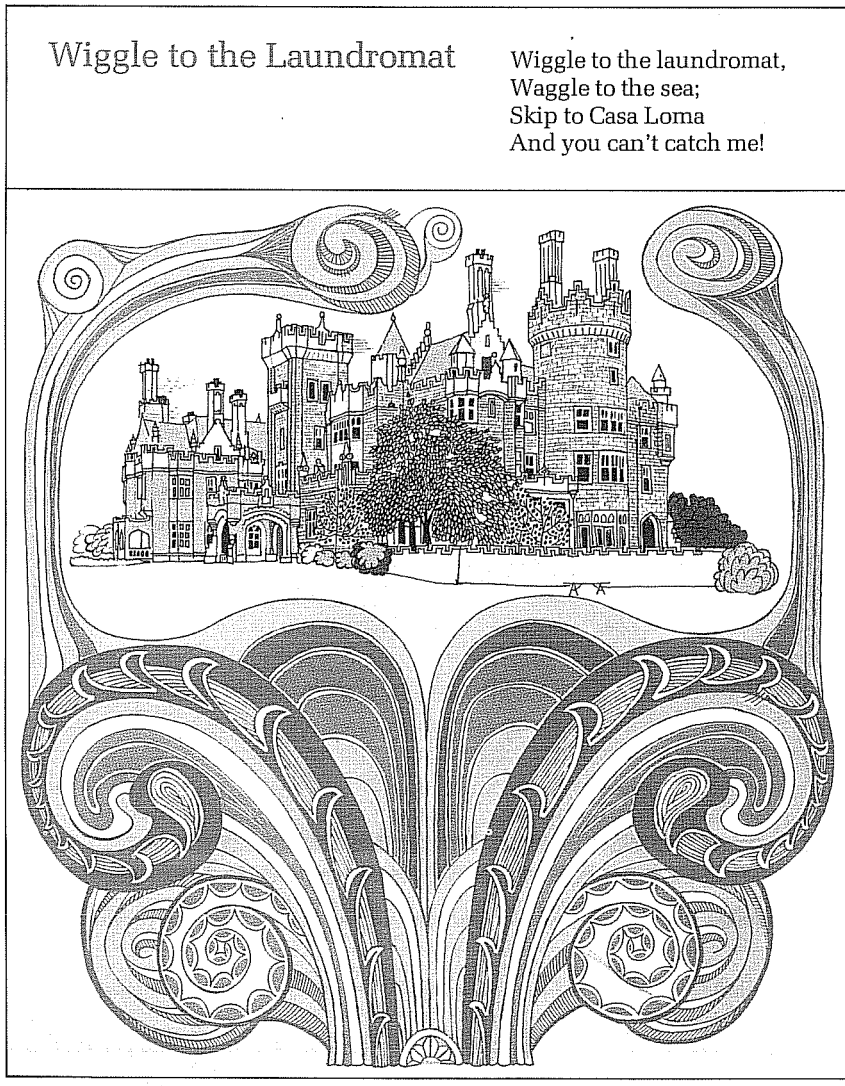

Image 8: Frank Newfeld, ***Alligator Pie*** *(1974); Text by Dennis Lee*

and illustrations on the page, and coloured or illustrated endpapers. Solomon was frequently credited for his work in the colophon of the books, although there is evidence that Aldana continued to contribute her eye to the visual design process. For example, Aldana's notes to illustrator Ann Blades during the creation of the images for Ainslie Manson's *A Dog Came, Too* (1992), part of the Ann Blades fonds at the University of British Columbia library, reveal Aldana's active shaping of details in the illustration and her appreciation of the way in which illustration can further the emotional trajectory of the story and expand the textual experience. Yellow sticky notes attached to Blades's rough drawings for *A Dog Came, Too* indicate Aldana's requests for changes in perspective and point of view ("This could be closer up," "You should show them searching for him here — quite close up — we've seen lots of canoes"), for details that reveal emotion ("Dog could be sitting, looking anxious"), and for a stronger harmony of movement in the illustrations with the movement of text on the page (the discussion of whether "west" should always be to the left of the page, implying movement from east to west, or whether the illustrations should move from left to right to propel the eye forward in concert with the text) (see Image 9).

Other Canadian editors also combined various duties at their publishing houses. Kathryn Cole, like Patsy Aldana, edited both text and art at Scholastic Canada, Oxford University Press, and Stoddart Kids. Starting in art production at Scholastic in 1969, she moved to Oxford University Press in 1988, where she was the sole employee in the children's book division. As Cole has stated, "I think I can lay claim to a unique and privileged position. Being the only person in the 'division,' I got to reject, select, contract, edit, design, art direct, paste up, and negotiate foreign sales of each book on the list, without having to argue with anyone but myself" (MacPhee 163).

Design innovation, however, was often inhibited by the lack of material resources at many of the smaller publishing houses. For example, the early editions of Kids Can Press during its period in the 1970s as a publishing collective often had a rather impoverished look, resulting from a lack of editorial experience and a shoestring budget, a combination of factors that also challenged many early specialist presses devoted to the production of child-empowerment, feminist, multilingual, and multicultural books. The first works published by the early alternative presses such as Kids Can Press and Annick Press were marred by poor quality paper, somewhat basic layout, and amateur artwork. However, as the small specialist presses moved into the mainstream, budgets grew larger and production values were consequently transformed. Kids Can Press's sophisticated information books in particular benefited from Michael Solomon's early involvement and exhibited innovative design and creative use of illustration and typography. Annick Press developed a distinctive square format for its pic-

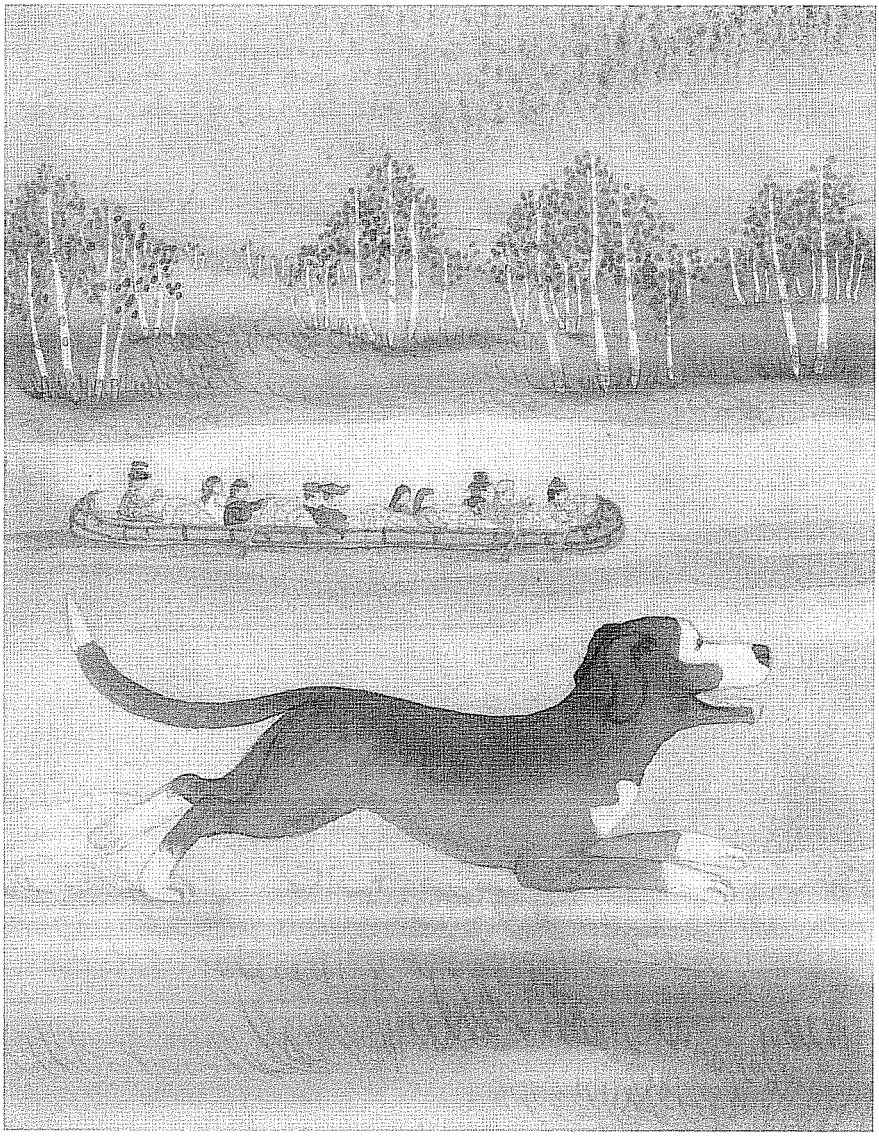

Image 9: *Ann Blades, **A Dog Came, Too** (1992); Text by Ainslie Manson*

ture books, with a design aesthetic that is rarely risky or elaborate. The exception was the bestselling miniature Annikins series, which first appeared in the late 1970s with reprinted Annick picture books reduced in size to nine centimetres square, including Robert Munsch's *Mud Puddle* (1979), illustrated by Sami Suomalainen. In a typical 32-page Annick picture book, blocks of text on the left-hand side face a page of illustration on the right with little typographical elaboration, perhaps reflective of the Swiss International focus on the streamlined grid and modernist typefaces. The straightforward layout seems to be designed primarily to facilitate the needs of emergent readers and to suit the often crisp, straightforward narrative of the text.

In the wider sphere of graphic design, other artists were experimenting with a return to more traditional design in commercial artwork for advertising and magazine illustration. The graphic designer Heather Cooper, whose ornate, finely executed work for adults in posters and advertising art drew on a vein of magic realism reminiscent of the decorative qualities in Laszlo Gal's illustrative style, returned to a "premodernist" decorative aesthetic. Overall, the work of Cooper and partners Robert Burns and Jim Donoahue "preferred classic to modernist typography, illustration to photography, and figurative to abstract imagery" (Novosedlik, "Part II" 86). Cooper was not alone in her design aesthetic. Many other young designers during the 1970s rejected the modernism of the Swiss International style in favour of eclectic historical revivals of the figurative art and type style of Art Nouveau and the hand-lettering of the Arts and Crafts movement, particularly in theatre posters. In general, illustration regained in the 1970s a central position in design for marketing purposes, after experiments with abstraction and non-narrative imagery in the 1960s (Donnelly, *Graphic Design* 37).

Children's Book Design in the 1980s and 1990s

The definitively alternative approach of Cooper and associates to the mainstream Swiss International aesthetic was not as startling a contrast by the 1980s, by which time graphic design studios were more numerous and stylistic approaches were not as individually defined. Instead many designers adjusted and melded, "repackaged and bent" to the demands of the market (Novosedlik, "Part II" 86). Robert Priest, discussing commercial illustration and graphic design in a 1983 article, pointed to the range and amalgamation of styles being used by individual illustrators through the late 1970s and early 1980s: "As recently as five years ago, many illustrator's portfolios would feature examples of every technique they had encountered. Airbrush renderings, photo-realism, surreal juxtaposition of objects and multi-image oil paintings . . . were all there in any one individual portfolio" (71). He suggested, however, that from this variety

emerged illustrators with strong individual styles, citing again the internationally recognized Heather Cooper (71).

While Priest's article was very brief, the accompanying photographs provide evidence of the involvement of noted children's book illustrators Kim La Fave, Marie-Louise Gay, and Phillipe Béha in commercial illustration; they also document the clear diversity of style that appeared in graphic design work of the time. In the 1980s, as more illustrators graduated from professional training in the colleges of art and design, the range of stylistic influences derived from Canadian graphic design in their work for advertising art, book illustration, and children's illustration became increasingly evident. At the same time, changes in the means of production, most notably the emergence of digital technologies and the popular practice of sending full-colour printing to high-speed, technologically sophisticated printers overseas, meant that production values continuously improved and the majority of picture books published by Canadian houses could compete in quality in the international marketplace with the publications of the United States and of Britain.

In the 1980s, a new generation of designers entered the rapidly expanding children's book field. Michael Solomon became interested in the "history of bookmaking and the craft of bookbinding" in his studies at the University of Waterloo in the late 1970s, where Tim Wynne-Jones taught a non-credit course on book design (Beggs 19). Wynne-Jones, who went on to become an award-winning children's book author, entered the field as an art editor for the publisher Peter Martin Associates and, when he left their employ in 1976, he presciently suggested that Solomon replace him. Solomon's work at Peter Martin included producing the visually arresting and innovative *Northern Lights* series of six small picture books on Canadian history (Beggs 19), which included Shelley Tanaka's *Michi's New Year* (1984), illustrated by Ron Berg. Solomon subsequently worked as a freelance book designer with many publishers, including Groundwood and Kids Can Press.

Solomon's early work was influenced by the book design style of the University of Toronto Press and by the work of Canadian "International Style" designers. His later work has increasingly demonstrated his respect for the traditions of book design and his role as the book's architect, creating an unintrusive "exhibition space" for the display of art on the page (Mail interview). Speaking to Margo Beggs in *Quill and Quire*, he said, "I think that's one of the strengths of book design; the art of the book is very conservative. It's not a field that's open to all the stylistic tricks of graphic design. It has its own rules that go back for centuries" (19). As well as Solomon's attraction to traditional design, his knowledge of type is important to his aesthetic (19). When he worked on developing Kids Can Press's nonfiction line, he gave it an innovative, sophisticated design that unified illustration and typography, revealing his interest in creating "an effective

communication vehicle for the author's and artist's work" (Mail interview).

Other art designers have entered the children's book field and have made their mark on picture books since the late 1980s. Christine Toller has worked at Orca Book Publishers and at Red Deer College Press, Dan O'Leary at Tundra Books, and Brian Bean at Annick Press. Perhaps the most internationally recognized illustrator-designer working in Canada today is a cross-over artist. Nick Bantock, whose globally successful *Griffin and Sabine* (1991) and sequels appeal to both adults and adolescents, has also applied his innovative design and paper engineering talents to children's pop-up books as well as to his postmodern adult picture books. Many are single songs, poems, or rhymes, such as the nursery rhyme *Solomon Grundy* (1992), the traditional song *There Was An Old Lady* (1990), and two of Lewis Carroll's poems, *Jabberwocky* (1991) and *The Walrus & the Carpenter* (1992).

Commercial art continues to intersect with children's book illustration. Many children's book illustrators have formal training in graphic design or have been employed as commercial artists or as graphic designers.[5] Warabe Aska, Kim La Fave, Murray Kimber, Maryann Kovalski, and Ron Lightburn have all had employment as commercial artists. Kady Macdonald Denton and Robin Muller studied or worked in stage design. Marie-Louise Gay worked as an art director, set designer, and designer of children's clothes. Murray Kimber and Michael Martchenko worked in advertising agencies. Martchenko, Gay, and Karen Reczuch have all been employed as art directors. Leo Yerxa and Mark Thurman have also worked as designers. As well, a number of illustrators, particularly those with art college training, have designed or co-designed their books. A partial list of illustrator/designers includes Ken Campbell, Ruth Ohi, Vladyana Krykorka, Russ Willms, Ron Lightburn, Deborah Turney-Zagwyn, Harvey Chan, Veronica Martenova Charles, Paul Morin, and Leo Yerxa (Jones and Stott).

Despite the growing interest in design and media, the Canadian Cataloguing in Publication information provded by the National Library of Canada has no field for the book designer. The crediting of designers, media, or typeface is included somewhat sporadically in the colophon of some but not all picture books. Thus, there is no consistent internal evidence of the critical role designers and design play in book production and aesthetics, which hinders critical analysis and review of illustrated books.

However, despite the advances made in children's book design in Canada, there are those who decry its lingering limitations. In 1999, Vancouver book designer Dean Allen contrasted the exuberance and inventiveness of American design in picture books by Maurice Sendak and Margaret Wise Brown and the wit of contemporary works by Lane Smith and Maira Kalman with their Canadian counterparts, stating somewhat inaccurately that,

> In Canada, there's no such long tradition of beautifully produced books

> for children. We have reliable perennial favourites like *Alligator Pie* and *The Hockey Sweater*, but it's unlikely anyone would hold those books up for their splendid production. What we do have in Canada are truly talented writers and illustrators who, not always, but too frequently, have their work packaged and sold in insensitively designed and not terribly marketable form. . . . [D]esigners nowadays are tyrannized by their tools. . . . With the advent of each new generation of microprocessors, less time is allotted for the work demanded by words and images to convey their meaning. Typography in particular has suffered from its sudden ease of use. (20-21)

Are Allen's criticisms justified? From its very modest beginnings in the early years of the twentieth century, Canadian children's publishing has rapidly developed over the last forty years into a mature industry, and many publishing houses have focused increasingly on the importance of book design in shaping the book as an aesthetically pleasing object as well as a container for information. Certainly, Canadian children's book designers have been recognized within Canada for their work. For example, the Canadian Alcuin Society offers an annual award for excellence in Canadian book design. Under the category of Books for the Young, which includes non-fiction and fiction as well as picture books, a number of designers are listed under the citation for the award title.[6]

The critical issues for Canadian publishers continue to be the relatively small size of the Canadian market and the difficult economic realities that result from their inability to profit from large print runs. As Frank Newfeld notes,

> We share a common language with three publishing giants [U.S., U.K., France]. The problem is that our readers join in reading what "they" have to say; while the majority of our authors have to be content with just the local market. This greatly and negatively affects the selling-price of our books. Our preparatory costs [such as art, colour separation, plates, prep, composition] become a punishing factor compared to the constant running costs [paper, print, and binding]. Thus, amortization of the former imposed by our shorter press runs usually limited our ambitions. (Mail interview)

Similarly, Michael Solomon notes that in his early career he was greatly constrained by financial and technological considerations, although the pressures have diminished consistently since then as he gained more control over the finished product (Mail interview).

Canadian publishers, illustrators, and designers work increasingly in an environment in which they look both within Canada to the work of their colleagues as well as outward to the work of colleagues in other countries. The relative isolation of the early generation of book designers has changed dramatically. Canadian picture books competed successfully in the 1980s and the early 1990s in the international children's book market

through co-publications and the sale of rights to foreign publishers. By 2000, Canadian children's book production had doubled to 400 books published annually, from 200 in 1990. In the 1990s, international children's publishing became, by comparison with the 1980s, closed to co-publications and rights sales. Throughout the 1990s and into the present, cuts to federal and provincial government publishing programs, the development of large chain bookstores like Chapters, and the financial collapse of the publishers Stoddart and General pressured many Canadian publishers to take the risky decision to distribute their books directly into the American market. This decision has met with mixed success, and in some cases resulted in the diminution of Canadian content (Saltman, "Imagining Ourselves"). However, picture books travel better than all other genres, and they continue to sell internationally. Exposure to the work of other publishing traditions has been facilitated through the Bologna International Children's Book Fair. Whether Canada has developed a distinctively Canadian children's picture book style is a matter of debate. Certainly the criticism levelled in 1975 by pioneering critic Sheila Egoff, that "Canada has had no real tradition of book illustration" (257), is no longer true. While Canada may not have a long tradition of beautifully produced books, the shelves of booksellers across the country today reveal that Canadian children's publishers are now producing beautiful, well-designed picture books.

Frank Newfeld and Michael Solomon, Canada's pre-eminent children's book designers, both responded to our question "How do you see Canadian picture books differing in design from British and American picture books?" Their complementary answers extend our understanding of whether a distinctly Canadian design aesthetic can be identified in the work of Canadian children's book designers from the early twentieth century to the present. According to Newfeld,

> I suspect that graphic designers — talented ones — have as distinctly personal styles as, say, illustrators or musicians. The more blatantly obvious ones are readily perceived by civilian or professional alike. The subtler ones are still perceptible to fellow practitioners. (PLAGIARISTS NOT INCLUDED). And though influenced by our geographic climate, I believe that we have distinctive individual styles rather than visible national styles, such as found in Japanese, Italian, Czech or Israeli book design. (Mail interview)

In Solomon's words, Canadian picture books "are closer to American books in their commercial appeal and more opulent and ambitious designs and production values. Nevertheless they are similar to British and American books when compared with those outside the Anglo-American publishing tradition" (Mail interview). From the perspective of 2002, William Toye's hope in 1963 that "Canadian design may eventually rank with the world's best" ("Book Design" 63) is no longer a possibility but a reality.

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Notes

1 It is only in recent years, however, that the development of graphic design in Canada has been studied. Michael Bell, in his preface to the catalogue of a 1996 exhibition on graphic design in Canada, notes that the history of Canadian graphic design has yet to be written. Indeed, a search of the literature supports Bell's assertion that the literature on the history of Canadian design is remarkably sparse.

2 Crane stated that the Arts and Crafts revival was a "revival of the mediaeval spirit (though not the letter) in design; a return to simplicity, to sincerity . . . [and] to rich and suggestive surface decoration" (qtd. in MacCarthy 35).

3 Four of the Group (A.J. Casson, Franklin Carmichael, Frank Johnson, and Arthur Lismer) had worked for the Toronto printing house Rous and Mann, and most had worked at one time as artists for the commercial art house Grip Limited.

4 See the special issue of *DA: A Journal of the Printing Arts* devoted to the work of Carl Dair; for Canadian type fonts, see Devroye.

5 Increasingly, the focus on professional training as a prerequisite for a career as a children's book illustrator has meant that there are fewer opportunities for talented artists who lack the professional credentials. For example, in an interview with illustrator Ann Blades, she repeatedly asserted that as an "untrained" artist, she had only a working understanding of the design and production issues related to the publishing of her books, and deferred to and was guided by the expertise of the designer and publisher. Similarly, the combination of circumstances that allowed small alternative publishers like Kids Can Press to establish themselves as serious players on the Canadian and international scene no longer exists. However, a few small presses, such as Vancouver's Tradewind Books, continue, despite their size, to be devoted to beautiful picture books.

6 Looking at a small sample, from 1996, the designers include Peter Coking, Blair Kerrigan, Yukself Hassan, Brian Bean, Rose Cowles, Andrew Smith, Kong Njo, Kren Powers, Andree Lauzon, Marc Tetro, Christine Toller, Marielle Mahue, Julia Naimska, Karen Birkemoe, and Judith Steedman. Marie-Louise Gay, Victor Bosson, and Dusan Petricic, also included in this list, are illustrators of the award-winning book. See the website for the Canadian Alcuin Society.

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