

Western University

From the Selected Works of Paulette Rothbauer

2012

Kevin Major's *Hold Fast* and the Critical Reception of a Milestone Canadian Novel for Young Adults

Paulette Rothbauer



Kevin Major's *Hold Fast* and the Critical Reception of a Milestone Canadian Novel for Young Adults

— Paulette M. Rothbauer

Introduction

Although a burgeoning market and a seemingly insatiable readership for young adult literature exists today, with commentary on its trends and appeal appearing regularly in the mainstream press, the emergence of this genre in Canada has received only the slightest mention in children's literature studies and is given even less notice in Canadian literary history. In a 1996 special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* devoted to adolescent literature, Caroline Hunt argues that theorists of children's literature "evaded" young adult literature and its production, in part because of an unwillingness to consider it as a type of writing for young people distinguishable from materials produced for much younger readers. Hunt's observation is evident in a number of influential overviews of Canadian children's literature, beginning

with the earliest literary histories of this genre written by Sheila A. Egoff in two chapters for the multi-volume *Literary History of Canada*, published in 1976, and followed by an updated overview by Frances Frazer in 1990.¹ Although these historical surveys discuss individual titles and authors suitable for young adult readers, they are mentioned in the context of broader thematic and bibliographic analyses; in none of the chapters is young adult literature defined as a genre or a sub-genre. These surveys of Canadian children's literature were published during a span of time when young adult literature in Canada moved from a barely recognized sub-genre to one well represented in popular and educational discourses.

In her first edition of *The Republic of Childhood*, an influential study of literature for children in Canada published between 1950 and 1965, Egoff suggests

that “most books in the lists fall into a group that can be described as for ‘the middle-aged child’ (roughly ten to twelve years of age)” (7). The second edition of her book, published nearly a decade later, includes a few examples of novels for adolescents in a new section entitled “Realistic Fiction” with a subsection on “Stories of Sociological Interest.” In this second edition, Egoff dismisses these young adult novels when she declares that they “seemed to revolutionize children’s literature, but it was not a true revolution and it can be seen now as unfortunate” (173–74). Only in Egoff and Judith Saltman’s significant revision to this study, *The New Republic of Childhood*, do we find a discussion of materials for an audience that is explicitly described as young adult. Saltman’s own overview in *Modern Canadian Children’s Books* also provides a brief discussion of Canadian fiction that considers “contemporary Canadian teenage life as a valid subject” (65), whereas Elizabeth Waterston’s *Children’s Literature in Canada* attempts to apply reader-response theory framed by processes of human development to Canadian children’s materials. In the short concluding chapter on “Young Adult Readers,” Waterston makes an unsupported claim that “occult fantasy and science fiction seem to hold the most appeal to young adult readers in Canada” (164) and then goes on to review authors and titles in these genres without mentioning any broader body of works that might be seen as constituting a genre of young adult literature.²

There is wide agreement with Egoff’s claim that Catharine Parr Traill’s 1862 novel *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* marks the starting point for a national, English-language literature for children in Canada (“Children’s Literature to 1960” 136). Unlike those of American literature, in which S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* and Maureen Daly’s *Seventeenth Summer* are cited as pioneering titles in the production of young adult literature of the USA, overviews of the history of Canadian children’s literature contain no obvious titles to signify the establishment of a new field of Canadian literature for young adults. Jean Stringam makes a compelling case for a long and rich tradition of Canadian writing for young adult readers in works that were found primarily in American and British nineteenth-century periodicals (“Colonial”; “Present”), arguing that the phenomenon of producing works for young adult readers and featuring adolescent protagonists in uniquely Canadian social and cultural contexts is certainly not new; indeed, she cites “A Summer Ride in Labrador,” written by a Mrs. Groser and published in the American youth periodical *St. Nicholas* in 1876, as one of the earliest stories written by a Canadian specifically for a young adult audience (“Present” 54). My central argument in this paper, however, is that a book published 102 years later represents the emergence of what was perceived by adult critics and reviewers to be a new phenomenon: the Canadian young adult novel.

Canadian critics and reviewers clamoured to identify the style and the audience of *Hold Fast*, the 1978 novel by Newfoundland writer Kevin Major that is now sometimes cited as the first contemporary young adult novel in Canada (see, for example, Clare; Howard; “Banned”). Major debuted on the Canadian and international literary scenes with this novel, which features fourteen-year-old Michael, who is sent to live with his aunt, his uncle, and his cousin in a distant town after his loving parents are killed in a car accident.³ He must cope not only with the sudden loss of his parents but with his subsequent transition from a somewhat idyllic life in a fishing village to life in town, where he is subjected to sharp taunts from his peers for the ways he speaks and behaves and to harsh indifference from his uncle, the tyrannical head of his new home.

This novel appeared in Canada during what has been described as a boom in Canadian children’s literature publishing. The 1970s saw a new era in the production of texts for Canadian young people, beginning with the establishment of Canadian presses specializing in children’s materials and funded by grants from provincial and federal governments (Kids Can Press in 1973, Annick Press in 1975). In 1974, the Children’s Book Store, the first Canadian bookstore devoted solely to children’s books, opened its doors in Toronto, closing them in only 2000. In 1975, a children’s section was established at the National

Library of Canada, and the scholarly journal *Canadian Children’s Literature*, the forerunner to *Jeunesse*, began as a new forum for research and critical evaluation of texts for Canadian young people. In 1976, a non-profit clearinghouse for information about Canadian children’s literature and its creators was established in the still extant Canadian Children’s Book Centre (Edwards and Saltman 89–93; Frazer 218; Reimer, “Canadian” 1015).

Prior to this activity in children’s literature production in Canada during the 1970s, the predominant genres were folklore, adventure stories, and animal tales (Egoff and Saltman 15–16). Canadian publishers throughout this decade began to make a name for themselves with illustrated children’s books that unabashedly represented Canadian experiences and that featured Canadian writers and artists, but the production of materials for older youth, specifically teenagers, had a much slower rise. The popularity of so-called problem novels (or those stories that were often criticized for their thin plots, weak characterization, and overbearing social realism) that was apparent in other parts of the world, notably in the United States, was largely absent from the Canadian scene. As Egoff suggests,

While American and British and Australian children, as seen through their books, were coping with ineffectual parents, no parents, one parent,

being unhappy, growing up, tuning in, dropping out, or brushing up against drugs, alcohol, homosexuality, and racism, Canadian children [in the 1960s and 1970s] were still visiting a lighthouse, crossing the barrens, discovering a cache of Indian relics, escaping a murderer, catching a bank robber, or getting a pony for Christmas. (“Children’s Literature” 204)



Hold Fast is a hinge event
... representing a turning
point in written materials
for older teen readers.



The work presented here is part of a larger project that examines the emergence of the modern Canadian young adult novel amid new and competing discourses on teen reading and readers. *Hold Fast* is a hinge event in the story of this evolution, representing a turning point in written materials for older teen readers. Thirty-five years after its publication, Major’s first novel can be recognized as a landmark work, one of the early, critically acclaimed, internationally recognized novels in Canada published specifically for a young adult audience (as differentiated from audiences of either adults or younger children). In reviews and commentary, it is also frequently cited as one of the first novels by a Canadian author that has the trademark features of contemporary young adult literature: first-person narration, colloquial language with liberal use of expletives and local dialect, frank presentation of sexuality, and an attempt to provide a perspective that reflects adolescent experience accurately (Ross 175).

In order to investigate the critical and professional reception of Major’s novel, I draw on an exhaustive sample of published reviews, author profiles, and commentary from 1978 to 2006, as well as primary documents in the archives of its publisher in an attempt to understand the place of the novel as a pioneering text in Canadian young adult literature. My analysis is informed

by a strand of contemporary book history that Leslie Howsam describes as falling between disciplinary approaches of history (with a focus on agency, power, and experience) and literature (with a focus on texts and criticism) (16–27), focusing less on the physicality of books themselves or the texts they contain, but instead on the history of critical reception. In his study of fiction reading practices in antebellum USA, James L. Machor suggests that the “intersection of periodical reviews, public interpretation, and middle-class reading constituted an important context not only for the reading of fiction but also for its production” (32). Janet Badia’s investigation into Sylvia Plath’s reception within the discourse of women readers circulating in the 1960s and 1970s similarly informs my methodology. Badia examined hundreds of reviews written in response to Plath’s publications in order to understand the ways in which her female readers were constructed as young, “uncritical consumers, as Plath addicts, and even as literary cannibals” (2). I came to this project as a researcher primarily concerned with the reading practices of contemporary Canadian young adults (see, for example, Rothbauer; Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer), but found that I continually encountered gaps in what I could learn about the history of the fiction that is ostensibly intended and produced for them in Canada. While this project seeks to understand fiction reading and reviewing in very different contexts, I am informed by Machor

and Badia’s emphasis on the publicly sanctioned authority found in reviews published in a wide range of periodicals with large circulations. As Badia also notes, reception in these contexts “assumes that reviews are not ever just transparent and objective statements about the literary or aesthetic quality of a work” (4). By examining the reviews of and commentary related to a landmark Canadian young adult novel, I aim to discover the particular tropes, narratives, and arguments of professional discourses related to literature and reading promotion for young adults.

The published and primary documents used for this study provide evidence of how adult readers conceptualized young adult readers and young adult literature vis-à-vis their own authority as experts on either or both. Most of the reviews in this study are written by librarians, teachers, and booksellers, appear in professional reviewing journals, and are intended for both parents and fellow professionals.⁴ These reviews tend to be quite short—less than two hundred words—and include evaluative summaries of the book with notes about its intended audience. Staff writers at major newspapers provide slightly longer reviews that often appear in several regional papers owned by a single media company. A small selection of articles in the sample are written by scholars and professional critics whose aims are to provide deeper contextual understanding of the work for others with an academic interest in Canadian children’s literature.

In establishing *Hold Fast* as a classic of a new field of literary production in Canada, these reviews employ a number of rhetorical strategies. Not only are recognizable tropes of “Canadianness” intersected with those of regionalism (especially of Atlantic Canada), but both kinds are expressed against a backdrop of tension related to the perceived influence of contemporaneous works published in the USA. As well, the consistent articulation of the status of Major’s novel both as award-winning and as subject to controversy and censorship solidified it as a celebrated and somewhat notorious work.

Hold Fast: A Multiple Award-Winning Best-seller

Upon publication by Clarke, Irwin and Company in 1978,⁵ Major’s novel went on to become a best-seller, selling over seventy thousand copies in its first ten years of sales (Fraser). Delacorte released the title to American readers as an inexpensive paperback in 1980, and it also appeared in translation in several European countries. Stoddart brought out a mass-market edition in 1995 under its Stoddart Kids imprint, and in 2003, twenty-five years after it first hit the shelves, *Hold Fast* was reprinted and re-released as an anniversary edition by Douglas & McIntyre.⁶ The story was later produced for the stage and has recently been adapted for a feature film that is scheduled for release in 2013 (Canadian Press). There is an enduring investment in this novel by publishers, by

production companies, and, one might assume, by readers. Its lasting popularity gives rise to questions about the nature of its reception: how was the novel characterized, and how was it viewed in comparison to other works being published at the same time in Canada and in the USA?

After its publication, Major was often asked about his motivation to write a novel that many recognized as offering something new to Canadian youth. Major is cited as saying that he wrote the book “out of love for a way of life and a people. [The book] is a plea for us Newfoundlanders to be like certain of the species of seaweed that inhabit our shores which when faced with the threat of being destroyed by forces they cannot control, evolve an appendage to hold them to the rocks, a ‘holdfast’” (qtd. in Wynne-Jones 179). As I discuss below, it may very well be the inclusion of regional content—the setting, dialect, and culture of Newfoundland, along with the social realism elements of the young adult novel—that made this novel a watershed title for young adult literature in Canada.

There were other realistic novels published in Canada prior to 1978 that attempted to reach a young adult readership, notably John Craig’s *No Word for Goodbye* and Peter Davies’s *Fly Away Paul*. These titles failed to garner anywhere near the number of reviews of *Hold Fast*, however, and did not register with critics as presenting either innovative content or style compared to what else was emerging in Canada

as the adolescent reading market. Unlike with *Hold Fast*, these two novels were often considered problem novels, perhaps leading to their eventual removal from lists of recommended reading for adolescents. Craig's novel features two fifteen-year-old boys who are friends: Ken, who is white, and Paul, who is Ojibwa. Conflicts arise between the white townspeople and the travelling Ojibwa tribe, and eventually Paul leaves without saying goodbye to Ken. *No Word for Goodbye* is mentioned in some bibliographical essays that situate it with other early works about Aboriginal people in Canada written by non-Aboriginal writers (see J. McGrath), but it does not appear in the book-length overviews by Saltman and by Waterston. Egoff suggests of Craig's novel that, "[b]y virtue of its realistic detail and convincing plot, this is a more satisfactory piece of writing than other stories that emphasize social consciousness" (1975, 191). She also classifies it (clearly negatively) as a problem novel, however, when she adds that "one would not say 'this is story of a friendship between two boys,' but between a white boy and an *Indian* boy" (1975, 171; emphasis in original). *No Word for Goodbye* also appears in Egoff and Saltman's *New Republic of Childhood* as an early example of "the young-adult novel as a genre defined by age" (72). *Fly Away Paul*, a story about cruelty, betrayal, and friendship in a Montreal detention centre for young men, earned a harsh critique from Egoff: "Paul has his fourteenth birthday in a Boy's Home

in Montreal—an institution that reflects the tyranny, cruelty, and repressed sexuality associated with prison life. The author has no ability to distil these experiences. He recounts them, incident by incident, so monotonously and unskillfully that the book could be begun in the middle" (1975, 192).

A more sympathetic review appearing in *Kirkus Reviews* still finds that the novel has "a dull, almost stifling flatness that limits it," whereas a review in the *Montreal Gazette* sports a headline of faint praise: "Boys' Home Book Better than Nothing" (Spoonier). This brief look at representative comments on two contemporaneous titles that share some similarities with Major's novel suggests that *Hold Fast* caught the attention of adult readers in ways that were unusual for the time.

Hold Fast was widely reviewed in newspapers and magazines across the country and in important and influential professional publications for librarians, teachers, and booksellers such as *CM: Canadian Review of Materials*, *In Review*, *Quill & Quire*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Kliatt*, and *Kirkus Reviews*. It received attention from children's literature scholars in journals such as *CCL/LCJ* (Brown) and *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (Jones). Kevin Major was profiled in newspapers, magazines, and reference books on contemporary authors, and he also promoted his novel on local and national radio programs.⁷ The Canadian



... *Hold Fast* established Kevin Major as a renowned new author of young adult literature, [but] the author himself expressed discomfort with the term “young adult novelist.”



Association of Children’s Librarians, a division of the Canadian Library Association, awarded *Hold Fast* their Book of the Year Award in 1979, the same year that *Hold Fast* garnered the Canada Council Children’s Literature Prize and the Children’s Book Award given by the Ruth Schwartz Charitable Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council. In 1980, *Hold Fast* appeared on prominent “best books” lists, notably the Hans Christian Andersen Honor List of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and Best Books of the Year by the *School Library Journal* (“Major, Kevin (Gerald)” 296). It was also shortlisted for the Books in Canada Award for First Novel. Major’s debut novel became one of the most celebrated works for young people published in Canada.⁸

While many would claim that *Hold Fast* established Kevin Major as a renowned new author of young adult literature, the author himself expressed discomfort with the term “young adult novelist.” In a 1984 interview with Sherie Posesorski published in *Books in Canada*, Major is cited as saying,

I dislike being labelled a young adult novelist. I write about young people, not exclusively for them. I would hope that my books have an interest for adults. Adults with teenage children have told me that they enjoy the books in themselves and for the insights they give them into their children’s thinking. A good novel, whether it is about someone five or 55, should be able to stand on its own. (125)

In spite of Major’s discomfort with the label, however, reviewers and critics agree in their appraisal of *Hold Fast* as being primarily suited for young adult or teenaged readers even while they are ambivalent about the merits of the new genre. For example, although the novel was

nominated along with four other “adult” titles for the third annual *Books in Canada* Award for First Novel in 1979, it was dismissed as a suitable choice for the award by two of the four judges, while the other two did not mention it at all in their comments. In a year for which one juror suggested that the award not be granted because “the field was so poor,” another wrote that *Hold Fast* was an “engaging juvenile; it’s just in the wrong contest,” while the third juror called it a “little gem that depicts adolescent sorrow, stubbornness, and joy, and it can be read with profit by adults as well as younger readers” (“Fairest” 3–4). In many ways, the judges’ attitudes toward a work intended for adolescent readers can be seen to represent the variation evident in the overall reception of adult critics and reviewers of *Hold Fast*. It is notable that, despite Major’s wish to be seen as being more than a “young adult novelist,” there seemed to be a need in the Canadian book industry, as shown in the reviews and commentary, to establish just such a classification. Major’s work presented itself as a laudable addition to Canadian publishing, winning all of the awards available for a juvenile title but shut out from competitions that recognized fiction for adults.

The Reviews: The Emergence of a Classic Canadian Young Adult Novel

In the five years after its initial publication, *Hold Fast* was established as a classic of young adult fiction in Canada. That this happened so rapidly is in keeping

with the broader canonization of Canadian literature in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. In reference to the institutionalization of Canadian literature during the years 1965 to 1978, Lecker suggests that “[i]t is startling to realize that Canadian literature was canonized in fewer than twenty years” (25), arguing that the type of Canadian literature that was valorized could be characterized as realistic fiction (37–38). In this way, Major conformed to what T. D. MacLulich sees as the practice of Canada’s “best-known writers” (Lecker 38), which is to “build their fiction around characters and situations that are recognizably drawn from their own society” (11), perhaps helping his novel garner instant and resounding praise.

Not only have most reviews of *Hold Fast* over the years been positive, but as they accumulate they reveal a tendency to reiterate the status of the book as a best-selling, award-winning novel.⁹ Reviewers also alert readers to the unique and innovative features of the novel, showcasing it as the leading example of the emerging genre of young adult fiction in Canada. In a lengthy review published in *Saturday Night*, Robert Fulford introduces *Hold Fast* as “a unique product of recent Canadian literature” for the way it “brings together the current mode of ‘young adult’ novel as developed in the United States and the longings of Newfoundlanders for their past” (14). Similarly, Irma McDonough, noted critic of Canadian children’s literature and editor of the short-lived but influential

In Review: Canadian Books for Children, calls *Hold Fast* “a landmark in Canadian writing for young people,” praising the quality of Major’s novel in comparison to other young adult novels of social realism: “It reaches other, profounder places than most realistic writing meant for [adolescent readers]. And it discovers Newfoundland as the source-spring of a major new talent” (70).

By the time Major’s second novel, *Far from Shore*, was published in 1980, his reputation for having written a new classic of Canadian young adult literature was cemented. Jon C. Stott opens his review of *Far from Shore* by reminding readers that, when “*Hold Fast* was published three years ago, it was rightly hailed as a milestone in Canadian children’s book publishing. Major captured in stark, vivid detail the violent, troubled life of a Newfoundland teenager” (29). As documentary evidence of adult reception, the reviews of and commentary on *Hold Fast* contribute to the construction of a Canadian version of the contemporary young adult novel, in this way, moving the field of children’s literature in Canada beyond folk tales, animal stories, and adventure stories to privilege depictions of adolescent experience written with young adult readers in mind. But if Major’s use of coarse language and frank depiction of adolescent male sexuality were part of the realism of the book, these elements also amplified the status of the novel as one of the most censored titles for young people in Canada.

A Holden Caulfield Type

In their assessments of Major’s text, reviewers are apt to focus on the characterization of the main protagonist, who is compared frequently to that adolescent icon of American literature, Holden Caulfield, as well as to Huckleberry Finn, and in one instance, to Tom Sawyer. In one of the first reviews, R. G. Moyles claims that Major has a debt to Mark Twain, although he is careful to note that the “comparison . . . does nothing to devalue this young Newfoundland author’s achievement” (56). Moyles sees similarities in the two main characters, who are both “physical and spiritual orphans treading the hard road to self-awareness,” but also in the use of ironic (and naive) first-person narration and of regional dialect, the American South for Twain and the Newfoundland outports for Major (56). In *Saturday Night*, Fulford adds that “Michael contains a bit of Holden Caulfield and a bit of Huckleberry Finn, but there is also something authentically Newfoundland about him” (15). Other reviewers rely on comparisons to Salinger’s iconic character as well: an unsigned piece in *Kirkus Reviews*, summing up a positive evaluation, claims that Michael is a “classic innocent who sometimes sounds like a sort of Newfoundland Holden Caulfield,” while another calls Michael “a Holden Caulfield type” who will appeal to “readers whose tastes are groomed by the school-of-hard-knocks realism of American author Judy Blume” (“Holden”). A review in the *Globe*

and Mail—entitled “Sensitive? Maybe. Violent? Yes. Holden Caulfield He Isn’t”—objects to this conflation, observing of Major’s protagonist that “[s]ome may think him a sensitive youth, but he looks to me more like a violent and unteachable brute. Holden Caulfield ended up in a rest home with a nervous breakdown. This boy is headed for Sing Sing” (O’Flaherty 39). In a review of the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition of the novel, Scott MacDonald repeats the comparison between Michael and Holden Caulfield, noting that Salinger’s main character goes “from being a defender of truth and integrity to being a scornful, superior little shit” and yet insisting that Major’s novel “shares a lot of surface similarities with *The Catcher in the Rye*, but it’s a far more generous and reflective work” (68).

The recurring comparison to Holden Caulfield is remarkable in light of the infrequent references to the more recent American young adult novel *The Outsiders*, published less than ten years prior to *Hold Fast*. Given the presumed familiarity of many reviewers with literature for young people, it seems unlikely that reviewers were unaware of major trends in young adult publishing south of the border, but they were likely not immune to the cultural heft of Salinger’s teenage character. As Marcel Danesi writes in *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence*, Holden and other characters in *The Catcher in the Rye* “speak, act and think like teenagers in the modern sense of the word. For the first time ever in Western fiction, the *teenager*

had been given a narrative identity” (15). With such a persona now part of the cultural landscape, it is possible that reviewers were trying to make similar claims for Major’s debut of a new Canadian young male protagonist.

An “Emblem of Canadian Regional Culture”

Canadian reviewers also took pains to compare *Hold Fast* to other Canadian novels intended for young readers or to their authors, gathering evidence for the emergence of a new genre in Canadian children’s publishing. Authors mentioned most frequently were Brian Doyle, Monica Hughes, Barbara Smucker, and Gordon Korman, all of whom published works for young adults in the late 1970s. Major’s work was often discussed in the context of other novels of Newfoundland. In an early review, McDonough notes that “*Hold Fast* stands with other indigenous novels of stature that have pictured Newfoundland for young readers [and] holds its own among them beautifully” (70). Marnie Parsons begins an overview of contemporary Newfoundland children’s literature by establishing Kevin Major as the pioneering father figure of the field, suggesting that, “[f]or many people, Kevin Major is Newfoundland children’s literature. Tell people here [i.e., St. John’s] you’re doing a piece on Newfoundland writing for children and the almost inevitable answer is: ‘There’s not much, is there. . . . Kevin Major, of course.’” She



Repeated claims for the
value of local content
and idiom of *Hold
Fast* could be seen to
function as ideological
responses to the
dominance of literature
produced in Ontario
and the West



describes his early novels “as utterly uncompromising in their handling of complicated family and social situations as they are deeply rooted in the geography, history, culture, and speech of rural and small town Newfoundland” (36). The regionalism of Major’s novel, marking it as a vividly unique Canadian work, garnered some of the highest praise. A children’s librarian writing for the newsletter of her Canadian library expressed her high regard for the novel in nationalistic terms: “What is equally important is that the boy’s perception of the physical and sociological environment characterizes him as Canadian” (Roberts). Fulford lavished similar praise on the book in his national column, claiming that Major’s efforts and the recognition that he has received are “in a small way an emblem of the beautiful thing that Canadian regional culture has become in the 1970s” (15).

The use of Newfoundland dialect in the novel posed its own set of challenges for readers, according to reviewers who seem to be concerned that non-Canadians or in some cases non-Newfoundlanders might have trouble understanding Major’s use of region-specific colloquial language (“Books” 174; Unsworth 79). According to a review in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, “the one weakness of the story is that the use of local idiom or phonetic spelling in exposition (‘I would a been just as well off’ or ‘You wasn’t so good to say anything flick about me. . . .’) is obtrusive, while in dialogue (where it is even more heavily used) it seems acceptable” (196). In contrast, a Canadian reviewer argues that the use of Newfoundland dialect is “not enough to make [it] incomprehensible to outsiders” (Duffy 256). In her inaugural “News from the North” column featuring Canadian literature for young people in *The Horn Book Magazine*, Sarah Ellis writes that *Hold Fast* “takes its narrative strength from a deep rooting in a particular place and its emotional conviction from the voice of a

particular character" (99).¹⁰ Despite some misgivings, reviewers are in general agreement that the use of the Newfoundland dialect strengthens the novel and its expression of regional culture, making it distinct from other fiction written for teens. Commentators on *Hold Fast* believe that its so-called "universal" themes of adolescence trump any reader difficulties with the vernacular language or setting; as a senior editor at Major's American publisher comments, "The books are full of accurate references to the problems and anxieties which our readers can readily identify with" (Cahill 64).

Reviewers made efforts to promote the universal appeal of what was also construed as a regional novel, thus reflecting a tension in its reception by adult readers. The repeated emphasis on the Newfoundland setting and dialect suggests that Major's first novel can be considered not only as representative of contemporary Canadian young adult literature, capitalizing on a boom in the children's publishing and book industry in Canada, but also as emblematic of the drive to establish a recognition for viable regional publishing in the 1970s. In these contexts, it is worth noting that *Hold Fast* received widespread acclaim in Newfoundland in syndicated reviews that were published in newspapers in Atlantic Canada. It also appeared second on the Newfoundland Bestseller List in June 1978, along with international bestselling authors of adult fiction such as Robert Ludlum,

J. R. R. Tolkien, and Sidney Sheldon ("Nfld."). For some reviewers, an affinity with the geographic location and culture is given priority over other aspects of the novel, reflecting what Frank Davey calls "geographic sectionalism" and the "intuitive regional self-recognition" in Canadian literary criticism (2). Repeated claims for the value of local content and idiom of *Hold Fast* could be seen to function as ideological responses to the dominance of literature produced in Ontario and the West, and as resistance to the perceived influence and threat of American publishing.

"More than a Problem Novel"

At the time of its initial publication in 1978, informed reviewers would have been familiar with what Saltman termed the "meteoric ascendancy of the American young adult novel," but in Canada, the socially realistic young adult novel was still a new sub-genre. Writing nine years after the publication of *Hold Fast*, Saltman adds that "[t]here are still only a handful of novelists for young adults that focus on contemporary realities in this country" (*Modern* 65). There was a consensus among scholars and critics of children's literature that Major produced a work of social realism that was similar to the so-called problem novels on the American market but that transcended this formulaic sub-genre of young adult literature.

In her overview of recommended Canadian books

for children, published in *School Library Journal* in 1980, Joan McGrath includes *Hold Fast* in a section about “Canadian ‘kids in trouble’ stories” along with Peter Davies’s *Fly Away Home*, Tom Moore’s *Good-Bye Momma*, and Brian Doyle’s *Hey, Dad and You Can Pick Me Up at Peggy’s Cove* (43). In a 1982 article in *Quill & Quire*, the premier trade journal for the publishing industry in Canada, prominent Canadian children’s book experts Judy Sarick (owner of the Children’s Book Store in Toronto), Irene Aubrey (Director of the Children’s Literature Service at the National Library of Canada), Virginia Davis (Director of The Canadian Children’s Book Centre), and Irma McDonough (former editor of *In Review*) add their voices to the chorus that sing the praises of what Sarick calls fiction that deals with “rites of passage, the transition from kid to adult,” to which Aubrey adds, “The Canadians who are writing for [adolescents] are not consciously proposing to write young-adult books; they’re writing what they want to write, and they only happen to speak to that age level. And I think that’s a much better position to be writing from than to attempt to write what in essence is a formula” (qtd. in Couture 3, 5). In an article on Major’s first three novels published in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* in 1985, Raymond E. Jones also pegs Major well above those authors who produce “problem novels,” seeing *Hold Fast* as an attempt to avoid the “limitations of the typical adolescent novel while still retaining its audience appeal” in Major’s

efforts to “make the Newfoundland setting itself one source of conflict” along with his emphasis on “psychology rather than sociology, character rather than topical problem” (140).

Given the cultural capital that the novel accrued through the authority of such expert voices, it is not surprising to learn that when *Quill & Quire* printed a list in 1997 of the “top ten” children’s titles as voted by a panel of thirteen experts in children’s literature, Major’s first novel was second only to L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* by only two votes (Oppel). This list was reprinted in other publications, including popular magazines such as *Today’s Parent* (Biehn), giving more evidence for the firm entrenchment of the novel into a solidifying canon of Canadian children’s literature. These positive judgments of the literary merit of the novel and its status as a new classic would come to be relied on as calls mounted for its removal from libraries and school curricula.

“Explicit Language, Immorality, and Sexuality”

In some ways, it seems that the legacy of Major’s first novel is its place not only as an early example of a modern Canadian young adult novel, but also as one that is persistently at the centre of censorship challenges. In a wide-ranging review of censorship of children’s literature in Canada, Saltman notes that *Hold Fast* was challenged for “explicit language, immorality and sexuality” (“Censoring” 10). In 1980, for example, a

school librarian wrote a letter to the editor of *Canadian Review of Materials*, asking, “Why did neither review mention the frequent use of coarse language (or is that the ‘delightful Newfoundland dialect’)? Why was there no mention of the masturbation scene? Why at least did the reviewers not say the book should be for junior high school students or older?” (Montgomery). Major himself recounted the story of how one public-school teacher, who also served on the library board of a small Ontario town, cancelled a reading that was scheduled as part of the national program of the Children’s Book Festival Week, reportedly because of the coarse language found in the novel. According to Major, the Writers’ Union of Canada (of which he was a member) reacted with a “swift and forceful response,” challenging the censorship on the grounds of the “violation of the right to intellectual freedom” (Major, “Censor” 4–5). This account was picked up and widely reported in the Canadian press at the time of the challenge in 1982 (see Adilman; French, “Timely Reminder”; Porter).

Major did not fare any better in his home province of Newfoundland, where his books were routinely banned from the school curriculum, despite his expressed intent to provide meaningful stories for local youth. In a profile of the author published in 1989, Major is cited as saying, “It is frustrating to go into a school in Newfoundland . . . to find that the very people who would enjoy the books and gain the most from them have never heard of [the novel].” As the author of the

profile suggests, “It doesn’t bother him that the books aren’t on the curriculum, but they can’t even be found in the school library” (Duffy 256), a state of affairs reported in other press as well (see Cahill; Sullivan; Van Luven; Turbide). As soon as the novel was published, the promotion department at Clarke, Irwin and Company tried to find ways to accommodate the objections of the Newfoundland Department of Education concerning coarse language. An internal memo from 1981 gives a clear sense of what the publisher was up against: “Ed Jones, Consultant in English, went through *HOLD FAST* underlining the language which would be unacceptable and came up with 240 examples. As there are only 170 pages in *HOLD FAST*, Dr. Jones considered it would be difficult for us to provide them with a school edition” (Neale). Major actively strategized with his publisher and with allies in Newfoundland to launch a “pilot project” that distributed the book to a small selection of English classrooms in hopes of influencing its eventual province-wide adoption for use (Major, Letter). This and other efforts were not successful: as Major reported in 2011, “it never did make it to the Newfoundland school curriculum” (Pelley).

The controversy reached such a level of interest that it was the subject of a segment entitled “Just Like It Is: Kevin Major,” broadcast nationally on the popular Canadian television news program *W5*. As the narrator of the broadcast piece announces, “Kevin Major defies many of the conventions of most writers of teenage

literature. Some of his characters drink beer, swear, talk about sex and even break the law." In a profile of Major appearing in *Maclean's*, Diane Turbide points out that it is this frank depiction of male adolescence that sometimes draws controversy: "His troubled young men talk and think like real teenagers, and their frank and often funny references to alcohol, sex and strained family relations have occasionally resulted in cancelled readings and controversy in school libraries" (61).

Many adults who critique *Hold Fast* express the need to alert readers to content that may be suitable only to older readers. As an indignant school librarian writes, "This book won the award for Canadian children's literature. Perhaps we need to redefine 'children.' This book is for young adults, and I want to be told such things before I spend my small budget" (Montgomery).¹¹ In another letter to the editor by another school librarian, Major's use of slang and profanity is vehemently criticized as an impoverished attempt to find readers: "Because of Major's propensity to use swear words in a not-too-subtle attempt to maintain readers' interest, I made the decision last year that his works would not 'grace' the shelves of our school's library. . . . I am disappointed to learn that the Canada Council and the Canadian Association of Children's Librarians propagate such 'literature'" (qtd. in "Kevin Major" 124).

Later reviewers and commentators on Major's writing have been careful to cite the censorship challenges

related to *Hold Fast* as they discuss the merits of the work. That *Hold Fast* came to be an enduring symbol for censorship challenges on the Canadian children's literature scene is reflected in Freedom to Read activities reported in 1995, during which "an award-winning but controversial book for adolescents . . . will be read by a number of writers at the Canadian Children's Book Centre" (Harris).¹² In fact, the novel's twin claims to fame—its controversial content and its award-winning status—are the only commentary it receives in a 2006 survey of Canadian children's literature published for school librarians (Pennell 77). The censorship case of *Hold Fast* easily can stand as a symbol of a protectionist ideology of reading with its assumption that young people should be shielded from content that some adults find objectionable. For as many adult readers like Ruth Goodman, a high school English teacher and reviewer who thought that young readers should only be exposed to "models of good writing" that did not include coarse language, there were supporters that argued that books like *Hold Fast* would resonate with adolescents in satisfying and rewarding ways.

Of Interest to Teens: "The Universal Trials and Tribulations of Teen-Age Life"

In a magazine article on the contemporary state of Canadian young adult fiction in the mid-1980s, Major is cited as saying that "[a] lot of my books that fall into [the young adult] category have interest beyond



. . . the claim that *Hold Fast* marks an emerging young adult genre in Canadian children's literature has gathered strength



teenage readers" (Cahill 63). At a workshop offered during Ontario Public Library Week in 1985, Major told an audience of librarians and youth that the "young adult" label limited his readership, and that he would like to see cross-referenced shelving in libraries where "books that span both (adult and young adult) categories [are] placed in both categories" (McRae 11). Despite Major's wish for cross-referencing, *Hold Fast* was firmly relegated to several lists of titles that were recommended for teen readers by virtue of their popularity, quality, and presentation of realistic themes that were deemed to be of interest exclusively to teens. Major was repeatedly praised for addressing themes that were what one writer calls "the universal trials and tribulations of teen-age life: the questioning, the gaucheness, the is-this-really-me misery" (Sullivan). In a short piece of critical scholarship, Lloyd Brown (then a professor of Education at Memorial University in Newfoundland) writes that "Major succeeds admirably in revealing the teenage mind, in portraying adolescents struggling with the loss of loved ones, coping with the urges of sex, struggling to find their place among their peers, and trying to establish their independence" (23). Brown's praise stops there, however: he finds Major's characterization of young people to be particularly repugnant, describing them as "in the main unsympathetic characters—obnoxious, narrow and rigid in their views, insensitive to the feelings of others, blind to the necessity for compromise" (27). Another reviewer argues otherwise, suggesting that it is Major's characters who hold the most appeal for "readers over 12," who will "find it comforting to see their own concerns and values mirrored in books they can find in their school libraries." This reviewer adds that Major's male protagonists "swear, masturbate, fight, try a drink or two and sometimes get into trouble at school. But at heart they are 'good' kids trying to do the right thing, often in a world where

they cannot control what's happening to them. In short, they're real young people" (Van Luven).

In recent years, many adults who work with young readers have been interested in making gender-specific recommendations, seeking to address perceived imbalances in reading promotion and skill among boys and girls. *Hold Fast* is seen as a ready recommendation for young men. Paul Kropp describes the novel as "[p]robably the closest book we have to a Canadian classic for boys," although he also cautions that its regional dialect may prove challenging "for kids in central Canada" (40). A review of the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition claims that the novel is "ageless" and that it will be "just as appealing to the boys in your school as it was when it first came out" (Miller 38). In another retrospective review, Jennifer Branch strongly recommends the book to boys due to Major's "diverse and interesting male characters" and recounts the successful reception the title enjoyed among her junior high students in Inuvik, who could relate to the setting—"the hunting, fishing, and being out in the woods" (Branch). In sum, while it is not clear whether *Hold Fast* has moved from being seen as a title with wide appeal for all readers, there is some evidence to indicate that its themes and characterization came to be seen as particularly related to boys' reading interests.

An examination of the critical reception of one of Canada's earliest teen novels reveals themes that continue to endure in discussions of Canadian literature

produced for adolescent readers. *Hold Fast* was notable among critics for its reflection of a unique Canadian setting and culture, that of the isolated harbour village and the provincial small town in Newfoundland with their attendant dialects. There is a tension between the perceived need to protect young readers from what some see as an immoral and inappropriate text and the competing desire to celebrate it for its capacity to reflect common teen experiences. Regardless of individual views, the claim that *Hold Fast* marks an emerging young adult genre in Canadian children's literature has gathered strength as reviewer after reviewer reiterates its award-winning status as a new kind of Canadian book: the young adult novel. Its history of being a title frequently subject to censorship becomes entrenched in the review literature. Major's use of first-person narration, colloquial and profane language, as well as the inclusion of frank depictions of adolescent experience, all unmistakably and unapologetically set in Canada, make reviewers take notice.

***Hold Fast* as a Symbol of Change in Young Adult Print Culture in Canada?**

As is often the case with investigations into under-researched areas, this analysis of the critical reception of a novel that is often held up as a symbol of a changing literary landscape has led to new questions rather than offered final conclusions. The acclaim heaped on *Hold Fast* for its contemporary cultural relevance, its modern

style, and its self-consciously proud regionalism has marked a rupture in Canadian children's literature, given that many see the title breaking with tradition to offer something new to young readers. While it is beyond the scope of this paper, a comparison of the reception of novels apparently written for a similar audience within the decade prior to Major's novel—such as Peter Davies's *Fly Away Paul*, John Craig's *No Word for Goodbye*, and Barbara Smucker's *Underground to Canada*—would give additional insight into the emergence of modern young adult literature in Canada. Similarly, an analysis of the reception of titles published for an adolescent readership after the critical acclaim of *Hold Fast* would deepen our understanding of how young adult publishing in Canada changed and developed. Was *Hold Fast* an agent for change? How did it compare to titles published later in 1978, such as those by Brian Doyle and Gordon Korman?¹³ Did Michael, the young protagonist of *Hold Fast*, become an exemplar for the succession of characters to inhabit Canadian realistic novels for teenagers? Additional questions could be asked of the reception of popular genre novels written by notable female writers to understand more about why such works are generally overlooked by reviewers as marking the emergence of a quality literature for young adults. Titles ripe for exploration include Suzanne Martel's science fiction novel *Quatre Montréalais en l'an 3000*, first published in 1963, as well as early works by Monica Hughes.

In his history of American young adult literature, Michael Cart argues that by 1973 there was evidence of what he calls the “emergence of a serious body of literature published expressly for young adults” (93). Not only were authors like John Donovan, S. E. Hinton, Paul Zindel, and Robert Lipsyte firmly established as writers of adolescent novels, the novels of several (still) celebrated authors represented “an explosion of new work” (91) in the 1970s: M. E. Kerr, Richard Peck, Lois Duncan, Robert Cormier, Walter Dean Myers, Judy Blume, Robert Newton Peck, Isabelle Holland, Harry Mazer, Norma Fox Mazer, and many more writers too numerous to mention here. As Cart also tells us, the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association began to include young adult titles on its influential annual Best Books for Young Adult lists in 1973. The 1980 publication of Donelson and Nilsen's *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, a standard textbook in pre-service Education and Library and Information Science programs, was evidence that this type of literature had come of age, as Hunt reminds us (7). As Hunt also notes, though, the nature of any such canon was and remains contested among critics, scholars, publishers, and authors. Hunt chronicles the arrival of journals featuring reviews and criticism of as well as advocacy for young adult literature, such as *English Journal* and *The ALAN Review* (8–9). Major's novel made its appearance in Canada during the early years of the Canadian children's literature boom and in the

midst of the institutionalization of young adult literature in the USA. The currents of publishing and scholarship, along with the growing advocacy for the recognition of the distinct genre of young adult literature in the United States, no doubt influenced the reception and promotion of a novel that seemed to share so many characteristics of the socially realistic narratives being published, marketed, and read there.

The professionalization of young adult literature and librarianship was also well underway in Canada by the late 1970s. Although the Young People's Interest Group of the Canadian Library Association was dissolved in 1973 after twenty-three years of advocacy since it started in 1950, the Saskatchewan Library Association founded a Young Adult Caucus at its 1977 conference (Amey 3). Two years after the publication of *Hold Fast*, in 1980, the Young Adult Caucus established an award that recognized the best in Canadian young adult literature, later to be administered by the Canadian Library Association. In 1981, Major's *Far from Shore* was the first to win this new literary prize. The relationship between librarians, publishers, reviewers, and editors concerned with young adult literature and adolescent readers in American contexts has received some notable scholarly attention (see Jenkins; Cart), but is an area of inquiry in Canada that has largely been overlooked. We need more research into the roles of librarians and teachers in Canada who reviewed new literature for

professional journals and mainstream news venues in order to ask how they functioned as tastemakers who had the capacity to bring written works directly to a young readership, a capacity that carried a great deal of power. We see it in the legacy of Lillian H. Smith, the pioneering children's librarian at the Toronto Public Library in charge of the first stand-alone children's library in the British Commonwealth, whose 1927 publication *Books for Boys and Girls* became a trusted selection aid for collections at children's public libraries around the world (L. McGrath 110–14). Librarians at the Toronto Public Library also compiled and published several editions of *Books for Youth* between 1940 and 1966.¹⁴ These tools were meant to highlight titles that had literary merit but that would also provide pleasurable reading choices for young people with hopes of encouraging a lifelong habit of reading. The reviews of *Hold Fast* illustrate that the twin professional motivations continue: on one hand, adult critics show support for the development of quality young adult literature, and on the other, they make some attempt to privilege the popular reading interests of young adult readers.

While many more questions are raised by a close examination of the reception of a single notable work of Canadian young adult fiction, this analysis is offered as just one piece of an emerging picture of broader trends in the field of literary production in Canada

that aims to reach a young adult readership. Perhaps most pressing of all is some knowledge of how young people themselves received such classics of young adult

literature and how its developing field contributed to competing constructions of what it meant and means to be a young person coming of age in Canada.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing, held at the University of Helsinki in 2010.

¹ In “The Canonization of Canadian Literature: An Inquiry into Value,” Robert Lecker claims that the first volume of *Literary History of Canada* “made a Canadian canon seem possible; to many, it made the canon seem real” (25).

² My argument here is not that young adult titles are completely neglected by scholars of Canadian children’s literature, but that in many analyses, works that are now certainly understood to have been produced for young adult readers are not seen as distinct from titles for much younger readers. The silence on young adult literature in treatments of Canadian children’s literature that are contemporaneous with some of the fiction published for young adults in the 1970s through to the 1990s provides additional evidence of how such works were received by adult critics.

³ An anthology of Newfoundland writing, *Doryloads: Newfoundland Writings and Art* (published by Breakwater Books in 1974), was Major’s first work, but it was *Hold Fast* that brought him

widespread critical notice and acclaim.

⁴ It has been and remains standard practice for librarians, teachers, and others to provide such reviews for professional journals on a voluntary, unpaid basis.

⁵ Records in the Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, held in the William Ready Division of the Archives and Research Collections at McMaster University, give ample evidence that the publisher recognized that Major’s novel held appeal for young adults. For example, advanced reading copies were sent to high-school teachers, who were asked whether they thought there would be enough appeal “through the province [Newfoundland] and in other parts of the country” for a paperback edition, “assuming that the level is grade nine or grade ten” (Eagan). Promotional materials consistently position the novel for an adolescent readership.

⁶ This is an incomplete summary of the publication of various editions of *Hold Fast*: translations, Braille, library, and other mass-market editions were also published.

⁷ Publicity materials in the Clarke, Irwin and Company fonds at

McMaster show a promotion plan that included *CBC Morningside*, *The Andy Barrie Show* (CFRB), *In Toronto Live* (CFRB), and *On the Arts* (CJRT), among others (“Major, Kevin. Hold Fast”).

⁸ Mavis Reimer provides an analysis of Janet Lunn’s 1986 novel *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*, describing it as “the most decorated book in the history of Canadian children’s literature” (“Homing” 1). It is worth noting that one of its awards, the IODE Violet Downey Book Award, was not established until 1984, six years after Major’s novel was published. Also, unlike Lunn’s novel, *Hold Fast* would not be eligible for awards granted for works written or suitable for younger audiences of readers.

⁹ It is common for reviews of young adult titles to appear years after the original date of publication. When Canadian titles gain American distribution, they are often reviewed for the first time in the American press. Paperback, audio, film and e-book editions generate additional reviews. Sometimes a book is brought to public notice again when a reviewer revisits older titles in the context of newer trends in the field or when a reviewer wishes to alert teachers and librarians of the value of older titles for their collections and students. In this context, then, it is entirely possible that a title like *Hold Fast* would be reviewed and recommended for young adult

readers right up until the present day.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Ellis chose to include *Hold Fast* (published six years earlier) among the three titles she selected for this influential column.

¹¹ The editor responded that in the review the title was “clearly marked ‘Grades 7 (i.e. junior high school) and up’” (Ashby).

¹² Such an event was staged in Toronto, Ontario for Freedom to Read Week activities in 2009 as well.

¹³ I am presently investigating the reception of the titles mentioned here as well as the general trends in publishing in the years after the publication of *Hold Fast*. This work is generously supported by the 2011 Frances E. Russell grant, awarded by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Canada.

¹⁴ I discussed the contexts out of which *Books for Youth* emerged in a paper entitled “Specialized Space and Services for the Teen-Age at the Toronto Public Library, 1930–1965: The Kipling Room and the Legacy of Annie Wright,” presented at the 2012 annual conference of the Association for Library and Information Science Education.

Works Cited

- Adilman, Sid. "Rainy River Library Board Puts Damper on Reading." *Toronto Star* 7 Nov. 1982: C7. Print.
- Amey, Larry J. "Young Adult Services in Canada." *Meeting the Challenge: Library Services to Young Adults*. Ed. André Gagnon and Ann Gagnon. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1985. 3–13. Print.
- Ashby, Adele. "Editor's Note." *Canadian Review of Materials* 8.1 (1980): 6. Print.
- Badia, Janet. *Sylvia Plath and the Mythology of Women Readers*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2011. Print.
- "Banned Together: Canada's Finest Read the Censors's Favourites." *Open Book: Toronto*. Open Book: Toronto, 10 Feb. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2012.
- Biehn, Janice. "The Golden Page: Canadians Are Writing the Book on Children's Literature." *Today's Parent* Sept. 1998: 62. Print.
- "Books for Adolescents." Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Journal of Reading* 24.2 (1980): 172–75. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 June 2010.
- Books for Youth: A Guide for Teen-Age Readers*. Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1940. Print.
- Branch, Jennifer L. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *CM: Canadian Review of Materials* 10.8 (2003). Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Brown, Lloyd. "Kevin Major: Newfoundland's Problem Novelist." *CCL/LCJ* 66 (1992): 23–34. Print.
- Cahill, Linda. "Adolescent Fiction Comes of Age." *Maclean's* 21 Apr. 1986: 62–64. Print.
- Canadian Press. "Hold Fast Goes from Book to Film." *CBC News, Arts and Entertainment*. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 25 June 2012. Web. 27 Sept. 2012.
- Cart, Michael. *From Romance to Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. Print.
- Clare, Kerry. "Freedom to Read Week: A List of Challenged Books in Canada." *49th Shelf*. Association of Canadian Publishers, 26 Feb. 2012. Web. 8 Nov. 2012.
- Couture, Michelle. "Rites of Passage: Kids' CanLit: In Transit." *Quill & Quire* June 1982: 3–7. Print.
- Craig, John. *No Word for Goodbye*. Toronto: Martin, 1969. Print.
- Daly, Maureen. *Seventeenth Summer*. New York: Dodd, 1942. Print.
- Danesi, Marcel. *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994. Print.
- Davey, Frank. "Towards the End of Regionalism." *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*. Ed. Christian Riegel et al. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1997. Print.
- Davies, Peter. *Fly Away Paul*. New York: Crown, 1974. Print.
- Donelson, Kenneth L., and Alleen Pace Nilsen. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Glenview: Foresman, 1980. Print.
- Duffy, Mary. "A Sense of Truth: A Profile of Kevin Major." *CM: Canadian Review of Materials* 17.6 (1989): 255–56. Print.
- Eagan, Patrick M. Letter to George Shuff. 27 Feb. 1978. File 19, box 62, Educational Division Series C. (1976–87), Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster U. Print.
- Edwards, Gail, and Judith Saltman. *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2010. Print.
- Egoff, Sheila A. "Children's Literature." *Klinck* 3: 204–11.

- . "Children's Literature to 1960." *Klinck* 2: 134–42.
- . *The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1967. Print.
- . *The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1975. Print.
- Egoff, Sheila, and Judith Saltman. *The New Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English*. Toronto, Oxford UP, 1990. Print.
- Ellis, Sarah. "News from the North." *Horn Book Magazine* Feb. 1984: 99–103. Print.
- "Fairest of the Fair." *Books in Canada* Apr. 1979: 3–4. Print.
- Rev. of *Fly Away Paul*, by Peter Davies. *Kirkus Reviews* 16 Sept. 1974. Web. 15 Sept. 2012.
- Fraser, Matthew. "Writer Probes Youthful Worries with Rare Insight." *Globe and Mail* 26 Mar. 1988: C3. *CPI.Q (Canadian Periodicals)*. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Frazer, Frances. "Children's Literature." *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Ed. W. H. New. 2nd ed. Vol. 4. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990. 217–29. Print.
- French, William. "Children's Book Industry Is Growing Up Very Fast." *Globe and Mail* 18 Nov. 1980: 15. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 June 2010.
- . "A Timely Reminder of the Censorship Battle." *Globe and Mail* 9 Nov. 1982: P23. *ProQuest*. Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Fulford, Robert. "Capturing Newfoundland Before It Goes Away." *Saturday Night* Oct. 1978: 14–15. Print.
- Goodman, Ruth. Letter to Patrick M. Eagan. 31 Mar. 1978. File 19, box 62, Educational Division Series C. (1976–87), Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster U. Print.
- Harris, Christopher. "Arts Ink: Words to Live By." *Globe and Mail* 3 Mar. 1995: D1. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Hinton, S. E. *The Outsiders*. New York: Viking, 1967. Print.
- "Holden Caulfield in Newfoundland." Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Maclean's* 17 Dec. 1979: 48–49. Print.
- Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* June 1980: 196. Print.
- Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Kirkus Reviews* 15 May 1980: 651. Print.
- Howard, Vivian. "The Sea Stacks Project: Enhancing the Use of Regional Literature in Atlantic Canadian Schools." *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 7.1 (2012). Web. 24 Aug. 2012.
- Howsam, Leslie. *Old Books and New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006.
- Hunt, Caroline. "Young Adult Literature Evades the Theorists." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 21.1 (1996): 4–11. *ProjectMuse*. Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Jenkins, Christine. "The History of Youth Services Librarianship: A Review of the Research Literature." *Libraries and Culture* 35 (2000): 103–40. Print.
- Jones, Raymond E. "Local Color, Universal Problems: The Novels of Kevin Major." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 10.3 (1985): 140–41. Print.
- "Just Like It Is: Kevin Major." *W5*. Host: Jim Reed. CTV, 1988. Toronto Reference Library. VHS.
- "Kevin Major, 1949–." *Children's Literature Review* 11. Ed. Gerard J. Senick. Detroit: Gale, 1986. 123–33. Print.
- Klinck, Carl F., ed. *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. Print.
- Kropp, Paul. "Great Canadian Books for Boys." *Quill & Quire* Aug. 1997: 40. Print.
- Lecker, Robert. *Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature*. Concord: Anansi, 1995. Print.
- MacDonald, Scott. "A Rebel with a Cause." Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Quill & Quire* Sept. 2006: 68. Print.

- Machor, James L. *Reading Fiction in Antebellum America: Informed Response and Reception Histories, 1820–1865*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2011. Print.
- MacLulich, T.D. *Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction*. Toronto: ECW P, 1988. Print.
- Major, Kevin. "Censor Versus Major, Final Score 0–1." *Writer's Union of Canada Newsletter* 78 (1982): 4–5. Print.
- , ed. *Doryloads: Newfoundland Writings and Art*. Portugal Cove: Breakwater, 1974. Print.
- . *Far from Shore*. Toronto: Clarke, 1980. Print.
- . *Hold Fast*. Toronto: Clarke, 1978. Print.
- . Letter to Bob [last name unknown]. 2 Nov. 1978. File 19, box 62, Education Division C (1976–87), Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster U. Print.
- "Major, Kevin (Gerald), 1949–." *Contemporary Canadian Authors*. Ed. Robert Lang. Toronto: Gale, 1996. 296–97. Print.
- "Major, Kevin. Hold Fast." File 21, box 94, Clarke Irwin Authors, Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster U. Print.
- McDonough, Irma. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *In Review: Canadian Books for Children* 12.3 (1978): 70. Print.
- McGrath, Joan. "The Red & the White: Canadian Books for Children." *School Library Journal* 27 (1980): 41–43. Print.
- McGrath, Leslie. "Service to Children in the Toronto Public Library: A Case Study, 1912–1949." Diss., U of Toronto, 2005. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*. Web. 1 Feb. 2012.
- McRae, Lorie. "Youthtalk Features Teens." *Feliciter* Nov. 1985: 1+. "Kevin Major," Canadian Authors Vertical File, Toronto Reference Library. Print.
- Miller, Susan. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Resource Links* Feb. 2004: 38. *BCA Education*. Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Montgomery, Margaret. Letter. *Canadian Review of Materials* 8.1 (1980): 6. Print.
- Moyles, R. G. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *World of Children's Books* 3.2 (1978): 56–59. Print.
- Neale, Gladys. Memo to William Clarke. 2 July 1981. File 19, box 62, Educational Division C. (1976–87), Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster U. Print.
- "Nfld. Bestseller List." *Newfoundland Herald TV Week* 28 June 1978: 32. Print.
- O'Flaherty, Patrick. "Sensitive? Maybe. Violent? Yes. Holden Caulfield He Isn't." Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Globe and Mail* 9 Sept. 1978: 39. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Oppel, Kenneth. "The Best Canadian Kids Books of All Time." *Quill & Quire* Oct. 1997: 1+. Print.
- Parsons, Marnie. "A Reader from Away." *Books in Canada* June 1998: 36+. *ProQuest*. Web. 18 June 2010.
- Paterson, Gary H. "Learning to Hold Fast." *CCL/LCJ* 14 (1979): 81–83. Print.
- Pelley, Chad. "Shedding Some Ink on . . . Kevin Major." *Salty Ink: A Spotlight on Fresh Canadian Literature*. Salty Ink, 16 Feb. 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2012.
- Pennell, Victoria. "Canadian Children's Literature in Motion—It's [sic] Evolution from the 1970s to the Present." *Resource Links* 11.4 (2006): 74–78. *BCA Education*. Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Porter, Helen. "Hold Fast: A Retrospective Review." Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Atlantic Provinces Book Review* 10 (1983): 18. Print.
- Posesorki, Sherie. "Kevin Major." *Books in Canada* Dec. 1984: 24–25. Web. 29 Sept. 2012.
- "Prizes Awarded for Children's Literature." *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* 31 Mar. 1979: n.pag. "Kevin Major," Canadian Authors Vertical File, Toronto Reference Library. Print.
- Reimer, Mavis. "Canadian Children's Literature in English." *The*

- International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. 2: 1011-18. Print.
- . "Homing and Unhoming: The Ideological Work of Canadian Children's Literature." *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in English*. Ed. Mavis Reimer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 1-25. Print.
- Roberts, Muriel. "Canadian Books for Canadian Children." *Burnaby Public Library* Summer 1979: n.pag. Print.
- Ross, Catherine Sheldrick. "Young Adult Realism: Conventions, Narrators, and Readers." *Library Quarterly* 55.2 (1985): 174-91. Print.
- Ross, Catherine S., Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie, and Paulette Rothbauer. *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries and Community*. Westport: Libraries, 2006. Print.
- Rothbauer, Paulette M. "Exploring the Placelessness of Reading among Older Teens in a Canadian Rural Municipality." *Library Quarterly* 79.4 (2009): 465-83. Print.
- Saltman, Judith. "Censoring the Imagination: Challenges to Children's Books." *Emergency Librarian* 25.3 (1998): 8-12. Print.
- . *Modern Canadian Children's Books*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1987. Print.
- Smith, Lillian H. *Books for Boys and Girls*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1927. Print.
- Smucker, Barbara. *Underground to Canada*. Toronto: Clarke, 1977. Print.
- Spooner, Philip. "Boys' Home Book Better than Nothing." Rev. of *Fly Away Paul*, by Peter Davies. *Montreal Gazette* 8 Feb. 1975: 49. Print.
- Stott, Jon C. Rev. of *Far from Shore*, by Kevin Major. *World of Children's Books* 6 (1981): 29-30. Print.
- Stringam, Jean. "Colonial Canada's Young Adult Short Adventure Fiction: The Hunting Tale." *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Post-Colonial Context*. Ed. Roderick McGillis. New York: Garland, 1999. 135-52. Print.
- . "Present but Unaccounted For: The Canadian Young Adult Short Story of the Nineteenth Century Comes of Age." *Dominant Impressions: Essays on the Canadian Short Story*. Ed. Gerald Lynch and Angela Arnold Robbeson. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1999. 53-63. Print.
- Sullivan, J. M. "Award-Winning Novel for Teens Is Adapted by Rising Tide Theatre." *Globe and Mail* 3 Feb. 1990: C3. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Turbide, Diane. "Boyhood on the Rock." *Maclean's* 17 Apr. 1989: 61. Print.
- Unsworth, Robert. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *School Library Journal* May 1980: 78-79. Print.
- Van Luven, Lynne. "A Writer Who Majors in Newfoundland Youth." *Edmonton Journal* 5 May 1990: G4. *ProQuest*. Web. 4 Jan. 2011.
- Waterston, Elizabeth. *Children's Literature in Canada*. New York: Twayne, 1992. Print.
- Wynne-Jones, Tim. Rev. of *Hold Fast*, by Kevin Major. *Canadian Book Review Annual 1978*. Ed. Dean Tudor, Nancy Tudor, and Linda Biesenthal. Toronto: Martin, 1979. 178-79. Print.

Paulette M. Rothbauer is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at Western University, where she teaches primarily in the Library and Information Science graduate program. She is currently working on two major research projects, one concerned with the construction of youth readers as agents and audience in Canadian young adult literature contexts, the other an investigation of adult reception of works of Canadian young adult literature.

