



*Felines*

*Patricia Foixet-Studham*

"Felines"

The series of drawings of women is by Patricia Foixet-Studham of Montreal. Her works have been exhibited widely, and are represented in private collections in Canada and abroad.

## Book Review

**Bruce M. Shore, François Gagné, Serge Lavinée, Ronald H. Tali, Richard E. Tremblay (Editors).**  
**Face to Face with Giftedness.**  
**New York, N.Y.: Trillium Press Inc., 1983.**  
**488 pp. \$15.00.**

This book is called the first Yearbook of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. It is an assemblage of presentations made at the Fourth World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children held in Montreal in 1981 under the World Council's auspices. The first Yearbook appears after the Fourth Conference apparently because of a decision of the Council to begin publishing an annual round-up of important papers in the field, without, unfortunately, going back to the first World Conference held in London in 1975. Thirty-two presentations have been selected out of three hundred and sixty-nine given in Montreal. Some of the three hundred and thirty-seven remaining may appear in the Council's journal, **Gifted International**, and some in the second Yearbook in 1984.

All thirty-two chapters are supposed to relate to the general theme of the conference, "Many Views of the Gifted for the Advantage of all Children." Many views there are, but a commitment to the improvement of the lot of all children has to be assumed from the goodwill of the presenters rather than from explicit treatment in the papers themselves. What the selections do is to offer an unusual set of approaches to the study of gifted and talented children. Previous conferences paid a great deal of attention to the gifted child in school - to his identification and provision - from the point of view of teachers, teachers of teachers, and administrators. The selections in this book reflect five concerns of much wider range, each in a section of its own.

The part called "Social Contexts" looks mainly at the vital role of parents in the development of children's potential, with one chapter on the problems that gifted adults encounter in the world of work. Most significant for teachers and school administrators who are reluctant to congregate gifted children is Martin Dishart's paper on "Psychosocial Facilitators, Enhancers, and Inhibitors of Gifted Children," where he points out that

"What the gifted child needs in the classroom is to learn contexts, relationships and applications with other children who can reach out with similar ranges and degrees of giftedness".(p.35)

The second part of this book has less coherence despite some fancy footwork in the introduction, which, by the way, miscounts the number of chapters in the section. Entitled "The Meaning of Giftedness," it contains Jacquard's attack on the label while recognizing the phenomenon, Freeman's claim that non-verbal tests are the best measures of innate ability, Kramer's emphasis on the burden of giftedness, Klaus Urban's discussion of responses to a questionnaire on attitudes towards the educational needs of gifted children, and two papers about where technology might take us by way of intelligence amplification and creating robots to serve the cause of peace.

Far better related are the presentations called "Giftedness Deflected", dealing with gifted children at odds with society. The presenters share with the authors in Part One a conviction of the crucial importance for the nurture or inhibition of giftedness of early relationships with adults (i.e. parents or guardians) and the enormous difficulty and expense of salvage work later. What was missing from this section, and what needs to be shown to substantiate or dispel the notion that gifted children are particularly liable to delinquency as a result of an unsympathetic home environment or inappropriate provision at school, is a study of the ratio of delinquency among the gifted.

The most extensive and fascinating section of the Yearbook is devoted to the way giftedness is perceived and dealt with in many cultures, from that of the North American native peoples, China, Russia, Israel, Nigeria, and Kenya. The odd paper in this group is one called "The Unicef Perspective", which, apart from a comment on gifted and talented children in the opening sentence, reads like a survey of UNICEF initiatives for the prevention and treatment of disabilities arising from poverty and ignorance in developing countries.

The last section, roughly one fifth of the book, contains what most people came to the conference for, namely, the "Curricular Considerations". Teachers of gifted and talented children need strategies and materials to help their ablest students, and Part V offers something useful for them. Don Allen describes the contribution a mathematics club can make to the mathematics program for gifted high school students; Veronique Rossillon and Marguerite Castillon du Peron describe their activity and recreation centre for children aged 5 to 15, which is open after school hours in Paris on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Both are extracurricular activities. Two chapters on curriculum for the gifted that deserve every teacher's attention are "Restoring a Challenge to Secondary Education", a presentation of the International Baccalaureate program for senior high schools by Gilbert Nicol, and "Teaching Thinking to the Gifted" by Edward de Bono and Norah Maier.

(The International Baccalaureate provides a syllabus in six subjects, without specifying the teaching methods, which include a first and second language, mathematics, an experimental science, one of the so-called "social studies", and an additional subject from one of the other categories. Students are prepared for a common examination set and marked by an international team. Successful candidates are awarded the I.B. diploma which, is recognized by many leading universities around the world.)

During his presentation Nicol warns of the dangers of the quick-fix approach to the teaching of thinking. The other chapter worth a great deal of attention happens to be on the teaching of thinking. For this reviewer, de Bono's presentation was the highlight of the Conference both for its style and what it offered. What is remarkable about the chapter is how different it is from the presentation itself, which was a narrative accompanying illustrations on an overhead projector. The tape recording of the narrative is almost impossible to follow without the illustrations, and one is reminded of the incredible amount of work that must have gone into the editing of this book. Some of the presentations by speakers of other languages were difficult to follow, and some native speakers have had their work improved greatly in the redaction. For this we have a team of five editors to thank, four of whom pay tribute to the work of the fifth in a note preceding the content. Dr. Shore earned that tribute for the unusually high quality of the editorial work. Since he was Secretary of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, and Organizer and Program Committee Chairman of the Fourth World Congress on Gifted and Talented Children, he earns everyone's gratitude for a set of presentations that lights up dark corners and gives substantial help to educators concerned with able children everywhere.

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