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### Abstract

The fable is didactic; its purpose is to memorably illustrate some aspect of human behaviour clearly and unambiguously. The fable is thus widely regarded as a rather harmless literary form intended to instruct children or amuse adults. But the very monologism that makes it uniquely capable of expressing an idea convincingly also helps it to express ideas, as it were, surreptitiously; the reader may recognize that the situation illustrated is unjust before realizing that he or she is implicated in this injustice. Fabulous fiction appears to sacrifice plausibility and stylistic sophistication in favour of unity of effect, and this apparent textual naivety can be used not only to slip a message past the reader's intellectual and political defences but also to call attention to the reader's assumptions about the relationship of literature to the reader and to the world. Magic realism brings fabulous and realist writing into direct contact but does not represent a collision, producing an epistemology that is either relativist or sceptical. In Luis Leal's words, the supernatural in such texts represents "the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances" (122), the mystery lying perhaps in an excess, a surplus in the world for which no one code (linguistic, cultural or philosophical) can account. Like other fabulation, magic realism encourages a suspension of positivist assumptions, a suspension that enables examinations of many sorts.

I examine four Canadian authors who employ fabulation in their work: David Arnason's contemporary fables and postmodern fabulations adopt an air of innocence in order to interrogate the relationship between the reader, the text and the world; Robert Kroetsch's *What The Crow Said* employs magic realism and postmodernism to examine competing Canadian mythologies; Tomson Highway's *The Kiss of the Fur Queen* examines Christian and Native belief systems in order to forge a discourse between the two; and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* turns Western colonialist techniques back on themselves in order to reveal the harm they have done and demonstrate the resiliency and independence of Native culture.