

the lives of others on the line every day. Rise pulls up in style to bid farewell to his 'homeys', before 'splitting' to Miami. But fate catches up with him before he can make his escape. 'Yo, Jesse. I'm scared, man! I'm so scared!' Rise's dying words sum up how all the kids have lived their lives - in fear of the fate that awaits so many of them.

The black community console themselves after yet another meaningless death. It is summed up in the words 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away... truly it is a sorrowful thing for us to gather here in yet another going-home ceremony for a young man not yet reached his prime.' Jesse decides that since Rise can't finish his own autobiography, he'll do it for him, and that maybe one day he'll be able to make sense of the meaningless of a life cut short.

I think that Walter Dean Myers picks up on, and portrays accurately, the life of black teenagers in downtown New York. But for teenagers in the UK, especially in Scotland, it's hard to relate to the level of danger the teenagers live with. For us, as young people we ignore our parents' fears for us, but in reality their fears are so much greater than the reality of the danger. Gang culture exists, but with gun laws it's a lot rarer for deaths by shooting. It can maybe be compared to knife crime in this country, but even then the number of deaths is much fewer than in the USA.

I think for teenagers who read this graphic novel, the biggest question we are left with is how to make sense of life. At the end of the day, we can be like Rise, play with fire, and watch what goes around come around to us. We have the choice to make every day of how to live our life.

**Angus Norquay**  
Young person

### **The growth of love.**

Keith White.

Abingdon, Barnabas, 2008. 240pp,  
ISBN 1841014613  
£8.99.

This is a brave book in which Keith White puts the words love and God on the centre stage. The book sets out to connect theology and child development. It also discusses insights from sociology, anthropology, philosophy and travel. Most tellingly, though, White draws on he and his wife's lived experience of running Mill Grove, a residential child care community in London. The book is motivated by 'the desire to understand better the lives, struggles, growth and development of particular children and families' (p.10). This quest is grounded firmly in the day-to-day experience of caring for children. Writing from such an experiential base can appear rather quaint these days and provides a welcome antidote to policy overload and the 'what works' zeitgeist.

White describes five motifs contributing to the growth of love. His chosen motifs are security, boundaries, significance, community and creativity. Different chapters develop these themes from a range of theoretical and experiential perspectives, topped and tailed with a discussion of how Biblical insights might contribute to the theme.

So what is this thing called love of which White speaks? In a move that I am not sure I agree with, he deliberately does not define it, taking the view that we all have our own perspectives. I wonder if C.S. Lewis' schema of love, which only appears in the notes to the final chapter, might have been introduced a bit more prominently. In the absence of a clear exposition of what is meant by love, I suspect that practitioners might persist in their current unease and under-developed conception of the term, either struggling to move beyond romantic connotations or else regarding love as an equation whereby loving relations with children can only exist at the expense of children's love for their parents. While not providing a definition, he nonetheless places a concept of love at the heart of practice, arguing that '(t)he fundamental need, desire, hunger, longing and potential gift of every human being is to love and be loved' (p.45).

God, the other central theme running through the book, conflates with love in the sense of 'God being love'. While White's God is the Christian God, it is not constrained by any particular denomination or established Church. Rather, a broad conception of 'church' identifies it with community; places where groups of people come together in shared activity, mediated by a

sense of 'right relationship.' The theological literature introduced presents a fundamental challenge to the contemporary focus on the individual, stressing the need to balance individual freedoms and rights with group relationships and responsibilities. At a time when policy documents such as *These are our bairns* (Scottish Government, 2008) use the term 'parenting' in relation to the care of other people's children, White invites us to re-imagine a parenthood that goes beyond the biological (and presumably the corporate) to encompass his idea of a village. A village in which love might grow is likened to a compost heap, requiring ideas of covenant, celebration, spirituality and healthy patterns of life, all of which provide the compost for the growth of love. A residential community might become such a village.

There are threats to the growth of love. Specifically, the author identifies the emergence of consumerism, superficial ideas of individual rights, an over-regulated education system and perhaps more controversially, the decline in traditional marriage. White, however, is not one to hide behind what might be considered politically correct and he exhorts us to confront those forces that inhibit the growth of love.

In a message that has particular resonance for residential work, White suggests that love grows in the common things of life – 'the daily round and common task; the regular encounters, greetings and farewells, shared experiences....' (p. 206). This is a lifespace approach, the use of everyday events to promote growth. He talks of roots, boundaries and rites of passage, reclaiming a vocabulary that has been lost along the way to the professionalisation of care. He also speaks of covenant, a sense of commitment, responsibility and special relationship. These features of a loving upbringing become invisible in versions of care based around codes, standards and statements of rights.

Whether or not we agree with White (and many will continue to struggle with the audacity of the very concepts of love and God) there is something uplifting and enduring in what he has to say. It is too easy to forget that residential care is rooted in religious tradition and commitment. To paraphrase the words of an old song, none of us want to stay in a world without love – yet we often seem to expect children in care to do so. The intellectual and experiential provenance that permeates White's writing might embolden others to question current orthodoxies of care and to assert that there is a place for words like love and God.

**Mark Smith**  
Lecturer  
University of Edinburgh

Scottish Government, (2008). *These are our bairns: A guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.

## Notes for Contributors

The Editors will be glad to consider articles on any aspect of residential child care. Research and practice papers (2,500 – 3,500 words), case studies, book reviews, brief communications (500 – 2000 words), and letters from readers will be welcomed.

Contributions should be submitted in electronic format in Microsoft Word or by email. The language of the journal is English. All contributions should have a title with the names and designations of the authors clearly stated.

References should follow the APA 5th referencing style. They should be quoted in the text as name and year within brackets and listed at the end of the paper alphabetically. All references should be complete and accurate. Online citations should include the date of access. References should be listed in the following style:

Gilligan, R. (2001). *Promoting resilience: A resource book on working with children in the care system*. London: British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering.

Murray, K. & Hill, M. (1991). The recent history of Scottish child welfare. *Children & Society*, 5(3), 226-281.

Krueger, M. (2005). The seventh moment. *CYC Online: Reading for child and youth care people*. Accessed on 5th September 2009, from [www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0305-krueger.html](http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0305-krueger.html)

Roth, W.M. (1999) Authentic school science. Chapter in R. McCormick and C. Paechter (Eds.), *Learning and knowledge*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Authors should address ethical issues of confidentiality and consent where appropriate, particularly when using case material.

### *Papers for publication may be submitted to:*

Andrew Kendrick, Glasgow School of Social Work, Jordanhill Campus, University of Strathclyde, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow, G13 1PP

Email: [andrew.kendrick@strath.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.kendrick@strath.ac.uk)

or

Irene Stevens, Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care, Jordanhill Campus, University of Strathclyde, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow, G13 1PP

Email: [irene.stevens@strath.ac.uk](mailto:irene.stevens@strath.ac.uk)