Screech Owls: the familia of Roy MacGregor’s Narratives on Hockey
~ Dr Don Morrow

About hockey?
- Sort of...
- Hockey & Mystery & a bond of some kind
- MacGregor inspired by Young’s Scrubs on Skates
- Started a literacy / reading program with Leafs’ players
- MacGregor prolific, 40 books

MacGregor: “the poet laureate of Canadian hockey”

“A compelling fable about violence, superstition, love and the shallowness of modern life”

Rembrandt’s The Return of the Prodigal Son, pp. 306-7
- Arguably one of 4 best hockey books ever written
- The Batterinski Polish family in northern Ontario town of Pomerania
- Language ~ dis, Polish words
- The centrifugal force of the novel is the Polish family and Felix’s unlucky battering in hockey and in life
### The Black Madonna
- The Black Madonna of Czestochowa, Poland
- An icon of the Christian Virgin Mary
- 600 years recognition & belief she is the Queen & Protector of Poland

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### Family, Familia, Familiar
- Family is generally regarded as a major social institution
- It is a social unit created by blood, marriage, or adoption
- Either nuclear (parents and children) or extended (encompassing other relatives)
- I expected a lot more of the nuclear family
- MacGregor extends the notion of extended family in quite clever ways

### McGregor’s Familia & Familiar
- Family in The Screech Owls is overwhelmingly centered in the team
- *pater familias* [head of the family] is the coach, in this case Muck Munro
- Reading the Screech Owls requires willing suspension to 13 year olds comprising a family unit; parents are quite incidental
- What makes the novels familiar & alluring is MacGregor’s skill in making the novels a hockey family story of/with all sorts of intriguing adventures
Over a million sold in North America
Published in China, Czech Republic, & Sweden
20 books, 1995-2004
2001-2002 TV series, 27 episodes; not well reviewed

Examined the novels by sampling 6 of them, relatively at random
In essence, tried to deconstruct what MacGregor has done in 'constructing' his family
Focused on the family esp re home & community
Writers as touchstones of human nature
Juvenile fiction, grades 4-8, ages 9-13 ~ what might be/is being transmitted to them?
Some explanation of structure and context for the series is important...

The Setting, Tamarack, Ontario

Tamarack is in the heart of Canada, the country that gave the world ice hockey. It is a picturesque community built between two hills and alongside a winding river. Every winter, where the river forms a bay at the edge of town, town workers create an ice rink and put up a couple of hockey nets. Winter begins in November and the snow often lasts until April.

Tamarack has a local theatre, three elementary schools, and the oldest stone in the cemetery dates back to 1867 - the year Canada became a country. The main industry was once logging and there was a leather-tanning factory too. When the factory closed and the lumber business declined, tourism became the big thing. There's a marina on the river, there are several resorts, many cottages, and a provincial park that's only a half-hour away.

The Logo

Constructing Family...the website

Depth Chart

Left Wing
Travis Lindsay
Liz Moscovitz
Simon Milliken

Center
Sarah Guthbertson
Andy Higgins
Gordie Griffith
Derek Dillinger

Right Wing
Fahd Noorizadeh
Jesse Highboy
Dmitri Yakushev

Defense
Wayne Nishikawa
Lars Johanssen
Wilson Kelly

Defense
Samantha Bennett
Willie Granger

Goal
Jenny Staples
Jeremy Weathers
Team Awards

- Most Valuable Player: Sarah Cuthbertson
- Top Defenceman: Wayne Nishikawa
- Best Improved Player: Jesse Highboy
- Hustler Award: Travis Lindsay
- Top Scholastic Player: Fahd Noorizadeh
- Fastest Skater: Dmitri Yakushev
- Smartest Player: Lars Johanssen

Goalie Awards

- Goalie: Jenny Staples
- Jeremy Weathers

Record of Games Played

Screech Owls win championship!

The Coach: Muck Munro

“I don’t have time for coaches who yell at their kids”

Growing up in Tamarack, Muck Munro played lacrosse, baseball, and a lot of hockey. Having made the all-star-team every year, he was asked to go to the camp of the Hamilton Red Wings when he was fifteen. A broken leg kept him from going on to the NHL and from playing the game again. But Muck still loved hockey and thanks to Don Dillinger got back into the game as the coach of Screech Owls. Muck is also a history buff and can’t resist outdoor shinny.
Muck Munro’s 10 Golden Rules of Hockey...

- When it comes to hockey, Muck’s not up for shouting referees, coaches, or parents, but he likes the game and working with the team. Here are some of the rules Muck follows when he’s coaching his team. *Feel free to pass them on to your coach.*

1. Never take yourself, or your game, too seriously. If a sport isn’t fun, it’s no longer sport.
2. Treat everyone with dignity, no matter what their ability - or for that matter, their age.
3. Yelling draws attention to you when you’re at your worst. The quieter you speak to children, the louder they hear you.
4. Parents require as much coaching as children. Never let the game be taken away by those who should be old enough to know better.
5. Kids should look forward as much to practice as to games. Practice should mean more ice time, more fun, and more improvement. Good practice makes for good games.

Muck Munro’s 10 Golden Rules of Hockey...his family of values

6. A pat on the back has never been known to injure a player.
7. We learn from our mistakes, and if players are too afraid to make mistakes, they will stop trying to learn.
8. No one is more important than the team; no one is less important than the team.
9. No one - coaches, players, or parents - should look upon this as a career. Games are not jobs.
10. If you can’t laugh at yourself, rest assured others are laughing at you.

**BONUS**
11. No coach should have to put up with more than one Nishikawa per lifetime.

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In this prequel to the Screech Owls mystery series, the kindergarten class of Lord Stanley Public School find themselves involved in their very first mystery at the same time as the gang — Travis, Nish, Sarah and most of the other Owls — take to the ice for the very first time. This is the story of why the Screech Owls became the Screech Owls, and how Nish went from the most disliked kid in school to, as he put it, “the hero” of the fledgling hockey team.
The Final Book…

- The Screech Owls’ Reunion is the 20th book in the beloved “Screech Owls” series. Just as readers have seen Harry Potter’s character develop into a moody teenager through J.K. Rowling’s novels, Roy MacGregor has brought the Screech Owls hockey players into adult life in this the final book in the series. Travis Lindsay, former team captain, now teaches high school in hometown Tamarack, and Samantha (Sam) Bennett raises her little boy, Muck, there. Other members of the team are spread far and wide. Some are pursuing their hockey dreams, like Olympic Gold medalist Sarah Cuthbertson, Swedish Elite player Lars Johannsen, and Colorado Avalanche Dmitri Yakushev. Others, such as Derek Dillinger, an investment counselor in Florida, have taken up more traditional jobs. But only one player could land a job in Vegas as one of the flying Elvises - Nish!

... but it’s not the final book...

- # 21 - 2008
- # 22 - 2009

Creating family and the familiar...

- “Wedge stop!”
- family = players introduced
- Mystery/ies ~ suspension
- in loco parentis: Muck Munro & Don Dillinger; parents ethereal
- Their public school is Lord Stanley
- Their dressing room & rink familiarity emphasized
- Trading cards (Upper Deck); NHL greats as family (Lindsay, e.g.);
- values: “hockey [life] is a game of mistakes”
### Magic & Mystique
- Geography, La Colisée, Carnival; NHL greats; their billets = families
- Language is the sabotage “crisis” here; Fr Cdn issue (read 230-240; Lundrigan)
- Potent hockey description constructs family (p. 307)
- Travis deeply affected: “By playing badly, he was not only letting his team down, he was letting his family down”
- History as community/family – Travis understands how Montcalm felt

### Magic Realism & MacGregor’s constructions
- ‘Oz’ & wizardry ( & Aussie center is ‘Wiz’) & ‘Ice is ‘home’ in Oz quote p. 258
- Bondi Beach & Wreck Beach & Nish
- Boat in the story is named ‘Puck’
- Mrs Roberts, Wiz’s mom is the only ‘mother’ described extensively and interwoven into the storyline in all 22 books & she’s a ‘dream’ parent (p. 281)
- 1st rule of diving=hockey ‘stick together’
- Superstitions e.g. Travis always kisses his C & sport belittles family, “a tie is like kissing your sister” (p. 308)

### International Familiar
- Tamarach “twinned” w Nagano
- Family sphere widens to Olympic Village
- Hockey history – in this case, Dominik Hasek’s brilliant ’98 Ol performance – always threaded
- Hockey is ‘home’ (‘glad to get… p 23)
- Cans of “Sweat” (cover) and Nish the Fool, the family fulcrum
- Avalance
- Invoking fairy tales “someone’s rifled thru my hockey bag. Mine too” (Goldilocks)

### British royalty & family
- Guy Fawkes & British family
- Muck leads Owls thru Br history
- Contrast with Columbus “discovering” & Jesse Wilson’s (the Cree team member’s) subtle retort, “We didn’t need discovering! We already knew where we were”
- Values as ‘parents’ sustaining family-team (Valiant p. 275)
- Wembley Stadium & in-line hockey, same ‘family’ of values
- Nish ‘saves’ the Royal Family

### Memorializing the family
- MacGregor’s best, 10 years later
- Takes young readers into real futures & the ‘line-up’ of life cf lineup in 1st volume
- Cements family of hockey (p. 356)
- Environmental issue of snapping turtles laying eggs v Casino coming to Tamarack
- The Sarah Cuthbertson Arena & collecting most of the Owls from around the world along with All-Stars of all 20-book adventures = family reunion (p. 430)
- Sense of community writ large
- Nish passes to Sam who scores tie-ing goal, both teams pile on…

### Familial Conclusions
- MacGregor makes the Screech Owls familial; narratives and mysteries allure
- Family is hockey family
- Geography and history are family
- Rinks/ice/equipment is/are home
- Family is community
- Values are real family of attachment
- Canadianism reverberates
- These novels both mirror and create the familiar & the family
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All 22 books

- Mystery at Lake Placid
- The Night They Stole the Stanley Cup
- The Screech Owls' Northern Adventure
- Murder at Hockey Camp
- Kidnapped in Sweden
- Terror in Florida
- The Quebec City Crisis
- The Screech Owls' Home Loss
- Nightmare in Michigan
- Danger in Dinosaur Valley
- The Ghost of the Stanley Cup
- Kidnapped in Canada
- Sudden Death in New York City
- Horror on River Road
- Death from Under
- Power Play in Washington
- Secret of The Deep Woods
- Murder at the Winter Games
- Attack on the Tower of London
- The Screech Owls' Reunion
- Peril at the World's Biggest Hockey Tournament
- Trouble at the Top of the World

Thank you