



*Fierce September* by Fleur Beale. Auckland: Random House New Zealand (2010). RRP NZ \$19.99. ISBN 978-1-86979-328-9. Reviewed by Ashley Valentine.

*Fierce September* (shortlisted for New Zealand Post

Children's Book Award: Senior Fiction 2011) is a welcome addition to Fleur Beale's *Juno of Taris* series.<sup>1</sup> It picks up from the first book with the arrival of Outsiders in time to rescue the Juno and the Taris inhabitants from their dying island as its protective environmental dome fails. The young people look forward to a wider life Outside. But, as it transpires, Outside also has its problems. It is two-year-old Hera, with her uncanny ability to foresee events, who saves the Taris people from death and danger. The book is aimed at young adults, with the themes that run through the book could easily be related to the collapse of any protective 'dome' and not just the Outsiders' arrival on a confusing Aotearoa. *Fierce September*

could be read as the passage from childhood to young adulthood.

Despite not being in the target audience, I found *Fierce September* entertaining; the characters are engaging and well-developed. The additional information available in online blogs at the end of each chapter will appeal to many, but the story can be read and enjoyed without this although you might well miss some background atmosphere. That said, reading from a LCD screen, for me, does not compare with the presence of a book in the hand. Would the additional info have been better placed in an appendix?

Books such as this confirm that New Zealand literature for young people, specifically concerned with growing up, is now receiving the attention it deserves.

- <sup>1</sup> Fleur Beale has had more than 30 books published in New Zealand and won the 2007 Storylines Gaelyn Gordon Award for a Much-Loved Book with *Slide the Corner* and the Esther Glen Award for *Juno of Taris* in the 2009 LIANZA Children's Book Awards.