

butter and cheese in a gigantic sandwich. John Bianchi's illustrations are wonderfully matched to the lively rhythm of the text and feature comical expressions and lots of exaggerated action, complete with clouds of dust and beads of sweat. It all comes to a crashing conclusion with an unexpected twist. This is a fast-paced and funny book, definitely *not* recommended for quiet bedtime reading.

A more subtle form of humour is apparent in *Best and Dearest Chick of All*. A sweet-tempered chick named Cheep Cheep is displaced in his family with the arrival of a younger half-brother with the formidable (and ridiculous) name of Little Yellow Fluffy Ball, Best and Dearest Chick of All, Not Another on the Farm, Boasts Such Beauty, Wit and Charm. Not surprisingly, "Best and Dearest" is spoiled by his doting parents and Cheep Cheep ends up doing all the chores. The book is richly decorated and the cast of barnyard characters are beautifully depicted by Coral Nault. The playful mice who inhabit the borders of each page create a minor story of their own and will capture the attention of young readers. Despite its humorous approach, the story cautions against selfishness and its surprise ending will leave children smiling and perhaps a little wiser.

*Little Kiwi at the Beach* will appeal to very young children. It is a quieter, more subdued story about a young bear cub's first encounter with the "watery giant" known to grownups as the ocean. This is a translation of *Petit Kiwi à la mer*. The book is attractive, with clean and simple illustrations by May Rousseau who also wrote the text. Her soft, earthy colours blend well with the glowing mauve endpapers and bright fuchsia cover. The story is told from the cub's point of view and his first impressions of the beach and ocean are captured imaginatively and in a simple way that will captivate young children. The book is marred, however, by the fact that in several places the rhyming text just doesn't rhyme and this disrupts the story's gentle flow.

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### Music, Sound and Colour for Young Children

*Pussywillow*. Elizabeth Ferber. Illus. author. Boardwalk, 1995. Unpag. \$6.99 paper. ISBN 1-895681-07-3. *One Grey Mouse*. Katherine Burton. Illus. Kim Fernandes. Kids Can P, 1995. Unpag. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-225-6. *Simon Makes Music*. Gilles Tibo. Illus. author. Tundra, 1995. Unpag. \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-359-6.

Ferber and Burton have produced attractive books, with minimalist texts and strong visual content, ideal for young children. Ferber's book, with its loving portrait of her cat Pussywillow, makes engaging use of idiosyncratic images — Pussywillow as a kitten curled round a toaster, overturning a Christmas tree, eating a fly — done in bold colours. Attention to visual detail, a crucial element in attracting and sustaining a child's interest, is handled with aplomb. Ferber's empathic presentation of Pussywillow's traits walks with assurance the narrow

line between egregious anthropomorphizing and silly sentimentality. The line "When she yawns, I feel like yawning too," accompanied by a particularly effective illustration, makes its point about the symbiotic relations of animals and humans in a subtle and convincing way.

Burton's book highlights the work of illustrator Kim Fernandes, who works in Fimo, a type of acrylic modelling clay. The medium produces the illusion of three dimensions in the unaffected images of this book, designed to introduce children to the numbers from one to ten, as well as to ten colours. Fernandes comes from a line of artists, including her grandfather, Creig Flessel, illustrator of the *L'il Abner* comic strip, her mother Eugenie Fernandes, illustrator of over 80 children's books, and her father, Henry Fernandes, an animation designer and illustrator who has done animated shorts for *Sesame Street*. Though the illustrations are obviously well-executed, fimo, as a medium used in this way, does not produce the same densely satisfying, visual texture found in the plasticine illustrations of Barbara Reid — partially a function of Reid's skill in manipulating perspective, partially a function of Fernandes's decision to use plain, contrasting backdrops to frame her images.

*One Grey Mouse* uses tableaux to illustrate Burton's whimsical rhyming couplets, each tableau being linked by the repeated intervention of a grey mouse. The mouse motif, like the cat motif in Ruth Brown's neo-gothic *A Dark Dark Tale*, provides narrative continuity and variation within the book's essentially didactic context. The metre used by Burton, with its strong spondaic feel supplemented by alliterative monosyllables, produces some rather intriguing tongue twisters: have a tired parent try repeating "Five pink wigs / in yellow pig wigs" to an attentive toddler for mutual comic relief.

Gilles Tibo's latest in the Simon series — based on the notion that failure has its compensations and on the rhetorical device of *adynaton*, in which impossibility (counting snowflakes, finding the missing pieces of the moon, or, as in John Donne's "Song," catching "a falling star") — has Simon trying to interest animals in music he plays. The animals ignore Simon, who is told by a music-box dancer that animals "hear other sounds in the air. / It's the music of nature and it's everywhere." Simon embarks on a vain attempt to commune with nature's sounds only to discover, in the process, loneliness and fear. Finally another musician tells Simon that music's "even better with more than two," and the book closes with Simon's friends playing in an orchestra, begetting the "magic" that induces birds to "fly down and join in a chorus." As with others in the series, the book is beautifully produced, combining naive, folk-artsy images with a text full of onomatopoeic play and simple rhyme. The translation wavers between the French alexandrine and pentameter, a feature that can be distracting, if not unmusical, producing clunky lines like: "But my horse seems to hate my guitar and its sound."

The moralism of the story — community is harmony — is perhaps a bit too simplistic for those whose notions of community entail less idealism. The rejection or obtuseness the animals show for Simon's music, like the fear and loneliness provoked by Simon's attempt to play with nature's sounds, also rings

somewhat false. There is, after all, a long literary tradition (Arion, Orpheus, and so forth) demonstrating music's power to move the non-human, a tradition that had its uses in articulating the transcendental ideal associated with music. Similarly, the notion that human music is somehow out of place in the world of nature contradicts another venerable notion regarding the complementarity of all forms of music in producing the *harmonia mundi*. In fairness though, the book ends with a vision of mutual and shared song, Simon's earlier failures to address the animal and the natural worlds having been transmuted into the collective magic of which music is capable.

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### Wildflowers in a Meadow: Five Poetry Books You Ought to Read

*Save the World for Me.* Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield, 1991 (1995). 75 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-919001-70-X. *I Once Had a Pet Praying Mantis.* Leonard Gasparini. Mosaic, 1995. 47 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88962-592-1. *Images of Nature: Canadian Poets and the Group of Seven.* David Booth (compiler). Illus. Kids Can, 1995. 32 pp. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-272-8. *Songs for Survival: Songs and Chants from Tribal Peoples around the World.* Nikki Siegen-Smith (compiler). Illus. Bernard Lodge. Key Porter, 1995. 80 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-695-X. *Poets in the Classroom.* Betsy Struthers and Sarah Klassen, eds. Pembroke, 1995. 128 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55138-055-2.

Like wildflowers in a meadow the five books included in this review are afire with colour and variety and energy. As a poet and teacher I am encouraged by the growing enthusiasm for reading and writing poetry in schools. These five books all make strong contributions to this growing interest. Every school ought to purchase copies of all five books — there is something here for teachers and students of all ages. Four of the books are collections of poetry, all lively with the poets' commitment to exploring themes of human experience, all experimenting with craft and form, all illustrated in inviting ways. The fifth book is filled with timely advice for writing poetry.

Maxine Tynes is one of my favourite Canadian poets. A teacher in Nova Scotia, rooted in the heritage of Black Loyalists, she writes about themes of family, ecology, school, community, heritage, racism, and relationships. Her poems often sing in a humorous voice, as in "Stop Eating Those Poems!":

Stop eating those poems!  
Save some for me —  
I like mine with mustard  
I like mine with cheese.