

ble. Ceci, dit, ma seule critique est la suivante: malgré la curiosité de l'enfant et même de l'adulte, il faut être polyglotte pour déchiffrer des phrases telles "Das ist bestes Sleisch." (p. 12) ou encore "Kala, poly ellios zyméron." (p. 22). Il va sans dire qu'une note de l'auteur aurait été des plus bienvenues. Néanmoins, le commentaire précédent n'enlève rien à la valeur de l'ouvrage. *Samedi, rue Saint-Laurent* est bien écrit, intelligent et sensible, et permet à l'enfant de s'approprier le réel à travers le vécu et, ce faisant, de faire l'apprentissage de la parole.

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RHYMES AND PICTURES FOR TODDLERS

Mortimer, Robert Munsch. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Annick Press, 1983. Unpaginated \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-92030-11-0; **The new baby calf**, Edith Newlin Chase. Illus. Barbara Reid. Scholastic-TAB, 1984. 30 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71405-8; **Mouse tails**, Julie Durrell. Crown Publishers, 1985. Unpaginated \$10.95 paper. ISBN 0-517-55592-1; **At the farm**, Roser Capdevila. Annick Press, 1985. 10 pp. \$4.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920303-08-0.

Mortimer is already one of the favourite stories of young children. It has the quality of an urban myth, this story of a child who is to go to bed and be quiet. Children exult in singing out Mortimer's refrain, "Clang, clang, rattle-bing-bank, Gonna make my noise all day, . . ." (please sing twice), and enjoy the complications as parents, brothers, sisters and policemen are called to quiet Mortimer. The characteristic elements of a Munsch story are all included. There is a simple situation with which children can identify, plenty of participation in repeating the refrain, and the playful twists, the funny surprises that make Munsch such an original storyteller. To children's delight, it is often the authority figures, the adults, who suffer loss of poise at the hand of his playfulness: here the final scene leaves the adults bickering while Mortimer falls asleep. For children, there is a certain pleasure in seeing the adults being silly, for they themselves are not infrequently corrected for this.

In *The new baby calf*, Barbara Reid unites a simple rhyming text with vivid, detailed landscapes created out of plasticene. The story concerns a calf's first experiences. This experience of gradually growing stronger and more competent is parallel to the child's so that the content reaffirms the child's sense that she/he too will grow strong. The illustrations are masterfully created with the vivid, clear tones of plasticene. Interesting textures are constructed using tiny dots or stripes or by making patterns of indentations (fig. 1). Yet the pictures



Fig. 1

are not stylized but are highly expressive, for Reid manages to keep a fluid line and to incorporate marvelous expressions of feeling on the farmer's and animals' faces. This is a masterpiece of illustration, using an original technique, and has the additional benefit of stimulating slightly older children (four to six) to see the range of things it is possible to do with plasticene.

Mouse tails is not a story, but a simple puzzle book for toddlers. Using a mouse, "an expert on tails", as narrator, a series of folding pictures is presented, each accompanied by a four-line verse. The rhymes are simple, but unforced, and give clues about the animal to be found under the folded page. The animal's tail creeps out from under the fold too, so that there are two sets of clues for the child to use. Children enjoy this kind of game because they are required to think: using limited but accurate information, they make a deduction about what is under the fold. Their deduction is a prediction, (not a guess, for we guess only when we have no information), about what will be there. The fun is in checking to see if they are right. The content is very simple, but there are some nice touches, some slight surprises. The illustrations are clear and detailed and the book, like Beatrix Potter's, is sized to fit the hands of a small child.

At the farm is a board book for toddlers. There are interesting small details for children to describe, to question, and to count, and the family of five, two children, parents and a grandmother, recurs in different activities on each full-page spread. The illustrations are soft watercolours. The only print is the publication information on the back and the title, *Books about us: at the farm.*

However, the perspicacious child will find interesting anomalies in looking at this farm and thinking about farms in Canada. In the book, the roofs are tiled and iguanas crawl on the sides of whitewashed buildings. Water is collected in open reservoirs, and, in the farm kitchen, the television sits on top of the refrigerator. In reading the pictures, I became confused, because I was expecting either a Canadian farm or a "universal" farm from this Canadian publisher, and these pictures were clearly of a farm in a poor but warm country. I scurried to the reviewer information from the publisher, which announced that the series was developed in Spain. Spain? If this is a Spanish book, why is it not acknowledged outright, (Spanish farms are certainly as interesting as any others), rather than being described as a "... book, without words, for young children to have fun with familiar objects and daily activities." There are many objects here quite unfamiliar to our children. This is no problem. But why is Annick doing this when there are wonderful Canadian illustrators available, and storymakers crying to be published?

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MOTHER GOOSE WOULD HAVE LIKED BP NICHOL

Giants, moosequakes & other disasters, bp Nichol. Illus. Maureen Paxton. Black Moss Press, 1985. 36 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-131-8.

This collection of 22 verses contains some characters who are bound to become household favourites. Sockless Sarah, for example, who

doesn't like her clothes
If she could do without them
She'd take off her toes
and get rid of her eyebrows
her chin and all her hair
and dance from dusk till dawn in
her almost nothing there.

Or Sally Snorefoot, who lives in a counting rhyme. She doesn't like to get up in the morning ("7 foot 8 foot/ Sally's got a latefoot. . ."). She sleeps through the schoolbell and is still abed when a giant commences to trample all the houses in the town. As he nears Sally's place he hears her "counting like a fool: / '9 foot 10 foot/ I should have been in school.'" Tardy though she may be, our Sal is an admirable stoic.

Giants, moosequakes & other disasters is a reissue of Nicol's first book for children, *Moosequakes & other disasters*. This new collection presents some of his more popular lyrics, plus some new verses, all suitable for children between