

émotivité que le lecteur ressent pour cette dernière ont été perdues dans la version abrégée. Le résultat est une oeuvre dénudée manquant de conviction. Les auteurs du volume *Animaux, parents et petits* ont essayé de présenter aux jeunes certaines informations sur la vie des animaux. L'intérêt du livre repose sur les illustrations. Le texte manque de précision et de clarté pour avoir un impact sur les jeunes. *Mes amis, mon jardin*, présenté sous forme romanesque, n'est nul autre qu'un guide moral typique de d'autres époques. Le produit final est didactique et nullement original.

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Anthropomorphism: Uses and Abuses

RUTH WEBER RUSSELL

The Lonely Dragon, Christiane Duchesne. Adapted from the French by Rosemary Allison. James Lorimer & Company, 1977. 12 pp. \$6.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-154-x. \$1.59 paper. ISBN 0-88862-155-8.

Lazarus Laughs, Christiane Duchesne. Adapted from the French by Rosemary Allison. James Lorimer & Company, 1977. 12 pp. \$6.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-156-6. \$1.59 paper. ISBN 0-88862-157-4.

The Elephant's Cold, Mark Thurman. New Canada Publications, 1979. 24 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-919601-36-7.

Ms. Beaver Travels East, Rosemary Allison and Ann Powell. The Women's Press, 1978. 36 pp. \$7.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88961-057-6. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-88961-056-8.

How Willie Became an Explorer, Don Brewster. Illus. by Pam Swanson. Fredericton: Lyndon House Publishing. 32 pp. \$6.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920948-00-6.

Bronty, Frances Thompson. Illus. by Rosemary Kenney. Borealis Press, 1979. 16 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-919594-91-3.

Pod, the Wood Elf, Margaret Allison Shaw. Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing, 1978. 24 pp. \$5.95 cloth. ISBN 0-919866-33-6. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-919866-32-8.

The anthropomorphic convention is one of the most commonly employed structures in books for small children. From Pooh and Piglet to the more contemporary Frog and Toad, this convention has provided the structure and characterization for some of the most beloved children's literature written in English. In this convention no holds are barred. The animal characters can combine animal and human characteristics in any proportion that pleases the author and best serves his purposes: they can wear full clothes, half clothes, or no clothes at all; live in houses with Mummy and Daddy and Little Sister or alone in the woods; associate with people as equals or view them with understandable caution. But, whatever their form and situation, the animal characters must be identified by the child reader as real living creatures in the expanded world that books create.

The Lonely Dragon and *Lazarus Laughs* form an obvious pair of companion volumes. These two twelve-page books are both written and illustrated by Christiane Duchesne and "adapted" (into English) by Rosemary Allison (who appears later here as the author of *Ms. Beaver Travels East*.) *Dragon* and *Lazarus* are both beautiful books to behold – the illustrations are startlingly original in conception, boldly coloured, fantastical in spirit. The plot lines, however, are far from equally vivid. The heroine of *The Lonely Dragon* is Lucy, who has lost her friend in the snow. Poor Lucy is all alone, cold and sad. Then she has a dream: she sees a "beautiful house with a piano" with her friend (also a dragon) sitting on the roof of the house. Her friend tells Lucy not to be sad, that she will make her happy – and does so the next day by replacing the snow with sun, green grass, and "millions of tiny violets upon which Lucy dances." End of story. Not really a story at all, in fact, but a tone-poem about a sort of Lucy-in-the-sky-with-diamonds; some children may fail to see the point of it all.

The other Duchesne-Allison volume, *Lazarus Laughs*, concerns itself with a much more timely issue: French-English relations in Canada. Lazarus, a lamb, leads a lonely life until one day he jumps over a fence and spots a flock of sheep. But even then his problems are not over for he speaks only English and they, only French. What to do? Laughter, the best medicine! Lazarus and the others all laugh together in sympathy and understanding and Lazarus goes home, resolving to learn to speak French. The illustrations in this book, as in *The Lonely Dragon*, are superb but the story is flat and Lazarus, like Lucy, fails to come to life.

The Elephant's Cold concerns, as one might deduce, an elephant stricken

with a bad cold. Douglas is bored with lying in bed, and decides to sneak outside to see what's happening. But things do not develop as he hopes. His nose is too swollen to smell the wild flowers; his monumental sneezes wake up his sleeping friend; his trunk hurts too much to smile. Douglas' friends rally 'round to suggest various remedies but nothing works. The situation gets noisy and confused and poor Douglas finally goes back home and crawls into bed again, convinced that his mother's advice made sense. The story is plausible (within the no-holds-barred convention); the art is in the most favoured bold and colourful contemporary style and works well with the story line. The Douglas of the pictures, with his patently sore red trunk and ingenuous expressive face, is a sympathetic creature and we are happy to see him fall asleep at the conclusion, "a big smile on his face."

Ms. Beaver Travels East, written by Rosemary Allison and illustrated by Ann Powell, is a sequel to their earlier volume, *The Travels of Ms. Beaver*. *Ms. Beaver Travels East* differs in a number of ways from the other titles I have discussed: it is geared to a somewhat older audience; it is not a lavishly illustrated "picture book" like the others, but a story illustrated with line drawings that support but do not dominate the text; and it is most firmly topical. Ms. Beaver, obviously a mover and a shaker by nature, is found at the story's opening sitting in a restaurant in Toronto with a map of Canada spread out in front of her, wondering where to go next. The waitress, June (who's referred to as a woman but looks fourteen in the illustrations) confides to Ms. Beaver that she's just been laid off. Before Ms. Beaver realizes what has happened, she and June have piled into June's rattle-trap Volkswagen and headed off to June's home in Nova Scotia to get jobs in the fish plant. They arrive just as the plant is burning down. Everyone is sad and worried about the future – but Ms. Beaver saves the day. Just to give herself something to do she starts to build a structure. The structure takes shape, someone has a good idea for its purpose and everyone pitches in – and it becomes a fish plant! And it's not like the old one, but a co-op which everyone will own. Her mission accomplished, Ms. Beaver waves her bright red handkerchief and leaves for parts unknown.

It is a sure sign of the authors' skill in *Ms. Beaver Travels East* that they have incorporated so many issues of contemporary social importance in a small book and yet contrived to keep it entirely free from that earnest moral preachiness which so frequently taints children's books. We have Ms. Beaver (who introduces herself to June as "a representative of Canada's National Animal"); we have a Maritimes girl who has come to Toronto to make a new life but has not succeeded; we have a motel developer (conceived in a truly classic mould with his perfectly coiffed hair, perfectly shaped spectacles, perfectly trendy suit and tie) whose profit-oriented intentions are thwarted by the will of the people; and we have the fish plant which changes from a nasty capitalist venture to one that will benefit the Maritimes workers themselves. We have all those contemporary social concerns, yet they are all natural components in an interesting and sensible

story about a charming, kind, and physically delightful heroine who knows how to get things done. (Yet another recommendation for this book – published by the Women’s Press – is its cheerful and matter-of-fact presentation of an active female heroine, the only one to appear in this group of books.)

The final three titles in this group of anthropomorphic books are all anachronistic, in varying ways. *Bronty*, by Frances Thompson, is a cheaply produced and not very attractive little book about a colony of brontosaurus whose home swamp has become depleted of its food stock, so that they must find another. En route to their new home the group is tyrannized by a tyrannosaurus but all members manage to reach the new haven. The family structure in *Bronty* and the plot structure as well rest upon the most tired and outdated of stereotypes: the father, Bronty, is a bold, careless fellow, a natural leader who makes all the decisions, while Mrs. B. does a lot of worrying, sighing and agreeing.

How Willie Became an Explorer, by Don Brewster, is at least a much more attractive volume than *Bronty*, because of its rather charming pastel illustrations of the mouse family. This book is, we are told, “the first of a planned series on ‘Life with the Roundears’ ”, and is “a children’s book which contains really worthy messages about manners and morals and awareness of life.” Such an intention, however admirable, is fraught with artistic pitfalls, and the Roundears family story is a kind of “Little House on the Prairie” of the rodent world, but even more filled with virtue, as the mouse children go off to their one-room school in a cosy, early-20th-century country setting. I found it all just too good to be true.

Pod, the Wood Elf is also a little too sweet – and a little too whimsical. It’s all about a “merry little crowd” of elves who live in Fern Dell and who have an annual squirrel-riding derby. Pod, the hero, gets lost during the derby, confronts the Creature of the Deep Dark Woods who turns out to be a lost puppy, takes the puppy home to Real People Land, and then successfully wishes himself back to Fern Dell. (But Real People Land is just as unreal as Fern Dell, for a real little girl says things like “Hello there, little fellow, and what might your name be?”)

In none of these final three books do the animal creatures share in the sometimes angry, bad, frustrating world that children really inhabit. One great advantage of the anthropomorphic mode is the breadth and imaginative possibilities it gives the artist to portray the world as a child sees it. The animal/human characters can enable the author to add new perspectives to the strictly human and adult point of view by portraying the world as a true world of wonders where beavers build fish plants and elephants converse. But when the anthropomorphic mode instead shrinks the world to the sweet, the cute, and the morally platitudinous, it has been misused.

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Puffins and Politics

SALLY SMITH

Puffin Rock, James Heneghan and Bruce McBay. Illus. by Vesna Krstanovich. The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1980. 103 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 0-7725-5070-0.

Puffin Rock is a short children's adventure story comprised of pointed comments, lively characterizations and delightful black and white illustrations. Your eye is first attracted to the cover which shows a soft, realistic water colour of a lonely puffin waving goodbye as his friend flies out to sea. Around his neck is a brilliant red scarf, similar to those worn by WW I flying aces — a single dash of colour in a muted scene.

Lundigan Puffin is the first character we meet. He is young, shy, gentlemanly, cautious, and moderate, just as we might expect puffins to be. Lundigan, the reluctant hero of the tale, leaves his homeland to look for an answer to the problems of Puffin Rock. He enacts the age-old quest of youth for knowledge. Through his travels and search, Lundigan grows and matures, eventually returning to the rock with a new-found knowledge and assurance and a startling answer to his questions.

Puffins are depicted as pacifists by Heneghan and McBay, co-authors of the novel, and not only as pacifists, but prim and proper ones as well. The puffin character is gentle and meek, but persistent. This puffinly tone is conveyed by stiff overpoliteness and exact adherence to proper speech and of course it is emphasized by the tiny black and white frock-coated puffin figures themselves.

The authors depict various national personalities in bird form. They have