

des vacances," il s'agit "des enfants" avec "la grand-mère" et "un oncle et une tante" qui les attendent. Cette situation est tellement anonyme qu'elle est presque stérile. Dans un conte de cette longueur, une écrivaine pour enfant devrait absolument pouvoir incarner ses personnages et créer une atmosphère réaliste. Les problèmes de difficulté un peu partout dans le livre suggèrent que l'auteure a perdu de vue les enfants qu'elle prétend viser.

En conclusion, malgré ses belles apparences, ce livre est moins bien fait et moins utile qu'on l'aurait pensé au premier coup d'oeil. Les enfants aimeront pourtant les images et les thèmes et pourront s'amuser à se faire lire les contes. Dans le contexte scolaire, l'enseignant(e) bien rusé(e) pourrait s'en servir de temps à autres, mais pas plus.

Margaret Paré enseigne la troisième année de français d'immersion à Kitchener, Ontario.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

A breed apart, Tony German. McClelland and Stewart, 1985. 272 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7710-3266-8.

Duncan Cameron returns to his birth place at Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1809. He is sixteen and has spent the last ten years in Montreal. There he was mocked for his mixed blood and he has returned to the Northwest with his father, Angus Cameron, to discover whether he is Scot or Cree and whether his future lies among the woods and lakes of the fur country or in the urban luxury of Montreal. Conflict is in the air at Ile-à-la-Crosse where the Northwest Company's hold on the fur trade is being challenged by the Hudson's Bay Company, whose fort lies just a mile away from Cameron's post. Angus Cameron and Magnus Spence, chief of the Hudson's Bay post, hope that their personal friendship will keep the peace between the companies. Duncan falls in love with Nancy Spence, like himself the child of a Scots father and Cree mother.

Open conflict follows the arrival of Harry Whistler at the Hudson's Bay post. The new English representative of the Bay has no time for conciliation between the companies. Duncan is barred from the Bay post and relations rapidly degenerate into open conflict. During a siege of the Bay fort, Duncan allows his feelings for Nancy to overcome his responsibility to the Northwest Company and he allows her to slip through the besiegers' lines with food she has caught. Nancy is spotted, a skirmish follows and a Bay man is killed. Regarded as a traitor by his fellows, Duncan is banished from the fort by his father and retires to an abandoned post near the home of his grandfather Cut Hand. Cut Hand supports Duncan and teaches him something of his Indian heritage.

Nothing consoles Duncan at the news that Nancy has agreed to marry Harry Whistler. The girl does so to protect her family when Angus Spence retires to Scotland.

Whistler attacks Duncan's post while he is absent, kills Duncan's cousin and burns the man's wife and child to death when he razes the post. The novel then chronicles Duncan's pursuit of Whistler, his attempts to bring him to justice and his own efforts to reconcile himself to his father. The search leads Duncan back to Montreal where Whistler is brought to court and is about to be acquitted on the charge of murder when he is condemned by his own hand in a letter he has written to Spence describing the attack of the fort. Duncan is reconciled with his father who proves true to his Cree country wife and their children. After Whistler is led off to jail and eventual execution, Duncan learns from his accomplice that Nancy never yielded to the Englishman and that she is waiting for him in the west. Duncan discovers that he is neither Indian nor Scot. "But he was something else. He was a breed apart. He was himself." he resolves to find his true love Nancy and make his life in the northern woods.

Tony German is fascinated by nineteenth century Canada which he has used as the setting for his Tom Penny novels. Those novels are packed with action and densely plotted. They are less successful at developing credible characters or expressing emotion and feeling. The same holds true for this novel. German is at his best describing the race of the brigades across the lake to Ile-à-la-Croise or Duncan's desperate trip down a dangerous rapid or his happier travels with dog team and carriole. Here you feel that the author has had a paddle in his hands and untangled a dog team in his time and the clear narrative prose moves along briskly when German is describing action. In some scenes the lavish detail tends to slow down the narrative thrust, as it does in a passage describing New Year's celebration at Ile-à-la-Croise, but when people are doing things German is in control. When it is a question of emotions, he is less in control and the language reflects his difficulty.

"No!" He stood, recoiled. The word lurched.

'Nancy, Nancy. . .' His chest filled, his throat jammed tight. He stood immobile, looking down. What was this? What was she doing? What had she done?

She gasped, her eyes widened. Shame? Fear? Love? Hate? He couldn't see her face. Her eyes said? . . . He couldn't tell."

This novel is as much about character and feelings as about action and it suffers from a lack of nuance in the characters. Scots are sturdy and dependable, Whistler is an English cad straight from melodrama, Canadians are generally reliable though you will find an occasional shirker in the bunch, Indians are good and wise and their eyes sometimes "reflect untold years." Duncan is said to be sixteen but little in his actions or feelings reflects that and he could as easily have been twenty-five. The hero is heroic and he makes the right choice between a flighty and frivolous Montreal girl and a Northwesterner as dependable and upright as himself who defends her virtue against the cad

even when he has her in chains. The search for identity, the question of where you belong, the problems of choice and the destructiveness of racism are powerful themes for any novelist to choose but in *A breed apart* they are handled with little subtlety and the reader is less in the world of history than of historical romance.

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UN RÉCIT ONIRIQUE

Le fils du sorcier, Henri Lamoureux. Illus. Charles Vinh. Montréal, Paulines, 1982. 140 pp. 5,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89039-884-6.

“En ces sortes de feinte il faut instruire et plaire
Et conter pour conter me semble peu d'affaire”

Ces mots par lesquels La Fontaine définissait le but de ses Fables semblent assez bien rendre compte de l'ambition d'Henri Lamoureux telle qu'elle apparaît dans son roman *Le fils du sorcier*. Car Henri Lamoureux sait raconter; on peut même croire qu'il s'est régala lui-même des aventures qu'il a imaginées; en tout cas, il n'ennuie pas son lecteur. Mais il cherche aussi à instruire, soit en insérant des données scientifiques (ou apparemment telles) dans le tissu narratif, soit en donnant un contenu didactique à certains dialogues. L'auteur a même recours à quelques notes en bas de page, ce qui semble indiquer qu'il a senti le danger d'une surcharge didactique dans le texte lui-même. Henri Lamoureux parvient assez habilement à intégrer au dialogue l'explication de mots difficiles, comme “nyctalope”, mais, sans doute par crainte d'alourdir son texte, il se résigne à utiliser des notes en bas de page pour des explications de mots ou d'expressions plus simples, comme “tribord” ou “vent de force huit”. Le choix de ces notes (il y en a sept) devrait nous éclairer quelque peu sur le niveau culturel du public visé, mais c'est là un point sur lequel l'auteur nous semble manquer de rigueur. Si le jeune lecteur a besoin qu'on lui explique un mot comme “tribord”, comprendra-t-il des mots comme “symbiose” ou même “stalagmite”? (Soit dit en passant: il devrait y avoir aussi des stalactites. . .). Qu'il faille encore préciser au même jeune lecteur qui est Salvador Dali (mais attention à l'adjectif “surréaliste” . . .) ou ce que fut la ville de Troie, rien d'étonnant à cela. Mais alors, comment pourra-t-il apprécier, au chapitre 9 du roman, les révélations extraordinaires que Bernard, le fils du Sorcier, livre à deux adolescents?