

en français et dans des structures grammaticales plus acceptables que ce n'est le cas en anglais et c'est à se demander si dans la traduction le personnage est bien campé. En posant le personnage d'Actaudin le traducteur n'a pas toujours rendu avec exactitude les structures langagières, qui dans la version anglaise apparaissent quelquefois en style télégraphique.

Nous avons aussi parfois des doutes quant à l'exactitude des termes employés; ceci peut être dû à des canadianismes ou alors à un manque de compréhension de l'anglais de la part du traducteur. Nous n'avons relevé que de rares erreurs de frappe, ex. p. 160 "porduites" p. 36, "un garniture dorée," p. 165, "le capitaine à dit"...

Tout bien considéré "La main de Robin Squires" est un livre qui obtiendra sans doute beaucoup de succès car il possède, dans l'ensemble, les ingrédients nécessaires à motiver la jeunesse, mais s'ils ont une connaissance suffisante de l'anglais, il faudrait peut-être leur recommander la version originale.

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A GOOD YARN FROM JAMES REANEY

Take the big picture, James Reaney. Illus. Barbara Di Lella. The Porcupine's Quill, 1986. 172 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88984-0873.

In an age of computer-composing, the conceit of writing only until the ink pot empties is ingenious: it is entirely in keeping with James Reaney's good old-fashioned narrative sense. A lively highway romp from British Columbia to Ontario as André Delahay, recently fired university professor, returns with six progeny from a domestic sabbatical is balanced by life on the home front played out by Granny, his mother, and Lucy, mother of his unwieldy menage. The two family strands connect and, after a brief struggle with the elements and a pair of folksy criminals, reunite. In a delightful bit of instruction we learn that it is possible for the family unit to survive the onslaught of triplets, job loss, emotional breakdown, and the three generation household. Equally remarkable is the wisdom of seventeen-year-old Colin who quite literally keeps the show on the road: he gently tames his three unruly five-year-old brothers with assists from the Sas-

quatch, the mythical beast of which the Terrible Three are mortally afraid. But then this is, after all, a romantic comedy in which trials and tribulations are either blessings in disguise or temporary setbacks on the narrative road to a happy resolution.

Given its middle-class albeit zany family and its emphasis upon male character and action, it is possible that *Take the big picture* would not fare well under the scrutiny of marxist or feminist criticism. There are, however, a variety of possible readings of this text. It can be read as an indictment of the school system or a diatribe against fast foods. More positively it can be considered as a plea for animal rights or as a celebration of spirit and action on the part of older women. Granny orchestrates events: she even operates a successful halfway house with a minimum of exploitation. Criminals are redeemable and need not always be young male hoodlums on motorcycles: they can as easily be old female imposters in stolen cars. The pretensions of the market-place are cheerfully ridiculed when a rare book dealer pays vast sums for small volumes whose age and origin have been "authenticated" by the recent toothmarks of ravenous young children. While large extended families, a sense of community and the celebration of traditional festivals are upheld, it would take a wildly zealous historicalsocial literary critic not to enjoy the simple spoof being played upon many conventional assumptions.

All in all, the deft prose style combined with keen characterization and mystery will sustain the young reader's interest. The clever structure in which the camera zooms in on travellers and stay-at-homes alternatively, then switches skillfully from main story line to tale-within-tale provides the stuff story spells are made of. Intriguingly Reaney leads us to a grand finale in which experience and fancy merge in the yarn that is spun from them both. Since the ink well is dry we are encouraged to write beyond the ending and it is the measure of Reaney's accomplishment that the reader of any age will find the invitation irresistible.

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HISTORY LESSONS

White mist, Barbara Smucker. Irwin, 1985. 159 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7725-1542-4.

Caring and committed in her approach to historical fiction for young peo-