

savent lire avant l'école) mais révélateur (puisqu'il s'agit de quelqu'un qui, en tant qu'animateur, étend le réseau d'influence de l'institution), les élèves sont vite plongés dans la lecture utilitaire reposant sur la compréhension du contenu informatif et sa mémorisation. Ceci contribue d'après Y. Beauchesne à ce que 44% des adultes québécois ne lisent jamais de livre. Il semble donc qu'il passe sous silence totalement les effets néfastes de l'idéologie de production/consommation.

Il faut ainsi envisager des pratiques qui redonneront ce goût de la lecture expérimentielle, c'est-à-dire de "créer, de vivre et assimiler une expérience à partir d'un texte." (p.25). Aux pages 40 et suivantes, il établit donc un plan à l'aide de postulats et d'indicateurs méthodologiques qui donnent les assises à la partie pratique de l'ouvrage.

Celle-ci, au verso, comprend 220 pages d'exemples divers adaptés aux différents publics. On élabore des stratégies permettant aux lecteurs de noter simplement leurs réactions et de retrouver leur potentiel de résonance imaginaire face au texte. De nombreux extraits de textes des littératures québécoise, française et internationales sont joints. A la fin se trouve une bibliographie facile à consulter car les titres sont imprimés sur des pages jaunes. Il s'agit d'un manuel utile qui met au courant rapidement et fait de nombreuses suggestions.

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## MYTHIC BEASTS

**A New World bestiary**, Mary Hamilton. Illus. Kim LaFave. Douglas & McIntyre, 1985. 40 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88894485-3.

Medieval bestiaries detailed the strange habits of real and not-so-real animals both to entertain audiences addicted to marvels and to further their moral understanding: the phoenix rising from its nest of flames is an image of the resurrected Christ, the crocodile lurking in the muddy Nile is like a sinner puffed up with pride and hypocrisy. Mary Hamilton likewise offers readers a combination of strange creatures and, if not morality, then his-

tory in the form of anecdotes about the explorers who came to America from Scandinavia and Europe and who saw, or thought they saw, the fabulous creatures described in *A New World bestiary*.

The book contains fascinating information about approximately a dozen strange creatures, from fierce "skrellings," small as pygmies and completely covered with hair who frightened the Norse explorers from the shores of the New World, to mermen with webbed fingers who crushed their victims in a watery embrace, and creatures whose legends are still current, such as the Sasquatch and the water monsters said to inhabit lakes and rivers. Of particular interest to Canadian readers are the creatures of New France: the loup-garou, a were-wolf who lived in early French communities and could be killed only with a silver bullet; the gou-gou, a cannibalistic giant who stored victims in a large pocket before eating them, and the eery chat-huant, half cat and half owl, described by Governor Denys of Acadia.

The full-page illustrations by Kim LaFave are suitably mysterious, attractive or terrifying. As this is a book of exotica, it is a pity that many of the pictures are in orange tones only; however the restriction is put to good advantage when the reader comes unexpectedly upon the first plate in full colour, most appropriately given to the brilliant blue and scarlet Mexican snake-bird, Quetzalcoatl.

As a rule the author does not relate these creatures to earlier accounts in European literature, where several of them (e.g., the men with heads buried in their chests) have a long tradition; nor does she surmise what the explorers may "really" have seen in terms of modern knowledge. Her stated aim is to "recreate the sense of excitement felt by people who had little science to explain some of their earliest experiences in the New World," but she only partially succeeds, for as in the medieval bestiaries, the animal lore is sometimes at odds with the moral, or in this case historical, information. The picture-book format suggests that this book is intended for younger children (8 to 10 years), but the lengthy descriptions that accompany the pictures, with liberal quotations from the explorers' own writings, will quickly lose the interest of many of them. The book may however find its audience in older children and adults who are interested in myth and legend and in the adventures of early explorers. Younger readers would probably prefer either a more exciting narrative or a greater emphasis on the verbal magic that appears only occasionally here, as in "strange beasts like...[the] Singing Hare, the frizzly Tapurette, the Side-hill Gouger and the airy Haut."

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