

terloo. She knows the time (the year in which she and her husband Donovan Smucker came to Waterloo), and the place (the Smuckers still live in Waterloo), and the Mennonite Community. Her love of time, place, and people shines through in descriptions of sky, pond, field, barn, kitchen, and of Mennonite mealtimes and gatherings, and a wedding.

The book also gives us Jacob Snyder's inner life: his wild imaginings (frowned upon in the hard-working and practical Mennonite household), his fears, his insecurities. When his father puts him in charge of a pair of Giant Canada Geese, relocated by the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests on the Snyders' farm, seven-year old Jacob takes his job very seriously.

The geese settle on the pond and four goslings hatch in early June. One much smaller than the rest becomes Jacob's favourite. Both little boy and little Giant gosling exhibit unexpected bravery during the summer and early autumn. So Barbara Smucker weaves together the stories of six Giant Canadas and one small Mennonite boy – stories about ecology and emotional growth.

The "Note to the Reader" at the end of the book explains the Co-operator's Programme developed in Southern Ontario during the 1960's to save the Giant Canada Goose from extinction. The programme has been so successful that now hundreds of Giant Canadas are found in Southern Ontario. Here, as in all her books, Mrs. Smucker begins in fact and creates a fictional world which celebrates the kind of heart-felt values that centre the other books which she has written: growth, love for one another and for the world of nature.

With a poignancy like that found in *Charlotte's web*, the book gently presents birth, growth, separation, maturity, and death in both natural and human worlds. Jacob increases his own stature in the family; his sister marries and leaves the family nest, and the Giant Canada Geese, with "Little Giant" bravely flying last, leave their nest on the pond to travel south.

The pacing in the book is excellent: slow at first as we get to know Jacob and his insecurities about being "little," quick in the middle episodes about the geese growing, and very fast at the end with the wounding of "Little Giant" and Lydia's wedding. There is less overt didacticism in this story than in some of Barbara Smucker's earlier books. The apparently effortless story-telling makes it one of the best-written of her books to date.

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A FLURRY OF SERIES

What's in a name? Pauline Carey. Illus. Lee Munroe. Aya Press, 1987. Frances and Josephine series. 32 pp., \$6.00 paper. ISBN 0-920544-48-7;

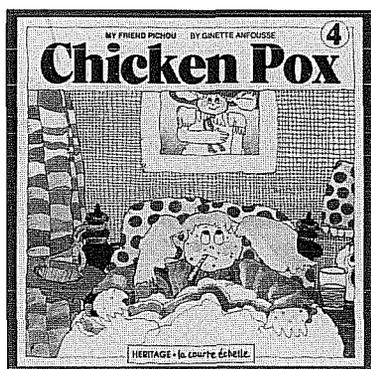
Magic. Pauline Carey. Aya Press, 1988. 24 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-920544-59-2; Leon Series: **Hello, tree** Cécile Gagnon. Illus. Darcia Labrosse. Trans. Patricia Claxton. McClelland and Stewart, 1988. Unpag. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-3283-8; **I'm hot.** ISBN 0-7710-3284-6; **I'm hungry.** ISBN 7710-3285-4. A new house. ISBN 0-7710-3286-2. [All of the foregoing are in the "Leon Series," published by McClelland and Stewart.] **Where is Tommycat?** Nicole Girard and Pol Danheux. Illus. Michel Bisson. Adapted by Priscilla Galloway. James Lorimer, 1988. Unpag. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-117-8; **A letter from the Moon.** ISBN 1-55028-119-4; **Tommycat comes back at last.** ISBN 1-55028-121-6; **Tommycat is gone again.** ISBN 1-55028-123-2. [All of the foregoing are in the "Anna, Paul and Tommycat Series," published by James Lorimer.] **Yuneek in I'm Yuneek.** Bertrand Gauthier. Illus. Daniel Sylvestre. English version David Homel. La courte échelle, 1984. Unpag. paper. ISBN 2-7625-5170-6; **Yuneek in the championship.** 1986. ISBN 2-7625-5171-4; **Yuneek in the winner.** 1987. ISBN 2-7625-5172-2; **Yuneek in the present.** 1987. ISBN 2-7625-5173-0. [All of the foregoing are in the "Yuneek Series," published by La courte échelle.] **My friend Pichou.** Ginette Anfousse. Trans. Linda Gaboriau. La courte échelle, 1988. Unpag. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 2-7625-5160-9; **Hide and seek.** Trans. Mayer Romaner. ISBN 2-76255161-7; **The fight.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5162-5; **Chicken pox.** Trans. Mayer Romaner. ISBN 2-7625-5163-3; **Soap.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5164-1; **Winter: or the seven-o'clock-Bogey-Man.** Trans. Mayer Romaner. ISBN 2-7625-5165-X; **School.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5166-3; **The party.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5167-6; **A baby sister.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5169-4. **I'm sulking.** Trans. Linda Gaboriau. ISBN 2-7625-5169-2. [All of the foregoing are in the "My friend Pichou Series," published by Héritage.] **Trompy - 1.** Wim Rottinghuis. Trans. Teena McDiarmid. Hayes Publishing, 1988. Trompy series. Unpag., \$4.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-247-4; **Tromphy - 2.** ISBN 0-88625-249-0; **Tromphy - 3.** ISBN 0-88625-251-2. [All of the foregoing are in the "Trompy Series," published by Hayes Publishing.]

One forgets sometimes how much joyous anticipation attends the discovery of a good series. Those who remember serial Saturday movies, long summer days with Anne books, or even (horrors) with the Hardy Boys, never forget, and will argue years later the varying merits of volumes in a series. The books reviewed here provide evidence that the appetite for more of the same can be whetted at quite an early age. All of these series are quite suitable for children from three into the early reading years.

Series, of course, come in as many varieties as do single titles. All titles within a series must be identifiably related, and it certainly is desirable that individual titles be self contained.

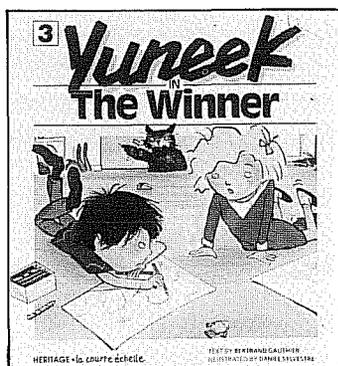
All of the series reviewed here are quite distinctive in appearance. All are

not equally successful in dealing with the problem of sequence, however, a reader who happens upon *I'm hot* (in the *Leon* series) before reading *Hello, tree* might very well wonder about a polar bear in a hot country for no apparent reason. Even if one reads the four books in order there is something just not right about Leon the polar bear settling down in a maple tree with no prospect of ever returning to the frozen North – and to other polar bears. The illustrations, full pages of fanciful eventful goings-on, Leon himself, a decidedly appealing bear with a black toilet plunger of a nose, will appeal to children very much. A little text beautifully printed on the facing pages along with a small emblem in black and white clearly eliminates any confusion. The story of Leon is simple, though (it has to be said) a trifle boring.



A colourful, strange and charming series presents the books about *My friend Pichou* by Ginette Anfousse. Jojo, a very excitable freckled moppet, narrates all of the stories, which feature a shapeless gray stuffed object, which turns out to be Pichou, an honest-to-goodness-baby-aardvark-who-really-eats-ants. Pictures are breezily drawn cartoons, bright masses of colour casually framed in irregular line-drawn boxes. Text is accessible outside the frames, and is spare, but adequate. A number of childhood issues

are touched upon as the series progresses – being alone, being confined with chicken pox, having to stay clean, dealing with things that go bump in the night and so on. None are treated heavy-handedly. One of the best in the series, *The fight*, introduces Jojo's enemy (the kind you love to be rivals with). There is just enough narrative to sustain a child's interest from book to book, and it doesn't matter much in which order they are read. Getting a new one will be like meeting an old friend.



Published in the same 8" x 8" format by the same publisher is the rather wild *Yuneek* series. Yuneek lives in a single parent home with his father. Yuneek is a five-year-old kindergartner who has his ups and downs. Being a losing goalie is not good, but being cheered up by Dad is good. And so it goes. Yuneek is quite different from Jojo; his life is filled with jagged lines, which is to say that the artist, Daniel Sylvestre, has picked up on the fine line that divides a secure life from an insecure one. Not every-

thing is as it should be in Yuneek's life – he can throw in his father's face when he is mad that he likes his mother better – but most of the time life is happy – and his father sometimes even arranges visits for Yuneek to his mother. This is a balanced, honest presentation of five-and-a-half-year-old life. Even enemy Andrea Abbott isn't *all* that bad!

Some of the Anna, Paul and Tommycat stories are narrated by Anna, others by Paul, her brother. All involve the mischievous independent goings and comings of naughty Tommycat. This series has a lot of attractive features. One might say that children are here introduced as beginning readers to the detective fiction one imagines that many of them will embrace as a lifetime pleasure. The "famous detective Mr. Sharpeye" embodies character in the manner of Inspecteur Cleusot. Children may participate as they read and reply to the detective's question. The illustrations of Michel Bisson, painted flat and bright in poster paint, are clear and highly appealing. The text is carefully set forth in print which is ideal for a beginning reader, and the language itself has appeal. "Ha, ha," somebody said, "Ha, ha, miaow".

A short series that one hopes will lengthen is the Frances and Josephine pair, *What's in a name?* and *Magic*. The former especially appeals with its theme of names, so important to the identity, so powerful in myth and legend. This is a book that plays in a truly childlike way with language. Alternating pages of softly realistic pencil drawings set off aptly the rather quiet, thoughtful text. There is little action in this story, but the theme has a vitality of its own that compensates.

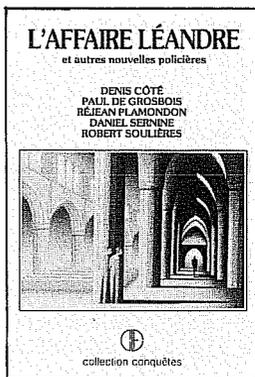
A surprise package is the Trompy series. Three little books about a baby elephant and his two friends, a pair of rather triangular white mice, are presented in a comic book format, six panels to the page, with occasional variations of two long horizontals, or three tall verticals. Usually a page contains a whole story; occasionally two pages are required. These books with their simply, almost mathematically drawn figures – figures almost as minimally stylized as the Miffy drawings of Dick Bruna – are a considerable achievement. The blend of drawings and text, spare but sharply set in caption style, is essential. Both must be read carefully, for their interdependence is critical. Very funny things happen, and sharp eyes are needed to capture all the fun. Hours of pleasure are to be had here, best shared with a parent.

The Tromphy books, with originate in the Netherlands, are here ably translated by Teena McDiarmid, a Canadian. From solid cover and aptly decorated endpapers right through the small book format (6" x 6") these are delightful books. Each has a colour-it-yourself middle story (a little irritating to the purist; no problem for the four-year-old). Volumes in the series (1,2,3) and pages within the books are numbered with fingers of stylized hands, a rather fussy, slightly patronizing affectation, especially confusing because at ten the numbers begin again. Apart from this the Tromphy books are highly recommended.

It has been commented that series books, even some of the undistinguished ones so popular with a slightly older crowd, provide plateaux whereon developing readers can rest and acquire fluency and confidence. It seems to this reviewer that series for early childhood may well do the same. Old friends, Trompy, Tommycat, Leon, will be sought out, read, re-read and loved. On such a foundation lasting literacy is built.

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RÉCITS POLICIERS POUR JEUNES LECTEURS



L'affaire Léandre et autres nouvelles policières. Denis Côté, Paul de Grosbois, Réjean Plamondon, Daniel Sernine et Robert Soulières. Illus. Odile Ouellette. Montréal, Tisseyre, 1987. (Collection conquêtes.) 180 pp., 10,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89051-334-3.

Chercher un sens aux actes d'un homme requiert perspicacité et lucidité. Dans l'antiquité, le philosophe qui se passionnait pour une telle activité pouvait, dit-on, se retrouver par mégarde au fond d'un puits; en revanche, de nos jours, cette activité permet au détective d'écrouer le criminel au fond d'une prison. Dans cette article, il ne sera pas question de philosophes inattentifs mais bien du plaisir de démêler ce qui, à première vue, semble inextricable. En littérature, le récit policier, par définition, est le récit d'une telle quête de sens: "un récit consacré avant tout à la découverte méthodique et graduelle, par des moyens rationnels, des circonstances exactes d'un événement mystérieux" (Herron et Kaiser).

L'enquêteur (et le lecteur qui le suit pas à pas, ou plutôt, mot à mot) interprète des faits en apparence insignifiants pour en tirer une conclusion rationnelle et logique. Or, si le mystère est mentionné dans la définition précédente, c'est surtout le processus réflexif de l'enquête, la recherche de la solution au problème (au "puzzle") qui se trouve au centre des préoccupations de tels ouvrages, et ce, à tel point que l'on pourrait parler dans l'étude de ce genre romanesque de "contrat". Le contrat, c'est-à-dire ce qui engage, ce qui promet, par le biais d'un réseau de signes codés, une formule textuelle déterminée. Bien entendu, ce concept de signes codés et de "détermination" du récit