

The painting depicts a huge tree covered with buds and singing blackbirds. On its massive trunk can be seen a face, mouth open in song, with two branches that have become arms so that the tree can conduct the chorus of blackbirds. No children's or adult's collection should be without this book.

The last two books are very similar the many humorous touches in both story and illustrations. Without actually rhyming, the words in both books flow in a lively manner, eminently suitable for group reading. The illustrations are painted with broad, brightly coloured sweeps of the brush.

Zagwyn's paintings in *Mood pocket mud bucket* are delightful. She has included many details that children will not discover at first glance. An example of the fun the author has with words and images is in her description of one stormy morning when "the robins in the cottonwood tree were wishing they had umbrellas." The matching illustration shows a bedraggled robin with a red umbrella and yellow galoshes!

Mood pocket refers to the young girl's different faces for different moods. When not wearing a face, she keeps it in her pocket: "faces for every mood and occasion – rainy mornings or sunny afternoons, sad beginnings or happy endings." If the book can be said to have any failure, it is in the adult dialogue. Zagwyn reports it faithfully but by so doing breaks the rhythm of the story by interjecting adult words and adult mannerisms.

Amos's sweater was the recipient of the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award. The award is a double honour since the winner is chosen by children, in this case by grade 6 Toronto students. The illustrator, Kim LaFave, was awarded last year's Governor-General's Award. *Amos's sweater* is already a favourite of both children's librarians and parents. The story is a very simple one, but children will love the notion that a sheep will try to recapture his wool, now in the form of a knitted sweater. The illustrations are short in detail but long in gentle humour.

Terri Lyons is the Community Service Librarian at the Barry Public Library.

FAIRY TALES RETOLD OR NEWLY CREATED

How the Devil got his cat. Mary Alice Downie. Illus. Jillian Hulme Gilliland. Quarry Press, 1988. Unpag., \$11.95, \$6.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-919627-84-6, 0-919627-86-2, **Little Kay.** Robin Muller. North Winds Press, 1988. 31 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-71887-8, **The girl on the hat.** Jane Jacobs. Illus. Karen Reczuch. Oxford University Press, 1989. 50 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-19-540708-3, **Amanda Greenleaf and the spell of the Water Witch.** Ed Kavanagh. Illus. Janice Udell. Moonstone Press, 1987. 56 pp., \$6.95 paper.

ISBN 0-920259-12-X, **The magic amethyst**. Mirian Goldman. Illus. Jane Grady Hamilton. Ragweed Press, 1988. 166 pp., \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-920304-87-7.

Folk and fairy tales give to children a legacy of the rhythm of language and imaginative expression that is part of their literary inheritance, besides offering them the excitement of a clash between forces of good and evil or the humour of the universal human condition. In contemporary literature for children the situation and motif of the traditional fairy tale are often used to create intricate fantasies or morality tales. Of the five books viewed here, only one, *How the Devil got his cat*, is a traditional fairy tale retold by Mary Alice Downie from a version by Baptiste Laroque in *Legends of French Canada*. In a convent in Quebec a particularly beautiful black cat receives preferred treatment. When the old wooden bridge collapses and has to be replaced by a new stone one, only one person, a mysterious stranger, can be found to do the job. No money will be exchanged, but the first thing to cross the bridge will be his. After the bridge has been completed and blessed, Mother Superior releases the black cat, who crosses the new bridge. The devil is cheated of Mother Superior's soul and the cat remains with him for ever. Downie's simple, uncluttered retelling of the story and Gilliland's dramatic black and white silhouette illustrations make this a compelling and enjoyable story for young children to hear and to read.

Robin Muller uses traditional fairy tale themes to recreate modern versions. Little Kay is the youngest of three daughters to challenge the much feared sultan. Disguised as a boy and wearing armour made from a platter and a soup pot and a helmet made from a teapot, she tackles a terrifying dragon. Little Kay completes all the tests devised by the Sultan, defies a hideous ogre and proves that girls can be just as brave and clever in the face of danger as boys. Muller's story is reminiscent of many European tales. The style is straight forward and humorous and is complemented by illustrations which, though they depict beasts and monsters as larger than life, would not be frightening to young children. Although Muller's illustrations teem with activity the reader does not lose sight of the story.

Jane Jacobs, a well-known authority in the field of town planning, has created a modern fairy tale similar to *Thumbelina* in *The girl on the hat*. Tina, only two inches long, rides in a fold on her mother's hat. Her ingenuity saves her from kidnappers. Because of her minute size she is able to photograph small animals in real life situations. Then Tina discovers that she is growing (unlike her counterpart Tom Thumb, Thumbelina or Stuart Little) and the explanation is that "it is just time to". The story is amusing and at times exciting, but the ending is unconvincing. If Tina was so successful as a tiny person why did the author feel she had to convert her into a normal-sized child? The author introduces at the end the mythical Sasquatch as a possible target

for Tina's photography and probably a sequel to this story.

The least successful of the five books is Ed Kavanagh's tale of Amanda Greenleaf, sequel to *Amanda Greenleaf visits a distant star*. It is a modern fairy tale with the moral that that which appears to be evil can be enticed to do good. Amanda, guardian of the waterfall, must help her merpeople reach salt water. Her journey is thwarted by the Water Witch, Miranda. Amanda believes that the witch isn't all bad and convinces Miranda to help rescue the merpeople. The story is flimsy and too sweet for those children who enjoy the tough standards of the traditional fairy tales with their gutsy characters and hair-raising adventures. Too much description of superficial details interferes with character and plot development.

Miriam Goldman, author of *The magic amethyst* is an American who spent many summers in Prince Edward Island. The beautiful countryside and the rural ways of its inhabitants inspired her to create a fantasy which has within its depths the substance of myth and Yiddish folk tradition. On the imaginary island of Port la Joie live Ray, her parents and seven brothers and sisters. Within the landscape surrounding her ramshackle home are the Look Out, Castle Deep, the Caves, the Escape Hatch, the Settlement of River People and the Town of Three Rivers. Ray undertakes a journey of initiation and self discovery in which evil in the form of the Bumm Brothers and the Master must be subdued, goodness in the form of the sisters River and Heath must be discovered and reconciliation with her parents and the life of her rural forebears must be achieved. A magic amethyst is at first the catalyst, but eventually Ray must find her way without the aid of magic. There are many long descriptive passages, beautiful and evocative but diminishing the impact of the underlying mythic motif. Ray and her brother Cappy are real characters with all of the complexities of real people, but the central theme becomes convoluted. The true value of the story will not be known until it is tested with children who read at a different level than adults and who may or may not be able to ferret out the author's real meaning and message.

Eva Martin, *manager of Longhouse Bookshop, Toronto, is the author of Canadian fairy tales.*

LE RÉCIT DE LA MÉCHANCETÉ

Un monstre dans les céréales. Marie-Francine Hébert. Illus. Philippe Germain. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1988. 64 pp., broché. ISBN 2-89021084-7.

Mademoiselle Méli Mélo sort de ses gonds. Et c'est la faute de tout le monde. Enfin non, pas exactement. Ce n'est certainement pas la faute de son jeune