

not only to emphasize just how repeatedly those ducks reproduced.) They launch Lunn's language into the same kinetic region that LaFave's drawings already inhabit, while simultaneously providing the reader with a home base, some pattern she can count on. Deforming language through repetition exposes the subversion working within it; Lunn engages in this type of serious play, liberating words from sheer referentiality. It's as much fun to hear the words as words, to experience their shapes, sounds and colours (as Dylan Thomas says of nursery rhymes in "Notes on the Art of Poetry"), as it is to see LaFave's version of the "literal" results of this word play.

Waterton plays with language too in a more domesticated way – but then her story as a whole, and its illustrations, are more "in control" than *Duck cakes* is. She makes forays into alliteration, letting individual letter sounds wash over casual moments in her text. And she courts parody, rewriting "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" with a far more benign pen than Alice ever owned. But the strength of her story lies not so much in linguistic play or parody as in quiet humour and in its references to so many of a child's favourite things – babies, noodles, dinosaurs, circuses, beaches, picnics, bubbles, starfish and painting. This may be the reason that, of these two, my two-year-old daughter insisted on sleeping with *Plain noodles*. Or maybe she preferred not to be crowded out of her bed by ducks.

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### *JESPER: A DANISH THRILLER*

**Jesper.** Carol Matas. Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989. 160 pp., \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88619-109-2.

This work is a sequel to Carol Matas' *Lisa* which won the Geoffrey Bilson Prize for Historical Fiction for Young People in 1988. *Lisa* was about a Danish Jewish girl caught in occupied Denmark during the Second World War, along with her older brother Stefan and his friend Jesper. *Jesper* continues the story of young teenagers in the Danish underground movement after *Lisa's* and *Stefan's* departure. Jesper recalls early experiences with them in a series of flash-backs from his cell in Shell House, Copenhagen, where he is imprisoned by the Gestapo towards the end of the war. The 14-year-old boys begin with relatively simple acts of sabotage, such as making German trucks inoperative, and progress to more dangerous assignments. Later Jesper becomes involved

in an underground resistance newspaper and is closely attached to the young people producing and distributing it. On one occasion he is caught and nearly shot. While he is interrogated, he recognizes an old friend, Frederick, now a Nazi officer. Throughout the novel Jesper wishes to believe that Frederik is an undercover resistance agent posing as a Nazi.

The concluding chapters are particularly exciting: Stefan returns to Denmark on a special assignment in order to free a resistance leader. Stefan secures Jesper's aid in this dangerous rescue operation, which provides a fascinating conclusion to a really good teenage novel.

Carol Matas manages to convey an important historical lesson while telling an exciting story. She must be complimented for her meticulous research on the Danish resistance and her ability to convey the mood of the Danish people in these dark years, which provide much more than a backcloth to a thriller: it is an historically sound account of the Danish resistance. Many of the details she gives are well-known to all Danes and have become part of their national heritage, e.g., the king's daily rides throughout the city to encourage his people and how he informed the Germans that he and all his people would wear a star of David if the Jews were forced to do so. Likewise the tragedy of the accidental bombing by the Allies of the French School, the attack on Shellhuset, the bombs in Tivoli and the general strike are well known and give this historical novel greater credibility and depth.

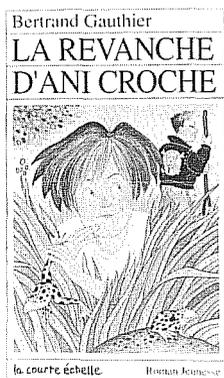
The author manages to steer a course between glorifying the resistance and dwelling on the cruelties of the Gestapo. Just sufficient details of the torture are given (Jesper has his fingernails painfully removed) to suggest the greater persecution, while the fear and discomfort of the resistance members detracts from any romantic sense of heroism. Even today the topic is one of great sensitivity in countries like Denmark and Holland. At a period of the reunification of Germany and the unification of Europe some parents might ask about the value of keeping such bitter memories alive for yet another generation, but I believe that Carol Matas' objective and healthy treatment of the subject provides the most sensible approach for children today. It makes them aware that mankind is capable of such atrocities. In addition it keeps alive the memories of the brave resistance fighters of all ages who risked their lives to liberate their country.

The author also provides a subtle portrayal of her hero's development between 14 and 18 years old. He has to grow up very quickly, as he is soon separated from his parents, and we follow him through his teenage love for Lisa and later infatuation Janicke, a colleague who is two years his senior. More confusing is his realization that even his hero, Frederik, has shifted his loyalty and betrayed him, so that everything becomes uncertain: "Ever since the Germans took over, that has been at the forefront of our lives – uncertainty. Nothing is sure. Nothing is safe. Is your neighbour a friend or an enemy? Be-

fore we could look our fellow Dane in the eye – now we don't know if we are looking at a friend or an enemy" (39).

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## DE LA BANDE DESSINÉE NARRÉE



**La revanche d'Ani Croche.** Bertrand Gauthier. Illus. Gérard Frischeteau. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1988. 89 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-078-2.

Le dernier Roman Jeunesse de Bertrand Gauthier pour la série "Ani Croche" nous présente cette fois-ci la "revanche" de l'héroïne: revanche contre Mario Brutal, l'anti-héros "macho", émule de Rambo, qui l'a humiliée devant toute sa classe en la rebaptisant Ani Crotte et en laissant entendre qu'elle est follement amoureuse de lui. Enfin, ce petit roman portant sur l'honneur menacé des jeunes dans le contexte de la cour d'école pourra amuser également les parents à

qui on offre une espèce de "catalogue" de l'univers pré-adolescent. Par le biais du journal intime, qui sert de structure au roman, chaque chapitre représentant un jour de la semaine narré par l'héroïne, apparaît en effet un amalgame intéressant de références à la fois conventionnelles et contemporaines à travers lesquelles le monde des enfants se profile avec humour.

Ainsi, si comme dans la meilleure tradition des décors enfantins, les jeux dans le grenier et la découverte de déguisements fascinent encore Ani Croche et ses amis, ce sont, par exemple, les masques de monstres qui retiendront le mieux leur attention; si les personnages de cette aventure ont aussi de la créativité à revendre, l'issue qu'ils lui trouvent est rarement gratuite: "tours pendants" pour affirmer leur position au sein du groupe, compétitions d'originalité et de drôlerie en poésie, etc.; ils sont ainsi pleins de plans, de stratégies tout en restant apeurés par la noirceur de la nuit, les douze coups de minuit; si leur lexique favori est invariablement scatologique, leurs idéaux ("du cran et de l'humour") ont peut-être varié légèrement, mais les insultes, pour relativement nouvelles que soient quelques-unes ("quétaine"), ressemblent à celles des