

mystère de la disparition de Julien – aux lois de la relativité. **Le roi de rien** et – comme jadis – **le roi des mathématiciens** deviendraient les hyperboles de la recherche, de l'affirmation de l'imagination, de l'intelligence, de la liberté. Il faut cependant rappeler que le signe choisi par Raymond Plante suggère mais n'explique pas, technique d'écriture fascinante qui laisse au lecteur la liberté de trouver divers développements symboliques possibles dans *Le Roi de rien*. Einstein est, avant tout, un perroquet qui refuse de parler et qui attend le miracle de l'amitié pour pouvoir s'ouvrir à l'univers. Ce miracle est une autre modalité de la liberté, modalité qui repose surtout sur des mythes bien connus – celui d'Ariane par exemple – et sur des symboles hautement significatifs – ceux des chiffres trois, cinq, six, dix, ceux du sang et des couleurs rouge, blanche et verte, ceux de la couronne et du coffre, enfin celui du déguisement final de Julien avant la scène de la reconnaissance par la mère. Tous ces symboles devraient faire l'objet d'une étude plus détaillée. Dans le cadre de cette analyse sommaire de l'ouvrage de Raymond Plante, nous nous contentons de signaler que ce court roman s'organise autour de catégories positives de signes qui évoluent vers une vision christique de l'univers de l'enfant. Le sang, la couronne, le coffre, la scène de la reconnaissance sont autant de signes évocateurs du mystère de la passion et de la résurrection du Christ. Julien apporte le salut à sa famille et à ses camarades et, ce qui est peut-être le plus important, il est le véhicule de la parole. Le roman se termine sous le signe de l'espoir.

Concluons en notant que le perroquet qui se met à parler est vert, couleur dont le symbolisme évoque une valeur médiatrice, rassurante, rafraîchissante, humaine. Associé au blanc – évoqué dans le roman en question par l'image de la neige – le vert qualifie l'Épiphanie et les vertus christiques, la justice du vert venant compléter l'innocence du blanc. Nous recommandons fortement à nos jeunes gens la lecture de ce roman qui, malgré son titre sans prétention, dévoile tout un univers de mystère et de symboles.

Santé A. Viselli est professeur de littérature française à l'Université de Winnipeg.

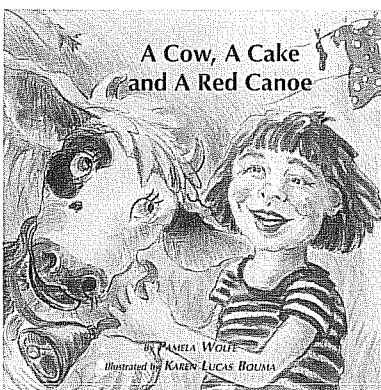
CHILDREN AS CRITICS

The bop. Irene Hunt. Illus. Tina Holdcroft. Scholastic-TAB, 1989. 32 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-73204-8; **A cow, a cake and a red canoe.** Pamela Wolfe. Illus. Karen Lucas Bouma. The Women's Press, 1989. 24 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88961-140-8; **Farmer Joe goes to the city.** Nancy Wilcox Richards. Illus. Werner Zimmerman. Scholastic-TAB, 1990. 24 pp., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-73362-1.

Recently a group of six and seven-year-olds was introduced to several new

children's books. They interacted eagerly as each story was read aloud and then freely voiced their opinions and feelings. Of those books, the following three were particular favourites.

In *The bop*, Meagan wakes up one morning singing a song which gets passed on from person to person. When one girl suggests that the song is like a contagious disease, everyone begins telling about his or her personal experiences with chicken pox, measles and pink eye. After hearing the song only a few times, the children in the group became active participants in the story. They automatically repeated the words and snapped to the rhythm. When the principal who shouts "enough of this silliness" gets caught up in doing the bop himself, the children squealed with delight, especially when he sends everyone home. By the end of the story, Meagan and her family are all bopped out; however, as she gets into bed there is the promise of more to come. We are told that she falls to sleep with a new song in her head. One boy in the group realized "the story was like a circle that never ends" and everyone agreed. They hoped it never would and begged for the story to be read again.

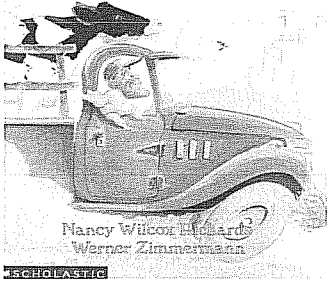


A cow, a cake and a red canoe contains black and white illustrations alternating with coloured pages. One six-year-old particularly liked this and said, "it was like magic when the colours came." While helping Grandpa hang the laundry, Tamara pulls many unusual things out of the laundry basket. Before each new item appears, the children excitedly and thoughtfully predicted what it might be. They waited eagerly as the page was turned and were pleasantly surprised when the next object was shown, whether it was a cow, a cake or a red

canoe. At the wonderful climax, a roller coaster is pulled out of the basket and everyone on the street has a ride through the starry sky. The unexpected ending was a thrill! All the children listening to the story talked about how they wished they could take a roller coaster ride before bedtime and how much fun it would be. They really believed that it was within the realm of possibility.

In *Farmer Joe goes to the city*, the children were amused by the animal that accompanies Farmer Joe on his trek to the city to find a birthday present for his wife. While listening to the story, they tried to help him by suggesting items which might be appropriate. The gift has to be red, his wife's favourite colour, and very special. Anticipation and excitement are built up when Farmer Joe finally finds the perfect gift, but it is hidden from the audience until the very last page. When it was finally revealed, the children cheered and agreed that a red computer with a red heart on it was indeed the perfect present.

Farmer Joe Goes To The City



Each of these books allowed the children to become actively involved and to use their imaginations. The stories held the interest of the audience from beginning to end and provided satisfying and enjoyable experiences which the children begged to have repeated. What better review could any book get?

Judy Willson works as a primary resource teacher in Mississauga and has a special interest in children's literature.

TEXTBOUND ON A ROCKY SHORE

Wind in my pocket. Ellen Bryan Obed, Illus. Shawn Steffler. Breakwater Books, 1990. 32 pp., \$14.95 casebound. ISBN 0-920911-74-9. **Play time.** Roger Paré, English adaptation David Homel. Annick Press, 1990, 24 pp., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-087-1. **Hickory dickory duck.** Pat Patterson, Illus. Joe Weissmann. Greey de Pencier Books, 1990. 32 pp., \$12.95. ISBN 0-919872-72-7. **The dressed up book.** Kathy Stinson, Illus. Heather Collins. Annick Press, 1990, 32 pp., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-103-7. **A silly codfish tale/Un conte en l'air d'une morue amusante.** Pat Whelan and Arlene Luke, Illus. Ronan Kennedy. Jespersen Press, 1989. 32 pp., \$7.95 paper. ISBN 9-921692-14-5. **Old Mrs. Schmatterbung and other friends.** Charles Wilkins, Illus. Victor GAD. McClelland and Stewart, 1989, 32 pp., \$9.95. ISBN 0-7710-8839-6.

Agnia Barto, a Russian poet well known in her country for her children's poetry, addressing the Fourth Symposium of the International Research Society for Children's Literature at Exeter University in England, called for illustration which would allow the child to "act," that is, come to an understanding of his own. Barto described the very different responses of primary age children to a book of her poems in editions done by two different illustrators. One poem, "The toys," contains the line, "Teddy lost his paw." One illustrator showed a teddy bear with a bandage on his arm. This elicited the remark, "The teddy bear's paw doesn't hurt, it's been pasted on and bandaged, and the teddy bear's now going to have a cup of tea." A later version showed the broken-off paw, to which one child remarked, "My little Bunny has no hair on its head, just like my Grandpa, but I'll never leave him" ("Children's responses to il-