

ception of Rumpelstiltskin is a complete success: the little man appears as a traditional dwarf, with heavy eyebrows, red pudgy cheeks, a red pointed nose, and a look of devilish merriment on his crafty face. The best illustration shows Rumpelstiltskin dancing round the blazing fire in the wintry woods brandishing a look of triumphant glee, while the Miller peers at him from a distance. However, though old men's faces are Ricci's greatest strength, his women's and children's faces have little character. In places, Elinore looks sullen, rather than sad, smug rather than triumphant, and, at times, almost masculine; the baby appears out of proportion and has no character whatsoever.

Ricci's illustrations, with their generous rich colours, ultimately simply illustrate rather than elaborate upon the text – with one curious exception. Near the end, we see the Miller holding his grandson, while the faint image of a winged creature perches on his shoulder; to his left we see parts of a wing, a hand, and the corner of a gown disappearing. Nothing in the text explains this image. We must decide for ourselves whether these ghostly creatures represent the Miller's good or bad angels. Although the rest of the illustrations do not quite provide the "originality of vision" Sendak stresses as the most important quality of a true picture book artist, this one instance of the inexplicable shows promise.

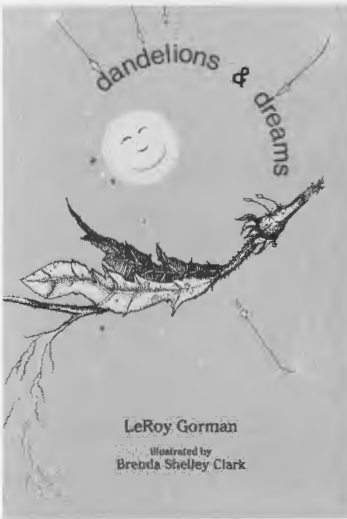
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RECENT ILLUSTRATED VERSE

Dandelions and dreams. LeRoy Gorman. Illus. Brenda Shelley Clark. Moonstone Press, 1990. 76 pp., \$8.95. ISBN 0-920259-26-X; **Mrs. Kitchen's cats.** Ken Ward. Illus. author. Annick Press, 1990. 46 pp., \$8.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-107-X; **Pass the poems please.** Jane Baskwill. Illus. Kathy R. Kaulbach. Wildthings Press, 1989, 32 pp., ISBN 0-929065-00-X.

Every new illustrated book of verse reminds this reviewer of the myriad difficulties posed by the form. Does the illustration swamp the text? When are black and white just right? Do text and illustration induce changes in each other that are more damaging than helpful? Has an illustrator more right to take liberties with mere verse than with a poem? What is the difference between verse and poetry anyway? What can we say about concrete poems which in a sense illustrate themselves?

All of these factors and more enter into any judgment one makes about the three recent books considered here. None of the three is likely to survive the ravages of time, but it is unfair to expect that. All are done in black and white,



and this betokens wisdom on someone's part. Some of the finest books of poetry for children are among the most restrained in illustration. (Consider for example, the "small poem" books of Valerie Worth, illustrated by Natalie Babbitt.) Not all black and white is restrained, of course, but at its subtle best it can present a calm accompaniment to the text's melodic line.

Gorman's works are organized into three categories. "Rougher than rough" contains poems on some of the unpleasant aspects of life from zits to drowned kittens. A few of these skirt dangerously close to didacticism. Many, though, are sensitive little poems. "Seeing things in my haiku" presents visual statements which are dubious as haiku, but fun to ponder, sometimes very challenging. The best show cleverness in their simplicity; for example, one printed in the middle of a page in a perfectly square shape in boxy sans-serif type that says "in this icecube the sun on fire." The third group, "Weirder than word," includes puzzles like "fall by numbers," and visual poems like this bird item:

))))h)))mm)))ngb)))rd

The illustrator has happily left most of these to show off themselves. Overall, the book, despite some obscurities perhaps beyond many child readers, is an intelligent work done with artistry.

Ken Ward's *Mrs. Kitchen's cats* is bound to please children. Ward shows a gift for nonsense verse which he offers up with exuberance: "a kid and a fish/were walking to school/ the fish made a wish/for a dip in a pool/ the kid made a wish/ for a sky full of rain/ **surely there's something wrong with his brain.** Ducks, and clothes, shadows and rainbows are the stuff of Ward's verses, which rhyme and possess delightful rhythm. The author's silly sketches, abundant but not overdrawn, are about as fine as his silly verses.

Sometimes the two are visually integrated into a unit such as "alexander the great was never late/ he ate all the veggies upon his plate" in which the text forms a plate on which rest a fork and knife. One cannot help but wonder again whether something special happens when author and illustrator are one and the same. Certainly this is a special book.

Baskwill's book, or is it Kaulbach's book, offers us both merit and problems. Perhaps for such a small book it attempts too much. The contents page lists thirteen themes, but none is represented by more than three poems, almost half by only two. The poems are written with assurance and skill in conventional rhymes, rhythms, stanzas. But one reads them with the feeling that this has already been said. "Open a book" says, much less originally, what Emily Dickinson said so well so long ago. The title poem says well what Eve Merriam said much more vividly in "How to eat a poem." The poems, though, are very well composed and will speak to a child. Teachers who sincerely want children to love poetry will find this a helpful book. The illustrator, working in scratch-board and ink, has provided at the bottom of every page visual hints for extension activities which children could do. Kaulbach's illustration does not stop here, though: she also provides large black pictures which are arresting, sharp, lively, and assured. But they are too much for the understated verse. The smaller illustrations at the bottoms of the pages might have been enough.

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THE MARGARET TRILOGY

A place for Margaret. Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1984. 151 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73665-5; **Margaret in the middle.** Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1986. 149 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73666-3; **Margaret on her way.** Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1988. 140 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73667-1.

The author of the delightful Booky stories returns to Depression-era Ontario to bring us five years in the life of another lively young heroine in the Margaret Trilogy. After positive TB test, eleven-year-old Margaret Emerson is sent for a restorative summer to the Shelburne area farm of her childless aunt and uncle. Circumstances

