than the fish are worth. Gang-gang becomes obsessed with finding silver coins to end his family's poverty. He calls on the river for help, and one moonlit night sees the water covered with thousands of silver coins. (One does wonder how a boy who has spent all his life near the river could be so easily fooled by light glittering on water.) Frantically Gang-gang casts his net and draws it in, only to find it empty. His desperate plunge into the water to scoop up the coins in his hands almost leads to tragedy when he is swept downriver. Only as he recovers does Gang-gang realize he must begin to cast his net for fish, not for elusive silver coins. He is then able to appreciate his true relationship with the river, and to take his place as one of the wage-earners of the family. The story's point that hard work is of greater value than luck is made rather baldly, yet the final solution is satisfying because it comes from Gang-gang himself.

All three illustrators bring a realistic style to stories that hint at the invisible magic of life. Alice Priestley's colourful illustrations in *Roses for Gita* focus on Gita and the bright flowers she loves. Priestley's plants surge with life, breaking through the boundaries of the pictures' frames just as Gita's friendship breaks through the boundaries that divide her and Mr. Flinch. Karen Rezuch's illustrations similarly focus on the abundance of nature, and her fairies — beautiful, glowing children of many ages and races — are realistic enough to be believable. Ken Campbell's paintings play with a number of intriguing perspectives to suggest much about the connections between Gang-gang and his parents and the river.

All three of these stories hint at the special nature of the relationship between humans and the natural world. Nature can be a friend, and can even draw humans closer to each other; but it can also be an implacable foe. *River My Friend* is the most overt and moralistic in this regard, and is less successful than the others in making its point gracefully.

These picture books all suggest that even ordinary lives can be touched by the extraordinary. Beneath the everyday layer of existence lies a kind of magic waiting to reveal new ways of seeing the world.

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*Joanne Findon is the author of The **Dream of Aengus** and **Auld Lang Syne**, both illustrated by Tolkien artist Ted Nasmith, as well as several short stories for young adults.*

Mini-Reviews

Recipes for Magic

Pizza for Breakfast. Maryann Kovalski. Kids Can, 1990. 32 pp. $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55074-152-7.

Pizza for Breakfast proves that a children's book can successfully employ adult protagonists. Frank and Zelda, the proprietors of a pizza restaurant, are

endearingly human with their tired feet, bulging waistlines, grumpy moments and consoling hugs.

A fairy tale with a cleverly modern flavour, this book reworks the theme of being careful of what one wishes for, in case the wish should actually come true. Frank and Zelda, who "were happy even though they didn't know it at the time," resort to magic to improve their circumstances. Their wishes are granted by a "little man" — a genie figure who is humorously understated in both text and illustrations. Magic leads Frank and Zelda through a series of catastrophes. Finally realizing that they need a rational plan, they create their own solution and achieve happiness again. "And this time, they knew it."

Frank and Zelda have realized that magic is not always what it seems, that they are empowered to create their own happiness or misery, and that happiness is more a state of mind than a set of circumstances. Their trials and tribulations awaken our empathy, and delightfully harmonious illustrations bring the couple to life. Kovalski's book withstands frequent rereading, and lodges in the mind as a "good story."

Troon Harrison is completing a BEd at Queens. She writes picture books and poetry.

Revenge of the Small Small. Jean Little. Illus. Janet Wilson. Pengui, 1992, 1995. Unpag. $6.99 paper. ISBN 0-14-055563-43.

In this picture-book aimed at beginning readers, Jean Little unobtrusively draws upon her own childhood to relate how her youngest sister dramatically taught her older siblings, including herself, a lesson about respect. With the same sensitivity she brings to her novels, here she shows how cruel and thoughtless older children can be to the youngest. Patsy is depicted as a caring and thoughtful child and the child reader identifies with her perspective, no matter whether she or he has siblings or not. Similarly, the poetic justice of Patsy's revenge is appealing to the child since it is the logical outcome of a steady build-up of frustration. The inclusion of the father's loving support of her action is reassuring for the child.

The occasional three-fold repetition of comments by all three siblings lends a lyrical aspect to the brief text. The details which are included such as the contents of the box and the construction of the village are significant to the child and these are enhanced by the vivid illustrations. The double-page layout of "THE SMALL TOWN" is compelling: here, materials are included which are not mentioned in the text — notably the cotton-ball smoke from the chimneys. The final twist of the plot is effectively presented in the illustrations alone.

Jacqueline Reid-Walsh teaches in the Faculty of Education at McGill University and publishes in the areas of children's literature.