

phie éryméeenne retrouve une fraîcheur absente de la série Argus. Ces récits reposant sur le postulat que les humains du vingtième siècle sont incapables d'assurer la survie de leur espèce sans aide extérieur, nous y voyions évoluer une armée d'anges gardiens effectuant de louables missions avec l'aide de quelques initiés.

Aussi bien *la Nef dans les nuages* est-il le plus optimiste des romans de Sernine. Alors que le Bien ne peut venir que d'extraterrestres dans la série de science-fiction et que les forces du Mal dominent la série historico-fantastique, ce roman à la croisée des deux démarches semble offrir une chance aux jeunes hommes et aux jeunes femmes de bonne volonté.

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#### TELLING REPETITION

**Sam and the tigers.** Allen Morgan. Illus. Christina Farmilo. Oasis Press, 1990. Unpag., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-895092-00-0; **Malcolm's runaway soap.** Jo Ellen Bogart. Illus. Linda Hendry. Scholastic-TAB, 1988. 30 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71356-6.

A recently rediscovered trunkful of popular children's books from the '50s leads me to conclude that authors of that period thought we youngsters were a trifle thick and needed constant reminding in our stories of what had happened on the previous page. Repetition was rife in those books, both in plot and as a stylistic device, and it tended to be tedious – or, at least, it appears so now, to the adult eye rereading old favourites.

In *Sam and the tigers*, Allen Morgan uses repetition to much greater effect, in a style reminiscent of oral tradition. The arrivals of each of three tigers at Sam's house on the boy's fifth birthday are described in exactly the same language (at exactly the same place on the last page), except that each new tiger is bigger and more demanding than the last. The repetition helps build the story's tension so that when the third tiger appears, we know he will be truly frightful and Sam truly scared.

Sam resolves his tiger problem in a way that suggests repetition of a different nature. He borrows from Max of *Where the wild things are* to stare at the tigers with his dangerous eyes "without stopping once for a moment to blink" and, like Little Black Sambo, he reduces his wild things to butter.

The repetition in Jo Ellen Bogart's *Malcolm's runaway soap* is more in the plot than the telling, and thus less successful than Morgan's usage. Malcolm's

strawberry soap escapes from the bath and "pops" from one place to the next through town before finally settling on a toy sailboat in the city hall fountain. Bogart has the soap pop in a great variety of places, and she writes in nice descriptive detail about each one, but by the fifth or sixth escape of the soap a feeling of *déjà vu* creeps in. The ending is fine, however – one which will appeal to the child's love of public nudity.

And this is a great looking book. Linda Hendry's slightly whimsical illustrations are full of life and detail (almost as good as an Ahlberg picture, and that's high praise). She creates movement by including at the edge of several drawings a hint as to where the soap will land next, causing the reader's eye to move across the page and her hand to turn it. Text and illustrations balance in a pleasing symmetry, a sign that someone at Scholastic thought hard about the design of this book.

The same cannot be said for *Sam and the tigers*. Christina Farmilo's somewhat wooden illustrations bleed off the page as though cut at random. The black and white drawings above the text add to the feeling of busyness created by the large boldface type set with ragged edge. There is no white space, no rest. Tiger paws splash across the title page and two Tiger Butter labels fall out the back. And oddly, given that this is the first publication of Morgan's own Oasis Press, the book looks very much like a production of his former publisher, Annick Press, from shape and cover design right down to the author and illustrator photos on the back. With "complete control," why settle for repetition?

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#### WHAT ABOUT COMBINING A MONSTER AND A DAD, OR A FISH AND A FOETUS?

**A monster in my cereal.** Marie-Francine Hébert. Illus. Philippe Germain. Second Story Press, 1990. 54 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-92005-12-0; **The amazing adventure of LittleFish.** Marie-Francine Hébert. Illus. Darcia Labrosse. Second Story Press, 1990. 24 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-92005-15-5.

**A monster in my cereal**, offers a familiar plot fairly cleverly reworked. Poppy (age not stated) is left in Dad's care for two days. A monster, not *in* her cereal, but *on* the box, comes to life and listens to her complaints about her selfish father. Poppy blurts out three wishes. She adds a fourth: "Sometimes I wish I didn't even have a father!" The monster grants the first three, then disappears. Dad's nature is changed. What can Poppy do before Dad vanishes? The short, final chapter puts all right. Poppy confides in the reader: "You probably think I made this all up, or that it was only a dream. So do I!" A misleading confi-