

on time, he sacrifices his hopes of success when he helps an old man cross the street. The old man rewards him with a magic cart, a modern equivalent to the flying carpet that moves very fast on command. Rory makes his sacrifice with no expectation of reward; he operates according to the principle of love rather than that of self-service as in *The day the fairies went on strike*. He is never late for school again. The principle of helping others continues. The old man finances Rory's time at college so that he can become a doctor, on condition that Rory do likewise for another in the future. And the cart is passed on generation by generation to a succession of short-legged MacPhees. Mystery, adventure, and momentary tragedy make this a solid, good story too; it is not merely a vehicle for moralizing. Some complaint, however, ought to be made about the illustrations, which are in a child's style and appear condescending. A child of eight or more would feel this to be so, those younger perhaps not. All in all, though, this is a gem, combining entertainment with instruction and, for those developing reading skills, sketching their capacity a little.

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#### FOUR MORAL TALES

*Dusty*, Ellen Schwarz. Illus. Ann Swanson Gross. Solstice Books, 1983. 24 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-919569-02-1; *Don't dilly dally dear*, Joan Vowles. Illus. C. Elizabeth Baker. Lyndon House Publishing, 1981. 29 pp. 3.25 paper. ISBN 0-920948-04-9; *Angelina and her friend Georgio the squirrel*, Gabrielle Kirschbaum. Illus. Rosemary Kenny. Borealis Press, 1979. 8 pp. paper. ISBN 0-88887-036-1; *A cart full of strays*, Lue McNamee. Illus. Terry McNamee. Pegasus Publishing, Ltd., 38 pp. \$4.50 cloth. ISBN 0-919566-67-7.

There is a distinguished tradition in children's literature from which these four books noticeably depart. All four read as if the authors have decided to write a book to demonstrate that it is wrong to dawdle, wrong to tell lies, and so on. This is very laudable but a moralising tale needs skillful handling, and should be avoided by authors with little talent for the trade. I note that two were written by school teachers. These four books impress me as formless, burdened with long paragraphs, slang, and bad illustrations.

*Dusty* is the story of young girl's obsession with a bicycle. The story is set in Denmark; it rambles tediously on until the girl is told she may not take her

bicycle back home to Vancouver. Much is made of a very little plot, and this leanness is not offset by the illustrations, which, although lavish and colourful, suffer from an odd and unconvincing perspective, and from the graceless and misshapen figures of the adults, their sinister faces, and the surrealist flavour of so many of them. In one picture the characters appear to be seated on vertical carpet. In another, the child is seated on a chair and the mother appears to be sitting on the floor. Even the face of the child has a sinister cast, and a decidedly adult face. The general effect is unpleasant.

*Don't dilly dally dear* is intended for beginners, and the general concept is an excellent one for this age group. A small boy is exhorted not to dally on the way home from school. He does so and arrives home at the same time as his mother, who was also dallying. There are endless possibilities in such a theme, especially in the illustrations, but these chances are thrown away. The illustrations, which could make the book, are very badly drawn. One wonders what a child would make of the blobs that are attached to the child's body when he is watching the ants.

The last sentence ("We smiled at each other . . .") is a comment no child would make. It certainly does not support the extravagant claim that this is "an appealing true-to-life tale with a warm ending." It has no obvious connection with what has gone before, and argues a certain sloppiness.

*Angelina and her friend Georgio the squirrel* is a slight story about a small girl who has made friends with a squirrel and tries to speak to it in Italian. The squirrel is frightened away by the class mischief-maker who mocks Angelina for speaking to it in her native tongue. Her father reassures her in a round-about way and on a level that seems out of keeping in a children's story. They offer the squirrel some nuts and it returns, thus confuting the maxim of her father that love is the only language you need for friendship. If the moral is concerned with the value of knowing more than one language it is ineptly handled and would pass unnoticed by most children.

The book has been published with the assistance of two grants. It has been badly printed, apparently to keep cost to a minimum, and would have been improved if the cover had not been printed on such a bilious green stock. The drawings are crude and amateurish.

The title of *A cart full of strays* is an attractive one that no pony-mad girl could resist. On the whole this is a pleasant enough tale of a young girl who sets off with her pony and cart for the fair, hoping to win first prize. On the way she picks up various passengers. They have a few adventures and she arrives late for the fair and thus spoils her chance of winning first prize. The aim of the plot is to show what is really important in life and what is not, and the illustrations are well chosen.

Since the story is intended to carry a moral the deliberate use of slang and slovenly language should have been avoided. Expressions like "wow," "super," "real mean" and "sure wouldn't" are entirely out of place. This will date the

book very quickly. The very large type face suggests that it is intended to be read by a beginning reader, but the nature of the prose suggests that it is intended for a much older reader.

I am really concerned that I cannot write anything pleasant about these books. I know how much effort goes, or should go, into writing anything. I must add that I showed these books to two artists, one teacher, one professional writer, one mother, and assorted children, and they ALL turned thumbs down.

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## LA MYSTIQUE DE L'ESPRIT D'ENFANCE

***Seuls les enfants ne meurent pas***, Marcel-Charles Roy. Photographies de Paul Lapointe. Montréal, Leméac, 1982. 81 pp. 6,50\$ broché. ISBN 2-7609-9976-9.

Ce touchant récit est un message, presque un poème unique en son genre. Comme le disent fort justement James et Jo Ellen Bogart: "Nurturing a child's appreciation of the natural world is a noble aim and a joyous task." (*Lighting the spark*, p. 54 de CCL, 29) Mais Marcel-Charles Roy ajoute à cette tâche une nouvelle dimension, qui transcende les valeurs d'ailleurs réelles, décrites dans *Lighting the spark*.

Yéarim, ce petit enfant qui "sommeille dans le coeur de chacun de nous" . . . est émerveillé par les beautés de la nature, beautés que lui ont fait connaître et aimer ses parents et ses professeurs. D'eux, il a appris également que Dieu est le Créateur de toutes ces belles choses dont il est entouré, qu'Il est la Lumière du monde, et dès lors Yéarim Lui a voué tout son amour. Il sera le serviteur de Dieu-Amour et de l'Espérance à travers un monde trop souvent ravagé par la haine et la guerre. A l'école, Yéarim a appris, entre autres choses, que Jésus-Christ est mort en croix par amour pour lui et pour nous tous. La terrible souffrance de Jésus-Crucifié déchire le coeur de son jeune disciple.

L'auteur rejoint ici la pensée de Charles Péguy dans le *Mystère de la Charité*: "Qu'est-ce qu'Il (Jésus-Christ) avait donc fait à tout le monde (pour être ainsi maltraité) . . . Je vais vous le dire: Il avait sauvé le monde . . ." (*Oeuvres poétiques*, p. 457.)

Puisque "les grandes personnes" agissent trop souvent en égoïstes et en irresponsables, Yéarim décide de ne plus vieillir, de garder son âme d'enfant,