

However, the perspicacious child will find interesting anomalies in looking at this farm and thinking about farms in Canada. In the book, the roofs are tiled and iguanas crawl on the sides of whitewashed buildings. Water is collected in open reservoirs, and, in the farm kitchen, the television sits on top of the refrigerator. In reading the pictures, I became confused, because I was expecting either a Canadian farm or a "universal" farm from this Canadian publisher, and these pictures were clearly of a farm in a poor but warm country. I scurried to the reviewer information from the publisher, which announced that the series was developed in Spain. Spain? If this is a Spanish book, why is it not acknowledged outright, (Spanish farms are certainly as interesting as any others), rather than being described as a "... book, without words, for young children to have fun with familiar objects and daily activities." There are many objects here quite unfamiliar to our children. This is no problem. But why is Annick doing this when there are wonderful Canadian illustrators available, and storymakers crying to be published?

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MOTHER GOOSE WOULD HAVE LIKED BP NICHOL

Giants, moosequakes & other disasters, bp Nichol. Illus. Maureen Paxton. Black Moss Press, 1985. 36 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-131-8.

This collection of 22 verses contains some characters who are bound to become household favourites. Sockless Sarah, for example, who

doesn't like her clothes
If she could do without them
She'd take off her toes
and get rid of her eyebrows
her chin and all her hair
and dance from dusk till dawn in
her almost nothing there.

Or Sally Snorefoot, who lives in a counting rhyme. She doesn't like to get up in the morning ("7 foot 8 foot/ Sally's got a latefoot. . ."). She sleeps through the schoolbell and is still abed when a giant commences to trample all the houses in the town. As he nears Sally's place he hears her "counting like a fool: / '9 foot 10 foot/ I should have been in school.'" Tardy though she may be, our Sal is an admirable stoic.

Giants, moosequakes & other disasters is a reissue of Nicol's first book for children, *Moosequakes & other disasters*. This new collection presents some of his more popular lyrics, plus some new verses, all suitable for children between

the ages of four and ten. All lend themselves best to oral reading, so that good advantage can be taken of the rollicking metre which has characterized the most enduring and popular children's verse from *Mother Goose* to *Alligator pie*. "De Gubbuda Buggada", for example, is a wonderful chant built around waking Daddy up:

De gubbuda buggada beep
my daddy's still asleep

De gubbuda buggada bake
I wonder when he'll wake

By line 8, the little fellow just can't wait any longer and decides to "wake my daddy up/ de gubbada buggada pup". These frisky verses appeal to every child's love of secret languages, as well as to his natural passion for incantation.

Some of the verses are rather less successful. They contain many parenthetical inserts and occasionally strain to complete a rhyme or fill out the rhyme. And for other readers who, like this reviewer, lift their hats to correct usage, some phrases are too jarring to be overlooked, even in the general bonhomie of verses like "Ear":

'... If you'd come and play that'd be real swell
that'd be real swell
that'd be real swell!

Spelling matters too, most especially in poetry which depends for its effect on purposeful alternate spellings or typographical display. We must be able, literally, to take the poet at his word. In "The Haunting of Cockroach & Tim", line 6 delivers us "wierd". *Weird* I am familiar with, but the stalwart *Oxford English Dictionary*, tells me that *wierd* appeared as a noun from 1654 to 1889, denoting a person thought to be a forese'er of the future; *wierd* also served a spell as a verb, meaning to warn, as in Jamieson's *Popular ballads* of 1866: "I wierd ye, gangna there!" But in all this dark history, ne'er has *wierd* manifested itself in adjectival form as offered by Nichol. So we conclude that "wierd" is not a special little surprise packet of fun. It's simply misspelled. And while one typesetting fatality may not count for much, it shakes the trust we place in the author. If he puts words in funny places, or dislocates their orthography, he does so to provoke some fresh fusion or vision. It's a good old trick of the trade, and one which is especially effective in poetry. But the writer mustn't let us down, even a little bit.

And apart from these little bits (and small crimes they are), *Giants, moose-quakes & other disasters* is a jolly collection to put on your shelf. There is a satisfying range of subjects and treatments (chants, narrations, lyrics), as well as a great variety in the length of the pieces: some are nifty little *ripostes*, while others are a good sit-down. Some offer detail, introspection and sophistica-

tion; these will appeal to older children. For the toddlers, the nonsense verses will serve well to prime their ears to language and their minds to playfulness. The large coloured illustrations wrap comfortably around the verses, offering graphic embellishment. The Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council are behind the production of this book, and it represents a substantial addition to the growing body of Canadian children's verse.

Carol Munro taught children's literature for many years. She has written and broadcast on children's books, and is currently translating a recent anthology of Peruvian Children's Literature.

L'HUMOUR EN COIN

La chenille à poil et autres contes, Réjane Charpentier. Illus. Elaine Despins. Montréal, Héritage, 1984. 128 pp. 4,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-7625-4443-2.

La maison Héritage a publiée depuis quelques années plusieurs titres qui plaisent aux enfants. Grâce à leur présentation; soit le format, la longueur des textes, la grosseur des caractères ainsi que les titres, ils se sont fait des lecteurs assidus. "La chenille à poil" s'intègre donc à cette approche. Ce livre compte huit histoires de longueurs variées. Les titres sont "La chenille à poil," "Le petit éléphant gris," "Pissenlit," "Les moustiques," "La bille de grand-père," "Alexis dans la nuit," "Dans un nuage noir," "C'est ça l'hiver." La progression des textes est courte au début, pour culminer au centre, puis il y a un décroscendo. Cette façon de procéder de l'auteure permet aux jeunes lecteurs qui lisent ce type de livre pour la première fois de ne pas paniquer à la lecture. Le thème qui domine est celui des animaux. On les retrouve dans toutes les nouvelles, au premier plan ou au second plan, pour accentuer les aventures "humaines." Un autre aspect important est "l'affrontement," si on peut le qualifier ainsi, du monde de l'enfant et celui du monde adulte, et ce aussi bien quand les personnages principaux sont "des animaux," que lorsqu'ils sont de vrais enfants.

Si on analyse chacune des nouvelles nous verrons mieux l'explication des remarques ci-haut mentionnées. La première histoire donne d'ailleurs son titre au livre: *La chenille à poil*. L'entrée en matière m'a semblé laborieuse à cause du passage trop rapproché de divers temps de conjugaison. On passe du passé au présent un peu trop souvent, en très peu de phrases, ce qui rend l'approche pénible. Passé cette embûche, le reste m'a emportée. Le style coulant et entraînant, nous fait vivre avec humour l'aventure de cette petite chenille. Celle-ci voudrait pouvoir changer de peau comme les grands et gros, mais elle ne le peut jamais car les "imposants" personnages l'empêchent, ils ne laissent jamais rien d'intéressant aux petits. Elle trouve enfin un bon moyen. On découvre