

mentales. En effet, Bijou se distingue par ses dons: il peut flairer l'or, d'où son omniprésence dans le récit. Mais il ne sert pas qu'à incarner jusqu'à l'absurde l'avidité des Français; il va acquérir une valeur idéologique exemplaire. Les chiens figurent au menu des Indiens, ce qui explique, chez le cabot de Cartier, une peur et une méfiance salutaires à l'égard de ces derniers. Et nos terreurs, séculaires, refont surface à travers ce malheureux chien: sous l'Indien, le Sauvage; et derrière le Sauvage, le Cannibale. Nous voilà donc exonérés de la tentation du racisme, puisque le chien, seul, va subir la nature de l'Indien. Et le lecteur ne verra pas qu'à Cartier, longiligne et rusé, s'oppose Donnacona, courtaud, grassouillet et fourbe; qu'au costume des Français répond la nudité implicite des indigènes, etc.

Nul doute qu'un enfant de dix ans prendra "un plaisir extrême" à cette bande dessinée. Puisse-t-il, à l'instar de Jacques Noël, à refaire le périple de Cartier et découvrir son Histoire, l'histoire ambivalente de la Fondation. A cette condition, L'or du Canada, simple "pyrite de cuivre", vaut l'achat.

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AMERICA AS BONBON

Uncle Jacob's ghost story, Donn Kushner. Macmillan, 1984. 132 pp. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7715-9806-8.

C.S. Lewis once called children's stories "the best art-form for something you have to say." Unfortunately, Lewis' remark has reached those whose grim duty it is to flog new books for children; hence, season after season, the guarantees festooning dust jackets, promising "universal themes," and pledging "appeal to readers of all ages." On rare occasions the promise is justified. We are assured, for example, that *Uncle Jacob's ghost story* is such a book; and — *pace*, honest cynicism — it is certainly true that Donn Kushner (whose *The violin maker's gift* won the Canadian Library Association's 1980 Book of the Year for Children award) has now given us another novel worthy of serious attention.

Uncle Jacob's ghost story deals with our idealism and our desire for power, and with the gulf dividing our glorious vision of what might be from the sordid fact of what is. The author brings these themes home through the story of Paul's Uncle Jacob. Eager to know more about the man denounced by his relatives as a "completely impractical person" who "went his own way... the family disgrace", Paul learns of his uncle's early life in a village in Poland, and of his two stage-struck friends, Simon and Esther, who dream of acting careers in New York. Jacob too dreams of America, and after watching some Cossacks

exercising their ingenuity on three old men he longs for America a land "where the soldiers don't make the old men dance". Simon and Esther die in a typhus epidemic; Jacob emigrates to New York. At his newstand in Times Square, he meets two street musicians, who turn out to be the ghosts of Simon and Esther (for bodies they use mannikins, stolen from Macy's). Jacob's friends are actors still; now they perform in the streets, offering wry and incisive commentary on American mores. Jacob refuses their invitation to join them until he sees mounted police brutally clear the Square of a crowd of the poor and the hungry. Then he dies, his lost hopes for America tempered by his reunion with those he loves.

There is much to commend and enjoy in *Uncle Jacob's ghost story*. Its sense of humour is robust but subtle. Jacob's disillusionment with his chosen land is handled delicately and — mercifully — altogether without stridency. Furthermore, the novel's anatomy of America-as-Bonbon is part of a larger inquiry into our dreams and our limitations. Power is most emphatically not the answer to our problems; Simon and Esther know so much more now than they knew when they were alive and thought the actor's magic could change the world — but now they also know how weak they really are, their powers restrained by inexorable law.

Finally, then, the best thing about *Uncle Jacob's ghost story* is the way in which it honours Jacob's dream without succumbing to a chic cynicism or a cheap assurance that the dream must some day be realized in this world. It deserves praise too for its refusal to confuse worldly prosperity with spiritual maturity. In the eyes of society, those of its characters who truly possess moral integrity look like hopeless failures, like Jacob, who "never had to meet a payroll" and consorted with "street people." In adroit puncturing of our smug assumptions, *Uncle Jacob's ghost story* has much to offer thoughtful readers. **William Blackburn** teaches in the English Department at the University of Calgary. He is the author of numerous articles on Renaissance literature, children's literature, and East-West literary relations.

DREAMS AND DAYDREAMS: THE CONTROL OF FANTASY WORLDS

Busy nights, Gail Chislett. Illus. Barbara Di Lella. Annick Press, 1985. 22 pp. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-920303-20-X, 0-920303-22-6; ***Christopher and the dream dragon***, Allen Morgan. Illus. Brenda Clark. Kids Can Press, 1984. 30 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919964-60-5; ***There's an alligator under my bed!***, Gail E. Gill. Illus. Veronika Martenova Charles. Three Trees Press, 1984. 24 pp. \$11.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88823-087-7, 0-88823-089-3; ***Brendan, Morgan and the best ever cloud machine***, Gerrem Evans. Illus.