

poésie qui transforme tout. Certes, les ornements poétiques ne manquent pas: la mer, le soleil, les oiseaux. Mais, surtout, les paroles du vieux pêcheur sont toutes empreintes d'une chaude poésie, celle du coeur qui perçoit la profonde harmonie cosmique. Dès lors, tout est correspondance et les scènes se répondent les unes aux autres depuis l'apparition de la colombe à la première page du récit jusqu'à l'image finale du grand oiseau blanc. Vocabulaire, images, symboles créent une atmosphère subtilement poétique et finalement sereine qui voile le mélodrame.

La philosophie que nous venons d'évoquer est empreinte d'une sagesse transmise par toute une tradition philosophique et mystique, assez éclectique d'ailleurs et plus sentimentale que logique, enseignant l'unité et l'harmonie du monde, prêchant la compréhension et le respect d'autrui, la solidarité des hommes, la bonté, l'interdiction de juger son prochain, la confiance dans l'imagination et dans le coeur, et surtout le retour aux sources.

Émouvant, poétique, riche de bons sentiments, *L'Oiseau-Douceur* est écrit dans une belle langue, souple, chargée d'images. L'auteur fait habilement alterner dialogues familiers, formules didactiques et envolées lyriques.

Les illustrations, surtout celle de la couverture, détails que l'auteur a tirés de toiles peintes par Marthe MacLeod, sans références particulières à tel ou tel point du récit, contribuent à l'atmosphère ambiguë du conte.

Voilà beaucoup de bonnes qualités qui feront oublier facilement quelques défauts véniels, tels que mots trop difficiles pour de jeunes lectrices, incorrections, impropriétés, images étrangement précieuses. Ces réserves faites, les qualités mêmes de l'oeuvre pourraient lui nuire. À sentiment, pour apprécier la poésie et le message de *L'Oiseau-Douceur*, il faut un goût déjà formé, un esprit relativement mur, ouvert aux autres, et une imagination encore très vive. Bref, je ne conseillerais la lecture de ce beau conte qu'à des jeunes de quatorze à seize ans, capables de s'émuvoir aux scènes édifiantes de Greuze et de s'émerveiller devant le symbolisme de Chagall.

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THREE GOOD BOOKYS

As ever, Booky, Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic-TAB, 1985. 153 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71547-X.

In the second chapter of Bernice Thurman Hunter's third "Booky" novel,

Lucy Maud Montgomery turns up. Her presence is apt. Hunter's novel is watermarked, franked and registered Canadian in a way still rare enough to be cherished. And her heroine, Beatrice, Bea or "Booky", is distinctly Anne-ish, spilling over with words and enthusiasm, making her mother apprehensive with her "Guess what, Mum?" much as Anne gives Marilla Cuthbert palpitations with her quaint ideas. Booky visits the great writer at her Toronto mansion as Bernice Hunter herself did, to receive tea with cream in it, pink iced cakes ("I had never tasted anything so delectable") and advice on being a writer.

With this novel the series about Booky is complete, and full and satisfying it is. Mrs. Hunter has drawn extensively on her own experiences in the Toronto of the Depression years; indeed, the book is illustrated with what appear to be her family photographs, making the reader wonder just how closely Beatrice mirrors Bernice, and whether there was, really, an "Uptown Nuthouse" visited by everyone who mattered in Toronto, from Ernie the shoeshine boy to John David Eaton himself. The sense of place and time is absorbing, authentic (and light years away), with silk stockings and worship of Deanna Durbin, red-hot curling tongs and saddle shoes. It is a world where the fifteen-year-old Booky must sleep as one of three in a bed, where a chicken is hung on the clothes line to freeze solid in a potato sack, where Booky ships off her precious manuscript in a cut-off brown paper bag for an envelope and the word "university" is never mentioned. Life is hard, but the worst happens off-stage; optimism and vitality dominate, and humour takes the edge off the horrors. After RoyRoy's funeral, instead of inviting the adults home, his mother takes all the neighbourhood kids, in the long black limousine, to the ice-cream parlour. Next day she moves away from the district, taking nothing with her.

Hunter's third novel maintains the standard set by the two, and the series as a whole provides some of the best realistic/historical novels for the middle age range that we have. (They deserve a hardback edition.) If there is a kind of nostalgia about *As ever, Booky*, it is the best kind: you turn away from Booky's past with a renewed sense of just how much there is to be got out of the present. Booky, or Bernice, has lived the life most of us live, but she caught it going by. In the leatherbound diary with a key, bought for Booky by her friends and embossed with her name in gold, the diary that became this novel, she celebrates the richness and variety of life. Even in the drabness and poverty of Depression-era Toronto it is eminently worth living. L.M. Montgomery would have been proud of her.

Judith Terry teaches children's literature at the University of Victoria. Her first novel, for adults, Miss Abigail's part, or, version & diversion has been