

découverte en découverte. De plus, l'art de la brièveté ajoute à plusieurs événements un certain piquant. Citons à titre d'exemple la conclusion du chapitre 5 où, au lieu de s'attarder à décrire les blessures causées par le cactus, l'auteur se contente de constater: "Les passagers encore étourdis sont évacués un à un de l'avion, tantôt sur leurs pieds, tantôt sur une civière" (24). Au lecteur alors de faire preuve d'imagination.

C'est souvent au moyen de dialogues animés que l'auteur nous fait part des aventures de Gontrand. Cette conversation prise sur le vif montre d'ailleurs que l'auteur a l'oreille fine. Il saisit les accents de la mère exaspérée: "Gontrand, as-tu vu l'état de ta chambre? C'est un véritable dépotoir!" (35) et le gazouillement du petit frère: "zé tout arrosé ce que t'as dit. Zé vidé tout le rosoir. . . zé rien renversé sur le plansé" (37); l'hôtesse de l'air se caractérise par ses recommandations habituelles, "Attachez vos ceintures, éteignez vos cigarettes" (32) et le chef de police par ses phrases ampoulées, "Mon petit Gontrand, tu as accompli un travail magnifique dont l'humanité entière profitera sous peu" (69).

Mais, malgré la vraisemblance du dialogue, ce qui domine dans cette courte histoire, c'est la fantaisie et le rire. Ainsi le cactus monstrueux, qui pousse sans fin sous l'effet de la limonade et qui n'est maté que par son allergie au carton, relève-t-il tout bonnement du burlesque. Et le ton volontiers laconique ou ironique rend amusants des événements en apparence graves. Ce sera enfin grâce à Gontrand, le "dompteur de cactus," que la catastrophe éventuelle se transformera en une "bénédiction," capable de sauver "des milliers de vies humaines" (69)! Bravo, Gontrand le conquérant, plus puissant et plus intelligent que les adultes!

Que peut-on augurer de ce premier roman composé par un garçon de onze ans? Jean-Thierry Bourque a su employer tous les ingrédients d'un bon récit: intrigue bien tissée, pleine de suspens et d'imagination; variété de techniques littéraires et de registres; ton humoristique. Bref, il a fait preuve dans ce roman d'un talent précoce qui laisse présager une belle carrière d'écrivain.

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EVALUATING PICTURE BOOKS

Borrowed black: A Labrador fantasy. Ellen Bryan Obed. Illus. Jan Mogens. Breakwater, 1988. 30 pp., \$11.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920911-14-5; **Who goes to the park.** Warabe Aska. Tundra Books, 1984. 32 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88776-162-3; **Mood pocket mud bucket.** Deborah Turney Zagwyn.

Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1988. 30 pp., cloth. ISBN 0-88902-426-X; **Amos's sweater**. Janet Lunn. Illus. Kim LaFave. Douglas & McIntyre, 1988. 32 pp., cloth. ISBN 0-88899-074-X.

Children's picture-books should tell a story through both words and visual images. These two ways of communication should work hand-in-hand, mirroring and reflecting each other. All four books reviewed here achieve an almost perfect harmony of words and images. Having said that, I must now add that the four books are not equally valuable to a collection.

Borrowed black has been reprinted with new illustrations by the award winning artist Jan Mogensen. The book has been translated into a number of Northern European languages with the publisher's statement that "rarely has a Canadian book been so well received." Taking into account the expected use of hyperbole by marketing departments, I sincerely hope that not all Canadian picture-books will be judged by this particular work. Mogensen is a talented artist and illustrator but overall the book is dark and foreboding. The story of some fantastical entity that borrows parts of animals to create a physical form is grim without the additional thrills that children adore. The original book published in 1979, with Hope Yandell as illustrator, is brighter, friendlier, and less surrealistic than this version.

The original medium that Mogensen used appears to be either watercolour or pen and ink wash. In any case the illustrations are soft with a good use of light and shadow to create volume. Very little colour is used. On the bright side, Mogensen has created some truly unforgettable characters in the Curious Crew. The hero of the story is a small mouse outfitted in a tiny sailor suit. Children will love the few comical paintings that depict the rescuers.

Who goes to the park has been re-released in a paperback edition. The park is no longer Toronto's High Park, but, rather, any park in any city. The hardback version has been the recipient of many awards both in Canada and Europe. Aska has exhibited his paintings in his native Japan, in England and in Canada. A companion book *Who hides in the park* has also been released.

This is, without a doubt, a truly beautiful book for readers of all ages. Of the four illustrated books reviewed here, Aska's illustrations are the most polished and visually exciting. The landscape and fauna of the park are reminiscent of the impressionist Seurat's pointilism. Every blade of grass and every flake of snow seems to be individually alive and vibrant. The people who go to the park are of every age, of every size, and of every race. Each full page painting displays a different season or park activity.

In the spring
When the trees begin to sprout leaves
Black birds appear in the park
The great oak raises its arms
To hold all their songs in harmony

The painting depicts a huge tree covered with buds and singing blackbirds. On its massive trunk can be seen a face, mouth open in song, with two branches that have become arms so that the tree can conduct the chorus of blackbirds. No children's or adult's collection should be without this book.

The last two books are very similar the many humorous touches in both story and illustrations. Without actually rhyming, the words in both books flow in a lively manner, eminently suitable for group reading. The illustrations are painted with broad, brightly coloured sweeps of the brush.

Zagwyn's paintings in *Mood pocket mud bucket* are delightful. She has included many details that children will not discover at first glance. An example of the fun the author has with words and images is in her description of one stormy morning when "the robins in the cottonwood tree were wishing they had umbrellas." The matching illustration shows a bedraggled robin with a red umbrella and yellow galoshes!

Mood pocket refers to the young girl's different faces for different moods. When not wearing a face, she keeps it in her pocket: "faces for every mood and occasion – rainy mornings or sunny afternoons, sad beginnings or happy endings." If the book can be said to have any failure, it is in the adult dialogue. Zagwyn reports it faithfully but by so doing breaks the rhythm of the story by interjecting adult words and adult mannerisms.

Amos's sweater was the recipient of the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award. The award is a double honour since the winner is chosen by children, in this case by grade 6 Toronto students. The illustrator, Kim LaFave, was awarded last year's Governor-General's Award. *Amos's sweater* is already a favourite of both children's librarians and parents. The story is a very simple one, but children will love the notion that a sheep will try to recapture his wool, now in the form of a knitted sweater. The illustrations are short in detail but long in gentle humour.

Terri Lyons is the Community Service Librarian at the Barry Public Library.

FAIRY TALES RETOLD OR NEWLY CREATED

How the Devil got his cat. Mary Alice Downie. Illus. Jillian Hulme Gilliland. Quarry Press, 1988. Unpag., \$11.95, \$6.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-919627-84-6, 0-919627-86-2, **Little Kay.** Robin Muller. North Winds Press, 1988. 31 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-71887-8, **The girl on the hat.** Jane Jacobs. Illus. Karen Reczuch. Oxford University Press, 1989. 50 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-19-540708-3, **Amanda Greenleaf and the spell of the Water Witch.** Ed Kavanagh. Illus. Janice Udell. Moonstone Press, 1987. 56 pp., \$6.95 paper.