mais, mais la mère-souterrain, avec ses replis humides et étouffants, représente le danger de perte et de dissolution du moi.

A ce point-là, la politique prend la relève de Freud. Juste avant de sortir du souterrain, Wondeur et Moussa sont passés devant deux navires aux mâts desquels pendent des drapeaux ornés d'une tête de mort avec des dollars de chaque côté. Quand ils paraissent devant des adultes, on leur ordonne, sous peine de prison, de porter des oeillères comme tout le monde dans la ville. Selon le maire, "Ici, on ne cherche pas. On se mêle de ses affaires, c'est la loi."

Nos jeunes amis sont sauvés du désespoir par la rencontre d'une vieille femme gentiment anarchiste, qui les invite à enlever leurs oeillères et leur donne à manger. C'est la première fois dans le roman qu'il mangent, la première fois aussi qu'un adulte les aide; tous les autres jusqu'ici ont été veules, lâches, menteurs, ou tyranniques. Elle leur offre aussi un but, donc une raison de vivre, autre que la recherche de plus en plus vaine du père: ils peuvent s'engager dans sa tentative de sauver les arbres détériorés par les camions vidangeurs.

Après la rencontre avec un karatéka hanté par son passé, qui ne peut pas les aider mais qui se révèle assez sympathique, les deux jeunes décident de tenter de sauver les arbres. Une lueur d'espoir pour eux, donc, mais bien incertaine.

Les jeunes lecteurs et lectrices, heureusement, sont capables de lire un roman sans poser trop de questions, comme le voudrait le maire. J'ai été gênée par la lourdeur de l'écriture, où la cohérence de l'intrigue est subordonnée au symbolisme, comme on peut en juger par le résumé fait plus haut. En revanche, mon fils de douze ans a trouvé le livre "assez bon" et y a vu surtout un message vert: ne pas trop consommer pour ne pas sombrer dans les déchets.

Ce roman contient des idées intéressantes: la quête du père, le nom si poétique du Quai des Brumes, lieu de désespoir, l'histoire du karatéka, et bien d'autres, dont l'assemblage ne fait pas un tout cohérent. Dans sa forme actuelle, et comparé à d'autres romans du même genre, ce n'est certainement pas l'un des meilleurs. Un budget limité peut se dispenser de cet achat.

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THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN

Duck cakes for sale. Janet Lunn. Illus. Kim LaFave. Douglas & McIntyre, 1989. Unpag., cloth. ISBN 0-88899-094-4; **Plain noodles**. Betty Waterton. Illus. Joanne Fitzgerald. Douglas & McIntyre, 1989. Unpag., cloth. ISBN 0-88899-095-2.

In Betty Waterton and Joanne Fitzgerald's *Plain noodles* the cover illustration shows noodles squiggling wildly out of control, sliding off a huge plate, squishing out of a pasta maker, sticking in a small girl's hair. The cover gives a good indication of what happens when a sad, oldish woman finds a boatload of babies on the beach – a gentle riotousness treading the line, happily, between chaos and play.

Betty Waterton's story is an in-between one. Mrs. Figg, the main character, is between children and grand-children, and so is lonely for babies. She lives with her husband between land and sea in an island lighthouse decorated with aquatic things – paintings of starfish and fish, lilypad wallpaper and a couch with clam shell engravings. And the story takes place between spring and summer.

This hesitancy lends the book an aqueous sense, suggesting that nothing is ever firm or completed. But the book's structure doesn't support this. Despite its suggestively circular ending – Mrs. Figg returns to the beach to find more visitors – the story is regrettably "complete." While Fitzgerald's illustrations delightfully accent the mood and supply lots of little details for the curious child to search out, they are essentially illustrations and not extensions of the text. Pictures and words join in a harmony quite unlike the delicious disharmony of the story.

Janet Lunn's *Duck cakes for sale* also concerns an old woman who, when she gets what she wants – in this case the quiet of the country and a couple of ducks to keep her and the creek company – gets chaos she didn't bargain for. But even the early pictures of the quietly restful country are full of a movement anticipating the crescendoing anarchy which results from avian overpopulation. None of the lines in LaFave's drawings are still or straight; the old woman's hair, her windows, her lamp shades, her chairs, all seem to quake with a latent energy that bursts with the hatching of the ducks' eggs. These illustrations hint at the inevitability of chaos and confusion, as does Lunn's open ending. The old woman wonders: maybe one red hen? And the reader hopes that she doesn't think twice about getting another egg-laying critter – the first time around was so much fun.

Lunn and LaFave are well matched; as *Amos's sweater* proved (Amos, by the way, makes a cameo appearance here), the energies and rhythms of their art complement each other. The chaotic energy of LaFave's drawings takes the tall tale quality of *Duck cakes* to new heights, but the text, despite its own enthusiastic exaggeration, is well grounded and skillfully anchors the illustrations' exuberance. It's no surprise to find passionate intensity in Lunn's writing, that being the great strength of her novels. Such passion certainly gels with the strongly choreographed confusion of LaFave's drawings.

But repetitions and repetitive listing, techniques Lunn capitalizes on with a fine discrimination, give solidity to the book's wildness. (They are here not merely as stock devices, though that would be almost enough justification, and

not only to emphasize just how repeatedly those ducks reproduced.) They launch Lunn's language into the same kinetic region that LaFave's drawings already inhabit, while simultaneously providing the reader with a home base, some pattern she can count on. Deforming language through repetition exposes the subversion working within it; Lunn engages in this type of serious play, liberating words from sheer referentiality. It's as much fun to hear the words as words, to experience their shapes, sounds and colours (as Dylan Thomas says of nursery rhymes in "Notes on the Art of Poetry"), as it is to see LaFave's version of the "literal" results of this word play.

Waterton plays with language too in a more domesticated way – but then her story as a whole, and its illustrations, are more "in control" than *Duck cakes* is. She makes forays into alliteration, letting individual letter sounds wash over casual moments in her text. And she courts parody, rewriting "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" with a far more benign pen than Alice ever owned. But the strength of her story lies not so much in linguistic play or parody as in quiet humour and in its references to so many of a child's favourite things – babies, noodles, dinosaurs, circuses, beaches, picnics, bubbles, starfish and painting. This may be the reason that, of these two, my two-year-old daughter insisted on sleeping with *Plain noodles*. Or maybe she preferred not to be crowded out of her bed by ducks.

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JESPER: A DANISH THRILLER

Jesper. Carol Matas. Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989. 160 pp., $10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88619-109-2.

This work is a sequel to Carol Matas' *Lisa* which won the Geoffrey Bilson Prize for Historical Fiction for Young People in 1988. *Lisa* was about a Danish Jewish girl caught in occupied Denmark during the Second World War, along with her older brother Stefan and his friend Jesper. *Jesper* continues the story of young teenagers in the Danish underground movement after Lisa's and Stefan's departure. Jesper recalls early experiences with them in a series of flash-backs from his cell in Shell House, Copenhagen, where he is imprisoned by the Gestapo towards the end of the war. The 14-year-old boys begin with relatively simple acts of sabotage, such as making German trucks inoperable, and progress to more dangerous assignments. Later Jesper becomes involved