

tions are particularly attractive; Springett uses roundels, decorative borders, double-page pictures with inset text, and varying perspectives to fascinate the reader and draw us deeper into the world of the old story.

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MERE ILLUSTRATION: A NEW *RUMPELSTILTSKIN*

Rumpelstiltskin. Dorothy Joan Harris. Illus. Regolo Ricci. Oxford University Press, 1991. 33 pp., \$16.95. ISBN 0-19-540766-0.

Rumpelstiltskin made one of its early appearances in Rabelais' *Gargantua* (1575). Since then, numerous versions of the tale have appeared throughout the world, with the creature answering to such names as Tom-Tit-Tot, Whippity-Stourie, Trillevip, and Kinkach Martinko. The best known account occurs in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, and Harris models her version on theirs. Despite Bruno Bettelheim's belief that fairy tales should appear unillustrated, Regolo Ricci makes an admirable attempt to render in pictures the highlights of Harris's story.

While Harris is a well-established writer of picture books, adolescent novels, and magazine articles, *Rumpelstiltskin* is her first attempt at making an old tale seem new. Harris modifies the story by replacing the old, avaricious king with a wise, young modest one. In addition, Harris names her heroine Elinore (the Greek word for light), thus giving her more identity than a typical fairy tale character. Furthermore, Harris's tale is didactic: the Miller's discovery of Rumpelstiltskin's true name and his subsequent redemption from avarice add a certain freshness to the traditional story. The only weakness of the text appears at the end: extending the story past the last scene (between the Queen and the little man) appears superfluous.

Rumpelstiltskin is Regolo Ricci's fourth picture book and second fairy tale (see *The tinderbox* 1990). One must admire his courage in following a tradition established by such renowned illustrators as George Cruikshank, Walter Crane, Mervyn Peake, Paul Galdone and Paul Zelinsky. Moreover, Ricci's con-



ception of Rumpelstiltskin is a complete success: the little man appears as a traditional dwarf, with heavy eyebrows, red pudgy cheeks, a red pointed nose, and a look of devilish merriment on his crafty face. The best illustration shows Rumpelstiltskin dancing round the blazing fire in the wintry woods brandishing a look of triumphant glee, while the Miller peers at him from a distance. However, though old men's faces are Ricci's greatest strength, his women's and children's faces have little character. In places, Elinore looks sullen, rather than sad, smug rather than triumphant, and, at times, almost masculine; the baby appears out of proportion and has no character whatsoever.

Ricci's illustrations, with their generous rich colours, ultimately simply illustrate rather than elaborate upon the text – with one curious exception. Near the end, we see the Miller holding his grandson, while the faint image of a winged creature perches on his shoulder; to his left we see parts of a wing, a hand, and the corner of a gown disappearing. Nothing in the text explains this image. We must decide for ourselves whether these ghostly creatures represent the Miller's good or bad angels. Although the rest of the illustrations do not quite provide the "originality of vision" Sendak stresses as the most important quality of a true picture book artist, this one instance of the inexplicable shows promise.

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RECENT ILLUSTRATED VERSE

Dandelions and dreams. LeRoy Gorman. Illus. Brenda Shelley Clark. Moonstone Press, 1990. 76 pp., \$8.95. ISBN 0-920259-26-X; **Mrs. Kitchen's cats.** Ken Ward. Illus. author. Annick Press, 1990. 46 pp., \$8.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-107-X; **Pass the poems please.** Jane Baskwill. Illus. Kathy R. Kaulbach. Wildthings Press, 1989, 32 pp., ISBN 0-929065-00-X.

Every new illustrated book of verse reminds this reviewer of the myriad difficulties posed by the form. Does the illustration swamp the text? When are black and white just right? Do text and illustration induce changes in each other that are more damaging than helpful? Has an illustrator more right to take liberties with mere verse than with a poem? What is the difference between verse and poetry anyway? What can we say about concrete poems which in a sense illustrate themselves?

All of these factors and more enter into any judgment one makes about the three recent books considered here. None of the three is likely to survive the ravages of time, but it is unfair to expect that. All are done in black and white,