

tous les éléments ont été rassemblés et juxtaposés sans lien réel entre eux. Le paysage peut même avoir un aspect lunaire inquiétant. Lorsque Simon saute dans son traîneau pour aller à la ville le traîneau est tiré par un cheval de bois à bascule, et ce cheval, avec, à l'arrière-plan, un soleil polaire se détachant sur un ciel virant au noir et au violine, a quelque chose d'inquiétant.

Le monde de Tibo est un monde de clair-obscur, un monde irréel où les animaux et les étoiles sont plus grands que nature, un monde plein de symboles. C'est un monde onirique.

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#### SECRET MARRIAGES: UNIFIED TEXT AND VISUALS

**Simon and the snowflakes.** Gilles Tibo. Tundra, 1988. 24 pp., \$9.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-218-2; **Benjamin and the pillow saga.** Stéphane Poulin. Annick, 1989. 24 pp., \$14.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-069-3, 1-55037-068-5; **I'll do it myself.** Jirina Marton. Annick, 1989. 24 pp. ISBN 1-55037-0630-4; **Kevin's magic ring.** Patricia Quinlan. Illus. Jirina Marton. Black Moss Press, 1989. 24 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-072-3; **10 for dinner.** Jo Ellen Bogart. Illus. Carlos Freire. North Winds Press, 1989. 32 pp., \$11.95 cloth. ISBN 590-73172-6; **Surprise! Surprise!** Maryleah Otto. Illus. Carlos Freire. Three Trees Press, 1988. 24 pp. ISBN 0-88823-133-4.

It is certainly no longer necessary to point out that in a successful picture book visuals and text must interact in a synchronous manner. Almost everything written about picture books presents some variation on this theme. Only infrequently, though, does a writer define the way the interaction of text and visual works.

Some serious writing (but not much) has been devoted to the picture book as art object. (Kenneth Marantz in *The Wilson Library Bulletin* 1977, said, "Picture books are not literary works to be read. They are art objects to be experienced.") There is a proliferation of awards recognizing picture-books, but usually, and incongruously, judges single out either the author or the illustrator. If such awards were given on the *book's* total merit as a unified work of art, what might we learn about the symbiosis of visuals and text?

Usually, in symbiotic art, one aspect dominates even when both are essential – a tendency of one form to assimilate or swallow other forms explicated by Susanne Langer in *Feeling and form*, 1953. There is no fundamental question of superior versus inferior artist when assimilation takes place. An interesting question arises: is the degree or the kind of assimilation that takes place in a picture book the same when text and visuals are done by the same person,

as when they are executed by different people? Few would deny that Sendak's greatest work is that in which both words and visuals are his own.

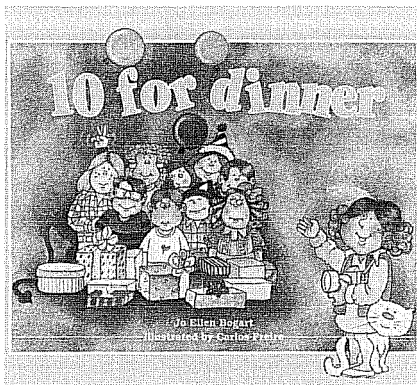
A batch of recent Canadian books allows us to pursue this question of two books, *Kevin's magic ring* and *Anna's red sled* written by Patricia Quinlan; one is illustrated by Jirina Marton, the other by Lindsay Grater. Two books, *Surprise! Surprise!* and *10 for dinner* present artwork by Carlos Freire, though each is written by someone else, the former by Maryleah Otto, the latter by Jo Ellen Bogart. Interestingly, we also have one book, *I'll do it myself*, written and illustrated by Jirina Marton. Two additional books created by an individual are Stéphane Poulin's *Benjamin and the pillow saga*, and Gilles Tibo's *Simon and the snowflakes*.

Quinlan's plot ingredients in *Kevin's magic ring*, none notably original, include the old magician's trunk, the ring, the conditions, the magic word, the oblivious adults (the magic word being "ah choo," guess what the parents think?) The heavy responsibility that accompanies a gift of magic gives an otherwise breezy tale more ethical weight than it can comfortably bear. Jirina Marton's illustrations, mostly full pages with some small page opposites, are painted in an antiqued style against scumbled background. Somewhat child-like and awkward in manner, they generally convey mood successfully – for instance in an early blue-toned night scene the painter also records faithfully the main turns of events. The union of visuals and text is satisfactory at this level; however, perhaps the illustrations are too literal a rendition of a story ultimately more thought-provoking than the illustrator gives it credit for. The book *looks* like a book for a very young child; the pictures say "fun," but the text is not about fun; it is perhaps not for the *very* young at all.

In *Anna's red sled* Quinlan again demonstrates her gift as a storyteller. She writes this time not of magic, but of memory, of the precious moments of childhood; hers is a story that may help reconcile the child – and her mother – to loss. Lindsay Grater's illustrations, framed full-page watercolours, follow the narrative literally. Some (a sky scene on a snowy night) are quite fine as mood

and story converge; others (a weird greenish faraway planet in the Milky Way) are not only garish, but confuse the reader. Again, the story calls for more serious treatment.

Carlos Freire, a Chilean lawyer turned Canadian artist, finds good grist for a picture book in Jo Ellen Bogart's *10 for dinner*. This book is about numbers and about being different (awkward at times but not a bad thing). It is also nonsensical, very funny and economically written. Freire's sense of humour is irre-



pressible. His coloured drawings are bright and crisply executed in full and double-page spreads. The glee overflows the pages, and the spare text appears boldly and clearly right where it belongs. This is the kind of book that calls for accuracy, being after all a book about numbers. Ten birthday party guests are hilariously depicted.

In *Surprise! Surprise!* double pages of text alternate with double pages of colourful Freire nonsense. Occasionally, the alternating spreads are single, and sometimes the pictures are simply ink drawings without colour. (There could be various reasons for this lack of colour: John Burningham, for instance uses the device when he wishes to distinguish the child's world of the imagination from the adult world of reality, but no such plan seems in place here). The story, with more text than is usual in a picture book, is moderately funny. Maryleah Otto presents Percy Perkins as *very* neat (at about five). The horrible complication is that a new set of twins arrives, and the parents, not too neat themselves, don't seem to mind the mess. The story is about how Percy accommodates himself to this intrusion in his life.

It would be hard to resist the idea that the better an illustrator gets the more likely she is to insist on doing her own writing. This does seem to have been the case with Sendak. In *I'll do it myself* Jirina Marton has produced a book far beyond *Kevin's magic ring*. The artist has control, she is able to blend extraordinarily delicate, filmy, sensuous textures (of curtains, hair, upholstery, wall and floor coverings) with a like pattern of delicate repetition in the text. She evokes, again in her antiqued style, a dream sequence about elephants which is crucial to the story. The book opens and closes upon one of the most arresting sets of endpapers in recent memory. This is a very satisfying book.

Finally, in Canada we have two picture book artists who have moved from their native tongue into producing text in English. Stéphane Poulin's *Benjamin and the pillow saga*, and Gilles Tibo's *Simon and the snowflakes* evidence mastery of English cadences to match their artwork. Poulin alternates left-hand pages of text, presenting a subtle story of shy Benjamin and his ancient musical parents, a harpist father and a tuba-playing mother, with self-framing right hand paintings in oil on canvas. The story in words and pictures is evocative of old Europe, in a time when even the world of commerce cared about making people happy. Poulin's paintings are cut to interesting shapes – a romanesque arch, cut-away corners, a great variety of shapes set on white into which an occasional figure strays (as a loop of telephone cord, a car wheel). Only once is the format prominently changed, when in the middle of the book, in the middle of the story, at a critical point when the strangers arrive, Poulin's art spills across the divide onto the left-hand page, and the visual silently announces its marriage to the text.

Another artist to watch, one who is already gaining international attention, is Gilles Tibo. Like Shulevitz, who began with too little command of English

to do his own writing, and finally became a master of the economical text, Tibo first produced *Annabel Lee* an astonishing accompaniment to Poe's poetry; now he follows with a more formidable book, *Simon and the snowflakes*.

Tibo again uses the airbrush to create delicate nuances of light and shade. He uses a small horizontal format and frames simply his left and right pages. Left-hand pages are mainly white and contain the brief bold text along with (by wonderful inspiration) a little rectangular box cut from the actual artwork on the full page facing picture. The reader detective can spend happy minutes identifying the very snowflake, the very tree in the full page which has been abstracted to the page of the text. Tibo has hereby invented a way of making readers look very closely. His text is as subtle as his painting which is very subtle indeed.

Some books can as well or better be illustrated by a second person, but there may be in the world of picture books a kind of efferent-aesthetic continuum, to use terms established by Louise Rosenblatt in *The reader, the text, the poem*, 1978. Perhaps the closer the book aspires to art the greater the likelihood that its creator is one person. It may be that the best marriages between text and visuals in picture books are the secret ones, so secure in their relationships that there is no need to broadcast them to the world.

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## THE GHOSTLY VOICES OF THE STORYTELLER

**The ghost of Peppermint Flats and other stories.** Ted Stone. Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989. 112 pp., \$11.95 paper. ISBN 0-88833-229-8.

In Ted Stone's ghost stories a casual and conversational narrative voice invites the reader to establish an intimate relationship with the storyteller. The first sentence of the first story – "It was me and Melvin Michaels who did it" (1) – involves the young reader, who feels that he or she is entering the narrator's very personal and private world. The most successful of the fourteen stories in this collection are the ten told from the child's point of view, often by a first-person retrospective narrator. The impulsive shedding of burdens and secrets offers the reader sudden and powerful moments of recognition.

The supernatural realm depicted in *The ghost of Peppermint Flats and other stories* is often a world more accessible to children than adults. Fear, imagination and the will to believe lead to experiences from which the more skeptical adult is excluded. Adults traditionally deny "such things as ghosts" (22). But they can be affected despite resistance, and can be in awe of supernatural experience, indirectly and unknowingly endorsing the power and value of a