

Full of sophisticated humour and crazy, catchy word combinations, this book is now refreshed by Mogensen's limpid hues and splendid pastels. An impressive production.

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#### PLAYFUL PICTURES MAKE SOME BOOKS EASY TO LIVE WITH

**The troll of Sora** Leslie Elizabeth Watts. Illus. author. Oxford University Press, 1989. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-19-5407172-2; **The terrible Finn MacCoul**. Tom Harpur. Illus. Linda Hendry. Oxford University Press, 1990. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-19-540716-4; **The swan children**. David Day. Illus. Richard Evans. Doubleday, 1989. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-25233-1; **Little Fan and the fountain fairy**. Margaret Miles-Cadman. Illus. author. Breakwater, 1989. Unpag., \$11.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920911-72-2; **Draw and write your own picture book**. Emily Hearn. Illus. Mark Thurman. Pembroke, 1990. 32 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-921217-46-3.

There is no substitute for living with a new collection of picture books for a few weeks to let us know what we really feel about them. The more time my children and I spend exploring the richly imagined illustrations and rereading the simple but very wise tale in Leslie Elizabeth Watts' *The troll of Sora*, the more we all love it. Drawing upon a traditional Italian folk story, Watts tells the plight of Fragolina, a girl whose inability to accept her plain appearance produces nearly disastrous consequences. As her discontent grows, she isolates herself. The solace she finds in eating only leads to greater despair. Through the magical intervention of a troll and the opportunity to live briefly as a dazzlingly beautiful woman, Fragolina discovers the values which bring her fulfillment. The seriousness of the message is nicely balanced by playful, sensuous and warm-toned paintings.

Another playfully illustrated version of a traditional folk tale is Tom Harpur's *The terrible Finn MacCoul*. MacCoul, the biggest giant in all of Ireland, is really a timid soul who panics when the ferocious Fergus walks across the sea from Scotland to do battle with him. Fortunately, Finn is saved by an amusing plan devised by his clever wife. The pleasures of the tale are greatly enhanced by Linda Hendry's energetic watercolours. Her goodnatured, robust characters spill out of their picture frames, making the world of giants a friendly place to visit. The pictures also provide fascinating opportunities to contemplate reality from a giant's perspective. A half dozen fried eggs comfortably fit onto Finn's fork; the cats that scamper over the gargantuan furniture appear no bigger than mice.

Traditional Irish lore is treated quite differently in David Day's *The swan children*. Although the language is no more demanding than that in Harpur's tale of MacCoul, the tone and content make Day's book less appropriate for young children. The death of a beloved mother, the plots of an evil stepmother and the thousand year separation of children from their father combine to produce a sombre tale which can overwhelm and frighten preschool and primary audiences. Older readers would be better able to appreciate the subdued palette used to render the gaunt, dreamlike images which illustrate the text, and to handle the sense of loss, yearning and sadness which the story and pictures evoke.

It is not clear exactly what response Margaret Miles-Cadman's *Little Fan and Fountain Fairy* hopes to evoke. Although the watercolours of countryside settings are appealing, the awkwardly rendered cats which populate these settings lack expressive clarity. The story itself is also muddled. The calligraphied text, uncomfortably formal in juxtaposition to the loose drawing style, is also difficult for new readers to decipher.

Young readers might also be frustrated by Emily Hearn's and Mark Thurman's temptingly illustrated *Draw and write your own picture book*. Advertised as suitable for eight-to-twelve-year-olds, the book assumes that the children trying to follow its guidelines possess astonishingly sophisticated skills. For accomplished story writers and artists of any age though, the book is an excellent introduction to techniques for constructing attention-getting, action-filled illustrations.

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## LES GRANDES PERSONNES SE RESSEMBLENT TOUTES

**Les grandes menaces.** Marie-Hélène Jarry. Illus. Philippe Béha. Montréal, Raton Laveur, 1989. 24 pp., 6,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-920660-10-1.

Voici un petit album illustré où vont se retrouver petits et grands. Son sujet est justement un aspect très précis des rapports entre parents et enfants: les menaces que chaque génération de parents juge bon d'infliger à ses enfants. Le lecteur adulte trouve ici l'écho de menaces proférées par ses propres parents, et que, à son tour, il a pu prononcer à l'intention de ses propres enfants: "Si tu ne mange pas ta soupe, tu vas rester tout petit"; "mange tes carottes, sinon, tu seras obligé de porter des lunettes"; "si tu ne ranges pas tes jouets, on va les donner aux voisins"; "quand on raconte des mensonges, alors là, notre nez devient très long".

Que le lecteur adulte ait envie d'en rire ou d'en pleurer, il doit constater