

the process and struggle required to purge those emotions. The description of the *Sea Lion* and the allusions to the *Titanic* will likely retain the interest of readers, although the detail of the hydraulics and the control panel could have been either more fully explained or made less prominent. Rory is eventually saved from the extreme and prolonged torment experienced by Morgan when he faces Morgan and thus conquers his own fears. The final confrontation is gripping not only because of its suspense but also because of its epic and mythic struggle, which brings to mind similar physical and psychological confrontations.

British writer Nina Bawden refers to "the dark wood that Dante writes of at the beginning of *The Divine Comedy*, the dark wood that we all remember from childhood and still visit in dreams" (75). Rory Dugan and Dylan Maples journey through such a dark wood as they are forced to confront their fears. The young reader of these novels, like the young reader envisioned by Bawden, knows "that the dark wood is himself, the mysterious world of his unconscious mind and that, like the brave knights of old, he has to get through it" (75). Peacock and Lunn are ambitious in their attempts to convey and connect the darkness of the physical landscape with the inner psychological darkness of the main characters. The sasquatch of the mountains and the ancient mariner of the sea provide the link between the overpowering landscape and the inner fears. The mythic struggles depicted in these two novels are indeed memorable, as are the forested mountains and the stormy ocean on which the struggles occur. The humorous, adventurous and realistic struggles of the other three novels under review do not have as much psychological force as *Monster in the Mountains* and *The Mariner's Curse*, but they certainly succeed in engaging young readers.

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### Goddess and Heroine / Bert Almon

*Inanna: From the Myths of Ancient Sumer*. Kim Echlin. Illus. Linda Wolfsgruber. Groundwood, 2003. 72 pp. \$22.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-496-6.

*See Saw Saskatchewan: More Playful Poems from Coast to Coast*. Robert Heidbreder. Illus. Scot Ritchie. Kids Can, 2003. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55337-392-8.

*I Gave My Mom a Castle.* Jean Little. Illus. Kady MacDonald Denton. Orca, 2003. 80 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-253-6.

*Ann and Seamus.* Kevin Major. Illus. David Blackwood. Groundwood, 2003. 109 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-561-X.

*A Grain of Sand.* P.K. Page. Illus. Vldyana Krykorka. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2003. 32 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55041-801-7.

Robert Heidbreder is a primary school teacher who knows well his audience of children from pre-school to the fourth grade. *See Saw Saskatchewan: More Playful Poems from Coast to Coast*, a sequel to his earlier book *Eenie Meenie Manitoba*, has the same rollocking rhythms and clever use of vivid place names that are so abundant in Canada, like Kapuskasing and Coppermine. The book contains light verse with regular rhythms and amusing rhymes, such as the following "circular rhyme": "Pick a peck of P.E.I., / pack it in a box. / Send it off to Newfoundland, / get back a box of . . . / rocks!" The subject matter is up to date: one poem is about a computer crash (it begins, "Eager Beaver Antonette / logged on the internet"), while another deals with "Snowbirds" who head for Florida sunshine in the winter. The book's preface explains the symbols that identify poems as ball-bouncing, skipping, clapping, or choosing rhymes. The endpapers are maps of Canada, showing all the marvelous place names mentioned in the poems. The illustrations by Scot Ritchie have the liveliness appropriate for skipping and counting out rhymes. They have a cartoonish flavour, but he can use perspective when he needs to, as in a two-page illustration at the end that manages to combine a coast with a lighthouse and a child's bedroom with a long shaft of light to join these scenes.

Jean Little's *I Gave My Mom a Castle* is built on the theme of generosity in school and family situations. This book for readers aged eight to twelve is saved from sentimentality by having several of the poems deal with failures to be kind, but occasionally the desire to be uplifting is too conspicuous, as in "Miss Sorensen and Mother's Day," a long tale about a teacher's relationship with a boy whose mother has deserted him; the result is an exercise in pop psychology. Little is a distinguished writer for children, but her poetry is not very memorable: there are no genuine rhythms in the free-verse poems. She is better when she writes metrically, however: a poem in ballad meter, "Two Dogs Waiting," is the most successful work in the book — as poetry, rather than as a moral-pointing narrative. The illustrations by Governor General's Award-winning artist Kady MacDonald Denton are unpretentious drawings in black and white or in blue and white. They are definitely subordinate to the text.

P.K. Page's *A Grain of Sand* comes from one of Canada's finest poets. The book is Page's brief poetic meditation in nine couplets on four lines from William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "To see a World in a Grain of Sand, / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, / And Eternity in an Hour." Page's poem, written for a millennium oratorio by Derek Holman titled *Invisible Reality*, is not a major work, and only the last couplet has imaginative power: "With a wink or a blink an Age is done. / Old Father Time is a boy again." Page, a distinguished artist under the name P.K. Irwin, makes intricate dream landscapes in her own pictures. The illustrated landscapes by Czech-born Canadian illustrator Vldyana Krykorka are not dream visions but dreamy scenes created as backdrops

for images of flowers, angels, and children. The brightness and colour of Kryorka's pictures is in the spirit of Blake's own art, but without the sharply defined lines that he, an etcher, thought essential, and without his visionary gleam. The book seems made for contemplation rather than reading and doesn't offer much actual text for its audience of children ages ten and older, with one couplet for each pair of facing pages.

Kim Echlin's *Inanna*, a retelling of Sumerian myths, is a beautifully-illustrated book with a remarkable text. Inanna seems to fascinate Canadian writers, since Karen Lawrence and Tim Lilburn have both written poetry collections about her prior to this one. She was the sister of Gilgamesh, a better-known figure. Inanna is a multiple figure, both a human being and a goddess, and, in both modes, a feminist. Her stories have a strangeness about them, an archaic quality that the more familiar Greek myths lost as the poets reworked them. Inanna manages to be willful and kind, a tender lover of the shepherd Dumuzi and a self-crowned queen of heaven. She steals the holy power of *Me* (pronounced "May") from the earth god, Enki, by getting him drunk, and adds more powers of her own. She is, we are told, pleased with her breasts and her vulva. This book is rated for readers aged twelve and older but seems more suited to older adolescents, since it is remarkably frank about sex ("The king goes to her holy thighs") and the illustrations contain some tasteful full-frontal nudity. Inanna's greatest adventure involves her attempt to take over the underworld from her sister, the death goddess Erishkigal. Inanna is killed and hanged from a hook but is resurrected and rescued through a ransom scheme in which Dumuzi and his sister take her place in the underworld, each spending six months of the year there, a story that anticipates Persephone's story in classical myth.

Echlin has turned the scholarly translations of the myths into a readable and chronological (if myths can have a chronology!) narrative. Her free verse is not especially accomplished, but prose would not have suited the archaic and formulaic nature of the myth. Most evocative is "Love's Last Song," a celebration of the lovemaking of Dumuzi and Inanna in a style that suggests the Song of Songs. The text builds to a celebration of the goddess as an archetypal female — a conqueror, a prostitute, a queen, a man's friend, a woman's friend, and finally a creator of "Reed-marsh woman" and of "Reed-marsh man." This book would make a fine supplement to the epic of Gilgamesh frequently included in high-school curricula. It is illustrated by celebrated German artist Linda Wolfsgruber, who combined pen and ink, watercolour, and collage techniques to create drawings that evoke the surviving examples of Sumerian art. Wolfsgruber's modern equivalent to Sumerian layering techniques is to paste some elements into the compositions, especially to create backgrounds.

Finally, two distinguished Newfoundlanders, children's novelist Kevin Major and printmaker David Blackwood, have created an elegant and moving book, *Ann and Seamus*, from a dramatic historical incident. In 1828, three members of the Harvey family rescued 60 Irish immigrants from a ship that had run aground in the fog off Isle aux Morts in Newfoundland. They received a gold medal from the Royal Humane Society. The most effective member of the rescue party was seventeen-year-old Ann Harvey. Little is known about her life, except that she took part in another rescue ten years later and that she eventually married a Charles Gillam and moved to Port aux Basques. Major has filled in her story by creating a romance with Seamus Ryan, one of the Irish immigrants she rescued. The romance fails because the lovers

are too young and because Ann is unable to face the idea of leaving Newfoundland for Quebec, especially since she is painfully aware of her illiteracy.

The story is fascinating, and the text was on the shortlist for the Governor General's Award in 2003. Major's free verse works best at moments of high excitement, such as the shipwreck and the rescue. It is not so effective when describing human emotions, but the awkwardness of the style at such points reflects the awkwardness felt by his characters. Major could as easily have put the story in prose, although he must have felt compelled to provide more descriptive detail at the expense of story and characterization, given that the poetry allows for brevity. Blackwood is a master at portraying the sea, and his blue and grey illustrations (done in watercolour and graphite) are absolutely right for conveying the fog and waves of the Newfoundland coast. Major and Blackwood, like Echlin and Wolfsgrubner, have created work with literary and artistic merit.

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### Three Big Books of Canada / Gordon Lester

*The Big Book of Canada: Exploring the Provinces and Territories.* Christopher Moore. Illus. Bill Slavin. Intro. Janet Lunn. Tundra, 2002. 255 pp. \$39.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-457-6.

*The Kids Book of Black Canadian History.* Rosemary Sadlier. Illus. Wang Qijun. Kids Can, 2003. 56 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-892-0.

*The Kids Book of Great Canadians.* Elizabeth MacLeod. Illus. John Mantha. Kids Can, 2004. 64 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55337-366-9.

I have heard two explanations for the origin of the name Canada. According to the Department of Canadian Heritage, the name Canada is derived from *kanata*, a Huron-Iroquois word for village or settlement. On Jacques Cartier's second voyage in 1535, two Aboriginal youths directed Cartier to their village of Stadacona, now the site of Quebec City. Cartier used the word to refer not only to the village but to all the territory subject to Donnacona, chief of Stadacona. This has become the official version of the origin of Canada's name, popularized by a government-sponsored television commercial and repeated in Elizabeth MacLeod's recent book, *The Kids Book of Great Canadians*.

Another story explaining the name, taught to one of my former professors at the University of Western Ontario when he was a student at Upper Canada College, claims that Canada comes from a Spanish short form of "there's nothing there," meaning "there's no gold there." Evidence supporting this explanation consists of old maps of the Americas with other places labeled "Canada" south of the St. Lawrence. Although this version smacks of Eurocentrism, I think it appeals to a Canadian sense of irony, especially combined with Voltaire's famous description of Canada as "a few acres of snow." It is appropriate that the name Canada resists a