Ukraine steppes. She goes to a house where a wedding is to take place, and gives as a gift to the bride her typical Moroccan embroidered slippers. In return, the bride gives her the Vinok, the traditional floral wedding headdress. Then Zorah visits Bombay in India and Beijing in China on her magic carpet. Here she receives more typical gifts of each place. For peacocks and firecrackers, she gives jewelry and leather goods. She returns to Morocco inspired to weave more fabulous carpets, and does, though none ever equals her original magic carpet. With their tales of intercultural mingling, Stefan Czernecki's stories are a precious treasure trove in Canada's multicultural society.

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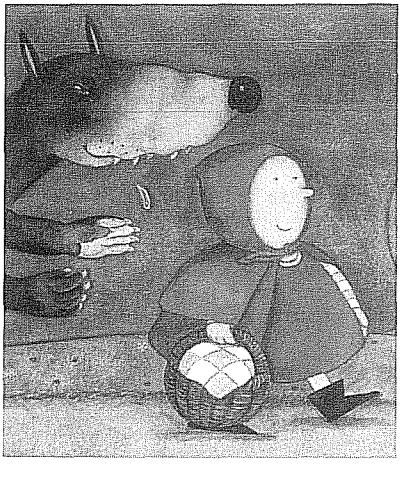
Living Folktales

Little Red Riding Hood. Mireille Levert. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntrye, 1995. Unpag. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-226-2. ***The Magic Boot.*** Rémy Simard. Illus. Pierre Pratt. Annick, 1995. Unpag. $5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-410-9. ***Just Stay Put***. Gary Clement. A Groundwood Book/Douglas & McIntyre, 1995. Unpag. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-239-4. ***Bone Button Borscht***. Aubrey Davis. Illus. Dušan Petričić. Kids Can, 1995. Unpag. $14.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-224-8.

Mireille Levert's bold rendition of *Little Red Riding Hood* does not so much retell as restore the original version of this classic tale. The merciless wolf actually swallows Grandmother without hesitation and, after the famous conversation scene between disguised wolf and deceived child, "he leapt out of bed and gobbled up poor Little Red Riding Hood!"



Carried by the energy of swiftly told narratives and sparing in details, Levert's story is neither sensationalistic nor sentimental. The woodsman enters the hut while the wolf reclines in a post-prandial slumber. Suspecting the worst, he "took a pair of scissors and began to cut open the wolf's stomach." Aside from the slaughter, not many contemporary versions restore the archetypal event of Red Riding Hood gathering, then filling, the wolf's stomach with stones.

The restricted palette of the watercolour illustrations — shades of red, green, brown and blue for the most part — supports the elemental force of the tale. Although Levert's Red Riding Hood with her perfectly round face comes to mere cuteness, she nonetheless suggests the naiveté and innocence of the young child.

Rémy Simard's humorous story *The Magic Boot*, illustrated by Pierre Pratt, also depicts a careless child threatened by a cannibalistic monster, in this instance Hector the Ogre who "loved to eat skinny, bony, dirty children, even if the dirt did get stuck between his teeth."

In an unnamed country the poverty stricken boy Pipo "had enormous feet — and they would not stop growing." Unlike many young and struggling heroes of folktales, Pipo need do nothing to win the favour of a good fairy who "made two magnificent red boots appear." Magic has it limitations. Don't get the boots wet, he is warned. The child, of course, splashes in a puddle and the boots begin to grow. What appears to be a misfortune, however, enables Pipo to escape Hector's appetite when he exchanges his boots for his life.

Robert, a jealous neighbour, steals the boots from the giant, gets them wet, suffers the consequences and buries them in a field. Pipo's sister plants seeds in the same ground, waters them, thereby increasing the size of one boot to such an extent that it was "[t]oo big for his little country ... a country that was too small for someone whose feet kept growing. Maria tosses the boot into the sea where it grows bigger and bigger "until it became ITALY!."

The Magic Boot is amusing but unsatisfying. It depends not so much upon tension and resolution as it does upon convenience and arbitrariness. Solutions to conflicts are too easily achieved. Pierre Pratt's red, green and brown acrylic illustrations, heavily outlined in black are visually strong. The paintings are more impressive than the prose and, given Pratt's style, seem at times to overwhelm the written word.

Humour is the driving force behind Gary Clement's *Just Stay Put.* Clement's hero lives in the village of Chelm where the people "were extremely silly," even though "they felt they were quite clever — wise, almost." The narrator provides an elaborate example of the collective foolishness in the person of Mendel, a good man who unfortunately "dreamed of being a great genius ... of being able to fly like a bird. But most of all, he dreamed of traveling."

One night Mendel dreams of a "great town." And so he sets off. As with many schlemiels — foolish or unlucky persons — Mendel's travels take him only so far. He falls asleep and points his shoes in the direction he wishes to travel the next day. A poor shepherd discovers the boots, thinks about stealing them, finds them inferior to his own, and "dropped Mendel's boots exactly where he'd found them, only now the toes pointed the other way, back to Chelm."

Befuddled by delusion and dream, Mendel sees the obvious on his way back to Chelm but is unable to accept it. "Can this be Warsaw?" he wondered. "It looks exactly like Chelm from here." The villagers, including the Rabbi, share Mendel's interpretation of his experience. The story concludes with Mendel wondering about the purpose of travel if "one place is exactly like every other place."

Reminiscent of Isaac Singer's stories, *Just Stay Put* relies upon dialogue, often taking the interrogative form and flavoured with the voice and intonation of the shtetl. An adroit use of parallelism in sentence structure enables Clement to establish character and situation quickly without cluttering details. Illustrations, done in pen and ink and gouache, make use of tones of brown and grey. With the exception of the dream sequence, they underline the poverty and credulousness of the characters. As the story is essentially built upon dream and delusion, many of the villagers seem to be flying or floating in a topsy-turvy state in the style of paintings by Marc Chagall.

Bone Button Borscht could well have taken place in Chelm as the villagers in Aubrey Davis's story are as credulous and deluded as they are in *Just Stay Put.* In this case a hungry beggar appears in a village one snowy night but meets only refusals and hostility even in the synagogue where the shamas or caretaker ignores him. Unlike Mendel, our beggar is clever and wise in the ways of foolish villagers. Popping his buttons, he pretends to make soup, persuading the villagers that such a thing is possible. If only he had another bone button. The villagers find one and gather round for the taste test. "Not bad," the beggar said, "But it could be better," if he only he had other ingredients like salt, pickle juice, beets, onions, cabbages and so on, until he produces a real borscht. So the beggar leaves the village, his stomach full and a set of brass buttons in exchange for his bone buttons. After all, how could the villagers make borscht again without the beggar's buttons?

Aubrey Davis, like Gary Clement, builds the narrative upon dialogue, and questions and answers. Tone of voice and dialectical accent are convincing, the prose generally clear and brisk.

Dušan Petričić's watercolour and pencil illustrations blend in well with the text although the consistent use of horizontal pencil lines through many of the illustrations occasionally irritates and distracts. Most of the illustrations are done in muted shades of grey and blue and do not overpower the text.

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Scouting Indian Territory

The Ghost Dance. Alice McLerran. Illus. Paul Morin. Stoddart, 1995. 40 pp. $19.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-2898-8.

The Ghost Dance is a *serious* picture book with serious problems. Its white American author, Alice McLerran, who holds a doctorate in anthropology and studies historical accounts of Native Americans, is passionately sincere. Its white Canadian illustrator, Paul Morin, whose illustrations for Tololwa Mollel's African story *The Orphan Boy* won a Governor General's Award, has taken part in sweat lodge ceremonies. Its intention is to teach children about Native spiritual wisdom.

In my opinion (I am a white writer who attends pow wows and teaches children's literature), the book will merely offend Natives and frighten children. I do not say this because I advocate zero tolerance of voice appropriation. (I don't.) The problems are artistic, not political.

In *The Ghost Dance*, McLerran and Morin interpret a Native religious movement in the American West in the 1890s (when Indians were being exterminated by white people). They adapt aspects of this movement as a universal prayer for the survival of the planet in the 1990s (when the natural world is being destroyed by pollution). To me, this is like using religious practises of Jewish victims of the Holocaust of World War II for advertising the German branch of Greenpeace. Earnestness does not excuse bad taste.

Nor does it excuse frightening children needlessly. The title, *Ghost Dance*, is normal nomenclature for an anthropologist, but the word "ghost" in North America now connotes scariness, not holiness. When the prophet Tavibo commands, "Dance to call those ghosts alive again. / Dance, and all the white men will disappear,/ their horses and their goods remain," I think kids would find Tavibo not only frightening, but weird and greedy.

Also frightening is the cover picture depicting an exterior view of Tavibo's son Wovoka experiencing a vision. The dark, shadowed Wovoka is downright menacing. (In one historical account I checked, Wovoka is described as a "gentle" shaman who "preached a peaceful doctrine.") Spooky too are the