

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.

Kenneth Radu's most recent book is a collection of connected poems, Romanian Suite (Brick Books). He teaches English at John Abbott College in Ste-Anne de Bellevue, Quebec.

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 Molle'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

later depictions of Indians and spirits dancing. The photo-montages of artifacts are arresting and seemingly authentic, but the paintings of visions (later seen from the inside too) are intellectually, emotionally, and visually murky.

In short, the confusingly-elliptical text and pseudo-mystical paintings are hysterical rather than inspirational. This interpretation of Amerindian spirituality requires much tolerating of Euroamerican foibles.

So much for my opinion. Here are the gentle words of Merle Assance Beedie, a descendant of Ojibwe and Pottawatomi chiefs, and an elder: "Ghost Dance is a nice, strong book. The pictures really conjure up images of the past. There are not many books of this calibre about our people. But our story just can't be told any longer by non-Native persons. Their perspective is not the same. It can't be the same." By the way, Beedie is the author of a picture book about Native spirituality called *Our First Family Circle*, illustrated and published by Native people in 1995. To order this book contact Anishinaabe Kendaswin Publishing, RR #1, Jubilee Road, Side Road #4, Muncey, Ontario N0L 1Y0. One of the illustrators is a brother of the man killed in the summer of 1995 at the protest in Ipperwash Provincial Park. Artistically, *Our First Family Circle* is not as sophisticated as *The Ghost Dance*, but perhaps it is truer.

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Retelling the Classics

Atalanta: The Fastest Runner in the World. Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Normand Cousineau. Annick, 1995 (Tales of Ancient Lands). 80 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-463-X. *Aleta and the Queen: A Tale of Ancient Greece.* Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Normand Cousineau. Annick, 1995 (Tales of Ancient Lands). 160 pp. \$14.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-462-1. *The Wanderings of Odysseus: The Story of the Odyssey.* Rosemary Sutcliff. Illus. Alan Lee. Frances Lincoln, 1995. 120 pp. \$26.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7112-0862-X.

