

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.



Priscilla Galloway has retold two Greek legends for readers aged nine to twelve. The shorter book by half (80 pages vs. 160) is about Atalanta, the virgin huntress of Greek myth. Galloway's book retells her story in a very personal way, with the characters expressing their feelings in dialogue, and the narrator revealing their thoughts. This "close up" approach makes the story more involving for young people, as they can view heroes and heroines as people whose hopes and fears are very real.

The *Atalanta* book recounts the well-known incidents of her life — especially the Caledonian Boar Hunt, and the competition for her hand in marriage. There is considerable emphasis on the gods and their roles, not surprisingly as Atalanta was closely associated with (and virtually a human version of) the virgin huntress goddess Artemis.

The early Greeks felt the tension and opposition between Artemis and Aphrodite (the goddess of sexual relations) very strongly. Young girls, especially, had a very decided transition around ages fourteen or fifteen from being devotees of Artemis to being followers of Aphrodite. Some of this tension is reflected in the story of Atalanta, and her desire not to wed.

There were, however, no nuns in those days, and no feminists in our sense of the word. Dr. Galloway does attempt to suggest "empowerment" themes for young female readers. Whether it is appropriate for her to suggest (at the end of the book) that Atalanta can still remain ambivalent about marriage is open to doubt, since the competition just over was specifically to determine whom she would marry. As in any good folk tale, the contest for her hand ends in marriage. Galloway omits the sequel that Atalanta and Milanion were punished by the gods for consummating their marriage within a temple precinct.

I read this story to my ten-year-old daughter who found the adventures of the heroine quite engrossing. She had problems, however, with the extensive role given to the Greek gods, and had trouble relating these deities to her concept of God and of spirits. They frankly made her very nervous.

Galloway's second tale, *Aleta and the Queen*, recounts the story of the wanderings and return of Odysseus, as told from the perspective of people left at home. This is made more relevant to young readers by inventing a girl named Aleta who works at the palace of Odysseus. Her grandmother Kleea is Queen Penelope's trusted confidante, while her mother Nesta is one of the disloyal maidservants. This allows a "close up" of the feelings and attitudes of people at home.

By further fictionalizing the story this way, Galloway has the problem of providing not only background to *The Odyssey* itself, but to the additional plot which she has created. This makes the first chapter somewhat heavy going, but it pays off later by providing added interest to the denouement.

Galloway builds on the Ithaca (home front) episodes of Homer, and wisely avoids retelling all of Odysseus's wanderings. The only wayfaring adventure told at length is the hero's escape from the cyclops Polyphemus. For

the most part the story is told through Aleta's eyes with the emphasis on Penelope and the troubles at the palace.

Although she has her eye on a contemporary female audience, Galloway is generally true to the nature of the tales she tells. She gets into the spirit of the story, so that her own incidents and asides have the ring of authenticity to them. The illustrations by Normand Cousineau are boldly expressive, and have considerable appeal for the intended audience. They incorporate motifs, images, and stylistic touches from archaic Greek art into a style which is nonetheless modern.

Galloway's version of *The Odyssey* does not suffer from comparison with Rosemary Sutcliff's version of the same legend. *The Wanderings of Odysseus* is a sequel to her *Black Ships Before Troy* (the story of the Iliad), and was completed just before Sutcliff's death in 1992.

It is a very attractive book. The illustrator, Alan Lee, won the Kate Greenaway Medal for *Black Ships*. His illustrations evoke nineteenth century idealistic treatments of Greek myth, yet they combine this with contemporary "magic realism."

Whereas Galloway uses various techniques to make her tales "close up" and "relevant," Sutcliff uses a traditional third person narrative style throughout. Those parts of the Odyssey which Homer's Odysseus told in the first person are recounted in Sutcliff's version by the author/narrator.

Galloway focuses on the women at home in the palace, and their situation and difficulties, but Sutcliff tells the story following Homer, except that, quite reasonably, she incorporates the wanderings of Odysseus into the main narrative. In Homer these adventures are told by the hero as "flashbacks," or the story within the story.

As with "Tales from Shakespeare" adult readers will miss the little significant touches that great authors such as Homer and Shakespeare toss off regarding life and human nature. As a result Sutcliff's rather streamlined narrative may seem a little flat. On the plus side, she unobtrusively gives necessary background information as she goes along.

Sutcliff's narrative has more of the feel of epic about it, and is much closer to the original. As such it will probably appeal to parents who regard a knowledge of Homer as an important part of one's education. There is something, however, to be said for Galloway's more "popular" approach to the legend.

There remains, in both cases, a considerable leap for the intended audience which must jump from the "Baby Sitters' Club" to Greek Myth. I lean to the opinion that the Galloway books will be the more successful in bridging this gap.

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