



**Multicultural Folk and Fairy Tales for Children:
Around the World in Eight Picture Books**
—Melissa Li Sheung Ying

Alrawi, Karim. *The Mouse Who Saved Egypt*. Illus. Bee Willey. Vancouver: Tradewind, 2011. 32 pp. \$16.95 hc. ISBN 9781896580791. Print.

Andrews, Jan. *When Apples Grew Noses and White Horses Flew: Tales of Ti-Jean*. Illus. Dušan Petričić. Toronto: Greenwood, 2011. 72 pp. \$16.95 hc. ISBN 9780888999528. Print.

Asch, Frank. *Happy Birthday, Big Bad Wolf*. Toronto: Kids Can, 2011. 32 pp. \$16.95 hc. ISBN 9781553373681. Print.

Becker, Helaine. *Juba This, Juba That*. Illus. Ron Lightburn. Toronto: Tundra, 2011. 24 pp. \$19.99 hc. ISBN 9780887769757. Print.

Davis, Aubrey. *A Hen for Izzy Pippik*. Illus. Marie Lafrance. Toronto: Kids Can, 2012. 32 pp. \$18.95 hc. ISBN 9781554532438. Print.

Hood, Susan. *The Tooth Mouse*. Illus. Janice Nadeau. Toronto: Kids Can, 2012. 32 pp. \$16.95 hc. ISBN 9781554535651. Print.

Krishnaswami, Uma. *The Girl of the Wish Garden: A Thumbelina Story*. Illus. Nasrin Khosravi. Toronto: Greenwood, 2013. 32 pp. \$17.95 hc. ISBN 9781554983247. Print.

Ondaatje, Griffin. *The Camel in the Sun*. Illus. Linda Wolfsgruber. Toronto: Greenwood, 2013. 40 pp. \$17.95 hc. ISBN 9781554983810. Print.

“In a country of multicultural heritage,” Eileen Tway suggests, “children require books that reflect and illuminate that varied heritage” (109). Canadian publishers Tundra Books, Kids Can Press, and Greenwood Books since the 1970s and Tradewind Books since 1996 have the shared goal to promote

societal changes in Canada, a goal that is rooted partly in the country’s governmental policies on immigration and bilingualism as well as in neo-liberal conceptions of multiculturalism with its beginnings in the 1970s and 1980s. As such, it is not surprising that the four publishers behind the eight books reviewed here are

well known for giving “English-speaking Canadian children . . . access to picturebooks that deliberately [reflect] the evolving model of Canadian society as explicitly multicultural” (Edwards and Saltman 2).

Although publishers play a significant role in the dissemination and promotion of multicultural-themed books for young readers, the focus of this review is on the expressive plurality of voices coming from authors and illustrators in contemporary Canadian children’s publishing, with an examination of eight books published within the last five years. As Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman observe in their extensive study *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children’s Illustrated Books and Publishing*, the movement from stories of adventure and wilderness (associated with earlier Canadian children’s literature) to recent texts that reflect the “ethnocultural diversity of Canadian society” (3) marks a specifically Canadian distinction in picture books. That said, while the books featured here do not address multiculturalism in terms of issues such as immigration, war, justice, and freedom, they contribute nonetheless in their own ways to the building of a contemporary cultural mosaic that promotes a Canadian identity open to heritage languages and ethnocultural traditions. Edwards and Saltman provide a number of examples of picture books from the 1970s to the 1990s that exemplify the risks for authors and illustrators in speaking for and representing cultural stories and practices within their collaborations, as well as the

decidedly purposeful omissions that occur for a variety of causes and reasons. The books included in this review attempt to go beyond the dangers of misrepresentation and cultural appropriation, even though no multicultural book can escape such issues fully.

To add another layer of complexity to this already intricate mosaic, we cannot ignore the role the picture book format has in communicating the ideas mentioned above to a young audience, nor can we gloss over the use of folk-tale and fairy-tale genres to explore the heritage cultures and traditional texts brought forward by these four Canadian publishers and their mandates. Because picture books are “invariably the first books that children encounter” (Graham 209), they carry with them a unique ability “in an increasingly visual, image-based culture” (Salisbury and Styles 7) to introduce and to integrate children into a specific culture while encouraging a diverse set of readings (Salisbury and Styles 75). Moreover, the use of folk-tale and fairy-tale genres within the picture book format contributes to the ongoing trend to adapt and (re)interpret older texts for contemporary readers. Because these fluid genres can be revised and altered to fit a current audience and level of readership, their presence in picture books has a long history of beautifully illustrated texts for children; present-day additions to this type of text prove to be increasingly more playful, experimental, and self-aware in both their narration and their visuals than those that came before. This review explores the extent to

which the picture book as a uniquely visual format can allow, especially in its incorporation of folk-tale and fairy-tale elements, for diverse readings in a selection of contemporary picture-book texts.

Of Weeping Camels, Egyptian Mice, Brave Girls, and Yellow Cats: The Folk Tales

The texts of this review fall into two groupings, each of which deserves a quick word. The distinction between a folk tale and a fairy tale is a very literal one: according to Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, “‘Folk tale’ means exactly what it says; it’s a tale of the folk” (15), while a fairy tale denotes a literary tradition, where a tale has an identified author and is transmitted through print but maintains symbols, motifs, and settings of an oral tradition (Stott and Jones 528). Because the “folk” or “common people” of a nation generally were illiterate, folk tales maintained permanence through word of mouth as passed down from generation to generation and could also “express ideas or morals important to the culture” (Stott and Jones 527). Like a game of broken telephone, however, where one person whispers a sentence to his or her neighbour, who then passes it on to the next individual until the circle is complete, the words by the end of the game inevitably undergo a transformation as they are misheard, misunderstood, and improved upon with each subsequent telling (Hallett and Karasek 16). The four folkloric texts reviewed here are rooted distinctly in the oral tradition of tale telling.

As well, these four contemporary texts fall on the fine and sometimes provocative line between respectful reinterpretation and cultural appropriation. As mentioned briefly above, picture books exploring multicultural diversity throughout the 1980s and 1990s have been criticized for misappropriation of voice, according to Edwards and Saltman, regardless of the level of research done by authors and illustrators: the “risk of ‘speaking for’ rather than ‘speaking with’ the culture they are attempting to represent” (195) can become a point of great contention.

In their 2013 collaboration *The Camel in the Sun*, author Griffin Ondaatje and illustrator Linda Wolfsgruber attempt explicitly to avoid running the risk mentioned above with young readers. An emotionally and spiritually charged story inspired by a traditional Muslim Hadith that the author had heard while visiting Sri Lanka, the narrative begins with a hard-working camel whose merchant owner has eyes only for the large bundles of goods he needs to get from place to place as quickly as possible. Unsympathetic to his camel’s suffering, Halim continues to overwork his camel until the Prophet Muhammad appears to him in a dream and allows him to experience and finally to understand the camel’s long-endured pain and loneliness.

Ondaatje’s narrative lyricism and Wolfsgruber’s complementary earth-coloured monoprints with scratchy sharp lines offer young readers an important



The beautifully muted mixture of browns, golds, oranges, and reds adds significantly to the overall emotional impact of the tale, but it also creates a sense of exoticism in its evocation of a far-off time and place.



lesson about kindness and compassion toward both animals and humans. It is their treatment of the Prophet Muhammad, however, that most emphasizes their respectful awareness of the roles they occupy as (re)tellers for young readers of an oral tradition at a contemporary time, especially for readers who may be experiencing this culture for the first time through their book. In keeping with Islamic tradition, the Prophet is not depicted bodily in the illustrations, and the importance of this fact is stressed in a brief acknowledgement on the copyright page and within the author's note concluding the story (39–40). The integrity of the text and the illustrations revolves around this small but significant detail, all of which accentuates Ondaatje's and Wolfsgruber's awareness of the cultural impact they expect their book to have on young Canadian readers through the visual and textual combination of their work. While still ensuring that the Prophet's presence—although never pictured—is felt, Wolfsgruber provides in her illustrations a perspective that is closer to the conventions found in traditional Islamic art.

In contrast, there is more difficulty in escaping cultural or social stereotyping in terms of the desert setting, no matter the level of research or basis in the "real." According to the book jacket, the desert featured in *The Camel in the Sun* reflects Wolfsgruber's time spent living in Iran. The beautifully muted mixture of browns, golds, oranges, and reds adds significantly to the overall emotional impact of the tale, but it also creates a sense of exoticism in its evocation of a far-off time and place. Depictions of desert landscapes are long rooted in an orientalist vision or fantasy that is known to exaggerate, imagine, emphasize, and distort in their "playful experimentations of identity" (Teo 2). While I do not believe that Wolfsgruber's attempts are of this nature, it must be admitted that the desert depicted is, on

one level, an imaginative re-envisioning, even if it is drawn from first-hand experience.

The desert locale that appears in *The Mouse Who Saved Egypt*, however, clearly depicts a romanticized and faraway time. Like *The Camel in the Sun*, this ancient Egyptian folk tale teaches the rewards of kindness in a story of a young prince who rescues a mouse from a thorn bush. When the prince becomes pharaoh and is threatened by a powerful enemy, the grateful mouse returns the act of kindness by gathering his friends together to chew through the leather of the enemy's weapons and clothing. In gratitude, the pharaoh builds a temple to the sun god Ra and includes a golden statue of a mouse to remind the people of Egypt "that every act of kindness is rewarded—though sometimes in unexpected ways" (32).

Notably, the narrative is retold by acclaimed Egyptian playwright and free speech activist Karim Alrawi. The choices made by this author echo a point made earlier by Edwards and Saltman: because Alrawi is of the culture he is choosing to represent within his book, he is "speaking for" a culture from within it, a connection that eliminates purposeful distortion or misrepresentation. Evidence for this can be seen in the language Alrawi uses: it is particularly unembellished, and when the prayer for Ra appears, it is delivered with adoration and gravity: "*I, Amon-Ra, give life to this land, / Yet my image lies buried deep in*

the sand. / Neglected, forgotten, banished from sight, / I'll make him pharaoh who brings it to light" (4; emphasis in original).

Illustrator Bee Willey's digital-media images take more artistic licence when it comes to her visual interpretation of Alrawi's narrative. Willey's ancient Egypt reveals a sandy, sunrise/sunset palette and vastly calm landscapes, but most prominent are the subtle hints of humour found throughout her double-page spreads but not in Alrawi's narrative. A quietly grinning horse that looks at readers directly, men who stand in the likeness of the hieroglyphs that adorn the pillars and walls around them, and members of the defeated enemy army who run (some without clothing) with arms flailing above their heads are only some examples of Willey's comical interpretation of Alrawi's text. That said, in connecting *The Mouse Who Saved Egypt* to the multicultural Canadian vision in the current picture-book industry, Willey's added humour does not subtract from the overall cultural themes implied by Alrawi's story, nor does it disregard the pedagogic turn established.

In comparison, *A Hen for Izzy Pippik* by author Aubrey Davis and illustrator Marie Lafrance is much quieter in tone, colour, and action. Based on a tale from the Babylonian Talmud and a Hadith from the Prophet Muhammad, Davis and Lafrance's story of Shaina's determination to do the right thing in the face of adversity offers a strong moral for young readers

while adding to the multicultural mosaic of Canadian children's literature in its exploration of Jewish and Islamic cultures. When Shaina finds Yevka the hen on her doorstep, she decides to keep it safe until Izzy Pippik, the hen's rightful owner, returns. When Yevka's eggs begin to hatch and the chickens run amok all over town, Shaina must fend off the hungry, angry villagers who see the increasing group of birds as both a nuisance and a potential source of food. They change their minds later when the birds attract tourists to the town, making business boom and the villagers reluctant to return the flock to Izzy Pippik. Shaina remains steadfast in her decision to keep Yekva and her family safe from the villagers and, in the end, everyone remains happy when Izzy Pippik bestows his chickens to the town.

Unfortunately, there is no author's note included at the back of the book either to confirm or to offer insight into Davis's and Lafrance's decisions in adapting such an ancient tale, with sources from two cultures, into a literary format. The acknowledgement on the book jacket of the combined use of the Talmud and the Hadith by Kids Can Press, however, conforms to notions of Canadian cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism by promoting cultural connections and—to use the words of Isabel Pascua, a professor of translation at the University of Las Palmas in Spain—a “diversity that reflects Canadian values of respect and tolerance” (qtd. in Edwards and Saltman 210)

in expressing a moral important to both Jewish and Islamic cultures.

Lafrance's detailed illustrations, rendered in pencil and coloured in Adobe Photoshop, suggest as well that careful attention has been paid to the cultural customs at hand. Following Jewish tradition, most of the adult women are depicted with head coverings or scarves covering their hair, whereas the men's clothing shares a dark-grey-and-white palette. The only exceptions are Shaina's grandfather, who wears a red-checked shirt with his grey trousers, and Shaina herself, whose light-green dress shares its colouring with Yevka's tail feathers. In addition, Yevka's bright-red comb complements Shaina's red bow, and the matching flicks of Shaina's long braid and Yevka's black tail emphasize the close connection between girl and hen and what their growing relationship to each other represents. While the political discourses that connect the contentious histories of Islamic and Jewish traditions do not make an appearance within the vaguely ancient time period of the narrative, the lesson of *tikkum olam*¹ does promote a call for action in viewing the world openly as Shaina eventually learns to do with the help of her grandfather. As such, the universal lesson promoted through both text and illustrations serves to reinforce a very Canadian-inspired identity rooted in co-operation despite differences—an idealized vision, perhaps, but a valuable one all the same.

Author Helaine Becker and illustrator Ron Lightburn's *Juba This, Juba That* also works with visual and textual connections—only this time, the lessons learned are not in terms of kindness or compassion but rather in terms of playful opposites and prepositions. Based on a traditional “juba” handclapping game and song from Nigeria that was carried over to the New World by slaves and passed down orally from generation to generation, *Juba This, Juba That* is the strongest example of the books in this review that reveals the difficult balance between preserving aspects of an oral tradition while feeling the need to shift it for various reasons to ensure “appropriateness” within the multicultural framework that Canadian publishers may prefer for the market of young readers and their parents.

In an interview with Open Book Toronto, Becker admits that “[t]he hardest part of writing *Juba This, Juba That* was staying true to the spirit of the original words, but taking out the violent and often unpleasant imagery that was woven through the original.” As such, the opening lines of the narrative—“Juba this, Juba that, / Juba spies a yellow cat” (2)—replace the following found in one version of the original: “Juba dis and Juba dat / and Juba killed da yellow cat” (Watson). In this way, Becker purposely conserves the catchy rhyme and rhythm of the original chant, but she lends her lines to a gentler image of Juba and the cat, who, contrary to the earlier version, strike up a friendship as they explore a nighttime carnival together.

In a fantasy-filled and playful way, Lightburn affirms Becker's textual choices with his motion-packed illustrations of Juba and the yellow cat. With his simple palette of vibrantly festive carnival colours, he fuels the dreamlike quality of the adventure at hand as Juba and the cat twist and shout, giggle at their stretched-out reflections in funhouse mirrors, and attempt to guess how many candies are in a jar. Lightburn's choice of bright-red pyjamas with a yellow collar and cuffs for Juba has a twofold effect: first, it keeps the focus of each page on Juba and his developing sense of imagination and creativity, and second, it connects the boy visually and metaphorically to the cat's own yellow colouring. Additionally, apart from the occasional orange and pink, the strong repetition of blue, green, red, and yellow in all illustrations acts as a persistent reminder of the Nigerian cultural heritage the young boy possesses. By returning full circle to the originally adverse source of inspiration for the text, the imaginary and playful visuals and upbeat, finger-snapping lines conform understandably to what is deemed “appropriate” and does preserve the original rhythms and energy for today's young audience to experience in a pedagogic way. One cannot deny, however, the more sinister undertones attached to the romanticized aspects of this Nigerian oral tradition and folklore as seen in the short excerpt of one version of the chant above.



One may argue that these four picture books continue to reflect an unrealistic vision of perfect Canadian multiculturalism



Between camels, mice, a determined little girl, and a young boy and his cat, the folkloric stories in this section do at least two things: they provide “multiple perspectives” in order to yield “a critical vantage point from which to understand them” (Gopalakrishnan 10), and they comment on the ways in which Canadian publishers today are expanding the acceptance of multiculturalism yet unquestionably are still challenged by the nuances of what it means to negotiate “intercultural tensions [by] being tolerant of minority groups” (Edwards and Saltman 196). One may argue that these four picture books continue to reflect an unrealistic vision of perfect Canadian multiculturalism, especially since they all contain explicitly positive messages of tolerance, sensitivity, and inclusion. This model can also be supported, however, in its attempt to educate children into “creating opportunities of understanding” (Gopalakrishnan 10) and to provide them with ways of seeing themselves within the unique format of the picture book through the relationship between text and image.

Of Thumb-Sized Girls, Tooth Fairy Mice, Big Bad Wolves, and Clever Heroes: The Fairy Tales

The next four books contain a similar pedagogic outlook on the folk-tale texts discussed above and can “be seen as a continuum” of the oral tradition of tale telling (Hallett and Karasek 17). Circulated in multiple versions, the fairy tale remains “reconfigured by each telling to form kaleidoscopic variations with distinctly different effects” (Tatar, Introduction, *Classic* ix), a process that recharges the narrative, “making it crackle and hiss with cultural energy” (Tatar, Introduction, *Cambridge* 1). The four fairy-tale texts under review here all embody this fiery “crackle and hiss” in introducing Canadian children to tales that exude a level of familiarity, yet they offer a range of perspectives

on the specific cultural roots the authors and illustrators choose to explore.

Author Uma Krishnaswami's *The Girl of the Wish Garden: A Thumbelina Story* takes its inspiration from two sources: Hans Christian Andersen's Thumbelina text and Nasrin Khosravi's artwork. Just as with the authors discussed above, Krishnaswami's role as a (re)teller makes her rendition a delicate balance between staying true to "certain features of Andersen's immortal wonder tales," as she reveals in her author's note (31), and honouring the artistic liberties taken by Khosravi in her artwork. Because Krishnaswami wrote her text after she had encountered Khosravi's interpretation of the Thumbelina tale, there is a unique collaborative process among the texts in this review. As such, Khosravi's images (versus Krishnaswami's text) become the first base of interpretation, as does her blending of art styles drawn from her Iranian heritage and a stylistic flair reminiscent of Marc Chagall.

The trouble for Lina, who is no bigger than a thumb, starts when a hungry frog snatches her up and traps her on a lily pad. To free herself, she sings to the fish to cut the lily pad free, then to the butterflies to carry her up into a tree. When Lina yearns for "the warmth of another living soul" (9), she pushes onward to find temporary comfort in keeping house for a mouse. Eventually, Lina finds true solace in nursing back to health a nearly dead swallow she finds. Because of her kindness, she receives the ultimate reward: the bird

transforms into a little prince and they live happily together. Krishnaswami reveals that "where the art departed from Andersen's narrative, I followed" (31), and the omission of a repulsive prospective marriage to a mole is one example of where Krishnaswami's poetic words reinforce Khosravi's own re-envisioning for a contemporary audience. Lina's ability to help herself out of dangerous situations is also emphasized, challenging the traditional "damsel in distress" convention in a postmodern way.

Another book that challenges traditional female fairy-tale conventions is *The Tooth Mouse*, by author Susan Hood and illustrator Janice Nadeau. When the old Tooth Mouse announces that she is seeking a successor, Sophie desperately wants to prove that she is right for the job. She is successful with the first two tasks, bringing La Petite Souris the whisker of a cat and an honestly earned silver coin. But the third is a daunting puzzle. After showing the final three competitors charts containing the names and addresses of the thousands of children who are expecting to lose a tooth within the next few days, La Petite Souris asks each of them to come up with a plan concerning what to do with all those baby teeth.

In keeping with the folk-based picture books discussed earlier, Hood and Nadeau's collaboration contains a lesson for young readers about being brave and moral while introducing them to a story that contains a few familiar aspects of the Tooth Fairy that

Canadian readers may know best. The chart on the last tooth-filled endpapers demonstrates that the book itself—and Hood’s and Nadeau’s roles as (re)tellers of this French version—is part of a much larger tradition of understanding with its inclusive list of mythical beings who take baby teeth in a number of countries. Nadeau’s choice to make Sophie visually unique to readers—she is the smallest mouse of all the contenders and stands out in her pink skirt and matching bow on her tail—goes along with contemporary North American conventions that the tooth-fairy figure consists of a feminine presence and that there is an aura of mystery and magic about her. Nadeau also complements Hood’s textual decisions regarding Sophie and represents her as a high-spirited, ballet-dancing mouse whose cleverness and self-sufficiency ultimately reward her with La Petite Souris’s black beret and finely carved staff.

Although *The Tooth Mouse* and *The Girl of the Wish Garden* both place their female protagonists in strong, independent positions for a modern audience, the books still exemplify the motif that goodness results in just rewards but bad behaviour leads to downfall—perhaps another typical facet of the fairy-tale genre and something different from the overall positive appeal of the folkloric texts discussed earlier. Sophie is rewarded with her new position as La Petite Souris not only for her ingenuity but also for her honesty (she does not resort to thievery to get her silver coin in the second task). Lina is rewarded for her selfless compassion by the bird turned

prince, who whisks her off to where “the sun shines bright / and the winds blow free / and music makes dreams / come true” (25).

The good/bad motif is upended once again in Frank Asch’s *Happy Birthday, Big Bad Wolf*. In this postmodern retelling of the British folk story “The Three Little Pigs,” Asch casts the Big Bad Wolf as anything but that big or that bad, which challenges common perceptions surrounding the Wolf and may even extend to the lessons of tolerance and acceptance that the folk-tale picture books promote. Dressed in grey trousers with a blue vest over his white T-shirt, the Wolf looks unthreatening. Asch emphasizes this softness further by having Little Pig mistake the idea of his family hiding behind the sofa (out of fear) for a surprise birthday welcome for the Wolf. Physical violence is notably absent and transposed in a more comical manner: the Wolf foregoes the traditional huff and puff to get through the Pigs’ front door and uses it instead toward his birthday cake candles. As with Krishnaswami’s and Hood’s texts, Asch keeps certain details to maintain familiarity, but even if the Wolf’s recognizable hunger and supposed “badness” still drives the plot at the beginning, humour is key to Asch’s re-envisioning and makes his version unique in its depiction of the Wolf and the Pigs. The final image of the book, for instance, features a family portrait of the Pigs with one new member—the Wolf, with arms around the shoulders of both Poppa and Momma Pig as he smiles down at Little

Pig standing in front of him. In addition, the circular border of the portrait indicates acceptance, inclusion, and wholeness—a perfect happily-ever-after ending that plays in a postmodern way with the traditional antagonistic relationship between the Wolf and the Pigs.

Geared to a slightly older audience with its chapter-like sections and sparse but lively images by Dušan Petričić, Jan Andrews's *When Apples Grew Noses and White Horses Flew: Tales of Ti-Jean* focuses on an everyman hero whom the author compares to the "Jack in English fairy tales" (11) and who travels to far-off lands, outwits a greedy princess, is challenged by the scoundrel Bonnet Rouge, and finds true love by evening's end. Andrews keeps contemporary readers in mind, acknowledging in a brief introduction that the text is part of a much larger tradition of French Canadian oral storytelling:

Many, many people have created stories about [Ti-Jean] over the years. They've told those stories around fires and in logging camps, in countryside and in town. They've remembered those stories—perhaps not quite exactly, but what they have remembered, they've passed on.

What does that say? I think it says that if you have an urge to tell a Ti-Jean story or make one up, you should do it, but you should also be careful to share that story with someone else. (11)

Grounding her position as only one of many tellers of the Ti-Jean tales (11, 69), Andrews raises an awareness of and fosters an appreciation for cultural diversity in her young audience, while encouraging a sense of creativity and imagination through her rendition. The brief moments of French language found at the conclusions of each chapter accentuate the French and Québécois heritage present even if the publication itself is written for English speakers. Moreover, a note on sources at the end of the book confirms Andrews's attentiveness to her position as both a teller and a reteller. Full of magic and seemingly impossible feats, her Ti-Jean tales are matched by Petričić's equally fantastic take on the coyly smiling, straggly haired hero and his magical adventures. These black and white images are perhaps enchantingly romantic in their unspecified but ancient time period, but they do uphold a clever, witty, and comical complement to the details in Andrews's textual rendition.

Conclusion

In the context of multiculturalism as a key concept in society, Hallett and Karasek are of the opinion that "the fairy tale offers a unique opportunity to introduce students to a literary form that is familiar and simple, yet multi-dimensional" (12). As they note further, "our moods, desires, and emotions will inevitably affect what is heard; we hear what we want (or expect) to hear" (16). The authors and illustrators of the books

in this review are no exception to this statement. While maintaining a generally positive and respectful outlook on the stories and cultures they explore in their texts, these authors and illustrators possess the power and the choice to shift, alter, and emphasize elements for reasons surrounding appropriateness and respectability that are driven by everyone involved in the book industry: publishers, parents, teachers, and child readers. How these eight books contribute to a multicultural Canadian identity is, on one level, an easy one: the selection of these books for publication by Canadian publishers illustrates their commitment to promoting multiculturalism in Canada, as well as a type of outlook and dialogue they wish to promote in the twenty-first century. Whether or not these are thoughtful reinterpretations or are examples of texts “speaking for the other” is a more difficult decision.

Some books like *The Camel in the Sun*, *The Girl of the Wish Garden*, and *When Apples Grew Noses and White Horses Flew* are forthright in their authors’ notes and sources, which helps to confirm the positions authors and illustrators aim to uphold in their textual and visual decisions. Others like *Juba This, Juba That* require a bit of research and ask us to sympathize with the difficult choices made. There is always a risk of “speaking for” instead of “speaking with” the cultures depicted in texts, to return to a point made earlier by Edwards and Saltman, and while some of these books may be approached in this manner for what may be an idealistic and romantic outlook on multiculturalism, these authors and illustrators—I would argue—do demonstrate their acknowledgement of the social and cultural relevance of their roles as (re)tellers within the Canadian multicultural mosaic and literary tradition.

Note

¹ According to the reading guide created for *A Hen for Izzy Pippik* by the website *PJ Library: Jewish Bedtime Stories and Song*,

Tikkun Olam is translated from the Hebrew as “repairing the world.” The phrase is found in the Mishna, an ancient book of

Torah commentary. Today many Jews recognize *tikkun olam* as an opportunity for social activism. Discussing *tikkun olam* in the context of this book provides parents with a chance to teach their children what values are important to them, emphasizing the importance of being the best person one can be. (“Reading”)

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Melissa Li Sheung Ying is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Queen's University. While her primary areas of specialization are Canadian literature and children's literature, she also has interests in folk tales, fairy tales, literature and the environment, and world literature.