

Depictions of Race in Caldecott Medal Picture Books

Jefferson Peters*

Contents

- 1 American Race and Picture Books
- 2 Fourteen Caldecott Winners Featuring Characters of Color
 - 2.1 *Mei Li* (1938) by Thomas Handforth
 - 2.2 *Song of the Swallows* (1949) by Leo Politi
 - 2.3 *Once a Mouse...*(1961) by Marcia Brown
 - 2.4 *The Snowy Day* (1962) by Ezra Jack Keats
 - 2.5 *A Story—A Story* (1970) by Gail E. Haley
 - 2.6 *The Funny Little Woman* (1972) by Arlene Mosel and Blair Lent
 - 2.7 *Arrow to the Sun* (1974) by Gerald McDermott
 - 2.8 *Ashanti to Zulu : African Traditions* (1976) by Margaret Musgrove and Leo and Diane Dillon
 - 2.9 *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (1978) by Paul Goble
 - 2.10 *Shadow* (1982) by Marcia Brown
 - 2.11 *Lon Po Po : A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* (1989) by Ed Young

* 福岡大学人文学部教授

2.12 *Grandfather's Journey* (1993) by Allen Say

2.13 *Smoky Night* (1994) by Eve Bunting and David Diaz

2.14 *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (2005) by Norton Juster and Chris Raschka

3 Controversies and Conclusions

Works Cited

1 American Race and Picture Books

One of the most compelling and fraught aspects of American culture has always been race. From the birth of the nation until today, American history has been marked by race-based inequality, debate, and violence. Notwithstanding the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which “prohibited discrimination in employment and public facilities such as hotels and restaurants . . . on the basis of race, religion, or sex” (Hakim 256), and notwithstanding the election in 2008 of the first African American president in Barak Obama, there persist numerous racial fault lines in American culture. Among them are the persistent use of racial profiling by police and the disproportionately high number of African and Hispanic Americans lacking employment, languishing in prison, and living in poverty. Racial controversies regularly shake the United States. On June 25, 2013, for example, the US Supreme Court struck down the fourth section of the Voter Rights Act (which was signed into law on August 6, 1965 in order to prohibit unfairly difficult voting registration tests from being given to would-be voters of color), because, according to the majority opinion, there is no longer any voter discrimination in the USA. According to critics, however, the judgment freed Republican-dominated state governments to install strict voter registration policies that critics claim will once again disenfranchise people of color of their right to vote, ushering in “The Return of Jim Crow” (Ber-

man) and proving that “America is Not a Post-Racial Society” (Blackwell). In short, in this year of the 51st anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, things are racially much better in the USA than they were before 1964, but they are still far from ideal, and one wonders if King’s dream will ever come true.

There are many angles from which to approach the problems, benefits, and visions of race in America, but in this paper I would like to examine depictions of race in American picture books. Picture books have long been scrutinized for their perceived effects on children’s consciousness, and were throughout the twentieth century the foci of fierce debates about the ostensible ways in which children’s minds benefit or suffer from the books they read and the images they see in them, and some of the most intense controversies have involved race in picture books. One infamous example is the furor over Garth Williams’ charming book *The Rabbit’s Wedding* (1958), which featured a black rabbit groom and a white rabbit bride, and which was therefore condemned and banned in the south in 1959 for “promoting miscegenation” (Friedberg 368–69). Because children are quick learners of language and culture—and are perceived to be so susceptible to being shaped by what they read—one would expect children’s books to reflect America’s evolving vision of race and the vision of race it wants children to learn.

In *Discovering Children’s Literature* (1999), Judith Hillman provides a thorough overview of the picture book medium, focusing at first on its deep affect on children.

Picture books are frequently a child’s first contact with a wider world. Listening and watching an adult read a picture book aloud is the first vicarious journey a young child takes, as the experience introduces abstrac-

tions through art and language. . . . [and] triggers the imagination and introduces concepts for cognitive and language development. . . . [and fosters] intellectual and emotional growth. (91)

In their extensive and well-documented blog article, “Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls” (2001), Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese similarly highlight the “psychosocial” role of picture books in developing children’s verbal and cultural literacy, citing studies that prove that the medium “offer[s] young children a multitude of opportunities to gain information, to become familiar with print, to be entertained, and to experience perspectives other than their own.” Needless to say, picture books shape children’s conceptions of race. For Mendoza and Reese, in picture books “The child sees representations of people . . . that foster impressions of whatever sorts of people are being portrayed,” and therefore “any given picture book featuring people may have a didactic outcome, even if teaching was not the book’s intent.”

Just as America’s racial history is troubled, with long periods of overt discrimination and racism giving way to covert discrimination and racism, as well, surely, to greater equality and respect, we might expect a similar development to be reflected in picture books. It is difficult to overstate the pervasiveness of racist representations of nonwhite characters in children’s literature before the latter half of the twentieth century. Katherine Capshaw Smith, for instance, exposes racism in classic children’s novels: “some of the most respected texts in the canon . . . contain representations that offer prejudicial constructions of race, including France Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911), Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House series, and J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1911)” (190). Even as children’s books were depicting people of color in negatively stereo-

typical ways, they were also at least as often completely ignoring them, leaving them invisible. In 1965, Nancy Larrick published an influential article called “The All-White World of Children’s Books” in which her research demonstrated that most books for children (including picture books) lacked any minorities and that the few books that depicted them only perpetuated negative stereotypes. Larrick focused on the absence of books about African American children, surveying the 5,206 trade books published for children from 1962 to 1964, finding that only 349 books (6.7%) depicted one or more African Americans, and proving that as far as race goes, “Publishers have participated in a cultural lobotomy” (85). Seven years after Larrick’s article, Bettye Latimer proved in *Starting Out Right: Choosing Books About Black People for Young Children* (1972) that there were still not enough characters of color in children’s literature and that there were still too many stereotypes of them, so that white children were learning a false view of American culture. This all began changing during the era of the civil rights movement. As Hillman explains, “Trends that began in the 1960s, a decade of turbulent change, continue to evolve and find expression in recent [picture] books. Subjects previously considered taboo or inappropriate for young children are available, such as physical abuse, as in *No-No the Little Seal* (1986); homophobia, as in *Daddy’s Roommate* (1990); [and] living with AIDS, as in *Too Far Away to Touch* (1995)” (105). To Hillman’s list we may add, of course, picture books overtly about race, like Arnold Adoff and Emily McCully’s *Black Is Brown Is Tan* (1973) and Julius Lester and Karen Barbour’s *Let’s Talk About Race* (2005).

Today the state of race in picture books is, like the situation of race in America, better but not yet ideal. Mendoza and Reese examine “multicultural” picture books, revealing that from the 1960s and 1970s people of color began

appearing in picture books exclusively made by white creators, and that in these days of “glacial” progress there are more picture books being made by people of color about people of color, but that they are mostly published by small presses. Similarly, although Michelle Martin believes “that we are now in the midst of the ‘Golden Age’ of African–American children’s picture books,” with more and more scholars studying African American children’s literature than ever before (xi–xiv), “the number of children’s books by black authors peaked at 216 [in 1997]” and has been decreasing since, “as huge publishers continue to buy out smaller presses, as larger publishing houses continue to become mega–publishers, and as the bookstores market becomes increasingly more controlled by chains that are more interested in publishing poor quality series books that sell well than higher quality books that expand the definition of children’s literature,” all of which means that “black authors and artists may find it harder to publish in the 2000s than they did in the 1990s” (xiii–xiv).

That there are still too few authentic depictions of race in children’s literature is unfortunate given their potential benefits. Donna E. Norton explains that minority children who read multicultural literature may “realize that they have a cultural heritage of which they can be proud” (581), while children of the white majority culture may “learn to respect the values and contributions of minority groups in the United States and the values and contributions of people in other parts of the world” (581). Mendoza and Reese emphasize “a dual role for multicultural children’s literature ; it can serve as a mirror or a window. A child may see his or her own life reflected in a book or may have an opportunity to see into someone else’s life.” To make a society in which people from different cultures respect and appreciate each other’s differences and similarities, Hazel Rochman believes that children should read books “with enthralling

stories that make us imagine the lives of others” so as to “change our view of ourselves” and “extend that phrase ‘like me’ to include what we thought was foreign and strange” (19).

If we agree with scholars and educators who believe that children should be open minded and interested in different kinds of people, and that reading books about people of different races helps them to become so, it is also true that not all books that feature people of color are equally effective at “dispelling prejudice and building community.” Clare Bradford explains that merely featuring some characters of color does not necessarily mean that a book is doing something multiculturally helpful: “Narratives which incorporate characters of various ethnicities do not necessarily engage with cultural difference, and it is important to consider not merely how many characters come from diverse ethnic backgrounds but how such characters and cultures are represented” (“Race” 49). Norton lists seventeen criteria for evaluating multicultural children’s literature, such as “Does the book transcend stereotypes?” “Are non-white characters shown as equals of white characters?” “Does the book rectify historical distortions or omissions?” and “Are the illustrations authentic and nonstereotypical?” (585). Nodelman favors “selecting books that accurately represent real racial and ethnic differences, but also mak[ing] it clear that these differences are more significantly cultural than basically genetic, and that they are historically constructed” (131). Ideally children will by themselves and with the participation of adults read a variety of genres, protagonists, settings, and plots in order to broaden and stimulate their minds and hearts regarding race and their world in general.

2 Fourteen Caldecott Winners Featuring Characters of Color

Faced with the countless American picture books published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I will focus in my paper on a manageable and useful set: the Caldecott Medal winners. In *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (2008), Seth Lerer recounts the origins of the two most prestigious annual awards for American children's books, the Newbery Medal for the best American book for children and the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished American picture book, which were created by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1922 and 1938 respectively. Lerer concludes that "Prizes such as these" have "helped shape the canon of [American] children's books since the 1920s" (274). Beverly Lyon Clark similarly describes how the two Medals are the central pillars of American children's literature (73–75). Caldecott Medal books are emblazoned with a gold foil seal on their covers, guaranteeing that they will sell many copies to families and libraries, will be studied by scholars, and will remain available—all but one of the seventy-six Medal winners are still in print. As Leonard S. Marcus puts it, "Winning the Caldecott ensures that a book . . . will be read by vast numbers of children. It increases the chances that a book will be published in other languages and adapted for video or even as a movie or for the stage" (4). Not surprisingly, Judith Hillman recommends that prospective teachers, librarians, and parents begin with a core of Caldecott-winning books and learn "to recognize the many styles those illustrators and authors represent" (90).

In his 1991 acceptance speech for his Caldecott Medal, David Macaulay describes "the impact of this [prize-giving] ritual on kids. That little foil seal has been put there to indicate something special. It denotes a book that will be opened with expectation and possibly even reverence" (17). He believes that

the winning books should encourage readers to see the world with more imagination, creativity, accuracy, and clarity (18), but do they encourage readers to see race in those ways? For that matter, how many Caldecott books feature race and in what ways do they depict it? According to the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a branch of the ALA, the Caldecott Medal rewards “Excellence of execution in the artistic technique employed,” and “appropriateness of pictorial interpretation of story, theme, or concept,” all considered “in recognition of a child audience,” *not* “didactic intent” (ALSC 6), which would seem to preclude overt messages about things like race. Nevertheless, one would expect to find cultural trends regarding race reflected in books written, illustrated, and published by Americans for American children. Can some kind of “didactic intent” about race reside in the Medal winners? If so, with what messages? And do the answers to those questions change over time, from before the Civil Rights movement to the so-called “post-racial” era that may or may not obtain in America today? I would like to answer those questions by examining the Caldecott Medal winning books that feature race.

I will not consider Medal winners like *Prayer for a Child* (1944) by Rachel Field and Elizabeth Orton Jones, *The Rooster Crows: A Book of American Rhymes and Jingles* (1945) by Maud and Miska Petersham, and *Polar Express* (1985) by Chris Van Allsburg, in which token or background people of color play no significant role in their books. Field and Jones depict a blond white girl saying her bedtime prayer, and when she says, “Bless other children, far and near,/ And keep them safe and free from fear,” the illustration shows faces of cute, healthy, and happy children from races and countries around the world. On no other page of the book, however, do such children appear, and the nine angel figurines standing on the shelf above the little girl’s

bed are all white like her. Among the majority illustrations of “cherubic” white children in the first edition of the Petershams’ book, African American children appeared in the illustrations of only four pages, and because their “great bun-ion feet, coal black skin, and bulging eyes” were deemed unpleasantly stereotypical, they were removed from the 1964 edition (Larrick 65). And among the white children, including the boy narrator, riding to Santa’s village on Van Allsburg’s magical Polar Express, it is easy to miss the only black child who appears in only one picture. Merely by featuring mainly or only white characters in a multi-racial culture like that of the United States, the books are saying something about race (white people are more important, sympathetic, familiar, and so on), but my paper will focus on what the fourteen picture books that feature protagonists of color, taken individually and as a group, express about race.

2.1 *Mei Li* (1938) by Thomas Handforth

The first of the fourteen books, Thomas Handforth’s *Mei Li* (1938), was published in 1938, hardly an era of racial and multicultural understanding in the United States. The book begins with Mei Li, a young Chinese girl living in China, and her older brother San Yu helping their mother with New Year’s Eve preparations, which will climax in the feast of the Kitchen God, who will visit their house at midnight “to tell them what they must do during the coming year.” Before that, San Yu and Uncle Wang plan to visit the New Year Fair in the city, and although “little girls always had to stay home,” Mei Li bribes San Yu with a lucky marble to let her accompany him. At the Fair, San Yu scorns his sister when she has to ask him to set off her firecrackers, but she demonstrates her spirit by playing with some acrobats and galloping around on a cir-

cus pony. When she asks her brother to throw her penny at a bell beneath the Bridge of Wealth to bring her good fortune, he claims her luck, leaving her disappointed, but she then trades another lucky marble to a young priest so he will tell her future: “You will rule over a kingdom.” With the help of some finely dressed girls, she makes a crown fit for a princess. Finally, after Mei Li, San Yu, and Uncle Wang return home just in time for the feast, the girl thinks, “surely no kingdom could be as nice as home,” her mother calls her “the princess who rules our hearts,” and the Kitchen God tells her, “This house is your kingdom and palace. Within its walls all living things are your loyal, loving subjects.” To all this Mei Li happily sighs, “It will do for a while.”

The monochrome lithograph and pencil illustrations depict realistic, lively, and handsome Chinese people in their natural places. The clothes, faces and bodies of the people in the city (actors, workers, police, children, and so on) resemble those of 1930s Chinese people. There is but one unpleasant caricature, an old man reclining beneath the Bridge of Wealth and tricking children out of their coins, his clawed hands and wicked grin recalling yellow peril Chinese men from books and movies of the era. Mei Li’s brother San Yu, his black hair pulled back tight from his forehead, is handsome and good-natured. Mei Li has large, expressive almond eyes, a flexible and sturdy body, and a wide range of gestures, expressions, and attitudes: loving, pleading, pleased, excited, afraid, brave, curious, mischievous, and so on. With her bamboo pattern jacket, padded pants, “candle top pigtail,” and almond eyes, Mei Li is obviously a member of a different race and culture. With her changeable moods she is clearly a real individual. In the last picture of the book she looks right at us, wielding a broom whose brush is as big as her body, her expression thoughtful, daring, and sweet.

According to Kathleen T. Horning, Handforth lived for six years in Beijing, nourished by the denizens of the city and by traditional Chinese art. “He found no shortage of subjects in the courtyard surrounding the old palace. . . . But it was a bossy four-year-old girl named Mei Li who soon claimed his attention.” To read Elizabeth Coatsworth’s review of *Mei Li* contemporary with the book is to glimpse the prevailing view of race in the 1930s: “In these curious waddling little figures of brother and sister, in these little slant-eyed faces, Thomas Handforth has written the poem of childhood, vulnerable and lovely. It is his particular gift to feel and portray the dignity of little children and of old men and women, of races close to the soil, and of animals.” Coatsworth is inaccurate about the “slant-eyed” “races close to the soil,” because Handsworth shows no one possessing such eyes or farming, but she aptly highlights the appeal of the book in terms of its “poem of childhood.” As she says, Handforth depicts children “instinct with a touching grace” and scenes that “mingl[e] the unreality of a dream with the close observation of everyday life,” all with an “outstanding . . . respect.” Handforth’s multicultural vision is even evident in the style of his art, which fuses spare and ethereal Chinese brush art with more detailed Western illustration. As he put it, “My goal in etching and lithography is to do . . . a Western Hsie-y, i.e. ‘to write the meaning.’ It is a technique related to the calligraphic and is . . . the essence rather than the representation of a specific object” (“Personal”).

Handforth succeeded in depicting an individual Chinese girl who is also a universal child and in fusing beautiful Chinese art with dynamic American picture book art, all in the service of a charming story. As a result, American children reading his book would likely learn about the China of the 1930s, become more open-minded about different races and cultures, and experience an excit-

ing and exotic adventure far from home. It is therefore puzzling why *Mei Li* is the only Caldecott Medal winner to be out of print. Having been published in 1938, the book inevitably depicts an out-dated China, but other decades old, still in print Caldecott winners also depict out-dated cultures. Perhaps adults believe that the book is too gender-biased for today's children. If so, it is a mistake, because *Mei Li*, a girl living in a male-dominated era and culture, goes on an adventure, returns home victorious, and feels content to be princess of her home only "for a while."

2.2 *Song of the Swallows* (1949) by Leo Politi

Like *Mei Li*, *Song of the Swallows* (1949) by Leo Politi depicts the magical wonder of the real contemporary world, in this case through the perceptions of Juan, a small Latino boy who loves the swallows of the Mission San Juan Capistrano in California. He ecstatically watches the birds building their mud nests, feeding their young, and teaching them how to fly. He feels a poignant pleasure when they migrate south, wonders how they know where to go, and prays for their safe return. Julian, the aged bell-ringer and gardener of the Mission, encourages Juan's admiration of the swallows: "Just try to picture, Juan, the hundreds and thousands of miles they travel, high up in the air, looking down over strange and beautiful lands." In winter, Juan looks sadly at the empty nests, but in early spring he and his friends celebrate the return of the birds, and he runs home to find a pair newly nesting in his garden: "That night when Juan looked out of his window, he saw the two swallows asleep on the rose vine. They were so near that he could feel the throbbing life through their little bodies. He loved them."

Politi's tempera illustrations display a charming faux folk style, in which

the long-fingered human figures appear flat and simple, the buildings and trees solid and tangible, and the swallows graceful and vivid. The double-page spreads (single pictures running over both left- and right-hand pages) of which the book is mostly comprised consist of two alternating layouts and looks: pale pink, red, gray, and brown illustrations posed on white backgrounds that hold most of the text; and full-page and full-color illustrations made of vibrant reddish-brown, green, tan, yellow, blue, and black. This all leads to impressive sights like the lovely double-page bird's eye view of the tiny mission far below as a long line of swallows flies away south above the blue Pacific Ocean coast and the brown southern California landscape dotted with green groves of trees. *Song of the Swallows* never verbally refers to Juan or Julian's race or ethnicity, but Politi visually expresses that the people in the story are Latino, probably mestizos, for they have light brown skin and black or dark brown hair. Additionally, though the book is written in English, it implies that Julian and Juan speak to each other in Spanish, because Politi writes some of their phrases in that language along with English translations (e.g., "Vienen las golondrinas!" "The swallows are coming!"). Apart, perhaps, from Julian (whom Politi could have made an ornithologist instead of a gardener), Politi does not stereotype the mestizo Latinos and paints them with as much respect, affection, and dignity as Handforth illustrates Mei Li and her family. The boys and girls wear their own styles and colors of clothes, but they obviously belong to the same community. Their figures are simple, clean, and pleasing. Politi does not show close-ups of faces in the book, and, unlike Handforth, does not express their individual personalities much, but the text and the figures' gestures express their joy or excitement or thoughtfulness.

Although Politi sympathetically depicts the Latino kids and old man, he

does not accurately deal with the history of Spanish missions and Native Americans. Early in the book Julian recounts to Juan California mission history, in which Father Junipero Serra and “the good brothers of Saint Francis” came from Spain to California and with the willing help of the grateful Indians made the system of mission churches, where “the Indians learned to make shoes and harness, blankets and hats, tools and pottery—many of the things they needed in their daily life,” and the Fathers cared for sick Indians while the soldiers protected them from thieves. According to George E. Tinker (an Osage), however, the missionaries and their missions caused “lasting devastation . . . with the best of intentions,” and Junipero Serra “came with an army cohort and official orders from the Spanish vice regent to begin his missionary conquest of the native peoples in California” (381–82). Juan and Julian separate themselves from their Amerindian ancestry and identify with their white Spanish ancestry by reverently standing before a statue of Father Serra and referring to the Indians as others. After all, *Song of Swallows* is a paean to the swallows first and to the missions second, and the book is a mostly charming depiction of the curiosity and empathy for swallows of a sweet Latino or mestizo boy.

2.3 *Once a Mouse...* (1961) by Marcia Brown

As there was a gap of eleven years between the first and second Caldecott Medal books featuring non-white characters, *Mei Li* (1938) and *Song of the Swallows* (1949), so there was one of twelve years between the second and third, Marcia Brown’s *Once a Mouse . . .* (1961). While the first two told mostly realistic stories of the wonderful contemporary world in which the young Chinese and Latino protagonists live, Brown’s book is set long ago in India, retelling an Indian folktale about a philosophical old hermit. The hermit is sitting

and pondering “big and little” when he sees a crow try to kill a mouse, rushes to save the rodent, and takes it to his hut in the forest to care for it. When a cat appears and threatens the mouse, the hermit, “mighty at magic,” transforms it into “a stout cat” who dominates the interloping feline, and when a dog comes to frighten the “cat,” he changes it into a bigger dog, and when a tiger comes to threaten the “dog,” he changes it into a “royal tiger.” Now the most feared animal in the forest, the proud former mouse “peacock[s] about . . . lordling it over the other animals,” so that the hermit reminds him of his wretched origins. Humiliated and resentful, the “tiger” plans to kill his benefactor, but the wise old man reads the animal’s mind and changes him back into a mouse. The story ends as it began, with the hermit pondering “big—and little...”

Brown’s colored woodcut illustrations are lively and formal, the figures of the hermit and animals are more realistic than cartoonish, and they look solid and real, almost as if they themselves had been carved from wood. The colors of the main figures and forest flora and fauna are pale orange, red, beige, brown, and green, the backgrounds are usually white, and the layout consists mostly of double-page spreads, each with a particular color theme to it, as when the tiger is contemplating killing the hermit against a swirling red background. Small animals witness the story from among the trees in the background, monkeys, snakes, wild pigs, and the like, all of whom are fun to watch. And the illustrations are clever. On the cover, for example, beneath the title the royal tiger stands gazing with pride at his reflection in a pool of water, but the little mouse is also there, even closer to the pool and also gazing at the reflection of “his” tiger face: is the mouse remembering when he was a tiger or is the tiger remembering when he was a mouse?

What has all this to do with race? Not much, overtly, for the text, like Politi's, never mentions it. But the story is an Indian folktale set in India, the protagonist is an Indian hermit, and the illustrations emphasize his dark brown skin by contrasting it with his white loincloth, turban, beard, eyebrows, teeth, and eyes. And the hermit is depicted as a wise and compassionate man who lives simply by himself in the forest contemplating insoluble puzzles like "big and little" that seem to hint that bigger creatures prey on smaller ones, that smaller ones abuse power when they gain it, and that trying to help weaker and smaller life forms (or people) may not end well. These themes could be dealt with in the folktales of any country, but that this sobering wisdom comes through a humorous Indian folktale expresses to the child reader that wisdom and pleasure are not confined to white people or to American culture. The hermit is old and lives long ago by himself in a forest in India, and hence is distanced from the American child reader (of any skin color). Because *Once a Mouse . . .* is a folktale rather than a daily life story, the protagonist inevitably approaches stereotype and departs individuality. In any case, the hermit is depicted with dignity and respect rather than with condescension.

2.4 *The Snowy Day* (1962) by Ezra Jack Keats

The year after *Once a Mouse . . .* (two years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964) saw the publication of a watershed book, Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* (1962), which depicts the magical wonder of the first snowy day of a boy called Peter, the first African American protagonist in a "full-color mainstream picture book" (Bennett-Smith). After waking up and seeing the new-fallen snow covering "everything as far as he could see," Peter dons his red snowsuit and leaves his house for snowy adventures. He walks with his feet pointing out

and then pointing in to see his different tracks; he smacks a snow-covered tree so the snow falls “plop!” on his head; he tries and fails to join some big boys throwing snowballs at each other; he makes a smiling snow man and beautiful snow angels; he climbs up and slides down a snow mountain; finally, fully satisfied, he goes home. Before entering his house, he puts a large snowball in his snowsuit pocket for later use. Inside, he tells his mother about his adventures and recalls them while taking a bath. Before getting into bed he is shocked to discover that his snowball has melted. This provokes a nightmare in which the sun has melted all the snow away, but when Peter wakes up in the morning, the old snow is still there and new snow is falling, so he heads out for a second snowy day, this time with a friend.

To complement his realistic and magical story, Keats’ art—collage featuring paper, paint, and gum-eraser stamps—“gaily and vividly simplifies and stylises urban landscapes” (Mander 576). The windowless and doorless city buildings look like bright orange, tan, brown, red, pink, and yellow children’s building blocks topped with snow, the sky backgrounds are blue, violet, black, or turquoise to suit each scene, the hills and mounds of snow are white stamped with faint blue, pink, green, yellow, and gray washes, and Peter’s red snow suit and brown skin make a lively contrast with the snow. The impression is colorful joy. The artistic depiction of Peter himself is not so representational, and there are few close-ups of his face, but his body and the text clearly convey his emotions, ideas, and personality.

The Snowy Day may of course be read for things other than race. Jill P. May, for instance, analyzes the book as a story featuring a typical preschool protagonist and adventure, in that Peter enjoys the snowy day by himself in a *bildungsroman* home-away-home circle (40–41). Nowhere in her thorough

discussion of Keats' book does May mention Peter's race. Peter's joy at having an entire snowy world to play in has always resonated with children of all colors. As Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation put it in a National Public Radio interview celebrating the 50th year anniversary of *The Snowy Day*, "The point was that this is a beautiful book about a child's encounter with snow This is not about color. This is about childhood" (NPR).

Nevertheless, race is vital to *The Snowy Day*. Keats himself said,

Then began an experience that turned my life around—working on a book with a black kid as hero. None of the manuscripts I'd been illustrating featured any black kids—except for token blacks in the background. My book would have him there simply because he should have been there all along. ("About Ezra")

By presenting Peter as African American, Keats was filling a void. Pope herself movingly recounts how Peter's color affected African American children: "There was a teacher wrote in to Ezra saying, the kids in my class, for the first time, are using brown crayons to draw themselves. These are African-American children. Before this, they drew themselves with pink crayons. But now, they can see themselves" (NPR). Indeed, after listening to the interview with Pope, many African Americans posted emotional personal histories on the NPR website about how important it was for them as children to finally read a picture book with an African American protagonist doing what they could imagine themselves doing. Nancy Larrick did point out that although the book "gives a sympathetic picture of . . . a small Negro boy," Peter's mother "is a huge figure in a gaudy yellow plaid dress, albeit without a red bandanna," implying that she is a stereotype (65). Peter's mother, however, is also a nurturing maternal

presence embodying strength and love rather than cheerful subservience, and Keats leaves her face a blank mask, rendering her more a universal earth mother than a stereotypical African American woman.

In *The Snowy Day*, then, Keats depicts an individual and universal African American boy playing in the snow in a generic and abstracted American city. Even though the story and text are not overtly about race, by sympathetically presenting Peter doing something that any American child could enjoy doing in the context of the civil rights movement and of the absence of such a protagonist, Keats made a picture book very much about race, one that visually says that African American children can be just as happy, healthy, creative, active, and pure as any children of any color.

2.5 A Story—A Story (1970) by Gail E. Haley

While *Mei Li*, *Song of the Swallows*, and *The Snowy Day* feature contemporary children of color enjoying the wonderful real world, Gail E. Haley's *A Story—A Story* (1970), like *Once a Mouse. . .*, depicts an old man protagonist in a fantastic folktale. *A Story—A Story* begins with an old African storyteller telling three children that once "All the stories belonged to Nyame, the Sky God," who "kept them in a golden box next to his royal stool." Ananse, the Spider man, wanted to buy the stories, "So he spun a web up to the sky" and visited the Sky God, who told him that he must win the stories by fetching "Osebo the leopard-of-the-terrible-teeth, Mmboro the hornet who-stings-like-fire, and Mmoatia the fairy whom-men-never-see." Although Ananse is "a weak old man" for whom the tasks seem impossible, he is clever and plucky and manages to trick and capture all three beings, receiving for them the golden box full of stories. "And when [back on earth] he opened the box all the stories

scattered to the corners of the world, including this one.”

Haley’s lively and pleasing colored woodcut illustrations complement the text by evoking a pseudo-African look. The colors are bright and saturated, light and dark green plants and huts, pink, blue, violet, orange, and yellow robes and loincloths, and pale blue clouds for the world of the Sky God. The illustrations of the book are laid out on pages featuring white space backgrounds, on which stylized and nearly abstract green plants surround the simplified figures. Apart from a few moments like when Ananse has tricked and tied up the leopard in a web, and the cat looks at us with a comically plaintive expression, *A Story—A Story* is rather visually simple and straightforward.

As to race, Ananse, the Sky God, and his courtiers are dark brown and wear “traditional,” generic African clothes: colorful loincloths or robes wrapped around the body with one shoulder uncovered. The Sky God is depicted like any traditional African king. Ananse wears only a pink loincloth and a necklace of animal claws, and has a wise and compassionate brown face, with white eyebrows, beard, and fringe of hair around his ears. Despite being the “Spider man,” Ananse looks human, and the web he “spins” up to the sky looks like a magical rope ladder. In the last double-page spread of the story when Ananse returns to his village carrying the stories in their gold box, the villagers look “primitive,” living in reed huts, wearing few clothes, and possessing no modern technology. Otherwise, they do not resemble stereotypical savage or simple Africans. The main story takes place long ago in a pre-story age, but the introductory double-page spread in which the story teller begins to tell the tale shows the same people and era as do the pictures illustrating the story itself, as if nothing has changed from the folktale era till the “present.”

The book is compelling in its concept (a story about a story about the ori-

gin of stories) and feels respectful of Ananse (the underdog who triumphs over difficult odds to enrich the world). Haley illustrates the storyteller telling the story so that he looks exactly like Ananse, implying, perhaps, that all storytellers are akin to him. And the interesting facets of storytelling in the book are associated with people of color, with Africans. On the dedication page of the book Haley initiates a racially tolerant context: “This book is for Marguerite, and all her brothers and sisters, both black and white, and especially for Arnold, with all my love.” Her preface to the story alludes to the complex racial history of the United States: “‘Spider stories’ crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the cruel ships that delivered slaves to the Americas. Their descendants still tell some of these stories today. Ananse has become Anancy in the Caribbean isles, while he survives as ‘Aunt Nancy’ in the Southern United States.” Furthermore, in the story Haley uses African sound effect words, names, and epithets, as in “He crept through the tall grasses, sora, sora, sora, till he came to the nest of Mmboro, the hornets-who-sting-like-fire,” as well as the African rhetorical device of repeating words to intensify their meaning, as in “It is raining, raining, raining.” Haley primes her readers to pay attention to skin color, inserts African culture into her plot, setting, protagonist, storyteller frame, illustrations, and language, all in a way that is sympathetic to African Americans, reminding the reader of their connection to Africa through their stories.

2.6 *The Funny Little Woman* (1972) by Arlene Mosel and Blair Lent

After gaps of roughly ten years between the first four Caldecott Medal books featuring non-white characters, *A Story—A Story* ushered in the heyday of such books, being the first of five published in the 1970s. The second of these, *The Funny Little Woman* (1972) by Arlene Mosel and Blair Lent, is an-

other folktale from another country, a retelling of a Japanese tale by Lafcadio Hearn, “The Old Woman Who Lost Her Dumplings” (1898). In Mosel’s version, a “funny little” woman living by herself “long ago” in “Old Japan” enjoys making rice dumplings and laughing, “Tee-he-he-he.” One day one of her dumplings falls through a crack in the floor, and when she tries to retrieve it she falls into a subterranean world. Down there she follows the rolling dumpling to some sacred Jizo statues, one of which warns her not to proceed because wicked oni (demons) live at the end of the road. The little woman laughingly goes on her way, until she is captured by a giant, horned, green oni, who takes her to a demonic temple by a river to cook rice for the demons with a magic rice paddle that turns a single grain of rice into a potful. After living with the oni for nearly a year, one day the homesick woman takes the magic rice paddle and flees by boat across the river. The demons spy her and furiously drink up all the water in the river to stop the boat, but the woman looks so funny stuck in the exposed mud with her hair undone that the oni laugh so hard that they vomit up all the water, enabling her to complete her escape. Back home, she uses the magic paddle to make so many delicious rice dumplings that she becomes wealthy.

In the book two types of illustrations simultaneously tell two related stories, one of which is unmentioned by Mosel’s text. Blair Lent illustrates the main story depicting the funny little woman’s subterranean adventure with full color acrylic glazes laid over black ink outlines. These pictures dominate each double-page spread, and feature earthy brown and green colors for the backgrounds, accented by the red and yellow of the woman’s kimono. But as soon as the funny little woman enters the subterranean world, Lent begins drawing above the main story’s color pictures a sequence of smaller pen-and-ink line

drawings relating what happens in the world above while the woman is gone. These drawings show an old man and his dog walking to the woman's house, knocking on the door, looking in the windows, and walking away; the seasons changing; and then in the new summer the man and dog returning just in time to greet the woman as she returns from her adventure. Lent's illustrations are an appealing combination of the oriental exotic, grotesque, comical, and beautiful, and "reading" the concurrent stories is stimulating and pleasurable.

The funny little woman is obviously but not stereotypically Japanese. She has almond eyes, black hair done up in a bun with two sticks, yellow kimono with red flowers and borders, and a red obi (sash). In her countryside house a water boils on the stove and a low table is just right for sitting on the floor to eat and work. The woman is not the graceful and gentle female Japanese object of western desire. Laugh wrinkles mark her face, and—stocky and middle-aged—she stands with her feet planted on the ground. Whereas the original Hearn story emphasizes the woman's age, Mosel emphasizes her small size and humor, rendering her less crone-like and more childlike. Even as the pictures evoke an exotic Asian culture, they reveal an inaccurate view of Japanese culture. The thatched roof of the woman's house does not look Japanese. The arrangement of crockery inside her house looks American. She wears her outdoor sandals inside her house. Her kimono and obi have too fancy a pattern and style for a poor countryside woman, and she wears them with too many wrinkles, and in the end when she is wealthy and selling dumplings, the right side of the robe is folded over the left side as for a dead person. And the rice dumplings look like large western yellow flour dumplings rather than like the small white sweet sticky *dango* they ought to represent.

How accurate must be the details of stories set in other countries for chil-

dren to broaden their views of race and different cultures? Surely, most American readers would be unaware of the *Funny Little Woman*'s inaccuracies and would simply enjoy the scary and comical story with its intrepid little heroine performing the traditionally male heroic journey and return adventure. If it is true that, as with *Once a Mouse*. . . and *A Story—A Story*, *The Funny Little Woman* distances the protagonist from American children through geography, culture, time, and age, it is also true that reading the enjoyable folktale of another culture (whose people differ from the majority race of one's own culture) should help children view race more open-mindedly, especially when the protagonist is so fun to root for.

2.7 *Arrow to the Sun* (1974) by Gerald McDermott

Arrow to the Sun (1974), "a Pueblo Indian tale adapted and illustrated by Gerald McDermott" according to the title page of the book, is the fourth Caldecott Medal folktale featuring a non-white protagonist. Like *A Story—A Story* and *The Funny Little Woman*, McDermott's book features the fantastic and successful journey and return home of its hero, but unlike the other protagonists, McDermott's is a child. In the story, "Long ago the Lord of the Sun sent the spark of life to earth," where it entered the house of a Pueblo maiden, who then gave birth to the Boy. Because the Boy is mocked and ostracized by the other Pueblo boys for being fatherless, he sets off to find his sire. On his travels he meets Corn Planter and asks, "Can you lead me to my father?" But the man is too busy tending his crops and ignores the Boy. The same thing happens when he visits Pot Maker, but when the Boy meets Arrow Maker, the man recognizes him as the scion of the Lord of the Sun, transforms him into an arrow, and shoots him to the sun. There the Boy recognizes his father, but

the Lord of the Sun says that he must prove himself by passing “through the four chambers of ceremony—the Kiva of Lions, the Kiva of Serpents, the Kiva of Bees, and the Kiva of Lightening.” The Boy then overcomes the occupants of each kiva and returns to his father, who, after rejoicing with his son, shoots him back to earth in order to “bring [the Sun’s] spirit to the world of men,” where the people celebrate the Boy’s return “in the Dance of Life.”

The art of the book, gouache and ink, has a nearly abstract style, with simple geometric shapes and bright and dark saturated color contrast and harmony between different shades of yellow and brown. The non-representational designs of the houses and pots and clothes are jaggedly symmetrical as McDermott tries to channel traditional Pueblo art. The backgrounds of the scenes are dark yellow, the buildings orange-brown. The illustrations are beautiful and striking, as in the climax when the Boy is transformed with the power of the sun, a jagged, curving rainbow of green, blue, violet, red, and yellow light shooting out of the Kiva of Lightening, fragmenting him into white light, and then on the next page remaking him and beaming him down to stand beside his father. By abstracting the Boy and the other Native American figures into stylized “Pueblo” art, McDermott avoids stereotyping his characters by precluding exaggerated representational traits. The Boy’s body is black with yellow designs to represent his clothes, and his chest bears the Lord of the Sun’s “spark of life.” His head and shoulders are square and his feet rectangular; his face is a yellow mask revealing flat black eyes and mouth. His hands and pointing fingers, like many of the designs on sunbeams and pueblos and so forth, recall primitive pixelated video game art. McDermott’s abstract art, then, renders the Boy less individual and racial. Rather than a Pueblo boy living in the real world, he looks like a Pueblo figurine posed in a world of Pueblo art.

Although the protagonist achieves his goals and brings grace to his people and McDermott depicts none of the negative stereotypes of Indians prevalent until the 1960s (inimical savages or natural nobles), the book has been criticized for its inaccuracy regarding Native American culture. Debbie Reese (a Pueblo) and Naomi Caldwell-Wood, for example, asseverate that “In *Arrow to the Sun*, author/artist Gerald McDermott misrepresents Pueblo social life, religious beliefs, and ceremonial practices,” because “For Pueblo people, kivas are places of ceremony and instruction, not places of trial, but in *Arrow to the Sun*, the protagonist goes through a series of trials in the kivas” (175). They also say that McDermott’s “uses of line, shape, and color differ in important ways from authentic Pueblo kiva art,” and that although “This remaking of traditional art is visually engaging . . . it fails to reflect the reality of either Pueblo design or religious belief” (185). For that matter, the Boy’s story may evoke Christianity at least as much as Pueblo faith. Finally, *Arrow to the Sun* is a beautiful and appealing book with a spunky and successful protagonist, but though it should make children appreciate the arts and stories of other cultures and races, it may not deepen their understanding of contemporary Native Americans.

2.8 *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* (1976) by Margaret Musgrove and Leo and Diane Dillon

Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions (1976) by Margaret Musgrove and Leo and Diane Dillon is unique among the fourteen Caldecott Medal books that feature people of color in that it is an encyclopedia, a selected A-Z representation of twenty-six African cultures and their customs. A note preceding *Ashanti to Zulu* says that “This book has been prepared with great concern for accu-

racy and detail,” that the author lived in Ghana and studied her topic at Yale University, that the illustrators, Leo and Diane Dillon, researched African culture in museums, and that “Every detail has been studied and rendered accurately, then interpretively drawn together with remarkable artistic insight.” Beginning with the letter A for Ashanti and ending with the letter Z for Zulu, each page of the book devotes a short paragraph to an interesting tradition of a tribe. For example, the Ikoma people follow a certain bird to wild beehives and reward it with honeycomb; the Jie men name themselves after their cattle; and the Kung people suck up water from below the sands of the desert through reeds and store it in ostrich egg shells. Unfortunately, Musgrove writes dry paragraphs comprised of short sentences, as in her entry for S:

When a Sotho (soo too) girl marries, she does not carry a bouquet of flowers. She holds a magic beaded doll. The doll has no arms or legs, but it does have earrings. Its body is a bright beaded cone. It is Sotho custom for the bride to name the doll. Later, when she has her first baby, she gives this same name to her child.

As stylistically unadorned as the text is, the pastel, acrylic, and watercolor illustrations are refined and elegant. They illustrate the customs of each tribe and other cultural details not mentioned by the text, such as the people’s animals and houses. Detailed figures appear in the foreground, usually one man, one woman, and one child, each person wearing tribal clothes and accessories, with more roughly rendered figures in the background. For the Sotho illustration, for instance, a young bride stands in the foreground holding her beaded magic doll in her right hand and her husband’s hand in her left, while the man stands affectionately behind her, and both of them are wearing matching robes of white with red and blue swirling designs. A brightly colored parrot perches

in the lower right, and in the background the families of the newlyweds pose before their conical thatched houses.

The more one reads and looks at the book, the more the dreamlike tone of the Dillons' art dampens color and pleasure. For example, only two of the twenty-six paintings show even a hint of a pale blue sky, the other skies being pale gold, brown, green, gray, or red. Many of the scenes seem to exist in a vague twilight, one is at night, and even the eight that feature the sun do not bask in its light (and five suns are pale white, green, or orange rather than yellow). Furthermore, even though each picture has its own primary colors, cultural details, and composition of figures, they begin to look the same. This is partly due to the subdued colors, so that even the gold ornaments and rare blue skies are not vibrant. And because the single-page illustrations and accompanying texts appear in identically sized and placed positions with identical frames around them, the cumulative effect is one of static sameness, despite the variety of the traditions depicted. The figures come to seem less like real people than like models posed in display cases in a museum of anthropology. This effect is increased by the fact that only six illustrations show any Africans looking at the reader. Moreover, the Dillons paint the eyes of every human figure as solid black ovals without any eye-whites or pupils, so that though they do sometimes show their white teeth when happy, they all project a formal aloofness and do not invite us into their worlds. We are denied access to the windows of the soul. The Dillons, then, depict representative members of the twenty-six peoples rather than individual human beings, albeit without negative stereotyping (though the absence of modern clothes, technology, and buildings makes the people in the illustrations seem like types from an Africa of long ago). As a result of all this, although the details are often fascinating and

must make American child readers more interested in different cultures and races, and although the illustrations seem culturally respectful and accurate, I doubt that many children would enjoy *Ashanti to Zulu*. The book is beautiful and multiculturally earnest and enriching, but it is not exciting or moving.

2.9 *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (1978) by Paul Goble

Paul Goble's *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (1978) is another Native American folktale like McDermott's, but one set in a Plains Indian culture and land with an anonymous teenaged girl protagonist. The girl understands horses "in a special way," watching them and caring for them in the meadows. During a sudden storm, the horses panic, she mounts one, and they stampede far away. In the morning, a "beautiful spotted stallion [is] prancing to and fro in front of her, stamping his hooves and shaking his mane. . . . strong and proud and more handsome than any horse she had ever dreamed of." He invites her and her horses to live with his wild horses and him. A year later the girl's people find her riding a horse and leading a colt, but when they try to approach her, the stallion prevents them with his fierce demeanor and dangerous hooves. When her horse stumbles, her people capture the girl and take her home. There she languishes, as the stallion neighs sadly to her from a hilltop. Finally the girl's parents, who love her, return her to the wild horses, and in a kind of marriage ceremony, give her a beautiful dress and the stallion and his wild horses "colorful blankets and decorated saddles," and accessorize their bodies with painted designs, feathers, and ribbons. From then on, each year the girl returns to her people to give them a colt, until one year she does not appear, for she has become a wild horse.

The story is beautifully illustrated in pen and ink and clear and saturated

watercolors. The girl and her people wear lovely clothes of blue, black, red, and white, and their teepees are similarly beautiful, with red, blue, and yellow stripes and pictures of bears and horses in their centers. Goble is trying to channel Plains Indian art. His art is stylized and somewhat abstracted for figures and dramatic moments like the black cloud and gold lightening storm. The majority of pages have white and empty backgrounds on which Goble paints detailed and colorful flora and fauna of the prairies. The title page is dominated by a gorgeous picture of the stallion and the human girl riding him, their heads curving to each other before a stylized red sun, and after the story in a complementary picture the stallion and the black mare the girl has become form a perfect circle around the red sun with their large heads, arching necks, and overlapping bodies. The mare and her stallion are a loving couple, like the illustrated prairie dog, badger, and rabbit couples. Goble paints the girl, as well as all her people, almost exclusively from behind, so that we see the backs of their heads or their faces in partial profile, and none of the men, women, or children are distinguishable from each other apart from gender markers like body size and hair and clothing styles. We must read their emotions from their body positions and the text.

No text or image in the book specifies exactly which Native American tribe tells Goble's story, which risks stereotyping the people as generic Plains Indians. After the story, he prints a translation of "a Navaho's song about his horse" and one of an Oglala Sioux' dream about a singing stallion, but otherwise there is no mention of any tribal names in the book, and neither translation has anything to do with the story, other than that both express love of and respect for horses. If the girl is more a stereotype than an individual, it is also partly due to her presence in the folktale genre (in which protagonists are not

individualized to the same degree as in contemporary or realistic stories). Though Goble does not individualize his figures, he depicts them as possessed of beauty and dignity. The pictures are so beautiful and the story so impressive that despite perhaps indulging in the stereotype of horse-loving Indians, *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* seems fresh, respectful, and moving, and the girl is a strong heroine who follows her bliss away from her family and species. The book must impress child readers with the force, strangeness, and love of the girl's will and with the fascinating other-ness of traditional Native American cultures.

2.10 *Shadow* (1982) by Marcia Brown

Marcia Brown's *Shadow* (1982), her translation of Blaise Cendrars' French poem about "the African experience" of "Shadow," is the only poem among the fourteen Caldecott Medal books featuring non-white characters. The book personifies shadow by limning its haunting, terrifying, or philosophical aspects. At night Shadow comes from the forest "to prowl around the fires" and "to mingle with the dancers" and "listens" and "comes sliding right up behind the storyteller" until the last fire goes out. Shadow is always watching you as you sleep, and when the sun rises, Shadow "is the mother of all that crawls, of all that squirms," which is why when we wake up we must take care not to step on our shadow, else it prick or bite us. In daytime, "Shadow is full of life . . . waves with the grasses . . . races with the animals . . . swims along with the fish." Shadow "needs no ornament, no tattoo. The zebra's shadow has no stripes." Shadow "is in a mask," "Shadow is magic," and "Shadow is heavy when night falls," pulling even the eagle and the vulture down to earth. Finally, "What is Shadow? It is a game. A dance."

Brown's illustrations depict generic African forests, mountains, and savannahs and their people and animals with eerie beauty that at times verges on the horrifying. She uses collage, paper, woodcuts, and acrylics, painting the backgrounds vivid gradations of pink, red, and orange, of blue, violet, and red, of blue and beige, or of yellow, orange, and brown, and then pastes onto them cut out black paper shapes for the African figures and ghostly white shapes for their nighttime shadows and crisp violet shapes for their daytime ones, evoking an impression of mystery, beauty, and fear on each page. The most terrifying image of the book is the page-filling, monstrous mask with closed eyes and gaping, jagged-toothed mouth, several ghost mask shadows screaming in sympathy to the left of it. The next picture of the yellow and green savannah in daytime with the black cut out animals and their violet shadows affords a beautiful and pleasant relief. The double-page spread of *Shadow* following man everywhere, "even to war," is compelling. On the right side of the spread, black cut out paper warriors carry shields and spears, fall down, lie on the ground, or sit thinking, all with violet shadows mirroring their actions. On the far left side, on a blood-red ground stands a gray shadow figure without any black paper cut out human figure to explain its presence: a ghost.

The text and pictures of *Shadow* respect the "African" way of seeing *Shadow* and by extension African culture as a whole. Brown traveled extensively in Africa, and tried to evoke an African quality in her illustrations. Nevertheless, as with the Native American culture in *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*, Brown does not say from which of the many African cultures Blaise Cendrars' poem and her interpretation of it derive, which moves *Shadow* towards the stereotypical. The comical illustration for *Shadow* as a trickster mocking people behind their backs shows Africans and their shadows doing a

variety of “typical” African things like playing a drum or carrying a load on the head. The pictures of the people, though beautiful in their lines and blackness, are in a sense generic African primitives living nearly nude in huts in forests or on savannahs without any modern technology. Based on the text, background colors, and body poses, the figures express a great range of emotions, from joy and sadness to fear and anger, but they remain black silhouettes and cut out shapes rather than individual people. By coloring her Africans pitch black rather than dark brown, Brown places them a step further from real world Africans, perhaps because she is evoking a timeless African-ness in her book. The depiction is dignified, but does not represent how millions of Africans live today, and unlike a child reading *Ashanti to Zulu*, a child reading *Shadow* would not learn about a particular African people. Brown’s book is a metaphoric and metaphysical exploration of the nature of Shadow. If, like *Ashanti to Zulu*, *Shadow* is not a story, it possesses more magic, poetry, imagination, beauty, terror, and appeal than the earlier book. *Shadow* is uncanny. Its vivid representation of another culture’s ineffable conception of a commonplace thing like shadows must make children admire or wonder at African culture as well as change their vision of shadows in their own world.

2.11 *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* (1989) by Ed Young

Like *Mei Li*, Ed Young’s *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* (1989) features a Chinese setting and cast. Unlike Handforth’s contemporary story about a real girl, Young’s book retells a Chinese folk tale about three sisters, whose mother leaves them alone in their house over night to visit their grandmother (their “Po Po”), which attracts the local wolf. To trick the girls

into unlocking their door, the wolf feigns to be their grandmother. Despite the oldest sister, Shang, asking keen questions like “Why is your voice so low?” the wolf persuades the two younger ones, Tao and Paotze, to open the door. Inside the house, the wolf gets into bed with the sisters, hugging the younger ones and saying things like, “Good child, you are so plump.” When Shang finally realizes that their “Po Po” is a wolf, she appeals to his greed by telling him that the ginkgo nuts in the tree by the house are “soft and tender, like the skin of a baby” and “One taste and you will live forever.” As the wolf cannot climb trees, he waits below the ginkgo while the three sisters climb it to fetch him nuts. Once in the tree, however, Shang says that the wolf must pick the nuts himself to gain immortality from them, so he gets into a basket with which the girls haul him high up in the tree. They then “accidentally” let go of the rope, dropping the wolf to his death, and then go to sleep until their mother returns in the morning with food from their real Po Po.

Chinese painting has inspired Young’s work in picture books (“About Ed”), and his lovely watercolor and pastel illustrations here combine the ethereal softness of traditional monochrome Chinese ink paintings with the vivid colors and facial close-ups of Western painting, with pastels rendering the shapes more soft and textured and subtly multi-colored. In *Lon Po Po* each sister wears a different colored robe, red, blue, and green, while the wolf has a nearly black back, a beige-white belly and chest, and a face comprised of shades of red, yellow, orange, white, brown, and black. The backgrounds are red, black, green, or gold, depending on whether the characters are inside or outside the house or up in the tree. All the illustrations appear in double-page spreads, divided up into from two to four vertical panels separated by white “gutters,” recalling both Chinese scroll paintings and western comic books.

The establishing shot of the white house and gold tree behind it at sunset while the mother is waving good-bye to her children is exquisite, with the luminous gold and gray of the clouds in the sky and the dark brown and beige of the hills suggesting a giant wolf's sleeping head.

At the same time that the illustrations are beautiful, they are also often scary, for the wolf is much larger than the three girls and possesses malevolent large eyes and sharp long teeth. The first double-page spread in which the wolf appears is beautiful and terrifying. The far right panel barely holds the wolf as he stands muffled in a turquoise robe, pretending to be the sisters' Po Po, hiding his long nose and sharp teeth with a fold of the robe, so that only his lambent eyes and the surrounding patch of blue-gray fur are visible. This lovely and ominous turquoise column contrasts dramatically with the gold and red of the panel to the left, in which Shang is standing and holding a candle to the doorway. After her comes a panel in which the two younger sisters stand closely together, and then the far left panel, in which the text appears. Young employs all the features of the picture book medium—layout, color, pacing, and the interplay between text and picture—to enhance the suspense, beauty, and interest of his story.

Finally, the beauty of the colors and the quick thinking of Shang make the book pleasurable rather than nightmarishly scary. While the wolf is, as Young's dedication reveals ("To all the wolves of the world for lending their good name as a tangible symbol for our darkness") a universal wolf, the three sisters are both little Chinese girls and universal children. Young tries to individualize the girls by assigning different names and story roles to each sister in the text and by distinguishing between them in his illustrations. Each girl is cute, with almond eyes, small nose, and black pigtailed or braids. Their eyes are expressive,

the dark pupils moving to one side or the other against the whites as they look at their “Po Po” with affection, suspicion, fear, resolve, or triumph. Although the sisters may be said to be “typical” Chinese girls living in the countryside in the indefinite past of folktales, the book depicts them with respect and affection as brave, clever, and cute underdogs, and any child reading it would identify with them across any racial or cultural divides.

2.12 *Grandfather’s Journey* (1993) by Allen Say

After *Ashanti to Zulu*, *Grandfather’s Journey* (1993) by Allen Say is the second non-fiction book among the fourteen Caldecott winners. In the book, Say recounts his Japanese grandfather’s biography, beginning with his decision as a young man to see the world, including a visit to the United States: “He explored North America by train and riverboat, and often walked for days on end,” visiting “Deserts with rocks like enormous sculptures,” vast farm fields, “Huge cities of factories and tall buildings [that] bewildered and yet excited him,” “towering mountains and rivers as clear as the sky.” He settled by San Francisco Bay with his childhood sweetheart, and there had a daughter, Say’s future mother. In time, Say’s grandfather began missing his countryside home in Japan so much that he eventually moved back there with his family. Ironically, once settled back into Japanese life, he began missing California, but could never visit it, being prevented first by World War II and later by old age. Say’s mother gave birth to him in Japan, and he grew up there hearing his grandfather’s stories about California. The stories appealed so much to Say that as a young man he moved to California, where he had a daughter of his own. Although he has remained in California, he still often misses Japan and his old friends. Say concludes his book thus: “The funny thing is, the moment I am in

one country, I am homesick for the other. I think I know my grandfather now. I miss him very much.” Seth Lerer argues that from the first decades of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals, the awards have often gone to “good feeling” books that depict characters who go on journeys and or work through adversity to victory, reward, and success (287). *Grandfather’s Journey* is an exception.

Among the fourteen Medal books, *Grandfather’s Journey* features the most realistic and beautiful illustrations. They look like photographs, in their identical dimensions and arrangement on the pages and in the realism of their subjects, though Say also aestheticizes them, simplifying backgrounds, slightly idealizing the figures of his family with nostalgic affection, and “colorizing” them. The beautiful and realistic watercolor paintings reveal many details about Japan, America, and California. The book depicts Japanese people doing typical daily life activities in America and Japan. The rice fields, thatched roof houses, misty mountains, green gardens, and wooden interior of his grandfather’s home and the kimonos that he and his friends wear therein all look beautiful, accurate, specific, and exotic. The pale illustration of the aftermath of World War II, in which several ragged children stand barefoot in the rubble of destroyed buildings, is an eloquent anti-war image. In the cover illustration, Say’s grandfather as a young man stands on the deck of the ship taking him to America, the vast Pacific Ocean swelling greenly behind him. Wearing a long western overcoat and a bowler hat, both of which are too big for him, he looks comical, but because he is so young, small, and serious, he also exudes courage, dignity, and curiosity. On the back cover and title page appears a shiny gold origami ship: Grandfather’s journey made into Japanese art. The last illustration in the book is of a black and white photograph of Say’s grandfather

as a young man, the same illustration as the first of the book, only this time smaller and framed. With this monochrome painting of a real photograph, Say authenticates his book: his grandfather was a real person, was young once, and is loved and missed.

The situation and feeling of the story—nostalgia and melancholy over always missing the country you are not currently residing in—might be difficult for a child to understand, but Say’s depictions of Japanese and American people and their different settings are marked by individuality, accuracy, and respect. Perhaps the story focuses more on cultural than racial identity, but the painting depicting his grandfather standing beside a line of individualized Americans of different body shapes, sizes, and colors bears a caption that expresses a race-tolerant attitude from which children should learn acceptance: “He shook hands with black men and white men, with yellow men and red men.” Throughout the book the illustrations show American and Japanese people as individuals with their own personalities and feelings and ideas. *Grandfather’s Journey* evokes admiration and sympathy for Say’s grandfather, melancholy for his and Say’s aging and for that of all human beings, speculations about home and journey, and understanding of the feeling of immigrants for their new and former countries. It is at once a multicultural and universally human book and a moving and loving family history.

2.13 *Smoky Night* (1994) by Eve Bunting and David Diaz

Eve Bunting and David Diaz’ *Smoky Night* (1994) is the only Caldecott Medal book at least somewhat directly about race and the only one inspired by a real racially-centered event, the 1992 race riots in Los Angeles, which lasted nearly a week, saw 2,000 injuries, fifty fatalities, 3,500 fires, and 1,000

destroyed buildings, and required the US National Guard, Army, and Marines to restore order (“Then & Now”). Daniel, an African American boy, narrates the story, which begins as his mother and he support each other at home through a frightening night of rioting. His mother explains that when people become angry, “They want to smash and destroy. They don’t care anymore what’s right and what’s wrong.” When Daniel sees people stealing cereal and rice from Kim’s Market, he unsympathetically says, “My mama and I don’t go in Mrs. Kim’s market even though it’s close. Mama says it’s better if we buy from our own people,” and that “Mrs. Kim’s cat and my cat fight all the time.” Later that night Daniel and his mother must evacuate their burning building with their neighbors, the Ramirez family. As the refugees seek shelter in a church, Daniel fears for his missing yellow cat Jasmine. In time a fire fighter appears, holding Jasmine and Mrs. Kim’s orange cat. The cats drink milk from the same bowl, and when his mother says, “I thought those two didn’t like each other,” Daniel replies, “They probably didn’t know each other before Now they do.” Daniel’s mother introduces herself to Mrs. Kim and invites her and her cat to visit.

Although the back jacket of the hardcover edition asserts, “The Los Angeles riots made Eve Bunting wonder about what riots mean to the children who live through them—and about what we can all learn from such upheavals,” the sentence ignores the dates, causes, actions, and ramifications of the riots, as does the text of *Smoky Night*. Daniel and his mother talk about what makes people riot—anger—but not about what has angered the people: the appalling videotaped beating by white policemen of a supine black man, Rodney King, and the subsequent acquittal by a mostly white jury of the policemen from charges of using excessive force. Daniel and his mother mention neither the

high rate of unemployment for people of color in Los Angeles nor the resentment felt by African Americans about Korean businesses “exploiting” their community. Perhaps a picture book could not treat such a complex event in detail, or perhaps Bunting wanted to universalize rather than particularize her story.

Although it is not unusual for picture books to convey racial information through their illustrations rather than their texts—nearly all fourteen Caldecott Medal books about non-white characters do so—David Diaz’ stylized illustrations for *Smoky Night* leave the racial identity of the characters ambiguous. To illustrate the book, Diaz places his acrylic paintings upon mixed media three-dimensional collage backgrounds. For the double-page spreads on which people are breaking shop windows to steal things, he glues pieces of broken glass, TV packaging, shoe soles, and cereal onto textured paper and then glues the scraps of paper with the printed text in the middle of the left hand pages and his paintings in the middle of the right hand pages. This combination of three-dimensional realism and impressionistic painting makes the story authentic and powerful. However, he colors his human figures so darkly and paints their features so thickly, with the Asian Mrs. Kim, the Hispanic Ramirez family, and the African American Daniel and his mother all having violet or blue skin in the night and full lips, wide nostrils, almond-shaped eyes, and straight dark hair, that it is difficult to identify their races. Perhaps, as one reviewer suggests, Diaz is cautioning “the reader against assumptions about race” by giving his characters both typical Asian eyes and typical African American noses and lips and hence hinting that people of different colors are essentially the same (“*Smoky Night*” 89). But because the text does not directly invoke race, children who do not know that Kim is a Korean family name or that Ramirez is

often a Latino one, or that African Americans typically call their mothers “Mama,” might not recognize the different races in the story or understand what it means for Mrs. Kim to not belong to “our own people.”

In his Caldecott Medal acceptance speech, Diaz explained his hopes for *Smoky Night* in terms of race: “Eve Bunting had taken a timely subject and had handled it in a truly sensitive and thoughtful way. I felt the book could have a positive effect and help erode barriers of prejudice and intolerance” (“Hispanic”). Diaz’ art is dynamic and original enough to warrant the award, and critics like Ellen Fader applaud the book: “Both author and illustrator insist on a headlong confrontation with the issue of rapport between different races, and the result is a memorable, thought-provoking book” (89). Other critics find the book too politically correct (Lanes 25) or mild (Hearn 54 – 56). For me, Diaz’ illustrations are unique and powerful, but the text could have been more explicit vis-à-vis the historical event and should have clarified Mrs. Kim’s race. *Smoky Night* is so discreetly about race that if adults do not explain its historical context, children may miss much of its racial thrust. If by obscuring the reasons behind the rioting and looting the book fails as an exploration of racial strife, it succeeds in making the reader want to empathize with different people and to reject enraged destruction. In the last picture of the book, the orange and yellow cats sleep curled up together, symbolizing (for readers aware of the racial context) different races living in harmony.

2.14 *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (2005) by Norton Juster and Chris Raschka

Like *Mei Li*, *Song of the Swallows*, and *The Snowy Day*, Norton Juster and Chris Raschka’s *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (2005) features a contemporary

child of color doing realistic and wonder-filled things, but it is the only Caldecott Medal book in the history of the award to depict an interracial couple. Despite the text never mentioning race, the pictures convey the fact that the girl's father and grandfather are white, her mother and grandmother black, and she herself of mixed race. *The Hello, Goodbye Window* is the unnamed girl's account of her happy, loving time spent at her grandparents' house while her parents are working. She describes the house and its moods, focusing on the magical "hello, goodbye window," on either side of which the girl greets and parts from her grandparents and makes faces at them. The girl recounts what she does in and around the house: playing with things in the kitchen, listening to Poppy (her grandfather) playing the harmonica, saying good morning to the world, helping Nanna (her grandmother) in the garden while avoiding the "tiger" (cat) there, playing with water from the hose, taking naps, and just looking out the hello, goodbye window, sometimes imagining things like a dinosaur through it. And when her parents pick her up, she feels glad to be going home and sad to be leaving Nanna and Poppy.

As Juster writes the book in a girl's voice ("Just look at the kitchen. It's so big. It has a table you can color on and lots of drawers to take stuff out of and play with."), Chris Raschka illustrates it in a bright, colorful, and child-like style. He employs a dynamic mix of crayons and watercolors with plenty of color running outside the lines, so that we see them as the girl's own illustrations. Around the parts of the figures and objects in her pictures that she'd like to accent, like her grandfather's large nose and hands, she draws black lines, rough and wavering like a child's. This is all unique among the medal-winning books featuring race, for the illustrations in the others are done in adult (though rarely very representational) styles. In addition to looking like the art

of a child, Raschka's illustrations are beautiful, as on the double-page spread when, through the hello, goodbye window, the girl and Nanna say goodnight to the yellow, green, white, and blue stars swirling in the light blue, dark blue, purple, and black sky above the swirling green, dark green, and yellow trees around the house, while the windows of the house glow gold and orange. The other pages feature brighter illustrations, with vivid colors contrasting against their white, blank space backgrounds. It is all luminous, lovely, and engaging.

Painted by the loving little girl, the images of the mixed-race family express the unique personality of each member. Raschka, the artist standing behind the girl, executes "her" illustrations with respect and affection. The girl's kinky hair is brown, with black and gold curls, her skin tawny. Her grandmother has gray curly hair, brown eyes, and darker brown skin, her grandfather thinning hair, blue eyes, and white skin. Her father also has white skin and blue eyes, her mother nearly black and slightly curly hair, brown eyes, and darker brown skin. Like the grandparent's house, the characters' clothes reveal the family to be cleanly and comfortably middle-class. Most importantly, this is a loving family: on the dedication page the girl and her parents hug each other, while on the back cover the girl and her grandparents do so. In the context of a happy and loving inter-racial family, *The Hello, Goodbye Window* demonstrates the joy and sadness inherent to love between different generations, as well as the pleasures of fresh imagination in young and old people.

In the *Horn Book Review*, Martha V. Parravano lauds Raschka's illustrations: "The familial love that is Juster's subtext finds overt expression, spectacularly, in Raschka's illustrations—lush mixed-media creations saturated in watercolor and pastel crayon and set off perfectly by white space" (451). Nowhere in her review, however, does Parravano mention the race of the charac-

ters. For that matter, nowhere in Raschka's Caldecott acceptance speech does he talk about race in the book, though he does recount doing volunteer work with his wife in the Caribbean: "Perhaps our feelings of uselessness came from the knowledge of our own guilt and entanglement in New World history, the ills of slavery and racism reaching across the generations to trip us" (119). Because Raschka reveals his sensitivity to race in his speech, it is all the more surprising that he remains silent about race in his book. Perhaps he thought that the race of his characters was so obvious as to go without saying, but race is so rare in the Medal books that it would have been nice had he highlighted it in his acceptance speech.

3 Controversies and Conclusions

The first thing that strikes one after analyzing the fourteen Caldecott Medal books that feature characters of color is their rarity relative to the great majority of winners depicting white or animal protagonists. The scarcity stands out even more when compared with the increasingly large number of racial minorities in America. According to the 2012 census, people of color constitute 37% of the United States population ("Census: Minorities") and about 50% of children younger than five ("Census: White"), but only about 18% (fourteen) of the seventy-six Caldecott Medal books. Unsurprisingly, the various American racial types are also under-represented. The 2012 census revealed that 17% of Americans are Hispanic, 12.3% black, 5% Asian, and 2.4% multi-racial ("Census: White"), but only one book (1.3%) features a Hispanic American protagonist, two books (2.6%) an African American one, no books an American Asian one, and one book (1.3%) a multi-racial one. Admittedly, the minority (especially Hispanic) population has dramatically increased in the

twenty-first century, and there was a lower percentage of minorities in the twentieth, but the distribution of the fourteen books by year of publication reveals that there have never been enough Medal books featuring minorities relative to the demographics of the United States. One appeared in the 1930s, one in the 1940s, none in the 1950s, two in the 1960s, five in the 1970s, two in the 1980s, two in the 1990s, and one in the 2000s. It is not surprising that only two Medal books appeared before the civil rights movement and that five were published in the peak decade of the 1970s, not long after the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), when American educators, librarians, and parents had begun wanting to provide children with books about characters from different racial groups. What is unexpected is that the number of Medal books featuring non-white characters has dwindled since the 1970s until only one, *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (2005), has appeared since *Smoky Night* was published in 1994: only one winning book in nearly twenty years, only one in the twenty-first century. In 1970 the minority population was 17.1% (“Historical Census”), but five of the fourteen books appeared in that decade, so the percentage of the minority population is not closely correlated with the number of Caldecott Medal books that feature minority characters. Optimists would say that the rarity of Medal books about characters of color is due to America having become a post-racial society, pessimists that it is due to America still being a racist one.

The decreasing number of Caldecott Medal books about non-white characters is possibly related to the increasing number of race-based children’s book awards, which may draw away ALA committee votes from multicultural Caldecott candidates. In addition to the Caldecott Medal, since 1970 the ALA has annually given the Coretta Scott King Book Awards “to outstanding African

American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values” (“The Coretta”), and since 1996 the Pura Belpré Award to “the Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth” (“Welcome”). And the best picture books about Asian Americans and Native Americans have received The Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature since 2001 and The American Indian Youth Literature Award since 2006. One hopes that such prizes are not leading to an awards-based segregation of children’s books.

In addition to the statistical context of the fourteen Caldecott Medal books, it is useful to consider their genres, themes, and settings. Of the fourteen books only one, *Smoky Night*, somewhat directly treats race in text, story, and illustrations. The other thirteen books mostly leave it to pictures to tell readers that their protagonists are people of color and avoid overtly racial themes. Of those thirteen books, only three (*Song of the Swallows*, *The Snowy Day*, and *The Hello, Goodbye Window*) present protagonists of color who live in the contemporary United States, focusing as they do on the magical wonder of the everyday world in an American context. Ten of the fourteen books depict people from other countries or cultures, Africa (three), China (two), Japan (two), Native America (two), and India (1). And in a further distancing trait, of those ten, six are folk tales depicting protagonists who live long ago and go on fantastic journeys or deal with the fantastic while staying at home, while two have neither story nor protagonist (*Ashanti to Zulu* and *Shadow*), and one is a biography (*Grandfather’s Journey*). The only one of the ten to depict a contemporary child doing mostly realistic activities is *Mei Li*. Among the fourteen Calde-

cott Medal books featuring race, then, few do so in settings and genres that directly relate to the real world experiences of American children.

It could be argued that whereas once there were nearly no children of color in picture books, there now are a substantial number, but still not enough doing contemporary daily life activities. Dawn Friedman, for example, argues in her blog that

There just aren't enough books about everyday kids doing everyday things where the kids happen to be African American or Chinese American or Native American or Hispanic, etc. etc. There are many fine, laudable books (and many absolutely awful ones) about slavery and Civil Rights and the Japanese internment camps and migrant farm workers from Mexico, but the ordinary kid? The one who is riding her bike or fighting with his little sister? That's a lot tougher.

A related controversial matter concerns the degree to which child readers should be able to identify with the protagonists of the books they read. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein questions "The idea of identification as an explanation of how and why the 'child' reads [which] in turn supports the assumption that . . . the 'child' is supposed to be inherently and voluntarily attracted to books in which it recognises itself" (27). If "identification" is "a process [which] requires emotional ties with the model" so that "children believe they are like these models and their thoughts, feelings, and characteristics become similar to them" (Norton 20), what happens to, say, African American children who find few African American children in the books they read? What happens to poor or wealthy white children who read about the most common characters in children's literature, middle-class white children? Scholars like Robert Leeson hold that "although the 'child' needs to 'recognize himself or herself' . . . the work-

ing-class child does not want ‘only to read about itself’ and likes to escape into a different world in its reading” (43). Children enjoy reading stories set far away in time and or space in cultures seemingly different from their own and featuring protagonists seemingly different from themselves and then feeling the pleasure of empathic connection.

One of the most controversial issues in multicultural children’s literature is who has the right or authority to write, illustrate, and evaluate books that feature characters of color. The last of Michelle Martin’s criteria for judging the depictions of African Americans in picture books is “What difference does the ethnicity of the author and/or illustrator make to your reception of the text?” (194) Whether it makes a difference and if so what kind are contentious issues. Donna E. Norton recounts a debate on authorship at a “Roundtable” discussion on multicultural education held in NYC in May of 1993.

Many of the participants felt strongly that only members of an ethnic group should have ownership of the literature and be encouraged to write the literature and critique the literature written by others. According to this viewpoint, only African Americans, for example, have the experience and the perception to write authentically about the black experience. Others argued the viewpoint that anyone who writes with sensitivity and does the required research into the subject and the culture should be able to write about the culture. (627)

Mendoza and Reese sympathize with critics who question the right and or motives and or effects of mainstream white creators who publish picture books about “marginalized” people. They give examples from Native American scholars who have found problems with the “inaccurate and potentially misleading” images of Native Americans in picture books by white creators, even when the

creators seem to sympathetically depict Indians. Clare Bradford argues that “many non-Indigenous authors and illustrators draw upon assumptions and stereotypes which are invisible to them because they are cultural givens,” (“Reading” 332). Paul Goble, for example, asserts his right to adapt Native American stories like *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* based on his friendship with a Lakota chief, but his picture book oeuvre is “highly contentious” because he is not Native American and often gets details wrong (Bradford “Reading” 333). Furthermore, even if his books were 100% accurate, some Native Americans would still see him as engaging in cultural theft.

It bears mentioning here that of the fourteen Caldecott Medal books featuring non-white characters, eleven were written by white writers, and ten were illustrated by white artists. Alan Say (Japanese-Korean American) and Ed Young (Chinese American) wrote and illustrated *Grandfather's Journey* and *Lon Po Po*, while Margaret Musgrove (African American) and Leo and Diane Dillon (African American and white American couple) wrote and illustrated *Ashanti to Zulu* and David Diaz (Hispanic American) illustrated *Smoky Night*. So are their books more authentic than the majority of the fourteen Medal books made by white creators? Perhaps it is because I am a white American, but among the fourteen Medal books, only *The Funny Little Woman* has a distracting number of cultural inaccuracies, only *Song of the Swallows* has some upsetting historical cleansing, and only *Smoky Night* has troubling cultural silences. Certainly none of the fourteen books uses people of color as a canvas on which to paint the negative (superior, fearful, angry, etc.) feelings of a white character or reader. The farther a picture book is distanced by time and culture from the American present and from the race or ethnicity of readers, the less likely they will be to recognize cultural inaccuracies and the more

likely to judge a book by its story and illustrations. Adults who provide multicultural picture books to children could weigh the attitude towards people of color expressed by the books and determine as much as possible the accuracy of the depictions and then decide based on the other merits of the books whether or not to introduce them and whether or not to correct their cultural errors.

Katharine Capshaw Smith calls attention to a backlash against overtly anti-racist children's books: "Critics claim that antiracist efforts create rancor and divisiveness, privilege political correctness, and sideline aesthetics in service to social justice" (193). Ellen Handler Spitz favors books like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Beatrix Potter and *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) by Maurice Sendak that remain beloved and become classics because, unlike books burdened by overtly topical subjects like race, "they tackle important and abiding psychological themes . . . with craftsmanship and subtlety" (8). Smith claims that "As sensitivity to individuals of mixed backgrounds increases, any simplistic use of "race" as a critical category dissolves" (193). And perhaps it is true that as Americans continue to define themselves in ever-greater numbers as multi-racial and as the white majority continues to decrease relative to ethnic minorities, race will become obsolete. In any case, for the time being Perry Nodelman is right when he says, "It's undeniably important that children of all races and colors read stories about children of all races and colors written by authors of all races and colors," because "in a world in which race and color still play such an important part in defining the experiences of individuals, books by and about people of different backgrounds are bound to offer access to a vast spectrum of ways of being human" (129). It must be salutary for children to read books about people from different countries and ethnicities, as

well as from their own, as long as the books are written and illustrated with skill and thought and feeling, so as to present children with rich aesthetic and cultural experiences, open their minds and hearts, and make them more color-blind or color positive. The fourteen Caldecott Medal books featuring race form a varied group that is marked by mostly outstanding texts and illustrations and compelling stories and themes and by too few members in the group. Finally, although the situation regarding race in children's literature today is much better than it was in the past, examining the Caldecott Medal books reveals that there is still a long way to go before racial equality in picture books is achieved.

Works Cited

- "About Ed." *Ed Young*. August 31, 2013. <<http://edyoungart.com/about.html>>.
- "About Ezra." *Ezra Jack Keats Foundation*. August 19, 2013. <<http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/introduction/a-biography/>>.
- ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children). *The Newbery and Caldecott Awards: A Guide to the Medal and Honor Books, 1998 Edition*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1998.
- Bennett-Smith, Meredith. "The Snowy Day Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary." March 30, 2012. *The Christian Science Monitor*. October 26, 2013. <<http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2012/0330/The-Snowy-Day-celebrates-its-50th-anniversary>>.
- Berman, Ari. "The Return of Jim Crow." June 26, 2013. *Moyers & Company: Group Think*. October 19, 2013. <<http://billmoyers.com/groupthink/voting-rights-act/the-return-of-jim-crow/>>.
- Blackwell, Angela Glover. "America Is Not a Post-Racial Society." June 26, 2013. *Moyers*

- & Company: *Group Think*. October 19, 2013. <<http://billmoyers.com/groupthink/voting-rights-act/america-is-not-a-post-racial-society/>>.
- Bradford, Clare. "Race, Ethnicity and Colonialism." *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*. Ed. David Rudd. London: Routledge, 2010. 39–50.
- . "Reading Indigeneity: The Ethics of Interpretation and Representation." *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Ed. Shelby A. Wolf, Karen Coats, et al. New York: Routledge, 2011. 331–342.
- Brown, Marcia. *Once a Mouse*... 1961. New York: Aladdin, 1982.
- . *Shadow*. New York: Atheneum, 1982.
- Bunting, Eve and David Diaz (illus.). *Smoky Night*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- "Census: Minorities Constitute 37 Percent of U.S. Population." May 17, 2012. *National Journal: The Next America: How Demography Shapes the National Agenda*. September 16, 2013. <<http://www.nationaljournal.com/thenextamerica/demographics/census-minorities-constitute-37-percent-of-u-s-population-20120517>>.
- "Census: White Majority in U.S. Gone by 2043." June 13, 2013. *US News on NBCNEWS.COM*. September 16, 2013. <http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/06/13/18934111-census-white-majority-in-us-gone-by-2043?lite>.
- Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins UP, 2003.
- Coatsworth, Elizabeth. "Thomas Handforth's *Mei Li*." July–August 1939. *The Horn Book Magazine*. August 19, 2013. <<http://www.hbook.com/2012/12/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/thomas-handforths-mei-li/>>.
- Fader, Ellen. "Smoky Night." *The Horn Book*. January 31, 1994. 89.
- Field, Rachel and Elizabeth Orton Jones (illus.). *Prayer for a Child*. 1944. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.
- Friedberg, Joan Brest. "Garth Williams." Ed. John Cech. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*:

Vol. 22: American Writers for Children, 1900–1960. Detroit : Gale Research, 1983. 367–75.

Friedman, Dawn. “Books Featuring Children of Color Where Race Is Not the Point of the Story.” February 9, 2007. *Love Isn’t Enough : On Raising a Family in a Colorstruck World*. August 20, 2013. <<http://loveisntenough.com/2007/02/09/books-featuring-children-of-color-where-race-is-not-the-point-of-the-story/>>.

Goble, Paul. *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1978.

Hakim, Joy. *A History of US : Sourcebook and Index : Documents that Shaped the American Nation*. Book 11. New York : Oxford UP, 1999.

Haley, Gail. *A Story—A Story*. New York : Atheneum, 1970.

Handforth, Thomas. *Mei Li*. New York : Doubleday, 1938.

---. “Personal Progress Toward the Orient.” The American Library Association Conference in San Francisco, June 20, 1939. *The Hornbook Magazine*. August 19, 2013. <<http://www.hbook.com/2012/12/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/personal-progress-toward-the-orient/>>.

Hearn, Michael Patrick. “After the Smoke Has Cleared.” *Teaching and Learning Literature*. September–October, 1995. 54–56.

Hillman, Judith. *Discovering Children’s Literature*. 2nd ed. New Jersey : Prentice–Hall, 1999.

“Hispanic Heritage : David Diaz.” *Gale Cengage Learning*. August 20, 2013. <http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/chh/bio/diaz_d.htm>.

“Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States.” September 2002. *U. S. Census Bureau*. September 15, 2013. <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/twps0056.html>>.

Horning, Kathleen T. “Thomas Handforth, China, and the Real Mei Li.” January 2013.

- The Horn Book Magazine*. August 19, 2013. <<http://www.hbook.com/2013/01/authors-illustrators/thomas-handforth-china-and-the-real-mei-li/>>.
- Juster, Norton and Chris Raschka (illus.). *The Hello, Goodbye Window*. New York: Hyperion, 2005.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. New York: Viking, 1962.
- Lanes, Selma G. "Violence from a Distance." *New York Times Book Review*. May 21, 1995. 25.
- Larrick, Nancy. "The All-White World of Children's Books." *Saturday Review*. September 11, 1965. 63 – 65, 84 – 85.
- Latimer, Bettye. *Starting Out Right: Choosing Books About Black People for Young Children*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1972.
- Leeson, Robert. *Children's Books and Class Society: Past and Present*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1977.
- Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2008.
- Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. "Defining Children's Literature and Childhood." *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. London: Routledge, 1996. 17 – 31.
- Macaulay, David. "1991 Caldecott Acceptance Speech." *The Newbery and Caldecott Awards: A Guide to the Medal and Honor Books, 1998 Edition*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1998. 10 – 19.
- Mander, Gertrude. "Keats, Ezra Jack." *St. James Guide to Children's Writers*. 5th ed. Eds. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast. Detroit: St. James, 1999. 575 – 76
- Marcus, Leonard S. *A Caldecott Celebration: Six Artists and Their Paths to the Caldecott Medal*. New York: Walker, 1998.
- Martin, Michelle. *Brown Gold: Milestones of African American Children's Picture Books*,

- 1845–2002. New York : Routledge, 2004.
- May, Jill P. *Children's Literature & Critical Theory*. New York : Oxford UP, 1995.
- McDermott, Gerald. *Arrow to the Sun*. New York : Viking, 1974.
- Mendoza, Jean and Debbie Reese. "Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom : Possibilities and Pitfalls." Vol. 3, No. 2, 2001. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*. September 13, 2013. <<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/mendoza.html>>.
- Mosel, Arlene and Blair Lent (illus.). *The Funny Little Woman*. New York : Puffin, 1972.
- Musgrove, Margaret and Leo and Diane Dillon (illus.). *Ashanti to Zulu : African Traditions*. New York : Dial, 1976.
- Nodelman, Perry. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. 2nd ed. New York : Longman, 1996.
- Norton, Donna E. *An Introduction to Children's Literature*. 5th ed. New Jersey : Prentice Hall, 1999.
- NPR. 'The Snowy Day': Breaking Color Barriers, Quietly. August 19, 2013. <<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/28/145052896/the-snowy-day-breaking-color-barriers-quietly>>.
- Parravano, Martha V. "Review of *The Hello, Goodbye Window*." *Horn Book Review*. July–August, 2005. 451.
- Politi, Leo. *Song of the Swallows*. 1949. Los Angeles : Getty Publications, 2009.
- Raschka, Chris. "2006 Caldecott Acceptance Speech." *In the Words of the Winners : The Newbery and Caldecott Medals 2001–2010*. Chicago : American Library Association, 2011. 117–124.
- Reese, Debbie, & Naomi Caldwell-Wood. "Native Americans in Children's Literature." *Using Multiethnic Literature in the K–8 Classroom*. Ed. Violet J. Harris. Norwood, MA : Christopher–Gordon, 1997. 155–192.

- Rochman, Hazel. *Against Borders : Promoting Books for a Multicultural World*. Chicago : Booklist Publications, 1993.
- Say, Allen. *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Smith, Katharine Capshaw. "Race." *Keywords for Childrens' Literature*. Ed. Philip Nel and Lissa Paul. New York : Yew York UP, 2011. 189 – 93.
- "*Smoky Night*." *Publisher's Weekly*. January 31, 1994. 89.
- Spitz, Ellen Handler. *Inside Picture Books*. New Haven : Yale UP, 1999.
- "The Coretta Scott King Book Awards." *America Library Association*. September 16, 2013. <<http://www.ala.org/emiert/ckbookawards>>.
- "Then & Now : Images from the Same Spot as the LA Riots 20 Years Later." *LA Weekly*. August 13, 2013. <<http://www.laweekly.com/microsites/la-riots/>>.
- Tinker, George E. "Missions and Missionaries." *Enclopedia of North American Indians : Native American History, Culture, and Life from Paleo-Indians to the Present*. Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1996. 381 – 84.
- "Welcome to the Pura Belpré Award home page!" *Association for Library Service to Children*. September 16, 2013. <<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>>.
- Young, Ed. *Lon Po Po : A Red Riding Hood Story from China*. New York : Philomel, 1989.