INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORY AND CULTURE IN JAPANESE- AND CHINESE-
CANADIAN PICTUREBOOKS: A NEW HISTORICAL APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores insider and outsider perspectives in a sample of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks: <u>Little fingerling</u> (written by Monica Hughes and illustrated by Brenda Clark), <u>West coast Chinese boy</u> (written and illustrated by Sing Lim), <u>Roses sing on new snow</u> (written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Harvey Chan), <u>Ghost train</u> (written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Harvey Chan) and <u>Naomi's tree</u> (written by Joy Kogawa and illustrated by Ruth Ohi). Through the critical lenses of New Historicism, visual semiotics, and image-text interaction theories these selected works are examined for cultural and historical authenticity. The analysis concludes, overall, that insider perspectives are more authentic for these reasons: they better reflect the voices of the cultural groups they represent; they consider a broader range of philosophical and political beliefs towards history; they generate more intense reactions from readers and viewers; and they give power to people whose narratives have been suppressed in the past.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and grandparents whose stories inspired me to write.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Origins of Interest

My interest in interpreting and evaluating history and culture in the narratives of Japanese and Chinese-Canadian historical picturebooks stems from my own personal background. As a young child of second-generation Japanese-Canadian parents, and first-generation Japanese-Canadian grandparents, I was often told stories of what it was like to grow up just after the Depression, to face the challenges of internment and post-internment life, and to find a Japanese-Canadian identity. What stood out for me the most in these narratives were not so much the details of dates, places, and numbers, as might appear in a textbook, but rather, the innovative and unique ways in which my family found to deal with day-to-day obstacles.

I can remember a particularly memorable story my mother told me about her family's experience of working the sugar beet fields in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. She recalled sitting under a homemade tarp while her mother, father, aunts, and uncles spent many hours toiling in extreme heat picking beets back and forth across long rows in a large farm for their Caucasian employers. For entertainment, my mother and her brother dug deep holes in the dirt with small shovels and pretended that that they were escaping to an imaginary underground world with cool waterfalls, lush green trees and plants, and friendly undiscovered creatures. Apparently, this game was a great success for many weeks until they were scolded by the owners of the farm for making the field look "messy".

I also remember another account of how, at age eleven, a few years after moving to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, from Roseberry, British Columbia where his family was interned, my father became embroiled in a fistfight with some Caucasian classmates because they were calling him racist names and throwing rocks at him. When he told my grandfather (his father) what had

happened, my grandfather said that my father must use his brains instead of impulsively giving in to physical violence. His reasoning was that the school would likely be more critical of my father due to his Japanese background and the social and political realities of the era. My father considered this advice and then a few days later he asked one the biggest boys in the school if he would like help with his math homework as my father really liked math (and could multiply and divide large numbers in his head) and the other boy struggled with most academic subjects. After several hours of some very intense tutoring progress was made and my father had a new friend who made sure that he was never bothered at school again.

In a third story, my paternal grandfather designed a most creative way of finding out what was happening to his family in Japan while he himself was interned in Saskatchewan. As all writing and other forms of communication with Japan were banned, my grandfather reconstructed his simple radio to receive Japanese news reports by making some slight internal modifications and connecting a very long wire from the radio to the hydro lines at the back of the house. When the RCMP officers came by to check on the family, my grandfather disconnected the wire attached to the radio and wrapped it around the clothesline pole and hung laundry over it so that it looked like my grandmother just needed more space for the many clothes of her family of seven. Although I am sure that the contraption looked pretty suspicious, no one complained or even bothered to enquire about its actual purpose.

Traditional historians would be unlikely to classify the family narratives I have described above as being important enough, or appropriate, or even truthful enough to be included in most textbooks, yet, for me, they are certainly a type of history, as they have been passed down as detailed written documents and carefully remembered oral accounts through the generations from my grandparents to my parents, from my parents to me, and hopefully from myself and my siblings to our own children and grandchildren. Whose role is it, then, to decide what is worthy of being considered historical and truthful and what is not? Along the same lines, should there

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be a particular approach to telling or writing history? Finally, can social, political, or even family history be rewritten as new findings occur or new ways of thinking are developed?

These questions were foregrounded for me as I began my studies in children's literature. When I entered the Masters of Arts in Children's Literature Program, I was a late primary/early intermediate classroom teacher looking for effective and innovative ways of making history personally relevant to my students, but also still managing to meet the curriculum guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education. I already knew that I had a long-held passion for diverse styles of illustration, picturebooks, and Asian-Canadian studies, so discovering and deciding to concentrate my major research study on the cultural and historical content and authenticity in Japanese and Chinese Canadian historical picturebooks seemed like a natural and perfect progression. I was fascinated by the manner in which the sub-genre of the historical picturebook challenged one's thinking with its variety of innovative methods of integrating rich and complex images with powerful text to successfully tackle often difficult concepts or controversial issues experienced by Japanese and Chinese Canadians; and by the potential that this subject provided for motivating the use of higher level thinking skills.

The changes in verbal and written responses that I received from my students at the grade three and grade four level, upon partaking in read-alouds and picturebook studies with such diverse titles as Paul Yee's Boy in the attic and Ghost train, Ange Zhang's Red land, yellow river, Eleanor Coerr's Sadako, and Joy Kogawa's Naomi's tree, were nothing short of phenomenal. No longer was the goal to memorize a set of facts or to acquire a single, correct answer. As a majority of my school's population was of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean origin, the students remarked at how the stories reminded them of the way that their grandparents and other older relatives spoke about their families' experiences and homelands and connected them to a part of lived history. Discussions focused on themes such as ancestors returning to the human realm as supportive ghosts, feelings of loneliness and alienation upon adapting to a new

country, escaping a home country as refugees because of different religious views or values, and the Japanese retreat to the garden to find peace and comfort in times of trouble. English as a Second Language students became more animated and relaxed during lessons because they believed that the historical picturebooks helped them to understand sophisticated ideas in ways that were far less wordy than the textbooks and made them feel that their main method of communication, drawing, was not a juvenile activity. Canadian-born students stated that the historical picturebooks that were about their cultural backgrounds encouraged them to be proud of their families' accomplishments and historical picturebooks that were about cultures other than their own allowed them to better empathize with people from different places who had different experiences. One of the most perceptive comments, however, came from a gifted boy who remarked that he liked the picturebooks that were created by authors and illustrators from the cultures that they wrote about because he could feel the emotions and experiences more in those works, the language of the writing was more the way those people talked, and the illustrative styles concentrated on what the cultures really believed were important in the way that they felt was important.

Many of my instructors and fellow classmates at the University of British Columbia also seemed to share my enthusiasm and praise for these amazing books and we often traded favourite titles and our opinions about how these books were constructed by authors and illustrators. What was interesting, though, was the fact that I could only find a few of these books in both the school library and the upper primary and intermediate classrooms of my teaching colleagues. Could this oversight be because they believed the commonly held misconception that picturebooks are exclusively the domain of early primary children? Were they unsure of which criteria should be used to select the best Japanese and Chinese picturebooks for their curricular purposes or how to incorporate picturebooks into their programs? Did they comple their educational studies in the 1970s when it was believed that pictures were believed to

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interfere with reading comprehension or word recognition and early basal readers were for that reason, often without any illustrations (Kiefer 1995, p.7)? Perhaps they were unfamiliar with multi-layered contemporary historical picturebooks and remembered only the simplistic, often stereotype-riddled picturebooks, that they were exposed to themselves as students in the 1950s, 1960, or early 1970s. As Linda McGuire-Raskin has remarked in her article, "Multiculturalism in children's picture books: An analysis of insider and outsider texts," many children, and adults, have been scarred by the memories of picturebooks in which illustrations of the faces of ethnocultural minorities "are just like the White faces but coloured in," depictions of their homes "are contrasted unfavourably with the unstated norm of White middle-class suburbia" and "their voices are…omitted from the cannon" (1996, p. 23).

Statement of the Problem

Defining "Picturebook" and Examining the Word-Picture Dynamic

Picturebooks, which are socially constructed artifacts, have changed dramatically since their beginnings in the 1700s as sources of pedagogy and religious didacticism (Egoff 1981, p. 248). However, there still exists a wide range of opinions about what the term truly means and how contemporary picturebooks should be properly interpreted and appreciated.

The picturebook has taken various forms over the centuries. Today library and classroom shelves are likely to contain alphabet books, concept books, information books, and storybooks, in which pictures play a major role. In addition, many chapter books or novels for children contain illustrations. It is not surprising, then, that there is an abundance of definitions of the picturebook and confusion on the part of adults as to what constitutes a picturebook.

A question that adds to this confusion is whether picturebooks are to be considered literature (Groff 1974; Landes 1985). Certainly picturebooks are introduced and discussed most often in courses in children's literature rather than in art history or modern art. Art educator

Kenneth Marantz argues, however, that "picturebooks are not literature (i.e. word dominated things), but rather a form of visual art…The picturebook must be experienced as a visual/verbal entity if its potential values are to be realized" (1977, p. 150). Similarly, Uri Shulevitz suggests that "A true picturebook tells a story mainly or entirely with pictures. When words are used they have an auxiliary role" (1985, p.15).

Illustrator Barbara Cooney (1988) likens the picturebook to a string of pearls. She proposes that the pearls represent the illustrations, and the string represents the printed text. The string is not an object of beauty on its own, but the necklace cannot exist without the string. Although in picturebooks a verbal text should certainly bring pleasure in and of itself, Cooney's analogy supports the idea of the interdependence of pictures and text in the unique art object that is a picturebook.

Many other scholars concur with Cooney's proposition that illustrations and text exist in a symbiotic relationship in a picturebook. Patricia Cianciolo, in Picture books for children, states that in today's picturebooks for children, pictures and text come together to form a distinct unit that communicates differently from pictures and texts in other circumstances (1997, p. 1). Joseph H. Schwarcz and Chava Schwarcz note that because the words and the pictures in picturebooks both define and amplify each other neither is as open-ended as it would be on its own (1991, p. 5). In quality picturebooks, readers will often find that the illustrations are accomplished works of visual and graphic art and the texts are written in highly expressive language. As well as bringing out and emphasizing what is in the text, the illustrations convey other meanings and impressions that the readers would not have envisioned from the textual information alone and sometimes contradict the text (Schwarcz and Schwarcz 1991, p. 5). Patricia Cianciolo claims that "with some degree of higher-level thinking and imaginative thinking on their part, readers can and do grasp [the visual and textual] meaning and significance and even go well beyond what the illustrator and author suggest" (1997). Because of these

unusual features, picturebooks have unique rhythms, unique conventions or shape and structure, and a unique body of narrative techniques.

However, perhaps Barbara Bader's discussion of the term "picturebook," offered in her introduction to <u>American picturebooks: From Noah's Ark to the beast within</u>, best encompasses the complexity of the genre:

> A picturebook is text, illustration, total design: an item of manufacture and a
> commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost, an
> experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures
> and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of
> the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are endless (1976, p.1).

The limitless possibilities that Bader refers to arise from an intricate combination of verbal and visual signs, expanding opinions about what constitutes suitable subject matter, and ever evolving and adapting formats. These characteristics also present challenges for devising solid criteria for picturebook classification. With the picturebook's ability to readily incorporate other forms, the defining features shift constantly.

Multicultural Picturebooks: Problems with Definition and Determining Quality

Multicultural picturebooks have been transformed immensely since the era prior to the 1960s, when publishing about "minorities" was filled with stereotyping and severe distortion. Seen through North American or European ethnocentric eyes, non-Caucasian groups appeared exotic, inferior, sometimes threatening, and often a source of ridicule. Individual differences were ignored in the course of presenting common characteristics attributed to each group.

Joseph H. Schwarcz and Chava Schwarcz define current multicultural picturebooks as embodying the sum of stories that are the spiritual underpinning of any group of people and have great potential for bridging the gaps between diverse groups (2005, p. ix).

The concept of story is one common to all people, a shared experience that sets the stage for communication. Most young children have been introduced to some of the stories from the oral traditions of their ethnocultural heritage; so multicultural picturebooks based on similar narrative traditions, as well as those based on daily life, can be absorbed and enjoyed. But what is learned depends a great deal on the insights and craftsmanship of those producing the picturebooks that contain them (Marantz and Marantz 2005, p. ix).

Multicultural picturebooks can help to give children at least the flavour of another way of perceiving life. Adults working with children and books must in some cases not only help with the understanding of the meaning of words but seek ways to "translate" the pictures (Marantz and Marantz 2005, p. ix). Although cross-cultural learning in classrooms is a task that requires contemplation, educators can use the potential of these picturebooks to involve children with issues, concerns, values, and problems common to all humans, if rendered differently across the city or around the world. Those who create these books must understand the people on both sides of the bridge they are trying to build and think about what is appropriate for their audiences. If the creators are successful, they will have used their artistic skills to successfully interpret and present what they wish to convey so that the reader can value and be moved by the message.

Difficulty arises, however, when the decision is made to assess whether multicultural picturebooks have met their goals of quality and accurate representation. Kerry Mallan, in In the picture: Perspectives on picture book art and artists, declares that children's book awards can give the "official stamp of approval to certain books which have been judged as being the cream of the literary crop" (1999, p. 19). However, on occasion, there is dissonance between what the judges consider to be 'good' and what the public considers to be 'good'. One way around this debate has been to separate awards into those whose criteria are based on literary and artistic quality (e.g. the Children's Book Council awards) and those based on popular appeal (such as

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children's choice awards) (Mallan 1999, p. 19). However, such divisions and categorization of viewpoint serve only to reinforce an oppositional and hierarchical position between the literary/artistic establishment and the larger population. Mainstream organizations which confer awards for excellence in children's books, such as the Canada Council, the Children's Book Council of Australia, and the American Library Association, need to be viewed not as independent entities, but as institutions which are themselves produced and maintained in multiple discourses (political, social, economic, historical) and by systems of representation (gender, ethnicity, class, age) (Mallan 1999, p. 20). One could argue that a taste for art and literature and the ability to talk about it is a kind of capital which, like money, offers entry into an elite group. When aesthetic judgments are made by the judges of literary awards or by children, parents, and others, it is not so much a matter of one group getting it right and another getting it wrong. While one group may make judgments based on literary and artistic criteria which have been developed as benchmarks for excellence, another group may base their judgment on what appeals to them about the work and this appeal may or may not be based on aesthetics.

Other awards which run parallel to these offered by mainstream organizations are those awards by groups which have an avowed political, social, or racial/ethnic agenda (e.g. the Multicultural Children's Literature Award; Premiers' awards; the Coretta Scott King Award; the Canadian Aboriginal Book of the Year Award; the Belpre Award for Hispanic and Latino children's literature; and the David Unaiopon Award for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander authors). The case of awards for artistic or literary excellence being given to books by specific ethnic or indigenous writers presents a double-edged sword of discrimination (Mallan 1999, p. 20). On the one hand, the fact that these awards exist suggests a need for marginalised artists and authors to be given an avenue for recognition, and reward for, their work which may not fit the same criteria of excellence or value of the dominant group. On the other hand, such awards

are in themselves a discriminatory mechanism for exclusion, for rewarding and valuing a book within an ethnically or racially defined network.

As Nicholas Paley notes, in "Postmodernist impulses and the contemporary picture book: Are there any stories to these meanings?" (1992, p. 160), multicultural picturebooks' very existence depends on a range of contextual issues that are that are related to economic privilege, political power, and cultural advantage. While these contexts or discourse have always shaped picturebooks and other cultural artefacts, they are never constant, always unpredictable. Furthermore, these contexts will also determine the fate of the picturebook. The picturebook, like the arts in general, cannot be understood apart from the cultural contexts in which it is produced. To assume that picturebooks reflect one common or universal culture denies the multiplicity of cultures which operate in pretty much all societies (Paley 1992, p. 161). It also denies the ways social and political issues impact on differences which exist in any given cultural context.

The Need for Multicultural Children's Literature

Research tells us that using quality multicultural children's books, particularly multicultural picturebooks, is beneficial for children (Marantz and Marantz, 2005; Banks, 2003; Bishop 1992; Cai 2002; Lindgren, 1991). Such literature can play an important role in classroom instruction. It provides reading material, serves as a springboard for critical thinking, and supplies students with images, ideas, models, and multiple perspectives. In the absence of, or in conjunction with real-life role models, multicultural literature can be a powerful tool for promoting cultural understanding. Mingshui Cai (2002) suggests that multicultural literature is a means of achieving the goal of "diversity and equity in education" (p. 13). He suggests that reading about diverse perspectives enhances multicultural awareness, which enables us to recognize forces such power and privilege, which may otherwise be invisible to some people. Rudine Bishop (1992) contends that multicultural literature is a "vehicle for socialization and

change" (p. 43). Scholars and researchers advocate for multicultural children's trade books, but the extent to which teachers are actively selecting and using these books in their classroom practice is uncertain.

There needs to be more intensive research that bridges theory and practice about multicultural children's literature. By analysing the quantity (number of trade books published and available for classroom use) and quality (defined asliterary merit and cultural authenticity) of multicultural children's literature, we gain a better understanding of how society, culture, and politics influence the world of children's literature and also the role of Asian-Canadian children's literature in school classrooms. Over time, emphases in multicultural children's literature have shifted from issues of quantity to quality. However, both quantity and quality are equally important and interrelated. Only by increasing both will we be able to improve the representation and perceptions of people of colour.

Nancy Larrick's 1965 landmark essay addressed the quantity issue for multicultural books in the United States. She contended that the world of children's literature was "all-white" (p. 2). Larrick pointed out that people of colour were excluded and misrepresented in literature because the publishers and authors represented the voices and interests of the Caucasian majority. In response to Larrick and supported by the Civil Rights movement, multicultural trade books increased (Bishop 1992). But when compared to current demographics, the quantity of available multicultural texts is still not commensurate with the American population (Nilsson 2005). Futhermore, because the Civil Rights movement was led largely by African-Americans, most of the available multicultural trade books of this period focused on their experiences. In her seminal study, Bishop looked at the issue of quality as related to these texts. She found that they were based on an Anglo-American frame of reference and primarily intended for Anglo-Americans. In other words, these trade books were written about African-Americans from an Anglo-American perspective. Thus, they were often criticized for being culturally inauthentic

and not representative of the African-American experience as judged by African-Americans. Bishop sought to foster awareness about African-American trade books (Bishop 1982). She surveyed and analyzed 150 contemporary realistic African-American fiction books published from 1965 to 1979. She wanted to analyze the influence of perspective on the content and quality of African-American books. In analyzing data from her content analysis, she was able to provide practitioners with valuable information about what cultural authenticity means as perceived from an African-American perspective and how it is reflected in African-American trade books.

My study is inspired by and builds on the work of Bishop in my examination of the cultural authenticity of multicultural trade books. It differs from Bishop's work in that I focus on the varied interpretations of culture and history exhibited in narrative styles of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian historical picturebooks from the perspective of an Asian-Canadian researcher. The other significant difference is that I use New Historicism as my central methodology rather than content analysis. However, for both studies, the problem remains the same: The traditional cannon of multicultural children's literature has excluded and continues to exclude the voices of authors and illustrators of colour and positive images of people of colour (Nilsson 2005) which may have a negative impact students. In addition, the purposes of my study are the same as Bishop's study: to evaluate multicultural trade books and provide much needed research about cultural authenticity and to provide teachers and other school leaders with information so that they can make better and informed decisions about multicultural trade books.

The Issue of Quantity

Although data from the 2006 Census (2006 Census Canada) indicates that Asian Canadians are the fastest growing ethnocultural group in Canada, they remain underrepresented in Canadian trade books. There were 3,528,323 Asian Canadians (including 1,216, 600 Chinese and 81, 089 Japanese) recorded in the 2006 census. Furthermore, multicultural children's

literature currently represented in the school curricula includes only a minimal number of books written by Asian Canadians and/or representing the Asian-Canadian experience. The absence of Asian-Canadian perspective in school curricula, textbooks, and trade books may result in the unequal distribution of power, reproducing inequities and generating negative consequences for students, especially Asian-Canadian students. Thus, there is a need for more books about the Asian-Canadian experience.

The Issue of Quality

The need for high quality books is important, particularly books that authentically capture the Asian-Canadian experience. One of the greatest challenges of teaching Asian-Canadian students is the lack of culturally relevant materials. Cultural authenticity is a critical component of quality. It generally refers to the accurate depiction of a culture and its people (Short and Fox 2003). In her 2003 article, "Reframing the debate about cultural authenticity," Bishop suggests that cultural authenticity is a reflection of the author's success in writing about and from the cultural perspectives of the people about whom he or she is writing; it is about making members of that particular cultural group believe that the writer "knows what's going on" (p. 29). In addition to perspective, cultural authenticity is about true representation: Does this book accurately reflect and represent the culture?

However, a definition of cultural authenticity is far from simple. It is influenced by insider and outsider perspectives and by both members and non-members of a particular culture. Scholars like Bishop (2003) agree that a definition of cultural authenticity is difficult because of its political nature since it encompasses "matters having to do with economics, cultural appropriation, ethnic pride, and the desire of ethnic/cultural groups to transmit to the young through story, a sense of what it means to be a member of a group" (p. 25). The issue of cultural authenticity germane to the Asian-Canadian experience is further complicated by the diversity of the Asian-Canadian identity which includes various ethnicities and generational issues. For

example, the fourth generation of Japanese Canadians has significantly different experiences from first generation Chinese Canadians or from first generation Japanese Canadians. Given the complexities of the Asian-Canadian identity, one can see why teachers may be hesitant to select and use Asian-Canadian texts since they may or may not have sufficient knowledge of the Asian-Canadian culture. Bishop (1992) suggests that teachers, lacking cultural knowledge, might not be confident in their abilities to select multicultural literature in general.

The Lack of Representation of Asian-Canadian Voices and Themes

Recognition of authentic Asian-Canadian themes, issues, and voices have been conspicuously lacking in critical examinations of children's literature. Until recently, Canadian children's works featuring Asian characters have not been brought together in a comprehensive way making themes and issues challenging to identify. In 1990, Diane Shklanka observed in her article, "Oriental stereotypes in Canadian picturebooks," that "Books in which the central characters are of Chinese or Japanese origin are so uncommon…that any examples are lavishly praised and promoted, often before being critically evaluated" (p. 81). Of the Asian-Canadian historical picturebooks, that were published in the 1970s, only two, Sing Lim's West coast Chinese boy and Shizuye Takashima's Child in prison camp, are written and illustrated by authors who are members of the cultural groups that they write about and do not idealize or condemn the experiences of the characters (Shklanka 1990, p. 81).

Throughout the 1990s, however, there were changes in the Canadian multicultural children's book publishing world. Ronald Jobe, in Cultural connections, noted that "Although the majority of available books in English about other cultures have been written by non-natives, a remarkable development is occurring in that cultures are now being written about by members of them" (1993, p. 67). Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer observed that, "in recent years, more and more writers of colour have managed to gain access to mainstream publishers (Pleasures 2003, p. 171). They point out that many multicultural texts for children had appeared on the

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market and that through an "increasingly popular educational focus on multicultural diversity" more and more children are introduced to them in the classrooms at schools (2003, p. 171). But differences of opinions arise among scholars who discuss how to best promote tolerance through the books educators choose for their multicultural classrooms. One approach Jobe suggests for selecting books for multicultural children is to place a greater emphasis on the commonalities and similarities among peoples rather than on the differences (1993, p.33). Therefore, choosing a range of books that show different races and ethnicities but also show characters' emotions, beliefs, and needs as not so different after all could help children achieve tolerance among cultural groups. But Nodelman and Reimer believe that in doing so, we are in danger of "misrepresent[ing] the actual situation in our real world, in which colour and ethnicity have had and continue to have a strong effect on people's lives. For better or worse, membership in specific groups is part of what does indeed make people different from one another – and therefore part of what children need to understand about being human" (<u>Pleasures</u> 2003, p. 172).

Donna Norton, in <u>Through the eyes of a child: An introduction to children's literature</u>, reported on responses by educators attending a roundtable on multiculturalism, remarking that "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…" (1995, p. 605). Otherwise, non-minority writers' works could be open to charges of "cultural appropriation" or "voice appropriation" whereby non-minority writers writing about a cultural experience other than their own are seen as claiming or appropriating the "right to give voice to what it means or feels like to belong to a particular group" (Nodelman and Reimer 2003, p. 175). On the other hand, Norton also reports that "Others argued the viewpoint that anyone who writes with sensitivity and does the required research into the subject and culture should be able to write about that culture" (p. 605).

Roderick McGillis, in The nimble reader, summarizes Northrop Frye's essay, "Literary and linguistic scholarship in a postliterate world" in saying that all people exist with primary and secondary concerns and both those concerns should be represented in the voice or voices contained within a literary work (McGillis 1996, p. 104). Primary concerns are the desires to live comfortably, with food, shelter, and a sense of belonging and companionship and are things that are shared by all people in all places. Secondary concerns, on the other hand, include loyalty to one's own culture and society, to one's religious or political beliefs, to one's place in the class structure, and in short, to everything that comes under the general heading of ideology. McGillis goes further to state that since "psychologists have demonstrated that children deal with serious emotional matters in their drawings and stories…and have articulated their fears concerning such things as nuclear war, environmental waste, and racial prejudice," they are fully capable of comprehending and should be exposed to works conceived specifically for them that include political ideologies from ethnic writers expressing the perspectives of their own cultural groups as well as universal needs (McGillis 1996, p. 107).

Nodelman and Reimer highlight another key issue that cultural critics note as a danger in multiculturalism called "essentializing" – that is, "assuming that there's something identifiable as, say, a black soul or a Jewish character shared by all members of those groups" (Pleasures 2003, p. 171). Just as negative stereotyping does, so too does positive essentializing assume that characteristics are shared by all those of the same cultural origin leaving little room for "the possibility of individual growth or change, or of different but equally valid ways of being Black or Jewish or Asian or Native American" (Pleasures 2003, p. 172).

Nodelman and Reimer also make a significant contribution to the argument in their challenging of existing multicultural viewpoints about race and ethnicity. They offer suggestions for what they deem to be the best approach when evaluating and selecting multicultural texts for children. In supporting a process that cultural theorists call "hybridization," which means "the

process by which the values and attitudes of members of minority groups and members of the dominant group are influenced and changed by their dealings with one another" (2003, p. 173), Nodelman and Reimer emphasize that race and ethnicity are complex categories. They opt for a method based on the following principle:

> Evaluators could avoid essentializing by selecting books that accurately represent real racial and ethnic differences but also making it clear that these differences are more significantly cultural than basically genetic, and they are historically constructed-group characteristics that have emerged because of the group's history and the history of its interactions with other groups. (Pleasures 2003, p. 172).

They also bring up pertinent issues that inform my research study such as appropriation of voice, the authenticity of multicultural books, and the issue of essentializing.

Despite these developments, however, gaining access to children's works with Asian-Canadian themes and characters still remains problematic for educators, librarians, and researchers because few published bibliographies include Asian-Canadian titles or organize them in a systematic manner. The most comprehensive bibliographies have been published by the Canadian Children's Book Centre and by the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association (Parungao and Strong). Generally, bibliographies of Asian and/or ethnic literature often fail to include fictional works for children and young adults (for example, Anderson; Miska), and bibliographies focusing on Asian themes in children's books often include Asian-Canadian works indiscriminately with Asian-American works and assume that they have the same qualities (for example, Miller-Lachmann). Furthermore, the country of origin is rarely identified, and Chinese-, Japanese-, Vietnamese-, and Korean-Canadian characters and themes are often grouped under a single subject heading.

However, in 2003, Grace Ko and Pamela McKenzie published an article and bibliography entitled "At the margins of mainstream? East-Asian-Canadian fiction for children and young adults" in an attempt to increase understanding of the ways that Asian-Canadian children's literature contributed to Canadian identity. Their aim was not merely to provide an annotated bibliography but also to apply some of the "mainstream" Canadian characteristics that Nodelman and Reimer developed from examining a selection of Canadian children's novels (2003, p. 17). The themes of "confronting injustice," "outsider protagonists," and "home and away" that Ko and McKenzie identified attempted to parallel, challenge, or expand on the provisional list of characteristics identified by Nodelman and Reimer.

While Ko and McKenzie bring light to certain themes affecting Asian Canadians and discuss some Chinese and Japanese-Canadian works, their analysis of Chinese- and Japanese-Canadian picturebooks is limited and only a few examples of texts written and or/illustrated by members of the cultural groups are included. In addition, their notions of "home and away," according to Louise Saldanha, in "White picket fences: At home with multicultural children's literature in Canada?" need to be challenged in the context of the position of "multicultural" in relation to "mainstream" (2000, p. 129) because they function to "neutralize rather than seriously engage the cultural and racial diversity it permits to take shape in Canada (2000, p. 130). As long as "home" is considered to be a part of

> the Eurocentrically bounded Canada, our "away," as people of colour, remains,
> for all intents and purposes, outside of things, our exoticness perhaps celebrated
> but not actually included in any material, transformative manner. To this end, the
> participation of non-white cultures is encouraged and financially supported
> mainly within the cultural and symbolic sphere rather than within the social and
> economic sphere. ("White" 2008, p. 131)

In other words, the very terms "multicultural" and "mainstream" are problematic in achieving true equality and inclusion of all racial and ethnic groups in Canada. The term "multicultural," representing the minority groups here in Canada, distinctly separates them from what is considered mainstream. Hence, minority groups will always be seen to represent "away" while never feeling at "home" in Canada.

One of the few articles that include recent Canadian multicultural picturebooks is "Looking at ourselves, looking at others: Multiculturalism in Canadian children's picture books in English." The authors, Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman, provide a historical survey and discussion of multiculturalism, including Chinese- and Japanese-Canadian stories. Edwards and Saltman believe that the impact of Canada's change in immigration policies in the 1960s and its official adoption of multiculturalism in 1971 "deeply influenced Canadian children's literature" (2007, p. 2). They conclude that "Canadian picturebooks, since their beginnings in the 1970s, have mapped an intentionally Canadian geographic reality in their stories and images of regional life and culturally diverse society" (2007, p. 7). They also offer background information about Canadian publishing houses for children's books and discuss stereotyping and diversity in Chinese-Canadian books, all in light of Canada's multicultural policies.

Another article that offers unique insight into recent Canadian multicultural picturebooks is Marilynne Black and Ron Jobe's "Are children gaining a sense of place from Canadian historical picture books?" In their discussion the two authors argue that

> Children must become aware that 'a country's terrain and climate are perhaps the
> primary factors in determining how people live [their culture] – everything from
> the food they grow and eat, to the houses they build, the clothes they wear.' (Park
> unp.) Moreover, cultural artifacts often reflect the climate and landscape of a
> particular region as well as its animals and plants. For example, the clothing and
> housing of each Canadian aboriginal group is distinct and dependent on local

markers, for that particular group (2005, p.1).

This proposal implies that contemporary historical picturebooks about Asian-Canadian cultures should reflect how families may have to revise their traditional value systems in order to sustain adequate lifestyles in their new countries. For example, it is likely that extended relations will not be able to live in close proximity as before as the demand for certain livelihoods are not the same as in their former countries; substitutes for particular important auspicious foods, clothing, or types of houses will have to be found as Canadian climates do not allow for the existence of these items; festivals and seasonable celebrations may have to be held in alternate venues or times of the year due to the weather or growing season of required vegetation or even livestock; and women will have to take on different and additional roles in and outside the home in order to ensure the successful survival of their households.

Explaining Under-Representation and Lateness

In comparing the historical development of Asian-Canadian picturebooks to Asian-American picturebooks I have found that the American picturebooks predated their Canadian equivalent picturebooks by almost two decades. In <u>Multicultural children's literature: Through the eyes of many children</u>, Donna Norton notes that Taro Yashima's <u>Crow boy</u> (1955) was the first Asian-American picturebook by an Asian-American author/illustrator to win the Caldecott medal in 1956. <u>Crow Boy</u> authentically and respectfully portrays the Japanese culture from a Japanese-American perspective and offers a lesson about the acceptance of difference (2009, p. 203). In this sensitive and evocative story, Yashima draws on scenes from his childhood in a small village in Japan to tell readers about a shy and lonely mountain boy.

In "Oriental stereotypes in Canadian picture books (1990)", Diane Shklanka discussed the earliest quality Asian-Canadian picturebook, written and illustrated by an Asian-Canadian author/illustrator, Shizuye Takashima's <u>A Child in prison camp</u>, published in 1971. (1990, p.

86-87). This recollection chronicles a period in Shizuye Takashima's life which could have been traumatizing, but which she recalls without anger or bitterness: her three years (1942-1945) in a British Columbia internment camp for Japanese Canadians. The present-tense narration of young Shichan is deceptively simple and powerfully restrained. Dialogue, descriptions of customs, and documentary details arise naturally out of a narrative that is cinematic in structure. Shichan is not a dispassionate narrator, as the cover blurb on the book states. Her child-like detachment shields her from anger and hatred, but it does not prevent her from feeling, pain, sorrow, and compassion. With understated emotion, she reports the initial disbelief, the horror as the men were evacuated, the shock of dislocation and loss of freedom, the determination to make the best of a harsh and alien environment, and the tension that came close to breaking apart the family.

Takashima's illustrations require a literary sophistication and aesthetic maturity from the reader and the picturebook is best suited for older children above eleven years of age (Shklanka 1990, p. 87). The eight watercolour paintings, predominantly blue-green and gold, are impressionistic: settings and actions are merely suggested, and figures are so amorphous and hazy that without the accompanying text the subjects of the paintings would remain a mystery. Whereas young children may be put off by the lack of recognizable detail, more mature readers can appreciate the atmosphere evoked by the paintings – the warmth and sociability of the bathhouse, the excitement of the O-ban festival, and the disturbing fury of the night fire. The final scene, in which the sun's rays stream through the morning mist to illuminate Shichan and her mother rinsing clothes in the lake, emphasizes the note of peaceful optimism on which the story ends.

An important reason for the deficiency and relative lateness of Asian-Canadian children's trade books, including Asian-Canadian picturebooks, and the underrepresentation of Asian-Canadian voices in literature may be the lack of critical recognition. In his seminal study, "The

lateness of Asian-Canadian studies" (2007), Christopher Lee claims that there exists a conspicuous absence in the area of Asian-Canadian Studies in academic institutions, specifically scholarly associations, journals, annual conferences, and undergraduate and graduate programs, which are dedicated to mobilizing research and teaching on Asians in Canada; and that although anti-Asian racism has had a long and well-documented history in Canada, historical interactions are often simplified, sanitized, or completely obscured in public discourse, an ongoing erasure that marginalizes Asian Canadians across a number of public spheres.

Perhaps the largest obstacle is the racial politics of defining "Asian Canadian" itself. For some time now, in print, at conferences, and informal discussions, critical conversations about the shifting meanings of the term "Asian Canadian" as a socially descriptive label, as an identity (chosen or imposed), and as an intellectual formation have been unfolding. However, for many critics, it is not enough to merely point out the limitations of identitarian categories; rather, their work frequently draws our attention to how the production and circulation of Asian-Canadian identity can be co-opted for a celebratory and politically sedative multiculturalism by obscuring the social forces that have enabled this identity to emerge (Lee 2007, p. 3). If the role of Asian-Canadian Studies is to illuminate and unravel the complex interplay between socioeconomic power and personal experience, the field must look beyond identity in order to critically analyze social forces such as racialization (in relation to dominant white power as well as other marginalized groups), imperialism (especially the lingering legacy of colonialism), sexism, and globalization.

The current lack of formal educational spaces to address issues of the Asian diaspora limits theory-building and understandings of racialized Canadian experiences. Canada lacks this type of department in its universities and colleges. Not a single Asian-Canadian Studies department or program exists in Canada. Scholars have long argued that there are structural and institutional constraints that prevent the birth of this type of establishment. Unlike the United

States, there has never been a surge in student activism to facilitate the development of ethnic programs and to participate in building their own history.

Another reason is the lack of funding, which university administrators often use to reject proposals to expand or create new arts, humanities, or social science courses. Given this mentality, deeming Asian-Canadian Studies as a field worthy of university support continues to be a significant dilemma. Lastly, there is the problem of attracting home-grown Canadian talent. Asian-Canadian scholars often leave Canada to teach at various institutions in the United States. They often point to a lack of these positions in their native country which has forced them to move stateside to advance their careers. The very few professors that do teach Asian-Canadian related courses in Canada are usually more established and thus unlikely to want to uproot their lives and start teaching in a new program elsewhere.

For similar reasons as with Asian-Canadian scholarship limitations, Asian-Canadian picturebooks are proportionately late and limited in numbers in publishing for children, as compared to the parallel publishing for children in the United States.

Significance of the Study

There are several gaps in the present knowledge about Japanese and Chinese-Canadian historical picturebooks that make my study relevant. To date, there has not been an exhaustive analysis of the ways culture and history are conveyed, interpreted, and evaluated in Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks. Even though there has been an increase in research addressing the quality of multicultural children's literature, including multicultural picturebooks, there continues to be a paucity of research addressing Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks.

Furthermore, theorists in curriculum and development suggest that conversations in education about the Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian communities are still stuck in dialogue

about the model minority myth, which posits that Japanese and Chinese Canadians perform better in academics than other minorities (Conelly, He, & Phillion, 2007, p. 226). This stereotype, coupled with that of the perpetual foreigner are the two most powerful and persistent images associated with Japanese and Chinese Canadians. The school curriculum may inadvertently reinforce such images by excluding Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian experiences. All students, not just Japanese and Chinese-Canadian students, will benefit from high-quality representations of Japanese and Chinese- Canadian culture and history in children's literature. Since students need many and varied exposures to authenticate portrayals and to make adequate generalizations, there needs to be a substantial body of culturally authentic literature available to them. My study will contribute to teachers' understanding of culturally and historically authentic Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks which may increase the number of books selected and used in classroom practice.

One of the intended outcomes of this study was to arrive at a better understanding of what culture and history mean as related to Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks. The Japanese and Chinese-Canadian experiences are different from other ethnic groups in their historical, economical, and social positioning; thus, this understanding needs to be reflective of generational and inter-ethnic perspectives. I considered arguments concerning insider and outsider perspectives as there is inconclusive data about whether or not one's ethnic background matters in issues of cultural and historical authenticity (Shklanka 1990; Ko and McKenzie 2003; Cai 2000; McGuire-Raskin 1996; Fox & Short 2003; Lindgren 1991). If we are to use cultural and historical authenticity as judgment criteria, then we need to understand what being culturally and historically accurate means.

In conclusion, this study is significant because the findings may give support for increasing the quantity and quality of culturally and historically authentic Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian children's picturebooks as well as increasing the use and availability of these trade

books in the classrooms. The study may also assist teachers in becoming better evaluators of these books thereby improving the quality of what they select and use in classroom practice. It may also contribute to the growing body of scholarly research about multicultural literature, specially examining the Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian perspectives.

Research Questions

The following questions have guided this research study:

1. How are history and culture conveyed through visual elements in a selection of picturebooks?

2. How are history and culture conveyed through textual elements in a selection of picturebooks?

3. How does the relationship between image and text in the selected picturebooks convey historical and cultural meaning?

The Primary Texts

The following primary texts have been ordered chronologically from most recent to least recent. The rationale for choosing them for this thesis will be explained in the purposive sampling section of the critical framework.

Naomi's Tree (2008) is an abbreviated version of Joy Kogawa's 1986 novel, Naomi's Road, and tells the story of a Japanese family living in Canada. The Second World War disrupts the family, eventually tearing members' lives apart. Siblings Stephen and Naomi, who spent many blissful childhood days beneath the shade of their Vancouver backyard cherry tree, are forced into an internment camp. The book's text and illustrations contain both beauty and grace, but these are tempered by a nostalgic sadness. Much of the nostalgia will likely be lost on younger readers, but this emotion will increase the book's appeal for older children and adults. Each double-page spread features a full-page, full colour illustration with a facing page of text.

The amount of text on each of these facing pages ranges from as few as four lines of text up to nineteen lines. The top of each page is embellished with a small sprig of pink cherry blossom that repeats on the following page of text. Throughout the book, Ruth Ohi's lush pencil and watercolour illustrations have a grainy, heavily textured appearance, perhaps suggesting the bark of a cherry tree. Ohi uses predominantly cool colours, and this usage might suggest that the shade that the cherry tree offers is symbolic of a maternal protection from, not only the simmering sun, but also the traumatic events that Naomi has to endure over her lifetime. Naomi's Tree is a valuable resource for introducing children to some aspects of Canadian history with which they are likely unfamiliar, including the idea of enemy aliens, internment camps, and the Canadian dispersal policy.

Ghost Train (1996) is a picturebook written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Harvey Chan. In the story, Choon-yi and her mother are left behind in their village in South China when extreme poverty forces her father to sail to North America to help build a railway through the mountains. While her father regularly sends money and news to his family, Choon-yi adds to the family's income by painting portraits in the marketplace. When her father sends for her after two long years, she quickly gathers up her ink, brushes, colours, and paper, and sets off on a journey to Gold Mountain. She no sooner arrives in the New World than she discovers that her father was killed when the side of a mountain collapsed. Choon-yi sadly prepares to return to her village alone. The night before she sails for home, however, her father comes to her in a dream pleading with her to paint the fire-car, "the train that runs on the road that I built." Choon-yi sets off to create a masterpiece that will set free her father and the many other men who have died building the railway. Yee delves into the past to create a gem of a narrative. Not only does he draw on the history of the Chinese in Canada and the pivotal role that Chinese Canadians played in the building of the railway, but he also uses folktale motifs to add depth and dimension. Ghost Train is beautifully written, poignant, chilling, and utterly compelling. Harvey Chan's paintings

of rich brown, yellow, and red are most evocative. His illustrations seem imbued with life – they shimmer and glow like the coals that fire the ghost train – and ready to leap off the page.

In Roses Sing on New Snow (1992), Maylin cooks every day of the year in her father's restaurant in a turn-of-the-century Chinatown. The restaurant is renowned for its fine food, but Maylin has never heard the praise because her father tells everyone that his two sons are the chefs. When the governor of South China comes to town, each restaurant is invited to send its best dish for a banquet. Maylin's creation, Roses Sing on New Snow, is of course the governor's favourite. When he asks the two brothers to recreate the dish for him, so that he can take it home, they are unable to do so. Maylin is then brought in – and the story could just end there with the men getting their just desserts. Instead, the young woman says that hers is a New World dish that cannot be recreated in the Old. To prove her point, she and the governor cook the same dish, side by side, so that the governor can learn her secrets, and the results differ greatly. Harvey Chan's carefully researched watercolours in rich browns and terra cotta are flush with turn-of-the-century detail. Perspective changes from a bird's-eye view above Chinatown to a close-up of the governor's dragon-like nose and eyes.

Little Fingerling (1989), a Japanese folktale retold by Monica Hughes and illustrated by Brenda Clark, tells the story of a finger-sized boy who, upon reaching young adulthood, sets out for Kyoto in hopes of proving his worth in the world. After a brief stint as a comb painter, Issun Boshi, as he is named, is welcomed into the home of a nobleman where he becomes enamoured with the beautiful daughter of the house, Plum Blossom. The young woman recognizes a brave warrior trapped in the small body and the couple eventually becomes a perfect fit when they defeat two monsters and obtain a wish-granting mallet. Hughes' telling of the tale is leisurely and formal, with a ceremonial tone and a nod to the Japanese preference for economy of language. Clark's watercolours, each which is bordered with a delicate line and a touch of

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yellow, are realistically composed with soft colours, expressive characters, and imaginative use of perspective to show the vulnerability of the tiny hero.

West Coast Chinese Boy (1979), a precursor to current Chinese-Canadian picturebooks, records author Sing Lim's recollections of his boyhood in Chinatown during the 1920s. Most of his memories are nostalgic and humorous, yet the book does not idealize the past. Matter-of-factly, the anecdotes reveal the poverty, prejudice, and cruelty Sing Lim experienced. He scavenged for coal along the railroad, worked thirteen-hour days on a farm when he was nine years old, caught lice from one of the "viaduct people," and was taunted and attacked by the white boys. To balance his account, he reveals that prejudice and cruelty existed among the Chinese also: older children born in China looks down upon Chinese children born in Canada; a child suffering from rickets was ridiculed as "Crippled Kee" and neighbours would not interfere when a Chinese guardian mistreated his boy.

Significant Terms

A variety of important terms will constitute a critical part of my thesis. In the following section, I will define them and describe the context in which they will be employed.

Multicultural Children's Literature

The term "multicultural" has only recently come into popular usage (Lindgren, 1991). It generally refers to people from a non-Anglo-background and/or people from different cultures (Higgins 2002). Multicultural literature focuses on the lived experiences of these people and on the realities of being a member of their respective cultures (Higgins 2002). To complicate the matter, there are several definitions of multicultural literature, mainly differing in their inclusion and exclusion criteria (Klein 1998); for example, there is debate on whether or not sexuality and gender can be considered as criteria or if the definition solely encompasses race and culture. For

the purposes of my study, I limited the definition of multicultural literature to refer to people of colour.

Rudine Sims Bishop's (1992) seminal study delineates three categories of multicultural trade books. The first is culturally specific, which details the specific nuances of growing up in a particular minority cultural group. The second is generic or universal, as it features characters of colour but does not focus on cultural details. The third is neutral, which are generally trade books with people of colour but in which the content is not related to culture or diversity.

For my study, I define Asian-Canadian children's literature as a subgenre of multicultural children's literature. Asian-Canadian children's literature includes and/or features Asian Canadians and their experiences. It is important to note that there is a difference between Asians and Asian Canadians. For example, a Chinese person growing up in China will have a significantly different experience from a Chinese person growing up in Canada. Thus, my definition of this genre encompasses those of Asian ethnic backgrounds who were born and-or who are residing in Canada. This is inclusive of immigration and emigration experiences. Books which feature an Asian-Canadian traveling/or living abroad are included in this definition.

Asian Canadian

The term "Asian Canadian," is complex, diverse and inevitably shaped "through the boundaries of representations made legitimate by disciplinary regulations and norms" (Miki & Kobayashi 2001, p. 56). Encompassing diverse groups of people differing in culture, language, and belief systems, the term "Asian Canadian" includes (but it not limited to) those from the following ethnic heritages: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, East Indian, Cambodian, Samoan, and Vietnamese. According to the Canada Census Bureau (2006), an Asian Canadian is a "Canadian citizen or resident having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands."

This diversity and richness of Asian-Canadian experiences may be a leading factor in its failure to be adequately represented in the publishing world, as there is much confusion and inter-ethnic strife. When examining the inter-ethnic politics of these groups, one will find that there are prejudices and dissent among Asian Canadians. For example, historically, there is animosity between Koreans and Japanese because of the Japanese occupation of Korea. In addition, Far East Asians tend to have prejudices toward Southeast Asians as some consider Southeast Asians to have a "third-world mentality." To further complicate the matter, there are also differences between Canadian-born and immigrant Asians as well as differences between generations of Asian Canadians.

Cultural Authenticity

Cultural authenticity looks at how accurately people of colour are represented and/or portrayed in texts specific to their culture (Higgins 2002, p. 1). Because cultural authenticity is influenced by power and perspective, a concrete definition is hard to operationalize. Different cultural groups have different criteria for cultural authenticity (Higgins 2002, p. 1). Whether or not a book is culturally authentic is often the subject of analysis; however, what exactly defines cultural authenticity is not clearly defined. Jeffrey Karem contends, "Reviewers from different aesthetic and ideological extremes have argued about what was authentic about a text or cultural in their historical moment, but few of them have eschewed authenticity as a category of critical judgment" (2004, p. 6). The scarce use of cultural authenticity as judgment criterion may be a result of an ambiguous understanding of cultural authenticity. For the most part, an authentic work illustrates one's intimate familiarity with the nuances of a culture which may or may not be a result of one's ethnicity (Yokota 1993).

Much of the controversy that surrounds cultural authenticity deals with authorship. Non-members, usually Caucasians writing about cultures and people outside their cultural backgrounds, are subject to the most criticism. The general assumption, which is not accepted

by all scholars, is that non-members, also referred to as outsiders, are unable to represent the "nuances of day to day living" (Bishop 1992, p. 43) of another culture. Some scholars (Aoki 1992; Mikkelson 1998; Slapin, Seale, & Gonzales 1992) maintain that authentic books are only those written by members, also referred to as insiders, as they have access and knowledge of cultural codes that allow them to accurately represent themselves. However, other scholars (Barrera, Liguouri, & Salas 1992; Howard 1991) acknowledge that non-members who have researched and/or immersed themselves in another culture are able to produce authentic books. In this sense, a culturally-authentic book is one in which the details truthfully represent the culture as determined by a member of that culture.

Membership

Membership is usually affiliated with racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. A member of a culture belongs to the culture about which he/she writes and/or reads. Oftentimes, members are referred to as insiders and non-members are referred to as outsiders. In the research literature, there is generally more debate concerning non-members, who are criticized for not being able to represent the "nuances of day to day living" (Bishop 1992, p. 43) of another culture; whereas, members are assumed to have access and knowledge of cultural codes that allow them not only to accurately represent themselves, but interpret representations in literature.

Perspective

An ethnic, or insider, perspective is one in which the author and reader clearly know about the particular cultural group represented. In producing culturally authentic literature, Mingshui Cai notes the importance of an insider perspective which is needed to truthfully reflect and evaluate "the reality of an ethnic culture" (2002, p. 41). He does suggest that one does not necessarily have to be a member to have an insider perspective. On the other hand, an outsider perspective denotes someone who does not have a "special sense of reality" (Cai 2002, p. 41)

meaning he/she obviously demonstrates a lack of knowledgeable about and unfamiliarity with the lived experiences of that specific culture.

Outline of Chapters

While Chapter One introduces the origins of my interest in Asian-Canadian picturebooks, the specific focus and need for my research, my primary texts, and definitions of significant terms and their usages in my thesis, Chapter Two reviews the scholarly literature pertinent to my topic. In the first section, I consider the critical writing on the role of image in picturebooks, the role of image in cultural meaning, and how visual elements are interpreted in multicultural picturebooks. In the second section, I explore the viewpoints and subject matter contained in the text of multicultural children's literature and Japanese and Chinese historical literature and folklore.   In the third section, I look at critical writing on types of image-text interaction and semiotic theories. I also consider criticism regarding the role of fantasy and the role of nature and identity in Japanese and Canadian literature as these are two central themes that I present in my discussion of Paul Yee's Ghost Train and Joy Kogawa's Naomi's Tree.

Chapter Three comprises my methodology. In this section, I evaluate a variety of critical methodologies in order to find one that is suitable for my particular topic. I chose the New Historical Approach, which, unlike traditional history, labels all types of history as subjective and asks researchers to assess what an account of history tells us about the political agendas and ideological conflicts of the culture that produced and read the account; rather than looking at uncovering facts that reveal the "spirit" of an age (Tyson 2006, p. 282).

In the next area of my methodology, I articulate how I will apply the New Historical Approach, as well the Semiotic Approach and art-text interaction theory, to my analyses of my five primary texts while considering my three research questions. I explain how I used purposive sampling to select those texts.

Chapter Four presents my findings. In my text section, I look at the treatment of the Chinese-Canadian female protagonists in Paul Yee's <u>Ghost train</u> and <u>Roses sing on new snow</u>. In the image section, I consider how illustrators conduct extensive research, by studying artifacts in museums and interviewing appropriate sources, and yet may still be unsuccessful in representing the voices of the particular cultural groups that they are attempting to portray. I also look at how the merits of other illustrators may be overlooked because readers and critical reviewers neglect to notice subtle details of their work or make assumptions about isolated images without giving any regard to the accompanying text.   I investigate these phenomena in <u>Little fingerling</u>, illustrated by Brenda Clark, and <u>West coast Chinese boy</u>, illustrated by Sing Lim. In the image-text interaction section, I examine a key theme in each of Paul Yee's <u>Ghost train </u> and Joy Kogawa's <u>Naomi's tree</u>.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, discusses the conclusions that may be drawn from the analysis, the limitations of my research study, and implications that my findings may have for further research.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the critical literature which supports my research on cultural and historical authenticity in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks. The sources researched in this literature review included monographs, theses and dissertations, academic journal articles, and websites pertaining to Japanese and Chinese-Canadian issues, critical literacy, critical theory of illustration, multicultural children's literature as well as multicultural education. I begin each section with a brief explanation of the subject area and its relevance to my research. I then provide a synthesis of the critical works that were studied and analyzed in an effort to examine how critics have examined the role of image, text, the relationship of text and image, and historical and cultural background as they pertain to my thesis.

The Role of Image

In this section, I consider the critical writing on the role of image in picturebooks, the role of image in cultural meaning, and how visual elements are interpreted in multicultural picturebooks. I begin by discussing how cultural groups assign specific meanings to objects, people, and symbols; and when those meanings are depicted in the form of an illustration that illustration may not be universally understood in the larger population beyond that group. That being said, each artist's interpretation of the world is dependant upon his or her individual experiences so even within a culture there may exist anywhere from slight to huge variation in the content and form that an illustration may take. I then look at semiotics and how changes in size, shape, placement, and colour can emphasize or de-emphasize the importance of particular characters and objects. In a multicultural picturebook these attributes cannot help but reveal an illustrator's biases towards characters, cultural artifacts, and cultural groups.

Interpreting Images in Multicultural Picturebooks

In the chapter, "Pictures and the implied viewer," of his influential book, <u>Words about</u> <u>pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books</u> (1998), Perry Nodelman states that when looking at and analyzing pictures, readers are required not only to determine what is appropriate and respectful, but also expected to comprehend a complex system of codes and signifiers which may not be universally understood by all cultures (p. 9). In other words, illustrations and symbols that hold great meaning for one group (i.e. the illustrator and others from his/her cultural group) may be confusing or totally insignificant to another population group (Nodelman 1988, p. 11). In <u>Art and illusions</u>, Ernst H. Gombrich (1961) shows how artists could make visual depictions of objects only in terms of their previous knowledge of earlier visual images – from a repertoire of schemata they have learned from their knowledge of previous art: "Everything points to a conclusion that the phrase the 'language of art' is more than a loose metaphor, that even to describe the visible world in images we need to develop a sense of schemata" (p. 87). Hence, a visual depiction understandable to one artist can seem meaningless to another artist who has not shared the first artist's experiences. A perfect example of this situation can be demonstrated in a study conducted by anthropologist Jan Dergowski, who showed pictures of elephants to artists in East African villages. He found that "top view" photographs and illustrations of the animals without feet were odd and displeasing to the artists because they were unable to recognize what was being shown, but "split-representation drawings", where the elephants looked like they had been split open and all four feet were visible, elicited much more positive responses because the artists came from cultures where products of art served as "labels or marks of identification" (Dergowski quoted in Nodelman 1992, p. 15). Dergowski also showed the same group of artists a picture of a human female, which Western observers would understand to be a young woman sitting in front of and below a window, and they imagined the woman to be sitting outside rather than indoors and assumed that

the "window" was a tin that she was carrying on her head (Deregowski, quoted in Nodelman 1988, p. 16). For many Westerners, the idea of carrying a tin can on one's head is odd enough to prevent such an interpretation – just as odd as sitting inside beneath a window is for East Africans, who apparently prefer to sit outdoors.

In A Psychology of picture perception, John M. Kennedy (1974) explains how people may even misinterpret pictures that they seem to understand. "The nature of the pictures themselves also creates problems. All pictures require some interpretation, simply because no picture contains as much visual information as the objects depicted might actually convey" (p. 13). Artists cannot depict everything they see, for only so many strokes can be applied to a canvas or a sheet of paper, only so many of all the details of reality can be represented: and it is only logical that artists make their choices about what to depict in terms of pre-existing codes and conventions that establish relative degrees of value for various aspects of the perceptible world and that come to represent the language of art as they understand it (Nodelman 1988, p. 11). Clifford Geertz suggests that the formal attributes or works of art "materialize a way of experiencing: bringing a particular cast of mind out into the world of objects, where men can look at it" (Geertz 1976, p. 20). In Responsibility and forms, Roland Barthes identifies that "cast of mind" that we call the "style" of a work of art, as a "second meaning" and suggests that art forms like drawings, paintings, and photographs offer not just an analogan or literal depiction of reality but also a comment about reality that is implied by the artists' treatment of it. "In short, all these imitative 'arts' comprise two messages: a denoted message, which is the analogan, itself, and a connoted message, which is the way the society represents, to a certain extent, what it thinks of the analogan" (Barthes 1981, p. 6). Put another way, it is not just the objects depicted in art that bear cultural meaning; the way in which they are depicted do so also. Those unfamiliar with certain styles of art frequently express the inability to understand what they depict; they lack the grammar to comprehend a language.

Many other theorists discuss the topic of semiotics. Molly Bang, in her book Picture this:

How pictures work, asserts that "the forces of gravity and space affect responses to the

placement of objects on a page" (2000, p. 42). For multicultural picturebooks, this phenomenon

undoubtedly conveys an illustrator's feelings about a character, the character's cultural group,

and the character's positioning within a story and in society in general. Specifically, if an

illustrator wishes to depict a character as being a symbol of stability and calmness he or she

would draw the character with smooth, rounded lines (2000, p. 42). Conversely, to depict a

character as being menacing, evil-looking, or frightening an illustrator would employ sharp,

pointed, and jagged lines (2000, p. 28). If the aim was to demonstrate that a character was in a

place of happiness, freedom, triumph, or spirituality he or she would be located in the upper half

of a picture; but if a character was meant to be experiencing sadness, oppression, heaviness, or

lethargy he or she would appear in the bottom half of the page. To emphasize that a character is

one of importance and strength, an illustrator would draw him or her larger than other characters

and place him in the centre of a page (2000, p. 62). However, if a character is drawn small and

in either the left or right bottom corner of a drawing, with a significant amount of space around

him or her, such a positioning would indicate vulnerability, meekness, social isolation or inferior

status (2000, p. 72).

Perry Nodelman (1998), in the chapter, "Visual weight and directed tension: The

relationship of visual objects to each other," of Words about pictures, states that while much of

the meaning of visual objects is imposed from without, in terms of the contexts that give them

significance, much of it comes from within a picture itself, in terms both of the visual qualities of

individual objects and of the varying weights of different objects in relation to each other. This

arrangement is described as an "interplay of directed tensions" (p. 125).

Nodelman extends the discussion by explaining that because we associate certain

emotions with certain shapes, the shapes of visual objects as they relate to their background and

to other objects can create specific tensions and thus imply meaning in themselves. For example, we tend to assume that squares are rigid and that rounded shapes are accommodating. In addition, we believe that, joined to form spaces, lines develop solidity and seem stable; lines that do not connect enclose no space, create no solidity, and seem to have more energy – to be disordered (1988, p. 128). As well as drawing attention to themselves, the shapes and textures of objects can make us pay attention to other objects in a picture. For instance, an object that comes to a point tends to focus our attention less on itself than on what it points toward, no matter how big it is or what surrounds it.

The relationship of an object to the top and bottom of a picture is significant as well. Given our experience of gravity in the actual world, we seem to assume that an object of the same size has more weight in the top half of a picture than in the bottom half; it is for that reason that the two parts of a number three or eight seem equal only if the top part is actually smaller. Since gravity pulls objects down in pictures as in life, the top halves of pictures tend to be less occupied than the bottom halves; and as a result, objects that do appear in the top half are enough that they tend to attract us more. In Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye (2004), Rudolph Arnheim suggests that many modern painters fill the top half of the canvas because the "stylistic preference for overcoming the downward pull is in keeping with the artist's desire to liberate himself from the imitation of reality" (p. 31).

Mercedes Gaffron (1950), in "Right and left in pictures," speaks about the effects of our tendency to read from left to right. In a discourse of how pictures seem quite different if we reverse them photographically and look at their mirror images, she suggests that we conventionally look at pictures in terms of a "certain fixed path which we seem normally to follow within the picture space" (p. 316). Furthermore, she calls that path the "glance curve" and suggests that it moves from the left foreground back around the picture space to the right background. Because we look first at the left foreground, we tend to place ourselves in the

position and to identify with the objects or figures located there: "we not only feel that the objects represented here are near to us, but also that they have greater importance to us. People represented here belong to our side in the figurative sense of the term, in contrast to the people on the right side" (p. 321). In fact, the protagonists of many picturebooks – the characters we are asked to identify with – do tend to appear on the left more often than not.

Julia Kriteva (1980), in Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art, remarks that of all the variations in the picture plane, those of colour are the most immediately noticeable, and, like shapes, colours have emotional connotations that allow them to act as signifiers of states of mind – red seems warm or dangerous, blue strikes most of us as a calm colour (p. 221). Colour differs from other aspects of perceivable reality that sustain systems of meaning in that, while differing colours and combinations of colour can and do act as signs within a conventional system of visual signification, they also still communicate their original essence directly to the eye; whereas it is hard to hear the nonsense in sounds that we are learning to use to signify ideas, or to see two crossed sticks as just lumber once we have learned to think of them as a cross, a red light can both tell us to stop and offer us a basic sensual arousal in our mere perception of it that exists beyond and apart from the meaning we attach to it. Artists most significantly use colour, then, for its potential for arousal. Paradoxically, however, the fact that colour appeals so strongly to our senses without reference to meaning can contribute to the meaning of pictures. The mere presence of a vivid colour is so likely to give weight to visual objects that illustrators forced to work within the constraints of one or two-colour printing almost always use it to focus on the significant details of otherwise colourless pictures.

The Role of Text

In this section, I explore the viewpoints and subject matter contained in the text of multicultural children's literature and Japanese and Chinese historical literature and folklore. I

discuss universal and salient shared experiences in multicultural literature; insider versus

outsider perspectives when writing and evaluating multicultural picturebooks; the fluidity of

definitions in multicultural literature; the implications of "parallel culture" books; ethnicity

related issues in multicultural literature; and the values and beliefs in traditional literature that

affect the content and form of contemporary picturebooks.

Multicultural Children's Literature

Patricia Cianciolo, in <u>Picture books for children</u>, argues that what is expected currently in

multicultural literature for children is an honest presentation that values pluralism while not

rejecting those traditions that comprise the various segments of the whole (1997, p. 12).

Literature that meets this criteria depicts two broad categories of the human experience over a

lifetime: universal experiences, the kind of experiences that result from our very humanness (our

needs, feelings, emotions, strengths, weaknesses etc.), in relation with other people and within

ourselves and salient shared experiences among a particular culture or ethnic or racial group

based on cultural and ethnic traditions and practices, attitudes structures that have evolved

among members of the group as ways to survive, find solace, or resist negative forces or

destructive powers. In contemporary literature for children, persons associated with diverse

cultures or ethnic groups are depicted as responding to aspects of the universal experiences as

well as to their salient shared experiences.

Linda McGuire-Raskin, in "Multiculturalism in children's picturebooks: An analysis of

insider vs. outsider texts," discusses the question of who should produce cultural artefacts and

the ways in which an author's being inside or outside the culture depicted affects the work. She

draws on the research of several scholars of multicultural children's literature, including Rudine

Bishop (1994), who, in "A reply to Shannon the canon," asserts that it is important to focus

critical attention on people of colour as their voices have "traditionally been omitted from the

cannon [of multicultural literature]" (p. 8). As well, after examining six different multicultural

picturebooks, three by individuals from the cultures that they are writing about and three by individuals outside the cultures, McGuire-Raskin (1996) hypothesizes that "possibly outsiders employ more stereotyped or generic cultural motifs, adopt a tourist's view of characters and events, and are more careless with the ways that culture is portrayed" (p. 26). Some of those differences may be more subtle, but are nevertheless crucial, since they convey tone and meaning. She concludes by asking readers to consider whether insiders and outsiders have a different level of commitment to ensuring authenticity and, if this is the case, how it affects "the part of the picture that most needs to be filled in." (p. 26).

In Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature (2009), Maria Jose Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman also look at insider and outsider perspectives. Their findings demonstrate that we cannot discount the cultural membership of the author. The insider authors and illustrators are more versed in or have more access to culturally specific discourses and histories than outsiders to the culture (p. 104). These writers and artists tend to have a greater understanding of how language is used and how power is exercised within and outside the culture. Class, race, and gender power relations shape this cultural specificity, disrupting the notion of culture as stable and fixed; its dynamic, multiple, and shifting nature is made visible. Many of these writers bring the reader up close to the complexities of culture and its power relations.

Violet Harris and Arlette Willis (2003), in "Multiculturalism, literature, and curriculum," maintain that definitions of multicultural literature are fluid and linked to shifting historical, sociopolitical, and economic contexts (pp. 13-14). These definitions are influenced by developments in multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and critical literary criticism. From its historical developments, children's literature by and about people of colour was a response to racist social and publishing practices that led to the underrepresentation and disempowerment of

people of colour in society, curricula, and children's literature. The scholarship of children's literature mostly focuses on the conceptualization of definition (Harris & Willis 2003, 13-14).

Mingshui Cai and Rudine Bishop (1994), in "Multicultural literature for children: Making informed choices," discuss "parallel culture books," which are books written by authors from parallel culture groups to represent the experience, consciousness, and self-image developed as a result of being acculturated and socialized within those groups (p. 66). They argue that parallel culture authors are best qualified to represent their cultural experience and parallel culture literature best serves the goals of multicultural education.

Junko Yokata (2001), in "Issues in selecting multicultural children's literature," advocates for a multiethnic literature because "a focus on ethnicity-related issues in literature allows us to consider the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural issues shared by ethnic groups that lie outside the mainstream" (xiv). She recommends an expanded view of diversity, while recognizing that different kinds of diversity are not necessarily parallel in their issues and that although some issues affecting a range of diverse groups are the same or at least similar, others are quite different (p. xiv).

Mingshui Cai (1998), in "Multiple definitions of multicultural literature: Is the debate really just ivory tower bickering?" reasons, "If the issues of inequality, discrimination, oppression, and exploitation are excluded from consideration when we try to define multicultural literature, there is a danger of diluting, or even deconstructing, the social, political concept that underlies the term" (p. 313). He further states that "a definition of multicultural literature should therefore draw a demarcation line between the literature of the dominant mainstream culture and that of marginalized culture" p. 313).

Identifying Traits of Asian Historical Literature and Folklore

Asian-Canadian children's picturebooks contain many distinct characteristics that make them unique entities of study. Scholars who investigate traditional ideology in Asian culture

provide readers and critics with important information for analyzing the values and beliefs embedded in Asian-Canadian works with folkloric or historical content. This section will concentrate on the values and beliefs in Chinese and Japanese culture and folklore as they are especially pertinent to my thesis topic.

Donald Holzman, in "The place of filial piety in Ancient China," provides a very useful analysis of the importance of filial piety in China since the earliest times and as part of the Confucian canon. Holzman traces the importance of this respect for ancestors and the utmost regard for parents stating, "That a son should love his parents is fate – you cannot erase this from his heart – to serve your parents and be content to follow them anywhere – this is the perfection of filial piety" (1998, p. 190). Holzman identifies a twofold structure for filial piety in early China "piety within the family (toward one's parents) and in society (toward the emperor and toward the official hierarchy), and filial piety as exalted throughout the root of all virtue" (1998, p. 192). Filial piety was so important in the early stories that extreme cases provoked supernatural intervention in favour of such children, as well as rewards for this behaviour. In addition to filial piety, Holzman also discusses the values of reaching the gods through one's ancestors; punishment for unfilial conduct, and respect for the virtues of righteousness, love, goodness, and truth.

Holland Cotter (2002), in "The world according to some glorious Chinese misfits," analyzes Chinese art to suggest that depictions of the natural world are meant to provide some ethical guidance, and reinforce important values in the culture. For example, the bamboo and the flowering plum symbolize resilience and embattled survival because the bamboo weathers devastating storms by relying on resilience and the flowering plum blooms even in the snow and is a forerunner for spring. Cotter believes that the spirit of patience in adversity is an important theme in Chinese art and suggests the following Chinese values: patience is a virtue, haste

makes waste, and we are responsible for nature. This responsibility toward nature is why "China imbued mountains and flowers with moral consciousness" (p. 27).

Robert Beer (2003) identifies and discusses the importance of the "Five Buddhas" or the "Five Enlightened Families." He states, "Essentially the Five Buddhas represent the transmutations of the five delusions or poisons (ignorance, desire, jealousy, and pride) into the five transcendent windows (all-prevading, discriminating, mirror-like, all-accomplishing, and equanimous)" (p. 234). His illustrations and examples showing symbolism, themes, and motifs depicted in Buddhist literature and art are helpful for the analysis of the literature and the identification of important values of the culture.

Violet H. Harada (1998), in "Caught between two worlds: Themes of family, community and ethnic identity in Yoshiko Uchida's works for children," identifies authentic Japanese cultural values in Japanese children's literature. She explains the importance of the family hierarchy and the acceptable social behaviours associated with one's place in the hierarchy; the importance of maintaining family and community traditions, the belief of filial obligations, duty, and loyalty; the power of persistence and endurance; and the legacy of the Japanese spirit and soul.

Additional contemporary values are identified by Gail M. Hickey (1998), in "Back home nobody'd do that: Immigrant students and cultural models of schooling" and Nancy K. Freeman (1998), in "Look to the East to gain a new perspective." Hickey identifies the following cultural values as exemplified by recent Southeast Asian immigrants to North America: respect for parents, family, and elders and emphasis on children's academic success as a way to elevate personal and family status. Freeman stresses that Eastern cultures emphasize community, cooperation, and interrelatedness. She compares these values with Western cultural values that are apt to foster individualism, competition, and personal possessions. She believes that such differences in cultural values may result in cultural conflicts.

Moss Roberts, in <u>Chinese fairy tales and fantasy</u> (1979) maintains that Asian folktales are an important part of the Asian literary canon because they "bear the stamp of society and the traditions that originally produced them. They illuminate the Chinese social order through the structured relationships that defined it: emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife (or wives), official and peasant, human and beast" (p. xv).

Donna Norton, in <u>Multicultural children's literature: Through the eyes of many children</u> (2009), asserts that several philosophies influenced Chinese folklore (2009, p. 208). For example, during the Chou dynasty, the philosophers, historians, and theologians preserved and reinterpreted the ancient beliefs and customs. Confucianists maintained that the Chinese must return to the practices of the wise rulers of earlier times. Tales that illustrate the Confucian philosophies frequently reflect the superior orders of emperor, father, husband. In contrast, the Taoist philosophers were social critics who opposed the Confucians. Their populist view found its way into many of the tales. Norton states that one of the purposes for Taoist literature was to publicize the crimes of the mighty and the injustices suffered by the ordinary people including children and women – and even injustices suffered by animals (2009, p. 209).

Karl S.Y. Kao (1985), in his collection of <u>Classical Chinese tales of the supernatural: Selections from the third to tenth century</u>, identifies several types of tales: tales that show cosmological significance, tales that reveal manifestations of ghosts and spirits, tales that include animal transformations, tales that focus on fairies and deities and their interactions with humans, tales of magic fears, and tales of divine retributions and miracles related to the Buddhist faith and native Chinese beliefs.

The important plots and themes in these Chinese tales include transformations of humans into beasts and beasts into humans; trials involving perilous encounters with humans or supernatural creatures; dragon lore that features human involvement in the family feuds of dragon clans; revelations of what is in store for humans in the future and dream phenomena; and

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fantastical elements. According to Kao (1985), these tales are especially important because they influenced later fiction.

Gia-Zen Wang (2006), in <u>Auntie Tigress and other favourite Chinese folktales</u>, states that certain elements and motifs may be found in much of the Chinese folklore. For example, the universe is governed by Shang Ti, thought to be the Supreme Ruler of the Heaven. The Kitchen God controls life in the home and reports once a year on the behaviour of each family. Temples of the Gods of Place or Locality are scattered throughout the fields and are believed to allow the peasants to have a direct approach to Heaven. Heaven decrees the moment of death, when the soul is judged according to the Book of Destiny, which contains a record of all of the acts of an individual. Following a member's death, the disposition, repose, and happy journey of the soul are matters of great importance to the family (p. 42 "Notes on the stories").

Wang (2006), in <u>Auntie Tigress</u>, also comments on the importance of demons, spirits, and ghosts, in Chinese folklore (p. 42). He states that the two souls of a person may mingle with the throng of demons, spirits and ghosts. During sleep, the superior spirit leaves the body and goes about its own affairs – which become the substance of dreams. The souls of humans, animals, and things enjoy the pleasures and vices enjoyed by living beings.

Royal Tyler (1987), in <u>Japanese tales</u>, states that, like the folklore of India, the folklore of Japan was steeped in religion (n.p.). Buddhism was dominant, but other religions and magical traditions were important too. Buddhism emphasized the honouring of nature – mountains, valleys, and rivers play a great part in enlightenment. The treatment of the dead is also influenced by Buddhism. Buddhist rites had to be performed daily for the first seven days after death, then every seventh day thereafter until the forty-ninth day. Without this care, spirits were miserable and could easily linger on as harmful or unhappy ghosts.

Ellen S. Shapiro (1987), in her introduction to Grace James's <u>Green willow and other Japanese fairy tales</u>, summarizes some of the characteristics of Japanese folktales. According to

Shapiro, the stories include appreciation of the beauty and mystery of life, belief in the power of the spirit to accomplish its will, and ridicule for pretensions. In her discussion of style associated with Japanese folktales, Shapiro emphasizes that short phrases and repetitive sentences gave a significant amount of emotional impact (p. x).

Merrily Baird (2001), in The handbook of Tibetan Buddhist symbols, identifies important Japanese symbols and their comparisons or analogies that liken one object or phenomenon to another (n.p.). This is especially important in comparisons among humans and animals in which human traits are ascribed to animals and positive traits of animals are ascribed to people associated with them. For example, a tiger is said to be courageous and compassionate; likewise, certain humans may take on those traits. Plants may also symbolize human traits and emotions. For example pampas grass may represent the loneliness and desolation of autumn, while fallen cherry blossoms could refer to a warrior who died at a young age. Many of these symbols are also found in the illustrations that accompany traditional literature.

Clearly, the agents that shape Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks are varied and complex. The cultural, philosophical and sociopolitical ideologies that are contained within the art and text are frequently rooted in traditional literature, but also heavily influenced by contemporary theories about authenticity, perspective, diversity, discrimination, oppression, and visual semiotics. Because many of these forces often contradict one another, authors and illustrators are faced with the immense challenge of reconciling their works into units that are cohesive on a structural level, but also powerful, entertaining, and accurate on a narrative level.

The Image-Text Interaction

In this section, I look at critical writing on types of image-text interaction and semiotic theories. I also consider criticism regarding the role of fantasy and the role of nature and identity

in Japanese and Canadian literature as these are two central themes that I present in my discussion of Paul Yee's Ghost Train and Joy Kogawa's Naomi's Tree.

Types of Image Text Interaction

In their article, *"The dynamics of picturebooks communication,"* Maria Nikolajava and Carole Scott examine a spectrum of word/image interaction and identify a number of key characteristics, before focusing on three particular interactions (2000, pp. 225-226). In symmetrical interaction, words and pictures tell the same story, essentially repeating information in different forms of communication. In enhancing interaction, pictures amplify more fully the meaning of the words, or the words expand the pictures so that different information in the two modes of communication produces a more complex dynamic. When enhancing interaction becomes significant, the dynamic becomes truly complementary. Dependent on the degree of different information presented, a counterpointing dynamic may develop where image and text collaborate to communicate meanings beyond the scope of either one alone. An extreme form of counterpointing is contradictory interaction, where words and pictures seem to be in opposition to one another. This ambiguity challenges the reader to mediate between the words and pictures in order to establish a true understanding of what is being depicted.

What is particularly noteworthy in Nikolajva and Scott's discussion is that they, unlike most other picturebook scholars, have decided to go beyond the classic distinction between illustrated books (where the words carry the primary narrative while pictures are supportive or decorative) and books in which both the visual and verbal aspects are both essential for full communication. In addition, they have stressed that just because the terms "symmetrical," "enhancing," and "counterpointing" have been recognized in this article does not mean that they are absolute categories in all circumstances. While some simple word/picture relationships are easy to characterize, more complex works involve a variety of different aspects.

Semiotic Theories

In his article, "How picturebooks work: A semiotically framed theory of text-picture relationships," Lawrence Sipe draws on a number of theories of semiotic response. He begins his discourse by defining his own descriptive term, synergy, as the "production of two or more agents of a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects" (Sipe 1998, p. 98). In a picturebook, both the text and the illustration would be incomplete without the other. They have a synergistic relationship in which the total effect depends not only on the union of the text and illustrations but also on the perceived interactions or transmediations between these two parts.

Sipe then outlines the work of Wolfgang Iser. What Iser sees as he examines the reader-text relationship is a reader participating in the production of textual meaning and being a co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it that is not written but only implied (Sipe1998, p. 99). More specifically, each reader fills in the unwritten work or the gaps in his or her own way, thereby acknowledging the inexhaustibility of the text. Iser's concept of gap-filling suggests that we can think of readers filling in some of the gaps in the verbal text of a picturebook with information from the illustrations and of readers using information from the verbal text to fill in some of the gaps in the illustrations.

Next, Roman Jakobsen observes that the different ways that we experience written language and visual art have important implications for the ways in which we try to relate the words and the pictures in a picturebook. Because of the primarily spatial nature of the pictures and our drive to form "unified atemporal structures," our tendency is to gaze on, dwell upon, or contemplate them. In contrast, the primarily temporal nature of the verbal narrative creates in us a tendency to keep on reading, to keep going ahead in what C.S. Lewis termed "narrative lust" (Jakobsen quoted in Sipe 1998, 101). There is thus a tension between our impulse to gaze at the

pictures and to not interrupt the narrative flow. The verbal text drives us to read on in a linear way, where the illustrations seduces us into stopping to look.

This tension results in the impulse to be recursive and reflexive in our reading of a picturebook: to go backward and forward in order to relate an illustration to the one before or after it, and to relate the text on one page to an illustration on a previous or successive page; or to understand new ways in which the combination of the text and picture on one page relate to preceding or succeeding pages. Picture books have the effect of "loosening the tyranny of the one-way flow" of the purely verbal text (Jakobsen, quoted in Sipe 1998, p. 101). Therefore, picturebooks seem to demand rereading; we can never quite perceive all the possible meanings of the text, or all the possible meanings of the pictures, or all the possible meanings of the text-picture relationships.

The discussion culminates with an explanation of Charles Suhor's research. Suhor investigates the concept of "transmedation" or the translation of one sign system into another (Sipe 1998, p. 101). The concept of transmediation may be heuristic for understanding the process we use in relating words to pictures in picturebooks. For in picturebooks we must oscillate, as it were, from the sign system of the illustrations to the sign system of the text; and also in the opposite direction from the illustration sign system to the verbal sign system. Whenever we move across sign systems, new meanings are produced, because we interpret the text in terms of the pictures and the pictures in terms of the text in a potentially never-ending sequence.

The Role of Fantasy

In Paul Yee's historical picturebook, <u>Ghost train</u>, the ghost story, a type of fantasy, plays a prominent role. Thus, in this section of my literature review I will investigate how the fantastic applies to children's historical fiction.

Fantasy is a genre that may at first seem to run in opposition to the realistic mode of historical fiction. However, in children's literature, the integration of fantastical elements into stories about the past is not uncommon. Perhaps because of the overall prevalence of fantasy as a genre for children, and long-held notions of childhood as being less oriented in realism than adulthood, authors, especially in recent years, have experimented with many ways of including fantasy in works about the past. By fantasy, I am adopting a rather liberal definition, outlined by Wen-Chin Ouyang in "Magical realism and beyond: Ideology in fantasy," which embraces "anything that defies empiricism" (2005, p. 14). This may include the introduction of ghosts, spirits, time travel, superhuman powers, or other otherworldly elements into the telling of history.

My consideration of the fantastical also draws on the work of Tzvetan Todorov and his classification of the uncanny, the fantastic, and the marvellous. In his work The fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre, Todorov draws a clear distinction between the uncanny, in which strange events are given a logical explanation, and the marvellous, in which supernatural forces are accepted. It is "on the frontier of two genres" (Todorov 1975, p. 41) that Todorov places the fantastic, which he characterizes by its acceptance of doubt and ambivalence. Todorov explains that most works of the fantastic, though they may begin from a place of hesitancy, eventually shift to either the uncanny or marvellous as the stories resolve. It is the quality of indecision and ambivalence that Todorov finds so effective in the fantastical, and the element that I argue has the strongest ability to disrupt the closed nature of the historical picturebook; as is the case in Paul Yee's Ghost train.

Todorov's The fantastic is not directed toward works by either children's or contemporary authors. However, his theories of the destabilizing power of the fantastic are relevant to the current appearance of fantasy within realistic children's literature. Maria Nikolajeva suggests that although much of children's fantasy confines itself to the realm of the

marvellous, where the magical is accepted without hesitation, since the 1950s, children writers have been increasingly open to leaving readers in doubt as to the exact nature of reality (Children's literature comes of age 1996, p. 71).

Todorov writes that the genre of fantasy is one that "permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to [the fantastic]" (1975, p. 158). This statement applies just as well to fantasy's ability to cross other borders. Rosemary Jackson's work (1981) with Todorov's theories, in Fantasy: The literature of subversion, emphasizes the subversive potential of fantasy beyond Todorov's scope. She argues that "the fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (p. 4). This unsaid element, within the genre of historical fiction, can represent stories that sit outside the master narratives because they represent events or points of view that those who have written history have not wanted to acknowledge. By introducing a magical world outside of accepted reality, the fantastic historical picturebook presupposes the existence of multiple histories. In this way, it opposes closed and unified ways of understanding the past.

Another theorist who grapples with the notion of the fantastic, albeit within a much broader context, is Mikhail Bakhtin. In Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics, Bakhtin describes the unique qualities of fantasy, explaining: "the fantastic serves here not in the positive embodiment of the truth, but in the search after truth, its provocation, and importantly, its testing" (1984, p. 94). Bakhtin suggests that fantasy as a mode can contribute to creating the type of writing that he characterizes as dialogic. The insertion of the fantastical into historical literature for children can subvert the "dominant philosophical assumptions which uphold as 'reality' a coherent, single-viewed entity" (Jackson 1981, p. 48) that Bakhtin referred to as monologism.

The discovery and rediscovery of Bakhtin's theoretical writings has had a profound impact on the study of both Western literature as a whole and specifically on children's literature. As Robyn McCallum suggests in Ideologies of adolescent fiction: The dialogic,

adolescent literature (and I would extend this to include much children's literature as well) "has in common with Bakhtinian writings a predominant concern with the relations between the self and others, and the influence of society, culture, and language on cognition and maturation" (1999, p. 10). In addition to McCallum's invaluable work on dialogism and subjectivity in adolescent literature, other children's literature scholars who have drawn on Bakhtin include Maria Nikolajeva, in The magic code and children's literature comes of age, and John Stephens in Language and ideology in children's fiction.

In The location of culture, Homi Bhabha asks: "If we contest the 'grand narratives,' then what alternative temporalities do we create to articulate the differential (Jameson), contrapuntal (Said), and interruptive (Spivak) historicities of race, gender, class, nation within a growing transnational culture?" (2004, p. 249-50). Bhabha suggests that in questioning the master narratives that we have been taught to accept, something new emerges. In my examination of the use of fantasy in historical fiction, I focus on the ways in which authors attempt to retell periods of history through the points of view of those who are not in power. Though fantasy in children's literature has not always been particularly multicultural in nature, contemporary authors are showing how it can be effective in making room for the exploration of the disenfranchised.

Nature and Identity in Joy Kogawa's Naomi's Tree

The following critical writings on nature and identity in Japanese and Canadian literature will be of value in my analyses of Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ohi's Naomi's tree. The discussions that the literary scholars present indicate that Japanese and Canadian philosophies are completely divergent in their views about nature's role in forming identity.

In Kinya Tsuruta and Theodore Goossen's book, Nature and identity in Canadian and Japanese literature various scholars of Japanese and Canadian literature analyze the differences in the ways that Japanese and Canadian people respond and think about their identities through

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their reactions to their natural and man-made environments. In the "Introduction" section, the editors succinctly summarize the arguments by remarking that the quest for identity in Canadian literature has tended to project its heroes and heroines upward, towards the ideal of autonomous selfhood, and outward, into the promise of a brighter and better future, but it has found it difficult to send them "down," for what beckons is not a warm and nurturing reunion with maternal nature, but rather a terrifying void which is the antithesis of life. The struggle for identity in Japanese literature, by contrast, faces an entirely opposite kind of dilemma. Traditionally, the quest for selfhood has reached its paradoxical conclusion when the isolated "self" as such as ceased to exist, allowing the protagonist to "merge within an all-encompassing flow" (1988, p. 15).

The differences in Canadian and Japanese views of their identities very likely stem from their rather disparate histories and geographical topographies. Canada is a relatively new country which has maintained close ties with her colonial parents. She shares a common border and language with the United States, and some scholars go so far as to say that the two economies and cultures are so close that they practically form a single unit (Tsurata and Goossen 1988, p. 3). Quite naturally, therefore, her attempts to carve out a clear identity for herself have been phrased in modest and often tentative terms. Her literature as well, while possessing its own distinctive characteristics, is rooted in the traditions of the English and French literature: as Northrop Frye has written, what makes Canadian literature uniquely Canadian is its content, not its forms, which "are autonomous; they exist within the literature itself, and cannot be derived from any experience outside literature" (1971, p.232). For Canada, therefore, as for any other western country, the "national" literature is at once an affirmation of identity and a gentle reminder of the limits of that identity; no one stands alone, for all are bound by forms that transcend national boundaries (Tsuruta and Goossen 1988, p. 3).

Japan, although youthful when compared to China, seems aged indeed when placed alongside Canada. Whereas Canada's origins are recent, a matter of historical record, Japan's are bound in ancient myths, with the unbroken Imperial line symbolizing the continuity between gods and legends and the modern era. This continuity in turn has been made possible by Japan's relative isolation. Despite the profound influences she has received from the outside, Japan has been, and to a discernable degree still is, set apart from the rest of the world: geographically, by being an island archipelago; politically, partly due to the self-imposed retreat she entered into during the peak of the colonial era; and linguistically, since no one shares her language (Tsuruta and Goossen 1988, p. 3). It is not hard to understand, therefore, why the whole question of "national identity" has been phrased in sweeping terms in Japan's case: whereas the Canadian has extended himself tentatively towards some qualified affirmation of his cultural distinctiveness, the Japanese has embraced, often with religious fervour, the conviction that there dwelt within herself a sacred core, something utterly unique which no other culture could destroy, imitate, or perhaps even comprehend (Tsuruta and Goossen 1988, p. 3). The soul of the Japanese – sometimes called Yamato-damashii or Wakon – was historically postulated as a kind of refuge which soared securely above the shifting tides of foreign influence.

Yet, far from being a barren landscape, the world on that rock (i.e. Japan) was seen as lush and fertile, postulated by a myriad of natural deities that provided a far more concrete and particularistic proof of identity than any national myth could ever offer. Ultimately to be Japanese was to belong to a specific place, a furusato populated by known gods and the spirits of one's ancestors, and it was through the yearly festivals that celebrated the community's bonds with these unseen forces that one could find self-affirmation and renewal. This sense of being intimately tied to the natural landscape not only lay at the heart of the national religion, it permeated the literature as well. Indeed, just as the festival was the touchstone of identity at the "folk" level, so did literature come to play a similar role at the "higher" level of the culture

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(Tsuruta and Goossen 1988, p. 4). One's spiritual roots were somehow connected to the classics – the Imperial anthologies of poetry, the ancient monogatari of the courtly Heian period, the epic war chronicles of the early medieval days, and so on. Even after the modern era was well under way and the national literature had been transformed by western contact, people and the national literature had been transformed by western contact, people continued to turn not only to the classics but to their favourite contemporary Japanese writers to orient themselves within a changing world.

It would seem, therefore, that Japanese literature would be able to provide clear answers to the perennial questions about identity. It might even be imagined that, in Japan's case, it is merely the "content" that has been transformed by contact with the west, not the literary "forms" themselves, which continue to transmit the basic patterns of an unchanging national character. In fact, however, no such clean and tidy formulation is possible; modern Japanese literature is a true hybrid, whose bloodlines extend back into two distinct cultural worlds (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 4).

In looking at the language itself, one may be able to perceive another reason why Japanese literature is so deceptively difficult to pin down. To begin with, whereas western languages have tended to affix hard and fast meanings to key terms, in the interests of logical consistency, Japanese has developed a far more impressionistic mode of expression, in the interests of facilitating the emotional bond between the speaker or writer and his audience. From an outsider's standpoint, of course, this may seem like a vague, even unworkable system, and even within Japan, the contextual emphasis of the language can make it hard for members of one group to penetrate the short-hand used by another. Nevertheless, the relative homogeneity of Japanese society does mean that, overall, a great deal more can be taken for granted: one is expected to be able to "say five and have ten understood" (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 5). In a sense, therefore, many words tend to be defined by their contexts as much as they define them,

and what they "lack" by western standards – i.e. a hard semantic core – they gain back by their capacity to evoke a shared emotion or atmosphere. Quite naturally, Japanese literature has been shaped by this mode of expression, most notably the poetic tradition which relied heavily on a refined and highly synchronized body of literary precedent. A literate reader is expected to be familiar with the multitude of references underlying a specific word or phrase, and it has long been considered bad form, as well as bad art, to spell things out beyond the basic minimum.

Since the advent of the modern era, however, this harmonious world of consensual definition has been transformed by the impact of imported ideas and new assumptions. Indeed, one can say that the Japanese language – in fact, the whole conceptual framework of the culture – has been in a constant state of flux since even before the time of the Restoration. This probably had less to do with the great quantity of foreign loan-words that have crept into the vernacular than with the process of translation itself. Key words like nature (shizen) and "the ego" (jiga), for example, which had meant one thing within the traditional context, came to possess a very different set of connotations once they had been used over and over again within translated texts. As recent studies, such as Kojin Karatani's <u>Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen</u> (1980) have shown, the most fundamental modes of perception were irrevocably affected by this process, which itself was inextricably linked to the socio-economic changes taking place in the society at large. Unconsciously, the Japanese were moving away from the relatively nondualistic world view of the premodern era, towards a more dualistic mode which tended to draw clear lines between man and his environment (Tsuruta and Goossen 1988, p. 5). Shizen, for example, which traditionally expressed a belief in the existence of a universal force that bound all things together, took on a whole new set of associations, which posited "nature" as something set apart from man. In the same manner, the jiga, once a very ambivalent concept, acquired a far more positive set of associations: one had to construct a "modern" ego," some thought, to become truly at home in the modern world. Gradually, therefore, imported concepts came to dwell side-

by-side with traditional ones within a single terminology: the language had 'absorbed' them, as it were, making them part of the inner landscape of the Japanese.

The energy created by the friction between these cohabitating yet contradictory forces – 'man in nature' versus 'man and nature,' 'man in society' versus 'man and society' – has fuelled much of the development of modern Japanese literature. Far from setting it totally apart from other modern literatures, however, this has established a common link of sorts, simple examples of quests for self-discovery and portraits of alienation can be found in every tradition.

In a sizable number of Canadian works, nature tends to be depicted as a severe, demanding, and even brutalizing entity, its gods those of another race, its awesome scale rendering void all human endeavour (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 6). The forbidding vastness of the Canadian landscape does not easily permit the kind of lyrical union so valued within the Japanese tradition. To abandon oneself to the forces of nature can be suicidal – one is likely to end up lying crushed upon some rocky spit, or frozen in some snowy field. Yet it is vitally important, for by struggling with it (i.e. man versus nature), an individual can gradually attain a form of autonomy and self-knowledge. If this sounds very much like the role of the father, then nature in the Japanese works comes across as an unmistakable maternal figure. Full of nurturing milk, she indulges, energizes, and restores, often providing a wounded hero with a healing respite from brutalizing civilization. Far from threatening man, she is posed as alluring enough to facilitate his "regression," thereby allowing him to "merge" with her at least temporarily (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 6).

This Literature Review provides the context for the discussion of my primary texts. Each section – the role of image section, the role of text section, and the role of image-text interaction section – demonstrates the areas of investigation that have already been conducted in the field; and my own piece of research brings all three parts together to give a multifacted approach to the

picturebook, authenticity in multicultural literature, and in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three encompasses my methodology. In the first section, I argue why New Historicism is most appropriate for my needs; although Postcolonial Theory and Critical Race Theory have many pertinent strengths. New Historicists emphasize the subordinated historical narratives of marginalized groups such women, people of colour, the poor, the working class, gay men and lesbians, prisoners, and the inhabitants of mental institutions. In exemplifying history in this manner, New Historicism is stating that non-dominant cultures and other non-dominant factions of society have the same right to have their voices represented in history as the dominant cultures and factions. I then discuss the semiotic theories of

In the second section of my methodology, I describe how purposive sampling is employed to choose my primary texts. I explain how my cultural upbringing and my teaching experience led me to become interested in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks; how a specific criteria list helped narrow my list of primary texts to five picturebooks exemplifying quality and adequate voice-representation; and why more Chinese-Canadian picturebooks are discussed than Japanese-Canadian picturebooks.

Postcolonial Theory

In search of a suitable theoretical framework that would properly address issues of cultural authenticity and race in my study of cultural and historical authenticity in Japanese and Chinese Canadian picturebooks, I first turned to Roderick McGillis's book, Voices of the other: Children's literature and the postcolonial context. McGillis, in his introduction, describes "the other" as "the people more written about than writing, more spoken about than speaking, these past so many decades" (1999, p. xxi). He recognizes that many of "the voices of other" that are being heard are from minority writers. McGillis's aim, through the essays that he compiled and

edited, was to contextualize minority writings within colonial thought as a means to acknowledge "the history of oppression and [to liberate] the study of literature from traditional and Eurocentric ways of seeing" (1999, p. xxii). Moreover, he sees the postcolonial writer as one who "confronts directly the forces of cultural domination and racial intolerance" (1999, p. xxiii).

Several of the articles in McGillis's Voices of the other provide a postcolonial analysis of multiculturalism in children's literature. In "Rethinking the identity of cultural otherness: The discourse of difference as an unfinished project," Shaobo Xie states:

> The emergence of postcolonial narratives dialectically marks a complex historical moment. On the one hand, it testifies to a changed world characterized by increased tolerance and understanding of racial and cultural difference; on the other, it unmistakably mirrors a world saturated with imperialist ideas, stereotypes, and narratives. (2000, p. 1)

Xie argues the importance of enabling the differences of cultures to confront "the imperialism of the same that has reigned for over two thousand years, [and to now be] reinstated and recuperated as counter-hegemonic strategy" (2000, pp. 8-9). In the end, Xie points out that "To rethink the identity of cultural otherness as a radical difference is not, however, to assert the politics of difference as the end of history. Rather it is to strive toward a utopian future of unity that difference has to be celebrated and radicalized as the moment now" (2000, p. 13). McGillis calls Xie's article "a clear introduction to postcolonial thought" (p. xxix). Xie ends with a focus on children's literature and the criticism of children's literature as having the ability to be the most effective postcolonial project in the long run,

> For the world always ultimately belongs to children. If today's children grow up with postcolonial education, and if they are encouraged to understand and

appreciate racial/ethnic difference, that would tremendously expedite the progress towards a globalized postcoloniality. (2000, p. 13)

Louise Saldanha's article, "Bedtime stories: Canadian multiculturalism and children's literature" addresses "the contemporary insistence of the dominant society to perpetuate its position of privilege at the expense of minority peoples" (McGillis 1999, p. xxx). Saldanha questions the effectiveness of Canada's multiculturalism policy as being one that contains the notion of diversity "within a liberal humanist framework that encourages the expression of one's 'difference' as an alternative lifestyle rather than as an oppositional subjectivity" (1999, p. 167). She focuses her analyses on three children's books written by Canadian women of colour (Himani Bannerji's Coloured pictures, Vinita Srivastava's A giant named Azalea, and Lillian Allen's Why me?); these works, she asserts, represent a truly postcolonial body of work in Canada. She demonstrates through multicultural readings and responses to these books from students in her university class a "predominant tendency to assign pedagogical value to these texts within the conventions of liberal multiculturalism" (1999, p. 174). She summarizes her remarks by saying that although multiculturalism "is far from an oppositional discourse, its vision of inclusiveness can usefully be regarded as an opportunity for ethnocultural minorities to engage, counter, resist and transform the terms by which their diversity is instituted" (1999, p. 175). According to Saldanha, multiculturalism still has yet "to comprehend concepts of race and ethnicity as social, historical, and variable categories" and until it can, "the Canadian mosaic will continue to be read as nothing more than shades of white" (1999, p. 175).

McGillis refers to Dieter Petzold's article "Multiculturalism in Canadian children's books" as an important call for serious consideration of the history of cultures (p. xxx). Petzold poses history in relation to ideas of personal experience, ethnic identity, the simplification of moral issues, happy endings, and unpleasant truths. Autobiographical writings based on historical events might cause one to think that testament of personal experience would guarantee

their authenticity. He argues, however, that as adults recounting a childhood memory, the remembrances of children's writers may possibly be exaggerated or idealized, or constrained by a limited view, and so distort the truth.

The articles from <u>Voices of other</u> discussed here explore a range of issues while relating postcolonial criticism to a variety of multicultural works. Postcolonial criticism is relevant in presenting racism and ethnicity in a new light in multicultural children's books because it centralizes the history of the oppressed as well as racial intolerance and, indeed, its ideology does pertain in significant ways to the treatment of Asian Canadian perspectives in many of my primary texts. However, as Xiaoping Li comments in <u>Voices rising: Asian Canadian cultural activism</u>, "Asian Canadian pioneers were not colonized as were First Nation's people" (2007, p. 13) and thus I feel that to employ postcolonial theory as the main guiding framework for my thesis would be inappropriate.

Critical Race Theory

I next examined critical race theory. Richard Delgado and Jean Stephancic's <u>Critical Race Theory: An Introduction</u> as well as Carol Aylward's <u>Canadian critical race theory: Racism and the law</u> augment my understanding of this methodology. Critical Race Theory is explained to be a movement of scholars and activists concerned with studying and remodelling the relationships among race, racism, and power (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 2). Critical race theorists are generally concerned with "disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that work to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people and that attempt to maintain the status quo" (Milner 2008, p. 333).

The "voice of colour" section, in Delgado and Stephancic's book, was of particular interest to me in that its thesis statement holds that "because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, Black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able

to communicate to their white counterparts matters that whites are unlikely to know" (2001, p. 9). As Sarah Park declares in her UCLA Masters thesis, "Korean-American children's picture book: Critical analysis and annotated bibliography" (2004), "this is not to say that white authors cannot write good picture books about ethnic experiences, but being ethnic does provide a certain perspective of the world which a white person has not experienced" (p. 21).

Delgado and Stephancic state that the term ethnicity has commonly been defined as "group characteristics often based on national origin, ancestry, language and/or other cultural characteristics" (2001, p. 146). However, critical race theorists seek to revise concepts of race and race relations, to see these as "products of social thought and relations" (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 7). They also believe that race is more than just "people with common origins who share certain physical traits such as skin color, physique and hair texture" (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 8). Thus, the definition of race has been expanded to a concept "which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 55). Minority writers speak from experiences formed by race and thus are presumed to be capable of speaking about race and racism.

Delgado argues that Critical Race Theory has not been constrained to studying racial matters only in legal structures. He says that, "although CRT began as a movement in law, it has spread rapidly beyond that discipline into such areas as education, political science, ethnic studies and American Studies departments" (2001, p. 3). In their article, "Toward a critical race theory of education" (1995), Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate demonstrate Critical Race Theory is necessary in education because "race, unlike gender and class, remains un-theorized" (p. 49). In addition, they argue for a new perspective on multicultural education, one that critical race theory offers, "because of the failure of scholars to theorize race" (1995, p. 60) as well as other limitations of multiculturalism in education (1995, p. 60-62). They make clear that they by no means intend to belittle the scholarly efforts made by those in critical legal studies, but

Ladson-Billings and Tate desire to "underscore the difficulty of maintaining the spirit and intent of justice for the oppressed while simultaneously permitting the hegemonic rule of the oppressor" (1995, p. 62). In essence, Ladson-Billings and Tate see multiculturalism for education as being as ineffectual as critical legal studies was for advancing justice to minority groups still subordinated by the dominant culture. They seek a new perspective for education.

Critical race theory can be used to identify stereotypes and other forms of racism in multicultural children's books through re-contextualizing books against the historical background of the ethnic group. In critical race theory this concept is known as "historical race," which may be defined as the history of a particular group's racialization in a given society" (Aylward 1999, p. 31). In multicultural children's books, the history of minority characters can sometimes be marginalized. Dieter Petzold found in his readings of Canadian multicultural children's books, that "prejudice, racial slurs and downright discrimination play a surprisingly small role." Rather he found that child protagonists were frequently portrayed as "learning to accept their ethnic identity and finding their own place in society" (2000, p. 182). Petzold assumes that the child protagonists' journeys toward acceptance of themselves and their places in society would naturally involve a heightened awareness of characters' history and background. However, he found in some of the books, history played only a marginal role in the development of the story and the character (2000, p. 182). Petzold argues that history is closely linked to ethnic identity and needs to stay that way; otherwise, authors can water down the authenticity of a minority character's experience or journey in discovering his or her identity by eliminating key aspects of historical events that have shaped white views of minorities in the past.

Since my thesis centres on Chinese and Japanese Canadian picturebooks, I believe that it is essential to outline a brief history of Canadian Critical Race Theory at this point. According to Carol A. Aylward, Canada's leading critical race theorist, Canadian Critical Race Theory developed along a similar theoretical direction to that of the United States. During the 1980s,

scholars of colour in Canada began to articulate their dissatisfaction with Canadian legal

discourse which, like its American counterpart, had failed to include an analysis of the roles that

race and racism have played in the political and legal structures of society. However, issues of

race in Canada differ from those in the United States in that there is a "pervasive denial of the

very existence of racism in Canadian society" (1999, p. 40). Aylward asserts that most people

would acknowledge and agree that racism exists in the United States but in Canada it is difficult

to even approach this issues as Canada is said to "wish to portray to the world an image of a

society noted for racial and cultural tolerance…a mecca for the oppressed of the world" (1999, p.

40). Aylward points out that if racism is seen as a problem at all in Canada, it is usually seen as

an "aberration," "merely the action of a few misguided individuals that should not reflect on

Canadian society as a whole" (1999, p. 40). While racism may not be as overt as it was and is in

the United States, this does not mean that it does not exist in Canada. Aylward quotes Peter

Rosenthal to elucidate the ways in which racism plays out covertly in society:

> Many ethnic and racial groups in Canada have been victims of direct and explicit
>
> discrimination in the past. Today, discrimination persists in forms more difficult
>
> to discern such as stereotypes, assumptions and singular viewpoints. It manifests
>
> itself as systems, practices, policies and laws that appear neutral, but that, under
>
> close inspection, have serious detrimental consequences for members of ethnic
>
> and racial communities (Rosenthal, quoted in Aylward 1999, p. 39)

Although Delgado and Stephancic Critical Race Theory raises many outstanding

arguments that could easily be applicable to my study of cultural authenticity in Japanese- and

Chinese- Canadian picturebooks, I am hesitant to apply it as my overall framework as it does not

speak specifically to the Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian experiences with racism. However, in

examining other literature on the topic of Canadian Critical Race Theory I could not find any

other comprehensive discussions about Canadian Critical Race Theory and Japanese or Chinese

Canadians. Roy Miki, in <u>Broken entries</u>, does comment on how racism during internment caused Japanese Canadians to lose their faith in democratic values and made them feel shame in "their ethnicity [and] the very cultural and linguistic skin inherited from their parents as they entered the dominant society in their dispersed state" (1998, p. 132); Ron Tanaka forcefully asserts in his essay "The Sansei artist and community culture" that the sole condition for Japanese and Chinese to be admitted to Canada in the first place is "to be useful…The development of this internal structure …depends of the recognition of this role…[and] the survival of the community depends on Asians staying in their places" (1972, 1: 4); and Xiaoping Li, in <u>Voices rising: An Asian-Canadian cultural activism</u>, declares that "Asian-Canadian identity construction seems to have three interrelated purposes: (1) to reclaim suppressed ethnicity and to forge new identities (2) to project an Asian-Canadian identity into the mainstream society as a way of intervening in the nation-building process (3) to participate in a transnational struggle for equality and justice and to construct new cultural identities against the backdrop of Asian diasporas" (Li 2007, p. 4), but these cultural activists seem to align themselves more closely with Contemporary Cultural Political Theory, Postmoderism, and even Postcolonial Theory, than Canadian Critical Race Theory.

As Richard Delgado and Jean Stephancic state in their chapter "Power and the shape of knowledge", in <u>Critical race theory</u>, one of the more contentious issues in racial thought today is whether the very framework we use to consider problems of race reflects an unstated binary or mindset. That paradigm, the black-white binary, effectively dictates that non-black minority groups must compare their treatment to that of African Americans [or in Aylward's case African Canadians] to gain redress (2001, p. 67). The paradigm, the black-white binary, effectively dictates that one group, blacks, constitutes the prototypical minority group.

Exceptionalism holds that a group's history is so distinctive that placing it at the centre of analysis is, in fact, warranted (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 69). Although there has been

considerable controversy on that particular viewpoint, critics do make one very valid point. The differentialization thesis, subscribed to by most contemporary students of race, maintains that each favoured group has been racialized in its own way, and according to the needs of the majority group at particular times in its history (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 69).

Long preoccupied with issues of identity, both American and Canadian societies prefer to place their citizens into boxes based on physical attributes and culture. No science supports this practice; it is simply a matter of habit and convenience (Delgado and Stephancic, 2001, p. 70). Like other paradigms, the black-white one allows people to simplify and make sense of a complex reality. The risk is that non-black minority groups, not fitting into the dominant society's idea of race "become marginalized, invisible, and foreign" (Delgado and Stephancic 2001, p. 70).

New Historicism

Still on the search for an appropriate critical framework I read Lois Tyson's book, Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide and Mary Klages book Literary theory: A guide for the perplexed. After considering many different theories that these two theorists present, I enthusiastically learned that New Historicism would meet my research study's needs most satisfactorily because it allowed me to incorporate relevant components of Postcolonial Theory and Critical Race Theory as well as consider history in a way that values the heterogeneous perspectives of Japanese and Chinese Canadians and demonstrates their ideologies.

Most individuals raised to think about history in the traditional format would read an account and ask, "Is this account accurate?" Conversely, a New Historicist would read the same account and ask, "What does this account tell us about the political agendas and ideological conflicts of the culture that produced and read the account?" Undoubtedly, questions asked by traditional historians and New Historicists are quite different, and that is because these two

approaches to history are based on very different views of what history is and how we can know it. Traditional historians ask, "What happened?" and "What does the event tell us about history?" In contrast, New Historicists ask, "How has the event been interpreted?" and "What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" (Klages 2006, p. 124).

For most traditional historians, history is a series of events that have a linear, causal relationship. Furthermore, they believe people are perfectly capable, through objective analysis, of uncovering the facts about historical events, and those facts can sometimes reveal the spirit of the age, that is, the worldview held by the culture to which those facts refer (Klages 2006, p. 123). Traditional historians generally believe that history is progressive, that is the human species is improving over the course of time, advancing in its moral, cultural and technological accomplishments (Tyson 2006, p. 283).

New Historicists, in contrast, do not believe that we have a clear access to any but the most basic facts of history. But our understanding of what such facts mean, of how they fit within the complex web of competing ideologies and conflicting social, political, and cultural agendas of the time and place in which they occurred is, for New Historicists, strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact (Klages 2006, p. 124). Even when traditional historians believe they are adhering to the facts, the way they contextualize those facts including which facts are deemed important enough to report, and which are left out, determines what story those facts will tell. From this perspective, there is no such thing as a presentation of facts; there is only interpretation. Furthermore, New Historicists argue that reliable interpretations are, for a number of reasons, difficult to produce.

The first and foremost reason for this difficulty, New Historicists believe, is the impossibility of objective analysis. Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and place, and their views of both current and past events are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experiences within their own cultures. Historians

may believe they are being objective, but their own views of what is right and wrong, what is civilized and uncivilized, what is important and unimportant will strongly influence the ways in which they interpret events. For example, the traditional view that history is progressive is based on the belief, held in the past by many Anglo-European historians, that the "primitive" cultures of native peoples are less evolved than, and therefore inferior to, the "civilized" Anglo-European cultures. As a result, ancient cultures with highly developed art forms, ethical codes, and spiritual philosophies, such as the tribal cultures of First Nations People and Africans, were often misrepresented as lawless, superstitious, and savage (Tyson 2006, p. 283).

Another reason for the difficulty in producing reliable interpretations of history is its complexity. For New Historicists, history cannot be understood simply as a progression of events. At any given point in history, any given culture may be progressing in some areas and regressing in others. And any two historians may disagree about what constitutes progress and what does not, for these terms are matters of definition. That is, history is not an orderly succession into a continually improving future, as many traditional historians have believed. It is more like "an improvised dance consisting of an infinite variety of steps, following any new route at any given moment, and having no particular goal or destination" (Tyson 2006, p. 284). Individuals and groups of people may have goals, but human history does not.

Similarly, while events certainly have causes, New Historicists argue that those causes are usually multiple, complex, and difficult to analyze. One cannot make simple causal statements with any certainty. In addition, causality is not a one-way street from cause to effect. Any given event – whether it be a political election or a children's cartoon show – is a product of its culture, but it also affects that culture in return. In other words, all events are shaped by and shape the culture in which they emerge. In a like manner, our subjectivity, or self-hood, is shaped by and shapes the culture into which we are born. Every society constrains individual thought and action within a network of cultural limitations which it simultaneously enables

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individuals to think and act. Our subjectivity, then, is a lifelong process of negotiating our way, consciously and unconsciously, among the constraints and freedoms offered at any given moment in time by the society in which we live.

As Gillian Rose affirms, in <u>Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials</u> (2007), discourse is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience (p. 142). Although the word "discourse" has roughly the same meaning as the word "ideology," and the two terms are often used interchangeably, the word "discourse" draws attention to the role of language as the vehicle of ideology.

From a New Historical perspective, no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power. For there is no monolithic (single, unified, universal) spirit of an age, and there is no totalizing explanation of history (an explanation that provides a single key to all aspects of a given culture). There is, instead, a dynamic, unstable interplay among discourses: they are always in a state of flux, overlapping and competing with one another (or, to use New Historical terminology, negotiating exchanges of power) in any number of ways at any given point in time. New Historicists believe that the relationship between individual identity and society is mutually constitutive: overall, human beings are never merely victims of an oppressive society, for they can find various ways to oppose authority in their personal and public lives.

Just as definitions of social and antisocial behaviour promote the power of certain individuals and groups, so do particular version of historical events. Thus, New Historicism views historical accounts as narratives, as stories, that are inevitably biased according to the point of view, conscious or unconscious, of those who write them. The more unaware historians are of their biases – that is, the more "objective" they think they are – the more those biases are able to control their narratives.

So far, this discussion has demonstrated New Historicism's claims about what historical analysis cannot do. Historical analysis (1) cannot be objective, (2) cannot adequately illustrate that a particular spirit of the times or world view accounts for the complexities of any given culture, and (3) cannot adequately prove that history is linear, causal, or progressive. One cannot understand a historical event, object , or person in isolation from the web of discourses in which it was represented because that phenomenon cannot be understood in isolation from the meanings that it carried at that time (Tyson 2006, p. 287). The more we isolate it, the more we still tend to view it through the meanings of our own time and place and, perhaps, our own desire to believe that the human race is improving with the passage of time.

Lois Tyson remarks that Deconstructive Criticism[1] can significantly assist in the comprehension of the functions and benefits of historical analyses because historical practice incorporates deconstructive insights about human language and experience (2006, p. 286). For example, New Historicists might say that New Historicism deconstructs the traditional opposition between history (thought of as factual) and literature (traditionally thought of as fictional). For New Historicism considers history a text that can be interpreted the same way literary critics interpret literary texts, and conversely, it considers literary texts cultural artefacts that can reveal something about the interplay of discourses, the web of social meanings, operating in the time and place in which those texts were written.

Generally, we know history only in its textual form, that is, in the form of the documents, written statistics, legal codes, diaries, letters, speeches, tracts, and news articles in which are recorded the attitudes, policies, procedures, and events that occurred in a given time and place.

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[1] Deconstruction is the name given by French philosopher Jacques Derrida to an approach (whether in philosophy, literary analysis, or in other fields) which rigorously pursues the meaning of a text to the point of undoing the oppositions on which it is apparently founded, and to the point of showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. Deconstruction generally operates by conducting textual readings with a view to demonstrate that the language is wholly ideological: it consists entirely of numerous conflicting, dynamic ideologies – or system of beliefs and values – operating at any given point in time in any given culture (Tyson 2007, 253).

That is, even when historians base their findings on the kinds of primary sources listed above, rather than on the interpretations of other historians (secondary sources), those primary sources are almost always in the form of some sort of writing (Tyson 2006, p. 287). As such, they require the same kinds of analyses literary critics perform on literary texts. For example, historical documents can be studied in terms of their rhetorical strategies (the stylistic devices by which texts try to achieve their purposes); they can be deconstructed to reveal the limitations of their own ideological assumptions; and they can be examined for the purpose of disclosing their explicit and implicit patriarchal, racist, and homophobic agendas. In addition, historical accounts – secondary sources, written during the period in question or at a later date – can be analyzed in the same manner.

New Historicists consider both primary and secondary sources of historical information forms of narrative. Both tell some kind of story, and therefore those stories can be analyzed using the tools of literary criticism. Indeed, we might say that in bringing to the foreground the suppressed historical narratives of marginalized groups – such as women, people of colour, the poor, the working class, gay men and lesbians, prisoners, and the inhabitants of mental institutions – New Historicism has deconstructed the white, male, Anglo-European historical narrative to reveal its disturbing, hidden subtext: the experiences of those peoples it has oppressed in order to maintain the dominance that allowed it to control what most individuals know about history.

In fact, a focus on the historical narratives of marginalized people has been such an important part of New Historicism that some theorists have asked how New Historicists can accept narratives from oppressed people any more readily than they have accepted narratives from the patriarchal Anglo-European power structure. One answer to this question is that a plurality of voices, including an equal representation of historical narratives from all groups, helps ensure that a master narrative – a narrative told from a single cultural point of view that,

nevertheless, presumes to offer the only accurate version of history – will no longer control our historical understanding (Tyson 2006, p. 287). At this point in time, we do not have an equal representation of historical narratives from all groups. As well, even as the historical narratives of some groups are becoming more and more numerous, such as those of women and people of colour, those narratives usually do not receive the same attention as patriarchal Anglo-European narratives do in the classroom, where most individuals learn about history. Therefore, New Historicism tries to promote the development of and gain recognition for the histories of marginalized people.

In addition to its focus on marginalized historical narratives, New Historical analysis involves what is called "thick description," a term borrowed from anthropology. Thick description attempts, through close, detailed examination of a given cultural production – such as ritual ceremonies or works of art – to discover the meanings that particular cultural production had for the people in whose community it occurred and to reveal the social conventions, cultural codes, and ways of seeing the world that gave that production those meanings (Tyson 2006, p. 288). Thus, thick description is not a search for facts but a search for meanings and it focuses on the personal side of history – the history of family dynamics, of leisure activities, of childrearing customs – as much as or more than on such on such traditional topics as military campaigns and the passage of laws (Klages 2006, p. 124). Indeed, because traditional historicism tended to ignore or marginalize private life as subjective and irrelevant, New Historicism tries to compensate for this omission by bringing issues concerned with private life into the centre of historical inquiry.

Finally, New Historicism's claim that historical analysis is unavoidably subjective is not an attempt to legitimize a self-indulgent, "anything goes" attitude toward the writing of history (Tyson 2006, p. 289). Rather, the inevitability of personal bias makes it imperative that New Historicists be aware of and as forthright as possible about their own psychological and

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ideological positions relative to the material they analyze so that their readers can have some idea of the human lens through which they are viewing the historical issues at hand.

New Historicism and Historical Fiction for Children

In his 1982 book, <u>Labyrinths of voice</u>, Robert Kroetsch states: "I have considerable disdain or distrust for history. History is a form of narrative that is coercive. I don't trust the narrative of history because it begins from meaning instead of discovering meanings along the way" (p. 133).

The attitude towards history has been challenged in many arenas, including that of children's literature. John Stephens (1995), in <u>Language and ideology in children's fiction</u>, argues that historical fiction for children is not a closed system, but rather "the discoursal product of firm ideological intentions, written and read in a specific, complex cultural situation" (p. 205). Similarly, Hayden White (1978), in <u>Tropics of discourse: Essays in cultural criticism</u>, describes the deliberate construction of historical narratives and the infinite number of historical stories that can be told from a certain set of "facts" (p. 55). Of course, this position can be taken to the extreme; as critics of postmodern views of history have asserted, if one does not accept that there are some things about the past that are known, one runs the risk of remaking history entirely freely, as if all narratives are equally correct and valid. Nevertheless, I assert that many ways of viewing history tend to be largely and misleadingly shaped by master narratives, or what Kroetsch calls the "assumed story" of "meta-narratives" ("Disunity as unity: A Canadian strategy"1994, p. 61). The danger of these accepted versions of history is that they are often rooted in a limited point of view, usually white, male, and economically privileged. These unitary voices as historical accounts necessarily leave out a multitude of other stories.

This "cornering" or monopolization of history, however, is changing. In recent writings for children, there has been an increased drive to tell different stories of the past (Kroetsch 1994;

Nodelman and Reimer 2003; McGillis 2000). In North American children's literature, a greater focus of multiculturalism and equality has led to a growing representation of other voices, many of which seek to reshape the master narratives to include their own particular story. My thesis explores how these new stories about the past reflect a change, not only in the points of view represented in children's literature, but also in how the stories are told. In my research, I focus on the inclusion of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian viewpoints and ways of telling stories in the works of historical picturebooks for older children.

My examination of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian narratives calls into question a closed construction of the past as situated in a larger discussion. In the areas of historiography and postmodernism, scholars such as Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, and Dominick LaCapra have all engaged with the question of how our understanding of history is shaped by the narratives we construct. History, the recording of past events, can be viewed through many different lenses. Established historical accounts, or master narratives, are the stories that have been accepted as "official." They indicate not only what is generally agreed to have happened, but why what happened matters. The accounts of "great" events are disseminated through the stories told in our textbooks, our school curriculum, our novels, and even our picturebooks. These accounts are marked with documentation of dates, numbers, and quantifiable data, all of which have been verified and accepted over the years. However, history has always held a broader meaning than this. The stories that we tell of our own families must also be included in what is considered to be "history," particularly when they take the form of diaries or letters that record events outside of official history. Oral histories and other unrecorded accounts also contribute to our understanding of the past, though their non-textual nature has often resulted in their being accorded less status than other ways of knowing. When analyzing the construction of historical fiction, we ought to consider not just the published versions of the facts, but also other ways knowledge of the past has been transmitted.

Through the evidence that these varied histories present, scholars, teachers, adults, and children attempt to make sense of a past to which we have no direct access. We shape our history through the telling of stories, stories that help construct a logical and satisfying view of what has happened before us. This process of recreating the past through story, though very natural, is problematic. Because our only access to the past is through constructed narrative, or the interpretation of historical fact, history is necessarily subject to the ideological beliefs, conscious or unconscious, of those telling the stories. This inevitable ideological infrastructure has led in the past, most dramatically, to the suppression of subversive histories by those who are in power. The atrocities committed against various First Nations peoples of North America, for example, has not always been prominent in our history books, and still may be downplayed in some current representations of history for children.[2] Just as important, though, are the most subtle ways in which the writers of history, intentionally or unintentionally, shape their construction of the past.

It seems clear enough to contemporary scholars that some views of history fail to take into account all perspectives and all pertinent facts. Some scholars, however, take the notion of the unreliable historical account further, arguing that the narrative aspects of history are inevitably shaped by a certain ideological view. LaCapra asserts that "all narratives 'construct' or shape and some narratives more or less dramatically distort their objects" (Writing history writing trauma 2000, p. 10), highlighting the interpretive role that is inherent in all presentations of historical knowledge. Hutcheon specifically notes the impact of narrative construction in this interpretive process; she writes: "Whether it be in historical or fictional representation, the familiar narrative form of beginning, middle, and end implies a structuring process that imparts meaning as well as order" (Poetics of postmodernism, 2002, p. 59). This argument seems

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[2] In Through Indian eyes, Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale explore the ways in which First Nations people are portrayed in literature for children. They include lengthy analyses of works of history and historical fiction, analyzing both obvious and more subtle ways in which First Nations history has been misrepresented in children's literature.

particularly applicable to works of historical fiction for children. By constructing a narrative that offers the readers a sense of closure, writers also portray history in single-voiced ways. If the history ends when the book is closed, do we construct the past as something that can be grasped by reading one version of events?

Hutcheon and LaCapra suggest one set of issues that arises from the telling of history. If history is portrayed as closed and entirely knowable, we run the risk of universalizing human experience. This view would suggest that there is one story for humankind, a master narrative that applies to all. These master narratives not only limit the extent to which history is viewed as being comprised of more than one voice, but they also may exclude the viewpoints of those who do not have the power to construct the story. An opposite problem can occur. If one takes the view that historical events are only narratives, there is the danger that one can create multiple stories that may or may not reflect the facts of the historical record. White describes how some critics of historiography "argue that historical accounts are nothing but interpretations, in the establishment of the events that make up the chronicle of the narrative no less than in assessments of the meaning or significance of those events for the understanding of the historical process in general" (Tropics of Discourse 1978, p. 55). These two opposing problems, of universalism and relativism, cannot be escaped.

The Application of Theory

The areas of New Historicism that are most relevant to my research are described in Mary Klages' Literary theory: A guide for the perplexed (2006), Lois Tyson's Critical theory today: A user friendly guide (2006), Gillian Rose's Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials (2007), John Stephen's Language and ideology in children's fiction (1995), Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogic imagination (1982), Dominick LaCapra's Writing history writing trauma (2000), Linda Hutcheon's Poetics of postmodernism (2002), and Homi

Bhabha's In location and culture. Specifically, I draw on Mary Klages' assertion (2006) that historical events cannot be interpreted without looking at how they fit within the complex web of competing ideologies and conflicting social, political, and cultural agendas of the time and place in which they occurred and her belief that historians' views of past and current events are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experiences within their own cultures (2006, p. 124). Next, I utilize Lois Tyson's hypothesis (2006) which argues that, in bringing to the foreground the suppressed historical narratives of marginalized groups, New Historicism deconstructs the white, male, Anglo-European historical narrative and allows for a more equal representation of voices to be heard (p. 287). I also place value on her analysis of "thick description." Thick description attempts, through close scrutiny of a given cultural production, to discover the meanings that a particular cultural production had for the people in whose community it occurred and to reveal the social conventions, cultural codes, and ways of seeing the world that gave that production those meanings (2007, p. 288). Thus, thick description is not a search for facts but a search for meanings and it focuses on the personal side of history. Then I employ Rose's examination of discourse (2007) to explain the distribution of power in history. She states that from a New Historical perspective, no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power (p. 142). For there is no monolithic (single, unified, universal) spirit of an age, and there is no totalizing explanation of history. There is, instead, a dynamic, unstable interplay among discourses: they are always in a state of flux, overlapping and competing with one another in any number of ways at any given point in time. Following that, I use Mikhail Bakhtin's perspective in which he views history, not as a finished product, but as a dynamic presence . He professes that it is "through contact with the present [that] an object is attracted to the incomplete process of a work-in-the-making, and is stamped with the seal of inconclusiveness"(1982, p. 30). Finally, I apply the theories of John Stephens, Dominick LaCapra, and Linda Hutcheon. Stephens remarks that historical fiction for

children is not a closed system but rather "the discoursal product of firm ideological intentions, written and read in a specific, complex, cultural situation" (1992, p. 205). LaCapra (1983), in "Rethinking intellectual history" differentiates between what he refers to as "intellectual history as a reconstruction of the past" and "intellectual history as a dialogue or conversation with the past" (p. 78). Linda Hutcheon, in Poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, and fiction (1988), talks about "historiographic metafiction" and how it reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in doing so, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge (p. 89).

Semiotic theory also plays a significant role as a critical lens in my thesis. However, I place the greatest emphasis on Perry Nodelman's Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books (1988); Ernst H. Gombrich's Art and illusions (1961); Roland Barthes Responsibility and forms (1981); Molly Bang's Picture this: How pictures work (2000); Rudolph Arnheim's Art and visual perception (1974); Mercedes Gaffron's "Right and left in pictures" (1950); and Julia Kriteva's Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art (1980). In *Words about pictures* (1988), Nodelman states that to fully comprehend an image one must be able to understand a complex system of codes and signifiers that may not be universally understood by all cultures (p. 9). Thus, illustrations and symbols that may hold considerable significance for one group may be puzzling or trivial to another population group. In a later part of the book Nodelman also describes the dynamic of "visual tension" imposed on objects from external sources and from within by means of their visual qualities and relationships with other objects (1998, p. 125). In Art and illusions, Gombrich (1961), comments on how artists can make visual depictions of objects only in terms of their previous knowledge of earlier visual images. Hence, a visual depiction understandable to one artist may seem meaningless to another artist who has not shared the first artist's experiences (even if both artists are from the same culture) (p. 87). In Responsibility and forms (1981) Barthes identifies a "cast of mind" and

suggests that visual art forms offer not just a literal depiction of reality, but also a comment about reality that is implied by the artist's treatment of it (p. 6). In Picture this: How pictures work (2000), Bang describes how the elements of gravity and space affect readers' responses to objects on a page (p. 42). In "Right and left in pictures" (1950), Gaffron speaks about our tendency to read from left to right and how we also follow this same pattern on a "fixed path" when our eyes look at a picture space (p. 316). Julia Kriteva, in A semiotic approach to literature and art (1980), observes that of all the variations in the picture plane, those of colour are the most immediately noticeable, and like shapes, have emotional connotations that allow them to act as signifiers of a state of mind (p. 221). Colour differs from other aspects of perceivable reality that sustain meaning in that, while differing colours and combinations of colour can and do act as signs within a conventional system of visual signification, they also still communicate their original essence directly to the eye.

A third component, which profoundly affects the way that I approach my research, is body of work which encompasses text-image interaction. The critical writings of Maria Nikolajava and Carole Scott, in "The dynamics of picturebook communication," and of Lawrence Sipe, Wolfgang Iser, Roman Jakobsen, Charles Suhor, in Sipe's article, "How picturebooks work: A semiotically framed theory of text-picture relationships" (1998) are especially influential. Nikolajava and Scott concentrate on three types of interaction in picturebooks – symmetrical (where words and pictures tell the same story), enhancing (where pictures and words amplify the meaning of one another through their interaction), and counterpointing (where images and text collaborate to create a story that is beyond the scope of either one alone) (pp. 11-21). Sipe talks about the term synergy and how it involves the "production of two or more agents of a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects" (1998, p. 98). Iser then explains how, in a reader-text relationship, a reader participates in being a co-creator of the story he or she is reading by filling in the unwritten gaps in his or her

own way, thereby acknowledging the inexhaustibility of the text (1998, p. 99). Jakobsen observes that the different way that we experience written language and visual art have important implications for the ways in which we try to relate the words and pictures in a picturebook (1988, p. 101). Charles Suhor investigates the concept of "transmediation" or the translation of one sign system into another (1998, p. 101). For picturebooks, that means that readers and viewers must oscillate from the sign systems of the illustrations to the sign systems of the text and back again while creating new meanings each time.

The critical writings of New Historicism, semiotics, and image-text interaction are equally important for conducting my enquiries for this thesis, however, they are not applied in the same manner. While New Historicism assists in the analyses of cultural and historical authenticity in all the sections (reading the images in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks, reading of the text in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks, and role of image-text interaction in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks), the theories of semiotics are focused principally on my primary texts of Little fingerling and West coast Chinese boy in my reading of images section, and the theories of image-text interaction are concentrated mainly on my primary texts of Ghost train and Naomi's tree in my role of image and text section (with a few exceptions of semiotics being mentioned in the Naomi's tree section of image and text interaction and a couple of instances of complementary interactions being mentioned in West coast Chinese boy in the image section).

Purposive Sampling

In order to choose the primary texts for this thesis, I read an extensive survey of picturebooks that were content-focused on Asian-Canadian culture and then decided to implement the non-probabilistic sampling method of purposive sampling as it most closely met my objectives. I knew that I was broadly interested in Japanese and Chinese-Canadian

picturebooks, because my own cultural heritage is Japanese-Canadian and the majority of the students that I work with in my late-primary classroom are Chinese-Canadian, but I decided to narrow my focus to works that concentrated on specific historical time periods and either best reflected historical and cultural authenticity or problematized historical and cultural authenticity. Certain selection criteria were employed to facilitate the creation of a manageable list of titles: 1) each work had to have received at least one critical award or be placed on the shortlist for an award 2) each work had to reflect a Japanese or Chinese-Canadian experience 3) each work had to convey a Japanese or Chinese-Canadian experience 4) each work had to include historical content; this category was broadened, however, to include folklore 5) each work had to demonstrate an accurate representation of culture or a problematic representation of culture 6) each work had to be created by a Canadian author or illustrator.

The final titles offered me the richest territory of written and visual text through which to explore my research questions. Two examples were selected for historical and cultural authenticity of image, historical and cultural authenticity of text, and historical and cultural authenticity of text and image. Interestingly, there existed a much larger sampling frame of Chinese-Canadian historical picturebooks than Japanese-Canadian historical picturebooks.

For the image section I opted for Monica Hughes and Brenda Clark's Little fingerling, because it demonstrated how even though an illustrator could extensively research the time period and artefacts for a picturebook, he or she could still neglect to represent an authentic voice for a chosen culture by underrepresenting or misrepresenting elements of behaviour that the people of that culture deem important. I also opted for Sing Lim's West coast Chinese boy in the image section because it demonstrated how an illustrator's work may be overlooked if the images are examined purely on a superficial level in isolation of the text. Next, for my authenticity of text section I chose Paul Yee's Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train because they convey the voices of two assertive female protagonists at a time and in a culture that,

overall, has tended to position women in subordinate roles. Following that, I chose Paul Yee's

Ghost train and Joy Kogawa's Naomi's tree for my image and text interaction section because

they are both able to effectively demonstrate how image and text are able to come together to

depict prominent themes in the Japanese and Chinese-Canadian value systems. In Ghost train,

Yee fuses Canadian "historical facts" with the Chinese storytelling device of the ghost story in a

way that is not only seamless, but also a most ingenious means of revealing the multiple-voiced

narrative. In Naomi's tree, Kogawa masterfully shows how Naomi's relationship (and her own

relationship) with nature is inevitably affected by the changes in her sense of self-identity and

self-awareness over her lifetime.

In the next chapter, I submit my findings. In an examination of a selection of Japanese-

and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks, I attempt to demonstrate how insider perspectives offer

narratives that seem to more authentically represent the voices of the cultural groups that they are

they attempting to portray. I use the critical lenses of New Historicism, semiotics, and art-text

interaction theories to guide my analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

Chapter Four presents my findings. In the image section, I investigate the how Monica Hughes and Brenda Clark's Little fingerling and Sing Lim's West coast Chinese boy present images. I suggest that, although Little fingerling is not inaccurate, overall in depicting the authenticity of the physical artifacts it neglects to maintain the same level of authenticity in the behaviours of the characters. In West coast Chinese boy, I argue that images that can be misunderstood if evaluated as one homogenous unit completely in isolation of the text. In the text section, I look at the treatment of Chinese-Canadian women in Ghost train and Roses sing on new snow during early Chinese-Canadian immigration. At a time when women were placed far below men in the social order and relegated primarily to the home, Paul Yee creates protagonists, in these two stories, who choose to exhibit behaviours that are certainly anti-establishment. In the image and text section I discuss how the themes of immigration, in Ghost train (through the lens of the ghost story), and nature, in Naomi's tree (though the lens of Buddhism), are conveyed most successfully because the authors and illustrators are able to heighten the meanings of each others' messages by expertly employing the most suitable combinations interactions.

Reading the Images on Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian Picturebooks

In examining the images in Monica Hughes and Brenda Clark's Little fingerling and Sing Lim's West coast Chinese boy, I observed that the two picturebooks seem to have strengths and weaknesses (perceived or actual) in opposite areas. While Clark, in the illustrations of Little fingerling, pays close attention, overall, to maintaining the authenticity of the physical artefacts of the Japanese culture and the distinguishing characteristics of class hierarchy and time period, she falls short when depicting the behaviours of the characters. Sing Lim, conversely, in West

coast Chinese boy portrays behaviours of the characters, with their lively energy and ability to work and live in crowded conditions, with a sense of accuracy, humour, and warmth, which is immediately evident, but the drawings of the characters themselves are very stylized and when critically scrutinized away from the context of the text may be perceived as being stereotypical.

Images in Little fingerling

Little fingerling, which is based on the Japanese folktale, "Issun boshi," tells the story of an elderly peasant couple who want more than anything to be blessed with a child. When one finally is born to them, he is bright, compassionate, and hardworking, but also no bigger than his father's longest finger. They name him Issun Boshi, after a unit of measurement, which is equivalent to about three centimetres or an inch. Though small in stature, Issun Boshi has big dreams and is eager to see the world and seek his fortune. At age fifteen, he tells his parents his wishes, and although they are worried for his safety they do not stand in his way. Instead, they make him a fine travelling costume, fashion him a sword and scabbard out of a sewing needle and a hollowed out piece of straw, give him a red lacquer rice bowl and a bone chopstick to use as a boat and oar, and wish him a safe journey.

After bowing respectfully and expressing his gratitude, Issun Boshi walks for several days and nights and sails across a great river in his rice bowl until he reaches the nearby town. Upon his arrival he converses with a variety of different people while exploring the streets and marketplace, and with their recommendations he obtains employment with a merchant by showing his skill for painting intricate designs on boxes and combs. One day he catches the attention of a beautiful noblewoman who asks him to come and visit her family home; and there he learns to read and write and to fight with a sword. Issun Boshi is content with his new life, and because of his generosity, he is always treated well by others.

The daughter of the noblewoman (Plum Blossom) soon develops feelings for Issun Boshi, as he does for her and, although they know that they cannot have a future together, Issun

Boshi offers to be her escort and protector on her journey to the shrine of Kanzeon, the Goddess

of Mercy. Along the way two giant demons attempt to turn Plum Blossom into their evening

meal but Issun Boshi uses intelligence, bravery, perseverance, and love to overcome them and

they vanish. As his reward Issun Boshi is transformed by the gods into a powerful and

handsome samurai warrior worthy of seeking Plum Blossom's hand in marriage.

The images in Little fingerling are intriguing to analyze. The illustrator, Brenda Clark,

having studied traditional Japanese clothing, art, symbols of hierarchy and class, and written

language at the H.H. Mu Far Eastern Library at the Royal Ontario Museum, demonstrates that

she possesses an impressive knowledge base of the physical artefacts displayed in the

picturebook (Honda 1988, p. 5). What is especially remarkable and praiseworthy is the time and

consideration that she gives to the minute details of the kimonos, hairstyles, footwear, weaponry,

and woodblock print designs. Conversely, Clark's understanding of the expected standards of

behaviour for the Edo Period are less than satisfactory. In many scenes, she shows her central

characters participating in activities or set in postures that would be puzzling to scholars in the

field, or even frowned upon, as people living at the time were constantly being judged according

to how well they adhered to their stations in life.

It is evident that Clark paid particular attention to historical accuracy in the representation

of dress styles. Plum Blossom, whose attire seems to be the most elaborate and beautiful in the

book, is presented as the ideal of a young, single noblewoman. She wears a long, heavy, and

extravagant Furisode kimono, made of floral silk brocade, in yellows and pinks, with a butterfly

tied obi (choc ho) and long swinging sleeves (Yamanaka 1982, p. 61). Her hair is arranged in

the appropriate binkin-takashimada style, fastened with a real gold comb, which reveals that her

family is of a high rank, that she is of marriageable age, and that she is not expected to perform

any tasks of manual labour.

Plum Blossom's mother, like Plum Blossom herself, appears to also fit perfectly into her role. As the wife of a respected nobleman, she is wearing a Kurotomesode kimono which is the most formal and expensive of kimonos, other than the bridal kimono, and is reserved only for married women (Yamamaka 1982, p. 61). It is usually made from either black or dark blue heavy silk and unlike the Furisode, relatively unornamented with design, other than having five family crests (kamon) printed on the sleeves, chest, and back of the kimono, which indicate her high social ranking. The sleeves of the Kurotomesode are considerably shorter than the Furisode and the obi is tied is a simple envelope style because traditional Japanese married women are not supposed to divert attention away from their unmarried daughters.

Clark's depiction of Issun Boshi's costume, when he is transformed into a samurai warrior, is also based on careful historical observation. He wears a rich silk kimono as the first under layer of dress which, by law, was reserved exclusively for the upper classes (Dreitlein 2004, p. 1). Over his kimono he wears a kamishimo, a two-piece garment that is undeniably striking and regal. This is probably the most well-known samurai dress. The upper piece was called the kataginu, and was essentially a sleeveless jacket or vest with exaggerated shoulders. Alternatively, a long sleeved coat, called a haori, could be worn instead of a kataginu, especially when a samurai was required to travel in bad weather. The lower piece was the hakama: wide, flowing trousers somewhat like those found in the older hitare. The kamishimo would normally be composed of the same material, and was more likely to reflect the status of its wearer than not.

As a samurai's hair was an important part of his appearance, and most texts and house-codes of the samurai make reference to the importance of its neat appearance, Clark makes sure that Issun Boshi follows suit. The traditional hairstyle (for the better part of a thousand years) was the topknot, a fashion by no means exclusive to the samurai. Nearly everyone, with the exception of Buddhist priests, wore topknots, making the genesis of this style nearly impossible

to identify. There is reference to the use of the topknots in ancient China, and it might have been one of the many cultural imports introduced to Japan between the Asuka-Nara and Heian Periods. Needless to say there was any number of styles of topknot by the Edo Period. The chasen-gami was produced by wrapping a piece of string around the length of the topknot, producing a spray of hair at the end that resembled a tea whisk. The topknot would then be worn back or forward, hanging over the centre of the head. The mitsu-ori was a style popular in the later sixteenth-century. The hair was well-oiled and formed into a queue and folded forward on the head, then back again, and was tied in place. An abbreviated version, the futatsu-yori, was only folded forward before being tied, and was trimmed with a razor to give the front an almost solid appearance. Issun Boshi is given the chasen-gami in the second-to-last double-page spread.

As with the standard kimono, Issun Boshi's samurai sword is thrust through his obi (belt) which is worn wrapped around his waist and tied in front. Alternatively the main sword could be slung from cords from the obi which the short sword (wakizashi) or knige (tanto) was worn through the obi. Regardless, the sword was always worn on the left side to permit ease of drawing (West and Seal 1999, p. 2).

The garments of the working class, which are displayed on Issun Boshi's parents, the people of the marketplace, and Issun Boshi when he is still a peasant, are based on the kimono but made of simple fabrics such as hemp or cotton (Dreitlein 2004, p. 2). The happi was a short coat, similar in construction and wear to the kimono, which both genders wore. The happi was combined with either somewhat fitted pants for men or very loose pants and aprons for women. Cording, sashes, and obi were used to close these jackets. Under this, for men, would be worn a loincloth, a piece of fabric wrapped around the groin, held on using a cord or belt or tied like a diaper. In cold weather, a Hanten (quilted jacket) would be worn over the kimono or happi. All classes wore coats and hats made of straw in rainy weather.

Clark also has made an effort to study and demonstrate authenticity in the footwear. Three types of footwear were prevalent during the Edo Period: the waraji, zori, and geta (Dreitlein 2004, p. 2). Waraji sandals were made of woven straw. Long straw straps attached to the front pass through loops on the sides and heel, and were tied around the ankle to fasten the sold to the foot. Waraji were light, permitting nimble footsteps, and they were cheap to make, so in the old days, they were worn by lower ranking people when travelling. The straw zori were an improved version of the waraji, and said to be an improved version of the waraji. It had a thong and an oval sole, both made of woven straw. The big and second toes grip the shaft of the thong. One variation for the military class in the middle ages was the heel-less ashinaka, designed for the battlefield. In time, people began wearing zori for farm work. The geta is basically a rectangular wooden sole with two wooden supports under it and a thong on top. The toes grip the shaft of the thong, just like wearing zori. Picture scrolls from as far back as the tenth century show people in geta, indicating that geta have been worn for a long time. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, better tools had been developed to mass-produce geta, and they became quite the fashion in the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo). They became more and more gaudy, and this prompted the Shogunate, which punished the common folk for ostentatious lifestyles, to forbid the wearing of lacquered geta. Issun Boshi (as Little Fingerling) and his farmer parents are illustrated wearing waraji, while the peasants and merchants of the marketplace are shown in a combination of waraji and zori.

The artistic style chosen for <u>Little fingerling</u> is most appropriate, as well, as it conveys the characteristic woodblock techniques of the Edo Period; namely Ukiyo-e (Yoshida 1991, 1). In particular, the dramatic double-page spread of Issun Boshi (as a peasant) sailing across the river in his red lacquered rice bowl (with the illustration covering both pages) is a classic example of the genre that captures the trademark wave designs of renowned Ukiyo-e Edo artist, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) (Honda 1988, p. 11).

Hokusai, born in the Edo Period, was a Japanese painter and wood engraver who left over thirty-thousand works. He is considered one of the outstanding figures of the Ukiyo-e, "pictures of the floating world" school of printmaking that portrays ordinary life and leisure time. He introduced direct observation of nature and human subjects, rather than portraying birds and flowers, scenes of historic epics and legends (Kinsner 2007, p. 2). Instead of shoguns, samurai, and their famous geishas, Hokusai placed the common man into his woodblocks, moving the emphasis away from aristocrats to the rest of humanity. His most typical wood-block prints, silkscreen, and landscape paintings were done between 1830 and 1840. The free curved lives characteristic of his style gradually developed into a series of spirals that imparted the utmost freedom and grace to his work.

"The great wave off Kanagawa," arguably Hokusai's most famous work, which was adopted for the cover illustration of the musical score of the first version of "The sea by Claude Debussy, shows three boats among turbulent broken waves (Kinsner 2007, p. 2). The boats mold themselves into the shapes of the engulfing waves. Tiny humans are tossed around under giant waves, while the sacred, enormous, snow-capped Mount Fuji is just a hill in the distance. These swift boats, called Oshiokuribune in Japanese, transported fresh fish, dried sardines and the like, early in the morning, to fish markets off the Edo Bay, from fishing villages on the Bohso Peninsula.

The waves form a frame through which Mount Fuji can be seen. Hokusai loved to illustrate water in motion: the foam of the wave is breaking into claws which grasp for the fishermen. The large wave forms a massive yin to the yang of empty space under it (Kinsner 2007, p. 2). The impending crash of water brings tension into the painting. In the foreground, a small peaked wave forms a miniature Mount Fiji, which is reflected hundreds of miles away in the enormous Mount Fuji, which shrinks through perspective; the wavelet is larger than the

mountain. Instead of samurai and nobility, we see tiny fishermen huddled into their sleek crafts; they slide down a seamount and dive straight into the wave to make it to the other side.

The depiction of behaviour, in <u>Little fingerling</u>, is in stark contrast to the illustrations of the physical artefacts. Clark, in many instances, has her characters engage in activities that are peculiar in a culture where every detail is so strictly followed out of fear of corporal punishment, or at the very least, family embarrassment. As Nodelman states in <u>The narrative art of picture books</u>, Clark has fallen into the trap of representing elements of the Japanese culture for without understanding the complex system of codes and signifiers (1988, p. 9). A New Historicist would add that Clark's own view of what is right and wrong or important and unimportant has strongly influenced the way in which she has interpreted the events in the story (Klages 2006, p. 124).

As a starting point, the actions of the upper class women are rather perplexing. For example, in the middle of the story, when Issun Boshi is invited into the nobleman's household, Plum Blossom's mother is seen sitting leisurely on the floor reading a book and drinking tea while a tutor attempts to engage in prayer at the household shrine (tokonoma) and the children run about singing, playing, and dancing, or lie reading on the floor. This nonchalant attitude is rather shocking because maintaining the household order and taking care of the education and well-being of the children were the primary duties of noble or samurai wives during the Edo Period; especially during early feudal Japan, when warrior husbands were often travelling abroad or engaged in clan battles. No well-bred Japanese woman would be caught placing her teacup on the floor or allowing her children to act rambunctiously while an honoured teacher was paying respect to the deceased members of the noble family at the family shrine and an outsider (Issun Boshi) was visiting for the first time. Nor would she allow for the screen, in the bottom left-hand corner of the image, to be folded awkwardly or books and envelopes to be scattered in various places on the floor of the room. If on applies Perry Nodelman's theories about, visual weight and directed tension (<u>Words about pictures</u>), this interesting placement of characters might be an

attempt by Clark to point the viewer's attention towards the actions of Issun Boshi who is in the centre of the room, as the others seat or stand facing him (1988, p. 128), but this explanation does not account for the oddities of behaviour.

Secondly, the education of the young children is not as it should be. Although reading is an entirely suitable activity, and children of a noble household would very likely be literate, the little boy would not be reading for pleasure as reading during the Edo Period was strictly for religious education and for learning Kanji characters (Honda 1988, p. 4). In addition, most rich and noble persons, as stated by St. Francis Xavier in his observations of feudal Japan, sent their sons to monasteries to be educated as soon as they were seven years old, and they remained there until they were nineteen or twenty, learning reading, writing and religion. Once they left the monastery, they married and applied themselves to politics (Coleridge 1872). Mercedes Gaffron, in her article "Right and left in pictures" (1950) would further observe that because we have a tendency to approach pictures from left to right, in the same way that we approach words, the reader's eye would be immediately drawn to the little boy (set in the bottom left of the illustration away from the rest of the action), before any other part of the drawing, and that positioning would further accentuate that he is not behaving as expected (p. 321).

Plum Blossom in permitting Issun Boshi to accompany her, without a suitable chaperone, to the temple of Kanzeon, acts in a way that is beneath her station. As she is an unmarried woman, of noble status, she has a reputation to uphold in order to ensure that she can achieve the best possible match for herself and, as a result, either maintain her family's rank, or further elevate it. The education of Japanese noblewomen during the Edo Period began at a very early age and young girls knew that their value was based not only on their attractiveness and family background, but also on the way that they conducted themselves in social situations, how literate they were, how well they could manage a household, and how chaste and proper a character they maintained ("Samurai" in Wikipedia, no date, p. 18).

Next, Issun Boshi fails to adhere to the expected rules of his new position as a samurai when he goes on his own to ask Plum Blossom's hand in marriage. According to samurai codes on conduct, the marriage of samurai was arranged by having someone of the same or a higher rank (than those being married) choose the partner and make the preparations. While for those samurai in the upper ranks this was a necessity as most warriors had few opportunities to meet a suitable partner, it was merely a formality for lower ranking samurai. Most samurai married women from another samurai or noble family ("Samurai" <u>Wikipedia</u> no date, p. 16).

Finally, there appear to be many strange occurrences in the picture of the market scene. Three acts, more than any other, however, stand out. The first is that a horse's bridle is used specifically for riding, but the owner of the horse seems to be using the bridle to guide his horse on foot while it pulls a cart. Second, the peasants place stones on the roofs of their houses in order to keep the wood tiles from blowing away in a storm even though this action is unnecessary because, during the Edo Period, brick tiles were the primary building material for roofs because fires were a constant threat (Honda 1988, p. 4). Thirdly, and perhaps most interestingly, readers can see that one of the peasant women carrying apples is wearing lacquered geta even though it is not raining and the geta, as previously mentioned, are restricted to the upper classes by the Shogunate during the Edo Period. New Historicists would state that, even though she may be unaware of it, by portraying the characters in ways that are clearly outside the norms of acceptable behaviour in traditional Japanese culture, Clark is, in effect, taking away their power. Moreover, by placing her own culture's expectations of suitable behaviour on her depiction of the Japanese, she is inadvertently "constructing the means for the ruling powers to maintain their control" (Rose 2007, p. 141).

In <u>Little fingerling</u>, Brenda Clark's illustrations are most engaging and thought-provoking. Although not Canadian in content, the subject-matter does remind Japanese-Canadians of their cultural roots in Japan and helps them to better connect the traditional tales of

their ancestors to their beliefs and traditions in the New World. However, what is unfortunate is that not all aspects of the Japanese culture are portrayed with the same degree of accuracy. While Clark meticulously captures the details of physical artifacts with great precision, she seems to miss some important behavioural features in her portrayal of the actions of the characters. These inconsistencies highlight how an outsider, despite extensive research, may fall into the predicament of looking at another culture, in this case the Japanese culture, purely from a superficial perspective because he or she has not shared the beliefs or lived the experiences of that culture.

Images in Sing Lim's West coast Chinese boy

In West coast Chinese boy, Sing Lim recalls his boyhood in Vancouver's Chinatown during the 1920s. Most of his memories are pleasant and humorous, yet the book does not idealize the past. Matter-of-factly, the anecdotes reveal the poverty, prejudice, and cruelty Sing Lim experienced. He scavenged for coal along the railroad, worked thirteen-hour days on a farm when he was nine years old, caught lice from one of the "viaduct people," and was taunted and attacked by the "white boys." To balance his account, he reveals that prejudice and cruelty existed among the Chinese also: older children born in China looked down upon Chinese children born in Canada; a child suffering from rickets was ridiculed as "Crippled Kee"; and neighbours would not interfere when a Chinese guardian mistreated his boy.

In spite of the racism, Sing Lim has some positive memories of contacts between the Chinese and other cultures. Chinese peddlers gave their Caucasian customers Christmas gifts of candied ginger, lai-chee nuts, or tea; Mr. Mac hired out his moving van to carry the Chinese orchestra in the funeral processions; Miss Scott, the third-grade teacher, encouraged Lim in his interest in drawing. The young Lim especially loved the Brueughel print "Winter scene," salvaged by a janitor who lived in the apartment downstairs, and he looked forward to the special meals of liver and onions because he was then allowed to use a fork and knife instead of

chopsticks. On the whole, though, the book shows the Chinese interacting much less frequently with the Caucasian people than with other minorities. Lim's father learned Chinook in order to do business with the First Nations people and befriended a lame First Nations boy; the Chinese hired Japanese women and girls; and the poultry-shop owner sold chickens to the Indo-Canadians and a rabbi.

Sing Lim conveys the impression that the Chinese in Vancouver, isolated as they were by discrimination and injustice, drew strength from their community and from their sense of humour. In the afterword, he writes that he was able to survive the suffering by laughing as "it is the sense of humour of the Chinese that helps us live through the unlivable."(Lim 1979, p. 64). The struggle between being Chinese and being Canadian he "resolved in [his] own way, by turning to art, 'a more universal culture'"(Lim1979, p. 64).

Analyzing the art of <u>West coast boy</u> is certainly a complex endeavour. Although some strengths are immediately evident others only come to the surface after taking some time to fully analyze all the images in the book together, particularly in conjunction with the text. More specifically, readers can easily see how, through actions, postures, and gestures, individuals in the Chinatown community assist and comfort one another and work diligently to make a living and find success at school despite discrimination, culture shock, crowded conditions and poverty; however, in looking at the slightly-blurred facial expressions in the monoprints and the exaggerated mouths, eyes, and limbs on many of the pen-and-ink line drawings of the characters, by themselves, without also examining the events and emotions described in the written narrative one might misinterpret that Lim is perpetuating negative ethnocultural stereotypes of the simple-minded Chinaman.

The manner in which the behaviours of the characters in <u>West coast Chinese boy</u> are delineated accurately convey the close-knit sense of community experienced in Vancouver's Chinatown in the 1920s. Through the ways that he draws or paints the interactions between the

Chinese people within their community, and between the Chinese and the many other minority ethnocultural groups in Chinatown, Lim indicates a sense of support for one another in times of celebration, need, and ritual observance. As Paul Yee states in Saltwater city: An Illustrated history of the Chinese in Vancouver, this phenomenon occurred because men who were suddenly thrust into the New World faced overwhelming problems. They had to find work and shelter in an environment where a different language was spoken, where jobs were limited, and the competition for work was fierce. An individual's clan name and home district provided an easy way for making contacts and friends, so prominent organizations grew from these points of likeness. Men united to help one another because ultimately the greater good, that is the family back home in China, would be better served if everyone did well in Canada (2006, p. 54). Additionally, and what is perhaps even more worthy of note is how, by having characters placed in close proximity and at equivalent heights on the page with one another; by using primarily rounded lines; by choosing to depict welcoming gestures; by incorporating open body language; and by making adults the same size as one another (and children also of similar size), the images are able to convey a sense of equivalent degree of respect or equal power among the individuals and groups (Nodelman 1988, p. 128).

As celebrations are a very important part of bringing families, clans, and friends together in Chinese culture and passing on good fortune, Lim seems to focus on these events in his illustrations, more than on any others, to demonstrate how the members of the Chinese community give each other reciprocal aid, encouragement, and regard. The "bear paw" feast provides an excellent example. In the double-page spread image on pages twelve and thirteen, the men in attendance are seated surrounding two round tables so that no one person is given more prominence than another. Their heads and bodies are at the same levels or heights (as they are seated in the same curved-back chairs); their faces are turned towards one another in jovial and casual conversation; and their postures are either ones where they lean back in their chairs or

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place their hands and arms towards each other across the tables. Colours of the clothing are limited to red, purple, olive green, brown, and blue, yet are matched in a multitude of different combinations, to suggest that Lim wants his readers to see how the commonalities between the men's life stations and experiences naturally create bonds and alliances, but that he also recognizes that they are not exact replicas of one another in personalities or temperament. The food is placed in the middle of each table and people have the same access to all the dishes rather than having to wait to see whether they will be served first or last. Finally, when the host, "Uncle Jing" enters the room, all the guests raise their teacups to him in a toast to not only thank him for his generosity and to praise him for the success of his feast, but also to let him know that he will be most welcome at their tables when they, in turn, reciprocate with parties in their own homes or restaurants.

The "baby head shave" ceremony is the second celebration that Lim visually offers to the reader to show how members of the new immigrant Chinese-Canadian community came together to support one another. In China, the ceremony was actually called the "baby naming" ceremony, and it marked the time that a child was considered to be out of danger (as the mortality rate was so high, especially before the 1900s) (Heintz 1999, p. 3). After the name for the baby was chosen, large numbers of invitations were sent out to those who honoured the baby's birth. On the day of the party, vibrant, red-coloured eggs were placed on the entrance table of the host family's house for all to see. Guests had the opportunity to take an egg home for good luck when they left, along with some dried ginger. This red egg tradition started long ago when it was customary for the maternal grandmother to visit and bring gifts (Heintz 1999, p.4). She almost always brought clothing and eggs for the baby. Eggs were considered a delicacy in China, and that was how one knew someone special had come to visit. The grandmother also brought sweet cakes. Often these cakes had pictures on them that symbolized various good luck emblems such as the apricot flower.

Traditionally, the baby's head was shaved during the feast. The girl's head was shaved in the image of "Mother," the Goddess of Children, and the boy's head was shaved before the ancestral table. The symbolism of this practice is not entirely known, but it is speculated that this is the removing of the birth hair, to mark the point of the child's independent existence (Heintz 1999, p. 4). A lavish banquet was thrown with thirty, forty, and sometimes upward of a hundred people in attendance. The guests often brought gifts of clothing, or "luck money" envelopes, which are called Li-shihs. The baby was taken around the room to be introduced and admired. After that, the guests ate and visited with each other. Instead of sending thank you cards to the guests for their gifts, the baby's parents sent presents to them. This gift usually consisted of small round biscuits with pork in them, a little like char-sui baus, or pork buns.

Some of the customs of the "baby naming" ceremony inevitably had to change when Chinese families first started immigrating to Canada. In most cases, since Canadian laws greatly restricted the numbers of Chinese people who were allowed to enter the country in the period before the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 enforced a total ban on immigration, grandparents had to remain in China and, consequently, it became the role of another elder maternal relative or close member of the family clan to take on the role of grandmother. The guests in attendance might be fewer, as immediate kin were no longer all living next door or down the street, or might be composed of more distant clan relations. As well, the feasts and gifts also became more modest as people often did not have the same access to resources as they did in the old country.

In the illustration on page thirty-three of West coast Chinese boy, the intricate monoprint depicts a scene that, in many ways, personifies family intimacy, loyalty, and shared pride. First, the mother, with her baby, appears in the centre of the page, with a majority of the guests standing in a circle pattern around her within less than an arm's length away, indicating that she has a close relationship with them, and that they are most likely a mixture of immediate family, close friends, or part of the woman's clan. As Bang indicates in Picture this, putting a character

in the centre of a page gives him or her a "stronger focal energy than the rest of the group" (2000, p. 62). Second, all the guests have their heads and bodies leaning in towards the mother and baby and a few of them have their hands stretched out ready to take the baby if the mother needs a rest. Next, several of the older men and women hold out red envelopes of lucky money to welcome the new baby into the family and to let the mother know that they will help with expenses and care if her husband and own mother are not in Canada. Finally, an abundance of traditional food has been prepared (ginger root, pig's feet, boiled eggs, cane sugar, black mushrooms, and chicken-wine soup), so that the mother will not have to worry about cooking for several weeks, and some of it has been placed on the large table to feed visiting well-wishers.

The third celebration that Lim uses to pictorially demonstrate how the Chinese community members are concerned with each other's well-being is that of Chinese New Year. On pages fifty-six and fifty-seven, in the most vividly coloured double-page image in the whole book, readers see the children of Chinatown coming together in the snow to decorate the outsides of the houses with the traditional symbols of good fortune. Two boys, on the left half of the illustration, build a jovial and plump Chinese snowman and dress him in a bib that is marked with the auspicious "happiness" character, a hat embellished with coins, and what looks like a makeshift shirt. They make sure to only use the colours of red, gold, and purple as these signify good luck, money, recognition, respect, vitality, spiritual achievement, and mental and physical healing according to ancient feng shui custom. Three other boys, on the right half of the illustration, push a sled around the neighbourhood, and in it they carry red and purple balloons (likely to tie to entrance gates or to release into the sky) and firecrackers which will be lit and thrown into the air to frighten away any evil spirits. Mr. Jake, on his way to deliver a live chicken to Sing's mother as a token of appreciation, stops to give his approval and to wish the boys a Happy New Year. The only oddity in this scene is the boy standing in the far back on the picture getting ready to throw a snowball at the revellers. This action seems, at first, as if it is an

unfortunate error on the part of the artist, but when readers turn back to the previous page and see little Sing getting a most unflattering haircut all is understood and the New Year illustration has even more of an impact, albeit a humorous one.

Although colour is used by Lim, here, as a signifier of a state of mind (e.g. red to mean happiness), one could also say that, more importantly, he is using the aspect to generate a sense of emotional arousal from his viewer. As Julia Kriteva remarks, in <u>Desire in language</u>, colour "can offer a viewer a basic sensual arousal in his or her mere perception of it that exists beyond and apart from the meaning we attach to it" (1980, p. 221).

The next way that the members of the Chinatown community are portrayed in images as supporting and working together is in times of need. The first instance in which this mutually helpful behaviour is portrayed occurs in an interaction between Sing's father and a First Nations man. In a combination of pen-and-ink and monoprint images scattered on pages seven, eight, and nine, Low Lim offers the First Nations man cooked sow bellies for lunch; brings herbal medicine to the man's son to heal his leg; and rolls and shares cigars with the man at the back of his store. In turn, the First Nations man reciprocates by presenting Mr. Lim with several valuable deer horns and a fresh bear paw which is needed for Uncle Jing's "bear paw" feast. All the illustrations are very simple, and even in the coloured monotype there is very little background detail, but through the ways that the men are depicted as standing in close proximity, exchanging good eye contact when they speak, and allowing their children to play together demonstrates that they have developed a relationship of trust and respect.

Another example Lim gives to show how the community takes care of its own is in the "school and school" bullying episode. At the bottom of page twenty-three, young Sing and his Chinese friends are portrayed in a pen-and-ink drawing as walking home from school in a tight-knit group for protection against the "white kids" who hit them with pebbles from their slingshots and threaten to beat them up. The older, larger Chinese students stand at the front of

the group with aggressive stances and bats for weapons while the smaller, weaker children are sheltered as they walk at the back in cowering poses with timid steps. The bullies are shown in the right corner of the page in animal-like crouches or pouncing poses, drawn mainly with diagonal lines, and the trees that they lurk behind have some sharp and pointy branches that reach out to further amplify the menacing effect. Most interesting, though, is that Lim has not portrayed the bullies as being significantly bigger than the Chinese students, suggesting that he did not feel that his own group was at a disadvantage or devoid of power if they were provoked to fight. Lim has used diagonal lines, in the posture of the bullies and the leaning of the trees, to indicate tension and movement (Bang, Picture this, p. 46) and sharp and pointy branches because people tend to be more scared of pointed shapes (p. 70).

In the images on pages twenty-eight and twenty-nine, Lim demonstrates a third way that the Chinese-Canadian community reaches out to support one another. Adhering to the traditional Chinese belief that the bonds and obligations of family are stronger than any other relationship, Nellie, Sing's older sister by four years, is shown in the monoprint, on page twenty-eight, as working very hard in the household by cleaning, cooking, and helping her mother with her mending without any signs of complaint. Her back is slightly bent, hinting at the fact that she is getting tired and sore, but yet she reaches out to her mother with what looks like a bowl of soup in a gesture to ask how else she can be of help. As well, steeping tea has been placed in accessible reach for the mother when she decides to take a break; a pot of food has been prepared and is cooking on the stove; and the clothing items that the mother has finished tailoring have been neatly pressed and hung up on a line against the wall showing that Nellie is not only a diligent worker but also a competent and efficient one. The most heartwarming act that Nellie performs, however, is depicted in the small pen-and-ink illustrations on page twenty-nine. With the extra profits her mother has given her as a token of appreciation, she takes her little brother, Sing, by the hand and buys him a toy and some of his favourite foods.

The fourth example that Lim provides, through illustration, of the Chinese-Canadian community helping one another in a time of need is demonstrated by Uncle Jing who kindly, and without question, prepares dinner for the homeless Chinese people living under the Georgia viaduct. One may not immediately make the connection between the pen-and-ink drawings on page forty-eight, which show the homeless people collecting rainwater, searching for food in garbage cans, and making homes from cardboard boxes and mud, and the full-page monoprint, on page forty-nine (of Uncle Jing cooking in front of his wood-burning stove), but after some careful examination readers can see that there are the same number of fish, roasted ducks, and rice wraps as there are homeless people.

Lastly, Lim gives one strong example, in image form, of how the Chinese-Canadian community in Chinatown support each other in times of ritual observance. In the festival of Ch'ing Ming, the Chinese annual remembrance day, all members of Chinese families or larger clans come together to make offerings to their mutual dead ancestors so that the ancestors will continue to watch over them and protect them from harm. In the coloured monoprint on page fifty-three, Uncle Jing, who stands in the centre of the page, is clearly in charge of the preparations and appears to be the head of the clan. He is seen in a authoritative, but not intimidating, posture, telling one of the other men around him how to divide up the roasted pig among the visitors who came to pay their respects at the cemetery and directing the other man to make sure he has recorded who made donations and the amount of money each person contributed so that proper notes of appreciation can be delivered. Young Sing, who is dressed in his new and best clothes for the occasion, appears to be doing little more than eating in this scene, but on the previous page, in the two pen-and-ink drawings, he pulls offerings of clothing and ceremonial money to the grave site, in his wagon, and lights and places incense between the headstones.

Unlike the behavioural characteristics of <u>West coast Chinese boy</u>, the facial features and bodies of the characters are considerably more problematic to evaluate and readers and viewers must be careful, as is the case with many picturebooks, not to make assumptions about stereotypical depictions without first also reading the corresponding text. In their book, <u>How picturebooks work</u> (2001), Maria Nikolajava and Carole Scott explain that this phenomenon of having an inseparable picture-text pairing is known as a complementary interaction, where images and text collaborate to create meanings that neither could attain alone"(p. 17). An example of an erroneous interpretation is made by Diane Shklanka in "Oriental stereotypes in Canadian picturebooks" (1990), when she states that "the hundred pen-and-ink line drawings, presumably intended to be humorous, give the impression of child-like caricatures [and] the exaggerated, stick-limbed figures and the few slit-eyed faces that grin maliciously suggest negative stereotypes of cruel and untrustworthy Chinese" (p. 85). In her accusation she fails to recognize that in some of the illustrations Lim wanted his readers to see how Chinese immigrants changed their appearance from their old lives in China to their new lives in Canada; in other illustrations he wanted to show how the world was perceived through his nine-year old eyes the drawings accompanied by the cursive script of a young child; while in still other illustrations he wanted to convey his anger at some of the people he encountered, either because they punished him or because they were abusive towards other children in the neighbourhood. A New Historicist would say that behaving in this manner, Shklanka is imposing a master-narrative over another's history and not paying regard to the culture's intention for its own cultural product (Tyson 2007, p. 288).

In addition, in assessing the coloured monoprints, Shklanka mistakenly comes to the conclusion that because the "shapes are roughly delineated with heavy calligraphic lines and filled in so that details, such as facial features are blurred" (1990, p. 85) Lim cannot be bothered to give his characters individualized identities. This statement, a New Historicist would say,

personifies how an individual may contextualize an event or an artifact from another's culture in a certain way, or conveniently leave out pertinent information, in order to assert dominance and make his or her culture appear to be more advanced or progressive (Klages 2006, p. 124). However, the glass monoprint style is actually quite appropriate and effective because it not only conveys that the members of the community, Chinese Canadian or other ethnic groups, see themselves as equals working together for the common goal of achieving family success, but it also imparts to the readers that the illustrations are based on memories of events that occurred fifty years before West coast Chinese boy was written, and now, almost all the individuals in the book have "long since gone to join their noble ancestors" (Lim 1979, p. 62).

The first instance where the facial and body features portrayed in pen-and ink drawings is likely to be misconstrued, if one does not also read the text, is on page five. In the bottom far-right corner a small illustration of a Chinese man, wearing traditional clothing and a pigtail or queue, is shown in the forest cutting down trees while holding an oversized axe. Readers might initially believe that Lim is mocking his heritage from this depiction, but after reading the third paragraph in the narrative above the illustration, they can ascertain that he is actually attempting to show the extent of his father's desire to be accepted into his new homeland. In his own words, Lim states that "my father was the first Chinese to cut his pigtail or queue. That meant he could never return to his native land. Three hundred years before, when the Manchus conquered China, they forced all Chinese to wear pigtails to show they were a vanquished people. Later the Chinese made the queue a badge of honour, but reminders of its shameful origin remained – in China anyone caught without a pigtail was beheaded (1979, p. 5)." In Words about pictures, Perry Nodelman explains this situation by stating that people may misunderstand what an artist is depicting because they are unfamiliar with the "pre-existing codes and conventions that have been used to render various aspects of the perceptible world" (1988, p. 11). Roland Barthes, in Responsibility and forms, extends this discussion by observing that "those unfamiliar with

certain styles of art frequently express the inability to understand what they depict [because] they lack the grammar to comprehend [the] language (1981, p. 6).

A second pen-and-ink drawing, in which Lim might also be accused of perpetuating a negative stereotype of his Chinese culture can be found on page twenty-two. In the illustration, at the bottom centre of the page, Sing, at about ten or eleven years of age, is seen sitting at his Chinese school desk, opening a box of what appear to be school supplies, when his very strict teacher comes over with a furious expression, clenched fists and a discipline stick to hit him. What information is missing, and is given in the text, is that a small container of grasshoppers has been taken out of the school supply box and released into the classroom. As Sing describes, "I sat down with my brush, my ink jar, and my copybook. Everyone around me was busy writing. I tried to look busy too, but soon got bored. I took out a little box of grasshoppers I captured earlier that day and turned them loose. Soon they were hopping about the classroom and everyone was laughing – except the teacher. He smacked me over the head with his bamboo cane (1979, p. 2)." Barthes, here, would identify Lim's "cast of mind," or style of art, as a second meaning, and suggest that the presented drawing offers more than just an analogan or literal depiction of reality but also a comment about reality that is implied by the artist's (Lim's) treatment of it (1981, p. 6). In other words, in Lim's "imitative art" form, two messages are being offered to the reader: a denoted message, which is the analogan itself, and a connoted message, which is the way society represents what it thinks of the analogan, and it would likely take a Chinese-Canadian adult or child who has also attended Chinese language classes to fully appreciate the witty humour of the connoted message.

A third pen-and-ink drawing that may be misunderstood is on page thirty-one and rather large in comparison to most of the others of its type. In it, a Caucasian man in a suit and hat appears to be yelling at and ordering around an elderly Chinese man who has a pronounced nose, bags under his eyes, a cane, and stringy hair. Readers may think that Lim, here, is revealing a

sense of contempt towards Chinese seniors until they read that the old man abused and neglected the little boy who was sent to Canada be placed under his guardianship. As the text states, "some children were mistreated. I remember one mean, miserable old man who lived near us. Everyone in the neighbourhood disliked him because of the way he treated a small boy who was sent to this country and placed under his guardianship. One winter he locked the boy outside in the cold for hours without a coat ... He even sent the boy to school barefoot. The teachers thought he wore no shoes because he was poor, so they bought him a pair. But soon afterwards he appeared at school barefoot again. Finally, the school sent the truant officer to his home to investigate ... His threat to call the police put a stop, for a while anyway, to the old man's cruel treatment (1979, p. 31)." Clearly, it is not all elderly Chinese people that Lim has antagonistic sentiments towards; it is just this particularly awful individual.

In a final example of a pen-and-ink illustration that could be misconstrued, perhaps more than any of the other illustrations, Lim presents stick-figured representations of himself and another farm worker on page thirty-four. On their own, the two beings appear, with their exaggerated mouths and teeth, their close set eyes and their stiff straw-like hair, to be dim-witted and confused; but after reading the corresponding letter, created from the perspective of a nine-year-old boy, readers are more likely to be charmed by their presence than offended. As Lim writes with realistic, primary-level grammar and frank honesty, "I eat breakfast at 5:30 and start work at 6:30 o'clock. I can't sleep because people make noise when they sleep. One even sings in his sleep. I work all day pulling weeds with nice old man, Mr. Wong – too tired to walk home at 7:30 at nite" (Lim 1979, p. 34).

In her criticism of the coloured monoprints in West coast Chinese boy, Diane Shklanka remarks that "the facial features are blurred, bleak, generalized and inexpressive" (p. 85). She then goes further to say that the illustrations are "rather unappealing for children (which is their targeted audience) [because] the colours overall are muted: much greyed blue, purple, dull

greens, yellows, oranges, and browns" (1990, p. 85). However, what she fails to appreciate is that Lim has intentionally utilized this technique to accentuate the fact that the characters are being taken exclusively from his memory from events that occurred over fifty years ago, and have well since passed away – more bluntly stated, his style is reflecting a sense of time long-ago past and lost people. Instead of giving real people fabricated facial and body attributes for mass appeal, which really would not do his stories justice in an autobiography, he has made an honest attempt at authentic representation. Furthermore, as stated in the behaviour section, the slightly hazy effect gives the impression that the residents of Chinatown are a strong united body working together to achieve group success rather than a collection of separate and unrelated loose ends.

This is not to say, however, that Lim has made people look like carbon copies of one another or be portrayed as completely lacking of emotion or personality. For example, in the monoprint on page seventeen, which shows the single men sharing the apartment below Sing and his family, readers can see that the man on the far left is of medium height with a stalwart, muscular build, strong eyebrows, and a determined but not unwelcoming demeanour; the man in the exact middle of the picture is tall and slender with an angular jaw, receding hairline, inquisitive gaze, stiff posture, and a slightly anxious attitude; the man second from the right is plump and jovial with a relaxed posture as he smokes his water pipe; and the fourth man in the corner seated is younger than the rest, with his extra-long limbs, boyish cap, rounded cheekbones, naive expression, and pants and shirt that he has outgrown. Little Sing sits in the bottom left corner of the picture on some planks of wood, holding the handle of his red waggon in one hand and some kind of food in the other watching and listening to the men in fascination as they work and tell him stories of their lives in China and how they came to Canada.

Another illustration of an instance in which Lim makes a concentrated effort to show expression in the faces and bodies of his characters is in the monotype on page four. Low Lim,

Sing's father, sits in a wooden chair while repairing shoes and looks at his son with pride and affection in his eyes. He also leans forward and smiles in a genuine attempt to listen to the stories that are being told to him. Sing, in turn, gives his father very direct eye contact and positions his face and body in an open and trusting stance as he describes the antics in which he and his new friend, Johnny, have been engaging.

West coast Chinese boy contains images that are both sophisticated in content and unique in style. However, if readers, viewers, or critical reviewers make the error of underestimating the significance of the portrayed behaviours; classifying all of the monoprints under a single, generalized label; or assessing the pen-and-ink drawings completely in isolation of the written narrative they would be overlooking a plethora of important details that give the book its charm and emotional impact. In particular, close inspection of spatial positioning, relative size of characters, postures, gestures, and facial expressions reveals subtle elements of humour, depictions of character strength, innocence of a child's perspective, and the close-knit and compassionate nature of the Vancouver Chinatown community. But this is not to say that Sing Lim shied away from confronting the more difficult aspects of life at the time. As Judith Saltman remarks in Modern Canadian children's books, "as well as portraying the conventional childhood experiences of daily family life and social festivities and the exploration and discovery of the outside world, [the illustrations in West coast Chinese boy] convey[ed] fear, anger, and bewilderment as hardship and prejudice are remembered" (1987, p. 43); and for that reason it represents an outstanding model of social realism.

Reading the Text in Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian Picturebooks

The treatment of Paul Yee's Chinese-Canadian female protagonists in the texts of Ghost train and Roses sing on new snow

Paul Yee's female protagonists are well-situated in the challenging and rewarding social, historical, and cultural context of an increasingly multicultural country – Canada. Evidence of

this successful positioning is demonstrated in the text of his picturebooks through three main arguments. First, Yee's solid social or sociological expertise is effectively combined with his creative imagination in portraying female characters who break away from the super-stable, mostly male-dominated or patriarchal Chinese society and family structure. Second, as a historian turned writer, his rich and first-hand historical knowledge and experience enable him to draw from both Chinese and Canadian histories, myths, and mythologies. Third, his profound, though somewhat hidden, philosophical systems express themselves largely in two forms of values: Confucian and Taoist. The interplay between these two, compounded by the third element of Canadian value systems, makes Yee's work sophisticated and thought-provoking.

In Ghost train and Roses sing on new snow, characters like Maylin Cheung and Choon-yi leave readers with an indelible and vivid memory of their personalities and actions. As well, in addition to being suffused with the strong presence of female protagonists, Ghost train and Roses sing on new snow teach and inculcate a certain Chinese system of values and explore their multiple implications in the New World. Hence the immediate focus of a Paul Yee study should not be purely literary but it should also focus on cultural aspects such as the examination of Yee's strategies of centring on and foregrounding Chinese-Canadian women, traditionally the persistently, ruthlessly marginalized and trivialized "second sex" in Chinese society.

New Historicists would say that in foregrounding the historical narratives of Chinese-Canadian women (a marginalized people), Yee is attempting to ensure that a plurality of voices is represented and that a master narrative – a narrative told from a single cultural point of view that presumes to offer the only accurate version of history – will no longer control our historical understanding (Tyson 2007, p. 287). They would also point out that as a historian, Yee lives in a particular time and place, and cannot help but have his views of both current and past events be influenced in innumerable and conscious and unconscious ways by his own experiences within his own culture (Klages 2006, p. 124).

Chief among the Yee's strategies is the tactic of bursting Chinese-Canadian ghettoization

by placing his heroines in a socially and culturally mixed and challenging milieu, rather than

isolating them from intercultural exchange and communication. Although Maylin, in Roses sing

on new snow, is initially not permitted to take credit for her cooking or be seen by patrons of her

family's restaurant, Yee describes her as independently "shopping in the market [of Chinatown]

for fresh fish" (1991, n.p.) amongst other people whether they be Chinese, Caucasian, or other

ethnicities. As well, towards the end of the story, she strides up to the Governor, a man of great

power in China, and contradicts him by stating, "Your Excellency, you cannot take this dish to

China...This is a dish of the New World. You cannot recreate it in the Old" (1991, n.p.) which

would be an extremely bold gesture on the part of a Chinese-Canadian woman in the late

nineteeth-century. Choon-yi, of Ghost train, does not hesitate to take her paintbrushes and the

money that her father has given her and travel halfway across the world by ship simply because

he requests it. As Yee states, very early on in the narrative, "Choon-yi tied her belongings into a

sash and sailed on the next ship to North America. In the bustling port city; she hurried to the

company office to ask where her father worked" (1996, n.p.). Even though she has just arrived

in a strange country and does not know a word of English she courageously approaches the

paymaster to enquire about her father's whereabouts. Then, further in the story, she inspects a

steam-engine train to better understand what her father wants her to paint and stares directly into

the face of the Caucasian engineer when traditionally a Chinese-Canadian women of the time

would have lowered her eyes and immediately walked away. As Yee describes here, "Choon-yi

sent out and walked around the fire-car. She peered at the undercarriage, she poked at the giant

hooks linking the cars, and she stared at the engineer, who stared right back" (1996, n.p.).

Also significant is Yee's cultural interpretation and historicization of women, in which he

links them closely to the rich Chinese cultural heritage and studies female subjectivity in relation

to women's historical role. In both Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train the female

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protagonists are completely grounded in early Chinese and Chinese-Canadian history, folklore, and cultural artefacts and environment, and it is fascinating how they are portrayed as fully embracing some traditions and abandoning others.

In Roses sing on new snow, readers can see immediately how Yee employs the historical context of an unnamed Chinatown during the time of early Chinese-Canadian immigration. On the third double-page spread he describes how Maylin always feels inspired to cook to the best of her ability because it re-energizes the souls of the lonely, exhausted, and cold Chinese men who were forced to leave their wives and children in China so that they could live and make money in the New World. The narrator declares that "Maylin loved food too, but for different reasons. To Chinatown came men lonely and cold and bone-tired. Their families and wives waited in China. But a well-cooked meal would always make them smile. So Maylin worked to renew their spirits and used only the best ingredients" (1991, n.p.). Then, on the seventh double-page spread, the governor speaks of how he will present "Roses Sing on New Snow" to the emperor of China and "will reward [Maylin's brothers and father] well" (1991, n.p.). As the governor is a member of the imperial court, the setting has to be pre-1910 because imperial-China was abolished in 1911 (Yee in Davis 1996, p. 55).

Many of the defining traits of Roses sing on new snow are reminiscent of traditional Chinese folktales. For instance, the devices of hiding Maylin's talents and admirable personality traits behind the facades of less deserving siblings and being oppressed by a selfish or unkind parent until a final reveal are similar to those utilized in the plot design of "Yeh-Shen." "Yeh-Shen" is a thousand year-old Chinese Cinderella tale (retold by Ai-Ling Louie) that tells the story of an orphan girl who is sent to live with her deceased father's first wife who is jealous of her beauty. She grows up performing all the hard labour in the household but is fortunate to befriend an enormous fish that she feeds at the pond. Once her stepmother realizes she has a secret friend, she tricks Yeh-Shen and kills the fish. Yeh-Shen is devastated, but she learns that

the fish's bones are magical and can grant her every wish. She mostly asks the bones for food to help her survive, but all that changes when it is time for the festival and they oblige her by giving her magical shoes for her tiny feet. Once she puts the shoes on, she transforms into a stunning vision with beautiful clothes, jewelry, and hair. She goes to the festival and is almost recognized by her stepsister so she runs away and loses one of the shoes. The shoe is found and sold to the king who becomes enamoured with its exquisiteness and decides to find its owner. He sets up a trap and once again discovers his true love when she magically transforms into the girl he met at the festival.

However, "Yeh-Shen" and Roses sing on new snow also differ on a number of levels. First, the described strengths of the two protagonists are almost on opposite sides of the spectrum. While Yeh-Shen is held in high-esteem primarily for her beauty, gentleness, and extremely small feet, a product of foot-binding that signified that a girl would have a good marriage (Louie 1982, n.p.), Maylin is regarded well for her talent at cooking, hardworking nature, resourcefulness, and ability to manage her family's restaurant. Next, while Yeh-Shen relies on a magic fish to solve her problems and allows herself to be chosen by the king as "his one true love," without deciding how she feels in return, Maylin determines her own destiny by creating a dish so unique and special that her brothers could in no way replicate it and the governor would feel compelled to discover how it was made. Finally, while Yeh-Shen focuses on a goal of marriage, Maylin aims at bringing success to her family, a role, assigned at the time, exclusively to men.

The historical and cultural context that surrounds Ghost train is even more blatant and explicit than Roses sing on new snow. In the text of the first two double-page spreads, Paul Yee explains that the conditions in China in the early to mid-1880s were so impoverished that the protagonist's father had to sail to North America to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He conveys that "Choon-yi was born to poor peasants in South China...[who did not have] enough

money to rent land and pay taxes. [They] often went to bed hungry [so] when she was twelve years old, her father decided to sail to North America, where companies were hiring workers to build a railway through the mountains" (Yee 1996, n.p.). On the following spread, Yee remarks that "dynamite accidents were common" and that Choon-yi's father "was killed last week [when] the side of the mountain collapsed and carried his crew into the river far below" (1996, n.p.). Further, nearing the resolution of the story, Choon-yi lights three sticks of incense at her father's request (1996, n.p.). This act is important because it demonstrates that Yee is aware of the fact that many traditional Chinese practice the Buddhist faith and lighting incense is one of the ways that individuals purify surroundings and pay respects to their deceased ancestors ("Religious uses of incense" in Wikipedia 2008). Finally, Yee's knowledge of Chinese value and belief systems is evident, on the last double-page spread, when the souls of Choon-yi's father and his work team are sent to heaven when Choon-yi takes her magical painting back to China and burns the train with their images (which symbolizes the cremating of bones). According to custom, which is described throughout Yee's novel, The bone collector's son (2003), if the bones of a Chinese deceased person are not buried in their entirety in a permanent resting place then the soul of that person is doomed to be forever displaced.

Folklore, as in Roses sing on new snow, is, too, a vital component of Ghost train. One way that readers recognize the appearance of this storytelling genre is in its echoes with the Cinderella trope. Another is through the repeated metaphorical language of dragon imagery to describe trains and rivers. Yee eloquently expresses that "rivers shot like fiery silver dragons through steep canyons" (1996, n.p), "the fire-car swung into view under a plume of smoke, pulling a long chain of wheeled boxes like a huge snake slithering across a field" (1996, n.p.), and "the bars of the fanlike grill [were like] the bolts binding the beast together" (1996, n.p.).

In ancient Chinese legends, the dragons were considered even more powerful than in the West. But they usually shared the world peacefully with humans (Pringle 2008, n.p.). People

imagined them to be wise, helpful, and friendly. Today these dragons are called Eastern

dragons.

People in East Asia believed that dragons ruled the water of the world (Pringle 2008,

n.p.). They controlled the flow of all streams and rivers, the water level in ponds and lakes, and

even ocean waves. Eastern dragons were also in charge of rainfall. In fact, people said that the

clouds in the sky were dragon breaths. (Unlike Western dragons, Eastern dragons never breathed

fire.) In winter, Eastern dragons lived underwater in bejeweled palaces. This caused winter to

be the dry season in Asia. In the spring, dragons flew up into the sky, causing windy, rainy

weather and sometimes floods. They lived among the clouds in the summer sky. And in the fall,

flights of dragons returning to their undersea homes sometimes caused hurricanes. All year long,

the lives of dragons affected the weather.

It is intriguing that Yee chooses to have dragons be the Chinese connection and support

system for Choon-yi in the New World as the dragon in Chinese mythology has always

represented the "male principle" in the ying and yang pairing and the phoenix has always

represented the "female principle" (Greene 1996, p. 32). Perhaps his intention, in incorporating

this reversal into his story, is to give readers the message that if a woman is able to accomplish

tasks just as competently as a man and exhibit the same amount of courage and creativeness, she

deserves to be associated with an equally strong symbol.

Also at the centre of <u>Ghost train</u> lies the Taoist story about Chuang Tzu who upon

wakening from a dream wonders if he is a butterfly dreaming that he is a human or vice versa

(Graham 1979, p. 3); another tale about physical disabilities, "The Magic Tapestry," in which a

young boy must retrieve the exquisitely designed and life-like tapestry that his blind mother has

woven from the queen of the fairies (Demi 1994) ; and yet another titled "The Magic Brush of

Ma Lien" in which an evil emperor finds out about the magical powers of a paintbrush owned by

Ma Lien and wants to use both the boy and the implement to serve his own greed (Owen 1999).

Yee, however, reinvents these legends and myths, as well, with an adolescent female as the unquestionable protagonist. Though born with one arm, she is blessed with the gift of painting remarkably vivid and lifelike pictures that wins her admiration. Answering the call of her father, she arrives in North America only to find him dead – or buried alive – barely a week ago: "Many men died building this railway," Ba said. "All along the route, bodies have been swept away by the river or buried under a landslide. Their bones will never be recovered. But the time has come to transport their souls home" (1996, n.p.). In Yee's imagined world, it is through her magical brush that the Chinese labourers are resurrected – if only for brief moments; and it take the female artist's own experience riding on the ghost train in her dream to endow her with the powers to reinscribe the Chinese workers' heroic deeds and therefore enshrine them in her paintings.

As Zhong Ming Chen and Pat Parungao state in "Society, history, and values: A cultural study of Paul Yee's Chinese-Canadian female characters," in Yee's miraculous vision, "the past resides in the present, the dead are revived, history enters her story and painting, and this world is connected to the other world" (1999, p. 27). It is only natural, then, that the father praises Choon-yi thus: "'Daughter, you have done well,' Ba said, 'Now roll up the painting and take it home to China. Then climb the highest hill in the region and burn it. Let our ashes sail to the four winds. That way our souls will finally find their way home'" (Ghost train 1996, n.p.) There is little doubt that the heroine will complete her task, as advised by her ghostly father in a moment not unlike Shakespeare's "Hamlet." In this way, the blending and blurring of history, mythology, dreams, and reality assist Yee in his re-inscription and monumentalizing of the Chinese labourers, who, until very recently, have been the overlooked heroes in mainstream history books. Yee has demonstrated adeptness in dealing with both: the social and the literary; the imaginative and the historical. And the fact that he creates a female painter to perform the

same duties speaks volumes for his due trust in the practical abilities and magical powers of women.

Clearly, the integration of the Chinese into Canadian society coincides with the adoption of relatively progressive or individualistic Canadian values; it entails simultaneously the questioning and modification of Confucian ethical codes and moral norms (e.g., filial piety or rituals), some of which denigrate and oppress women. On the other hand, the individualist tenets and practices of Taoism and Buddhism remain basically unchallenged. In Yee's fictional world, these forces – social, historical, cultural, ethical, and spiritual – shape his heroines identities in diverse and complex ways.

New Historicists would explain this combination of ideologies in Yee's picturebooks by arguing that no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power (Rose 2007, p. 142). For there is no monolithic (single, unified, universal) ... totalizing explanation of history (an explanation that provides a single key to all aspects of a given culture). There is, instead, a "dynamic, unstable, interplay among discourses: they are always in a state of flux, overlapping and competing with one another," (Rose 2007, p. 141), or to use New Historical terminology, "negotiating exchanges of power in any number of ways at any given point in time" (Rose 2007, p. 141).

To better understand the identity formation of Maylin (Roses sing on new snow) and Choon-yi (Ghost train), one must first come to grips with the familial and social relations in Chinese society. When Chinese immigrants settle in Canada, particularly in Yee's Chinatown, they gradually re-establish or re-produce the same order and structure that have been entrenched for generations in the homeland. This repetitive scheme is characterized by two key features: it is not only strictly hierarchical but also ferociously misogynistic (Overmyer 1991, pp. 91-92). One should also note the Confucian vision at work here: Chinese society is arranged like the family. The ruler is to his subjects what the father is to the son: the former takes care of the

latter, but at the same time commands absolute obedience. The hierarchy includes every member of society, and women are at the very bottom. If the latter are not stunted, they grow up, paradoxically with double strength.

In Marie Davis' article, "'A backward way of thanking people': Paul Yee on his historical fiction," Paul Yee admits that he had to overcome some obstacles in order to make both picturebooks seem plausible within the restrictions of the traditional Chinese Confucian value system, but still allowing for Maylin and Choon-yi to fulfil their potentials. In <u>Roses sing on new snow</u>, he says that he first had to create a setting that allowed for men and women to have a direct connection with one another. As food is considered to represent the family, home, and community (which traditionally constitute the Chinese woman's domain), a restaurant seemed like an ideal solution (Davis 1996, p. 54). He next had to create a way for Maylin to be allowed to work in the restaurant since, at the time that the story takes place women were considered inauspicious to have in business establishments. With some contemplation, Yee decided that Maylin would mostly be kept in the kitchen away from public view but that her delectable dishes would be highly praised by all who enjoyed them (Davis 1996, p. 54). However, the most difficult hurdle to be overcome was determining how to give Maylin the recognition that she justly deserved at the story's conclusion. As a Chinese woman raised within the Confucian morals that her family structure has placed upon her, she cannot overtly demand credit, and completely "subvert the patriarchy" (Davis 1996, p. 54), so what Yee has her do instead is show "dignity through difficulty" by having her work hard without complaint and then employs an omniscient narrator to describe her empathetic nature, wisdom, and resourcefulness. When her brothers are exposed as frauds, for not being able to cook the special dish, "Roses Sing on New Snow," Maylin is also able to reveal to the Governor of China not only her culinary skills, but also her confidence, intelligence, and extraordinary insight.

In discussing <u>Ghost train</u>, Yee asserts that Choon-yi's anti-establishment behaviour would be far more appreciated in present-day than it would be during the time that the narrative is set. Specifically, even though Choon-yi, in <u>Ghost train</u>, proves herself to be a most remarkable individual who can pretty much perform any task and more presented to her, the Chinese value system in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century would not be able to see past the fact that she is not formed in the image of the female ideal. Yee comments that "I'm not sure that women of the time would see her as a role model because they would prefer to be fully-abled and to have other kinds of privileges. I don't think that they would necessarily be interested in her courage...It's a hard living. I think it is very much tempered. Her gift is a very special talent that not every woman at the time would aspire to" (Yee quoted in Davis 1996, p. 58).

For a contemporary audience, Yee hopes that Choon-yi's achievements and her ability to view her own status as an artist on the margins of society, a Chinese woman in a patriarchal value system, and a disabled person in a positive light will help readers to see that being different can be a strength rather than a shortcoming. If truth be told, it is her unusual circumstances that provide her with the motivation and opportunity to be able to do what she does. Yee comments that the Chinese "come from a culture where independent thinking is not encouraged. Traditional Chinese Confucian thought was very status-quo oriented: know your place; stay in that place; don't rock the boat" (Yee quoted in Davis 1996, p. 58). However, because Choon-yi has a physical disability, she would not be as rigidly bound by the obligation to marry well in order to improve her family's station; she would not be as heavily criticized if she decided to make independent choices for herself; and she would not be expected to restrict herself to domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare, like other young women of her age. In addition, her able arm possesses a gift that is so otherworldly that it permits her to open a gateway to the afterlife and set the trapped souls of her father and his workmates free.

Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train truly offer original but authentic representations of traditional Chinese human relations transplanted to Canada. With a clear understanding of the Chinese mindset of social relations, Yee's characterization of girls and women is typically concerned with the Chinese experience in their adopted home of the "New World" or "Gold Mountain." Readers can plainly see how Yee refuses to allow his female characters to be swallowed by tradition and both the Canadian environment and his heroines' inner resources contribute to their difficult but stubborn growth. His women mature neither within the narrow confines of a mere Chinese household nor even within the small Chinese community. They go beyond these two arenas and enter into the larger tapestry of Canadian culture.

Yee's narratives featuring female protagonists frequently reach their climaxes in the orchestrations of stunning and sudden public exhibitions of talents and abilities. After the repeated denial of female ability, the silencing by a strong male voice, or simply a robbing of opportunities for women to display their abilities in the public domain, the plots reach their climax in which a revelation must take place or all hope is lost.

In Roses sing on new snow, the father's attempt to shut his daughter behind kitchen doors fails utterly, though he tries every means to ensure his two sons' usurpation of the glory that rightfully belongs to the daughter, Maylin. The recognition of the latter's talent comes with full force when the visiting Chinese Governor unwittingly allows the girl to display her surpassing dish "Roses Sing on New Snow" to every admiring eye. To send the message, Yee has Maylin declare to the Governor: "This is a dish of the New World. You cannot recreate it in the old" (n.p.). Here, Yee's culturally synthetic hand is again at work. The dish is an apt metaphor: the public demonstration of her inimitable skill not only openly proves her unique talent, but also forcefully argues that the Canadian experience is an indispensable ingredient in the Chinese immigrants' process of acculturation.

One can draw two conclusions about Yee's fiction in terms of social relations and literary representation. First, the traditional Chinese family or community is indeed an extremely stable social structure in which prescribed order and norms are largely fixed. It gives protection, stability, and prosperity to the Chinese family and the Chinese-Canadian neighbourhood; but, it also hierarchizes people and marginalizes women, with the result that women reside at the very bottom of society and are exploited and oppressed. However, the same community may, under certain circumstances, open windows of opportunity, or even go so far to encourage women to show their talent to full public view, simply because of the tightly related and inner-looking social structure. The unveiling process in Yee's fiction is therefore entirely natural, logical, and culturally authentic.

Maylin (from <u>Roses sing on new snow</u>) not only bursts open familial and communal enclosures and literally basks in the glory of personal achievement, but she also throws in doubt the entrenched traditional assumption that men are unquestionably superior to women. In fact, under Yee's pen, there is a pervasive Taoist mystical sense of the ineffable and unteachable in her culinary art that defies repeated male imitation. It goes without saying that the two lazy sons fail to reproduce their sister's particular dish; even the reputedly wise Chinese Governor visiting Canada is deeply baffled by the fact that, though cooking side by side with the heroine, Maylin and he yield two dishes of widely disparate tastes. Here, one is indeed tempted to speculate that Yee implies that certain female experience or wisdom is inaccessible or unteachable to males.

Also, Yee's fictional characters are deeply rooted in specific social conditions. That Chinese-Canadian women have been marginalized, exploited, and oppressed in patriarchal social and familial structures is a proven fact, well-documented and vividly dramatized in biographies and historical books such as the award-winning <u>The concubine's children</u> by Denise Chong, <u>Gin Guo: Voices of Chinese-Canadian women</u> by the Canadian Chinese Women's Collective, and more recently, Lily Chow's <u>Soujourners in the north</u> (Chen and Parungao 1999, p. 24). What

makes Yee's works so unique then, are the parallels he draws between his literary prototypes and social reality. It is not surprising that in an interview, with Marie Davis, Yee confirms the vital role his deceased aunt played in his upbringing and stresses the need to "immortalize" her and women like her (Davis 1996, p.66). In this act of relating the social to the literary, Paul Yee joins the company of Yip Yuen Chung and SKY Lee, both in criticizing and in hoping to correct the ills of traditional Chinese Canadian society and its attendant patriarchal structure and misogynist attitudes. Moreover, as a creative writer, he offers the readers a salutary dose of realism against mainstream writers who indulge in postmodernism (Davis 1996, p. 66). Like most minority writers, Yee sticks to and excels at social realism.

However, to suggest that Yee is a social realist or serious historian, and nothing more, would be a considerable error in judgment. Yee is versatile. He has also proven himself to be capable of blending the realistic, historically grounded with the surreal, magical, and fantastic. And nowhere is this ability more evident than in his award-winning Ghost train. Here, as elsewhere, history re-enters his story – or rather, her story: a female painter's story. But this concrete historical referent is heightened and embellished by the wide – and perhaps wild – imagination Yee intends to instil in his young readers. Under Yee's powerful pen, the fourteen-year-old female, Choon-yi, is brought to life, and effectively serves the function of immortalizing the Chinese labourers – albeit largely male – working on and dying for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The fictional universe of Paul Yee's picturebooks is, indeed, culturally rich and complex. With a heavy focus on women and girls, in both Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train, he looks searchingly into the underlying make-up of the Chinese-Canadian family and value system and centres his protagonists firmly in society and historical time to give them authenticity and solidity. By doing this, he celebrates the social realist or neo-realist mode of writing that has been faithfully followed by many emergent and prizewinning Chinese-Canadian writers. But in

Ghost train, Yee also shows his superb skill at intermingling the real with the surreal, the historical and social with the magical and mythical, thus transcending the limited/limited time and space boundaries, while, paradoxically, anchoring his heroine, Choon-yi, palpably in real life.

Furthermore, Yee examines critically the basic moral and spiritual codes characteristic of the Chinese culture – Confucianism and Taoism. The tightly knit Chinese community and its sense of cultural unity, epitomized by the image of Chinatown, is viewed with ambivalence; but for Yee's characters, to leave it forever and never to return appears too radical a departure with the Chinese culture. The Chinese family, along with its protection, warmth, help, and indisputable role in moral cultivation and in Confucian all-round personality development, is treated positively more often than not, though some undesirable elements are identified.

Seriously questioned and rejected are the Confucian patriarchal prejudices and practices, such as the obsession with male offspring continuing the family line, and related to this, the misogynistic attitude that women are to be relegated to the margins of the family and society by the mere fact of their gender. In this sense, Yee's works anticipate many of the themes and topics explored by Chinese-Canadian women writers in the last two decades.

However, Yee confirms Confucian virtues such as frugality, modesty, respect for the old, duty, and altruism. Strongly asserted is the prerogative for Chinese-Canadian women not to sacrifice their time and energy for patriarchal purposes and reasons. In addition, the emphasis on a strong work ethic as having primary importance is maintained throughout, as is the possession or attainment of perfection.

On the other hand, Yee maintains the Taoist stress on intuition, instinct, spontaneity, and flexibility of attitude. He also treasures practical skills as much as he does the spirit of independence and individuality. This love for the Taoist tenets is not gratuitous. The Canadian

environment, as represented in <u>Roses sing on new snow</u> and <u>Ghost train</u>, allows plenty of room for their practice; several of the Confucian teachings, by comparison, are not so blessed.

Image -Text Interaction Through Significant Themes

In the image-text interaction section, I critically analyse a central theme in each of Paul Yee's <u>Ghost train</u> and Joy Kogawa's <u>Naomi's tree</u>. In <u>Ghost train</u>, I study how the text and illustrations complement one another to depict the subject of fantasy. In <u>Naomi's tree</u> I carefully scrutinize how the illustrations heighten the meaning of the text to show how Joy Kogawa's beliefs about her Japanese-Canadian identity are demonstrated through her changing relationship with nature at various moments in her life.

The ghost story in Paul Yee's Text and Harvey Chan's illustrations for the historical picturebook <u>Ghost train</u>

Paul Yee takes a particularly interesting approach to the historical picturebook by blending historical reality and fantasy in <u>Ghost train</u>. His background as a historian and archivist is apparent in many of his works, in both his attention to detail and his integration of historical artifacts. Yee also draws heavily on a different source of historical knowledge; his fascination with folktales, passed on from generation to generation, that depict the Chinese experience in both the old (China) and the new (North America) worlds. The stories tell of ghosts, magic, and other supernatural elements, even while conveying important details about past experiences. These contrasting ways of constructing historical knowledge are in constant dialogue in Yee's texts, working together to uniquely convey history to children.

Paul Yee's interest in the historical experience of the Chinese community in Canada stems from his personal history. As part of the first generation of his family to be born in Canada, but the third to reside here, Yee's connection with Chinese Canadian history extends back to his grandfather's work on the railway (Davis 1996, p. 52). His attraction to the past goes beyond this family connection; he has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Masters of Arts degree in

History, and spent time as an archivist working the Vancouver City archives (Davis 1996, p. 53).

It was Yee's efforts, as a third generation Chinese Canadian, to make a contribution to his

community that first led him to explore the oral and written history of the Chinese in Canada.

Yee's writing, though varied in approach, is unified, by a fundamental concern with accurately

representing the experiences of his community.

Yee's aims are well-suited to the ghost story format. He explains that, "ghosts represent

a very powerful force in [his] life" (Davis 1996, p. 66) that he has come to understand better

through his writing. In addition to this personal motivation, ghosts traditionally play an

important role in Chinese folktales. Fei Xiaotong, a Chinese man writing his impressions of

North America in 1944, makes particular note of the relative scarcity of ghosts in North

America, as compared to his homeland. He writes:

> American children hear no stories about ghosts. They spend a dime at the
>
> drugstore to buy a Superman comic book…Superman represents actual
>
> capabilities or future potential, while ghosts symbolize belief in and reverence for
>
> the accumulated past (Arkush & Lee vii).

This quotation speaks not only to the importance of the ghost story, and the past, in Chinese

culture, but also the shock of the immigrant at the comparative absence of ghosts of North

American soil.

The fantastical form of the ghost story, therefore, seems particularly appropriate to

express one of Yee's most prominent concerns: the experience of the immigrant. Although he

explores diverse aspects of the Chinese-Canadian experience, his stories continually revisit the

movement between home and away, and the attempt to position oneself in a new land. The

ambivalence of this experience is a frequent concern of postcolonial theorists, but also of

children's authors. Robyn McCallum notes the prevalence of the theme of displacement in

children's and young adult novels, explaining that often "characters are removed from their

familiar surroundings and placed in an environment which is physically, culturally, or linguistically alien" (1998, p. 104). In many ways this echoes the effect produced in the ghost story.

Significantly, Ghost train reflects the unique position of many Chinese immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was widespread practice to come to North America, not for long term residency, but to earn money that would eventually result in a better standard of living in China. Yee explains that the "whole experience was guided by that one drive: to make money and to send money home. We didn't come here seeking freedom from political oppression or to settle the land" (Davis 1996, p. 61). However, once men arrived in North America, they were often unable to earn enough to return home, and stayed abroad much longer than initially anticipated. Even men who immigrated to Canada with the intentions of eventually bringing over their families were frequently thwarted by discriminatory immigration laws, resulting in families split between two lands. Just as the ghost is a figure caught in between death and life, and fully part of neither world, the immigrant can also be caught in this "third place" as Yee describes in Dead man's gold (2002, p. 100).

The ghost story is also an illuminating approach to writing historical fiction, as it has the potential to trace direct links between past and present. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, in Ghosts: Deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and history note the tendency of traditional history to maintain "an ideal of an inert sense of the past, a past whose 'passing' can be accurately measured, and whose attributes can be quantified" (1999, p. 12). In contrast, the ghost story can forge dynamic connections between history and the present day. Although these links are not necessarily as overt as forms of fantasy, the very presence of the ghost, a figure of the past that haunts those who still live, indicates the impossibility of remaining disengaged from history. As Buse and Stott argue, "in the figure of the ghost, we see that past and present cannot be neatly separated from one another, as any idea of the present is always constituted through the difference and

deferral of the past" (1999, p. 10-11). Yee's stories, both explicitly and more subtly, link the sufferings of the Chinese Canadians with our present. For Yee, the return of the ghost also represents aspects of North American history that cannot be contained.

On this most basic level, the existence of the ghost in both a previous lifetime and a current lifetime links experiences across temporal boundaries and provides relevance to a study of history. These connections do not only indicate the ways in which the events of the past inform and transform our everyday reality. The process also works in the reverse. By fusing these links between temporal periods, writers like Yee show the degree to which our understanding of the past is informed by the present. In this way, history can be viewed, not as a finished product, but instead as a dynamic presence, open to multiple interpretations. Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) hints at this when he argues that it is "through contact with the present [that] an object is attracted to the incomplete process of a work-in-the-making, and is stamped with the seal of inconclusiveness" (Dialogic imagination, p. 30). The potential of the ghost is to indicate that history, and our construction of it, can never be dismissed as "finished."

Ghost train, a picturebook created in collaboration with artist Harvey Chan, uses the ghost story, and the power of the artist, to represent the tragic history of the Chinese men who constructed Canada's railway. Its concept is in many ways familiar. A young artist's father leaves for North America in order to support his struggling family and is killed while working on the railroad, like so many other Chinese labourers, leaving his daughter to mourn. However, it is Yee's use of the fantastical that makes this story distinct. With artist Harvey Chan, Yee uses the lens of the ghost story to construct this past and in so doing illuminates the experience of a Chinese railroad worker. Ghost train exemplifies Yee and Chan's abilities to highlight the dialogue between fantasy and reality, past and present, and old world and new world, all through the power of the artist.

In analyzing Ghost train it is useful to draw on Dominick LaCapra's conceptualization of two approaches to constructing the past. He makes the distinction "between intellectual history as a reconstruction of the past and intellectual history as a dialogue or conversation with the past – a distinction that should not be taken as purely dichotomous opposition" ("Rethinking Intellectual History" 1983, p. 78). Though La Capra stresses the importance of the former approach, which relies on analysis of documentation, he argues that, "the dominance of a documentary conception distorts our understanding of both historiography and the historical process (1983, p. 78). Yee's work reflects both approaches; he and Chan both alternate between depicting the past as realistic and fantastical. Both historical accuracy, through the reconstruction of the "facts" of history, and the fantastical, more open-ended approach of the ghost story, are employed in Ghost train.

By juxtaposing fantasy and history, but not allowing either to take prominence, Yee and Chan can guide us to read Ghost train as a dialogue between fantasy and realism. This dialogue is indicated in the front matter of the book. The cover illustration and the title distinctly locate this work in the realm of the fantastical. The otherworldly evocation of Choon-yi's paintbrush, the hazy effect of the oil painting, and the emphasis on the word "ghost" all contribute to this impression. However, the next picture that Yee and Chan include generates a very different effect. Chan's copper etching of a railroad worker, shovel in hand and labouring next to the train tracks, does not at all suggest the supernatural. Rather, the sepia-tone of this illustration brings to mind a vintage photograph, one that would be found in a historical archive. And although Chan returns to oil painting for most of the story, he places another copper etching, this time of a worker and plough in China, at the story's conclusion. This contrast in styles immediately suggests that Yee and Chan draw on both the historical archive and the fantastical stories it may exclude. Roman Jakobsen, in Lawrence Sipe's article, "How picturebooks work: A semiotically framed theory of text-picture relationships," would comment that by alternating back and forth

between fantasy and reality and by continually enhancing each others' messages, Yee and Chan are creating a type of tension (1998, p. 101). This tension dynamic results in the impulse to be recursive and reflexive in our reading of the picturebook: to go backward and forward in order to relate an illustration to the one before or after it, and to relate the text on one page to an illustration on a previous or successive page; or to understand new ways in which the combination of the text and picture on one page relate to the preceding or succeeding pages. Jakobsen would also add that picturebooks have the effect of "loosening the tyranny of the one-way flow" (1998, p. 101) of the purely verbal text, and therefore demand many rereadings as we can never quite perceive all the possible meanings of the text, or all the possible meanings of the pictures, or all the possible meanings of the text-picture relationships.

Although the contrast between historical realism and fantasy is set out most clearly in the difference between oil painting and copper etching, even Chan's oil paintings indicate the possibility of different approaches to understanding the past. His depictions of Choon-yi's experience in North America are hazy and ghostly, lacking clear definition and precise lines, but they also indicate a strict attention to historical detail. In particular, his representations of the train include specific elements that reflect careful consideration of the demands of historical accuracy. In an illustration of the engine, Chan represents the various controls and gauges in painstaking detail. Chan's illustrations do not locate themselves entirely as realistic pictures of the past; there are too many blurred lines, ghostly background images, and otherwordly details. However, they are too historically accurate to be entirely fantastical. His approach recalls one of the characteristics Linda Hutcheon attributes to historiographic metafiction: it "effects two simultaneous moves. It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in doing so, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge" (Poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, fiction 1988, p. 89). Chan's paintings indicate the importance of historical

accuracy, but use the fantastical to subvert any notion that we can construct an entirely knowable past.

In Ghost train, Yee and Chan insert the fantasy into a historical representation in order to better delve into a very particular aspect of the immigration experience. Just as Choon-yi's father's ghost belongs neither to the spirit world nor to the earthly realm, the immigrant is also caught between home and abroad. The experience of being "unhomed" is a prevailing subtext in literature of the immigration experience. This is especially true when the immigrant, like Yee's Chinese worker, is part of a subordinated minority in the new land. Homi Bhabha describes the "unhomely" experience as a "paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition" (Location of culture 2004, p. 13). By exploring the unhomed nature of the ghost, and drawing parallels to the immigrant, Yee strengthens his representation of the ambiguities of moving between worlds.

For Choon-yi and her family, the experience of separation happens quickly. On just the second page of text, Choon-yi's father leaves for the new world to make money, and her communication with him becomes restricted to letters. Chan's pictures accentuate the tenuousness of this link. On the fifth and sixth pages, Choon-yi and her father are represented by similar but separate images on opposite sides of the double pages, with the gulf of Yee's text between them. This separation is further widened when Choon-yi receives word that her father has died in a railway accident. Yee indicates that the previous geographical separation now extends to the worlds of the living and the dead. By incorporating the fantasy element, Yee accentuates the pain and distance of estrangement from one's home. Interestingly, the dialogue between Choon-yi and her father, in the form of letters while he is alive and dreams while he is dead, is rather one-sided. Yee depicts the father's words to his daughter, but leaves out her responses. It is only when Choon-yi's drawing brings her father's ghost into existence that Yee portrays her as speaking directly to him. In this way, Yee represents the fragmented experience of immigration through parallels between the dead and those left behind. Nikolajava and Scott,

in "The Dynamics of picturebook communication," would say that by having Yee's text placed in between Chan's illustrations to further accentuate the distance between Choon-yi and her father, and by having Choon-yi's father be only one who is shown to be expressing dialogue (through the form of letters) while Choon-yi reads in silence, Yee and Chan are demonstrating a type of image-text interaction that is complementary to a high degree (2000, p. 230) because their messages are not overlapping, but rather they are working together to strengthen the ultimate effect.

Although Yee and Chan indicate the barriers between the new world and old, and spiritual and earthly realms, Ghost train argues convincingly that these divides can be bridged. Choon-yi is given the task to paint her father a train, and it is only through carefully observing this object that she reconnects with him. To materialize her father's ghost, it is not enough to look superficially. Yee describes how "she stepped abroad, eyes eager with anticipation, and saw everything: the painted numbers on each car, the polished wooden steps. The dark oil clinging to the wheel axles" (n.p.). Chan's detailed drawings complement Yee's words. Further, once Choon-yi brings her father and the train into being, she is instructed to walk among the ghosts who ride the train. Yee writes:

> The men talked of their families, about how they longed to see them. They talked
>
> of their hopes and dreams, about what they had planned to do with their earnings.
>
> They talked of work, about how each day had been a question of life and death.
>
> (n.p.)

It is important for Yee that Choon-yi understands what happened to her father and other Chinese workers, even after his death, in order for her to bridge the divide between worlds.

In both text and illustrations, presence and absence of community also play a significant role in this construction of the immigrant history. Chan's pictures of life in China, in the early section of the text, are replete with many individuals. In fact, the first two pictures that Chan

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draws feature seventeen different figures. When Choon-yi travels to North America, however, this emphasis shifts. She is an outsider, lacking connections and the ability to communicate with others. This is especially apparent when she tries to fulfil her father's wishes and paint the train. Yee writes:

> So she set out for the train station. But without a ticket, she could not reach the
>
> boarding platform. She approached the stationmaster for help, but she knew no
>
> English. She stepped outside, but high wooden fences blocked her view (n.p.).

The accompanying illustration forms a marked contrast to the scenes of China. Here in the new world, Choon-yi is alone. Although there are other figures in the picture, their dress and attitudes mark them as different. An even more evocative picture of Choon-yi's alienation occurs in the following pages. As she rides the train alone, it seems to dwarf her small body, curled up as she is in an almost fetal position. Although the text indicates that she is frightened by the sound of ghosts on the train, the picture evokes loneliness and sadness much more than it does fear.

Not until Choon-yi materializes her father's spirit does community again emerge in the story. It is significant that Yee chooses to represent not just her father's ghost, but also those of many other men. As Choon-yi walks through the train listening to the workers talk about their lives, the text recalls an earlier passage, from when Choon-yi's father still lived, in which he describes how, in the new world, "he and his friends gathered around the campfire at nights to keep the loneliness away" (n.p.). For Yee, community is of vital importance to the immigrant, in both life and in death. As well, by deliberately including this gathering of men, Yee expands his historical account beyond that of one immigrant's experience. The inclusion of these ghosts brings to the forefront the commonness of death for the men while working on the railway. Yee writes"

"Many men died building this railway," Ba Said. "All along the route, bodies

have been swept away by the river or buried under a landslide. Their bones will

never be recovered. But the time has come to transport their souls home" (n.p.)

The presence of the ghostly in this tale shifts the emphasis from one family's suffering to the

repeated instances of death experienced by the Chinese immigrant community.

Ghost train culminates as Choon-yi is instructed by her father to take the drawing of the

train, which now includes all of the ghosts, and bring it home to China. As Choon-yi's father

explains, "that way [their] souls will finally find their way home" (n.p.). Yee emphasizes the

need for the ghosts to transmigrate, indicating the importance of finding ways to resolve the

issues of the earlier times. As Buse and Stott write, "ghosts do not just represent reminders of

the past – in their fictional representation they very often demand something of the future"

(1999, p. 14). These supernatural beings of Ghost train indicate that events are not over just

because they are part of history; Yee uses these ghosts to suggest that the past and present are

directly linked. By making it Choon-yi's mission to help her father's soul find his final resting

place, Yee suggests that the consequences of racism do not end in death, but must be dealt with

by future generations. Although Ghost train does not directly suggest a particular course of

action, and never strays into the political territory of restitution, Yee's fantastical narrative

argues that today's generations, both Chinese and non-Chinese, must acknowledge the

connection between history and our contemporary world.

It is particularly significant that the power to bring peace and resolution to the unsettled

ghosts comes from the hands of an artist. As Marie Davis notes in "A backward way of thanking

people: Paul Yee on his historical fiction," "not only does Choon-yi's art provide entry into the

past and a view of community's life, not only is it a record of human suffering, but it is also the

instrument of spiritual liberation" (1996, p. 51). In Ghost train, the artist is a magical figure who

seems not to belong entirely in this world. Although Choon-yi has the disadvantage of being

born with only one arm, potentially a debilitating handicap, Yee explains that "the villagers soon discovered that Choon-yi's one arm was no ordinary limb. When she held an ink brush, the pictures she painted looked as real as life" (n.p.). Choon-yi is missing a limb, but she is able to draw artistic power from her disadvantage.

Ghost train, therefore, argues for the importance of artistic vision in gaining an understanding of the past. By using her skill, Choon-yi makes the ghost train, and her father, materialize. In "Society, history, and values: A cultural study of Paul Yee's Chinese-Canadian female characters," Zhong Ming Chen and Pat Parungao describe how in this moment, "in Yee's miraculous vision, then, the past resides in the present, the dead are revived, history enters her story and painting, and this world is connected to the other world" (1999, p. 27). It is the vision of the artist that brings all this into being. Importantly, dispassionate observation alone cannot create the train. Not until Choon-yi rides it herself and hears the pain of the dead workers is she able to succeed in her mission. Yee explains that "this time the train that emerged from the brushstrokes held true all she had seen and felt" (n.p.). Both careful observation and empathy allow Choon-yi to capture the train, just as both the careful observation of the historian and the creativity of the artist construct the history that is Ghost train.

A Buddhist interpretation of the tole of nature in Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ohi's Naomi's tree

The theme of nature, which is presented through a successful pairing of the devices of art and text, and which is here analysed through the insightful critical lens of Buddhism, plays a very significant role in Naomi's tree. The protagonist Naomi's ability to connect with nature, an integral element of Buddhist philosophy, alters in a number of ways as she matures from innocent child to knowing adult. At the beginning of the story, the author and illustrator depict her as being surrounded and protected by a gentle and nurturing nature in what Japanese Buddhists would refer to as being in "a naïve state of bliss" (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 7). In the middle of the narrative, she feels her inner strength tested and her self-identity in a state of

turmoil when she is physically separated from the nature that helps keep her tied to her family memories and Japanese-Canadian Buddhist traditions; otherwise known in Buddhism as "suffering on the path to knowledge" (Izumi Abrams 1997, p. 11). At the end of the story, she believes herself to be an integral part of nature, as if she and the nature know each other so well that they could be one in the same – this state Buddhists call attaining enlightenment (Izumi Abrams 1997, p. 14). At this point, the text relates Naomi's reunion with nature, which reconnects her with the spirits of her ancestors and helps her fully accept who she has become, while the illustrations show her body taking an organic shape as she puts her arms around the trunk of her favourite cherry tree and presses her face into the rough bark. Particularly interesting, however, is that whatever configurations are taken by the nature bond, and its relationship to Buddhism, the narrative suggests that Naomi can always rely on the spirit of nature to be a constant and supporting force in her life.

New Historicists would remark that by presenting the important symbol of nature through a Japanese Buddhist perspective and incorporating personal experiences and biases in Naomi's tree, Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ohi are engaging in "thick description." Thick description attempts, through close, careful examination of a given cultural production to discover the meanings that a particular cultural production had for the people in whose community it occurred and to reveal the social conventions, cultural codes, and ways of seeing the world that gave that production those meanings (Tyson 2007, p. 288). Thus, thick description is not an hunt for facts but rather an investigation for meanings and it emphasizes the personal side of history – the history of family dynamics, for example – rather than more traditional topics such as military campaigns and the passage of laws (Klages 2006, p. 124). Indeed, because traditional history tends to disregard or marginalize private life as subjective and irrelevant, New Historicism tries to compensate for this omission by bringing issues concerned with private life into the into the centre of historical inquiry.

As Charlotte Izumi Abrams states in her dissertation, <u>Speaking through the silence:</u> <u>Uncovering the Buddhist tradition in Joy Kogawa's Obasan</u>, Joy Kogawa's choice to have Naomi turn to nature's comforting embrace, in <u>Obasan</u>, and then in <u>Naomi's tree</u>, can be attributed to Kogawa being raised in the culture of Buddhism (1997, p. 6). Although she is a Christian, and a member of the Anglican church, her father introduced her to Jodo Shinshu Buddhist cultural values and ensured that she was well-versed in Japanese cultural symbolism. In Arnold Davidson's <u>Writing against the silence: Joy Kogawa's Obasan</u>, the influence of the Buddhist faith on Kogawa's writing is further confirmed (1993, p. 28).

Different philosophies of Buddhism can be seen in <u>Naomi's tree</u>. Jodo Shinshu Buddhism was founded in Japan in 1224. This particular sect of Buddhists was characterized by the idea that Buddhism should be "for the masses (Izumi Abrams 1996, p. 13)." The early Jodo Shinshu Buddhists reworked the Buddhist epistles into "common language."

These Buddhists belong to the "sudden enlightenment" school in Mahayana Buddhism (Larger Vehicle Buddhism). The cycle of this Buddhism involves three steps: 1) precept 2) meditation 3) wisdom. The Larger Vehicle Buddhism arose from the concept of prajana (Wakada 1996, p. 388-389). Jodo Shinshu Buddhists believe in the forty-eight vows, of which the eighteenth vow is the most important – "sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiring to be born." Sutra chanting for the dead was a common form of achieving this goal (Watada 1996, p. 394).

The Buddhists in Western Canada had migrated from the Western part of Japan, from Hiroshima, Wayama, Shiga, and Kogoshima prefectures. The Jodo Shinshu Buddhists practices that they held did not involve extravagant temples or intense meditation, but rather stressed practical physical ritual. Zen Buddhists also immigrated to Canada, but they were very few in number. During the internment of the Japanese Canadians in the 1940s, all types of Buddhists were arrested because they were considered "subversive." Despite this repression, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist values were still put into practice in the internment camps. Jodo Shinshu and Zen

Buddhist values would include: 1) non-violent principles, 2) a belief in a detachment from desire, 3) not having one's practice of religion defined by dogma or doctrine, and 4) living in harmony with nature.

Many of Kogawa's works are immersed in these Buddhist sensibility and values. Her multilayered religious and spiritual tradition is evidenced by the places in her writing where there are no clear spiritual "answers" given to questions. Rather, she creates a silence, which is utilized to cope with the atrocities of both the internment and the atomic bomb (Izumi Abrahms 1997, p. 15).

Japanese literature, according to Masao Miyoshi, is imbued with interiorized or residual orality (1989, p. 66). There is a sense of public, not individual authorship of the texts (1989, p. 165). In a sense, this is related to the koan, or Zen challenge that is the basis for many Buddhist teachings. These koans are stories that represent a public case, essentially a puzzle to be deciphered by each listener in his or her own way. Japanese-Canadian literature can be seen as such puzzles as well. In fact, the central question or koan that Kogawa poses in Naomi's tree is "why is no one able to speak about the horrors of the atomic bomb or the internment?" This question, like a koan, is never fully answered. The "ghosts" behind the stories are informed by the Buddhist sensibility of the koans but also by the history of Japanese folklore and ritual.

In communities steeped in Buddhism, as in any community with a history of a particular religion, many practitioners may not follow all the tenets and practices of the religion, but may, nevertheless, use these tenets in conduct of daily affairs. A person with Buddhist sensibility may not rid himself or herself of all craving and attachments, but one's sense of being in the community can be informed by the religious practices and teachings of the ancestors.

Aiko Suzuki argues that a Buddhist sensibility also involves the use of silence when in nature. This silence does not necessarily revolve around "quietude," but rather deals in the "world of reality, aiming at appreciating simplicity in all its forms in the natural world" (Suzuki

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1997, p. 347-350). Buddhism, according to Raimundo Panikkar, cannot be "spoken of," rather it must be "prayed" (not necessarily physical prayer). Certain Buddhist rituals are performed in silence. Often silence "becomes" the ritual act not the means to a spiritual end in itself, a liberation (Suzuki 1997, p. 154-156). The Buddhist sensibility is an internal understanding of divinity, not an understanding which one is "given." As such, in writing like Kogawa's, this sensibility shows itself in imagery that represents the tension between the consciously aware (speaking) world, and the unconscious world. There is also evidence of the tension between the attachments of worldly, physical needs and the detachment from such needs. Discussions of this sensibility have been a useful tool in explaining Japanese-Canadian literature.

From the opening of Naomi's tree readers can ascertain that nature is the theme that will guide the story. The special cherry blossom tree named in the title is shown in Ruth Ohi's first illustration taking centre stage by being placed squarely in the middle of the page and taking up most of the available space. The young Japanese children form a dancing circle around the tree and the vibrant, pink petals blow outwards toward them to spread a sense of security and happiness. Joy Kogawa's text adds to this sense of bliss by noting that "each spring, lilting pink blossoms danced into view and filled the air like popcorn. And as the flowers fell in a snowy cloud, the children joined hands and sang and skipped around the tree…The Maker [Buddha], who had created the world for friendship, smiled upon the tree and blessed it." Molly Bang, in Picture this: How pictures work, would note that this choice of Ohi's, to put the cherry tree in the centre of the illustration frame, is an attempt to give it greater focal importance or energy than the rest of the objects (2000, p. 62).

Although it is not overtly mentioned or visually displayed, Kogawa and Ohi are subtly making reference to the fact that the tree and the cherry blossoms have profound significance in Japanese culture and in the religion of Buddhism. In the spring, two festivals take place which

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honour these two natural elements: Hanamatsuri, which is celebrated on April 8th of every year, and Sakura Matsuri or Hanami, which is celebrated from March until May.

Hanamatsuri, literally flower festival, is a celebration that commemorates the birth of Siddartha Gautama. Siddartha became enlightened as Sakyamuni Buddha under a great Bodhi tree and his enlightenment marks the release of sentient beings from suffering and sorrow (Bloom 2008, p. 1).

According to Buddhist tradition, the historical Buddha was born in Nepal on April 8, 566 B.C. (Bloom 2008, p. 1). He was born the son of King Suddohana and Queen Maya. There are many elaborate descriptions of the scene at his birth, including celestial birds singing beautiful songs, beautiful flowers, and a sweet gentle rain bathing the baby Buddha. However, it is not necessarily the presence of all these extraordinary things that make the day noteworthy, but rather it is the vibrant fact that on this day was born the greatest sentient beings who became the Enlightened one, the Buddha (Northwest Ministerial Association 2009, p. 1).

The identity and metaphor of the tree in Naomi's tree has its origins in Buddhist teachings and iconography which are going to be here explored. The Bodhi Tree, under which Buddha was enlightened, is the world tree, and its roots drink deep of the waters of infinity (Denosky 2006, p. 1). Its branches and leaves blow in the winds of the Void, and it is lit by a clear light. It is a tree of safety from the raging wind and the dragons of desire.

Each leaf has the bright green of spring, and its bark has the darkness and fragrance of the forest. It is the fruits of knowledge but these are not fruits forbidden to mankind by a jealous god. These fruits of knowledge are intended for all beings. While the fruits on the lower limbs give knowledge of good and evil, and awareness of many lives, those on the upper limbs give knowledge of unity and immortality.

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In the Western belief system, only the lower fruits have been tasted – mankind was expelled from the garden before eating the fruit of immortality or gaining the knowledge of unity (Denosky 2006, p. 1).

Because certain kinds of knowledge are not easily accessible, many people have given up and assume that they know all that is worth knowing. This is not the case. They have partial knowledge which cannot get them any further than the garden from which they were expelled. There they may have innocence, but also ignorance, and the value of wisdom is unknown, as is indeed its existence.

The Bodhi Tree or world tree unites all worlds, and it has no guardians to protect it. All sentient beings are welcome to gain as much wisdom as their minds can hold. But it is a long journey to that state, for the traveler must unravel the current life and many other past lives to see the components that have been woven together into the patterns of life. Then the strands must be woven again, to create a mind capable and worthy of returning to the source.

The Bodhi Tree is a symbolic representation of the individual's journey to infinity (Denosky 2006, p. 2). As the seed which begins tiny and hard grows open and free, so should the mind and the heart. The tree is rooted in the ground as the self is rooted in matter. But the seed grows beyond the ground, as it perceives its environment, cares about it, and ultimately leaves the limitations of the body and matter behind. The branches reach towards the heavens yet the roots reach towards the earth. Such is the state of mankind – always being pulled in two directions. One direction is freedom, ultimate liberation, and the transcendence of boundaries. The other direction is security, rootedness, comfort, and tradition – the self that will not turn away from the earth. The traditionalist may justify behaviour by Buddhist or other ethics and ritual but will ultimately seek comfort rather than freedom. Such people should rest peacefully at the roots of the tree and never climb it. For the others, the spiritual explorers, comfort and

security are left behind. Only those who seek the upper branches of the tree and liberation can progress and follow the stages to enlightenment.

The cherry tree and cherry blossom are both vital elements in Buddhist and Japanese iconography and cultural metaphors, and as such, appear at many instances and have prominent meanings in Naomi's tree. Hanami or Sakura Matsuri is a festive occasion that marks the blooming of the cherry blossom tree. During the Heian Period (794-1191), the Japanese sought to emulate many practices from China, including the social phenomenon of flower viewing (hanami), where the imperial households, poets, singers, and other aristocrats would gather and celebrate under the blossoms ("Hanami" in Wikipedia 2009, p. 1). In Japan, cherry trees were planted and cultivated for their beauty, for the adornment of the grounds of the nobility of Kyoto, at least as early as 794. In China, the ume or "plum" tree (actually a species of apricot) was held in highest regard, but by the middle of the ninth century, the cherry blossom had replaced the plum as the favoured species in Japan.

In Japan, cherry blossoms also symbolize clouds due to their nature of blooming en masse, besides being an enduring metaphor for the ephemeral nature of life, an aspect of Japanese cultural tradition that is often associated with Buddhistic influence, and which is embodied in the concept of mono no aware (an empathy towards the transience of life and a sadness at the passing of someone loved). The association of the cherry blossom with mono no aware dates back to the 18th-century scholar Motoori Norinaga ("Cherry blossom" in Wikipedia 2009, p. 3). The transience of the blossoms, the extreme beauty and quick death, has often been associated with mortality; for this reason, cherry blossoms are richly symbolic, and have been utilized often in Japanese art, film, and musical performances for ambient effect.

The cherry blossom is an omen of good fortune and is also an emblem of love, affection, and represents spring ("Cherry blossom" in Wikipedia 2009, p. 3). Cherry blossoms are an enduring metaphor for the fleeting nature of life, and as such are frequently depicted in paintings.

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During World War II, the cherry blossom was used to motivate the Japanese people, to stoke nationalism and militarism among the populace ("Cherry blossom" in <u>Wikipedia</u> 2009, p. 4). Japanese pilots would paint them on the sides of their planes before embarking on a suicide mission, or even take branches of the trees with them on their missions. A cherry blossom painted on the side of the bomber symbolized the intensity and ephemeral nature of life; in this way, the aesthetic association was altered such that falling cherry petals came to represent sacrifice of youth in suicide missions to honour the emperor.

The Buddhist symbols of the cherry tree have a strong presence in Kogawa's writing. In the second double-page spread of <u>Naomi's tree</u>, the text expresses that the cherry blossom tree became known as the Friendship Tree and "mothers visited with babies on their backs" and "old people sat and rested under the peaceful branches … in the gentle, welcoming light that surrounded the tree." As well, seeds from the Friendship Tree traveled to other countries far away "in the bellies of beasts [and] the beaks of many birds." Kogawa is stating, here, that the cherry blossom tree, with its "gentle, welcoming light" and "ripe and delicious fruit" is now a source of maternal protection and nourishment for the Japanese people. Ohi's illustration shows three figures sitting contentedly under the tree in relaxed poses with their faces in smiling, open expressions conveying complete trust. The background and kimono colours are warm yellows, purples, pinks, and browns, which in Japanese culture signify joy, spiritual fulfillment, love and tenderness, and stability, respectively (Kyrnin 2009, p. 1-4). What is exceptionally outstanding in this scene, both textually and visually, is that the cherry tree is primarily a provider of protection and food for the body as the souls of the people are not, at this point, in need of spiritual protection.

In the third double-page spread, the written narrative explains how "one precious cherry seed was carried in the kimono sleeve of a young bride" to the "Land Across the Sea" and planted in the backyard of "a pretty house with windows across the front" and turned into a new

Friendship tree which "grew and grew, welcoming the gentle seasons of sunshine and rain."

Kogawa appears to be metaphorically implying, here, that when Naomi's grandparents first came

to the Canada they did not know what to expect and were apprehensive and a bit closed like a

cherry seed. But as they found the "lovely city by the water's edge" and moved into their house

with the big windows and a "big playroom in the basement" they, like the new Friendship Tree,

grew roots and became more willing to open up, take risks, and attempt to integrate with the

Canadian culture. Ohi shows, in her illustration, the young Friendship Tree seedling tentatively

reaching its branches and leaves toward the sunshine with the feet of Naomi's grandmother faced

toward it and the feet of Naomi's grandfather in an open stance behind the grandmother implying

affection towards his wife and also sharing his acceptance for their new home. The primary

colours employed are a warm-toned green and purple; green meaning safety, healing, learning,

life, and harmony and purple, as previously mentioned, meaning good judgment, fulfillment, and

peace of mind (Kyrnin 2009, p. 2).

The fourth double-page spread best embodies the Buddhist concept of "attentive silence."

As Izumi Abrams comments, in Speaking through the silence, "moments in nature are perfect

moments for 'attentiveness' [where] Naomi is able to exemplify her use of silence to attend to

her surroundings." This type of moment also "allows for a telepathy between generations where

they can meet and "dialogue" at a fixed moment" (Izumi Abrams 1997, p. 113). Kogawa

describes an idyllic scene with Naomi, her brother, her parents, and grandparents where they lie

on blankets under the cherry tree watching the sparrows and robins hopping from branch to

branch and listening for the hushed voices of the leaves. Naomi, at times, is depicted as bonding

with the tree on her own by playing with her dolls and having private tree parties in the shade of

the tree; singing and skipping around the tree; and occasionally hanging upside down like a

monkey from the lowest branch. Seemingly, the rest of the world and its activities are placed

into the background, or even tuned out, as the family members completely immerse themselves

in all the sights, sounds, and other sensations that nature provides. Ohi's accompanying

illustration parallels Kogawa's intentions as the bright pink cherry blossom blooms fill all the

available space around the family as they stand in very close proximity to one another with

smiling faces and fingers reaching out to touch and observe falling petals.

In the fifth double-page spread, the mood of the story changes. In the text, Kogawa tells

the reader that "all is well" as Naomi looks out her bedroom window at the tree sleeping in the

moonlight and wishes it 'good night.' However, Ohi, for the first time, relays a very

contradictory message in her visual representation that creates a feeling of unease that is rather

ominous. Naomi's face is given a pale and slightly greyed complexion and her expression is

more wistful than content. In addition, her hand is raised in a waving motion that feels more like

a farewell than regular good night wish and all traces of the warm bright colours of the previous

scenes are absent. In "the dynamics of picturebook communication," Maria Nikolajava and

Carole Scott would explain that Kogawa and Ohi are utilizing an extreme form of

counterpointing interaction known as contradictory interaction where works and pictures seem to

be in opposition to one another (p. 226). This ambiguity challenges the reader to mediate

between the words and pictures in order to establish a true understanding of what is being

depicted.

In the sixth double page-spread, Kogawa reveals that Naomi's mother has to go to Japan

to visit her sick grandmother and then is sadly unable to return because war breaks out and

Japanese Canadians are now considered enemies that had to be "sent away from their homes,

their schools, their gardens, their trees, and their friends." What stands out most in the text of

this page is the fact that sending Naomi's family away from nature (the gardens and the trees) is

also is a way of symbolically sending them away from their self-and-spiritual identities. In an

interview with Kathleen Donohue, entitled "Free-falling and serendipity: An interview with Joy

Kogawa," Kogawa talks about her own experience of being taken away from her comfortable

home with tree-lined, large gardens and streets and being sent to an internment camp in Slocan. She further discloses how she gravitated to Lucy Maud Montgomery's book, Anne of Green Gables and Frances Hodgson Burnett's The secret garden, during her confinement, because, although they were written by non Japanese-Canadian authors, they gave her an opportunity to experience the healing qualities of nature in her mind (similar to the Japanese philosophy of "shizen") when she was not able to be near nature in person, and this circumstance, in turn, affected her later writing (Donohue 1996, p. 35). The illustration that Ohi includes with the sixth spread elicits an emotional reaction. The figure of Naomi's mother covers three-quarters of the page and with the dark colours of her clothing, her sad downcast eyes, and the lack of light on her face; she appears to be more of a ghost-like being than a nurturer and an integral part her family. In addition, as she is positioned with her back to her family, who are all tellingly dressed in the pink of the cherry blossoms, readers are given the impression that she will not be able to share in any future happiness.

The seventh double-page spread is probably the most powerful spread in the whole picturebook, but more for what it does not include rather than for what it does. In Kogawa's narrative, Naomi says a tearful goodbye to the tree and Ohi draws the vulnerable little heroine at the bottom of the page reaching up to hug the great tree trunk as petal tears fall from the branches. The text is brief, in comparison to the rest of the book, and the illustration is also noticeably more spare than the other pictures. Following the image and text is a large blank space and then a significant temporal passage to the next spread in which Naomi and her brother are shown both in text and image as young adults.

Izumi Abrams explains that this "physical blank space" or emptiness in text and illustration is a means of epitomizing in Japanese-Canadian literature two types of silence that Japanese Canadians demonstrated during the internment: imposed silence and stoic silence (1996, p. 91). The imposed silence refers to how the Canadian government took away the

Japanese Canadians' voices and identities by prohibiting them from expressing any of their beliefs or opinions and placing them in small crowded enclosures away from their homes and the beauty of nature. Japanese-Canadian newspaper publications were banned, Buddhism was not allowed to be practiced, gatherings where political beliefs were shared in a public forum were strictly forbidden, and the only element of nature that internees were able to have contact with were the sugar beets and other crops that they were forced to harvest for individuals outside of their community. The stoic silence refers to how many Japanese Canadians chose to employ silence during internment as a method of exerting power in a way that the government could not control. One of the ways this silent power was manifested was through silent meditation. In Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, quietness is a virtue that is essential for enlightenment or ultimate wisdom, so, in fact by not speaking, the Japanese Canadians were performing a restricted ritual. Stoic silence also refers to the conscious repressing of painful experiences or the silencing of the mind that had to take place during and after the war by the Japanese Canadians so that they could continue living amidst adversity and death (Izumi Abrams 1996, p. 96).

Kogawa and Ohi may also be employing the absence of text and image to bring the concept of the koan to the foreground. According to Izumi Abrams (1996, p. 16), koan are stories, often in the form of questions, set as problems for meditation in the practice of Zen Buddhism, although the problems are not solved by linear or rational processes. The effort to solve a koan is designed to exhaust the analytical intellect and the will, leaving the mind open for response on an intuitive level. Many questions come to mind in Naomi's tree that require consideration. For example, readers have to wonder why Naomi and her family, who are Canadian-born and raised are being sent away as enemies, how the family was treated during their internment, and whether there was a specific event that traumatized Naomi into silence. As well, thoughts and questions about the experiences of actual Japanese Canadians also arise as the

experiences varied considerably and explanations as to the cause of internment were so contradictory.

The writer and illustrator purposely leave gaps to allow the reader to be a co-creator in the production of the textual meaning. In other words, each reader can use his or her own previous knowledge to fill in the gaps of the story in his or her own way, thereby acknowledging the inexhaustibility of the text (Sipes 1998, p. 99).

In the eighth double-page spread, Kogawa makes known many of the horrors that Naomi and her family had to face during and after internment. Their house now belonged to another family, their mother had died during the war (Kogawa does not mention that she died from radiation poisoning following the atomic bomb), and all Japanese-Canadian people were scattered across the country because it was considered dangerous to have too many of them in any one place at a time. Additionally, Naomi stops thinking about her friend the cherry tree because she realizes that returning home is "just a dream [that] would never come true." Ohi, here, shows Naomi and her brother, Stephen, tending to the beet fields in the blistering prairie heat. Naomi stops for a moment to look out towards the horizon in hopes that a better future is out there for her. Even though she cannot see it, a sprig of cherry blossom placed at the top of the facing page of Kogawa's text indicates that her cherry blossom tree is still thinking about her and watching over her.

In the ninth double-page spread, the written narrative describes how the cherry tree asks the ants, butterflies, frogs, worms and other tiny creatures to cross the many miles to where Naomi is living to see that she is safe. According to Naoya Shiga, in Nature and identity in Canadian and Japanese literature, by identifying with nature in this manner in her writing, Kogawa is attending to a most ancient and fundamental Buddhist belief that ascribes a shared life force to all living things; a man might be reborn as an animal, tree, or flower and vice versa, and the spirits of dead ancestors could enter animals, insects, or plants (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p.

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40). What this tradition seems to imply, too, is that Naomi's ancestors are actually the ones who are being called to look after her in her time of need.

Shiga also discusses the Japanese preference for small animals over larger ones. Insects, in particular, are usually bestowed with affection and are welcome reminders of the passing seasons (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 45). The Japanese language has a rich assortment of onomatopoeic expressions representing the calls of the insect kingdom; indeed, the Japanese scholar, Tadanobu Tsunoda, has claimed that, whereas Westerners hear insects' voices as noise, Japanese hear them as comprehensible sound, registering them in the same part of the brain that handles language (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 45).

This diminution of the animals' scale is matched by a shrinking of the stories' landscapes. This too relates to broader cultural differences between Japan and Canada. A recent work by Korean scholar, O-Young Lee, entitled <u>Chijimi shiko no nihonjin</u> (or <u>Smaller is better</u>), points out that the Japanese, being most comfortable when space is limited, have developed a wide range of methods for miniaturizing their environment (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 45). One example is the Japanese garden, which conveys this welcome sense of the 'limited universe' by arranging nature in a condensed but symbolic way – a rock can convey a mountain, a paving-stone can evoke an island. Such miniaturization can be carried to remarkable lengths – the tiniest of the so-called 'box-gardens,' for example, can be held in a hand. The seemingly constricted world of many Japanese stories, therefore, implies a much vaster reality, and the reduced scale of a frog or insect or small bird moving about a private garden, far from suggesting triviality, has a heightening effect.

Ohi's illustration, instead of showing the small animals and insects that Kogawa's text discusses, presents the cherry tree standing, bare-branched, as a lone survivor weighed down by snow in the garden in the middle of winter. It, like Naomi, is forced to withstand the challenges that Canada has inflicted upon it and, therefore, can empathize with her plight; but it also knows,

having faced the predicament before, that spring will eventually come and that things will get better. Kogawa and Ohi, are creating, with their image-text relationship, an enhancing interaction in which the picture amplifies more fully the meaning of the words and the words amplify more fully the meaning of the pictures (2000, p. 226). Since the enhancing interaction is quite significant one could say that the dynamic is complementary.

In the next double-page spreads, Naomi is finally able to come back to Vancouver and be reunited with her cherry tree. Kogawa explains that even though the tree and Naomi have become old and scarred – the tree bleeding sap from having had to endure the elements for so many years and Naomi tired and wrinkled from having had to live a most challenging life – both still have strong spirits; when Naomi's hand touches the bark of the tree the memories and emotions that she has not been able to express for so long come back to her quickly and all at once. Furthermore, although Ohi draws Naomi as an old woman with stooped shoulders and a slightly hunched back, her eyes are lit up with renewed happiness, her complexion once again has a lovely rosy hue, and her clothing, which for the last four illustrations was dark and sombre, has been dramatically changed to a bright red coat (red, in Japan, being the colour of life, vitality, love, and survival). Takao Hagiwara likens this condition to what he terms "regressive growth." In this state, a person attains true maturity and fulfilment by having the courage to reach deep down into his or psyche to know his or her real self, much in the way that a tree's roots reach far into the earth (Tsuruta and Goossen 1998, p. 7). Colour is being employed for two reasons, at this point in the narrative – to act as a signifier of a state of mind (red to convey warmth and love) and to generate a basic sense of emotional arousal (Kriteva in Desire in language1980, p. 221).

In the twelfth double-page spread, Naomi is finally prepared to feel like a complete person again with her pride, her spirit, and her identity returned to her. When she presses her head against the rough bark of the cherry tree's trunk and the tree says "How long I have been

waiting for you. How good it is to see you again," she is able to hear her mother's voice and knows that her mother has been reincarnated into that aspect of nature which she holds most dear. Ohi's depiction of Naomi is a stunningly effective one which suggests that Naomi, conveyed in the way that she is holds the tree and the form her body has taken, is becoming a part of the tree. Naomi's parallel with the tree in the visual imagery recalls Denosky, in his analysis of the Bodhi Tree and Buddhism. In her incarceration of Naomi as a tree-like figure, Ohi is indicating that she has reached the end of her journey in human life and is now ready rejoin nature and continue the path towards enlightenment which can only be found when a person's spirit rises to attain the knowledge at the topmost branches (2006, p. 2). Nikolajava and Scott (2000) would, again, recognize a complementary enhancing interaction in this scene as the text does not convey the fact that Naomi is ready to rejoin nature and enter a new phase and the illustration does not convey that Naomi is able to reconnect with the spirit of her mother in the cherry blossom tree (pp. 225-226).

In the final double-page spread, the cyclical nature of life is emphasized in both art and text. However, the approach that is taken to deliver the message is slightly different as Ohi and Kogawa reverse the order of text and illustration, putting the illustration first (as they did in the first double-page spread). It is my belief that Ohi's intention is to give the readers the opportunity to feel as if they are the next generation to be sitting under the offspring of Naomi's cherry tree partaking of its healing powers through their own quiet meditations without the interruption of words or conscious thoughts. The perspective given is one from the ground up (the worm's eye view), which is the same one Naomi's family experienced all the many years back when they lay on blankets and looked up through the branches of the tree at the clusters of pink blooms blowing in the breeze. Kogawa follows by elucidating that "so it was…and so it continues to be. Throughout the world, the songs of the Friendship Trees and the songs of those who love us forever fill the air like cherry blossoms in spring." Thus, when one cherry blossom

tree reaches the end of its lifespan, and passes on, new cherry blossom trees will spring from the earth from its seeds waiting to guide and nurture future children through their own journeys to wisdom.

Joy Kogawa's knowledge of Japanese culture and her upbringing in the "culture of Buddhism" appear to have had a profound influence on the narrative text of <u>Naomi's tree</u>. Although she consciously chose to suppress and deny many aspects of her Japanese-Canadian identity during grade school, due the fierce prejudicial attitudes that were rampant at the time, as an adult, Kogawa recognized the necessity of dealing with one's challenges and accepting all parts of one's identity to achieve fulfillment; and this change in attitude is reflected in her treatment of her protagonist, Naomi and Naomi's attitude towards nature and Buddhist philosophy. Ruth Ohi's visual interpretations heighten the meaning of the written text by strategically working with and against Kogawa's intended messages at various instances. Some may be surprised by the change in Ohi's style in a movement towards rather concepts and imagery in <u>Naomi's tree</u>, as her previous illustrations for her own books and her collaborations with Hazel Hutchins, Sarah Jennings, and Sarah Ellis are clearly not Asian-influenced and aimed at a younger age group; however, it appears that in doing her research with Kogawa, she acquired a firm grasp of Jodo Shinshu principles, characteristics of traditional Japanese literature and art, and what it meant to be a Japanese Canadian during internment.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Conclusions

In this study, I investigated three main research questions, specifically:

1. How are history and culture conveyed though visual elements in a selection of picturebooks?

2. How are history and culture conveyed through textual elements in a selection of picturebooks?

3. How does the relationship between image and text in selected picturebooks convey historical and cultural meaning?

In this chapter, I address my findings for these research questions in my discussion of the results.

To explore my research questions, I investigated five selected Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks for historical and cultural content: Little fingerling written by Monica Hughes and illustrated by Brenda Clark; West coast Chinese boy; written and illustrated by Sing Lim, Roses sing on new snow written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Harvey Chan; Ghost train also written by Paul Yee and illustrated by Harvey Chan; and Naomi's tree written by Joy Kogawa and illustrated by Ruth Ohi. I divided the books into pairs and investigated a different pair under each of the categories of historical and cultural authenticity of images, historical and cultural authenticity of text, and historical and cultural authenticity in image-text relationships. Little fingerling and West coast Chinese boy were discussed in the historical and cultural authenticity of images section, Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train were discussed in the historical and cultural authenticity of text section, and Ghost train and Naomi's tree were discussed in the historical and cultural authenticity of image-text relationships section. I used New Historicism as the guiding framework for analysis of all of my text and applied semiotic

theories primarily to my historical and cultural authenticity of images section and image-text interaction theories primarily to my historical and cultural authenticity of images section.

In analyzing my primary texts, I observed a number of differences in the way that outsiders and insiders presented their narratives. I began first by examining the images of <u>Little fingerling</u> as illustrated by Brenda Clark. As a cultural outsider wanting to properly relay a traditional tale, Clark pays close attention to maintaining accuracy with respect to a multitude to physical artefacts, and can be praised for the museum-like details she adds to the clothing, hairstyles, footwear, weaponry, and art. In particular, she ensures that characters wear appropriate kinds of kimonos and hairstyles for their stations (whether they be from the upper class or peasant class); fasten their weaponry on the correct sides of their bodies; ornament their clothing with suitably placed family crests (if they are of noble rank); and employ the accepted system of Japanese characters for the time. As well, she incorporates Ukiyo-E woodblock printing as her illustrative style, as that was a popular and respected art form of the Edo Period.

However, the authentic treatment of her characters and the time period does not delve beyond this superficial level. For example, instead of following the strict protocols or codes of conduct for different castes or hierarchies, the nobility and peasants intermingle on a number of occasions in a rather casual manner, and formalities, even within classes, is are completely overlooked. Although no explanation is offered for this situation, in either an introduction or afterword, it is possible to consider that, as a cultural outsider, Clark does not believe that she is bound by the same standards as a cultural insider or is unaware of the magnitude of importance that a cultural insider would place upon behaviour and is, therefore, using her creative license to go deliberately outside expectations of behaviour for her characters. The one illustration where this conjecture may be especially supported is in that of the double-page spread of the inside of the nobleman's house. In this scene there are so many inconsistencies that it is almost as if the viewer is being challenged to identify them as a kind of game. As well, in an article by Professor

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Hideaki Honda, in "Multiculturalism and Canadian picture books" Clark is quoted as stating that although her intention was to portray the Japanese culture accurately she could not help but also include her own stamp of originality (1998, p. 12). Semiotician, Perry Nodelman, in Words about pictures, explains this situation by remarking that cultural outsiders often make the mistake of depicting elements of another's culture without fully understanding the complex system of codes and signifiers that are required (1998, p. 9), and they, therefore, end up with a product that is misrepresentative and does not focus on what cultural insiders would value as being of high importance. New Historicist, Mary Klages, in Literary theory: A guide for the perplexed (2006), would add that Clark has not been able to perceive her subject outside her own culture's perceived views of right and wrong (p. 124).

The area of authenticity that is completely absent, in Little fingerling, is that of an authentic voice. Characters seem to blindly accept their stations in life and, although it would be extremely difficult to challenge the status quo, during the Edo Period, with overt actions, they never even question or discuss subjects of concern. One could speculate that the plot would be richer and more complete if Issun Boshi somehow expressed visually (and or textually) to the reader/viewer his frustration of not being a suitable match for Plum Blossom; if the young noble boy revealed to Issun Boshi his feelings of fear or anxiety at having to soon leave his household to study at a monastery; if the mother showed her quiet feelings of loneliness at having her husband leave the home so often; or if Plum Blossom shared with her lady-in-waiting her sadness at falling in love with a man she cannot marry, but these disclosures do not occur. One could conjecture that an explanation for this lack of perspective is that Hughes, as reteller, is afraid that she would be accused of voice appropriation, but for her to simply connect a string of events leaves a narrative that lacks substance and intensity.

As a cultural insider, Sing Lim, conversely, does a stellar job of depicting an authentic voice for the Chinese-Canadian community in the 1920s through his art in West coast Chinese

boy. Specifically, he demonstrates through his characters' behaviours – actions, postures, and gestures – how families, friends, and clans support one another in times of celebration, need, and ritual observance. What is particularly impressive is that Lim knows exactly which events Chinese Canadians would deem worthy of inclusion in a historical narrative set at that time period and which codes of conduct would have to be followed in order to display appropriate signs of respect in both a Confucian and Canadian system of values. He also is able to show motivations for characters' actions and this helps the viewer/reader to feel a sense of empathy for the characters.

The portrayal of facial features and bodies, in West coast Chinese boy, are also deserving of praise. In a heartwarming manner, Lim reveals, through a variety of judiciously-chosen and placed artistic styles, the mixed emotions of love, pain, confusion, anger, and happiness that he and other Chinese-Canadians experienced while living amongst the racism in Vancouver during early immigration.

Nonetheless, despite their strengths, the illustrations still may not be universally understood, especially by cultural outsiders who make their observations out of context, as found in the criticism levelled at his work by Diane Shklanka. What Shklanka does not consider is that the "humorous caricatures" are paired with the immature cursive script of a young child to convey Lim's innocent reactions of his first summer having to work manual labour at a produce farm on Lulu Island; the exaggerated stick-figures with slit-eyed faces and malicious grins are meant to demonstrate anger at his Chinese teacher for hitting him on the head for not listening to the lesson and disgust at the cruel old man who abused and neglected a small boy sent to Canada to be put under his guardianship; and the blurred glass monotypes are intended to illustrate the community of Chinatown working together to achieve a common goal and a refusal (on Lim's part) to forgo authenticity and fabricate details of events and people that he has not seen in over fifty years.

West coast Chinese boy's illustrated depictions of Chinatown in the 1920s are carefully executed, varied, well-planned, and accurately incarnate the values and emotions of the Chinese-Canadian people. Viewers who take the time to read the text in conjunction with the images and compare illustrations with other illustrations before and after will be amazed at how many events and relationships are present in a single book. In fact, one might wonder as to Lim's motivations in paying such close attention to so many minute details. One possibility may be that he wants to pay tribute to all of the people who helped him and his family get through this most difficult time in their lives. Another possibility is that he is using the book as a cathartic device to allow him to work through the pain, anger, and confusion that he was unable to release at the time the events took place.

In the text of Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train, Paul Yee brilliantly and authentically situates two strong female protagonists within the challenging and rewarding social, historical, and cultural context of Canada's increasingly multicultural climate at a time when women were regarded as the silent and invisible "second-sex." Likely, the main reason for this successful placement is the combination of his comprehensive sociological expertise, creative imagination, historical knowledge, first-hand experience as a descendant of immigrants, and philosophical leanings which allow him to push the boundaries to a certain extent but still keep the narratives within the realm of believability.

To begin, Yee foregrounds his heroines in the centre of a socially and culturally mixed environment, rather than isolating them from intercultural exchange, but he does not give them unlimited range with their communications. Maylin and Choon-yi are able to participate in such activities as travelling across the ocean to North America on a ship from China; shopping for food in public marketplaces; visiting busy train stations; managing a restaurant; and making eye contact with people from other ethnic groups, but neither girl suddenly is able to speak in English, offer her opinions before they are asked for, or work alongside men in the same

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occupation. Likewise, neither girl can openly take credit for an accomplishment; she must wait until her talents are recognized by others.

Next, with respect to cultural interpretation and historicization of women, Yee connects his characters closely to the events of Chinese-Canadian history. They prepare meals for men completing their long days of labour on farms and in mines, hear of other men being injured and killed while working on the railway, and watch unobserved as important officials come to visit their cities or towns. However, they do not make plans to partake in manual labour or be involved in politics, themselves. Instead, they find alternative ways to prove their worth that are just as important, only in a different form.

Folklore is, perhaps, the genre that Yee employs to highlight the best qualities of his protagonists, without limitations, and gives support for their eventual recognition. In his subtle comparison of Maylin to the Chinese Cinderella, Yeh-Shen, he is able to demonstrate how the women in his stories are valued for their intelligence, perseverance, creativity, bravery, and problem-solving skills rather than only for their beauty and obedience. In pairing Choon-yi with the most powerful symbols of male strength, the water dragon, he expresses his belief that if women are able to accomplish feats that are just as difficult as those of a man, they deserve to be associated with symbols that generate the same respect and status.

The philosophical system of values in which Yee was raised, and direct his writings, is very evident in Roses sing on new snow and Ghost train. However, it is fascinating to see how he brings all the different tenets and codes together, while still situating women in a primary role, because, in a number of ways, the goals of Confucianism completely contradict those of Taoism and "Canadianism." In the end, what results is a new hybrid value system where the heroines adhere to the Confucianist values of frugality, modesty, respect for elders, duty, and altruism, reject patriarchal prejudices and female subjugation, embrace the Taoist attributes of

independence, intuition, instinct, spontaneity, and flexibility of attitude, all while working to adapt to the new Canadian climate and topography.

In reading Yee's works, it is evident that he holds women in high esteem. The protagonists of <u>Roses sing on new snow</u> and <u>Ghost train</u> are both given traits that make them deserving of admiration and the direction the narratives take ensures that they reach their goals and eventually find success in their lives in Canada. However, it is intriguing that Yee chooses to incorporate such strong female presences into story lines where it clearly would have been much easier to have subordinated male protagonists play the same role. One might suggest that he wanted to recognize strong female role models in his own life. In "'A Backward way of thanking people': Paul Yee on his historical fiction," Yee mentions that he was raised by his aunt, who was his uncle's second wife in Canada, and she was not only spirited but "had lived a great deal of the history that we read about" (1996, 53). Another hypothesis might be that he is impelled to inspire the many young women, Chinese-Canadian or otherwise, who are still oppressed and are looking for paths of change in their lives.

In studying the image-text relationships, in <u>Ghost train</u> and <u>Naomi's tree</u>, it is most apparent that a culturally-significant theme is featured in each picturebook – that of immigration in <u>Ghost train</u> and that of nature in <u>Naomi's tree</u>. However, the agent that leads to an authentic representation for the culture is not so much the theme, but rather the critical lens through which the theme is investigated. In both picturebooks, the authors and illustrators use the critical lenses to help the protagonists celebrate and heighten their sense of awareness in times of happiness and cope with their pain and confusion in times of turmoil.

In <u>Ghost train</u>, Yee and Chan combine the elements of image and text and apply the critical lens of the ghost story to create a picturebook which embodies the unique experiences and voices of early Chinese-Canadian railway workers. Yee draws on his own background as an experienced historian, an archivist, a descendant of a Chinese railway worker, a Chinese

Canadian immersed in Chinese-Canadian culture, and an avid reader of Chinese folktales and mythology to give his narrative legitimacy.

The ghost story appears to have a number of important roles in Ghost train. First it is inserted into the historical representations in the story in order to help readers and viewers to better understand the immigrant experience. Just as Choon-yi's father's ghost belongs neither to the spirit world nor the earthly realm, upon his death, the immigrant is also caught between home and abroad. The experience of being "unhomed" is a dominant subtext in the literature of the immigration experience. This is especially true when the immigrant, like Yee's Chinese worker, is part of a subordinated minority in a new land.

Next, the ghost story is employed for its potential to trace direct links between past and present. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, in Ghosts: Deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and history note the tendency of traditional history to maintain "an ideal of an inert sense of the past, a past whose 'passing' can be accurately measured, and whose attributes can be quantified" (1999, p. 12). In contrast, the ghost story can elicit dynamic connections between history and the present day. As Buse and Stott argue, "in the figure of the ghost, we see that past and present cannot be neatly separated from one another, as any idea of the present is always constituted through the difference and deferral of the past" (1999, pp. 10-11). Ghost train, both explicitly and more subtly, links the sufferings of the Chinese Canadians with our present.

Third, the presence of the ghost marks a return of community. When Chinese immigrants leave the homeland and comes to the New World they find themselves isolated from their support systems. However, when a ghost from their family returns to guide them they are no longer alone. It is significant that, in Ghost train, Yee chooses to represent not just Choon-yi's father's ghost but also those of the many other men with whom he had worked and perished. As Choon-yi walks through the train listening to the workers talk about their lives, the text recalls an earlier passage in which her father describes how, in the new world "he and his friends gathered

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around the campfire at night to keep the loneliness away" (1996, n.p.). For Yee, community is of vital importance to the immigrant, in both life and death. As well, by deliberately including this gathering of men, Yee expands his historical account beyond that of the immigrant's experience. The inclusion of these ghosts bring to the forefront the common experience of death for the men while working on the railway.

Fourth, the presence of the ghost story in historical accounts distinguishes those histories as Chinese-Canadian histories. Unlike in Western print culture and society, where ghosts only appear in literature as features of fiction, in Chinese culture, ghosts are believed to actually be real entities that guide one through life and watch over and protect their descendant's families. As Yee states in Davis' article,"'A backward way of thanking people': Paul Yee on his historical fiction," "ghosts represent a powerful force in my life" (1996, p. 66).

As Davis states, not only does Choon-yi's art provide entry into the past and a view of community life, not only is it a record of human suffering, but it is also the instrument of spiritual liberation" (1996, p. 51).

Ghost train effectively personifies an authentic voice for the Chinese-Canadian experience; it gives dignity and importance to a group that have been typically been left out history books (Chinese-Canadian women); and its complexity and sophistication invite readers and viewers to return for repeated interpretations. However, the one area that is not seemingly resolved at the conclusion is Choon-yi's uncertain future now that her father's spirit has been sent to heaven. Two possibilities seem to surface as to why Yee and Chan have closed with a final state of ambiguity: one, they are trying to encourage readers and viewers to consider more carefully the situation of women in their own societies or two, they are trying to offer one further criticism of traditional Chinese society and its lack of respect for women and people who are different.

Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ohi, in <u>Naomi's tree</u>, combine the elements of art and text and use the critical lens of Japanese Buddhism to produce a text that captures a unique experience and voice of an interned Japanese-Canadian. Through their narrative, they demonstrate the changes in Naomi's relationship with nature as she moves through the stages of life and gains new knowledge. At the beginning of the narrative, art and text both convey that Naomi is being nurtured by a gentle and mothering nature while remaining in what Japanese Buddhists would call "a naive state of bliss." To fully appreciate the experience, Naomi takes a moment to enter into what Buddhists would describe as "attentive silence." As Charlotte Izumi Abrams comments in her dissertation, <u>Speaking through the silence</u>, "moments in nature are perfect moments for attentiveness [where] Naomi is able to exemplify her use of silence to attend to her surroundings" (1997, p. 113).

In the middle of the narrative, upon internment, art and text become darker, more spare, sad, and, consequently, less connected with one another as Naomi and her family are removed from each other, the nature that they love, and also symbolically from their identities. Kogawa writes less descriptive text and leaves more blank space on her pages and Ohi separates Naomi's mother from her family in colours of clothing, lack of light on her face, and in physical proximity on the page. As the story progresses, Naomi and her beloved tree are also isolated from one another and they no longer are able to see, feel, or hear how the other is doing. Izumi Abrams explains that this "physical blank space" or emptiness in text and illustrations is a means of epitomizing in Japanese-Canadian literature two types of silence that Japanese Canadians experienced or exhibited during internment: imposed silence and stoic silence (1996, p. 91). Imposed silence refers to how the Canadian government took away the Japanese-Canadians' voices by prohibiting them from expressing their beliefs and stoic silence refers to the silence of meditation that many Japanese Canadians chose to employ during internment as a way of exerting power in a way that the government could not control.

At the narrative's conclusion, image and text support the messages of one another again but this time each conveys the idea that Naomi is now prepared to become a part of nature and to leave her earthly life behind. She hears her long-deceased mother's voice when she hugs the tree, her body takes the form of its trunk and branches, and her mind is finally free and content. John Denosky (2006) would describe this state of development as a readiness for Nirvana, where boundaries are transcended and complete knowledge of enlightenment is attained (p. 2).

Joy Kogawa and Ruth Ohi, in <u>Naomi's tree</u>, do an outstanding job of representing an insider's perspective of Japanese-Canadian internment. Through the theme of nature and the critical lens of Buddhism they convey how many Japanese Canadians dealt with their pain and confusion by meditating in silence and turning inward, in a form of "regressive growth." It is interesting, though, that Naomi, as a third-generation Canadian, is able to adopt this traditional Japanese approach so easily and with such a high degree of acceptance. One may speculate that Kogawa is suggesting that the culture of Buddhism is so ingrained in what it means to be Japanese Canadian that Naomi turns to it instinctively, perhaps without comprehending its full meaning.

The focus of this study was to identify differences between insider and outsider perspectives when investigating cultural and historical authenticity in a selection of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian texts. In analyzing perspectives of the images, text, and image-text interactions, in my five picturebooks, it has become apparent to me that insider perspectives seem, overall, to better reflect the voices of the cultural groups they are representing; consider many more philosophical and political beliefs around history, generate far more intense emotional reactions from readers and viewers, and give power to people whose narratives have been suppressed in the past. One may suggest that these situations occur because insiders are more personally invested in their works and have greater expectations for accuracy placed upon

them. As well, insiders tend to be more aware of the elements of culture and history that the

represented group would feel compelled to emphasize.

When I compared the Japanese-Canadian picturebooks with insider perspectives to the

Chinese-Canadian picturebooks with insider perspectives, I noticed a number of parallel features.

First, I found that family seemed to be a very visible presence in both. Parents, grandparents,

and other older relatives guided and supported children in life and in death, and children, in turn,

reciprocated by offering honour and respect. However, the one main difference between the

cultures was that in the Chinese-Canadian picturebooks the Confucianist value of filial piety,

with its sense of duty, was more pronounced. Second, in dealing with discrimination, both the

Japanese-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks demonstrated the importance of not

resorting to feelings of despondency and victimization. Using the admirable qualities of inner

strength, fortitude, intelligence, creativity, and perseverance all the protagonists prove

themselves, not just to be survivors, but victors in overcoming the trials of adversity. Third, in

order to assist with the solving of problems, both Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks

turn to some form of spirituality.   For the Japanese Canadians, spirituality takes the form of

silent meditation, connecting with nature, and the search for peace and enlightenment. For the

Chinese Canadians, spirituality mainly takes the form of connecting with ones' ancestors.

However, both cultures employ spirituality to prepare themselves for the afterlife.

When I compared the Chinese-Canadian picturebooks with insider perspectives with one

another I came to other conclusions. First, I discovered that the establishing and maintaining of a

sense of community was an absolute necessity in Chinese-Canadian culture. When individuals

immigrated to Canada, their families and clans were, inevitably, much smaller so they often

formed relationships with other families to ensure mutual prosperity, health, and support in times

of need and celebration. Sometimes, that bond took the form of providing labour in others'

business, other times it took the form of helping to prepare for festivals, celebrations, and rituals,

and still other times it took the form of protection against racism. Second, I noticed that women were often given central roles and portrayed as being resourceful, courageous, creative, intelligent, and adept at solving problems. In traditional history, the voices of Chinese-Canadian women were all but omitted from canon of literature, but Yee and Lim give them recognition, status, and, as a result, a sense of power and voice. Third, I found that ghosts were a profoundly influential presence in all the books. However, unlike Western ghosts who resided primarily in fiction, Chinese-Canadian ghosts were considered to be an important part of the lives of the living and had the important role of guiding families towards their goals.

Undoubtedly, there are many advantages to having Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks with insider perspectives available in classrooms and libraries. Not only do they make for exciting reads, but they also give power to a group of people who have traditionally been marginalized in history; they elevate the self-esteem of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian children (who have opportunities to see themselves in the literature); and they not only inform outsiders about the issues and ideas that Japanese- and Chinese-Canadians deem important, but they also raise an awareness of the unique narrative styles through which those issues and ideas are presented. However, in order to appreciate the full potential of these works, it is necessary that readers and viewers see them as integrated wholes rather than a sum of isolated parts. In conducting my research, I observed that although looking at images and texts separately was a productive exercise, the most revealing epiphanies about authenticity were ascertained when the art and text were examined in conjunction with one another.

Limitations of Study

For my thesis, I qualitatively investigated the cultural and historical authenticity of five Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks, concentrating on the Japanese-and Chinese-Canadian viewpoints and ways of storytelling. Certainly, in a study of this sort and number of

primary texts, it is not possible to produce a complete explanation of cultural and historical authenticity; but according to Robert Donmoyer (as cited in Davis-Harris 2004); such a study can suggest possibilities of understanding. As such, the findings of this study, despite the limitations of the parameters of research and the number of title discussed, may impact teacher practice in the evaluation, selection, and consumption of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks.

Expanding further, another limitation that I encountered was the lack of availability of Asian-Canadian picturebooks that fit my criteria for inclusion. Unfortunately, there are only a limited number of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks containing Japanese or Chinese characters and themes that are focused on a particular historical era and incorporating authentic voices. As a result, I had to base the analysis of my data from a smaller selected sampling frame than I would have preferred.

There may also be some criticism of my role as a researcher. In qualitative research, the researcher is considered to be an instrument (Creswell 1998). As a third generation, Canadian-born female of Japanese descent I bring my own positionality to the research. I argue that my ethnic background and ongoing work with Chinese-Canadian children in the school environment gives me a certain familiarity and insider perspective with the picturebooks of this study, a perspective that allows me to better analyze the cultural authenticity of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks as I have insights and access into these specific cultures. Elizabeth Howard states, "It is difficult for reviewers who are [non-members] to evaluate authenticity unless and until they have immersed in a large body of authentic works" (1991, 92). My understanding of the Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian experience is derived from having lived the experience, having communicated with elders in my family, having shared the geographical location of several of the primary texts, having immersed myself into the culture and literature, and having conducted extensive research in this area.

My ethnic background was more beneficial to my study than not; but it also presented some disadvantages. First, I had to continually check myself to maintain my objectivity as a researcher. Second, although I am familiar with Asian Diaspora, I have a greater understanding of Japanese-Canadian than of Chinese-Canadian identities especially of the second and third generations. I conducted research when necessary in order to broaden my own cultural understandings and not to make any assumptions about my own perceived knowledge base. In addition to being a cultural insider, I am also a consumer of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks for children (as a teacher practitioner and teacher educator). Again, having such insider perspectives proved to be more advantageous than not in that I understood and accounted for various nuances such as jargon, politics, and other elements. As I am aware of these subjectivities and limitations, which I cannot ignore or deny, I accounted for them by reporting and acknowledging my biases.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study provides some preliminary findings of the ways in which insider perspectives convey historical and cultural authenticity in Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks. However, it calls for further research in the field. As the sampling frame of selected texts was very limited, I suggest that five years from now a subsequent study be done that draws on a larger sample. Additionally, it would be beneficial to determine how the insider perspectives of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks differ from those of Japanese- and Chinese-American picturebooks. Next, it would be useful to investigate the characteristics of Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian picturebooks that focus exclusively on ghost stories or exclusively on folklore. Finally, it would interesting to observe if there any significant ways that the insider perspectives of Japanese-Canadian picturebooks vary from those of Chinese-Canadian picturebooks.

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