

The Jewish Experience in Canadian Children's Literature

• Judith Saltman •

Résumé : Cette étude porte sur les catégories, les tendances et les modèles de l'expérience des Juifs comme elle se manifeste dans la littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse; elle suit le développement historique et les types de fiction, de livres d'images, de folklore et de poésie publiés au Canada, où s'imposent des thèmes, des éléments et des personnages juifs. De plus, l'enquête essaie de fixer le point auquel la littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse d'inspiration juive reflète l'identité et l'expérience judéo-canadiennes; elle cherche également à déterminer s'il existe des différences entre les livres américains et canadiens pour la jeunesse, dans lesquels se manifeste une présence juive. La bibliographie annotée inclut des livres des écrivains et illustrateurs juifs et non-juifs, ainsi que des ouvrages qui traitent des aspects de la culture des Juifs, de leur histoire, et de leurs personnages et thèmes littéraires.

Summary: This survey considers the categories, trends, and patterns of the Jewish experience as depicted in Canadian children's literature. It traces the historical development and types of fiction, picture books, folklore, and poetry published in Canada with Jewish themes, elements, and characters. It also assesses the extent to which Canadian children's books with Jewish content reflect Canadian Jewish identity and experience, and if any differences exist between American and Canadian children's books with a Jewish presence. The annotated bibliography includes books by both Jewish and non-Jewish writers and illustrators that address aspects of Jewish culture, history, characters, and themes.

In their introduction to a special issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn* on "The Jewish Presence in Children's Literature" (2003), guest editors Suzanne Rahn and Naomi Sokoloff point out that although the Jewish experience is part of children's literature, there is a scarcity of critical writing on the subject:

There is a Jewish presence in English-language children's literature, whether it is Jewish characters we are thinking of, or Jewish history, or Jewish folklore, or the considerable number of Jewish authors and illustrators who create, in some sense, from within their identity as Jews. Yet no real attention has been paid to defining what this presence consists of or what its overall effect might be. . . .

There have been studies of individual Jewish authors who wrote for children, most notably Isaac Bashevis Singer. Still, in-depth criticism and interpretation in this area have been rare, with one exception: studies centering on the Holocaust. (v)

The following survey and annotated bibliography attempt to redress this oversight in a Canadian context. The survey considers the categories, trends, and patterns of the Jewish experience as depicted in Canadian children's literature. It traces the historical development and types of fiction, picture books, folklore, and poetry published in Canada with Jewish themes, elements, and characters. It also assesses the extent to which Canadian children's books with Jewish content reflect Canadian Jewish identity and experience, and if any differences exist between American and Canadian children's books with a Jewish presence. The annotated bibliography includes books by both Jewish and non-Jewish writers and illustrators that address aspects of Jewish culture, history, characters, and themes. Some titles have not been included, given that this is a selective rather than comprehensive bibliography.

Jewish writing for children in Canada is part of the segment of Canadian children's literature that addresses the construction of a national identity committed to tolerance, respect, and inclusion in a multicultural society. Writing for children and young adults in Canada increasingly portrays ethnocultural diversity, religious pluralism, and overt anti-racism. In critical writing, there is generally a celebratory tone in the discussion of multicultural books for Canadian children. For example, Isabel Pascua, professor of translation at the University of Las Palmas in Grand Canaria, Spain, who is researching cultural diversity in Canadian children's books, comments from the perspective of another country:

I was very impressed to see how many ethnic groups you have represented in Canadian picture books. . . . I have encountered a new type of book that I haven't read before, in which multiculturalism is something implicit, . . . something natural. I feel Canada has taken another step forward in society and children's literature — Canadians find multiculturalism natural. (Interview)

Some Canadian critics, however, have expressed concern that there is not enough being published that reflects the diversity of Canadian society. Jeffrey Canton, reviewer of children's books for *Quill & Quire* and *Books in*

Canada, evaluates Canadian children's books of cultural diversity in this way:

We don't cut it at all. We're appalling. We're really bad [in comparison to] Americans. . . . We [publish] unbelievably good First Nations stories. But where are the Chinese, the Asian, the Korean, the Black stories? We just don't have [them]. We've got no gay and lesbian books. . . . The Americans are at that point where they're now creating stories that . . . are . . . powerful just for the sake of the stories themselves. There are so many interesting and evocative books. . . . Lee and Low, which is their big multicultural publisher, [publishes] great [books], but I have to say that a lot of other American publishers — big American publishers as well as small — [do] that as well. . . . But we really don't have enough diversity material. In terms of picture books we are very, very weak. We do slightly better in terms of young adult novels, but not much. (Interview)

Whatever the critics have to say about the nature of multicultural literature in Canada, writers from self-identified minority groups in Canada sound very similar in their stated objectives about why they write and how their heritage influences their narratives. Paul Yee explains, "I don't write because I want to be a generic writer; I write because I happen to be Chinese-Canadian. I am interested in . . . issues around identity, history, nationalism; all of those things influence, even motivate me, to write. That perspective comes from being a minority" (Interview). George Littlechild comments, "I try to reflect the themes of First Nations' experience: that culturally we have survived; that we have risen above our historical experiences; that society has a lot to learn from First Nations culture and people; and that what we have to give to society is important" (Interview).

Jewish Canadian writers discuss similar motivations and the awareness that writing of cultural identity is an affirmative and political act. Rhea Tregobov considers how, for her and for other Jewish writers for children, writing from cultural identity must be rooted in memory, in "the creative power of this tradition of remembering and evaluating the past" (285). She continues:

For millennia we were a people without a land, and our cultural survival depended upon memory, upon remembering and interpreting the lessons of the past. Our pockets were empty but our heads were full. . . .

Remembrance is a gift as well as a burden. When we present Jewish children or children belonging to any minority with authentic images of their own culture, we not only arm them against prejudice, we nourish their sense of identity and worth, and protect them against the amnesia that a denial of cultural difference engenders. (286)

Among the stories created out of the experience of living within a minority culture — stories of identity, history, survival, diaspora, discrimina-

tion, and the forging of a new pluralistic national identity from diverse cultural identities — where are the cultural and historical narratives of Canada's Jewish children and young adults? What do these narratives tell us about the Jewish presence, image, and role in Canada and its literature?

It is important to examine what messages Canada's children's books carry about Jewish people at a time of global (including Canadian) resurgence of anti-Semitism. In 2003, according to an article published in the *Toronto Star*, "584 acts were reported to the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada. . . . In its 2003 audit of anti-Semitic incidents, the organization recorded a 27.2 per cent increase in anti-Semitic acts countrywide from 2002. Most involved harassment, with vandalism the next most common" (Leong). Canadian newspapers throughout 2004 have reported increasing acts of anti-Semitism, primarily in Montreal and Toronto but in other Canadian cities and towns as well: headstones overturned at Jewish cemeteries; homes and cars belonging to Jewish people vandalized and painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans; anti-Semitic graffiti painted on synagogues; and the school library firebombing of a century-old Jewish elementary school, United Talmud Torah, in Montreal on 6 April 2004, the eve of Passover. On 2 June 2004, Statistics Canada released a national survey on hate crimes in Canada, reporting that "Jews are the most likely minority group in Canada to be victims of hate crimes. . . . [T]he federal agency said anti-Semitism was to blame for one-quarter of almost 1,000 hate crimes reported by 12 major police forces in 2001 and 2002" (Tibbetts). Against this backdrop of social instability, it is helpful to examine the historical development of the Jewish population and Jewish writing in Canadian society and to consider what differences exist between the Canadian and much larger American Jewish populations in demographics, history, and literature.

American Jewish literature for adults and children dominates the genre of Jewish writing from any other country except Israel. Canadian writing on Jewish life and character strongly resembles that of the United States, but there are subtle differences. The major difference between Canadian and American Jewish life, culture, and literature is one of scale. The total Canadian population of approximately 30 million is one-tenth that of the United States. The Jewish population in Canada is also very small compared to that of the United States, with close to sixteen times more American (approximately 5.6 million) than Canadian (over 350,000) Jews (Weinfeld 6, 425). Canada has a vibrant Jewish community, but nothing like the critical mass that has made the United States the centre of Jewish life outside Israel.

Given that the size of the book market is also based on population, Canadian children's books are published in smaller numbers than in the United States. In the 1960s, only 60 or so Canadian books for children were published annually; by 2004, that number had risen to over 400 books a

year. Compare this to the 5,000 to 6,000 children's books published annually in the United States. This combination of factors has resulted, by comparison with the United States, in a children's writing and publishing scene marked by a smaller pool of children's writers, a limited reading audience, and a modest publishing and book trade industry, which is, in fact, only 25 to 30 years old compared to the hundreds of years of American children's publishing. The number of Canadian children's writers on Jewish themes would therefore be proportionately smaller than that found in the United States.

These difficulties of scale have been somewhat overcome in the last two decades with an explosion in writing, illustrating, and publishing children's books, particularly those representing the cultural diversity of Canada. Canadian adult and children's literature commonly address the question of what is unique to this country and its evolving identity. A corollary may be whether a changing construction of social reality in the children's literature can be linked to government policies on multiculturalism.

Within the ongoing quest for a Canadian national and multicultural identity, sociologists, political theorists, and writers have positioned the immigrant and acculturation experiences of Canadian Jews. According to Morton Weinfeld, in *Like Everyone Else . . . but Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews* (2001), the most current analysis of demographic and sociocultural trends in Canadian Jewry, "the experience of Canadian Jews can teach us something about the limits and possibilities of diversity, and in particular about multiculturalism in Canada. . . . Jews . . . had for generations been living within yet apart from host communities throughout the Diaspora. . . . Jews were, and are, a Canadian multicultural community par excellence" (7).

One evident difference in a comparison of Jewish children's literature from Canada with that from the United States is the documented Jewish history in the two countries which is reflected in the settings and content of some of the books. According to Weinfeld, Jewish patterns of immigration, settlement, and demography in Canada developed differently from those in the United States: "Jews in large numbers came earlier to the United States, so they have had more time to assimilate. Recently, Canada has had relatively far more Jewish immigrants, who presumably have stronger ties to Jewish tradition" (11). The longer-lasting waves of Canadian Jewish immigration may have resulted in Jews resisting assimilation and continuing strong religious and cultural practices. Or, possibly it is "due to the . . . Canadian multicultural 'mosaic' versus the American 'melting pot'" (11), but Canadian Jews, according to Weinfeld, are "more Jewish" (11), less assimilated, and less secular in their knowledge of Yiddish, Hebrew, and religious ritual observance than American Jews.

In contrast to the urban-settling Jewish immigrants to the United States, Jewish immigrants to Canada settled the Canadian West in the early twen-

tieth century as farmers, peddlers, traders, and small-town merchants in addition to locating in big cities. Weinfeld explains, "The migration of Eastern European Jews also coincided with the expansion of the Canadian population westward. While Jewish life was indeed centred in the cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, there were also many Jews living in rural areas and smaller cities and towns" (60). Unlike the United States, Canadian governmental policy of the early twentieth century gave away land to encourage prairie settlement. As well, specific initiatives of Jewish philanthropists such as the Baron de Hirsch resulted in a tradition of Canadian Jewish farmers as well as the urban dwellers of Jewish North American history and cultural lore.

Many Jewish families lived in non-urban, rural isolation from Jewish culture and community, as did my own grandparents, who homesteaded in Saskatchewan at the turn of the twentieth century. As Weinfeld explains, "Efforts to set up Jewish agricultural colonies in the Prairie Provinces in the 1930s under the patronage of the Baron de Hirsch eventually came to naught. But those agricultural efforts grew to assume a mythic status in the history of Canadian Jews" (61).

Writers of adult fiction began mining the Canadian Jewish experience in the years before the First World War when immigrant writers in Yiddish and Hebrew responded to the waves of immigration from Eastern Europe. Another wave of Holocaust survivor immigrants brought new writers to Canada. From the early twentieth century on, writing in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and (this is particular to Canada) French, Jewish writers chronicled the Jewish immigrant experience, daily life, and cultural communities; from mid-century on, they added the Holocaust and Israel. Mid- and late-twentieth-century Canadian Jewish poets, playwrights, and novelists such as Eli Mandel, Phyllis Gotlieb, Irving Layton, A.M. Klein, Leonard Cohen, Adele Wiseman, Mordecai Richler, and Matt Cohen, as well as recent authors such as David Bezmozgis, have written of the Jewish-Canadian experience to international acclaim.

The group of Jewish-Canadian writers for children is smaller in number than its adult counterpart and began publishing at a much later date in the 1970s. A handful of Canadian Jewish children's book writers, such as Mordecai Richler, Gordon Korman, Teddy Jam (pseudonym of Matt Cohen), and Sue Ann Alderson do not explore the Jewish experience in their fantasy, realism, or picture books. Their works may reflect Canadian life, but are not overtly Jewish. This is particularly surprising in the case of Mordecai Richler's *Jacob Two-Two* series, since Richler's writing for adults helped define Canadian Jewish writing. The *Jacob Two-Two* books are a form of exaggerated comic fantasy that might preclude the depiction of a specific culture or ethnicity. Yet, *Jacob Two-Two and the Dinosaur* (1987) includes bumptious Canadian government officials, bumbling bureaucrats, and the RCMP. No characters appear Jewish, which is ironic, given that Richler

based the child characters on his own children. Traces of sardonic and satirical humour in the series, however, are familiar from the Jewish narrative voice in Richler's adult novels.

Perhaps the absence of a Jewish presence in Richler's writing for children reflects what Suzanne Rahn refers to as the "invisibility" of Jewish themes and characters in her survey of British and American children's books from the nineteenth century to the 1970s, when Jewish content in American children's books became more common. According to Rahn, Jewish characters were absent from mainstream American and British children's books well into the 1960s (304), even through the postwar period of internationalism in children's publishing, when cultural diversity became an important aspect of American publishing (312). Anti-Semitism was so current and accepted in mainstream society and media that the portrayals of Jewish characters were usually unsympathetic or at best ambivalent stereotypes, from earlier centuries' classic literature (Shakespeare's Shylock and Dickens's Fagin) to the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century children's books of British author E. Nesbit. Her *Story of the Amulet* (1906) includes a mass extinction of the Jewish capitalists, depicted as having control of the British economy, at the London Stock Exchange (Rahn 304). On the other hand, Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) includes a positive portrayal of a medieval Jewish storyteller (308). According to Rahn,

the widespread "invisibility" of Jewish characters in mainstream English-language children's literature . . . has been, for the most part, an invisibility of absence; until thirty years ago, Jewish characters of any sort were extremely rare. . . . Jewish characters, whatever the author's private intention, were not explicitly identified as "Jewish," which meant that as far as most young readers were concerned, they might as well not be Jewish at all. Clues of physical appearance, speech, dress, and nomenclature which — often stereotypically — might spell Jewishness to an adult reader would be illegible to most children.

In the past, when blatant anti-Semitism pervaded Western culture, invisibility of this type helped slow the seepage of race prejudice into children's minds. (304)

The first children's book in Canada to have the distinction of including a Jewish character (whom we never actually see; we just hear a report of him) is L.M. Montgomery's iconic *Anne of Green Gables* (1908): the stereotypically tricky, dissembling peddler who knowingly sells Anne the hair dye that turns her hair green (and charges her more than the dye is worth). As Rahn comments,

The few explicitly Jewish characters who appear in children's literature of the Golden Age are usually peripheral and portrayed in terms of negative stereotypes, such as the dishonest peddler . . . who sells Anne the dye that

turns her red hair green instead of black. In this case, L.M. Montgomery goes out of her way to identify the peddler as a "German Jew" who tells Anne that he is "working hard to make enough money to bring his wife and children out from Germany. He spoke so feelingly about them that it touched my heart," says Anne. Clearly, in Montgomery's opinion, it shouldn't have. (304)

Jewish characters did not evolve beyond negative stereotype or marginalized presence in early-twentieth-century children's books. Rahn continues her survey:

After 1910, Jewish characters of any importance seem to have disappeared entirely from English-language children's literature, and perhaps, given the virulent racism of the 1920s, it is just as well. . . .

The absence of Jewish characters is particularly noticeable in American children's literature, where internationalism became a major theme after World War I. . . . [and introduces] American children to their European roots. . . . In the 1930s, under the influence of the depression, the emphasis shifted inward, toward stories based on American history or on America's regional and ethnic cultures. . . . Surveying this unprecedented range of ethnicities, the non-presence of Jewish characters seems all the more remarkable. (312-13)

While American publishing continued to ignore Jewish content, Canadian children's book writers followed suit, including no Jewish character or reference, despite the waves of Jewish immigration to Canada, similar to the U.S., during the first half of the twentieth century. The few early Canadian children's books, however, focused on Canadian themes of the wilderness and outdoor adventure, history, biography, and wild animals. Writers certainly made little room in these stories for ethnic presence beyond the cultural identities of the British, Scottish, French, and (usually stereotyped) First Nations peoples.

Rahn continues her survey with the Second World War:

By the late 1930s, Jews were fleeing Nazi Germany in great numbers, and many took refuge in Britain and America. Not until World War II was actually underway, however, did they begin appearing in children's books, now depicted in ways that represented a marked change in attitude. These Jews were almost invariably appealing characters, serving not only to illustrate the evils of Nazism abroad but to imply that anti-Semitism was equally unacceptable at home. Many were token characters; others . . . were better developed, yet "invisible" to young readers. . . .

Although "liberal" was to become a dangerous word once the war was over and the anti-Communist crusade had begun, the change in status for Jewish characters was permanent. Any hint of negative stereotyping had disappeared; the hook-nosed capitalists, greedy moneylenders, and tricky peddlers were gone for good. (313-15)

Canada's World War II record on Jewish immigration was dismal; the "one-is-too-many" attitude of the Mackenzie King administration resulted in almost all Jewish refugees being denied entry into Canada. In contrast to the increase of Jewish characters in British and American children's books of the period, the continuing small number of Canadian children's books included no Jewish characters. When characters and themes of cultural diversity began to enter Canadian children's writing in the 1940s and 1950s, the focus on European immigration did not extend to Jewish immigrant characters.

In American publishing, 1951 saw a ground-breaking book — the first treatment of a realistic, sympathetic Jewish family in Sydney Taylor's classic *All-of-a-Kind Family* series. Taylor dramatized the life, customs, holiday rituals, and growing pains of five Jewish sisters living in New York's Jewish Lower East Side at the turn of the twentieth century. The series captured the texture of the early-twentieth-century Jewish immigrant experience, and "for an entire generation, the *All-of-a-Kind Family* books served as their introduction to Jewish religion and culture — an introduction to be found nowhere else in American children's literature" (Rahn 316).

The *All-of-a-Kind Family* series influenced American and Canadian child readers of the period who would become writers. In their 1950s and 1960s memories of childhood, Rhea Tregobov in Winnipeg and Sharon Kirsh in Halifax, echoing Rahn's survey, use the adjectives *invisible* and *absent* to describe their experience of Jewish self in society and in story. According to Rhea Tregobov,

In mainstream society . . . as a Jew, I felt invisible. We are now accustomed to the reluctance of the larger society to recognize our minority status by virtue of our so-called invisibility as a minority, but what I'm talking about goes even further into the psyche. The invisibility of being Jewish was a product of looking out into the available cultural paradigms and seeing next to nothing that reflected my own experience. I remember the shock of delight when I came across the All-of-a-Kind Family series of books, in which the family was recognizably Jewish. Even in these books, the barrier of location (the books were situated in New York City) remained an impediment to full identification with the protagonists. (292)

Sharon Kirsh's memories are similar to those of Rhea Tregobov:

Growing up in Halifax [in the 1950s and 1960s] we had no exposure, as far as I can recall, to children's literature with a Jewish theme. While the series of books All-of-a-Kind Family by Sydney Taylor, a Jewish version of *Little Women*, was published in 1951, it was not until five years ago that I read the series. Similarly, I.B. Singer's writings for children might have been available, but we were not introduced to them. During our childhood and adolescent years, the books we read in school and for leisure were of subject matter, imagery and language which in no way reflected any aspect of our

private or communal lives. . . . [W]ho among us can recall even a word about the tragedies and triumphs of religious or ethnic diversity? . . . [W]ho among us can remember an image of a Jewish child living, struggling, laughing? And the language too, was from a world far away from the one in which we lived. . . . [N]ever were there words, special words or expressions or cadences of dialogue that reflected our culture. We were absent. (196)

An inability to identify with the protagonists of popular fiction also characterized the childhood of Sheldon Oberman, who grew up in Winnipeg in the 1960s. Discussing his childhood reading of heroic figures in classic fiction and comic books, he says:

I didn't actually share much in common with the heroes of my books. Most of them were rich and upper class with many noble companions. If they were poor, they were British, French or American poor. They weren't Canadian and they certainly weren't Jewish. I felt different from my classmates, too. Occasionally, someone made me feel badly about being 'a Jew,' though it seldom happened openly. I learned about the Holocaust and about earlier persecutions such as the ones in Russia that killed my great grandparents and others in our family. Even the stories of the Bible ended with the destruction of ancient Israel and the Jewish people expelled. The more I learned the history of my people, the more vulnerable I felt. I had wanted to be a hero, but my Jewishness seemed to be telling me that I was fated to be a victim. (Oberman)

In the United States but not in Canada, children's books throughout the 1950s and 1960s slowly began to depict Jewish characters as neither invisible nor victimized as old taboos fell and new ideas took hold in society and in writing. Internationalism and historical fiction brought Jewish-themed stories from British and American writers Sally Watson, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Josephine Kamm, Geoffrey Trease, and Shulamith Ish-Kishor (Rahn 318). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jean Little was the first contemporary Canadian children's book writer to publish a number of books with a Jewish character. Her books were edited and published in the United States, and she may have been influenced by the growing freedom of spirit in American publishing. Little discussed the genesis of her two books that include Jewish character Kate, who appears first as Emily's friend in *Look Through My Window* (1970) in which Emily and Kate talk about their differences, including religion, with curiosity and respect, and then in her own story, *Kate* (1971):

My editor, Miss Jones of Little, Brown, retired and I met Ellen Rudin who was an editor working under Ursula Nordstrom at Harper. We hit it off instantly. I did not know she was Jewish when I sent her a short version of *From Anna* as a Christmas gift. She was interested in publishing it if I would

rewrite it. In the meantime I sent her two connected novels I had just finished. She got me to turn them into one, *Look Through My Window*. One of the major characters, Kate Bloomfield, was Jewish. . . .

What's the story about the Jewish characters in my books?

I like writing about children who are different, children with burdens to carry or problems to resolve. A child came to a youth group I led who had no idea what religion, if any, her parents claimed was theirs. I decided, then and there, to include such a child in my next book. I chose, at random, to make her father a Jew who had forsaken his Jewish identity to marry a lapsed Anglican. I did this easily, knowing nothing of what I was getting into. I sent the resulting manuscript to my new editor. . . . Our friendship and her editorial skill soon required that Kate turn into a deeper, more complex girl. After finishing *Look Through My Window*, I began writing poems in Kate's voice, chiefly to entertain my editor and friend. Before long, I realized that the poems were really chapters in a novel. I started to write it, in Kate's voice, and finished the first draft in three days. On the third day, I got a letter from Ellen, saying, "I think Kate wants to write her own book. Think about it." That eventually became the novel *Kate* and her poems, years later, were published by Kids Can in a book called *Hey World, Here I Am*. . . .

When I invented Kate Bloomfield, I had no close acquaintance with anyone who was Jewish. That has certainly changed over the years. I am grateful first to Kate and then to Ellen for helping me move from there to here.

I received a lot of letters from Jewish children thanking me for writing about a Jewish child like them. There weren't many books then about Jews or Blacks. I hope I paved the way for the next generation of writers who were Jewish to write their own stories.

Like Florence Crannell Means, who wrote some African-American stories in the 30s to 50s, who would have been read by Virginia Hamilton and inspired her to write her own books. (Interview)

Little's inroads in the depiction of Jews were part of a much larger trend toward increased representation, which Rahn documents in the United States and Britain:

by the 1970s, . . . the invisibility that had hung like a mist over Jewish characters for nearly a hundred years had finally dissipated for good. . . . The invisibility of Jewishness in characters clearly envisioned as Jewish [in earlier decades] by such children's authors as Hilda Van Stockum, Robert Heinlein, and Noel Streatfield seems related to the issue of Jewish assimilation. . . . Invisibility made it possible to imply, for an audience of non-Jewish children (though not for their parents), that Jews were essentially no different from themselves, helping to ensure that these children would grow up free from the prejudices of the parents, or even of the authors. At the same time, British and American authors who believed that the best possible outcome for British and American Jews was to be wholly assimilated into the mainstream culture could thus create a kind of assimilation before the fact. (Rahn 319)

In contrast to American and British children's publishing of the 1970s and early 1980s, the nascent Canadian children's publishing industry of the era was still tiny and underdeveloped, but it was deeply influenced by multiculturalism. From the 1960s on and enshrined in federal legislation in the 1970s, the federal government's policies on multiculturalism reflected a vision of Canada as a vertical mosaic in which ethnocultural groups collaborate in Canadian society while simultaneously preserving their distinctive cultural characteristics. This national discourse has helped shape Canadian children's literature. Many of the pioneering children's publishing houses devoted to indigenous Canadian literature in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as Tundra Books, Kids Can Press, Annick Press, and Groundwood Books, concentrated on multicultural as well as nationalist content that deliberately reflected the evolving model of Canadian society as explicitly multicultural.

Publishing tentatively expanded into its first books of Jewish content by Jewish writers in the late 1970s and early 1980s with themes similar to those of Canadian Jewish writers for adults and American Jewish writers for children: historical and contemporary immigration and acculturation, the entry of the unique Jewish culture into mainstream North American culture, the struggle for identity within an assimilationist culture, the lost world of European Jewry, and the Holocaust. Many Jewish writers of the 1970s and 1980s, however, as had been the case in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, did not identify themselves as Jewish in their children's writing, apparently a longer lasting variant of the "invisibility" of Jewish characters and writers explored by Rahn.

A curious and striking example of this invisibility is found in a sequence of typescript manuscripts in the Dayal Kaur Khalsa fonds (LMS-0163) in the National Library of Canada's Literary Manuscript Collection. Khalsa's *Tales of a Gambling Grandma* (1986), an autobiographical picture book focusing on a girl growing up in Queen's, New York in the 1950s, is intuitively read by adult readers as a story of a girl's relationship with her Jewish grandmother despite the absence of the word "Jew" in the text. But this insight into ethnic identity is not intelligible to the child who cannot read the syntax, tone, and implied nuances of the cultural context.

The fonds include the original typescript of the story and five subsequent edits, all dated and numbered. An examination of Khalsa's first two drafts of *Tales of a Gambling Grandma* show that she originally wrote a longer, more sophisticated narrative that explicitly discusses the Jewish identity of the Grandmother, the anti-Semitic killings of the Czarist pogroms that drive her from Russia to America, and the grandmother's feelings of insecurity and ambivalence towards the non-Jewish world of 1950s Queens. The editing of the original manuscript strips away detailed references to Jewish culture, history, and identity until not even the word "Jew" is found anywhere in the first revised draft.¹

Page one, paragraph two of the unedited original typescript manuscript, headed "Tales of a gambling grandma, first version May 1985," gives greater detail about the grandmother's identity than found in the first revision and final published book:

She was born in Russia; where and when exactly, she did not know. She only knew that one night the Cossacks came to kill all the Jews and she escaped, hidden in a hay cart, wearing only one little black shoe, all the way across the wide, slanting, slate-green Atlantic Ocean to America. (1)

In the revised typescript headed "Grandma was a gambler, first revision, June 1985," the passage has changed to this:

Grandma was born in Russia. When and where exactly, she did not know. She only remembered that one night the Cossacks charged into her village, brandishing their swords, scaring all the people.

My grandma (who was only three years old) jumped into a cart full of hay and covered herself. Somewhere she lost her shoe. And that's exactly how, she told me, she had come to America. . . . (1)

Pages four and five of the unedited typescript manuscript, headed "Tales of a gambling grandma, first version May 1985," include the following:

Her fourth piece of advice was the most serious, based on her own experience. She had been chased by the Cossacks, family and friends cut down by sabers or scattered to the four corners of the earth; she knew what danger was about. And even in the two car security of Queen's, Grandma lived in fear that some day she'd hear the terrible thundering of pounding hooves as the Cossacks swooped down, screaming, upon us. There was no hay cart in our garage. She made me promise to never forget this last piece of advice — what to do when the Cossacks come: Learn to say "Da" and keep plenty of borscht in the refrigerator. (4-5)

In the first revision of June 1985, this passage now reads: "And just in case the Cossacks come to Queen's, learn to say 'Da' and keep plenty of borscht in the refrigerator" (3).

Pages six and seven of the May 1985 first version satirize at length Jewish life and identity in late 1940s and early 1950s America and poignantly present Grandma's perception of non-Jews and Jews:

Our neighbourhood was predominantly Catholic. The times, just after World War II (my father still kept a Victory Garden) and edging toward Joe McCarthy, made any Jew suspect as a potential overthrower of the American way of life, a pinko, a commie. As a counter-balance we attempted to keep a low Jewish profile (not hard literally, since we were very proud of our comparatively small, straight noses); no hanging of herring out on the

clothesline to dry, no dancing with bottles of whiskey balanced on our heads, no haggling over the price of luncheon meat at the A&P. We drank out of Welch's grape jelly glasses, kept our bright green lawn as trim as a crewcut, bought family-sized jars of Skippy peanut butter, and tried not to make waves.

Therefore, when every evening the two tall nuns who boarded in a house around the corner, strolled by, stopping briefly to pat me on the head and give me a bright, shiny, little St. Christopher medal (it was also a time when praying for the Jews was considered an ecumenical act) my grandma pursed her lips into a little radish smile and bit her tongue. But — as soon as the big black habits slowly sailed out of sight around the next corner, grandma put down her knitting, stood up and marched me across the lawn, into the house and into the cool hushed evening twilight of the downstairs bathroom. There, she lifted the toilet lid, took the little oval medal from my hand and dropped it, flipping, flashing end over end like a tiny silver minnow, into the still, waiting water of the immaculate white bowl below. Then she reached across, pulled the silver handle and the little silver medal tumbled around and around in the swirling water, down past the point where you can see, down through the red clay pipes of Queen's and out to the vast, all-accepting Atlantic ocean. "Where it belongs," said my grandma, and closed the lid. And that was that, night after night. (6-7)

This lengthy passage becomes a single phrase in the June 1985 first revision, which refers to "the two tall nuns who lived around the corner" (4).

On page eight of the May 1985 first version, the protagonist refers to herself as "an innocent child of seven and a half, the future of America, who thought babies came out of bellybuttons and that Abraham Lincoln was Jewish because his name was Abie, his nose was big and he wore a black hat" (8). Nothing remains of this passage in the June 1985 first revision.

Khalsa immigrated to Canada in 1979 and lived in Montreal and Toronto before finally settling in Vancouver. Her *Tales of a Gambling Grandma*, either in manuscript or in published form, is not Canadian in content, but it is strongly Jewish, referencing her American childhood growing up as a Jewish child in Queens in the 1950s and her grandmother's escape from Russia. The original May 1985 first version of the manuscript is sixteen pages of typescript. The June 1985 first revision is just over eleven pages, a closer fit for what was to be published as a lengthy picture storybook. The editing tightens and polishes the text, bringing it into closer alignment with the developmental understanding of a preschool and primary child reader. Nonetheless, it is an immense loss to the literary documentation of the innermost stories of Canadian Jewish writers — and a loss for Canadian children — that nothing is left of Khalsa's Jewish identity or that of her acknowledged grandmother's character in the final published work. Was the Jewish content so painful, mature, sophisticated, or marginal that publishing it would have rendered the book less marketable? It certainly high-

lights the complexity of the invisible Jew as theorized by Rahn.

Even when books about Jews were published in the period between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, there is, as I have discussed, a certain editing out of ethnocultural identity. In terms of illustrations, the representation of Jews in this period may act as a block to authenticity. Indeed, critic Michele Landsberg comments on William Kurelek's illustrations for the adult nonfiction book *Jewish Life in Canada*:

His prairie reminiscences were so strong. . . . I hated his later books. He [illustrated] *Jewish Life in Canada* [1976] and he made all the Jews look like Ukrainian peasants. They didn't look anything like Jews and there wasn't a bit of Jewish feeling. I thought he was the exactly wrong person to have illustrated that book. . . . Maybe I've put this too strongly, but it offended me. (Interview)

Jewish visibility in Canadian children's books finally became accepted by publishers and self-identified by writers in the 1980s, a good twenty to 30 years later than its emergence in the United States and England. Rahn's comments about the ethnic awareness of the 1980s in America and Britain applies only partially to Canada:

the growing cultural prominence of ethnic identity, encouraged in America by the civil-rights movement and in Britain by immigration from former colonies . . . led to a new openness about ethnicity. . . . Since the 1980s, the publicity given the Holocaust and its incorporation into school curricula has made Jewishness particularly visible. Most importantly, a new array of Jewish children's authors has not only identified itself as Jewish but produced a wonderful variety of characters who are Jewish too. (320)

In Canada, federal governmental policies on multiculturalism brought a heightened awareness of ethnic identity to children's books at the very outset of contemporary Canadian publishing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but Jewish characters and themes took longer to emerge in children's books. Writing as late as 1998, Tregobov comments specifically on Canadian children's books with Jewish content, the types published, and what is missing from publishing. She identifies holiday books, traditional folk tales, and books about the Holocaust. She points out that

what still tends to be missing, and perhaps most particularly from *Canadian* children's books, are those books in which there is a greater integration between Jewish content and artistic intent. We need more books that address the varieties of ways of being Jewish that contemporary life in Canada offers. We need books about intermarriage as well as orthodoxy, about rejecting as well as affirming parts of Jewish culture, about the ongoing anti-Semitism that challenges the continuation of our culture. Stories that convey the particularities of Jewish culture, the ethos and mythology,

the kinds of family interaction, the history of Jewish immigration to Canada — all of these are, unfortunately, in short supply.

I look at the dearth of available literature and wonder about what factors continue to prohibit us from bringing into our writing our inner sense of Jewishness. I don't wish to dictate to any writer what they write or don't write. But I do find it very curious that writers who are titans of contemporary children's writing (Vera B. Williams, Maurice Sendak and Arnold Lobel) do not demonstrate more explicit evidence of their Jewishness in their books. And this makes me wonder whether a false dichotomy of literary quality *versus* ethnic content is being set up. That, lingering somewhere in our consciousness as writers, there is a sense that "ethnic" content precludes literary quality. (291-92)

What types and genres of Canadian children's books with Jewish characters and themes have been published over the past 30 years? I have divided titles into a broad range of categories. The following discussion gives a few examples of each grouping, and the annotated bibliography adds many more titles to each category. The books divide primarily into groupings that highlight the following topics and genres: the immigrant experience and early twentieth-century life in Canada; cultural diversity and social realism; Jewish folklore; and Holocaust fiction or memoir.

An overview of Canadian children's books with Jewish characters and themes shows few books with distant historical settings but a large number set in the Canada of the last century, particularly the teens, twenties, and Depression era. In these stories, children find a sense of belonging in their families, in their religious identity, and in their Jewish cultural and community life. In immigration narratives, there is a strong sense of a community in exile from its Eastern European roots, struggling with sacrifice and economic survival, hard work, prejudice, poverty, and family tension as the old traditions chafe against the new country's values. In American publishing, the texture of the early twentieth-century Jewish immigrant experience was best captured in Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family* series. A few parallel Canadian novels and picture books focus on the urban, working-class, Jewish immigrant family experience of the same period. Most of them are set in Winnipeg, a frontier society at this time, where early Jewish immigrants were "of Russian origin, . . . more rooted in Yiddish culture, more progressive in outlook and politics, and more integrated into mainstream social and political life than in Toronto and Montreal" (Weinfeld 84). A number of books capture the patina of social history, the values and customs of the 1920s and 1930s, the minutiae of home and school life.

One such book is Bess Kaplan's *The Empty Chair* (1986), which is unusual because it is adapted from Kaplan's adult novel *The Corner Store*. Set in the Depression, it sketches a lively Jewish community in Winnipeg's legendary Jewish North End. *The Wooden People* by Myra Paperny is set in the 1920s and also reflects the proliferation of Jewish businesses in small towns

across the Prairies. In addition, a few historical picture books imply an interest in questions of culture, ethnicity, and identity. Rhea Tregebov's *The Big Storm* and *What-If Sara* are two linked stories of brave young Jewish girls, set in an identifiable Jewish community of 1930s Winnipeg's North End, equivalent to New York's Lower East Side. Tregebov discusses the roots of *The Big Storm*:

The plot originated in a family story; the emotional resonance I was able to bring to the plot came from my deep attachment to the mythic stories of her childhood that my mother told me when I was a child. . . . My sense of being shut off from any family history [by virtue of the Holocaust and immigration] was somewhat alleviated by the stories of my mother's past, by the fact that the North End of Winnipeg was identifiable even beyond its cultural centre. . . .

While initially there was some concern that *The Big Storm* had a limited market because of its articulated ethnic content, the book found a wide audience of both Jewish and non-Jewish readers. I feel more and more strongly that the particular has a universal appeal; that by refusing to be homogenized and by asserting our difference in fact we call up a response to the authentic in every individual. ("Origins" 292-94)

In adult Canadian Jewish writing, family sagas of immigration incorporate the lives of prairie farmers. An example of this in writing for children is Carol Matas's *Rebecca*, which focuses on the Jewish colonies of homesteaders in Saskatchewan communities at the turn of the twentieth century. The depth of Jewish cultural and community life is deeply felt through the use of Yiddish words, Jewish humour, Jewish proverbs, Talmudic study, the presence of shul and ritual observances, and historical references to the Jewish Diaspora.

The difficulties of relocation between the Old and New Worlds and between the Jewish community and broader social community are also themes in picture books. The challenges and trials of reconstructing life, family, and self in the new country are seen through the lens of social history in works that document the Jewish immigrant experience. Stories of exodus from Europe and arrival and acculturation in North America include Dayal Kaur Khalsa's *Tales of a Gambling Grandma*.

Another cross-generational picture book of a relationship between grandparent and grandchild is Sheldon Oberman's *The Always Prayer Shawl*, in which a Russian Jewish grandfather passes on to his grandson his tallit (prayer shawl) when the child emigrates to North America. The continuity of culture and family is emphasized as the boy becomes an old man and hands down the prayer shawl to his own grandson, completing a generational cycle of wisdom and tradition. Although no specific geographical setting is named in North America, Oberman explained in an interview that the story has personal and Canadian significance:

When my son Adam was turning 13, he was going to have a Bar Mitzvah and I found my grandfather's prayer shawl which he had given to me as a child. . . . I told my son the story of my grandfather and how he came over to Canada and what the shawl meant to him. . . .

I feel *The Always Prayer Shawl* is very Canadian. However, no matter where I go in Canada and the United States, everyone is convinced it's their city that the book is describing. I made a deal with Ted Lewin, the artist, that he was not to indicate anything American in it, because I didn't want it, through the illustration, to exclude my grandfather's experience. . . . Lewin requested that I model the prayer shawl, which I did at my local synagogue and he asked for the shawl, which I sent him. I was surprised to see myself on that first full-colour page. (Jenkinson)

May Cutler, who founded Tundra Books and who published all of Khalsa's books, was the first publisher to issue an explicitly Jewish story of immigration to Canada. Ethel Vineberg's *Grandmother Came from Dworitz: A Jewish Story* (1969) is a long documentary-style picture-storybook, a restrained saga of several generations of Vineberg's Russian-Jewish family detailing their village life, history, and Jewish cultural customs, suffering, and immigration, first to the United States and then to New Brunswick. Published at the beginning of the contemporary Canadian children's literature boom, it may be the first Canadian children's book to focus solely on Jewish presence in Canada. It is certainly one of the first consciously multicultural children's books in Canada and the first book in Tundra's series of memoirs and biographical picture books on the origins of Canadians, created by Cutler to give witness to the multiculturalism of Canadian society and true life sagas of family immigration.

A common subject in adult Jewish fiction is North-American urban life in early-twentieth-century Jewish immigrant districts, often including reference to the Jewish garment trade, immigration, labour history, and women's rights and roles. In Canadian young adult literature, Judith Coburn's *The Shacklands* is an immigration story of a British adolescent who comes to Toronto in 1908. Although the protagonist is not Jewish, this novel of the labour movement within the garment industry includes Jewish characters, cultural vignettes, and references: the older Jewish union organizer; the young, progressive Jewish working-class woman; and a depiction of the Toronto immigrant-receiving area of the early 1900s, mostly inhabited by Jews, as "the Ward, the name for the poor immigrant neighbourhood behind the city hall, which was spat out in contempt by some people" (197).

A portrayal of the early twentieth-century Jewish immigrant from the non-Jew's point of view is found in Janet McNaughton's *To Dance at the Palais Royale*, also a coming-of-age novel of a working-class woman set in 1920s jazz-age Toronto. Aggie finds herself on the Jewish Spadina Avenue, equivalent to the Lower East Side of New York:

a jumble of small shops . . . spilled their wares out onto the street in wild confusion. Many shops had signs in heavy black letters that looked nothing like the alphabet. . . . Finally she realized that single letters in this script were printed above some of the psalms in her Bible. . . . This neighbourhood must be Jewish. . . . People spoke to one another in a language she didn't understand. It was strange, but not frightening. Everyone was busy, lively, interested in what they were doing. (124)

Coburn and McNaughton write of non-Jews meeting Jews for the first time, struggling with social and historical stereotypes (the wealthy furrier, the strike organizer) and finding themselves forced to construct new realities through real human interaction. Both authors give this experience a specific Canadian context and an early-twentieth-century Toronto setting with accurate referencing of the era's political and social history of class, labour, gender, and ethnicity. The protagonists are unafraid of the Jewish people they meet and react protectively when their own family and friends express stereotypical prejudices toward the Jewish characters. This is unusual and perhaps not altogether credible for the time. The Jewish characters are not experienced by these non-Jews as strangers, but as wise guides, warm counsel, and true friends. In both books, the detailed descriptions of the city of Toronto, its immigrant and impoverished neighbourhoods, are authentically realized.

A similar vein of social realism governs the depiction of Jewish family life and anti-Semitic experiences in otherwise mainstream realist novels describing life in mid- to late-twentieth-century Canada. In all of Brian Doyle's novels, for example, the examination of friendship and play among culturally-diverse children and teenagers is contrasted to the social cruelties of racial prejudice and bigotry acted out by adults. In his *Angel Square*, set in the ethnically-mixed working-class neighbourhood of Lowertown, Ottawa in the 1940s, the ugly, murderous racism of the adult world takes shape in a brutal, anti-Semitic attack upon Tommy's Jewish friend's father. As in *Angel Square*, the loss of youthful innocence upon first-hand experience of injustice and prejudice is a theme in a wider group of stories — those dramatizing not the immigrant experience but the empathy and conflict among cultural groups sharing community, friendship, and often prejudice in modern Canada. Set in a small (unnamed, but resembling Halifax) Atlantic coastal city of the 1960s, Sharon Kirsh's *Fitting In* depicts Mollie's struggle with her Jewish identity in the context of her first experiences of cultural and religious prejudice. The growth of self-awareness and quest for personal and cultural identity within the context of a developing understanding of bigotry and exclusion is a theme in many of the contemporary novels set in Canada. Kirsh discusses this and the autobiographical elements of her novel:

My novel . . . describes a skinny slice of Jewish life — small city, Canadian, post-Holocaust 1950s and 1960s. It isn't about Toronto, Montreal or Winnipeg — the self-appointed sculptors of Canadian Jewish culture. It isn't about the USA. . . . It is about a very narrow wedge of time when the Jewish people, worldwide, were attempting in such isolated Jewish communities as Halifax . . . to reconstruct their shattered bodies and souls and confidence. . . .

As a Jew, fitting into the mainstream in Halifax was not without its struggles. The cruel epithets shouted at us by neighbours whom we thought were our friends, the ugly stereotyping by the teachers whom we were supposed to respect as our elders and superiors, the swastikas smeared in mud on the window of our house by neighbourhood kids, the unrelenting mantra of "Jew as Christ-Killer" by our Catholic friends who learned such lessons in church and at Catholic school, . . . exclusion from all curling rinks, exclusion from riding stables and golf courses because we were Jews. . . .

It was the sense in which we came to view ourselves in the face of such bigotry that I hope to capture in my book. (297-98)

Many protagonists in these works of social realism are children of mixed marriages — of Jew and non-Jew — whose personal sense of identity and their families' understanding of tolerance are challenged in adolescence. In William Bell's young adult novel *Zack*, set in a small Ontario town, the teenage boy's father is a Jewish-Canadian academic, his mother an African-American singer. Jean Little also explores the dilemma of religious and cultural choice and family intolerance of a mixed marriage in *Kate*, set in a small Ontario town in the 1960s; the thirteen-year-old protagonist is not sure what being Jewish means to her or to her friends. Sociological and ethical issues of a different kind are at the heart of Carol Matas's contemporary novel *The Prinrose Path*, which addresses a Rabbi's sexual and emotional abuse of girls and women in his congregation.

In the realistic fiction subgenre of child and family life stories, Canada has few novelists writing of a typical Jewish child and family in which Jewishness is not an issue but a natural part of family and cultural life, stories that seamlessly evoke the sensibility of living inside a Jewish life or easily highlight Jewishness, as found, for example, in the works of American Joanna Hurwitz. In her *Starshine* series about a modern Jewish girl living in Vancouver, Ellen Schwartz evokes a Canadian Jewish family life, but with very few specific details that pin down cultural identification.

Differences between American and Canadian works persist in another genre, the Jewish holiday story, published in large numbers in the United States. Canada has produced very few, and none of them fall into the trap described by American Jewish author Eric Kimmel: "the overly selfconscious, trying to explain and legitimize Jewish observance to a polite but condescending non-Jewish audience. 'It's nice that you have your

little holiday. Now let's move on to Christmas'" (412). By contrast, Canadian books on the holidays of Hanukkah and Passover accentuate the social and historical tensions and conflicts of the Jewish child living in a non-Jewish culture. Indeed, two writers focus on the common experience of the Jewish child feeling excluded and confused during Christmas. Jean's Little's picture book *Jenny and the Hanukkah Queen* and Joseph Kertes's *The Gift* address this situation from different perspectives. Little's *Hanukkah Queen* has been the subject of some controversy, including the complaint that she had written a substitute for Santa Claus. Little used the names of Stephen Lewis and Michele Landsberg's daughter and Judy Sarick's daughter for the child characters.

The idea originated with Michele Landsberg, who invented the "queen" for her own children. I instantly knew I wanted to put her into a story about a mother and child. It is about a child's realization that "the Hanukkah Queen" is, in reality, her own mother. This is a painless realization just as my learning that Santa Claus was really my parents was not painful to me. (Interview)

Landsberg also offers illuminating commentary on the book and her involvement with it:

When my first two children were tiny babies, I was living in a town north of Toronto called Newmarket and we were the only Jews that we knew in town. When it was Christmas, and the babies became toddlers, they became aware that every house had Christmas trees. They were so beautiful and everybody was getting presents. I didn't want them to feel as I had, when I was a child in the exact similar situation, that they were deprived. So I said, "Well, don't worry, because the Hanukkah Queen is coming and she brings presents to every Jewish child, whether they've been good or bad. She doesn't care! She loves them all." . . . I tried to make a big deal out of Hanukkah. I tried to make all the Jewish festivals extremely happy and full and rich events for them so that they wouldn't grow up feeling persecuted the way I did in the anti-Semitic Toronto of the 1940s. . . .

In the late 1980s, CBC Radio [did a show] about gift-giving at Christmas. . . . I said, "Count me out. I'm Jewish, so I don't give Christmas gifts." They said, "Well, talk about any gifts, any reminiscences about gift giving." . . . I talked about how I made up the Hanukkah Queen. Jean Little apparently heard this story and was quite charmed by it.

As Jean wrote the story, [she] would call and consult with me. . . . I thought that Jean made the story her own with the intermarriage and the tension around the Santa Claus Parade. I thought . . . that it might really speak to a lot of children. I was dismayed to learn that a very conservative Toronto Jewish community was enraged by the book and Judy [Sarick] was asked to take it off the shelves [of her store]. [Judy] was unable to sell it and I don't think the book lasted long because of that. There was a real backlash against it, because of the intermarriage and this "nonsense" about

a Hanukkah Queen. I even got a few letters, when people twigged that it was originally my story, [from] conservative Jewish men condemning me for having a female figure distributing gifts. (Interview)

The poetic, imagistic writing of Joseph Kertes's *The Gift* also captures the emotional authenticity of a child's ambivalence, caught between two traditions in the unresolved tension of being an outsider who yearns to be part of the majority culture. Of all the contemporary stories of the Jewish and immigrant identity in Canada, *The Gift* has the richest subtext, the strongest implied process of constructing a new Canadian identity. Kertes evokes the experience of all immigrant children in Toronto, the social fabric of multicultural identities, and their overwhelming desire to fit in:

There were many other newcomers in our neighbourhood: others from Hungary, some from Poland, some from the Ukraine, a few from Germany, and one family from Finland. And the one thing most of us had in common was that we wanted to be British-Canadian. . . . But what I wanted to be besides British-Canadian — and what most of the other new Canadians already were — was Christian. The reason for my longing was Christmas. (5-7)

The figure of the Jew as outsider takes on sharper dimensions in another genre, that of Holocaust literature, which draws on historical fiction, social realism and memoir. Since the 1980s, there has been a flood of Jewish children's literature about the Holocaust published in the United States and Canada. Considerable critical and educational writing — in special issues of *Canadian Children's Literature* and *The Lion and the Unicorn*, as well as in several monographs — has addressed the conundrum of how to discuss and write the Holocaust for children. Most Canadian titles are set in the European arena of the Second World War, but often continue with the protagonist's immigration to Canada during or after the war. Many of these novels are written for adolescent rather than child readers due to the grim reality of the Holocaust. Some are written with more passion and heat than skill or subtlety. A small number are memoirs or fictionalized memoirs of the first generation — the Holocaust child survivors. Another group has been written by the second generation — the adult children of Holocaust survivors, telling the stories of their parents or grandparents. These follow the narrative patterns of Nazi occupation, struggle for survival, hidden Jewish children, ghetto and concentration camp life and death, and refugee drama also found in the writings of such British and American Jews as Esther Hautzig, Johanna Reiss, Anne Isaacs, Judith Kerr, and Aranka Siegal.

The question of faith emerges as a theme in many of the Holocaust books as the young protagonists' experiences of persecution, brutality and murder challenge their beliefs; some lose their faith in humanity and god, but others retain convictions of the necessity of human choice, compas-

sion, and action. The writers of Holocaust literature examine the nature of evil and wrestle with the question of how to present an authentic narrative unmarred by “the usual heroic lessons that accompany many children’s books on the Holocaust” (Kertzer 243) — false lessons of hope, luck and spiritual meaning with optimistic happy endings for a developmental age whose literature is defined by just those attributes. Adults prefer offering lessons on human nature that undercut the inexplicable, incommunicable nature of the Holocaust (Kertzer 248). Adrienne Kertzer questions whether Holocaust literature can even be written for children:

The challenge of writing about the Holocaust in children’s literature lies precisely here: resisting the well-intentioned impulse to construct an unambiguous hopeful lesson; considering instead whether there are ways in which even young children’s texts, and certainly young adult texts, can include a space for . . . questions. . . . [M]uch can be explained to young children about the Holocaust, for example, the nature of anti-Semitism, racism, the historical, economic, cultural, and religious events leading to genocide. . . . Yet most children’s books are justifiably reluctant to take on the task of coherent explanation written from within the perspective of the concentration camps. (245)

Canada has published very few books written for children and young adults about the camps. Most narratives are the more positive ones about refugees, about children in hiding, and about the resistance. Kertzer finds Carol Matas’s *Daniel’s Story* to be one of the few successful attempts at “fictional witnessing” (250). The novel uses artifacts as tokens of memory and survival as Daniel manages to take and preserve photographs, which represent his family’s nightmare journey from Germany to Poland, and finally, to the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Many of Matas’s historical novels are set in war-torn Europe. Some, like *Lisa*, are narratives of resistance movements; others are Holocaust stories of the concentration camps and the aftermath of the war.

Several Holocaust narratives focus on the courageous assistance of the Righteous Gentiles, non-Jews who help Jewish adults and children survive by hiding them or assisting them to escape. *My Canary Yellow Star* by Eva Wiseman chronicles a Jewish Hungarian girl’s struggle to secure Swedish passports from Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved 100,000 Hungarian Jews from extermination. *Shoes for Amelie* by Connie Colker Steiner narrates the story of a French boy’s short-lived relationship with the hidden child in his family, a child who is kept in the French village of Le Chabon-sur-Lignon where the Protestant villagers hid Jews throughout the Second World War.

A growing number of Holocaust writings are autobiographies or fictionalized memoirs from the first generation of survivors, who have often taken 50 or more years to discuss their experiences openly. Examples in-

clude the memoir of Regine Miller and the fictionalized autobiographies in Irene Watts and Lillian Boraks-Nemetz's trilogies. Another group, found in Kathy Kacer's writing, is the second-generation memoir: adult children of survivors recreating memoirs of their parents' experiences: stories of children in ghettos and concentration camps, hidden children, and refugee children. Miller, Watts, and Boraks-Nemetz explore the Jewish child-refugee experience: the loss of family, fear, displacement, loneliness, and isolation. Their narratives have post-war settings, both in England or in Montreal, Toronto and Victoria, where, notably, the child protagonists do not find full or easy acceptance but instead experience anti-Semitic hatred or bullying. It is painful — but realistic — that the central protagonist in most refugee stories is not fully welcomed, without prejudice or cruelty, by children, teenagers, or adults, whether in Canada or another country. Indeed, a number of titles, Geoffrey Bilson's *Hockey Bat Harris* and Kathy Kacer's *Margit: Home Free*, for instance, address the rigid policy of exclusion of Jewish refugees by the Canadian government before and during the war.

Related to the genres of autobiography and memoir is the documentary. Canada is known for its groundbreaking documentaries, in film through the National Film Board of Canada and in radio through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, so we should not be surprised to find a powerful documentary about the Holocaust. In *Hana's Suitcase: A True Story*, Karen Levine documents an odyssey towards cross-cultural understanding. Originally created by Levine as an adult CBC radio documentary and then adapted as an informational book for children, it is a moving narrative of loss and recovery.

Another genre that has flourished in Canada is the folktale. A growing number of Canadian picture books are based on the Yiddish oral tradition of Jewish folktales, from Hassidic legends to tales of Chelm, the Eastern European fictional folk village, or shtetl, entirely populated by fools. The great Yiddish writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, such as Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer, retold literary folktales of Jewish rabbis, children, beggars, scholars, angels and devils. Jokes, peasant tales, parables, and superstitions are suffused with Yiddish, the Eastern-European language of Jews. The tales are located in the shtetl, the Eastern-European Jewish village of nineteenth-century Russia and Poland. Often the folklore construction of Chelm, the village of fools, is the setting. Chelm tales are variants of the global nonsense, noodlehead, or simpleton stories, but in the Chelm tales, folly is often inverted, and absurdity leads to personal revelation and wisdom. Gary Clement, Aubrey Davis, and Richard Ungar retell Chelm stories rich with the wit of nonsense and inverted perceptions, celebrate the foolish and often tragicomic schlemiel or fool and evoke the lost world of the Eastern European shtetl with wit, pathos and historical accuracy. The retellings from the oral tradition of legend and folktale succeed in restoring a cultural past lost to oppression.

Phoebe Gilman's *Something from Nothing* is a variant of the Yiddish folktale and folksong that define the Jewish experience of loss and renewal. It treats the same subject as the American Caldecott winner Simms Taback's *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, but with a more poignant patina, an elegiac vision of lost Jewry. As Gilman follows the journey of a baby blanket growing old, worn, and disappearing, yet transforming to a jacket, vest, button, and then a story, she captures the theme of continuous re-creation, of creating something from nothing, as it relates to the rebuilding of a Jewish identity. Her art creates a magical closed world, a bustling, early-twentieth-century Eastern-European shtetl. Her genre paintings offer meticulous interior views mixing household activities with religious rituals and exteriors of street and market. She parallels the Jewish family's life with a story of a Jewish mouse family living in the floorboards, living complete with miniature tallit and matzoh, giving a new life to the scraps of the original blanket. Gilman acknowledges the elegiac element of the art:

One does not enter the world of my grandparents lightly. As I worked on the research for the pictures, I became filled with sadness for this world that was destroyed in the Holocaust. The people in the photographs called out to me to act as their witness. The book took on another dimension. It became a way of remembering and recording the lives of my people. (289)

There is considerable adult poetry by Canadian poets that is marked by Jewish thought, emotion and history, from the works of A.M. Klein to those of Leonard Cohen. For children, however, there is one book: *Doctor Dwarf and Other Poems for Children*, a selection of A.M. Klein's poems. The renowned Canadian Jewish poet's small collection of poetry for children has a Yiddish folk and biblical Hebrew quality. In its own way, it is also elegiac.

The wry inflection of Jewish humour is present in many of the folktales. It is also evident in certain picture books and novels. Author-illustrator Patti Stren adopts a wry, Jewish voice and alludes to Jewish names and North American Jewish culture in her picture books, with perhaps more adult than child appeal. Her tongue-in-cheek wit and classic Jewish comic routines and punch lines are, at times, beyond child comprehension. The shy porcupine, protagonist of *Hug Me*, is named Eliot Kravitz; the ant in *Sloan and Philamina; or, How to Make Friends with Your Lunch*, comments on her Uncle Lou: "He's spent the last seventeen years as a stand-up comic on the Borscht Belt" (n.pag.). Her stories feel more North American in style than specifically Canadian. Her endearing and nebbishy characters are subtly characterized as Jewish types with the comic appeal of Woody Allen. Stren's whimsical sketches in pen and ink and wash are cartoonish and ironic.

Carol Matas's prairie immigration novel *Rebecca* is marked by wry Jewish survival humour, pragmatic advice in proverbs and expressions, collo-

qualisms and Yiddish inflection in the dialogue, particularly of older adult characters. "I was six years old when I came to Oxbow to be part of the Hirsch community and the sky went on forever and the land was hard. I was six years old when Baba said to Zaida, that first winter, 'Where have you brought us, Siberia?'" (8). In Winnipeg, the children are greeted by the grocer, Mr. Jacovitch: "'Ah, children,' he said, shaking his head as we trooped into the kitchen, 'If it doesn't get better, depend on it, it will get worse.' Mrs. Jacovitch scolded him. 'A fool grows without rain!'" (18). Other Canadian titles also capture echoes of the voice that American Jewish author Eric Kimmel refers to as the "joy and humor sharpened by the sense of living on the edge that runs through all Jewish literature" (413).

The range of Canadian children's and young adult books with Jewish themes, characters, and presence is increasing every year. The themes of multicultural diversity and regionalism so dominant in Canadian history and society are present in Canadian Jewish writing for adults, but somewhat less dramatically so in writing for children. The children's books are not as far ranging or as culturally focused on Canadian historical incident or demographic trend. There are elements, however, that speak to the uniquely Canadian Jewish experience.

A minority of the books could be set in the United States, but most of them are written from a perspective inside the Canadian Jewish experience. Many of them are geographically specific to Canada. The immigrant sagas, on the whole, have identifiable Canadian settings of Toronto's Kensington market and garment district, Winnipeg's North End, and the small towns and farms of the prairies. The Jewish characters interact with non-Jewish Canadians and new immigrants, discovering a new and different society. The Holocaust stories, in particular, often include relocation to Canada, to Toronto, Montreal, and Victoria, with Canada depicted as both a refuge and a difficult country in which to reform a life. The Second World War Canadian government policies that discriminated against Jewish immigrants and refugees are openly denounced.

Concluding Summary

In summary, the social realism of much Canadian fiction portrays the anti-Semitism in Canadian society and the tension for Jewish children between their Canadian identities and Jewish family and tradition. Many of the Jewish holiday stories explore the meaning of Jewish tradition in a particular, specific Canadian environment, either urban or rural. Stories of the pre-Holocaust Jewish Eastern-European past and the world of Yiddish folklore express Jewish humour and historical shtetl life. The retellings function both as a memorial to the dead and as a political act to recreate their lives. The retellers of this oral tradition use dialect, intonation, grammatical shaping and expressions to evoke the Yiddish and Jewish cultural spirit in a

more concentrated, poetic way than in the novels. These stories are edgier than similar titles from the United States.

The Jewish humour found in Khalsa and Stren is identical to American Jewish humour. Carol Matas's use of Jewish humour in *Rebecca*, however, is expressed in response to the Canadian environmental realities of landscape and weather. The rural Canadian stories and those of the early twentieth-century urban experience are both more overtly Jewish and Canadian than those with recent contemporary settings. Some of the novels could easily be transplanted into the American landscape, but almost all of them interrogate, to varying degrees, the meaning and significance of Jewish culture within the Canadian mosaic and the challenging dynamics of finding a place within the social order.

A most interesting point that recurs in articles and interviews is the deeply personal nature of a large number of stories and picture books, both contemporary and historical, folkloric and Holocaust, that are inspired by autobiography, family stories, family memories and traditions. Phoebe Gilman and Sheldon Oberman worked from family photographs and artifacts; Rhea Tregebov from her mother's stories and her remembrances of her grandparents' delicatessen; Sharon Kirsh from her memories of her Halifax adolescence; and, of course, the writers of Holocaust fiction, both first and second generation, plumb personal and family memories to tell their tales.

Whether picture book or novel, historical or contemporary, this core of Canadian children's books with a Jewish presence document the survival of a strong cultural identity, derived from Jewish history, values and experience. Written from the long perspective of exile and oppression, the stories reflect an assertion of identity and a reclamation of spiritual and cultural truths. Most significantly, Canadian Jewish writing for children affirms Canada as home.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding that enabled me to interview the writers and critics quoted in this article. I would like to express my gratitude to Jeffrey Canton, May Cutler, Michele Landsberg, Jean Little, George Littlechild, Isabel Pascua, and Paul Yee who generously participated in the interviews. I gratefully acknowledge the Estate of Dayal Kaur Khalsa for giving me permission to quote from her manuscripts in the Library and Archives of Canada. I would also like to thank Naomi Hamer and Jessica Kelley for their assistance.

Note

- 1 I have not been able to verify that Carol Southern from Clarkson Potter was the editor responsible for the editing or editing suggestions of these early versions of the manu-

script; however, there are some indications that it may have been she. May Cutler, founder of Tundra, remembers some interesting details about the story: "As for Khalsa and the editing of *Tales of a Gambling Grandma*, I don't remember doing any editing and can't quite remember in what form Dayal brought the first version in to Tundra. All her other books, she came with the illustrations first and told us the story which she had written in her head as she created the pictures. All of the Tundra editing staff gathered around as she did this; it was such a pleasure to listen to her. I realized as soon as I saw *Tales* that if I published it in Canada it would maybe sell two or three thousand copies. It was just so New York Jewish that I said to her, 'I can't do this to you, Dayal. I will try to find an American publisher.' I called Lucinda Vardy, a Toronto agent, about it and she called Jane Gelfman in New York who sold it to Carol Southern at Clarkson Potter. I don't remember seeing much text for it ever. So perhaps Dayal edited it herself. I do remember Dayal telling me of one specific change that Carol asked for. In the illustration with the nuns (page 17 of the book), the text told that the nuns gave the little girl a religious medal and the grandmother flushed it down the toilet. Carol told her that by leaving that in, she would cut off thousands of sales, so Dayal edited it out" (Interview).

Works Cited

- Canton, Jeffrey. Interview, June 2003.
- Cutler, May. Interview, Oct. 2004.
- Gilman, Phoebe. "The Creation of *Something From Nothing*: Developing Jewish Themes in Children's Literature." *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*. Ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe. Toronto: Second Story, 1998. 287-90.
- Jenkinson, Dave. "Profiles: Featuring Sheldon Oberman." *Resource Links* Aug. 1996. 11 May 2004 <<http://www.sheldonoberman.com/doc23.htm>>.
- Kertzer, Adrienne. "'Do You Know What 'Auschwitz' Means?' Children's Literature and the Holocaust." *Lion and the Unicorn* 23.2 (1999): 238-56.
- Khalsa, Dayal Kaur. "Grandma was a gambler, first revision, June 1985." Dayal Kaur Khalsa fonds, LMS-0163. Literary Manuscript Collection, Library and Archives Canada.
- . "Tales of a gambling grandma, first version, May 1985." Dayal Kaur Khalsa fonds, LMS-0163. Literary Manuscript Collection, Library and Archives Canada.
- Kimmel, Eric A. "Joy on Beale Street." *Lion and the Unicorn* 27.3 (2003): 410-15.
- Kirsh, Sharon. "A Handful of Memories: Developing Jewish Themes in Children's Literature." *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*. Ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe. Toronto: Second Story, 1998. 294-98.
- Landsberg, Michele. Interview, June 2003.
- Leong, Melissa. "Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes on Rise, Says B'nai Brith." *Toronto Star* 12 Mar. 2004: A19.
- Little, Jean. Interview, May 2004.
- Littlechild, George. Telephone interview, Dec. 2003.
- Oberman, Sheldon. "Autobiography — Sheldon Oberman, Writer and Storyteller." 11 May 2004 <<http://www.sheldonoberman.com/bio.htm>>.
- Pascua, Isabel. Interview, Sept. 2003.
- Rahn, Suzanne. "'Like a Star Through Flying Snow': Jewish Characters, Visible and Invisible." *Lion and the Unicorn* 27.3 (2003): 303-23.
- Rahn, Suzanne, and Naomi Sokoloff. "Editors' Introduction." *Lion and the Unicorn* 27.3 (2003): v-x.
- Tibbetts, Janice. "Jews Top List of Targets for Hate Crimes." *Calgary Herald* 2 June 2004: A13.
- Tregebov, Rhea. "Introduction: Developing Jewish Themes in Children's Literature." *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*. Ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe. Toronto: Second Story, 1998. 285-86.

- . "Origins: Writing *The Big Storm*: Developing Jewish Themes in Children's Literature." *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*. Ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe. Toronto: Second Story, 1998. 291-93.
- Weinfeld, Morton. *Like Everyone Else . . . But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001.
- Yee, Paul. Interview, June 2003.

A Selected Annotated Bibliography on the Jewish Experience in Canadian Children's Literature

I. Culture and Community: The Jewish Immigrant Experience

Fiction

Coburn, Judith. *The Shacklands*. Toronto: Second Story, 1998. This social history of a British adolescent in 1908 Toronto combines immigration, labour, and women's history. Although the protagonist is not Jewish, Jessie confronts the political and social attitudes of the male ruling class in the squalid shantytown Shackland area as well as the harsh realities of social class, poverty, and prejudice. Her life is changed in the King Street garment factory strike for fair wages, during which she is given guidance and counsel by her new Jewish friends and fellow workers and gains an awareness of the false stereotypes and prejudices toward Jews, women, and working people.

Kaplan, Bess. *The Empty Chair*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie, 1986. Adapted from Kaplan's adult novel *The Corner Store* and set in the Depression era, *The Empty Chair* sketches a lively Jewish community in Winnipeg's legendary Jewish North End. The book focuses on the turbulent emotional inner life of ten-year-old Becky as she grieves for her dead mother, copes with her difficult shopkeeper father, and accepts a new stepmother. Readers empathize with her haunted imagination and lonely isolation.

Matas, Carol. *Rebecca*. Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada, 2000. After leaving pogrom-haunted Odessa with her large extended Jewish family in the early twentieth century, Rebecca travels first to Montreal and then to Oxbow, Saskatchewan to join the Hirsch farming community. Of all the mythic stories of immigration and acculturation, this novel is the richest in cultural reference and in the description of the struggle for cultural identity. The family struggles to learn a new life in the Hirsch colony (with a school, synagogue, stores, and blacksmith), where the crops are destroyed by locusts and drought and the Jews move from one disaster to another. Finally, the family is burnt out from their farm and leaves for Winnipeg where the parents cannot find work. Tensions in her sense of Jewish identity plague Rebecca when she is temporarily housed with an anti-Semitic family. There she discovers old world religious anti-Semitism in the father and new world ethnic and cultural prejudices in the brothers. Religious and political conflict exists between the atheism of Rebecca's father and her interest in religious study. Ethical dilemmas are often given a Jewish theological gloss. Details of the Canadian prairie setting and period are precise and convincing.

Matas, Carol. *Sworn Enemies*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1993. There are almost no Canadian books for children with Jewish characters and themes set in historical periods earlier than the turn of the last century. This historical novel is set in mid-nineteenth-century Russia and depicts the practice of kidnapping Jewish male children and teenagers into 25 years of military service in the Czarist army. The intent of assimilation and conversion to Christianity was achieved through torture and deprivation, often resulting in death. Aaron is a sixteen-year-

old Yeshiva student who is kidnapped from his Odessa home and endures the army's brutality. His kidnapper, Zev, is an angry Jewish youth. Their stories are told in alternate chapters until both attempt escape from the army and from Russia. Details of fear and persecution are balanced by a full portrait of nineteenth-century traditional Jewish life.

McNaughton, Janet. *To Dance at the Palais Royale*. St. John's: Tuckamore, 1996. Includes a portrayal of the Jew from the non-Jew's point of view in 1920s Toronto. Dealing with poverty and class persecution, the narrative is told from the perspective of seventeen-year-old Agnes, a Scottish immigrant who works as a domestic servant in the homes of Toronto's elite. When she finds herself in the Jewish Kensington market district, Agnes develops a friendship with a middle-class Jewish family and grows close to the traumatized young wife, who tells her of anti-Semitic persecution in Russia under the Tsar and the Communists and who gives her an understanding of religious and social oppression.

Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Green Gables*. 1908. Toronto: Seal, 1996. The story of Prince Edward Island's red-haired orphan is the first Canadian children's book to include reference to a Jewish character. The German Jewish immigrant peddler depicted by Montgomery is the classic stereotypical negative image of the dishonest, cheating Jew.

Paperny, Myra. *The Wooden People*. Illus. Ken Stampnick. Toronto: Little, Brown, 1976. This book evokes the lives of Jewish families in small businesses across prairie towns of the 1920's and 1930s. Mr. Stein, a disgruntled Jewish immigrant shopkeeper who speaks with heavily accented English full of Yiddish phrases, has brought his family to Alberta in a pattern of restless perpetual moving to start life afresh, desperate to avoid the life he lived as a child — "a filthy village in Russia with all us Jews jammed together." The conflict between children and father, the prairie life of cold endless winter, and social prohibitions and pleasures are strongly conveyed, as are the minutiae of school and Jewish home life and the patina of social history of the era.

Picture Books

Fagan, Cary. *The Market Wedding*. Illus. Regolo Ricci. Toronto: Tundra, 2000. Adapted from Abraham Cahan's 1898 story "The Ghetto Wedding" and set in Kensington Market (the Jewish immigrant and market district of Toronto during the early twentieth century), this satirical fable of social pride and greed tempers its wry tone with a gentle innocence that wouldn't be amiss in a Chelm story. A bride and groom are humbled in their naively mercenary plans by the generosity of their poor neighbours. Regolo Ricci's oil paintings document in meticulous detail the era and place, the vitality and humour of market life, Jewish details of daily life and ritual, and even the Hebrew names for streets, shops, and market buildings, some of which are still standing.

Khalsa, Dayal Kaur. *Tales of a Gambling Grandma*. Illus. Dayal Kaur Khalsa. Montreal: Tundra, 1986. 1950s Queens, New York is the setting for this cross-generational story of the bond between a Jewish grandmother, who escaped from Czarist Russia as a young girl, and her granddaughter. Guided by her grandmother (a mean hand at poker) into an understanding of life's comic truths and mysteries, the child ends up mourning for the grandmother at her death. The naïve-styled art is brilliant in patterns, flat colours, and subtle references to the work of fine artists from Cézanne to Van Gogh.

Oberman, Sheldon. *The Always Prayer Shawl*. Illus. Ted Lewin. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill, 1994. At the turn of the last century, a Russian Jewish grandfather passes on his love, wisdom, and tallit (or prayer shawl) to his grandson, Adam, who shares his grandfather's name. As the child flees Russian persecution and emigrates to the New World, Ted Lewin's paintings transform from images of the shtetl, or Jewish village, portrayed in black and white

to full-colour paintings of the child, now grown to adulthood, living in North America. In a cycle of generations, the elderly Adam passes the prayer shawl on to his own grandson. The continuity of Jewish traditions — the shared prayer shawl and name — is set against generational change and cultural constancy. Since no places names are given in the text, the setting could be Canada or the United States.

Schwartz, Ellen. *Jesse's Star*. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2000. A modern Canadian boy researching a homework project finds out how, when, and why his family immigrated to Canada. Searching the attic for clues to his heritage, he discovers a suitcase belonging to his great-great-grandfather Yossi, a photograph, and a Star of David. The star is a talisman that carries him back through time to an 1890 Russian village, Braslav, where he enters Yossi's identity at the time of the czarist pogroms. Schwartz explains many Jewish traditions and rituals while engaging the reader in Yossi's quest to outsmart the Czarist soldiers so the villagers can escape and travel to Canada.

Tregebov, Rhea. *The Big Storm*. Illus. Maryann Kovalski. Toronto: Kids Can, 1992. *What-If Sara*. Illus. Leanne Franson. Toronto: Second Story, 1999. These two linked stories of Jewish girls are set in the Jewish community of Winnipeg's North End during the 1920s. Tregebov names recognizable streets (the famous Selkirk and Salter) and references Jewish cultural elements. Parents are immigrant tailors and delicatessen owners, they make borscht and gefilte fish, sell herring and pickles, eat latkes, carry chicken soup to sick families, and need their assimilating children's help in reading and writing English.

Vineberg, Ethel. *Grandmother Came from Dworitz: A Jewish Story*. Illus. Rita Briansky. Montreal: Tundra, 1969. This long biographical picture book quietly captures the experience of immigration to Canada in its story of the author's grandmother. The first Canadian children's book to focus solely on the Jewish presence in Canada, it is a family saga beginning with its members' shtetl life, history, cultural customs, suffering, and finally immigration to New Brunswick. One of the first consciously multicultural children's books in Canada, it was the inaugural title in Tundra's series of biographical picture books on the origins of Canadians.

II. Identity, Cultural Diversity, and Fitting In: Social Realism

Fiction

Bell, William. *Zack*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1994. In a small Ontario town, teenaged Zack lives with his Jewish-Canadian father and African-American mother. The combination of his father's Holocaust research, Zack's schoolwork on slavery, and his mother's family's rejection of his white Jewish father lead Zack to face issues of intolerance, pluralism, and racial prejudice in his own life.

Doyle, Brian. *Angel Square*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. Set in Ottawa's working-class neighbourhood of Lowertown following the Second World War, this study of a child's understanding of racism and hatred focuses on Tommy's quest to discover the identity of the man who almost killed his friend's father in an anti-Semitic attack, during which he uncovers dark intolerance and human compassion. Doyle's book is noted for its risk-taking in the frenzied, cartoon-like scenes of rough play as the Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic French-Canadian kids affectionately pummel each other every day, cheerfully calling each other ethnic epithets, which starkly contrasts with the entrenched bigotry acted out by adults.

Kertes, Joseph. *The Gift*. Illus. Peter Perko. Toronto: Groundwood, 1995. See "Jewish Holidays: Fiction" below.

Kirsh, Sharon. *Fitting In*. Toronto: Second Story, 1995. In this semi-autobiographical novel set in 1960s Halifax, young adolescent Mollie experiences anti-Semitic prejudice. Her journey begins with the semi-humorous, self-contemplation of what it means to "look" Jewish and escalates to the experience of being an outsider as she is progressively ostracized, bullied, and finally turned upon by neighbourhood children in anti-Semitic attacks. The tension between her Jewish identity, the adolescent fear of difference, and the overwhelming desire to be accepted is treated with pubescent humour and sombre reflection.

Little, Jean. *Kate*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. *Hey, World, Here I Am!* Illus. Barbara Di Lella. Toronto: Kids Can, 1986. Set in an Ontario town in the 1960s, *Kate* explores the dilemmas of religious and cultural choice and family strains of a mixed marriage. Thirteen-year-old Kate, unsure of what it means to be Jewish, begins a quest to understand the significance of her Jewish heritage. She reads novels about being Jewish and ultimately finds the courage to visit a synagogue, but first she must unravel the secrets and silences that surround her father's family, which has shunned him since he married a non-Jew. *Hey, World, Here I Am!* is a collection of poems attributed to Kate.

Matas, Carol. *The Freak*. Toronto: Key Porter, 1997. One of the few Canadian realist contemporary novels with a Jewish protagonist, this story also has an element of science fiction. After surviving meningitis, teenaged Jade develops psychic powers of mind-reading and foreknowledge of the future. She can predict a skinhead attack on her Indo-Canadian boyfriend and leads the police to a gang of anti-Semitic white supremacists. Finally, she saves her Winnipeg synagogue from a bombing. Although a melodramatic adventure, the narrative is suspenseful, considers a broad range of religious beliefs and social issues, and incorporates diversity in many forms.

Matas, Carol. *The Primrose Path*. Winnipeg: Bain, 1995. Topical issues of morality and exploitation are the focus of a contemporary realistic novel in which a charismatic rabbi sexually preys upon the girls and women of his Eastern Canadian congregation. The details of the sexual victimization and the ostracism of those who speak out are added to the depiction of familial intimacy and the obsessive behaviour of the apparently traditionalist (but actually cult-like) religious group, making for a compelling narrative.

Matas, Carol. *The Race*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991. A dramatic novel of two teenagers discovering romance, mystery, and an introduction to federal politics as their parents compete for the Canadian Liberal party leadership. The campaign includes hints of anti-Semitism.

Schwartz, Ellen. *Starshine*. Winlow, BC: Polestar, 1987. *Starshine at Camp Crescent Moon*. Vancouver: Polestar, 1994. *Starshine on TV*. Vancouver: Polestar, 1996. *Starshine and the Fanged Vampire Spider*. Vancouver: Polestar, 2000. In her four-book *Starshine* series about a modern Jewish girl, Ellen Schwartz evokes a sense of Jewish family life with few specific details to pin down cultural identification. *Starshine* Bliss Shapiro is an engaging pubescent child, obsessed with spiders, coping contentedly with her hippie parents in their Kitsilano Vancouver home, and living a comic whirl of school, friendships, and adventures. No particular Jewish element stands out as distinct, but the lively, chaotic family life and dry humour — a touch of sarcasm, an expressive shrug of the shoulders — give a Jewish sensibility to the series.

Wiseman, Eva. *A Place Not Home*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1996. Through the eyes of thirteen-year-old Nellie, Eva Wiseman tells the story of a Jewish Hungarian family fleeing the dangers of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the hardships of Communism, and the renewed threat of anti-Semitism. Making their way to Montreal, Nellie's family finds that without money, familiarity with Canadian culture, or knowledge of either French or English, the task of settling in this foreign land is a harrowing one.

Picture Books

Schwartz, Ellen. *Mr. Belinsky's Bagels*. Illus. **Stefan Czernecki**. Vancouver: Tradewind, 1996. Although a contemporary story, *Mr. Belinsky's Bagels* is touched by the qualities of Jewish folklore — the wry humour, warmth, values of charity and community. It is written with a slight Yiddish linguistic lilt. Schwartz incorporates the spirit of fable into a New York setting as an elderly Jewish bagel maker tries to create new traditions in his bagel shop, turning to other types of baking to compete with a rival bakery. Mr. Belinsky ultimately discovers the old ways are often the best. Czernecki's witty cartoon art is in a contemporary folk style, with flat, patterned shapes and blocks of colour.

III. Jewish Holidays

Fiction

Kertes, Joseph. *The Gift*. Illus. **Peter Perko**. Toronto: Groundwood, 1995. Almost an adult short story, this poignant 1959 childhood remembrance set in Toronto resonates with emotional realism. Jacob, a Jewish Hungarian immigrant child, yearns for the mysterious magic of forbidden Christmas but is mocked by his Christian friend for his inappropriate gift, a plaster cast of "The Last Supper." Jacob sees his family's Hanukkah candle through the window, as an outsider would, and finds a delicate balance in belonging to both worlds. Jacob remains torn between the Christmas lights he sees across the street and longs for and the Hanukkah lights inside his own home. The tension in this beautifully-done book is between longing to be one of the majority and dealing with what it's like to be an outsider. Kertes skillfully evokes the overwhelming desire to fit in experienced by children from minority cultures. The pencil crayon pictures of the Christmas lights and Hanukkah lights depict the tension between being an outsider in a Christian society and belonging to a Jewish family and culture.

Picture Books

Little, Jean. *Jenny and the Hanukkah Queen*. Illus. **Suzanne Mogensen**. Toronto: Viking, 1995. This title focuses on the common experience of the Jewish child excluded and confused during Christmas. Determined to protect her daughter from her pervasive sense of Christmas isolation and yearning, a Jewish mother creates the Hanukkah Queen, a mythic figure who delivers gifts to Jewish children at the holiday of Hanukkah. The Queen is meant to be an alternative but not a rival to Santa Claus. This warm and funny family vignette is modelled on events in the life of the children's literature critic, Michele Landsberg. Not intended to be isolationist or non-inclusive, it has received considerable controversial attention.

Oberman, Sheldon. *By the Hanukkah Light*. Illus. **Neil Waldman**. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill, 1997. This multi-layered picture book text is both a family Hanukkah story and a Holocaust remembrance. The legend of the Maccabees who fought for religious freedom in 165 B.C.E. and a Jewish grandfather's memories of the Second World War become one as Rachel celebrates Hanukkah. Her delight in the rituals, foods, and family closeness becomes awe as her grandfather recounts his personal story of childhood observance of the holiday while hiding from the Germans in Europe. After his family's flight, he returns as a soldier, a modern Maccabee, to fight in the war and finds his family's Hanukkah, the Hanukkah candelabrum, amid the rubble of his old home. Rachel sees it is the same Hanukkah her family lights in celebration and now in memory. The marbled backgrounds capture the sense of memory.

Stuchner, Betty. *The Kugel Valley Klezmer Band*. Illus. Richard Row. Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1998. A Jewish community in early-twentieth-century Nova Scotia is the setting for the tale of ten-year-old Shira's quest to play Klezmer violin. She secretly practices on a tiny fiddle so that she can join her father's famous traveling band of Yiddish Klezmer musicians, the best in the Maritimes. The band's star fiddler falls ill and Shira steps in to save the Hanukkah celebration dance. Richard Row's oil paintings provide historical context, with Jewish cultural details of the spirit of Hanukkah pervading both the text and the pictures.

Waldron, Kathleen Cook. *A Wilderness Passover*. Illus. Leslie Gould. Red Deer: Red Deer College, 1994. The spirit of charity and compassion infuses this Passover tale. A lonely and alienated mother, settling into a new wilderness home in the British Columbia mountains and separated from her extended family at Passover, is brought into a community seder, or Passover dinner, created by her children and their new neighbours from the foods of the wilderness. Gould's watercolours have a gentle rural essence.

IV. Children of the Fire: Holocaust Narratives

Fiction

Kacer, Kathy. *Clara's War*. Toronto: Second Story, 2001. During her imprisonment in the Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, Clara observes horror and cruelty and experiences terror and loss. The courageous Terezin adult inmates defy authorities and teach the children music, art and theatre. With death on all sides, Clara finds meaning in her participation in the children's opera "Brundibar" performed at the concentration camp. *Clara's War* is a compelling story of the power of art in an environment without redemption or hope.

Kacer, Kathy. *Margit, Book One: Home Free. Our Canadian Girl*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2003. This short historical novel for middle readers tells the story of eleven-year-old Margit who, along with her mother, escapes German-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1944. Margit is portrayed as part of the small group of Jewish refugees allowed into Canada despite the governmental policy of exclusion. Her new life in Canada, living in the Kensington Market neighbourhood of Toronto, challenges her to cope with a new language, new Canadian social norms, and a classmate's anti-Semitic behaviour. Part of Penguin's *Our Canadian Girl* series of historical novels, this book is an extremely simple introduction for younger readers to the experiences of Jewish refugees.

Kositsky, Lynne. *Candles*. Montreal: Roussan, 1998. This book owes a debt to the American Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Echoing Yolen's work, this fantasy narrates the time-travel of a contemporary Jewish girl from Ontario who, frustrated with the traditions of Judaism, is drawn back through time to merge with the psyche of a relative in Nazi Germany. Kositsky weaves together two stories in chapters that follow the branches of the Hanukkah menorah, juxtaposing the peace of modern Canada with the horror and violence of Nazi Germany.

Kositsky, Lynne. *The Thought of High Windows*. Toronto: Kids Can, 2004. Written without some of the overused conventions of the genre, this journey of a Jewish girl from German persecution to Belgium and France mixes suspense and terror with a lyrical coming-of-age narrative. Awkward and overweight, Esther loses her family and friends to find herself amid Jewish refugee teenagers, who, even in an intolerable environment, retain their ability to mock and exclude her. Esther's visions of flight and freedom, staunch and stubborn personality, and raw courage help her guide others to safety in her work with the Jewish Underground in France. Kositsky's novel is a more sophisticated and complex examination of social relationships and emotional growth than what is found in much Holocaust fiction.

Matas, Carol. *After the War*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1996. *The Garden*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1997. These companion novels narrate the odyssey of a group of young concentration camp survivors to Palestine during the time of the United Nations partition of the area. It documents hostilities between Jews and Arabs and the moral and spiritual dilemmas of the escalating violence. Like her Biblical namesake, Ruth courageously travels through despair from Buchenwald and toward a new land.

Matas, Carol. *Daniel's Story*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1993. Perhaps Matas's strongest novel, *Daniel's Story* was published as a team project in conjunction with the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The narrative was based on details from the museum's children's exhibit of the same title. Matas shaped her narrative with input from the museum's staff. Daniel's photographs document his family's journey to Auschwitz and Buchenwald. The density of historical material provides authenticity. Matas's straightforward writing style allows the enormity of events to emerge as a natural force.

Matas, Carol. *In My Enemy's House*. Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada, 1999. Marisa, a teenaged Jewish girl disguised as a Polish worker, lives in Germany as a servant for a Nazi official and his family. Matas explores the terrible complexity of good and evil in human behaviour in depicting how ordinary German children and adults act kindly to Marisa but live with false and hate-filled beliefs about Jewish people. In this novel, Matas presents an Orthodox Jewish family wherein the father and daughter share Talmudic scholarship and wherein the questions of good and evil are given theological as well as historical dimensions.

Matas, Carol. *Lisa*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987. Set in Second World War Denmark, this young adult Resistance novel doubles as romance and adventure. Lisa, a Jewish teenager, participates in the underground Danish resistance with her brother and her romantic friend by her side. Dramatic and suspenseful scenes show the Danish people courageously smuggling almost the entire population of Danish Jews to Sweden in a flotilla of fishing boats. A rare Resistance novel that portrays Jews as active rather than passive.

Steiner, Connie Coker. *Shoes for Anelie*. Illus. Denis Rodier. Montreal: Lobster, 2001. Really an extended picture book with expressionistic illustrations by Denis Rodier, this simple, spare tale is told from the point of view of a young French boy. Lucien's family and their Protestant neighbours hide Jewish children and adults in their village of Le Chabon-sur-Lignon throughout the Second World War. His curiosity about the Jewish child staying with them, his enjoyment of her company, his desire to create a pair of wooden shoes for her, and his melancholy when she disappears make this a gentle depiction of children during war.

Wiseman, Eva. *My Canary Yellow Star*. Toronto: Tundra, 2001. Another title that focuses on the actions of the "Righteous Gentiles," *My Canary Yellow Star* chronicles the emotional progression from humiliation to fear and despair of a Jewish Hungarian girl and her family when the Nazis enter Budapest in 1944. Brave and determined, Marta secures Swedish passports from Raoul Wallenberg, the diplomat who saved 100,000 Hungarian Jews from extermination. Moments of terror are captured in a subtle voice.

Memoirs: First Generation

Boraks-Nemetz, Lillian. *The Old Brown Suitcase: A Teenager's Story of War and Peace*. Brentwood Bay, BC: Ben Simon, 1994. *The Sunflower Diary*. Montreal: Roussan, 1999. *The Lenski File*. Montreal: Roussan, 2000. A Jewish child named Slava suffers in the Warsaw Ghetto until she escapes to spend the remainder of the war as one of the hidden children. The first-person narrative shifts between her teenage postwar life in Montreal and Victoria and memories of her family's desperate wartime struggle for survival in Poland. Slava's courage

in facing prejudice in both countries is credibly captured, from her fear as a young child in the ghetto to her adolescent disbelief of the anti-Semitic hostilities she finds in Canada. In the first sequel, *The Sunflower Diary*, Slava is advised to hide her Jewish identity at a 1950s girls' boarding school in Victoria. Slava's memories of the Holocaust are the strongest element of the narrative. In the third volume, *The Lenski File*, Slava, now a young woman, returns to Poland to understand her traumatic past and the mystery of her lost sister.

Buchignani, Walter. *Tell No One Who You Are: The Secret Childhood of Regine Miller.* Montreal: Tundra, 1994. This is Regine Miller's memoir of her hidden childhood as told to a Montreal reporter. Separated from her family, the child Regine hid with four different families in Belgium over the course of the war. She was the only one of her family to survive. Her loneliness and fear is bleakly told. The Jewish Resistance movement plays a role and is depicted as active and courageous. Sixteen black-and-white family photographs emphasize the reality of the memoir.

Watts, Irene. *Goodbye Marianne: A Story of Growing Up in Nazi Germany.* Toronto: Tundra, 1998. *Remember Me.* Toronto: Tundra, 2000. *Finding Sophie.* Toronto: Tundra, 2002. A fictionalized memoir of a young Jewish girl growing up in 1930s pre-war Berlin, *Goodbye Marianne* chronicles Marianne's journey as she experiences the worsening situation for Jews, flees Germany, and becomes a refugee in England. Themes of persecution, hatred, friendship, and personal identity are handled with delicacy given the brevity of the novel. More optimistic than most other books of Holocaust fiction, the novel ends with a rough optimism as Marianne leaves her mother to join the first *Kindertransport*, the British government's transportation of German Jewish children to England. The sequel, *Remember Me*, recounts Marianne's next few years in a cold and alien England where she struggles alone with cultural and linguistic barriers and encounters continued anti-Semitism. Watts touchingly portrays the pain of refugees who fled Nazi regimes only to face religious and cultural alienation in their adopted countries. *Finding Sophie* brings the trilogy full circle as Marianne is reunited with the small child she cared for on the *Kindertransport* to England years before. The theme of searching for personal and cultural identity unites the trilogy.

Memoirs: Second Generation

Kacer, Kathy. *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser.* Toronto: Second Story, 1999. *The Night Spies.* Toronto: Second Story, 2003. The author has recounted her mother's Holocaust experiences as a Jewish adolescent in Nazi-dominated Czechoslovakia in two memoir novels. The central climax in the first book, in which Gabi hides in a wooden dresser to escape capture, is dramatic and suspenseful. A delicate balance between biography and fiction is partially successful, only slightly marred by the didactic need to transmit contextual historical background. In the sequel, *The Night Spies*, Gabi, her mother, and her cousin hide in a farmer's barn in the Slovakian mountain village of Osavica. Unable to tolerate their confinement, the children sneak out at night and find themselves acting as scouts for the Partisans encamped in the forest. A hybrid of adventure and memoir, it is more successful in portraying the despair of trapped and hidden children than in the less credible dramatic adventure.

Kaplan, William, with Shelley Tanaka. *One More Border: The True Story of One Family's Escape from War-Torn Europe.* Illus. Stephen Taylor. Toronto: Groundwood, 1998. The author recalls the odyssey of his father, a Jewish child, who fled Lithuania with his family and traveled through Russia and Japan on their way to Canada. The Kaplan family almost circled the globe, crossing Russia on the Trans-Siberian Express, and travelling by ship to Japan and on to Vancouver before ultimately settling in Cornwall, Ontario. This refugee narrative is a testimonial to Mr. Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Lithuania, who issued visas to thousands of Jews, allowing them to enter Japan and saving them from death. Taylor's realistic,

historically-accurate paintings offer narrative continuity, and the black-and-white archival and family photographs provide historical and personal context. Informational sidebars offer insight into political and social issues, transforming this memoir into a nonfiction overview of the unfolding persecution of the Jews and the plight of the refugees.

Nonfiction

Levine, Karen. *Hana's Suitcase: A True Story*. Toronto: Second Story, 2002. Karen Levine traces an odyssey toward cross-cultural understanding. This true-life narrative, adapted from a CBC radio documentary, is part biography, part detective story as Levine follows the quest of a contemporary Japanese woman devoted to beginning Holocaust education for Japanese children. When Fumiko Ishioka receives the suitcase of a child victim of the Holocaust for her Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Centre, she seeks to unearth the child's tragic fate. After much travel and archival research, she discovers the details of Hana Brady's life and death, her drawings, and her surviving brother in Canada. This saga of determination and moral conviction compellingly documents one woman's quest for a dead Jewish child, and her perseverance honours and gives meaning to Hana's death.

Anthology

Boracks-Nemetz, Lillian, and Irene Watts, eds. *Tapestry of Hope: Holocaust Writing for Young People*. Toronto: Tundra, 2003. In this anthology of writing on the Holocaust — poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction, memoir and survivor statements — written by Canadians for adults and children, the selections are broad-ranging, from writers as diverse as Leonard Cohen and Jack Kuper, and cover the entire fabric of Holocaust subjects to weave a tapestry of fear and despair, hope and courage. The anthology is organized under headings on hiding, loss and exile, selection, ghetto, flames, camps, resistance, and identity. Many of these pieces are drawn from children's books that appear in this bibliography.

The War in Canada

Bilson, Geoffrey. *Hockeybat Harris*. Toronto: Kids Can, 1984. In this historical novel set in Saskatoon during the Second World War, Bob's family takes in a British guest child escaping to Canada from the British blitz. Tensions and discoveries develop, as Bob's best friend, Danny, who is Jewish, expresses his confusion that the Canadian government refuses to take in any Jewish refugees. Danny's growing sense of being an outsider in his own country, his anger at the harrowing experiences of the Jews in Europe, and his despair at Mackenzie King's policies towards Jews meld into a thematic subplot of anti-Semitism on Canadian soil.

V. Jewish Folklore

Picture Books

Clement, Gary. *Just Stay Put: A Chelm Story*. Illus. Gary Clement. Toronto: Groundwood, 1995. Many Chelm stories include divination, dream, and misunderstandings, both comic and profound. After dreaming of going to Warsaw, Mendel loses his way and returns home to Chelm, mistaking it for Warsaw and recognizing the satisfactions of home. Clement celebrates the loveable nature of the schlemiel and subtly evokes the lost world of the Eastern European shtetl with wit, pathos, and historical accuracy. The vitality of Clement's paintings, their jewel-

like tones, surreal figures, and shifting sense of scale and gravity recall the paintings of Marc Chagall.

Davis, Aubrey. *Bagels from Benny*. Illus. Dusan Petricic. Toronto: Kids Can, 2003. This contemporary update of a Jewish folktale narrates a boy's quest for understanding of God and charity. Benny's grandfather bakes bagels and each week the boy, in an act of thanks, places a gift of bagels in the synagogue's Ark. The recipient is a hungry man, who, like the beggar in *Bone Button Borscht* below, brings the spirit of God and human compassion together. Petricic's illustrations, including bagel-mandala circular frames and shapes, emphasize physical and spiritual sustenance.

Davis, Aubrey. *Bone Button Borscht*. Illus. Dusan Petricic. Toronto: Kids Can, 1995. Based on the universal stone-soup motif, this picture book tells of a Jewish beggar in a Yiddish-styled Eastern-European Jewish village who brings the villagers out of their isolation and into social harmony. The voice is wry and musical in its Yiddish inflection and emphasizes the Jewish values of charity and community. Petricic's art is angular and expressionist, adding comic spirit to the tale. Radiant light follows the beggar and grows as the villagers come together in a vision of communal action.

Gilman, Phoebe. *Something from Nothing*. Illus. Phoebe Gilman. Richmond Hill, ON: Northwinds, 1992. One of the growing number of Canadian picture books based on Yiddish folksong and Jewish folktales, *Something from Nothing* chronicles the transformation of a baby blanket to a jacket to a vest to a button and, finally, to a story. Gilman's genre painting creates a magical closed world, a bustling 1920s and 1930s Eastern-European shtetl, and the meticulous interior views mix household activities with religious rituals. The illustrations tell an extra story, parallel to the Jewish family's life, with a visual narrative of a mouse family living in the floorboards. The art is based on Gilman's family photographs and resembles Roman Vishniac's photographs of the lost generation of the Holocaust.

Oberman, Sheldon. *The Wisdom Bird: A Tale of Solomon and Sheba*. Illus. Neil Waldman. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill, 2000. This synthesis of folklore and bible story is a parable of crosscultural wisdom. Oberman has conflated variants of a bible story, an African tale, a Jewish European legend, and a Jewish Yemenite folktale to create a hybrid legend of cultural respect and understanding. The biblical figure of King Solomon is visited by the equally wise African Queen Sheba, who challenges him to build her a palace constructed only from the beaks of birds. The tale evolves, patterned on the folklore structure of the riddle tale, as the small, unique hoopoe bird shows Solomon the folly and cruelty of his plans. Oberman's gifts as an oral storyteller are evident in the rhythmical and cadenced phrasing. Waldman's stylized acrylic paintings use decorative cultural motifs and a pointillist technique to respectfully echo the text's synthesis of various cultural traditions. Borders of African and Middle Eastern abstract patterns frame images of African life and of ancient Jerusalem.

Ungar, Richard. *Rachel Captures the Moon*. Illus. Richard Ungar. Toronto: Tundra, 2001. *Rachel's Gift*. Illus. Richard Ungar. Toronto: Tundra, 2003. These two Chelm stories are linked with the same bright young girl at the centre. In the first folktale, the village attempts to capture the moon. This version of a universal folktale motif has the foolish villagers ultimately believing the reflection on a barrel of rainwater is the moon itself. *Rachel's Gift* explores details of the religious holiday of Passover touched by the spirit of the prophet Elijah. Ungar's jewel-toned, expressionistic paintings recall Marc Chagall, right to the fiddler on the roof.

Zola, Meguido. *Only the Best*. Illus. Valerie Littlewood. London: Julie MacRae, 1981. This literary fairy tale of giving thanks mixes contemporary and historical imagery in its treatment of a father's quest (on the eve of the Jewish festival of Succoth or thanksgiving for the harvest)

for the perfect gift for his newborn son. The folktale structure is cumulative and celebratory of Jewish lore, festivals, and traditions.

VI. Poetry

Klein, A.M. *Doctor Dwarf and Other Poems for Children*. Ed. Mary Alice Downie and Barbara Robertson. Illus. Gail Gettner. Kingston, ON: Quarry, 1990. With a melding of the Yiddish folk and Hebrew biblical elements, images drawn from Jewish religious legends and social history from the turn of the last century become verses rich in nonsense and pathos, intimacy and music. Gail Gettner's richly detailed line drawings capture Hassids, scholars, and biblical kings kibbutzing and dancing in an odd dream world of peddlers, Talmudic scholars, Old Testament prophets, and Jewish children. Once again, a vision of a lost world is evoked.

VII. Jewish Humour

Stren, Patti. *Hug Me*. Illus. Patti Stren. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977. Rev. ed. Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada, 2002. *Sloan and Philamina; Or How to Make Friends With Your Lunch*. Illus. Patti Stren. Toronto: Clarke, 1979. In *Hug Me*, a prickly, lonely porcupine searches for love. In *Sloan and Philamina*, an ant and anteater become close friends. Author-illustrator Stren adopts a wry Jewish inflection and alludes to Jewish life and culture in these quirky animal fables of emotional trust. The shy porcupine protagonist of *Hug Me* is called Eliot Kravitz, while the ant in *Sloan and Philamina* comments on her Uncle Lou: "He's spent the last 17 years as a stand-up comic on the Borscht Belt." *Hug Me* was re-illustrated for the 2002 edition.

Judith Saltman is Associate Professor at the School of Library, Archival & Information Studies, University of British Columbia. She teaches courses in children's and young adult literature and public library services for youth. She is Chair of the multidisciplinary Master of Arts in Children's Literature Program at the University. Her publications include Modern Canadian Children's Books (Oxford University Press), The New Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English (with Sheila Egoff; Oxford University Press), and the picture book Goldie and the Sea (Groundwood Books). She is the editor of The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature (Houghton Mifflin).