

waffled between cheering on the daughter as she tricked her father into letting her marry as she chose and feeling very irritated with the daughter's weeping and wailing throughout the trajectory of the traditional marriage plot (compulsory heterosexuality definitely wins out in the end). Still, this *is* a folktale, and there's nothing stopping a parent from actually discussing its social conditions of production with a child (ditto for *One Arabian Morning*).

The Girl Who Lost Her Smile has engaging graphics and reasonably recognizable, though slightly caricatured, "Persian," "Turkish," "Chinese," and "Italian" characters (I particularly like the father in his "blue period"). The text has a lovely message: true happiness lies in engaging with your world and making it beautiful, rather than relying on others to do it for you. The storyline does need a bit of sophisticated interpretation, a difficulty one might expect of a children's story "inspired by a story in the collection of short stories and poetry called *Mathnawi* by Jallal al-Din Rumi," founder of the Whirling Dervishes. Still, as the press release explains, "this tale from the Middle East shows that beauty is in everything, but won't reveal itself without our help."

Finally, the most visually stunning and educational text of these four is also one that is truly problematic. *Animal Dreaming* has a frame story which foregrounds a child's learning experience, a central historical or ethnographic passage, and absolutely gorgeous, Koori-inspired illustrations. Unfortunately, neither the main story nor some of the graphics — those which "echo Aboriginal rock art" (press release) — "belong" to the text's "author," Paul Morin. A living Koori man, Bill Neidjie, a Gagadju elder, shared Dreamtime stories with Paul Morin and Morin researched Koori rock paintings (all noted in the author's note and the press releases), but these artefacts have a cultural specificity and contemporary function, an ownership, not maintained by folktales. While I respect the research done by Morin and acknowledge his educational intentions, I am saddened by the way the cultural productions of the highly oppressed and frequently impoverished Koori are circulating (and generating revenue) outside their control. I also wonder whether "secret" male initiation ceremonies are appropriate subjects for a children's story. There is, of course, the ironic consolation that, as one Australian website notes (citing a well-known statement) "it is absolutely certain that no secret stories have been recorded by white fellas."

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Conflict Between Tradition and Personal Ambition

White Lily. Ting-Xing Ye. Illus. Bernadette Lau. Doubleday Canada, 2000. 41 pp. \$16.95 cloth+jacket. ISBN 0-385-25896-8.

In *White Lily*, Ting-Xing Ye constructs an empowering narrative around White Lily, who, with her brother's help, defies the foot-binding tradition that has been popu-

lar in parts of China for several generations. Instead, White Lily chooses to pursue her dream of becoming a scholar. Ting-Xing Ye's story gives voice to the suffering that her own great-aunt and other Chinese women have previously experienced in silence. As White Lily's mother expresses, foot-binding is "the bitterness all females must eat."

Told from White Lily's perspective, the story effectively conveys her child-like innocence, but also her perceptiveness and unabashed ability to question things that she does not understand. These dual aspects of her personality evoke our sympathy for her and draw us into her tragic experience of having her feet bound. White Lily's mother tells her that bound feet "are supposed to make you beautiful, and that means a good marriage and a secure future," but White Lily refuses to accept this tradition and others that women were expected to follow. While males can become scholars, females were expected to take care of the household. When she displays her intellectual ability, family and village members frown upon it and consider it to be a breach of tradition. Eventually her family accepts her wishes and take pride in her intellectual skill.

The narrative is interwoven around various aspects of Chinese culture during the Qing Dynasty. Descriptions of daily activities, Chinese New Year, and Chinese customs give a well-textured backdrop to White Lily's experiences. This backdrop reminds us of the difficulties of reconciling tradition with personal ambitions. When faced with the dilemma of upholding tradition and letting his daughter pursue her ambitions, her father finally respects her wishes. Like White Lily, her father defied his parents' wishes: "Master Lee felt dampness in his eyes as he thought about White Lily, who dared to challenge the rules under much harsher conditions than his, secretly learning to read and write."

Ting-Xing Ye's *White Lily* inspires readers to fulfil their own potential and to overcome obstacles that stand in their way. In her afterword to *White Lily*, Ye situates her recollections of her great-aunt's bound feet within a collective experience of foot binding. Through her story, Ye constructs a hopeful tale that expresses "the suffering and misery [her great-aunt] and many women endured. But most of all, telling of a girl in her time who won her freedom."

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The Sharing and Preservation of Memories

Me and Mr. Mah. Andrea Spalding. Illus. Janet Wilson. Orca, 1999. 32 pp. \$17.95 cloth+jacket. ISBN 1-55143-168-8.

Memories can be a means for transcending cultural boundaries and functioning as a locus for friendships. Andrea Spalding's *Me and Mr. Mah* depicts a cross-cultural friendship between Ian and Mr. Mah in which the sharing and preservation of