López Ropero L. (2009). Multicultural children's literature and values education. *AILIJ* (Anuario de Investigación en Literatura Infantil y juvenil) 7 (1), 83-97. ISSN 1578-6072.

MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND VALUES EDUCATION

Mª Lourdes López Ropero
Universidad de Alicante

(Recibido 1 September 2008/ Received 1 September 2008)
(Aceptado 30 Octubre 2008/ Accepted 30 October 2008)

Resumen

Este trabajo se centra en la noción de educación en valores y la urgente necesidad que tienen los profesores y educadores de promover valores democráticos dada la creciente diversidad de las sociedades contemporáneas. Pretendo hacer hincapié en las oportunidades que ofrece la literatura multicultural para niños para trabajar temas transversales tales como la educación en diversidad, para la tolerancia y la paz. Tras explorar los temas de la educación en valores, el potencial cívico de la literatura y el desarrollo de la literatura multicultural para niños, se analizarán cuatro textos publicados en los Estados Unidos. Tres de estos textos son libros ilustrados, *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997) de Pat Mora, *Sitti's Secrets* (1994) de Naomi Nye e *Hiroshima No Pika* (1980) de Toshi Maruki; *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (2004) es un foto-ensayo de la autora Toni Morrison.

Palabras clave: literatura multicultural, educación en valores, educación para la ciudadanía, empatía, comprensión intercultural.

Abstract

This paper brings to the forefront the notion of values education and the pressing need for teachers and educators to enforce democratic values in our

increasingly diverse contemporary societies. I intend to emphasize the opportunities that children's multicultural literature offers for promoting such cross-curricular topics as education for diversity, tolerance or peace. After addressing the issues of values education, the civic potential of literature and the development of multicultural literature for children, four multicultural texts published in the United States will be presented as case studies. These include three picture books, Pat Mora's *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997), Naomi Nye's *Sitti's Secrets* (1994), Toshi Maruki's *Hiroshima No Pika* (1980), and Toni Morrison's photo-essay *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (2004). I will show how these texts promote positive images of minority children, cross-cultural understanding and habits of empathy.

Keywords: multicultural literature, values education, education for citizenship, empathy, cross-cultural understanding.

In his 1995 volume *Values in Education and Education in Values*, Mark Halstead states that schools and individual teachers exert a crucial influence on the evolving values of children and young people, alongside the family, friends, media or society. At present, Hasltead remarks, there is an urgent need for schools to engage in values, due to, among other things, the "growing cultural diversity within all western societies" and "the perceived 'moral' decline not only among young people but also in public life" (4). Although over a decade has elapsed since these statements were made, they are still highly relevant to contemporary western societies. A recent survey conducted among Spanish secondary school students nationwide as part of a current debate on classroom integration, has revealed that almost two thirds of teenagers would be reluctant to work closely with a foreigner in the classroom, the main targets of discrimination being Moroccans, Roma people and, to a lesser extent, South Americans (Castedo y Berdié, 2008). This paper discusses the notion of values education, emphasizing the opportunities that children's multicultural literature offers for promoting such cross-curricular topics as education for diversity, tolerance or peace. An introduction reviewing the concepts of vales education, the civic potential of literature and the development of multicultural literature for children will be followed by an analysis of four multicultural texts for children published in the United States. These include three picture books, Pat Mora's *Tomás and the*

Library Lady (1997), Naomi Nye's *Sitti's Secrets* (1994), Toshi Maruki's *Hiroshima No Pika* (1980), and Toni Morrison's photo-essay *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (2004).

Halstead defines values as "principles, fundamental convictions, ideals … which act as general guides to behavior or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action" (1995: 5). Values may change, but those which are usually identified in an educational context include "cultural diversity, cultural identity … peace, international understanding, human rights and environmental values, gender equality and antiracism … health; and common human values such as tolerance, solidarity and cooperation" (8-9). This host of principles are subsumed into the three fundamental values governing liberal or democratic societies and, accordingly, their educational systems, "freedom from constraint in the pursuit of one's one needs and interests", "equality of respect for all individuals within the structures and practices of society", and "rationality" or "basing decisions and actions on logically consistent rational justifications" (18). In terms of these core values, such harmful acts as stereotyping, oppression, intolerance or discrimination will be discounted. Given that contemporary democratic societies are increasingly becoming ethnically and culturally diverse, their education systems must necessarily be multicultural in order to meet their new needs and challenges. Certainly, the goal of multicultural education should be to "prepar[e] children for life in a pluralist society by encouraging them to respect those whose beliefs and values differ from their own, to see diversity as a source of enrichment, and to be open to a variety of ways of looking at the world" (27). The achievement of this goal relies on the promotion of core democratic values such as freedom, equality and rationality.

In her discussion of values and liberal education, philosopher Martha Nussbaum draws our attention to the realm of emotions and aesthetics or, in her own words, to the "cultivation of humanity", as the title of one of her volumes reads. "Intellect without emotion is value-blind", she remarks (1995: 68). Nussbaum does not gloss over, however, the capacities underlined by Halstead. Indeed, liberal education should foster a capacity for living "the examined life", an ability to examine oneself critically and distinguish whether our beliefs and life styles are really ours or have been imposed on us. It should be cosmopolitan in orientation, encouraging us to "transcend the local" and reach out to other places and cultures. But, more

importantly, it should cultivate the "narrative imagination", by which she means empathy or the ability to get inside the skin of someone whose background, life or personal choices are very different from ours (2003 : 9-11). Speaking of the impact of *Native Son*, a novel about racial hatred, on readers, Nussbaum says that "we cannot follow the novel without trying to see the world through Bigger's [the protagonist's] eyes. As we do so, we take on, to at least some extent, his emotions of rage and shame" (1995: 94). Empathy fulfills a fundamental civic function insofar as compassionate citizens are more likely to be fair with others and therefore more socially responsible (2003: 99). As the term narrative imagination suggests, it is literature that acts as a catalyst for empathy, for it allows us to experience someone else's story "as if from their point of view" (1995: 66). Not all literature, nevertheless, yields itself to empathetic identification. Nussbaum advices educators to choose works that take students outside their groups, that encourage them to understand people that they need to understand because their difference poses a challenge to them (2003: 109). She thus has a penchant for texts dealing with "equality issues" such as Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* or E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (1995: 97). The exposure to disturbing experiences that we obtain from texts like these, Nussbaum insists, has more "moral value" (2003: 98) than the exposure to situations that make identification easy. When faced with the need to put their values statements into practice, Jane Edwards reminds us, schools may choose to device education for citizenship courses, to appoint tutors, or rather to promote the activation of values through the different subjects in the curriculum, since "every area of the school curriculum is value-laden to some extent" (1995: 171). As we have just seen, Nussbaum highlights the value-laden nature of literature, something which John Dewey, the touchstone for American educational reform in the first half of the twentieth century, was well aware of, as he states in his Pedagogic Creed: "I believe that literature is the reflex expression and interpretation of social experience … it may be made [its] summary of unification" (1959: 25). If , as Hasltead insists, liberal education must necessarily be multicultural, and racism is still one of society's most pressing equality issues at present, then the use of multicultural literature will be highly beneficial.

A brief introduction to the development and main tenets of multicultural children's literature becomes necessary at this point. Multicultural literature is understood as a body of texts including "'books that reflect the racial, ethnic and

social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society'" (Bishop, quoted in Gates and Hall Mark, 2006: 3). In the 1960s and 1970s Anglo-American critics and authors became aware of the essential role played by children's literature in the socialization and developing values of children: "It could help make future citizens aware not only of past oppression, but also of how literature itself had been complicit in this oppression, both by using language, characters and situations which took it for granted and by rendering such groups invisible" (Pinsent, 2005: 177). Certainly, before the 1960s ethnic children had not seen themselves represented or positively so in the texts they read, and there were few ethnic authors writing for children . It is essential, Pamela Gates and Dianne Hall Mark argue, that children "see themselves and their culture depicted realistically and authentically in picture books and novels" (2006: 1). It is also crucial to reverse "years of stereotyping and ridicule" (6). Children, as Martha Cutter rightly points out, "are not born knowing the difference between black and white. Racial hierarchy and racial discrimination are what we teach children" (2002: 45). In order to 'unteach' wrong lessons children's classic texts were revised and new works addressing the invisibility or misrepresentation of minority groups began to be produced in those decades (Pinsent 2005: 177). Not surprisingly, the agenda of multicultural children's literature overlaps with that of ethnic literature for adults. In fact, in her introduction to the *MELUS* 2002 special issue on ethnic American children's literature, critic Katharine Capshaw remarks that many ethnic American writers have also ventured into children's literature, which is an essential contribution to American ethnic literature (2002: 7). Issues of "identity, assimilation, nationalism, cultural pluralism" are central to ethnic children's literature as well, which does not shy away from the portrayal of traumatic past events (5-6). Authors often portray ethnic identity as fluid and relational, since "child characters face the junctures of cultural contact, generational tensions and evolving senses of history" in an effort to counter essentialization and the othering of the ethnic child (7). Audience-wise, ethnic children's literature often addresses an integrated readership of both "insider and outsider groups":

> For children of the ethnicity represented textually, authors encourage resistance to pejorative categorizations by asking the reader to reimagine herself, to identify herself with the texts' cultural models. For a reader from another ethnic group, texts often encourage cross-cultural amity and understanding as a means to dispel prejudice. (4)

Mainstream children will be invited to narratively imagine and therefore reach a better understanding of the lives and experiences of other children with whom they will probably have to coexist as future citizens of the same democratic society. Contemporary ethnic children's literature promotes a culture of equity, freedom and rationality, ruling out such conducts as ethnic stereotyping, racial hatred, violence or oppression. In the pages that follow, I hope to show the opportunities offered by a selection of multicultural children's texts to reinforce these values. The comprehensive nature of my approach precludes an in-depth analysis of each of the texts under discussion.

Tomás and the Library Lady by Mexican-American author Pat Mora tells the story of Tomás, the son of Hispanic migrant farm workers. In the winter, the family works in Texas but every summer, they "bump-bump[ed] along in their rusty old car" [1] on their way to the corn fields of Iowa. We first meet Tomás as his family sets out on the journey that will take them to their yearly summer destination. Tomás travels with his parents, his brother Enrique and his grandfather "Papá Grande". In telling Tomás's story, Pat Mora is telling the story of many American children of Hispanic background. In fact, as a survey has shown, "Nearly one-fifth of America's schoolchildren now speak a language other than English at home, and about seventy per cent of these are fluent in Spanish" (Capshaw and Higonnet, 2002: 217). These children will see themselves and their culture represented in her text and will feel invited to proudly identify themselves with the ethnic child character. At another level, mainstream American children, whose lives and background are very different from Tomás's, will hopefully be encouraged to understand children like him better and to hold unprejudiced views of Hispanics. In order to facilitate the empathetic identification of mainstream children with Tomás, Mora highlights what he shares with ordinary children regardless of ethnicity. For instance, Tomás feels bored and thirsty in the car and is glad when they reach their destination. He feels "tired", "hot" and misses "his own bed, in his own house in Texas". He also loves stories, which nurture his imagination. His grandfather, to whom he is very attached, is "the best storyteller in the family". While their parents are at work in the fields, Tomás and his brother sit under a tree with Papá Grande, who tells them stories. The narrative,

[1] Picture books are unpaged. Page numbers will therefore only be provided for the photo-essay *Remember: the Journey to School Integration*.

however, does not overlook the fact that Tomas is different from mainstream children in several respects. He spends his holidays in the farm where his parents work, playing around them "with a ball Mamá had sewn from an old teddy bear"; there, he sleeps in a cot in a house they share with other farm workers. Tomás's family is closely-knit. He accompanies them to the town dump, where they "look for pieces of iron to sell".

In her effort to enhance the self esteem of minority children and counter ethnic stereotypes, Mora has to strike a delicate balance between Tomás's likeness with other children and his cultural specificity. An essentialist approach to Hispanic identity based solely on cultural preservation could contribute to reinforce stereotypes and other the ethnic child. Although the narrative is dotted with italicized Spanish words and expressions such as "*Buenas noches*", "*mamá*", "*pan dulce*" or "*pájaro*", the book is mostly monolingual, which emphasizes the mainstream language and the importance for minority children to acquire it. It is worth noting here that the publication of bilingual children's books in the USA is being promoted by such publishers as Piñata Press or Globo Libros (Capshaw and Higonnet, 2002: 218) and that some authors dealing with the Hispanic-American experience choose to write in a bilingual format, Alma Flor Ada and Sandra Cisneros being two representative examples —*Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English*, *Hairs/Pelitos*, respectively. We may gather that Tomás is a bilingual child from the way he speaks Spanish spontaneously at times, but the English translation is always given, "'¡*Qué tigre tan grande*!' Tomás said first in Spanish and then in English, 'What a big tiger!'". Besides, his grandfather encourages him to speak English, "'Read to me in English,' said Papá Grande". In keeping with Mora's fluid approach to cultural identity in the text, it is the grandfather, the repository of the oral tradition in the family, that suggests Tomás should go to the library, since he has run out of stories to tell. "'Tomás, you know all my stories' he said. 'There are many more in the library. You are big enough to go by yourself. Then you can teach us new stories'". In fact, the core of the narrative consists of Tomas's trips to the local library, where he develops a beautiful friendship with the library lady. While the library lady checks books out for Tomás under her name, the child teaches her words in Spanish. The library becomes his shelter from boredom, the summer heat, and the hardships of his family. Like any child, he gets engrossed in the stories he reads: "Tomás saw dinosaurs bending their long necks to lap shiny water ... He heard the cries of a wild snakebird. He felt the warm neck of the dinosaur

as he held on tight for a ride. Tomás forgot about the library lady. He forgot about Iowa and Texas". When the summer is over and Tomás and his family return to Texas, his grandfather is proud of the family's "new story teller".

In *Sitti's Secrets* Naomi Nye, American- born to a Palestinian father and an American mother, gives voice to the experience of the Arab-American child. The story describes the visit of Mona, a young girl, to her grandmother in the Palestinian village where she still lives and where Mona's father was born. This picture book is, like all the books that Nye has authored for young readers, "committed to peace and cross-cultural understanding" (Castro, 2002: 225). There is an urgent need, the author has remarked, to portray positive images of Arabs, given the stereotyping against them that goes on in the USA media (229). Mona's grandmother, whom she calls 'Sitti', the Arab word for grandmother, is at the centre of the story and has more prominence than Tomás's Papá Grande. Nye dedicates the book to her own grandmother, and to all the grandmothers in the world, "who give our lives gravity and light", as the dedication reads. In order to connect Mona to all children and foster identification and understanding, Nye explores the important role that grandparents play in their lives. Sitti may live in Palestine, "on the other side of the earth", but she shares with all grandparents her role as the giver of unconditional love, the keeper of the family history and traditions, and the repository of positive values. Mona thinks about Sitti's old green trunk placed in the corner of her room, where she keeps, in the girl's own words "my grandfather's rings, and her gold thread … and a picture of my father before he came to the United States, and a picture of my parents on their wedding day, and a picture of me when I was a baby, smiling and very fat". Sitti has been baking bread in an oven next to her house in the old way for "a hundred years", Mona informs us. The story emphasizes the distance separating grandmother and granddaughter. In fact, the opening lines read: "My mother lives on the other side of the earth. When I have daylight, she has night … Between us are many miles of land and water. Between us are fish and cities and buses and fields". Like many minority children in the United States, Mona shuttles two worlds, which causes her to be very far away from Sitti most of the time. The story emphasizes this deprivation, which will certainly lead mainstream children to empathize with Mona.

Through the relationship between Mona and Sitti, Nye makes the point that understanding can take place in spite of linguistic and cultural differences.

Sitti calls Mona 'Habibi', another of the Arabic words the narrative is sprinkled with, which means 'darling'. Even though they do not speak the same language, grandmother and granddaughter are able to understand each other and spend a lot of time together. "Soon we had invented our own language together. Sitti pointed at my stomach to ask if I was hungry. I pointed to the door to ask if she wanted to go outside". The same applies to Mona's relationship with her cousins Fowzi, Sami and Hani: "we didn't need words to play marbles". Sitti teaches Mona the value of ordinary things and of the small pleasures of village life, whose peaceful and happy rhythms are deftly captured in Nye's text. They watch the men picking lentils, buy milk from a neighbour, drink lemonade with milk under a lemon tree in the afternoons, fill in zucchini with rice for dinner, or climb to the roof of the house to pick up the laundry and watch the village woman walk back from the spring "with jugs of water on their heads". Interestingly, Mona is unaware of the religious and cultural significance of the scarf that covers Sitti's hair or the henna tattoos on her hands. Instead, she responds to these markers of ethnicity intuitively and imaginatively. Mona only notices the head scarf when Sitti removes it one day to wash her hair under the sun. She is fascinated by the length of her grandmother's hair, which she helps her comb, and by the white stripes on it. When remembering her flight back to the States, Mona thinks of how Sitti's tattoos "look like birds flying away". The way Mona relates to the head scarf and the henna tattoos and interprets them is universal, transcending cultural borders.

After she returns to the United States, Mona writes a letter to the President. After her one-paragraph long remark on how Sitti and the people in the village care for their trees, she addresses the president thus: "If the people of the United States could meet Sitti, they'd like her, for sure. You'd like her too … Mr. President, I wish you my good luck in your very hard job. I vote for peace. My grandmother votes with me". It is through this letter placed towards the end of the narrative that the political subtext of the story is hinted at. There are no explicit references to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the narrative or to America's involvement in it, but this is a sensitive issue to Nye. In an interview the author has shown her disappointment with the way adults have failed to solve the conflict. Therefore, she places her hope "on young people. The older ones haven't done so well" (Castro, 2002: 229). The readers of Mona's story will get a glimpse of the life in a Palestinian village, which is likely to be very different from the images broadcast in the news. They will hopefully

become aware of the richness in the life of children who, like Mona, have a foot in two worlds. Empathy will grow when children feel Mona's love and admiration for her grandmother, which pervades the narrative. Nye appeals to the basic sameness of all children, fostering a positive image of Palestinians and Arab-Americans.

The next two texts under discussion turn the spotlight on specific historical events. Toni Morrison's[2] *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* is a memorial photo-essay intended to expose contemporary American children to the struggle prior to the achievement of Civil Rights for African-Americans and, more specifically to the desegregation of schools triggered by the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case in 1954. *Remember* includes over fifty archival photographs to which Morrison has added fictional captions voicing the thoughts and feelings of the children, mostly African-Americans but also white Americans. The book consists of three sections. 'The Narrow Path' introduces readers to the separate-but-equal policies affecting the school education of black children, which led a group of parents to sue the Board of Education with the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1952. 'The Open Gate', the longest section, depicts the aftermath of the Supreme Court Ruling, namely society's reluctance to accept the new policy. The final section, 'The Wide Road', features emblematic events such as Martin Luther King's 1963 'I Have a Dream' speech or the Montgomery Bus Boycott spurred by Rosa Parks in 1956. Morrison does not have a factual or chronologically rigorous approach to history in this volume. John Dewey's views on the educational value of historical representations is worth quoting here: "I believe once more that history is of educative value in so far as it presents phases of social life and growth … When taken simply as history it is thrown into the distant past and becomes dead and inert. Taken as the record of man's social life and progress it becomes full of meaning" (1959: 25-6). In *Remember,* Morrison does not represent history as frozen in the past, but as a reflection of the struggle for and the cost of social progress in America. In keeping with her view, Morrison refers to these events with such journey metaphors as narrow path, open gate and wide road, all of which highlight the effort and difficulty underlying this process. Morrison wants contemporary American children to become aware of the cost of social progress. In her coda, where she dedicates the book to the four girls who died in the racist bombing of a Birmingham church in

[2] For a discussion of Toni Morrison's books for children see López Ropero 2008 (forthcoming).

1963, Morrison exhorts her readers to remember why things are "much, much better now" (2004: 72). As they become alert to the cost of social progress, American children will hopefully be more respectful for and less complacent about what they have been handed down.

One further aim of this pictorial and narrative journey through American history is to move African-American and white American children to empathy and mutual understanding through exposure to a traumatic event of their historical past. Thus, in her introduction Morrison states: "None of that happened to you. Why offer memories you do not have? Remembering can be painful, even frightening. But it can also swell your heart and open your mind" (5). As children read *Remember* and look at the poignant sepia photographs, they will see those historical events through the eyes of the children who experienced them and, inevitably, they will feel scared, shy, puzzled, happy or determined. One of the photographs shows a black child reading aloud in a classroom full of black children. The accompanying text articulates what her thoughts might be: "The law says I can't go to school with white children. Are they afraid of my socks, my braids? I am seven years old. Why are they afraid of me?" (8). Another picture depicts a classroom scattered with black students among empty desks. They had found themselves alone there, after the white children were taken out by their parents in protest. The caption reads: "When they let us in the school, none of the white students came. Their parents made them stay home" (31). The caption to a photograph showing white teenagers jeering at a group of subdued black students underlines the source of interracial hatred: "Walking through a crowd of people who hate what we are —not what we do— can make us hate them back for what they are and what they do. A lot of courage and determination are needed not to. We try …" (35). The volume abounds in disheartening, touching illustrations, but it is also interwoven with images of togetherness and racial harmony. It ends happily, for the last few illustrations feature black and white children holding hands, sharing texbooks and swearing the American flag together in the classroom.

Despite the political sensitiveness of the events depicted in *Remember*, it is not Morrison's intent throughout this book to stir "blood memory" as Nussbaum would put it (2003: 173), but to promote values —cross-cultural understanding and tolerance— and an awareness of the cost of social progress. The same may apply to Toshi Maruki's *Hiroshima No Pika* (1980), a piece of historical fiction in picture

book format about the infamous bombing of the Japanese city by Americans during World War II and its aftermath. *Hiroshima no Pika* was first published in Japan, but it is the recipient of the Mildred Batchelder Book Award, granted to outstanding children's books originally published in another country but translated into English and published in the United States ("The Mildred Batchelder Award", online). Significantly, the story has also received the Jane Addams Award, granted to children's books that promote "the cause of peace, social justice and world community" ("Jane Addams Book Award", online). In a postscript to the book, Maruki, a highly regarded Japanese artist, states that the purpose of her story is "to tell young people about something very bad that happened, in the hope that their knowing will help keep it from happening again". Peace education rather than animosity against Americans is what she aims at. Besides, the fact that the story found an American publisher and received an American award reveals that the United States have come to terms with this chapter of their history. The narrative, however, does not obscure American agency. In one of the early pages, showing how the bomb caught the child protagonist's family off-guard having breakfast, we read:

> Mii was seven years old and lived in Hiroshima with her mother and father. She and her parents were breakfasting on sweet potatoes, which had been brought in the day before by cousins who lived in the country. Mii was very hungry this morning, and exclaimed about how good the sweet potatoes tasted … then it happened. A sudden, terrible light flashed all around. The light was bright orange … Violent shock waves followed … Moments before the Flash, United States Air Force bomber Enola Gay had flown over the city and released a top-secret explosive. The explosive was an atomic bomb, which had been given the name 'Little Boy' by the B-29's crew. 'Little Boy' fell on Hiroshima at 8:15 on the morning of August 6, 1945.

The accompanying illustration depicts the family and their breakfastware blown into the air. In spite of the blast, Mii keeps holding her red chopsticks throughout the narrative, which emphasizes the extent to which the bomb disturbed the lives of innocent civilians all of a sudden.

It should be noted that the spotlight is not on the Japanese-American conflict, but on the human cost of the disaster, which has a more universal appeal. Maruki plays on the readers' sense of empathy by highlighting the damage caused by the bomb on the lives of ordinary people. At the onset of the narrative, the reader is introduced to the city of Hiroshima, busily engaged in its morning routine:

"That morning in Hiroshima the sky was blue and cloudless. The sun was shining. Streetcars had begun making rounds, picking up people who were on their way to work … The rays of the midsummer sun glittered on the surface of the rivers". The landscape changes dramatically once the bomb is dropped. Maruki's illustrations capture the devastation it causes. They depict civilians, including many women holding their babies, running for shelter, and large numbers of dead bodies lying naked on the ground among rubble and flames. Mii and her mother, who carries her wounded husband on her back, run "among piles of cracked roof tiles, over fallen telephone poles and wires". Maruki informs readers about the destructive power of the atomic bomb, which is "greater than thousands of conventional bombs exploding all at once" and whose radiation causes "deaths and illnesses for many years following the explosion". Thus, we learn that Mii's father died a few months later, that she stopped growing and that her mother still plucks splinters of glass out of her scalp to this day. The story ends on a happy, though cautionary note, showing how the people of Hiroshima set paper lanterns adrift on the rivers in memory of their loved ones who died. Mii is given the last word, saying "'It can't happen again, if no one drops the bomb'".

As I hope to have shown, multicultural children's literature is a value-laden field that points the way to social change. It does not effect change but, as Nussbaum would put it, "makes its spectator perceive, for a time, the invisible people of their world —at least a beginning of social justice" (2003: 94). Those children who like Tomás and Mona feel on the fringes of mainstream society, will see positive representations of themselves and their culture in these books. Their stories will become accessible to others whose cultural backgrounds are different but with whom they share a basic sameness, as these narratives show. Many contemporary children have not gone through a devastating war like Mii, or did not suffer the discrimination and social turmoil the children in Morrison's photographs did, but through these stories they will witness the cost of social progress and the need to maintain its achievements, a world devoid of racism and war.

Bibliographical References

ADA, A. F. (1997). *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English*. New York: HarperCollings.

CAPSHAW SMITH, K. (2002). Introduction: The Landscape of Ethnic American Children's Literature. *MELUS,* 27.2, 3-8.

CAPSHAW SMITH, K. and HIGONNET M. (2002). Bilingual Books for Children: An Interview with Nicolás Kanellos, Director of Piñata Press. *MELUS,* 27.2, 217-24.

CASTEDO, A. and BERDIE A. (2008). El racismo cala en las aulas. Dos tercios de los alumnos rechazan trabajar junto a marroquíes y gitanos. *El País*. Online: <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/racismo/cala/aulas/elpepisoc/20080718elpepisoc_2/Tes?print=1>. [retrieved 15 August 2008]

CASTRO, J. (2002). Nomad, Switchboard, Poet: Naomi Shihab Nye's Multicultural Literature for Young readers: an Interview. *MELUS,* 27.2, 225-36.

CISNEROS, S. (1997). *Hairs/Pelitos*. New York: Dragonfly.

CUTTER, M. (2002). Empire and the Mind of the Child: Sui Sin Far's 'Tales of Chinese Children. *MELUS,* 27.2, 31-48.

DEWEY, J. (1959). *Dewey on Education*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

EDWARDS, J. (1996). Planning for Values Education in the School Curriculum. In M. Halstead and M. J. Taylor (Eds.), *Values in Education and Education in Values* (pp. 167-179). London and New York: Routledge.

GATES, P. and D. HALL MARK (2006). *Cultural Jorneys. Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults.* Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press.

HALSTEAD, M. (1996). Values and Values Education in Schools. In M. Halstead and M. J. Taylor (Eds.), *Values in Education and Education in Values* (pp. 3-14). London and New York: Routledge.

_______ Liberal Values and Liberal Education. In M. Halstead and M. J. Taylor (Eds), *Values in Education and Education in Values* (pp. 17-32). London and New York: Routledge.

"Jane Addams Book Award". Online: <http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~cfjab/jaddams.htm>. [retrieved 15 August 2008]

LOPEZ ROPERO, M.L. (2008). "Trust them to Figure it Out": Toni Morrison's Books for Children. *Atlantis.* (Forthcoming).

MARUKI, T. (1980). *Hiroshima No Pika*. New York: Northlop.

MORA, P. (1997). *Tomás and the Library Lady*. New York: Knoff.

MORRISON, T. (2004). *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

NUSSBAUM, M. (1995). *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life.* Boston: Beacon Press.

_______ (2003). *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

PINSENT, P. (2005). Postmodernism, New Historicism and Migration. In K. Reynolds, (Ed.), *Modern Children's Literature* (pp. 173-190). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

The Mildred Batchelder Award. Online: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/batchelder.html>. [retrieved 15 August 2008]

Correspondencia: **Lourdes López Ropero** - Universidad de Alicante, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Campus San Vicente del Raspeig, Ap. 99, E-03080, Alicante. Email: lourdes.lopez@ua.es