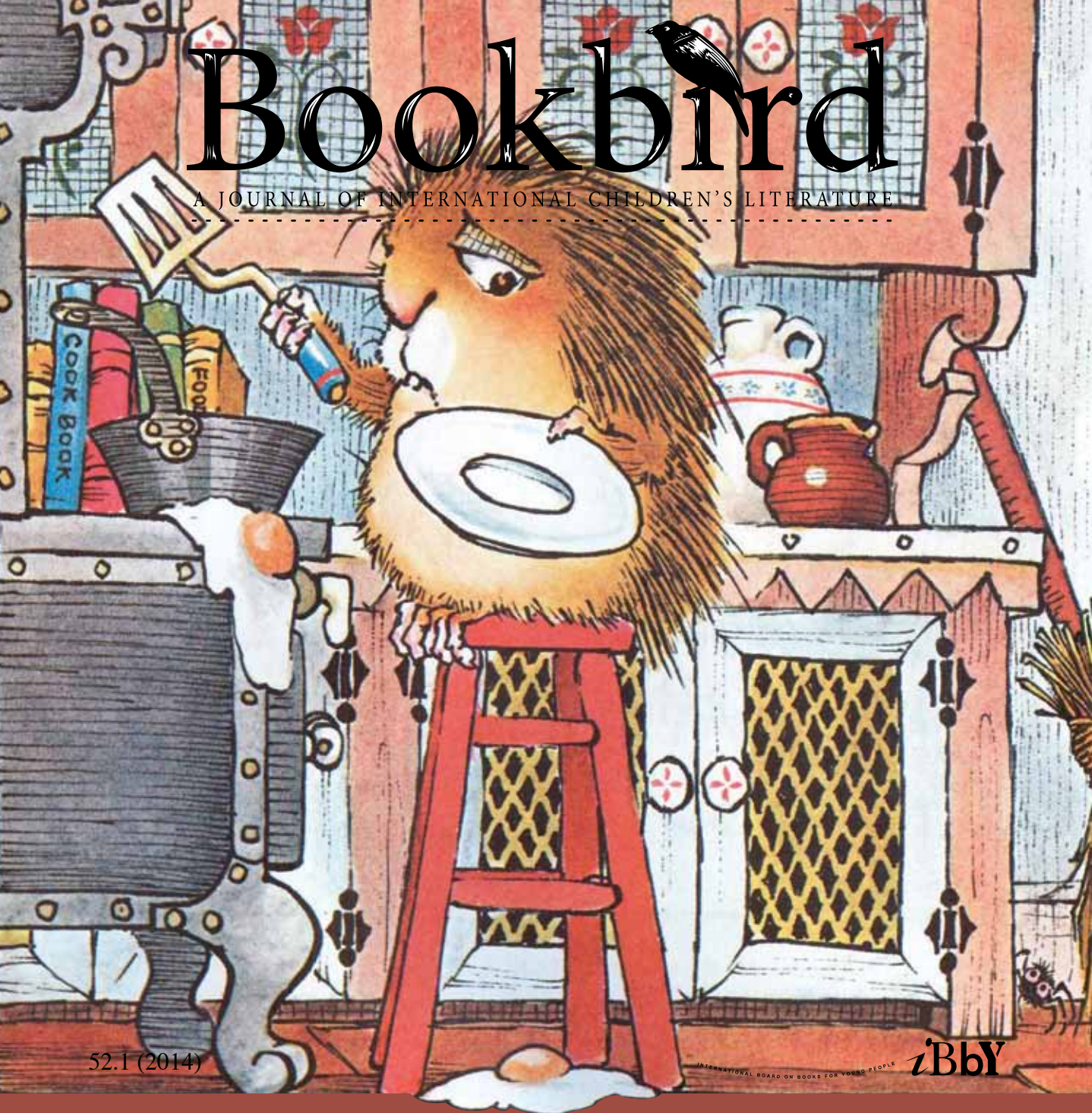


Bookbird

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iBbY

Feature Articles: The Biggest Loser: Mercer Mayer's Little Critter Series, the Queer Art of Failure, and the American Obsession with Achievement • Hey, I Still Can't See Myself! The Difficult Positioning of Two-Spirit Identities in YA Literature • The Invisibility of Lesbian Mother Families in the South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge • What a Shame! Gay Shame in Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face* • Sexual Slipstreams and the Limits of Magic Realism: Why a Bisexual Cinderella May Not Be All That "Queer" • "A girl. A machine. A freak": A Consideration of Contemporary Queer Composites • A Doctor for Who(m)?: Queer Temporalities and the Sexualized Child

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Address for submissions and other editorial correspondence: rharde@ualberta.ca

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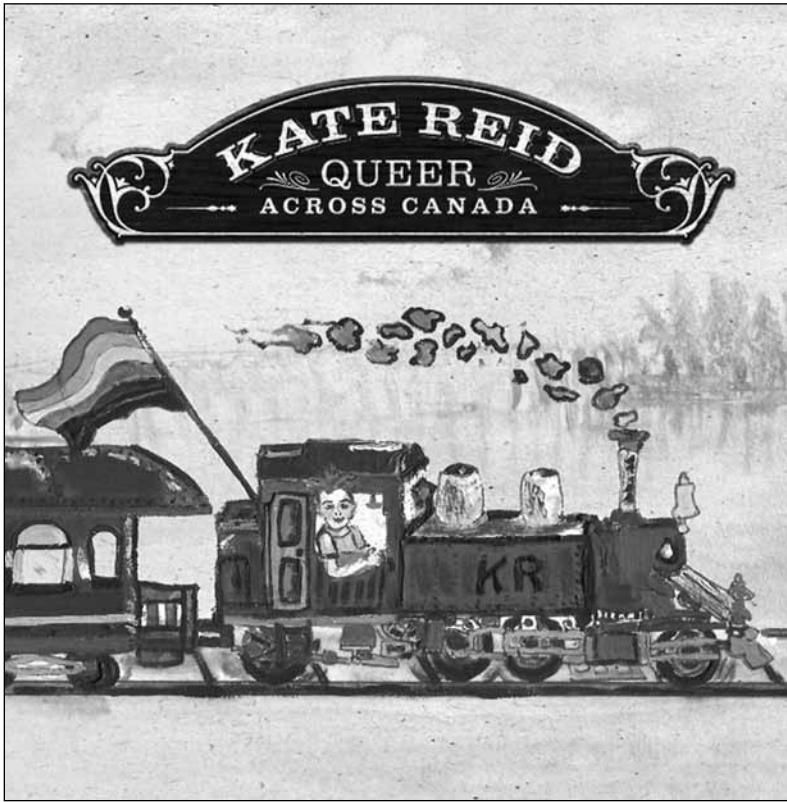
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Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

As I prepare this—*Bookbird's* Queer Issue—for press, I am listening to Canadian singer-songwriter Kate Reid's latest album, *Queer Across Canada*. After interviewing more than seventy queer adults and their children, Reid prepared the *Queer Across Canada Musical-Educational Kit*, which includes the seventeen-song album and an educational resource package that pairs activities and exercises with the songs in order to teach children about gender and sexual diversity, homophobia, heteronormativity, and to encourage acceptance of diverse people, families, and communities. A number of Canadian musicians make guest appearances on the album, which also features a choir of young people from Gab of Qmunity, an LGBTQ resource center in Vancouver, and children from some of the queer-headed households Reid interviewed. Overall, the *Queer Across Canada Musical-Educational Kit* is a groundbreaking, musical-educational project for families and educators.

However, Reid's project is not alone in taking on controversial themes and issues. Cultural production for children and young adults—books, art, music, television, film—has long engaged with complex cultural issues and weighty sociopolitical concerns. From the golden age of children's literature on, those who create for children have laced or loaded their work with pointed social critique and sharp political satire even as they have reflected current social, political,

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Bookbird Editor



Roxanne Harde is an Associate Professor of English and a McCalla University Professor at the University of Alberta, Augustana Faculty. She studies and teaches American literature and culture. She has recently published *Walking the Line: Country Music Lyricists and American Culture* (Lexington 2013), and her essays have appeared in several journals, including *International Research in Children's Literature*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Christianity and Literature*, *Legacy*, *Jeunesse*, *Critique*, *Feminist Theology*, and *Mosaic*, and several edited collections, including *Enterprising Youth* and *To See the Wizard*.

environmental, economic, and cultural concerns; think of Alice or Huck Finn or the Onceler; remember your journeys to Oz, or through the Secret Garden, or over the bridge to Terabithia. However, if those who create, consume, employ, or study texts for children and young adults have long engaged with difficult subjects, we have been much slower to embrace queerness. I suggest this slowness even as I work on an issue that features guest editor Laura Robinson's compelling discussion of queerness in children's literature, alongside seven first-rate articles, two Letters, and several reviews all on this subject. I suggest this lack of embrace or acceptance or even tolerance, because although Laura and I received almost thirty proposals for articles, we did not receive a single Children & Their Books column. I know that there must be teachers, child-care workers, and librarians around the world who work with young people to help them understand queerness in its many aspects, to trace the ways in which society constructs gender, and to welcome alternate sexualities and reconfigurations of families and communities. Nevertheless, we did not hear any of their stories for this issue, and that troubles me greatly.

As with *Bookbird's* Trauma Issue, the Queer Issue has a good deal at stake. Young people around the world are being made to suffer because of alternate sexual orientations and lifestyles, because of queerness, and adults around the world are beginning to help. As one notable example of someone committed to helping queer young people, consider pop star Cyndi Lauper's True Colors foundation for LGBTQ kids. Comparing her work for queer children with the American Civil Rights Movement, Lauper notes on the True Colors website, "this time the minority is the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. This time it is straight people who are beginning to stand side by side with their family, friends, co-workers and neighbors."

Lauper was motivated to fund True Colors when she learned that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth make up about 40% of all homeless youth, yet only 3% to 5% of the general youth population in the United States, and queer homeless young people are the chief beneficiaries of the foundation. Similarly, Dan Savage's It Gets Better Project works "to communicate to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them." In the face of a number of suicides by marginalized teenagers, Savage created It Gets Better as a highly public site in which openly gay adults and straight adults who are openly accepting of alternate lifestyles come forward to show LGBTQ young people that things will get better.

In an interview with the *Edmonton Journal*, Reid notes that "Obviously, gay, trans and queer is becoming way more visible and accepted and schools are moving toward it, if they haven't already, supporting students and staff that are queer" (19 August 2013 B1). *Bookbird's* Queer Issue simply cannot offer evidence to support Reid's contention. What it can offer are multiple scholarly perspectives on the state of queerness in texts for children and young adults, insightful commentaries on authors and books on the subject, and informative reviews of recently published books on the same. While reading this issue, you will be confronted with questions about who and what our societies include and exclude; you may find this issue troublesome or troubling, and you may be made uncomfortable even as you are being intrigued by the possibilities inherent in queerness and in queer children's literature. It is my hope that you may, as I have done, reflect on the queer people in your life—family members, friends, colleagues, people you love—in the light of the work in this issue, and how you may contribute to understanding queerness.



Queerness and Children's Literature: Embracing the Negative

by LAURA ROBINSON



Laura Robinson is an Associate Professor and Head of the English Department at the Royal Military College of Canada. She's published articles about Canadian children's literature, Canadian women writers, and *The L-Word*, in addition to many articles on L.M. Montgomery's work. Her current project examines Montgomery's depictions of friendship and sexuality.

As I sit down to write this introduction in late summer of 2013, three unrelated media stories keep tugging my attention away from queerness and children's literature, the special topic for this issue of *Bookbird*. First, in July 2013, the group Geeks Out called for a boycott of the soon-to-be released film version of Orson Scott Card's 1985 novel *Ender's Game*. Geeks Out is protesting Card's anti-gay stance, which he articulated in a 1990 interview for the magazine *Sunstone*. Lest you think this was a while back, the *New York Times* also points out that Card was on the board of the National Organization for Marriage, which opposes gay marriage, until very recently. Second, the Russian government's new law against gay propagandizing is rousing the ire of many people internationally and mobilizing a movement to boycott the winter Olympics in Sochi. Third, on 22 July, Dwayne Jones, a

transgender sixteen year old, was beaten to death by a mob in Jamaica supposedly because he went to a party dressed as a female.¹

While at first glance these stories seem unrelated, each is strangely connected to queerness and children's literature. First, *Geeks Out* might do well to consider how the young adult novel *Ender's Game* can be read, despite Card's beliefs spoken elsewhere. As Jennifer Mitchell argues in this issue, this novel, the first of Card's trilogy, if not the others, "is full of queer potential." Indeed, the queerness of a novel that has spent 42 weeks on the New York Times bestsellers list (paperback mass market fiction) might have more ideological impact than an organization that attempts to regulate the meaning of marriage. Reading texts queerly can change the world.

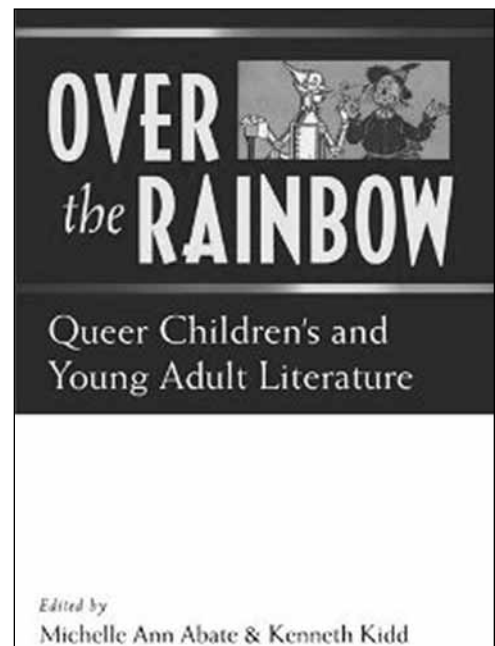
Second, the BBC News Europe's coverage of the concern over how Russia's repressive laws will affect athletes at the Sochi Olympics quotes the interior ministry as saying "that officials would act during the games—as at any other time—to *protect children* 'from the propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations'" (BBC News, my emphasis). Many critics have discussed the use of children as a trope to police adult sexuality (see *Undoing Gender*, Butler and Kincaid). Given the arguments in his book *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature*, Tison Pugh might take this further and suggest to the Russian state that the very laws that enforce or fetishize childhood innocence work to produce queerness and, moreover, create such an ignorance "that normative heterosexuality itself becomes corruptive" (166). The marriage of queer theory with children's literature studies enables us to unpack the devastating irony of Russia's attempt to police not only sexuality but its representation in so-called propaganda.

Third, according to the *Ottawa Citizen*, Dwayne Jones was kicked out of his home and shamed at age fourteen and then murdered at age sixteen, all because he did not, and perhaps simply could not, abide by the standards of his society. I include Dwayne's story because he is a child who did not end up having what Judith Butler calls a "livable life." She discusses the violence that homosexual and trans people experience all over the world: "The negation, through violence, of that body is a vain and violent effort to restore order, to renew the social world on the basis of intelligible gender, and to refuse the challenge to rethink that world as something other than natural or necessary" (*Undoing Gender* 34). The work we do as literary scholars may sometimes seem far removed from the so-called real world; however, many academics' insistence on unveiling the constructedness of the social order, on denaturalizing power relations, on challenging the world as it is, whether through history, anthropology, psychology, or children's literature, can indeed have an impact on real children's lives, can "open the possibility of both *identifying* and *articulating* queer child life" (xxxiii, emphasis in original), to borrow words from Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley.

This issue on queerness and children's literature yokes together the political, the painful, the real, the joyous, and the fantastical in order to take an incomplete and fragmented snapshot of this contentious topic.

In his much-cited introduction to the 1998 special issue on Lesbian/Gay Literature for Children and Young Adults in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Kenneth Kidd explains that both queer theory and children's literature "have an uneasy foothold in the academy" and expresses the hope that the disciplines work together (118).² Thirteen years later, in a short essay in *PMLA*, Kidd calls again for "dialogue between queer theory and children's literature" ("Queer Theory's Child" 185). Thomas Crisp and Lance Weldy's special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (2012) on Sexualities and Children's Cultures carries forward that dialogue by exploring texts for children through the lens of sexuality studies and queer theory. Hot off the press, and reviewed in this issue, is Lydia Kokkola's book, *The Fictions of Adolescent Carnality*, which explores the treatment of sexuality in young adult fiction; she devotes one chapter to queer sexualities. My hope is that this issue furthers the curious and productive relationship between the two academic disciplines with its focus specifically on queerness.

As Kidd does, many scholars have been quick to link children and queerness. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley playfully declare in *Curiouser: on the Queerness of Children* (2004) that, rather than being "anti-queer," the child and childhood are deeply queer. Their volume of essays investigates the meaning of the figure of the queer child in society at large and does not engage children's literature specifically. Bridging that gap, in 2011, Kidd teamed up with Michelle Ann Abate to assemble essays that cast a queer eye on literature intended for young people. In *Over the Rainbow*, they explain that many early academic explorations of queerness in children's literature centre on what they term "lesbian/gay affirmative" approaches. These approaches locate literature with LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer/questioning) content and assess the representations therein. Thomas Crisp and Suzanne M. Knezek's 2010 article, "I Just Don't See Myself Here': Challenging Conversations about LGBTQ Adolescent Literature" fits into this tradition, as does Crisp's 2008 article "The Trouble with Rainbow Boys." Coming from an education perspective, "I Just Don't See Myself Here" outlines how critics, educators, and readers might effectively read queer texts in order to ensure that the LGBTQ community is well represented. In this issue of *Bookbird*, Damien W. Riggs and Scott Hanson Easey's article on the lack of lesbian mother-families in South Australian literature, alongside Robert Bittner's "Hey, I Still Can't See Myself! The Difficult Positioning of Two-Spirit Identities in YA Literature"—an obvious titular response to Crisp and Knezek's essay—demonstrate the continued need to approach literature from a utopian viewpoint, with the hope that someday in the future positive images will abound. As Riggs and Easey and Bittner suggest, however, positive representation of the LGBTQ



community is not the only important issue at hand. *Representation in the first place* is crucial.

Riggs and Easey's, and Bittner's identification of a lack of visibility for certain identities in children's literature highlights a fascinating fairly recent turn in queer theory, one that promises to yield new ways of thinking about the world in general. Kidd and Abate suggest, for example, that "understanding children's literature as queer means embracing trajectories and tonalities other than the lesbian/gay-affirmative and celebratory" (9). In our desire to see LGBTQ people reflected as normal, healthy individuals, we may overlook the potential in the negative, an increasing number of theorists argue. Encouraging us to "feel backwards," Heather Love discusses the conundrum of the queer studies scholar: the desire to locate progress and triumph set against the sad history of damage, loss, and trauma.

A glance over queer theory of the past few decades illuminates not only tales of triumph but also a world in negative, like Alice and her looking glass. Terry Castle unveiled the "ghosting" of the lesbian back in 1993, while Butler troubled gender (1990), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick theorized the closet (1990). These early theorists, and Michel Foucault before them, insisted that trouble and ghosts and closets, rather than only effects of oppression, could also be sites of change and agency. The words that appear in much recent queer theory are certainly not affirmative and celebratory at first glance: loss (Love), backwards (Freeman, and others), failure (Halberstam), growing sideways (Stockton), and no future (Edelman). Stockton argues that the queer child exists only retrospectively and experiences a sideways growth rather than the traditional upward and outward development. Lee Edelman rejects the idea of the future, and thus of the child who embodies the future, because "reproductive futurism" re-entrenches heteronormativity. Look at Russia's laws against gay propagandizing that purportedly protect the child's future heterosexuality, for instance. Edelman further calls for a "rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity" (17) and for "the embrace of queer negativity" (6). Similarly, Judith Halberstam assures her reader that delving into the

bleakness of the past is potentially the road to new subjectivities: "Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmasking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world," and identifying these failures "provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life" (3). Elizabeth Freeman echoes this sentiment when she argues that queerness can expose the failure of capitalism and Western belief systems (xvi).

If these scholars' definitions of queer are anything to go by, queerness is that which dismantles, which troubles time, articulates the silenced, hides in plain sight, and challenges belief systems. Bruhm and Hurley explain that their definition of queer "is intended to be spacious" by embracing the non-normative in general (x). Abate and Kidd simply state that queer "defies definition, indeed is the antidote to definition in any easy or clear sense. The term at once fortifies and dismantles the notion of a stable or knowable self, in relation to gender and sexuality especially but not exclusively" (4).

What is fascinating, as Kidd has pointed out, is that many of these queer scholars have focused on the figure of the child, if they haven't explored children's literature ("Queer Theory's Child," 184). This issue of *Bookbird* seeks to explore the queerness in texts intended for children and youth very specifically. In looking at queerness, we, too, have chosen to be "spacious," to imagine the queer as that which discomfits and disrupts. The essays collected here cover a range of approaches and types of texts, from picture books to television shows. The first two "embrace the negative" by exploring the potential upside of failure and of shame. Michelle Ann Abate pairs Mercer Mayer's Little Critter picture book series with Halberstam's argument about queer failure in order to show that Little Critter is rather queer and his consistent failures are to be celebrated as they yield unexpected achievements. In "What a Shame! Gay Shame in Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face*," Anne Stebbins argues that this young adult novel's focus on shame, if acknowledged rather than decried as earlier critics have,

can become an integral part of a queer legacy.

The next two essays purposefully read texts for young people queerly in order to expand the possibilities of the queer. Adrienne Wadewitz and Mica Hilson's romp through the Dr. Who television series reveals that director Steven Moffat queers the child and challenges our assumptions about family and time. In "A girl. A machine. A freak," Jennifer Mitchell pushes the boundaries of queerness to incorporate Marissa Meyer's *Cinder* and Laini Taylor's *Daughter of Smoke and Bones*, both young adult fantasy novels. While not on the surface engaging LGBTQ relationships necessarily, these novels read queerly, Mitchell argues, encouraging an "acknowledgement of a new queerness."

With a slightly different approach, Jon M. Wargo's "Sexual Slipstreams and the Limits of Magic Realism: Why a Bisexual Cinderella May Not Be All That 'Queer'" reads Malinda Lo's young adult fantasy *Ash* against the grain to determine that the novel re-entrenches heterosexuality in the very moment Ash chooses a same-sex love. The final two essays similarly attempt to make visible what is not clearly seen. Damien W. Riggs and Scott Hanson Easey conduct a scientific analysis of the representation of families in children's books in the South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge and find a lack of lesbian mother-families. Similarly, Robert Bittner's essay discusses the difficulty of defining and representing Two-Spirit identities in the North American culture that would try to erase them. These final three essays adopt the lesbian/gay affirmative approach: each in their own way calls for change.

The issue continues with two Letters, one on Swedish picturebook artist Pija Lindenbaum and the other on effective trans novels for young adults; the latter includes a really useful annotated bibliography. There are reviews of two new books of scholarship on the topic of queerness and the Books on Books selection of reviews from the International Youth Library. The Postcard reviews of books for young people cover two texts on queerness and others from seven countries. The issue concludes with the Focus IBBY column, in which Liz Page offers news and information about the activities of several IBBY sections.

I am compelled to end this introduction to the Queer Issue with these implicit utopian visions of a world where we are all included, even as I pay heed to Bruhm and Hurley's delightful but cautionary statement that "utopianism follows the child around like a family pet" (xiii). As an apologetic yet unremitting Pollyanna, I want to believe in a better future, one free of trans-murder, repressive laws, and the need for boycotts, even as I attend to Edelman's arguments against "reproductive futurism." I am made queerly uncomfortable by what Edelman calls "the embrace of queer negativity," even as I witness in this issue of *Book-bird* the rippling possibilities and powerful new identities that can emerge from that backwards, sideways, and shameful clasp.

Notes

1. All the media stories I have read refer to Dwayne Jones as trans, but all continue to refer to him as "he." His quoted friends do as well, so I will follow suit.
2. I am including dates of the academic work on queerness and children in the text in order to highlight a growing history.

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Lesléa Newman, was set to be the featured speaker for Gay Awareness Week at the University of Wyoming the same week that college student Matthew Shepard was robbed, beaten and left to die—because he was gay. The poems in this collection are her attempt to explore the events and perspectives surrounding his horrific attack and death. They channel a variety of human and personified points of view including the fence where Shepard was tied, the deer nearby, the stars and wind, as well as the the victim's mother, friends, police officers, a journalist, and even the two perpetrators. Together they paint a picture that is gripping, compelling, and heart-breaking. Yet, the book has a quiet dignity that is a fitting tribute to the young life taken too early. In addition, the poetry is beautifully crafted and Newman weaves together an impressive variety of poetic forms including haiku, "found" poems, pantoums, list poems, "This is Just to Say" poems, alphabet poems, villanelles, acrostic poems, and more, along with a section explaining each form. She provides source notes for the factual material that grounds the poems, as well as lists of books, DVDs, and websites that readers may find helpful. This is a brilliant example of how poetry can help us cope with horror in a way that facts alone cannot.

Sylvia Vardell



Lesléa Newman
*October Mourning:
 A Song for Matthew Shepard*
 Somerville, MA: Candlewick
 Press, 2012
 111 pages

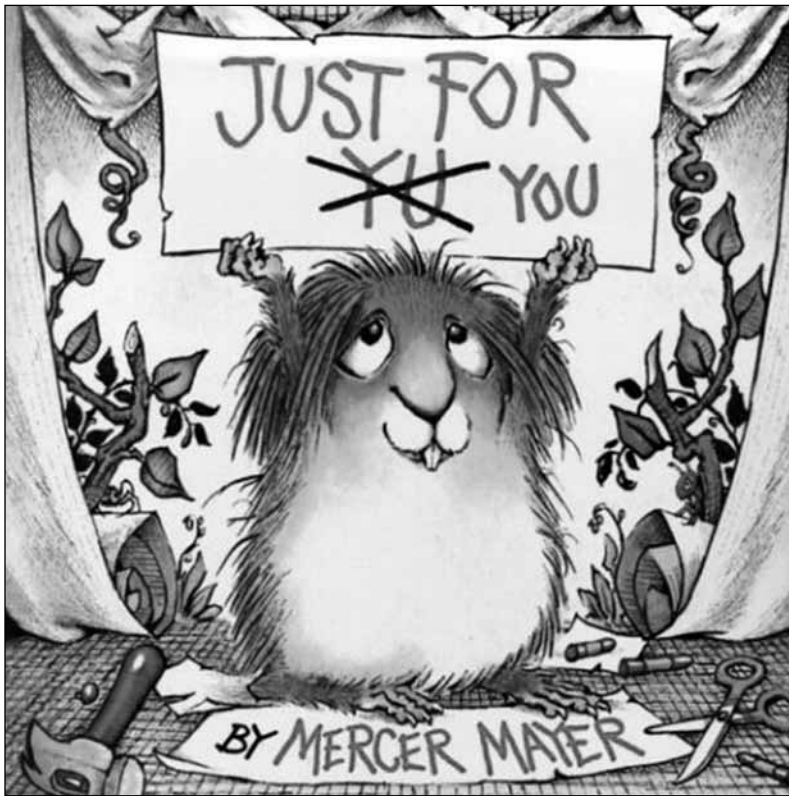
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The Biggest Loser: Mercer Mayer's Little Critter Series, the Queer Art of Failure, and the American Obsession with Achievement

by MICHELLE ANN ABATE



Michelle Ann Abate is an associate professor of literature for children and young adults at The Ohio State University. She is the author of three books of literary criticism: *Bloody Murder: The Homicide Tradition in Children's Literature* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2013), *Raising Your Kids Right: Children's Literature and American Political Conservatism* (Rutgers UP, 2010), and *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Temple UP, 2008).



This essay spotlights the many mistakes, setbacks, and blunders that Mercer Mayer's Little Critter experiences in various narratives throughout the series. Drawing on Judith Halberstam's notion of "the queer art of failure," it argues that these disappointments can paradoxically be seen as successes. The errors that Little Critter makes routinely lead him to new discoveries and accomplishments, many of which are even more fulfilling than his initial goal. In so doing, Mayer's series offers a compelling critique of the American obsession with achievement.

In 1975, Mercer Mayer released his now-classic book, *Just for You*. The story follows the experiences of narrator-protagonist Little Critter as he attempts to perform a number of tasks for his mother, all of which end in failure. On the opening page, for instance, he relays: "This morning I wanted to make breakfast just for you...but the eggs were too slippery."¹ The illustration that accompanies these lines shows one egg lying on the floor and another dribbling down the side of the stove; meanwhile, in the

illustration on this issue's cover, Little Critter holds an empty plate and spatula, a forlorn look on his face. Such experiences only continue. As Little Critter reveals on the very next page: "I wanted to wash the floor just for you, but the soap was too bubbly." In the facing image, the narrator-protagonist stands waist-deep in suds; his mother surveys the mess with a mixed expression of sadness and disbelief. The rest of the text follows a similar pattern. Each time that Little Critter attempts to do something nice for his mother—like put away the dishes or carry in the groceries—he is thwarted: he drops the plates and they shatter while the grocery bags rip open and the items spill onto the ground. Consequently, Little Critter must face these failures and the disappointment that results from them.

For both its portrayal of experiences that are common among young people and for its construction of a narrative well suited to early reading, *Just for You* was a critical as well as commercial success. In fact, Mayer's book launched an entire series based on the figure of Little Critter. As the back cover to the current edition of *Just for You* proclaims, stories featuring this character are "perennial favorites of parents and children." While this overview goes on to assert that the narratives "address all the major issues of growing up," they routinely focus on the experiences of failure, disappointment and frustration. In titles like *Just Grandma and Me* (1983), *I Was So Mad* (1983), and *Me Too!* (1983), Little Critter tries to perform a wide variety of tasks but is unsuccessful. A typical passage from *Just Grandma and Me*, for instance, reads: "I found a nice seashell for Grandma, but it was full of a crab." Meanwhile, in *I Was So Mad*, Little Critter's desires are thwarted by parental restrictions, such as in the following scene: "I wanted to tickle the goldfish but Mom said, 'Leave the goldfish alone.'" Finally, in *Me Too!*, the failures experienced by Mayer's narrator-protagonist emanate from a difference source: his younger sister. Nevertheless, the end result is the same. "I had a paper airplane that I made myself. But



my little sister saw it and said... Me Too! Then she threw it in a tree." As even this brief overview suggests, given Little Critter's propensity for bungling, he can be seen, to borrow the title of a popular television program in the United States, as "the biggest loser."²

This essay makes the unexpected and somewhat unusual case that this label is not an insult, but an accolade. Mercer Mayer's beloved Little Critter character can be viewed through the lens of what Judith Halberstam has called "the queer art of failure." As Halberstam argues in her book by the same name, LGBTQ individuals have a unique relationship with disappointment. Building on the work of Lee Edelman, Heather Love, and José E. Muñoz, she explains that because notions of success with regard to sexual activity are commonly defined not simply in heteronormative terms concerning the interplay between male and female sexual organs but also from the reproductive standpoint of impregnation

and procreation, queer erotic interactions are always acts of failure. In the words of Halberstam: “Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style, to cite Quentin Crisp” (3). That said, failure for the LGBTQ community is simply not a dour state of perpetual frustration; it can also have distinct advantages and even important rewards: “while failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (Halberstam 3). Indeed, Halberstam goes on to explain: “Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development” (3). Failing to conform to both gender and sexual norms has allowed LGBTQ individuals to imagine new, and more liberatory, ways of being. It has permitted them to escape the traps, pitfalls and limitations associated with mainstream heteronormative American life. For this reason, Halberstam asserts, “there are definite advantages to failing” (4).

Of course, the narrator-protagonist in Mercer Mayer’s series is never explicitly associated with a nonheteronormative gender or sexual identity. On the contrary, based on his appearance, interests and attitudes, he possesses many traditionally masculine traits that are stereotypically associated with heteronormativity. Indeed, as Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley have observed: “There is currently a dominant narrative about children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual” (ix).³ For many readers, this same rationale undoubtedly applies to Mayer’s central character. Nonetheless, as his amorphous name “Little Critter” suggests, he can still be seen as a queer figure. Mayer’s narrator-protagonist is an unspecific creature who resembles a hedgehog, a guinea pig and a porcupine, but is never definitively identified as any specific species. Moreover, while Little Critter is an animal, he is also—given his penchant for wearing human clothes and engaging in human activities—powerfully anthropomorphized. Thus, he inhabits a hybridized, liminal, or “queer” space. As a consequence, it should come as no surprise that Little Critter is adept at the queer art of failure. Appearing more than four decades before Halberstam’s observations, Mayer’s beloved character does much more than simply win at losing; he demonstrates how losing can be a form of winning. The failures that Little Critter routinely experiences give rise to new, unexpected, and in many ways better opportunities that paradoxically yield success.

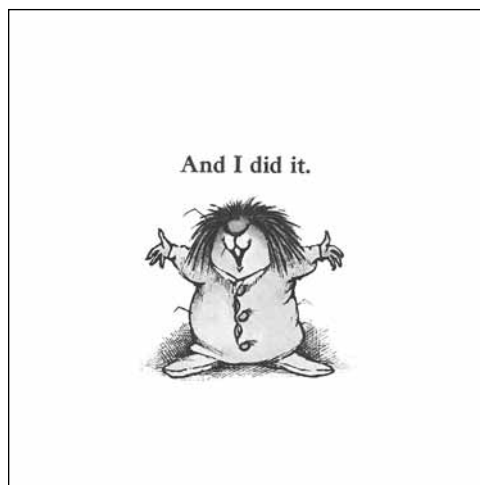
This phenomenon emerges in the finale to the first book of the series, *Just for You*. After Little Critter has failed to perform numerous chores and favors for his mother, he discovers something that he can successfully do

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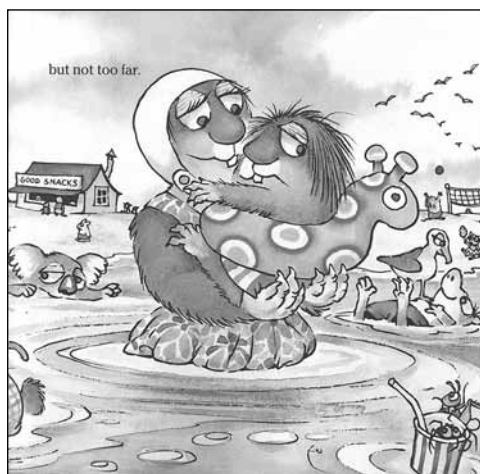
for her and that she actually wants more than any of the tasks he had previous attempted. “I wanted to do something special, just for you,” Little Critter says. The illustration that appears on the facing page shows the narrator-protagonist in his mother’s arms giving her a hug and kiss. For the first time in the narrative, nothing goes wrong to spoil his plans. On the contrary, both characters have a look of love and contentment on their faces. Consequently, when readers turn the page, Mayer’s narrator-protagonist proudly announces: “And I did it.” Below this line is an illustration of Little Critter standing with his arms outstretched in celebration and a happy grin on his face. In this way, Little Critter’s ultimate success arises from his failures. It is precisely because Mayer’s narrator-protagonist failed at so many different ventures that he was able to alight upon an act that he could not only perform successfully for his mother, but that she appreciated the most: receiving his love and affection.



This scenario recurs in many of the subsequent Little Critter texts. In *Just Grandma and Me*, the personal disappointments that the narrator-protagonist experiences yield an unexpected but delightful interpersonal achievement: they bring him closer to his grandmother. “I told Grandma to take me way out in the deep water,” he confidently relays in one of the opening pages. Yet, on the facing page, he hedges “but not too far.” The illustration that accompanies these lines shows



a frightened-looking main character clinging tightly to his grandmother’s arms. Even though he is wearing an inflatable ring around his waist and is close to the shore—his grandmother is barely up to her own waist in the surf—he is very scared. Indeed, no part of his body is even close to touching the water. Little Critter’s failure to go “way out in the deep water,” however, yields a paradoxical success: it builds trust, fosters intimacy, and thus deepens the connection that he shares with his grandmother. While Little Critter looks frightened in the illustration, his grandmother has a loving expression of care and concern. Had the narrator-protagonist succeeded in his desire to bravely explore the ocean depths, he would not have clung to her so tightly and thus he would have not experienced this tender moment of bonding.



This pattern is repeated in many of the subsequent passages in *Just Me and Grandma*. “I put on my fins and mask and showed Grandma how I can snorkel,” the main character proudly proclaims soon afterward. The drawing on the facing page, however, reveals that he failed miserably at this task, not snorkeling at all but instead being suspended near the surface of the shallow water by his grandmother. That said, she is once again smiling warmly, clearly enjoying this moment of closeness. Finally, in one of the



closing scenes, readers learn from Little Critter: “One the way home Grandma was tired, so I told her I would watch for our stop” on the bus. The facing image, however, shows Little Critter fast asleep in his seat; meanwhile, his grandmother



has her arm lovingly around him, and looks at him with tenderness and affection.

An analogous instance of “success-from-failure” emerges at the end of *Me Too!* After having his plans repeatedly spoiled by his little sister insisting that she be included, Little Critter reveals: “Today my little sister had a candy cane of her very own. So I said. . . Me Too?” When readers turn the page, they see what his little sister said in reply: “You too!” The closing illustration shows Little Critter’s sister holding up her candy cane while her big brother takes a

A comment that had previously precipitated failure, now, in a different setting and scenario, yields success.

delightful lick. A comment that had previously precipitated failure, now, in a different setting and scenario, yields success.

In these and other scenarios, Little Critter offers a compelling commentary on the American obsession with achievement. As historian Scott Sandage has written, from its origins, the



United States has placed a premium on success. “Low ambition offends Americans even more than low achievement” (Sandage 2). Evinced most strongly in the belief that anyone can “pull

themselves up by their bootstraps” and achieve the American Dream, the nation has long been focused on winners and winning. Indeed, when Alexis de Tocqueville toured the United States in the 1830s, he made the following observation about the nation’s citizens: “ambition is the universal feeling” (450). As Sandage has discussed, Americans routinely look unkindly on those who fail. Rather than seeing this outcome as the result of institutional or structural forces—such as economic inequity, social bias, or the vicissitudes of the marketplace—they tend to see it as the result personal failings. “Franklinesque proverbs blamed failure on laziness, drunkenness, greed, ignorance, extravagance, and a host of other sins” (Sandage 15). To be sure, many of the nation’s most beloved public figures have achieved this status, at least in part, because they have been successful. “Cornelius Vanderbilt and Phineas T. Barnum proved that any poor boy with grit and sturdy boot straps could make good. *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself* (1855) and Barnum’s later memoir, *Struggles and Triumphs* (1869), headed a burgeoning genre of success stories and primers long before Horatio Alger mastered the art” (Sandage 17). Even those who faced hardship could reveal themselves worthy of admiration through perseverance. “Protagonists like Ulysses S. Grant or Thomas Edison overcame early setbacks, proving that a winner never quits” (Sandage 17). In many ways, in fact, Edison rejected the entire concept of failure. In a comment for which he was well known during his own time and which continues to appear in self-help books and motivational posters today, he insisted: “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work” (qtd in Kleiser 80). Any American who is not familiar with this remark has likely encountered another popular maxim that was first uttered by football coach Vince Lombardi and which could serve as the national motto in many ways: “Winners never quit and quitters never win” (qtd in Manser 303).

Mercer Mayer’s *Just for You* was written and released during a time when notions about winning and losing were acquiring added significance for young people in the United States. Beginning in the 1970s and accelerating throughout the 1980s, childhood became increasingly focused on achievement. Arising in part from a growing national hysteria over the perceived dangers of leaving children unsupervised, in part from changes in childrearing practices that regarded structured activities as socially, intellectually, and psychologically enriching for young people, and in part from a national recession that made parents acutely aware that the world into which their children had been born was far more uncertain and competitive, American youth began engaging in more organized activities than any previous generation.⁴ As Francesco Duina has written, “Between 1981 and 1997, free time decreased by three hours per week, playtime decreased by three hours per week, unstructured outdoor activities fell by 50 percent. In the same time period, structured sports time doubled and study time increased by nearly 50 percent” (171). Young people were not simply being placed in more competitive situations, they were expected to perform well in them: to get the big hit at their baseball game, take first place in their

school spelling bee, or shine at the piano recital. As Steven Mintz has commented about family life during the Vietnam era, “Unlike postwar parents, who wanted to produce normal children who fit in, middle-class parents now wanted to give their child a competitive edge” (par 40).

As a consequence, children were being sorted into the categories of “winners” and “losers” at increasingly younger ages. Childhood was no longer seen as a time of experimentation and error, a period when young people tried and, inevitably, failed at a variety of activities as they discovered their personal strengths and weaknesses. Instead, the pressures for young people to excel at seemingly every endeavor that they attempted were enormous. A low score on a standardized test, teachers commonly warned young people during the 1970s and 1980s, might irrevocably derail their future. Similarly, a botched play during the big game, coaches cautioned the members of their varsity squad, might ruin their chance of ever receiving a college sports scholarship. “Excessive efforts to overload children with activities led experts such as David Elkind to decry a tendency toward ‘hyper-parenting’ as ambitious middle-class parents attempted to provide their children with every possible opportunity by filling up their afterschool time with lessons, enrichment activities, and sports” (Mintz, par 41). Indeed, as Mintz goes on to discuss about parenting practices during this period, “These experts feared that overscheduling and overprogramming placed excessive pressure on children and deprived them of the opportunity for free play and hanging out” (par 41).

Mercer Mayer’s Little Critter offers a counterpoint and even antidote to this trend. Written and released during a time when it was becoming increasingly important for children to succeed, this character was demonstrating the benefits of failing. Indeed, the setbacks, disappointments and letdowns that Little Critter experiences are not the ones that inevitably occur on the way to success, and thereby demonstrate the importance of perseverance, hard work, and determination. In *Just Grandma and Me*, for instance, Little Critter never explores the deep water or snorkels on his own. Likewise, in *Just for You*, he is unable to complete any of the household chores, outdoor tasks, or personal favors for his mother. Even more importantly, Mayer never shows his central character persisting in the face of such obstacles. On the contrary, after being thwarted in his efforts, Little Critter simply “gives up”: he does not try again to make his mother her morning eggs, carry in the groceries, or put away the dishes. Instead, he moves on another goal, which also, inevitably, ends in defeat.

This pattern causes Little Critter to be classified as not simply a generic loser, but the worst kind of failure: what sociologist Francesco Duina

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has termed a “consistent” or a “definitive loser” (106-7). These individuals are “eager to win” but they consistently prove themselves “incapable of achieving the desired result” (Duina 107; italics in original). Indeed, as Duina explains, “They are definitive losers because they keep on failing to achieve what they want” (107). As a consequence, these figures are seen as hopeless and pathetic at best and worthy of scorn and condemnation at worst (Duina 107-17).

That said, while Little Critter may consistently fail at his stated goals, he does achieve a different kind of success. As discussed above, although he never completes any of the tasks that he sets out to accomplish, these disappointments allow him to discover alternative achievements that are, arguably, even more fulfilling and important than his initial goal: maternal love in *Just for You*, grandmotherly affection *Just Grandma and Me*, and sibling camaraderie in *Me Too*. In this way, Little Critter turns being “the biggest loser” into an asset, not a liability. Moreover, this phenomenon causes Mayer’s narrator-protagonist to engage in a process that is more complex and in many ways more iconoclastic than Halberstam’s notion of “the queer art of failure.” On the contrary, Little Critter’s experiences demonstrate what might paradoxically be termed “the queer success of failure.” Mayer’s protagonist reveals

*Mayer’s protagonist reveals
how losing can actually be more
beneficial and, thus, more desirable
than winning.*

how losing can actually be more beneficial and, thus, more desirable than winning. Contrary to assertions by Thomas Edison and others, failure need not be merely a temporary detour or frustrating delay on the route to success; rather, it can be seen as its own alternative, unconventional, and queer destination.

Henry David Thoreau, writing in his journal on June 20th, 1840, cautioned about the hazards of focusing too intently on success: “Let us remember not to strive upwards for too long, but sometimes drop plumb down the other way, and

wallow in meanness. From the deepest pit we may see the stars, if not the sun” (146). Ironically, this figure who is regarded today as one of the most important American writers of the nineteenth century was considered a loser by many men and women during his own time. Because Thoreau repudiated the pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of material goods, and instead—as his experiment at Walden Pond demonstrated—chose to live his life simply with minimal possessions and modest professional aspirations, many regarded him as a disappointment. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an article that appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1862 after Thoreau’s death, for example, lamented about his friend: “he seemed born for great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action, that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition” (248). However, Thoreau recognized that certain forms of success could only come from failure. As he would remark in the concluding chapter of *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* (1854): “I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours” (427). It was precisely Thoreau’s failure to attain conventional socioeconomic accomplishments that allowed him to find personal satisfaction, intellectual enlightenment, and, ultimately, literary acclaim.



Little Critter has an analogous experience. Perhaps not since Henry David Thoreau has there

been a more successful loser. Mercer Mayer's series does not teach its young readers the expected lesson about the importance of avoiding failure; rather, it offers the far more unusual and even iconoclastic one that they should welcome it. This message remains as radical and important today as when *Just for You* was initially published.

Notes

1. *Just for You*—akin to all of the other Little Critter books that I am discussing—is not paginated. Thus, in keeping with this source material, none of my quotations here have page numbers. Given the relatively short length of these texts, however, it should not be difficult for readers to locate any of the passages to which I refer.
2. For readers who are unfamiliar with this show, *The Biggest Loser* is a reality series that first aired in 2004 and—at the time of this writing—is still being broadcast on NBC. The program follows the experiences of a cohort of individuals, usually all adults, who are following a new regiment of diet and exercise in an attempt to lose weight and improve their health. The winner of the show is the contestant who sheds the most pounds, and thereby becoming—as the title of the program indicates—“The Biggest Loser.”
3. Bruhm and Hurley go on to problematize this phenomenon. Discussion the common co-opting of children by the conservative right in the United States, for example, they note: “What is the effect of projecting the child into a heteronormative future? One effect is that we accept the teleology of the child (and narrative itself) as heterosexually determined” (Bruhm and Hurley xiv). That said, because childhood is also routinely framed as a liminal state of alterity, it could paradoxically be seen as possessing some queer qualities in its own right. Bruhm and Hurley write: “The very effort to flatten the narrative of the child into a story of innocence has some queer effects. Childhood itself is afforded a modicum of queerness when the people worry more about how the child turns out than about how the child exists as a child” (xiv). For more on this issue, see not only Bruhm and Hurley's introduction to *Curiouser*, but also the chapter by Kathryn Bond Stockton: “Growing Sideways, or Versions of the Queer Child” (277-315) As she provocatively asserts on one of the opening pages of her discussion, “Scratch a child, you will find a queer” (278).
4. For more on both these individuals social forces and their synergistic interplay, please see Chapter Three, “Threats from Without: Satanism, Abduction and Other Media Panics,” and Chapter Six, “Threats from Within: Maternal Delinquents,” in Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels' *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

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Lesléa Newman's picture book, *Donovan's Big Day*, narrates the experiences of young Donovan as he prepares for his mothers' wedding that day. From the moment he wakes up to the moment his "mommy and mama" are married, he is challenged to remain on his best behavior and avoid any messy situations. He stifles his temptations to oversleep, play with his cousin Benjamin, and run around the yard with his dog in order to keep his suit clean and unwrinkled. Donovan has a special responsibility today: he is the ring bearer, and has been given the task of keeping the rings safe in his pocket. He is careful in performing his daily tasks, washing his face and brushing his teeth with the utmost care and attention, and he is happy to mingle among his family members while waiting for the ceremony to begin. Because the ultimate event is hidden from the reader until the last two pages of the book, there is a sense of suspense and excitement throughout the course of the storybook. When it is finally time to give the rings to mommy and mama, Donovan is sure to show his mothers just how much he loves them—by kissing the brides. Newman's heartwarming story is told alongside captivatingly illustrations, and this progressive picturebook is a wonderful addition to any child's collection.

Samantha Christensen



Lesléa Newman
Donovan's Big Day
Illus. Mike Dutton
Berkeley: Tricycle Press, 2011
30 p.

ISBN: 978-1-58246-332-2
(Picture book, 2+)

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Hey, I Still Can't See My-
Self!: The Difficult Positioning of
Two-Spirit Identities in YA Literature

by ROBERT BITTNER



Robert Bittner is a doctoral student in Women's and Gender Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, BC. He specializes in young adult literature with gay, lesbian, and transgender themes. He is an advocate for LGBTQ literature to be used in classrooms and recently published on the topic in the *Journal of LGBT Youth* 9.4 (2012).

This article explores the difficulties of presenting two-spirited individuals in textual form due to the amount of political, social, and spiritual complexity associated with this particular identity category. Utilizing personal statements from aboriginal and two-spirit-identified individuals as well as secondary sources from well-known academics, this essay interrogates two novels in its focus on the deconstruction of identity categories to better understand the two-spirit identity within each text.

Introduction

Over the last decade there has been an increase in the number of essays and books exploring visibility of diverse sexualities and gender identities in young adult (YA) literature, particularly in a North American context.¹ The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN), recently put out a call for proposals for a workshop in which the following statement was highlighted: “[ALAN has books for everyone]—books for boys, books for girls, for challenged readers, brilliant readers, LGBTQ teens, teens in other countries, teens from other countries who now live here, Christian kids, Jewish kids, Muslim kids, non-believing kids, kids with problems at home [...]—young adults, all young adults (“Call for Manuscripts” 5). While it may be true that a large number of young people are able to see themselves in literature within North America, many of these images are still very limited and some still are almost entirely absent.

While it may be true that a large number of young people are able to see themselves in literature within North America, many of these images are still very limited and some still are almost entirely absent.

In the context of queer youth communities, finding representation within YA literature began with the appearance of gay and lesbian characters, then transgender and transsexual (trans*) characters, and now bisexual and genderqueer individuals.² And within all of these sub-categories, many academics, librarians, and authors (see endnote on queer literature scholarship) hope

to see some diversity in ethnic background, creating mirrors for queer young people of color. But one group is still very absent, and perhaps not for lack of trying on the part of authors and publishers. It is likely, in fact, that the difficulty in finding representations of non-gender-normative individuals within young adult literature is due to confusion surrounding identity categories themselves. Genderqueer, trans, and non-gender-identifying individuals are difficult enough to write about in fiction due to the nature of the English language and its reliance on gendered pronouns. However, one identity category that is incredibly complex due to the misunderstanding of what the term actually means is the two-spirited identity—an identity in which an individual feels the embodiment of both a male and female spirit. This may sound initially simple; however, differing accounts of what is meant by the term *two-spirit* in different cultural contexts complicate the issue greatly.³ It is my hope that through this exploration of two-spiritedness, and the current state of such identity categories in literature, publishers, authors, and literary critics will find the necessary information to begin the process of including two-spirited characters in contemporary fiction for young adults.

A Complex Notion

It may be that two-spirit as a category is seen as a remnant of the past, or part of a queer Native American or Aboriginal Canadian community that we cannot possibly understand. Of course there is also the

oft-proclaimed idea that being two-spirit is just the same as being queer or trans because being two-spirit is to embody both female and male spirits, but I believe that being two-spirited goes far beyond this. Qwo-Li Driskill, Daniel Heath Justice, Deborah Miranda, and Lisa Tatonetti, in the introduction to *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* state that

Not all queer Native people identify as two-spirit or see their sexualities and genders as connected to two-spirit histories in their communities, just as many people who identify as two-spirit or with tribally specific terms do not identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Still others identify as both GLBTQ and two-spirit but see these identities as inhabiting different social and cultural spheres, and many people shift between labels and terms depending on their contexts. (5)

If the label is contextual based on social placement, how then can there be representation of two-spirit youth within a literature that so often excludes Native individuals or explorations of Native cultures? In this article, I will explore the difficulties in finding representative identities within literature that shift based on cultural or social contexts, along with a close reading of one text—Emily Danforth’s *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*—in which a two-spirit character actually appears, along with a brief glimpse into Celu Amberston’s *The Dreamer’s Legacy*, in which a shaman-type character can be read as two-spirit.

The multiplicity of two-spirit terminology can be confusing and very much dependent on cultural/tribal tradition: “Two-spirit people—*identified by many different tribally specific names and community positions*—have been living, loving, and creating art since time immemorial” (Driskill et al, emphasis added 1). Some of these tribally specific terms include *wiŋkte*—a term used by the Lakota people, *nádleebé*—a Navajo term, and *hwame*—a Mohave term. These identities more often refer to socially gendered roles within Native American and Aboriginal communities, but sexuality is often tied into the experience of two-spirit people as well. Initially, many theorists and anthropologists used the term *berdache* to describe what we now refer to as *two-spirit*; however, *berdache* has a derogatory and offensive connotation. In *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang describe the history of *berdache* and the epistemology of the term, noting that it referred to male prostitutes, effeminate men, and captives (4). In 1990, during the third annual inter-tribal Native American/First Nations conference in Winnipeg, two-spirit was chosen to replace *berdache* as a descriptor of queer individuals within Indigenous communities.

Two-spirited individuals, it should be noted, may be gay or lesbian,

These identities more often refer to socially gendered roles within Native American and Aboriginal communities, but sexuality is often tied into the experience of two-spirit people as well.

but this is not what defines them as two-spirit; rather the two-spirit identity refers to those who feel the embodiment of male and female spirits. This is a more limiting definition, but one which, in its specificity, keeps the term from bleeding over into a more direct gay/lesbian identity. Embodying a feminine and masculine spirit, however, does not determine the sexual orientation of two-spirit individuals but rather refers more to gender and traditional roles within a tribal context. In "Straightening the Shawl," Ezra RedEagle Whitman writes,

I have toiled over this question for years. Am I a Two-Spirit? That's not that same question as "Am I gay?" I know I'm gay. I'm gay as hell. Yet I'm doubtful of whether there is in me a man and woman who shift between duties or situations. That would still define roles for each as if either one or the other will surface in order to handle its respective affairs like gender roles of the spirit. (90)

Gregory Scofield, a Metis playwright, social worker, and teacher, holds a similar view of two-spiritness. In "You Can Always Count on an Anthropologist (To Set You Straight, Crooked or Somewhere In-Between)," Scofield writes about his confusion regarding what it means to be two-spirited: "Apparently the Cree elders were as mystified as I was about the whole two-spirited description. How do you translate such a concept, the idea of a third or fourth gender? [...] Then again, who really knows what sacred ceremony takes place inside the womb?" (160). These accounts give a glimpse into the difficulties of defining two-spiritness, illustrating its nature as a term that is incredibly restrictive and unbelievably open to interpretation (relying greatly on subjective, individual experience).

There is also the spiritual aspect that complicates the definition as well. Discussing how he felt when he first began to explore his sexuality, Whitman states, "nothing felt spiritual about my [...] sexual desires. Accepting the mystic power of a two-spirit made me feel like I had to give up sexuality altogether and hover about

humbly voicing the visions that came to me in my sleep" (86). Because of this complex intersection of religion/spirituality and gender/sexuality, many two-spirit individuals feel that they need to renounce the identity if they do not feel the spiritual aspects apply to them, or they feel unable to find support within the "predominantly White gay scene" (Wilson 339). In 2008, Scofield renounced his two-spirit identity, as June Scudeler explains: "while Scofield previously referred to himself as Two-Spirited, he now calls himself gay, because he hasn't been trained in the sacred aspects of an *âyahkwêw* [an honored or sacred medicine person]" (190). With the full understanding of what makes a two-spirit person a subject of debate even within Native communities, it is no wonder that within non-Native cultures, the term causes so much confusion and is so often ignored. This conundrum is also why Native American/First Nations individuals who identify as two-spirit are doubly marginalized, because their race and the spiritual aspect of their sexual/gender identity does not fit into Western queer culture, and they are often left without support for their identities within their own Indigenous communities.

...Native American/First Nations individuals who identify as two-spirit are doubly marginalized, because their race and the spiritual aspect of their sexual/gender identity does not fit into Western queer culture, and they are often left without support for their identities within their own Indigenous communities.

In some cases, individuals who identify as two-spirited will engage in cross-dressing, or in activities that actively seek to upset cultural norms of gender roles and gendered activities or behaviors. In *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*,

Sabine Lang explores the history of this sort of activity within various Native communities in varying geographical locations and timeframes. According to Lang, the act of cross-dressing is not often practiced anymore within Indigenous communities due to the prominence of associations of (homo)sexuality with such behavior(s). This tradition is no longer practiced as often, therefore, as many Native American/First Nations individuals desire to fit in with society rather than purposely ostracize themselves. And this is often especially true in schools and young peoples' social settings.

Another researcher and artist who identifies as two-spirit, Qwo-Li Driskill explains, "the term 'two-spirit' is a word that resists colonial definitions of who we are. It is an expression of our sexual and gender identities as sovereign from those of white GLBT movements" (52). Thus, while the term two-spirit is often used to encompass GLBTQ identities, but within Native communities, Driskill shows how the two-spirit identity is one that resists these terms and works to separate itself from colonial definitions of sex and gender, even queer definitions. He goes on to clarify that "[t]he coinage of the word was never meant to create a monolithic understanding of the array of Native traditions regarding what dominant European and Euroamerican traditions call 'alternative' genders and sexualities" (52). Driskill states that he often finds himself using the words "Queer" and "Trans" to "translate my gendered and sexual realities for those not familiar with Native traditions, but at heart, if there is a term that could possibly describe me in English, I simply consider myself a Two-Spirit person" (52). This sort of complexity is most likely what is at the heart of the absence of two-spirit characters currently in YA literature. Without authors and publishers taking the time to define the identity category and its relation to a very specific tradition or history, however, two-spirit as a term becomes incredibly difficult to interpret fully. Driskill demonstrates this difficulty in his own life:

I'm not necessarily "Queer" in Cherokee contexts, because differences are not

seen in the same light as they are in Euroamerican contexts. I'm not necessarily "Transgender" in Cherokee contexts, because I'm simply the gender I am. I'm not necessarily "Gay," because that word rests on the concept of men-loving-men, and ignores the complexity of my gender identity. It is only within the rigid gender regimes of white America that I become Trans or Queer. [...] As Native people, our erotic lives and identities have been colonized along with our homelands. (52)

Understanding and writing about this sort of nuanced description of identity is intimidating for academics and researchers outside of Native communities, and many non-native authors avoid this sort of complication for fear of "getting it wrong." Linda Alcoff for instance, in "The Problem of Speaking for Others," writes that the position of an individual as either a part of or apart from a specific place/time/culture is an important component of speaking for or about other people(s): "I would stress that the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise" (29). While this is very much true in the context of colonialist attitudes in specific socio-political contexts, I would also argue, in the vein of Cynthia Sugars, that within fiction there is more freedom to write about others without appearing to take over or master them. Sugars writes, "[i]f literature is a realm where the suspension of disbelief enables the illusion of such immersion, where the author's unconscious is momentarily allowed to touch that of the reader, it is also a treacherous space that leaves one open to misrecognition" (16). The danger of speaking for someone else is inherent in the writing process when it comes to fiction; authors will always be writing about people and experiences that are not their own. What is necessary, though, is sensitivity to the lives and experiences of those who are being mirrored within the fictional world.

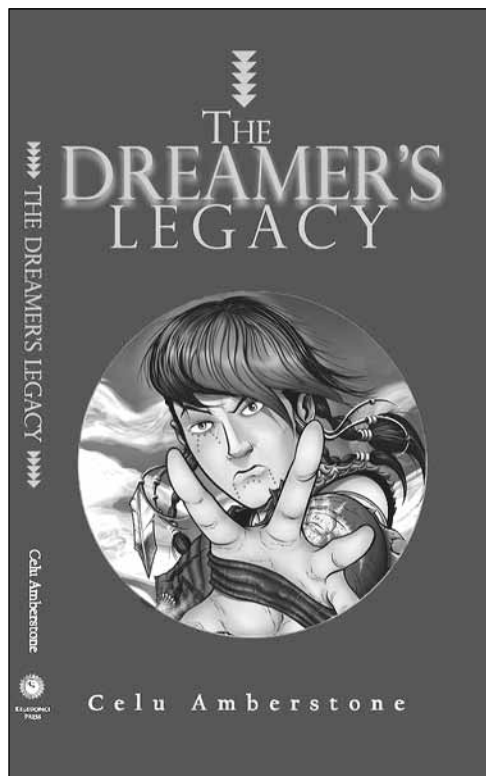
Without a combination of sensitivity and the desire/ability to write about others, women could not write books about men, and straight people could not write about LGBT individuals; Emily Danforth would not have been able to write most of the characters in *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*; I would not be able to write this paper. Much like trans* novels—which have now come much more into their own, being written by non-trans authors, with complex and nuanced character development—until more authors take the step of trying to “get it right” in regards to two-spirit identities the literature will not materialize. It is my hope, however, that with aid and support of two-spirited individuals and advocacy groups, there will be a greater desire for authors and publishers to produce such literature in the future.

With so many books coming out about LGBTQ themes and individuals,⁴ it is unfortunate that two-spirit individuals are still so absent from the greater body of queer YA literature. There are a number of novels with two-spirit content on library shelves, though the majority are written for, or at least marketed toward, an adult audience. The majority of books with two-spirit content that are aimed at a young adult audience conform to the broader definition of the term, which describes individuals who may be gay/lesbian/transgender/etc., who also happen to live in Native American or First Nations communities in North America.⁵ The more specific definition which I discussed earlier on—that being two-spirited is more than just being lesbian, gay, or bisexual within an Indigenous context; that it embodies male and female spirits in a spiritual context—is only fully evident

in two novels: *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* by Emily Danforth, and Celu Amberstone’s *The Dreamer’s Legacy*. This is not to say that there are no other quality novels available with Native gay/lesbian youths, but the novels I will be discussing highlight the more specific definition of two-spirit youth who find themselves living outside of even a gay or lesbian identity within Native communities. These young people, therefore, are still mostly unable to find themselves within the mirrors of young people’s fiction.

Two-Spirited Youth

Not only academics, researchers, and/or professional writers notice the difficulties of identifying outside of prescribed social norms of sexuality and gender: young two-spirit individuals have caught onto the complexities of identifying outside of LGBTQ. On the blog *for2spirits*—a space of LGBT, Queer and Two-Spirit Indigenous People—some users have posted their thoughts and experiences growing up as two-spirit. These accounts show the often-convoluted way of expressing identity that is necessary when living as two-spirit. An anonymous user writes:



For a while, I had always assumed I was just gay (I liked guys and not girls; that's gay right?) However, I didn't always feel very masculine or male. My gender seemed to fluctuate a lot. One minute I felt very masculine. The next, all I wanted to do was be Beyonce. Being two-spirited, having both a masculine and feminine spirit in one body, fit my identity/gender/sexuality perfectly. It all made so much sense.

While labels are often limiting and unrealistic in terms of what they actually characterize, two-spirit as a term is intricate and specific in a way that, while limiting, is also expansive and manages to cover an aspect of gender and sexuality that colonial terminology does not. Anonymous understands this, going on to explain his take on coming out as two-spirit, and what it means to him historically and culturally:

Colonialism and the christianization [sic] of natives almost eradicated the Two-Spirit identity. Since gender non-conformity and same-sex attractions were “against God,” Two-Spirit natives were murdered or forced to assimilate. After years of fear, torture, murder, and brainwashing many natives began to assimilate or believe in Christianity and its teachings against Two-Spirit natives, much like my family.

Another example of a user who differentiates two-spirit from other identities is Awkwarddisaster. This user writes, “i am a transmasculine genderqueer who is ojibwe, and i have an ojibwe + cree cousin who is two-spirit, but other than that, i haven't met any indigenous people who identify outside the gender binary. this blog is such a wonderful thing. thank you for creating it!” What this quotation shows is that some young people in Native communities, even though they are queer, do not identify as two-spirit, because of the specific contextual nature of the term. The second half of this quotation is also notable; it acknowledges the blog as a necessary space for youth to find others like them, an acknowledgement that also reinforces the need for young people to be able to see themselves mirrored in various aspects of culture, including literature. And literature is exactly the space that is still almost entirely unpopulated by two-spirit individuals.

Two-Spirited Characters

I wish to move forward from a discussion of real-life two-spirited individuals, to a consideration of two fictional instances of two-spirited young people in contemporary YA literature. Emily Danforth's recent novel, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, is a nuanced and complex book about the experiences—both delightful and depressing—of Cameron Post, a young girl who discovers she is a lesbian. When her first

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relationship goes awry and her conservative Christian relatives learn about her sexuality, they send her away to a Christian camp for reparative therapy to help covert her to a heterosexual orientation. Upon her arrival at the camp, Cameron meets her fellow sexual rejects—those considered to be sexual deviants in the face of mainstream Western sexual ideals. The camp is full of young people who are being convinced that their sexual and gender identities are abhorrent and in need of change; they are threatened with excommunication from families and religious communities if they do not transform to meet the expectations of the camp directors. Among the incarcerated teens is a young man by the name of Adam Red Eagle. He is Native American—significantly not plagued by issues growing up on a reservation (a prominent theme when discussing life as a Native American in YA books)—and he self-identifies as two-spirited. Adam's inclusion in the novel is a huge step forward for YA literature, providing readers with a previously invisible sexual identity within the fictional world. His presence is enlightening as well, giving Danforth the chance to explore two-spiritedness as an identity and a historically important aspect of indigenous culture.

Each young person who has been forced to attend the camp is asked to write out a brief outline of why he or she is there. Adam Red Eagle has this to say about himself and his situation: “Dad’s extreme modesty and lack of physical affection caused me to look for physical affection from other men in sinful ways. Too close with mom—wrong gender modeling. Yanktonais’ beliefs (winkte) conflict with Bible. Broken home” (292). Later, while talking to Cameron, Adam explains his identity in greater detail, making sure to differentiate two-spirit from being gay: “No gay image here, I’m winkte.... [A] two-souls person.... It’s a Lakota word, well, the shorter version of one. *Winyanktebca*. But it doesn’t mean gay. It’s something different” (309). There is a desire to differentiate the two-spirit identity, explaining that it “is an expression of [...] sexual and gender identities as sovereign from those of white GLBT movements” (Driskill 52). Much like the two-spirited youth I quoted earlier, Adam wants to

remain true to his identity as well as his history, and to the intersections between the two.

During his exchange with Cameron, Adam reveals how his parents each show a very different understanding of his identity: “It was seen in a vision on the day of my birth.... If you believe my mother, that is. If you believe my father, then my mother concocted this *nonsense* as an excuse for my faggy nature, and I need to just *man up* already” (309). The complexity of two-spirit as an identity is most apparent during Adam’s coming out process, it seems. Trying to explain an identity that is so tied to a cultural upbringing or experience to a person or group of people outside of that tradition is an incredible source of anxiety and confusion for two-spirit youth. Just as people such as Driskill have to resort to Euroamerican terminology when describing themselves, so Adam has to do in Danforth’s novel. Regarding his earlier discussion with Cameron, Adam goes on to explain, “My dad’s version is easier to explain to everyone single person in the world who doesn’t know Lakota beliefs. I’m not gay. I’m not even a tranny. I’m like pre-gender, or almost like a third gender that’s male and female combined.... Winktes are supposed to somehow bridge the divide between genders and be healers and spirit people” (309-10). Adam’s character is a complex one even though he is only in the novel for a short period of time. His identity is one that is difficult to explain, though Danforth makes a valiant effort to cover as many aspects of his gender and sexuality as possible without making him sound like a case study. Adam is a mirror of a very real young adult experience—that of coming out and having to explain the nuances of two-spirit vs. queer or trans* identities. Much like trans* narratives for teens, the concentration in this novel is on exploring identity and coming out rather than exploring physical relationships, or romantic relationships in general. Like trans* narratives, there has to be one book that starts a

Like trans narratives, there has to be one book that starts a trend, and hopefully this is just such a book for two-spirit characters.*

trend, and hopefully this is just such a book for two-spirit characters.

While *Cameron Post* is grounded in realism, Celu Amberstone's *The Dreamer's Legacy* is grounded more in fantasy. This is significant because the narrative gives voice to more mystical and spiritual aspects of indigenous cultures; spirit animals and a connection to the spirit realm are important to the protagonist. Amberstone's novel focuses on the young Tasimu, a boy very much connected with the spirit world. His Grandfather and another man named Chumco are both Qwakaihi—shaman-like figures within the tribe. The two-spirited nature of Chumco is incredibly subtle, only being shown to savvy readers through nuanced descriptions of action and personal characteristics. While Tasimu's Grandfather is a respected elder, Chumco is considered to be a much darker character, albeit one who exhibits more feminine qualities, giving the impression that he may be two-spirit: "To my surprise, Chumco untied the thong around my braid, and began combing out my long dark hair with a finely carved wooden comb. As he worked, he sang a low chant under his breath. [...] The song brought back memories of my babyhood, Mother sitting me on her lap, untangling my hair with a brush made of poplar twigs" (125). Chumco's actions are reminiscent of a mother's, combing Tasimu's hair and singing to him. Granted this is very subtle as far as introducing a two-spirit figure, but it is an introduction to a figure in Native tradition that does not conform to dominant Western traditions of gender. Chumco, as a character is more feminine in nature, is a powerful figure within the tribe, and has ties with the spirit world, all qualities ascribed to historical figures identified as being two-spirit.

Both authors bring recognition to two-spiritedness through their novels—Danforth through the fully realized and explicitly two-spirited Adam, and Amberstone through more subtle clues and mystical spiritualism regarding Chumco. Readers of both novels can learn about two-spiritedness, some of its history, and how two-spirited individuals function within Western cultures that have redefined sexuality

and gender identity over the centuries. Through these novels, young people will hopefully become more interested in what it means to be two-spirit and will be able to learn more about or connect with groups and communities that are working to bring back the two-spirit identity into a contemporary context. Each of the two representations discussed herein work to complicate traditional identity categories, bringing forth identity as a fluid and social category entrenched in history

...the two-spirit identity is one that can, and hopefully will, ultimately break free from the repressive and colonial attitudes in which it has become mired.

and tradition. But the two-spirit identity is one that can, and hopefully will, ultimately break free from the repressive and colonial attitudes in which it has become mired.

Conclusion

Evidence of two-spirited teens or any such characters in literature for youth is nearly absent. Danforth's *Miseducation of Cameron Post* and Amberstone's *Dreamer's Legacy* are the only two novels I could find with two-spirit characters that were identified as being different from Western notions of queerness, that is characters who are LGBT and also happen to be from an indigenous population. There are novels now available, though still few, with queer Native characters who identify within accepted Western terminology, but there are only these two with more specific and marginalized two-spirit characters (beyond gay/lesbian identities), and of the two, only *Cameron Post* has a self-identified two-spirited character. Adam as a character acts and reacts much in the same way that two-spirit youth do in their self-representations, trying to live outside the borders of accepted identity politics, having to explain the differences each and every time they come out. Adam's experience being ostracized from his community seems typical as well in many ways as the earlier

youth testimonies concur, showing just how much the colonial influence of European culture has caused Native communities to abandon acceptance of two-spiritedness in favor of mainstream heteronormative thinking. But what does this all mean for the future of literature for all, including those occupying marginalized identities, whether in terms of sexuality or gender or racial difference?

I can only posit that the current lack of two-spirit individuals in literature for young people is due to the fact that the term is so confusing to some that they do not wish to engage with it in such a public venue as a published novel, or the term has become such an umbrella—much like *queer*—that authors do not consider using the term because they would rather use *gay*, *lesbian*, and so on, rather than use a lesser-known identity category. I can understand both of these possibilities; however, if the term is not used and does not show up in YA literature, how can we expect young people who identify as two-spirit to find books that represent them and their experiences? We need more books with strong two-spirited characters, much like Danforth's Adam, and we need more education on lesser known terminology so young people can understand that just because a certain term is not used often, it does not mean that their experiences and existence are being ignored or erased.

Notes

1. A sample of this emerging research area is as follows: Abate and Kidd, *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2011); Bittner, "The Trouble with Normal: Transsexual Youth and the Desire for Normalcy as Reflected in Young Adult Literature" (2010); Cart and Jenkins, *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-2004* (2006); Crisp and Knezek, "I Just Don't See Myself Here: Challenging Conversations about LGBTQ Adolescent Literature" (2010); Crisp, "From Romance to Magical Realism: Limits and Possibilities in Gay Adolescent Fiction" (2009); Rockefeller, "The Genre of Gender: The Emerging Canon of Transgender-Inclusive YA Literature" (2007).
2. Genderqueer as defined in the *OED* is a term used to describe a person "who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions, but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders." The website itspronouncedmetrosexual.com defines trans* as "an umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum...the asterisk makes special note in an effort to include all non-cisgender gender identities, including transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderfuck, genderless, agender, non-gendered, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, and trans man and trans woman."
3. In 1990, during the third annual intertribal Native American/First Nations conference in Winnipeg, two-spirit was chosen to replace *berdache* as a descriptor of queer individuals within Indigenous communities.
4. Christine Jenkins and Michael Cart have been collecting statistics

on LGBTQ books for many years, and full charts and information can be found in their book, *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-2004* (2006). Also, Malinda Lo, a young adult author, has recently completed an analysis of queer literature for youth from 1969-2011, where she noted the increase in queer YA novels: from 1969 to 1980, only 1-2 queer YA books were published per year, while in 2011 there were over 25.

5. See, for example, Daniel Heath Justice's fantasy trilogy, *The Way of Thorn and Thunder: Kynship* (2005), *Wrywood* (2006) and *Dreyd* (2007), and Lee Maracle's *Will's Garden* (2008).

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Our Forthcoming Issues:

- 52.2 (2014) The Hans Christian Andersen Award Nominee Issue
- 52.3 (2014) The Mexico City Congress Issue: Children's Literature in Latin America
- 52.4 (2014) Open & the Hans Christian Andersen Award Shortlist

Yuk!

Kes Gray & Nick Sharratt



The Invisibility of Lesbian Mother Families in the South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge

This essay engages in an analysis of a selection of books from the 2011 South Australia Premier's Reading Challenge, which centres upon a recommended reading book list from which children must select titles in order to complete the challenge. As our findings suggest, nowhere in the subsection of the list explicitly named as "families and relationships" did there appear representations of lesbian mother-families, and indeed in the larger sample of the 4000 books on the list, only one such representation was identified. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings and provides recommendations for how this issue may be addressed.

by DAMIEN RIGGS
and SCOTT HANSON-EASEY

Introduction

Arguably, one of the defining features of scientific, experimental research is the null hypothesis, which suggests that any change observed as part of an experiment is the product of chance, and thus is not a result of the experiment itself. Of course scientists typically want to refute the null hypothesis and show that their findings are the product of their experiment. In the social sciences, where true experiments are somewhat less common, we still work with the notion of a null hypothesis. In the social sciences, we are often interested in finding out if there is a relationship between a set of variables, or for qualitative researchers, if there is a relationship between being a member of a group and having a shared set of experiences. So, for example, we might interview a group of lesbian mothers (as we did for the research that informs the broader project from which this paper is derived), and while we would expect to hear a lot of different stories and experiences, we might also expect to hear a lot of similar themes (as was the case in our interview data, see Riggs and Willing). If indeed we do hear a number of key themes repeating themselves across our interviews, then we have in essence refuted the null hypothesis (which would suggest no similarities amongst lesbian mothers).

At this point the reader might be wondering what if anything the above focus on the null hypothesis has to do with a paper on children's literature. Our reason for opening with this line of thought is to introduce a potentially novel way of thinking about social change (or the lack of it) in regards to gender and sexuality in the context of children's literature. To explain: the project that this paper is drawn from sought to examine the educational experiences of South Australian lesbian mother-families. At the time the data were collected, South Australia was the only remaining Australian state or territory that did not provide full protection to such families. This was despite the fact that South Australia was the first Australian state to legalize homosexuality in the mid 1970s. This contradiction suggested to us that much could be gained from exploring the experiences of this population of lesbian mothers. For the project, we have to date surveyed a sample of South Australian lesbian mothers about their family's experiences within the education system (Riggs), spoken to a sub-sample of those who completed the survey focusing on how they negotiate educational contexts (Riggs and Willing), run and assessed a workshop aimed at increasing the capacity for educators to work with lesbian mother-families (Riggs and Due), and finally undertaken an audit of the books included in the families and relationships section of the 2011 South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge. This last aspect of the data is the focus of this paper.

As its title would suggest, the South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge (PRC) is a government-organized annual undertaking in which South Australian students are encouraged to read twelve



Dr. Damien Riggs is a senior lecturer in social work at Flinders University, where he researches and teaches in the areas of family studies, gender/sexuality studies, and mental health. He is the author of over 100 publications in these areas, including *What about the Children! Masculinities, Sexualities and Hegemony* (2010).



Dr Scott Hanson-Easey is a post-doctorate researcher in Public Health at the University of Adelaide. His research investigates how minority groups are represented and accounted for in lay and political talk. Recently, he has explored the socially constructed nature of public understanding of climate change, and how the communication of hazard messages to refugees and other diverse groups could be improved.

books of their own choosing from the extensive list of books covered by the PRC. Students from reception (that is, the first formal year of school, which Australian children enter when they are 5 years old) to year nine are able to participate, and students who complete the PRC each year receive a medal to acknowledge their completion. Most South Australian schools (both public and private) actively encourage involvement, and school libraries typically utilize a coding system to indicate which books are included in the PRC list. In addition to maintaining a list of all of the books included in the PRC, each year a list of the most popular books is made available on the website www.premiersreadingchallenge.sa.edu.au. Furthermore, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA) also cites books included on the PRC as recommended texts.

To return to the null hypothesis, then, our expectation prior to auditing the books included in the families and relationships subsection of the PRC was that while it would be likely that we would find a significant proportion of books focusing exclusively on heterosexual nuclear families, we nonetheless expected that we would also find at least some books featuring lesbian mother-families, amongst other family groupings typically lumped under the banner of “diversity.” Much to our disappointment, however, we were not able to reject the null hypothesis. Of the 500 books that were included under the subsection of families and relationships, not one included representation of lesbian mother-families, despite a relatively large body of both storybooks and young adult fiction that feature such families. We did identify a small number of books that included representation of other “diverse families,” for example, *Family Forest* by Kim Kane and Lucia Masciullo, but these were overwhelmed by the predominance of heterosexual nuclear families represented (especially in the books for children in years three and above), and by the predominance of highly normative images of mothers and fathers (especially in the books for children in reception to year two).

Of course it could be argued that this outcome is unsurprising. But at the same time, we had legitimate reasons to expect that our findings would refute the null hypothesis of there being no representations, and that we would find at least some books featuring lesbian mother-families. We acknowledge that at the time of data collection there was no legislative recognition for lesbian mother-families in South Australia. However, this does not mean that there were not representations of lesbian mothers in the media, that lesbian mothers and their families do not have a presence in the school system, and that South Australian educators do not acknowledge their presence. Yet despite these reasons as to why our expectation of refuting the null hypothesis was plausible, the outcome would suggest that we were perhaps somewhat too optimistic.

Of the 500 books that were included under the subsection of families and relationships, not one included representation of lesbian mother-families, despite a relatively large body of both storybooks and young adult fiction that feature such families.

So where does that leave us for this paper? In the analysis that follows, we outline broadly what representations of family we *did* find in the families and relationships subsection of the PRC. While this might seem an appropriate topic to write about (despite it not being the focus of our project), the reader might question why we are still framing this paper in terms of lesbian mother-families. Our answer for this is simple, and it is the reason why there are entire journals devoted to publishing non-significant findings (i.e., those that fail to refute the null hypothesis): there is typically a good reason for expecting to find change or differences when we undertake research. When our hypotheses are not confirmed, it is often valuable to reflect on why this is the case. And in terms of the South Australian education system and lesbian mothers, it is vital that we continue to reflect upon why this family form remains largely invisible. Indeed, illuminating what is not present—what is hidden behind normative layers of representation—can provide an impetus for important changes to be made to the representational order as it stands. Before outlining what we did find in our analysis of the PRC, we first briefly outline previous research on the topic of children’s storybooks and non-heterosexual parents.

Previous Research

Previous research on children’s storybooks and inclusion suggests that such books frame for children the world around them, and provide them with a lens through which to interpret their experiences (Clyde and Lobban). For those children who are not part of a lesbian mother-family, the invisibility of lesbian mother-families within the books they read can translate into many things. It can legitimate exclusion if the child is taught by their parents or other adults to see lesbianism as something negative (Chapman). It can fail to prime them to be able to “see” difference, thus contributing to the exclusion and marginalization of lesbian mother-families (amongst others). For children who may later identify as lesbian or otherwise not heterosexual, it gives them the message that they do not exist (Stafford). And of course for children raised in lesbian

mother-families, the lack of representation of their families may only compound their experience of social exclusion.

In terms of children’s literature that *does* include representations of lesbian-mother families, Jeff Sapp (2010) suggests that there has been something of a shift away from the explicit (though often very simplistic and didactic) inclusion of lesbian mothers and gay fathers in books published in the 1980s and 90s, to the present where lesbian or gay characters often play a secondary role, one in which they blend into the background. While it could be argued that this represents the taken-for-granted status of non-heterosexual people as part of the accepted weave of the fabric of western societies, we would not readily accept such an interpretation. Rather, we read this practice of rendering non-heterosexual sexualities as part of the background as a product of neoliberal assimilation. Virginia Wolf highlights this issue of the foregrounding versus backgrounding of homosexuality well when she writes:

To some extent I find these books’ failure to make homosexuality an issue refreshing. It is pleasant simply to be presented with female couples and with a man who fulfills some of the stereotypes about gay men and not to have their being gay the focus of the books. . . . Whenever an issue takes over, no matter what it is, it tends to seem a problem rather than just the way things are. . . . On the other hand, if these parents are not identified as gay, then readers are not being educated about the gay family. I think the labels are necessary if reading is to challenge the reader’s homophobia (53-54).

Christine Jenkins makes a similar point from her review of sixty young adult books featuring lesbian or gay characters published between 1969 and 1992. She suggests that what appears in these books are categories and stereotypes, not identities. While, as Wolf notes, a sole focus on identities can reify, rather than address, problems of exclusion, at the same time the failure to

depict lesbian or gay characters as anything other than a category or a type (and thus as just a plot narrative) can also fail to do anything to provide the reader with a broader context in which to situate lesbians or gay men. To return to our point above then, the backgrounding of lesbian and gay characters serves to reinforce the “we are all the same” logic that drives the neo-liberal assimilationist agenda. And it is this point that gives us some insight as to why our findings do not refute the null hypothesis: why would books featuring lesbian mother-families be included in the PRC if, by the logic of “we are all the same,” any other book featuring any other family form will do? As our following examination of the books that *were* included highlights, however, this type of exclusion through assimilatory inclusion logic does relatively little if anything to shift the center, but rather repeats the same old norms and stereotypes.

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Analysis

For the purposes of the research reported here, we decided to focus solely on books listed under the families and relationships subsection of the PRC. Furthermore, we limited our sample to the books that were aimed at children in reception to year five. This decision was made on the basis of the fact that our aim in undertaking the audit was to determine the degree of coverage of lesbian mother-families in books that pertain to our sample of lesbian mother-families. Given that our sample was comprised of families with relatively young children (i.e., in grade five or below, see Riggs), we felt it appropriate to focus on the books that this population would be accessing.

We were of course cognizant of the fact that there may well have been other books outside of this selection that featured families and

relationships, but given that the full PRC list contains over 4000 books, it was not possible to read all of the titles. To ensure that we were not misrepresenting the PRC, we decided to undertake a search of the entire PRC for any known titles featuring lesbian mothers, taken from lists provided by both Day and Sapp. Across the entire PRC only one title was identified that featured lesbian mothers: Todd Parr’s *The Family Book*. This book attempts to highlight family diversity, and includes one page that says “some families have two mums” and also “some families have two dads.” This book, however, is classified as nonfiction in the PRC and thus does not appear in the family and relationships list and is therefore not included in our sample.

Of the subsample we examined, the majority is aimed at children in reception to year two (228 titles), with the remaining titles aimed at readers in years three to five (58). Across all of these 286 books, almost half (48.6%) of the storylines featured heterosexual nuclear families. It is important, we believe, to note the preponderance of these books featuring heterosexual families on the list of the most read books for the PRC in 2011. While it could be argued that such books are the most read because they are the most available (and not that children prefer books featuring heterosexual nuclear families *per se*), the question nonetheless must be asked as to why these books are so widely available and so well received. Obviously the top books lists should reflect those that are most read, but if this is a product of only certain titles being most widely available (i.e., those featuring heterosexual nuclear families), then this is an issue that requires ongoing attention. Of the remaining books, 33 (11.54%) included storylines where there was only a mother present, and 10 (3.50%) included storylines where only a father was present. The remainder of the sample was constituted by storylines in which there was no family represented (67, 23.43%), or where the focus of the story was upon non-human families (27, 9.44%), as well as a small number of other non-normative families (e.g., children living with aunties, uncles, grandparents, or in blended heterosexual families, 3.49%).

Representations of Mothers

In many of the books where a mother was present, women were depicted as active gatekeepers to children's experiences. For example, *A Lion in the Meadow* by Margaret Mahy tells the story of a young boy who insists that there is a lion in the meadow, only to be told "nonsense, little boy" by his mother (n.p.). Of course the emphasis upon gatekeeping was not the only stereotype about mothers that many of the books relied upon. Other stereotypical depictions of women involved mothers being overly affectionate and/or controlling, sewing costumes, being good cooks who are frequently in the kitchen, undertaking activities solely inside the house, being accommodating, being interested in their daughters looking stereotypically like girls and their boys acting stereotypically like boys, being strict and matronly, holding and feeding babies, washing clothes, and being forgiving. For examples of these see *My Cat Maisie* by Pamela Allen, *Ella Kazoo will not Brush her Hair* by Lee Fox and Cathy Wilcox, and *Can we Lick the Spoon Now* by Carol Goess and Tamsin Ainslie. In making this summary of the majority of the books featuring only mothers, we of course do not seek to dismiss the fact that mothers *do* continue to do the majority of all child-rearing, the majority of all housework, and that children may well experience their mothers in some of the ways described above. Our concern, however, is that the mothers represented in these ways were *only* represented in these ways.

There were only three books that were clear exceptions to the rule of stereotyped images outlined above. In these three books, mothers were represented as both people with interests and activities of their own, and as parents. The first of these, *Midge, Mum and the Neighbors* by Phil Cummings and Ritva Voitila features the story of a young single mother who is frowned upon for having fun and playing with her child. The second book, *The Wishing Cupboard* by Libby Hathorn and Elizabeth Stanley, follows the story of a child whose mother has gone to Vietnam to bring back her cousin to live with the family. In the third book, *Mum goes to Work* by Libby Gleeson, the story tells of children at a childcare center and the work their mothers do while their children are in care. While somewhat breaking the gender norm of mothers as primary caregivers, it could also be argued that *Mum goes to Work* reinforces this norm to some extent by providing no stories of stay-at-home fathers; that is, the children are in care because their mothers can't care for them at home.

For children of heterosexual parents, we would argue, the stereotypical images of mothers that appeared in the majority of books may only serve to reinforce the cultural expectation that mothers should be selfless in the care of their children. This expectation was often implied in books that described mothers as controlling, refusing, or as strict disciplinarians, and where these negative attributes depicted mothers as failing to be selfless. Interestingly, in two particular books where mothers were represented in these ways, it was in response to non-gender normative behaviors by children. For example, in *Yuk* by Kes Gray and Nick Sharratt a female child is cajoled to choose a dress for her

role in a wedding: “If you don’t wear a dress to Auntie Sue and Clive’s wedding, I’ll be sad, Nanny will be sad, Grampy will be sad, Clive will be sad, everyone in the world will be sad, exaggerated Daisy’s mum” (n.p.). Ultimately, the child refuses to wear a dress that conforms to the mother’s expectations, yet while this engenders a space for the child’s own unique gender expression, the refusal to wear a dress is reliant upon the contrast between the controlling mother and the child. In *Crusher is Coming* by Bob Graham, a young boy has a play date planned with a tough looking boy named Crusher. He pleads with his mother not to embarrass him, but we are repeatedly presented with images of her failing to do so, for example, by giving him a kiss despite the boy asking her not to do so. Interestingly, the narrative of the book presents Crusher as gentle and kind and happy to play with the boy’s younger sister (i.e., the complete opposite of his tough boy appearance), but the narrative is nonetheless reliant upon the image of the mother who is negatively depicted as unresponsive to her son’s requests.

Considering what the representations of mothers summarized above might mean for children raised by lesbian mothers, it could be argued that the mother-only books included in the sample possibly allow for the mothers in these books to be read as single lesbian mothers. Nonetheless, the stereotypes outlined above do very little to present a diverse range of images of motherhood that encompass the many different ways in which women can mother. Furthermore, for children raised in two mother households, the stereotypical images of motherhood depicted, while possibly still resembling the actions of some stay-at-home lesbian mothers (as Sullivan suggests in her research on lesbian mother-families), nonetheless fail to provide representations of mothers who work outside the house or who engage as mothers in a diverse range of ways.

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Representations of Fathers

As mentioned previously, a minority of the books included representations of only fathers. Of these, 8 of the 10 books featured gender normative images of fathers, including the depiction of them as engaged primarily in paid work, located outside of the house, being disorganized and messy, being inventive, having food they are never seen making, knowing the answers, being unable to express emotions, being sporty and brave. For example, in *Every Second Friday* by Kiri Lightfoot, the narrative states that when “my brother and I pack our bags and go and stay at [dad’s] house...we always get—magnificently muddy, worryingly wet and mind-blowingly messy” (n.p.).

Compared to the images of mothers outlined above, the images of fathers that appear in the books examined sit as polar opposites, with fathers primarily depicted as agentic workers who are fun to be with; see, for example, *Great Ocean Walk* by Jiri Tibur Novak. Like the

representations of mothers, there were a number of books that included stereotypically negative images of fathers, such as images of them as clueless and messy. In contrast to the negative images of mothers, however, fathers who were messy or clueless were able to rectify the issues associated with this by the end of the book. In other words, where a plot narrative focused on the problems arising from having a messy father, this was resolved in the conclusion of the book, such as in *Down the Back of the Chair* by Margaret Mahy and Polly Dunbar, which tells the story of a father who loses the keys to the car but in the process of looking for them finds happiness with his children. In comparison, when mothers were represented in negative ways, this aspect remained so at the conclusion of the book: the narrative did not “redeem” controlling, rejecting, strict, or matronly mothers.

The types of images of fathers outlined above have negative implications for child readers. For children with fathers who can be read in similarly stereotypical ways, there is the message that change is possible. For some fathers this may well be the case, but for many others this may not be so. Depicting fathers as capable of addressing negative attributions but mothers as unable to do so holds potentially negative implications for all parents. For children living in father-only households specifically, the over-emphasis upon emotionally distant and absent working fathers may well serve to normalize such approaches to fathering, which not only perpetuates this type of image of fathering, but also fails to acknowledge that being parented in this way may not be ideal for all children. And in terms of lesbian-mother families, the stereotypical images of fathers reported here (and their difference from the images of mothers) only serves to reinforce dominant cultural discourses in which mother-only families are depicted as lacking (Clarke). In other words, by depicting fathers as agentic and capable, in comparison to mothers who are depicted as responsive and available but not necessarily agentic or capable, children raised in lesbian mother-families are provided with images by these books in which only men are active subjects.

Conclusion

Our findings presented above suggest that not only are lesbian mother-families not represented in the 2011 PRC but that those families that *are* represented include highly gender normative images of mothers and fathers. This presents a number of issues for lesbian mother-families,

Our findings presented above suggest that not only are lesbian mother-families not represented in the 2011 PRC but that those families that are represented include highly gender normative images of mothers and fathers.

not the least of which being their relative invisibility in the PRC. Certainly as Norma Klein notes, if children’s storybooks serve an escapist function, then what does it mean that there are no lesbian vistas in which children *of any parents* can escape into? This lack of lesbian vistas has implications not simply for children with lesbian mothers, but also for children who may in the future identify as lesbian. But beyond the invisibility of lesbian vistas, the issue of normalization is perhaps equally as troubling. If all that children see are images that either locate “good” mothers within the home (and immediately responsive to their children’s needs) or other “bad” mothers as gatekeepers of children’s lives, then what are the implications of this for all children? And of course if normalizing images of mothers are all there are available and none of these include lesbian mothers, then how does this implicitly endorse homophobia or the exclusion of lesbian mother-families?

Of course, the problems we have identified with the PRC are not limited to the impact upon children and parents. As Jeff Sapp notes, the lack of literature in the PRC on lesbian mother-families, amongst others, may only serve to reinforce the inability of educators to engage with such family forms:

[Previous research reported by the author highlighted] the palpable discomfort that teachers demonstrated when gay and lesbian themed children's books were introduced as a topic in a graduate education course. During the course, titled "Literature for Children and Adolescents," teachers expressed their great anxiety over using any storyline with gay and lesbian themes. Statements such as "Having books like these floating around in libraries is not something you want as a hazard for parents who prefer to teach their kids conservatively" reveal educators' unease about having gay and lesbian themed books in their classroom. It stands to reason that if educators are anxious then children may pick up on this anxiety as well. (39)

With multiple demands on the attention of Australian educators, anything that fails to support them in actively engendering inclusive environments must be viewed with concern. We would view the PRC as one place in which, due to its highly normative forms of representation, teachers are implicitly excused from covering topics they might find "discomforting." Rather than being complicit with making available any excuses to shy away from inclusive practices, education systems must provide opportunities for educators to become skilled in teaching about a diverse range of families and offer them the resources with which to do so. A PRC list that is more inclusive and representative would be an important component of such a context.

Future research could certainly do well to undertake a comparison of the PRC as it appears in other Australian states, which may well differ in their content. Certainly the Australian state of Victoria has recently initiated a "safe schools" program aimed at supporting non-heterosexual and non-gender normative people, and this may well translate into other areas of the Victorian education system (including the Victorian PRC). Future research may also undertake an even closer examination of the holdings of individual titles in school libraries. Our approach to accessing titles

from the PRC was to borrow books from public libraries. However it would be useful if future research examined which particular titles from the PRC are held in which South Australian primary schools and which titles predominate in this regard.

To conclude, and to return to our opening words, there is much to be gained, even in the social sciences, from examining why any researcher's findings do not refute the null hypothesis, and why it seemed plausible in the first place that it would be refuted. While, as we noted earlier, South Australia has lagged behind in recognizing lesbian mother-families, this did not seem enough to mitigate against finding representations of lesbian mothers in the South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge. The fact that we did not find any such representations in the families and relationships section of the 2011 PRC, and that the only book we could find in the entire PRC was classified as non-fiction (and only included one page in one book featuring a two mother family), might well be not all that surprising, but it nonetheless warrants concern. For us, part of that concern is not necessarily that the lack of inclusion represents homophobia at work, but we would certainly suggest that it represents an equally insidious form of exclusion, namely that of neo-liberal assimilation. That it has not occurred to anyone that at least some books featuring a more diverse range of families *should* be included in the PRC as part of the families and relationships section is indeed notable. Our hope is that the insights afforded by this paper will indeed lead to change in regards to future iterations of the PRC.

Acknowledgments

We begin by acknowledging the sovereignty of the Kurna people, the First Nations people upon whose land we live and work in Adelaide, South Australia. Thanks must go to *Bookbird's* two anonymous reviewers for their excellent and supportive feedback on a previous version of this paper. A Faculty Establishment Grant supported the research reported in this paper.

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The Girl of the Wish Garden: A Thumbelina Story is a loose retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's Thumbelina. An author's note explains the inspiration behind the revision. Uma Krishnaswami, who first fell in love with Hans Christian Andersen's stories at the age of eight while living in India, was inspired to write this book after encountering Nasrin Khosravi's illustrations for a Farsi picture book edition of the Thumbelina story. The illustrations are captivating, a compound of late impressionism and cubism. The illustrations deviate in places from the original Thumbelina plot, and since this retelling is inspired by the paintings, Krishnaswami follows them, although she retains some key elements from the original, especially using the convention of story as a poet's dream. The text of the story is spare, written in free verse poetic style, following the surreal dream narrative of the paintings. The result is an engaging poem that follows the fluid dynamic of the paintings, shifting landscapes, and narrative atmosphere. As a Thumbelina retelling should, this story brings the reader into the enlarged world of the tiny protagonist, an enchanting environment of interaction with frogs, mice, swallows, and horses.

Taylor Kraayenbrink



Uma Krishnaswami
*The Girl of the Wish Garden:
 A Thumbelina Story*
 Toronto: Groundwood
 Books, 2013
 32 pages

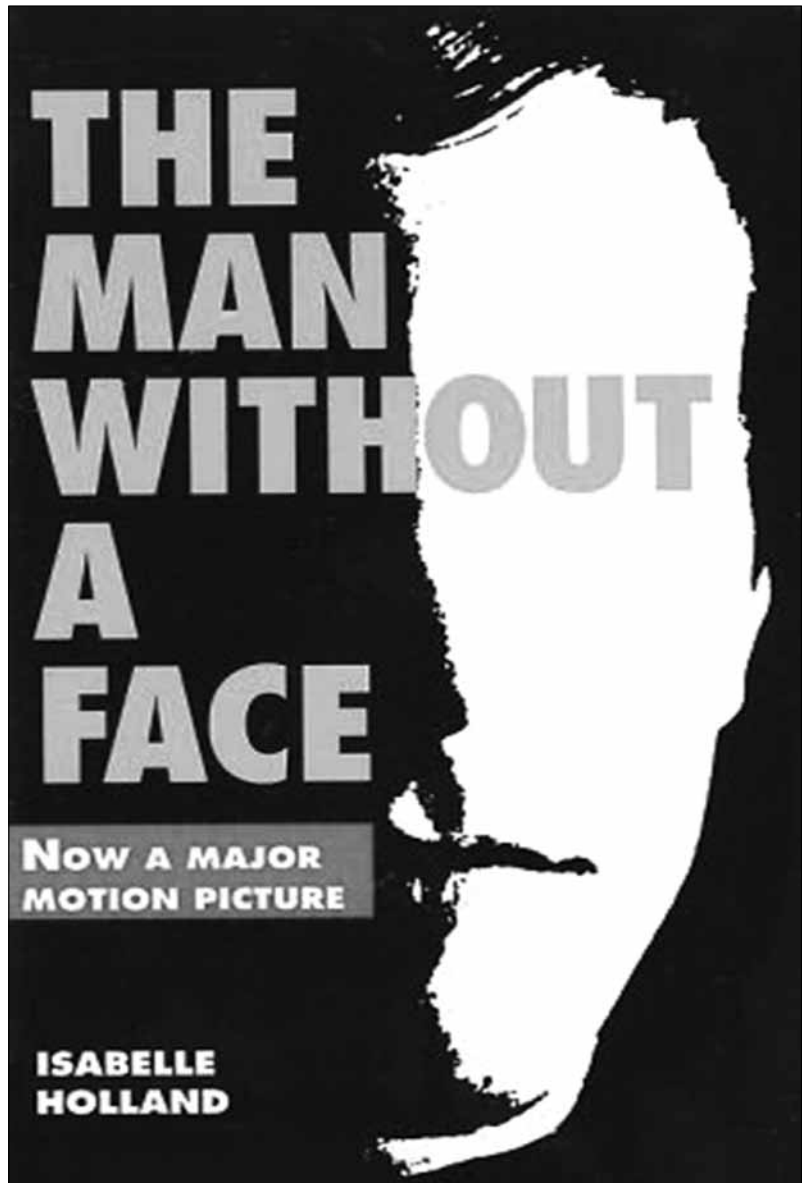
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What a Shame! Gay Shame in Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face*

by ANNE STEBBINS



Formerly a high school English teacher, Anne Stebbins is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Language, Culture and Teaching program at the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, Ontario. Her dissertation considers the function of gay shame in novels with gay and lesbian themes from the 1970s and 1980s. She has published in several journals, including *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *New Horizons in Adult Education*, and *Atlantis*.



*This paper explores the critical reception of Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face* (1972), which is one of the first gay-themed young adult novels published in North America and the United Kingdom. Drawing upon Eve Sedgwick's theorization of shame as an affect related to performance and identity, this paper explores the function of shame in the novel and argues that shame plays a role in gay identifications and ought not to be dismissed as a backward affect.*

Introduction

Since the groundbreaking publication of John Donovan's *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip* (1969), an increasing number of gay-themed young adult (YA) novels continue to be published every year.¹ While early novels such as Donovan's, Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face* (1972)², Lynn Hall's *Sticks and Stones* (1972), and Sandra Scoppettone's *Trying Hard to Hear You* (1974), and *Happy Endings are All Alike* (1978) are recognized as pioneering titles, they are also heavily criticized for highlighting the dire consequences once associated with falling in love with a person of the same gender. These stories bring us back to a time when it was difficult, if not impossible, to adopt a gay or lesbian identity. Not surprisingly, scholars of children's literature tend to show a preference for more contemporary novels that offer positive and redemptive narratives about gay and lesbian life (Webber 2010; Norton and Vare 2004; Cuseo 1992; Day 2000). Michael Cart and Christine Jenkins' detailed study of gay-themed YA novels illustrates this trend toward embracing queer affirmative narratives. Charting the evolution of the representation of gay characters in YA novels, they characterize the field as progressing away from stories linking gayness with anguish, death, violence, and isolation and privilege titles illustrating more positive, happy, and well-adjusted gay and lesbian characters.

While critics denounce early gay-themed YA novels as representing the worst sorts of damaging and shameful stereotypes about gay

...I argue that these novels also narrate a queer relation to shame through their explication of dark themes such as death, intergenerational relationships, violence, social isolation, exile, and loneliness.

and lesbian people, in this paper I argue that these novels also narrate a queer relation to shame through their explication of dark themes such as

death, intergenerational relationships, violence, social isolation, exile, and loneliness. Recently, gay shame has been taken up by queer scholars, perhaps most notably in David Halperin and Valerie Traub's edited collection, *Gay Shame*, which investigates a range of topics and issues related to gay shame such as negative emotions, embarrassing figures, and undignified or unsettling aspects of gay history. Following Halperin and Traub, this paper turns the lens of gay shame onto the genre of children's literature. Focusing in particular on *The Man Without a Face*, I explore the novel's critical reception, including the way in which critics condemn the parallels that Holland draws between gayness, intergenerational relationships, social marginalization, and death as emphasizing homophobic conceptions about members of the gay and lesbian community. I read the rejection of negativity and the insistence on positive representations in reviews of the novel as evidence of the emotional difficulty of encountering books that narrate the painful legacy of gay shame. Next, I explore an alternate way of understanding gay shame through the work of Eve Sedgwick who argues that shame is a dynamic affect related to queer identity and performance. I bring this theorization of gay shame to a reading of *The Man Without a Face* and explore the function of gay shame in the lives of two characters, Justin McLeod and Charles (Chuck) Norstadt in order to challenge the dominant understanding of shame as an outmoded affect overthrown by the gay liberation movement's struggle for pride.

Critical Reviews of *The Man Without a Face*

The Man Without a Face follows the summer of fourteen-year-old Chuck whose holiday is spent preparing to retake an entrance exam to St. Matthews, a prep school. Chuck is unhappily spending his summer with his mother and two sisters in a New England village that is inhabited by wealthy cottagers. He imagines St. Matthews as an opportunity to escape his family and as a step toward his goal of joining the Air Force, a vocational choice motivated by his desire to follow in the footsteps of his absentee father. Chuck makes unlikely friends with the island

recluse, Justin McLeod, who is known as “the man without a face,” because of his facial disfigurement. McLeod reluctantly agrees to tutor Chuck, and over the summer the boundaries of their pedagogical relationship blur. Chuck’s physical and emotional attraction to McLeod is depicted through contradictory identifications with the man as a teacher, father figure, and lover. The story climaxes when they have an ambiguously narrated sexual encounter, which abruptly ends their friendship. Afterward Chuck passes the exam and moves away for school. Several months later he returns to reconcile with McLeod, only to discover that the man has died and willed Chuck his estate.

Holland’s novel has met strong criticism. Cart and Jenkins’ critique of the novel is centered on their identification of a trend whereby several early novels conclude with the tragic death of gay characters. Noting their frustration with this repeated plot, they write: “Surely it is time for LGBTQ literature to abandon the traditional and too-easy equation of homosexuality with violent death” (166). They believe that this trope reiterates a negative image of gay teens in particular. Expressing their disapproval with several aspects of the plot of *The Man Without a Face*, they identify five grave consequences that the novel associates with being gay: 1) being hideously injured in a car wreck; 2) becoming an embittered, tormented recluse; 3) being rejected by a boy whom you have sought only to mentor, comfort, and reassure; 4) exiling oneself to a life among strangers; and, 5) dying prematurely of a heart attack no doubt brought on by the first four (21-22). Their concern is that these depictions feed into homophobic assumptions about the LGBTQ community. Taking issue with Justin McLeod’s death at the end of the novel, they write, “In death the man without a face becomes a martyred saint, with the apparent implication that the only good homosexual is a dead homosexual” (21). For Cart and Jenkins, this insinuation is particularly dangerous because it creates a troubled association between same-sex sexuality and death and sends a particularly depressing message to young gay and lesbian readers.

Further to their critique of the novel’s correlation between gayness and death, Cart and Jenkins are also critical of Holland’s justification for her novel. Defending the novel as reflecting the prevalent social norms about homosexuality of the time, Holland writes, “Now to understand the meaning of Charles’ and Justin’s story, you have to realize they had something in those days they called a taboo against any expression of love between members of the same sex. Yes, I know it’s hard to believe, but without that there wouldn’t even be a story to tell” (143). Holland reiterates that her novel actually reflects homophobic conceptions prevalent in North America in the early 1970s. Cart and Jenkins, however, are critical of this response: “And yet, in reflecting the prevailing social attitudes of her time, the author [Holland] nevertheless equates homosexuality with disfigurement, despair, and death, and her novel... reinforces some of the stereotypical thinking about homosexuality that became a fixture of GLBTQ literature” (22). For Cart and Jenkins, the dark images in Holland’s work may be detrimental and destructive

because they reiterate social shame that was once closely associated with same-sex love.

Other critics express reservations about Holland's depiction of an intergenerational relationship. Two librarians, Frances Hanckel and John Cunningham, register discomfort with Chuck and Justin's relationship:

Holland's novel contains one of the most destructive and fallacious stereotypes—the homosexual as child molester. Justin, whose scarred face is noted by the title, is responsible for the death of a boy under unclarified circumstances. In light of such limited coverage of the gay experience in YA fiction, the possible identification of such a major character as a corrupter of children is grossly unfair. (534)

They worry that because there are so few gay-themed YA novels, *The Man Without a Face* may perpetuate a disparaging stereotype about gay men. While they express reservations about the novel, they also pay homage to the legacy of representation that Holland initiated. Writing that novels of the early 1970s are: "pioneering efforts in dealing with a controversial theme and, as such, merit inclusion in YA collections," (532) they hail Holland's novel as one of the first of its kind. They also predict that early titles, like Holland's, can pave the way for more positive representations to be written in the future. Concluding their review with a plea for more affirmative novels, they ask: "Where is there a life-affirming hope for a young person who knows or suspects he or she is homosexual?" (534). Writing in 1976, they foreshadow the conclusion drawn thirty years later by Cart and Jenkins, that fictional representations in YA novels will eventually become more affirming.

Corinne Hirsch's review is less concerned about the negative themes that the novel explores and more critical of Holland's lack of realistic engagement with these topics. She writes:

Furthermore, as realistic fiction, *The Man Without a Face* owes its readers fidelity to human experience; it cannot sweep under the rug the problems it has been dealing with throughout. Having introduced themes rich with ambiguity, the exigencies of the novel demand that they be worked out more fully. How might Charles deal with the complicated emotional and sexual feelings he has developed? What would be a realistic outcome of his relationship with McLeod? (33)

Hirsch's charge to Holland is that if she wants to depict intergenerational love, she must fully flesh out the implications of this relationship. For Hirsch, ending the novel with McLeod's death is not a convincing conclusion.

These criticisms of the novel are not unfounded. After all, Justin McLeod is an abject figure. He sits on the margins of society, engages in a questionable relationship with Chuck, and dies tragically at the end

of the novel. The man is also responsible for the death of another teenage boy and the car accident that killed the teen also left the man with a scarred face and a criminal record for impaired driving. Chuck is certainly a more sympathetic character, yet he is also flawed. He is a loner and has trouble relating both to his family and to his peers. The only other adult, besides McLeod, Chuck looks up to is his absentee father, who turns out to be a despicable character. While the novel's critical reception is certainly understandable, the fact that it has evoked such strong responses also suggests the importance of exploring the difficulty that the novel still poses today. For her critics, Holland's novel risks the repetition of stereotypical and homophobic conceptions about gay and lesbian people. It is these negative conceptions about gay people that the era of gay liberation fought against and sought to replace with gay pride. Such strong reactions to the depiction of shameful themes in Holland's novel suggest that her novel continues to invoke negative feelings, images and associations. The way in which representations of gay shame continue to stir up difficult feelings suggests that the effects

The other side of exploring the depiction of shame in YA fiction is that it may open up a space to think differently about the relationship that we have with the history of gay shame and the traces of this history that have survived and continue to affect us today.

of shame persist in the present. The other side of exploring the depiction of shame in YA fiction is that it may open up a space to think differently about the relationship that we have with the history of gay shame and the traces of this history that have survived and continue to affect us today.

Eve Sedgwick and Gay Shame

In an article appearing in the first issue of *GLQ (Gay Lesbian Quarterly)*, Eve Sedgwick brings

together Silvan Tomkins' theorization of shame/interest and Judith Butler's influential work on queer performativity to offer a model for understanding queer identity and performance in relationship to shame. In the 1990s, as academics were calling identity politics into question, Sedgwick posed a different kind of question about identity: she wondered what it might mean to consider queer identity and performance in relation to shame. Reflecting on her decision to begin with an inglorious statement like "shame on you," Sedgwick writes:

What's the point of accentuating the negative, of beginning with stigma, and for that matter, a form of stigma—"Shame on you"—so unsanitizably redolent of that long Babylonian exile known as queer childhood? But note that this is just what the word queer itself does, too: the main reason why the self-application of "queers" by activists has proven so volatile is that there's no way that any amount of affirmative reclamation is going to succeed in detaching the word from its association with shame and with the terrifying powerlessness of gender-dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood. If queer is a politically potent term, which it is, that's because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy. (4)

While her acknowledgement that shame "cleaves" to pride may come as a terrible disappointment to the ethos of the gay pride movement, Sedgwick offers the condolence that gay pride is only ever mobilized through its resistance to gay stigma. In other words, she demonstrates that shame is an essential aspect of queer identity and performance by regarding shame as a source of power and "transformational energy" for the gay community.

Gay identity is not achieved despite people's experiences of shame; rather, gay identities are always already accomplished through shame.

Sedgwick writes, “shame effaces itself; shame points and projects; shame turns itself skin outside; shame and pride, shame and self-display, shame and exhibition are different interlinings of the same glove: shame, it might finally be said, transformational shame, *is performance*” (5). Tying shame squarely to the grounds of modern queer identity, she elaborates, “The forms taken by shame are not distinct ‘toxic’ parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the process by which identity itself is *formed*” (13). Her theorization of shame demonstrates that gay liberation, which created the foundation through which modern gay identities were built, was born out of the experience of gay shame. The ability of the LGBTQ community to claim a sense of pride is directly related to the isolation, stigma, and shame that were once ubiquitous with gayness. Thus, Sedgwick positions shame as a volatile affect that is part of the foundation of gay identity, community, and pride that the gay liberation movement celebrates.

Sedgwick’s conceptualization of shame as an affect related to queer identity and performance offers an alternative way of reading the representation of shame in *The Man Without a Face*. By condemning the parallels that Holland draws between gayness and shame, critics of the novel position shame as an outmoded affect best avoided or disposed of. Alternatively, Sedgwick approaches shame a resource and a facet of queer history that we cannot do without. Following Sedgwick, rather than turning away from and denouncing shame, we might read the novel as illustrating what it was like to live in a time and

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place where gay identities were shamed. Instead of throwing out this negative affect and disowning shameful literary figures that represent the worst of life before the accomplishment of gay pride, we might instead approach shame, and shameful subjects, as having a place in queer life.

Justin McLeod’s Shame

While *The Man Without a Face* highlights the alienation of a condemned gay man, it also offers a model of what it means for a person to tolerate and live with shame. Justin McLeod’s social isolation is an ambivalent illustration of the way in which the man learns to embrace shame in order to survive. In many ways McLeod’s failure to participate in the social life of his community may be read as a purposeful strategy. After all, the man’s solitude is as much self-imposed as it is inflicted upon him. His mysterious permanent residency and lack of social participation completely distance him from the other summer cottagers. While people take up residence on the island to escape city life, McLeod stays year round and has no contact with others. Nicknamed “The Grouch,” McLeod doesn’t speak to anyone (17). Even his menacing house, positioned on the top of a cliff, back from the road and fenced off with a protective gate, operates as a symbol of his seclusion. Strangely, McLeod’s isolation also further implicates his status as a shamed man. Sedgwick suggests people are socialized to learn that displays of shame are in and of themselves shameful, explaining: “Shame itself then must be hidden as an ugly scar is hidden, lest it offend the one who looks at it” (*Touching Feeling* 172). Thus McLeod’s purposeful shrinking away from society is both a symptom and consequence of his shame. The double-edged sword of shame is cruel. It is not enough to be shamed; one can also be shamed for displaying shame. Rather than resist his shame, the man accepts his disgrace and embraces a life of exile.

Just as he does not resist his social exclusion, the man does not seek plastic surgery to remake his face and body that were scarred in the terrible car accident. Curiously, he accepts his abjection and literally wears shame on his body as retribution for the drunken car accident that killed a

teenage boy. This literal manifestation of shame on the man's face is an important element of Tomkin's understanding of shame as a facial affect. Tomkins studied the expression of emotions on baby's faces and observed that three- to seven-month-old infants learn to distinguish the faces of their mothers from a stranger's. He noticed that when babies turned their faces towards their mothers to "make face" and were instead greeted by a stranger, the infants responded by "making strange," that is, turning away and lowering their eyes. Drawing on Tomkins, Sedgwick theorizes that when babies gaze up expectantly at their mothers, they are making their first connections to the outside world. Thus, shame is expressed through the face and eyes and is tied to our earliest ability to communicate and connect to others and the world around us. Tomkins locates shame on a continuum with interest, or as Sedgwick describes, "interrupted interest," since shame results from a dual movement of expectant approach and blushing retreat. The scars on the man's face illustrate this movement, serving both as a visible reminder of his drunken misdeed and acting as a barrier to his ability to communicate with others and participate in the social life of his community. McLeod's response to the shame that vexes him is to turn inward and his isolation and loneliness offer him a way to quietly live with his shame. The man's friendship with Chuck is what eventually breaks down his permanent solitude.

Chuck Norstadt's Shame

Sedgwick conceptualizes shame as a highly contagious and unstable affect that is central to a person's sense of self. She reminds us that: "Shame is a bad feeling attaching to what one is: one therefore *is something*, in experiencing shame" ("Queer Performativity" 12). Shame therefore, unlike other affects, has the capacity to mark a person's identity. Curious about the way in which shame can so suddenly influence a person's self esteem, Sedgwick wonders: "Why are shame and pride such central motives? How can loss of face be more intolerable than loss of life? How can hanging the head in shame so mortify the spirit? In contrast to all other affects, shame

is an experience of the self by the self. At that moment when the self feels shamed, it is felt as a sickness within the self" (*Touching Feeling* 136). The ability of shame to strike at a person's core reverberates in Chuck whose shame is integral to his sense of self. He inherits shame through both his mother and his absentee father. Chuck's existence is a symbol of his mother's shame because she has three children and multiple ex-husbands. Yet, she remains relatively unscathed by this history because her extraordinary beauty offers a buffer for the scorn that might otherwise land on a divorced woman in the 1970s. She cleverly directs shame off herself and onto her many ex-husbands, particularly Chuck's father. Scoffing about her second ex-husband, she says, "Eric was so... so... square and middle class and true-blue-All-American-Boy-Scout. You know the type. They always turn out to be engineers—or pilots" (11). Chuck's mother deflects shame onto Chuck's father and by association, onto Chuck, who dreams of becoming a pilot. Curiously, Chuck opts to embrace shame by stubbornly identifying with his father, who his mother refers to as "my one true mistake" (11). Chuck copes with his mother's rejection of his father by defiantly attaching to a man without a face.

Chuck's strategy of rejecting his mother and identifying with his father ultimately proves ineffective. Eventually, Chuck discovers that his perception of his father is a sham. His father is not a war hero, but a homeless man who died of health complications related to alcoholism. Chuck is flooded with shame when he realizes that his father, whose succession he has modeled his life after, is actually a failure. Chuck's experience mirrors Sedgwick's description of familial shame. She explains that parents may be shamed by children who fall below expectation: "Indeed, a parent may in fact hang his head in shame because he feels that his child is a hopeless incompetent, and the parent's gesture arises from a feeling of defeat and hopelessness" (*Touching Feeling* 155). Sedgwick ties shame to the rather ordinary experience of parents who are inevitably let down when their children's lives do not fulfill their lofty dreams. Familial shame moves in two directions in the novel. On the one hand,

Chuck's mother is ashamed of her son's intellectual pitfalls: Chuck failed to gain entry in the first round of prep school admissions. On the other hand, Chuck is also ashamed of his mother's reputation and his father's reality. Chuck is devastated when realizes that his dreams for the future are actually built on a false legacy.

Upon finding out the truth about his father, Chuck seeks comfort from McLeod, who Chuck has begun to identify as a substitute father. Oddly, this identification coincides with Chuck's growing attraction to the man, and Chuck's distress brings an unlikely emotion: desire. Their embrace is sexually charged, and Chuck describes the intimacy that follows: "The golden cocoon had broken open and was spilling in a shower of gold" (147). The next morning Chuck is overwhelmed by contradictory feelings of shame, and he lashes out at McLeod and storms off. Chuck goes on to pass his second attempt at taking the prep school entrance exams and moves away for school. Months later, he returns to make peace with McLeod and learns that the man has died. In a fatherly act, McLeod leaves his entire estate to Chuck. McLeod also leaves a message tucked inside the cover of Chuck's favorite novel:

You gave me something I hadn't ever again expected to have: companionship, friendship, love—yours and mine. . . . One other request: try to forgive your father. He did his best. More people do than you realize. A good way to start is by forgiving yourself.

My love to you always,
Justin. (154)

The letter reads as an invitation for Chuck to let go of the past. By asking Chuck to forgive his father, McLeod, as Chuck's substitute father, is also requesting forgiveness. This need for forgiveness also reverberates in the unfavorable readings of *The Man Without a Face*. Could critics exonerate Isabelle Holland as well as the other YA authors of the 1970s and recognize that the affirmative YA novels of today could not exist without them? Might gay pride also learn this lesson and avow its shameful predecessors?

Transcending the limits of death, McLeod's letter forges a connection with Chuck. By giving Chuck his fortune, McLeod imprints himself firmly onto Chuck's future. Just as Chuck carries McLeod's memory with him, so too do the rights and freedoms won by the gay pride and liberation movement bear the traces of gay shame. If we accept that the history of shame is etched into the fabric of the new possibilities that pride continues to realize for LGBTQ people, then we might wonder what role shame could play in our identifications with gayness. Sedgwick's insistence that shame is intimately bound up in queer performance and identity is a reminder that shame serves a function for the gay community.

Shame is queer and therefore has much to do with queer identifications.

Shame is queer and therefore has much to do with queer identifications. Taking a cue from McLeod and Chuck, identifying with shame might simply mean learning to acknowledge the queer shame that stubbornly remains despite the accomplishments wrought by gay pride. Like Chuck we might learn to accept this painful legacy and recognize shame's painful reanimations in the present as an invitation to patiently attend to, or perhaps simply learn to live with, the past.

Notes

1. John Donovan's *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip* is widely considered to be the first YA novel to portray adolescent same-sex desire. However scholars including Corrine Wickens, and Laurel Clyde and Marjorie Lobban cite Rosemary Mannings's *The Chinese Garden* (1962), as the first young adult novel to depict same-sex sexuality. Fictional representations of adolescents with same-sex desire can also be found in much earlier, classical fiction, such as E.M. Forster's *The Story of a Panic* (1902), Henry James's *The Pupil* (1891), and D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915).

2. This novel was also adapted into film: *The Man Without a Face*. 1993. Dir. Mel Gibson. Warner Bros., 2004. DVD.

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Sexual Slipstreams and the Limits of Magic Realism: Why a Bisexual Cinderella May Not Be All That "Queer"

by JON MICHAEL WARGO



Jon Michael Wargo is a doctoral student in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University. His research interests lie at the intersection of gender and sexuality studies and English education. Jon teaches Children's Literature as well as Social Studies and Literacy methods courses for Elementary preservice teachers.



*Critics and readers alike praise Malinda Lo for her novel, *Ash*, a contemporary Cinderella story and a queer variation of the ash girl tale. Despite its potential as a landmark variation in same-sex romance, this paper suggests that Lo's queer approach is undercut by heteronormative rebounds into sexualized payment. Ultimately, Lo confines her slipstream variation to rigid boundaries of gender and sexuality, rendering the lesbian narrative invisible to hauntings of bisexual shame and compulsory heterosexuality.*

Since the turn of the 21st century, “queer” visibility and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) content have become a central assemblage to the world of young adult literature; some may say that “queer” has taken center stage. From the queering of “classic” texts to the growing number of novels and edited volumes focused explicitly on the multiplicities of genders and sexualities in contemporary children’s and young adult literature, critics and scholars are reading queerly to (re)conceptualize textual constructions of contemporary youth sexuality. For, as Kenneth Kidd and Michelle Ann Abate argue, “At this moment, it seems, we must insist for practice and political reasons on the reality of queer childhood and queer children’s literature while being alert to such metaphors and remaining open to possibility” (9). While laudable, such visibility has been traced almost exclusively in “problem novels” rooted in homophobia and contemporary homo-normative characterizations of the LGBT experience. Consequently, references to sexual possibility and “community [are] always somewhere else,” often leaving these novels with themes of isolation and internalization, ultimately failing to move beyond the binary (Jenkins 310).

Furthermore, texts centered on bisexuality or be(com)ing transgender remain, at best, rare. Bisexuality seems to be a difficult theme to find in contemporary young adult literature, despite the fact that organizations, like the Lambda Literary Award, present annual citations for “Best Bisexual” book. In “Bi Book Review: Bisexual Books for Youth Audiences,” Mike Szymanski writes that Malinda Lo’s *Ash* was one of the most “intriguing” books he read. Lo, in an interview for Szymanski’s essay, states that the female protagonist Aishling “winds up with another girl but honestly, she’s very attracted to a male character, too. It’s not overtly about ‘bisexuality,’ but neither is it overtly about being gay. She falls in love with the person she falls in love with” (491).

Acclaimed for its representations of sexuality, Lo’s *Ash*, a variant of the classic ash girl Cinderella story, is, in many ways, a landmark text in LGBT and queer young adult literature. Because scholars like Iona Opie and Peter Opie argue that the traditional (meaning “heterosexual”) contemporary *Cinderella* fairy tale is “the best known fairy story in the world” (117), *Ash* operates as a slipstream on account of the ways in which the narrative moves between genre boundaries and utilizes facets of magical realism to bridge Aishling’s dual existence. While *Ash*, like countless other variants of Cinderella, is arguably a *bildungsroman*, its compromising sexuality and sometimes utopian overtones of gay assimilation position readers to acknowledge that this narrative journey is purely fantastical. Despite the surface construction of Lo’s novel as a “girl meets girl” narrative, it complicates the fairy tale convention of the “happy ending,” and, perhaps more overtly than other Cinderella variants, raises the question, “At what cost?”

Although Lo argues that she does not confine *Ash* within borders of sexual identity, the depiction of same-sex companionship becomes problematic when examining the ways in which the existence of a “lesbian” happy ending is characterized as one in which the protagonist

must ultimately be shamed and punished for her sexuality in order to attain same-sex desire. Anchored in elements of magical realism, Lo's fanciful backdrop and often times winding fairy tale narrative leaves the reader with the knowledge that, like countless other takes on Cinderella, companionship always comes at the cost of a desexualized story line, no matter how queer the surroundings.

By writing a variant of an archetypal fairy tale such as Cinderella, Lo begins to braid a tale of both fantasy/reality and heterosexuality/homosexuality, highlighting how complicated such dichotomies can be in capturing the existence of fluid desire. Paradoxically, these dichotomies, especially as they pertain to issues of gender, are what have allowed Cinderella to be reconstructed and restylized across generations of young readers. While complicated, Lo's *Ash* follows Graham Anderson's five-step framework for *Cinderella*, a framework that was built around archetype variants of the common fairy tale. The five-steps are "the persecuted heroine, magic help, meeting the prince, proof of identity, and finally, the marriage to the prince" (24-25). Grounded in patriarchy, Anderson's framework is constructed with issues of static gender identity and institutional happiness (i.e., marriage) at its center. Comparatively, Aishling and her journey of individuation from age twelve to eighteen follow this common framework, but Lo uses facets of the genre of magical realism to question whether such a framework must be rooted in heterosexuality, illuminating how homophobia acts as a counter to what many would consider realism.

Dividing her novel in two parts, Lo follows the basic narrative structure of Anderson's five-step framework. Aishling loses her mother Elinor and her father within the first forty-five pages of the book. Upon their deaths, Aishling loses ties to the spiritual fairy world her mother had once connected her to and believed in. Living with her stepmother, Lady Isobel, and her two stepsisters, Ana and Clara, Aishling transforms into the ash girl archetype that familiar *Cinderella* variants depict, homely and rough. After losing both parents and being treated poorly by her stepfamily, Aishling becomes enraptured with understanding the world of magic and fairy. Lo's magical setting of Tanili becomes a central focus for the story and sustains the second part of Anderson's five-step approach to the fairy tale archetype plot structure. What Anderson calls "magic help" becomes an alternative life for Ash, who after meeting the male fairy Sidhean, becomes entranced with bringing back her mother from the dead and/or seeing her in the fairyland of Tanili, a place where the dead typically roam. While Anderson would argue that this magic help enlists the support of the central protagonist, Lo uses this land of magic to create an alternative world apart from the "lived" realistic setting of Rook Hill. Situated between Tanili and Rook Hill, Aishling begins to interweave these dual narratives to construct meanings of love and desire. Thus, the land and aid of magic plays a critical role in Aishling's individuation. Lo evokes desire and love by setting up the pairing of both Sidhean, the male fairy Aishling becomes obsessed with in the first part of the novel, and Kaisa,

the King's Huntress, whom she decides to love in the end. By the close of *Ash*, Lo accomplishes the latter elements of Anderson's framework insofar as Aishling discovers her true sexual desires for same-sex companionship and forms a union with Kaisa in the final lines of the novel. While this synopsis does not capture the complexities of a desexualized union, it does provide the central plot structure for which readers and critics commend Lo, because she provides a pairing of two women and what may seemingly be called a "lesbian" happy ending. However, it is here that I suggest that through facets of magical realism, performative subjectivities of gender identity as outlined by Judith Butler, and the interwoven tale of independence, Lo's juxtaposing mirror

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image worlds of magic and reality complicate a queer reading, ultimately restricting the story to one of compulsory heterosexuality and leaving bisexuality at the periphery of such a fantasy.

Ash oftentimes exists in both the world of magic and human, worlds that construct a distinct binary of homo and hetero because they are inhabited by both Sidhean, a male fairy who has interest in conquering Aishling as payment for her mother's debt, and Kaisa the Huntress, the ideal for Ash in same-sex companionship. While Lo provides readers with glimpses of what can be a slipstream variation in same-sex romance, the queer approach she deploys is haunted by heteronormative rebounds into sexualized payment. In a scene of distinct intimacy, for example, Lo characterizes this transition into queer sexuality as requiring the payment of compulsory heterosexual love. When viewing the narrative through the lens of critical feminism, Lo's story ultimately lacks a queer existence and confines this variation

of ash girl within rigid boundaries of sexuality and individuation. Situated in a land of fairies and cross-dressing, Lo writes a slipstream narrative that relies on the conundrum of compulsory heterosexuality and the necessity of heterosexual consummation.

In this approach, I use terms such as "gay," "lesbian," "butch," "feminine," and "masculine" to employ gender specific categories that reinstall heterosexuality, as Adrienne Rich argues, as a "*political institution*" (637). Such performed identities are present within this larger examination of Lo's novel as a means to both illustrate the boundaries provided by the larger heterosexual matrix and to offer possibility to same-sex female eros within Aishling's story of individuation.¹ Individuation in this essay is not used in the Jungian psychoanalytic tradition, but, rather, is used as a means to signify the movement of Aishling's transformation from child toward self-identity and independence. While categories such as these may not have been Lo's intention in constructing a same-sex slipstream, they provide a lens through which one can critically approach representations of sexual identity and question the role of sexual shame and the limits of bisexuality as it pertains to the larger assemblage of LGBT and queer young adult fiction. Refuting queer couplings and possibilities of polyamory, Lo's narrative sustains the dominant narrative about youth and youth sexuality: children are assumed to be asexual, but, "also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual" (Bruhm & Hurley ix).

Individuation and the Confines of Compulsory Heterosexuality

Aishling's coming into self echoes how Simone de Beauvoir describes the construction of a gender insofar as she writes, "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (xxvi). Lo uses the dual existence of both the natural and supernatural to aid in Ash's construction of gender identity. Such worlds are presented to us in a way where the natural appears strange while the supernatural may seem common and ordinary. The bridge between the world of magic and that of the "realistic" setting of Rook Hill provide a complex tale of sexual desire. The fairy land of Tanili plays a

central role in Ash navigating the “real” world of Rook Hill and neighboring environs such as the city. Lo describes Tanili as a place of “in-between times” (29) and where “no humans were allowed to taste [their] delicacies” (28). Although other scholars have offered glosses of how authors of LGBTQ young adult literature use facets of magical realism to expand the boundaries of same-sex companionship and desire (see Crisp for example), Lo uses elements of magical realism to create dichotomies of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Tanili, Lo’s fictional land of magic and fairies, is situated as being uniquely heterosexual. Rook Hill and the larger environs of the city present same-sex companionship as ordinary. This complicated heterosexual fairyland disrupts what readers would assume in terms of constructed fairy quarters. One could possibly claim that the realm of magic and infinite possibility would offer a definition of sexuality that could be more fluid and polyamorous in its representation. Ironically, Lo constructs the “realistic” setting as the environment where same-sex companionship, bisexuality, and polyamory are common practice. While such a use of the mode could potentially offer readers a glimpse into a “realistic” world of narrative that offers possibility free from the heterosexual matrix of homophobia and hegemony, Lo’s Tanili becomes a rooted tradition of compulsory heterosexuality wherein readers can only fathom this land of magic as being real due to its increased homophobia and sexual surveillance. Thus, Aishling’s quest for same-sex companionship becomes secondary to what I will argue is the primary payment of heterosexual consummation.

Aishling’s crossing of these two worlds plays a central role in her quest of individuation and same-sex companionship. In the first part of the book, “The Fairy” Ash becomes aware of the fantastical land of Tanili and yearns to find a world where she does not feel like “a sparrow among peacocks” (49). Lo situates the family estate of Rook Hill as having no sign of Aishling’s once primary presence after her parent’s death. She writes, “The dining room was dark and Ash lit the candles with shaking hands. As the room came to light, it was as if the world

had shifted three place settings, three chairs, three places. There had never really been a place for her, after all” (58). Aishling becomes invisible after her father’s death, and the move to Rook Hill. After this scene, and in an attempt to escape her stepmother and stepsisters, Aishling flees into the woods and Tanili takes form. Filled with angst and thinking of her own misfortune and mother’s death, Ash comes in contact with the male fairy, Sidhean. Within the forest, a “fairy ring” magically starts to form, a divisive ritual that humans may not enter, but one with which Aishling is familiar. Wishing to return to her mother through death, Ash leaves to set foot in the magical ring. Just as Ash crosses the threshold into the ritual, Sidhean grabs Ash and pulls her away from the fairy ring before she can enter. In questioning why Sidhean did not let her enter his world and why he banished her from Tanili, he remarks, “I told her [a fairy woman] that you were mine; that I have given you this cloak; that she could not have you” (125). In this moment of dialogue between Aishling and Sidhean, an exchange begins to characterize the ways in which their two worlds are strict binaries of one another. “Every time you come near me,” he said, “You come closer to the end of everything.” “It does not feel that way,” she said. “It feels like I am coming closer to the beginning” (125). Moments before the narrative starts its second part, the narrator provides the reader with insight into Ash’s thoughts: “and she watched him go, feeling as if her world had split wide open. On the other side it was not dark as midnight, but rather bright as sunshine in the middle of winter: blinding, dazzling on the snow” (126). Readers are positioned to question whether Sidhean’s attraction to Ash is romantic and whether he characterizes the “prince” character central to common Cinderella stories.

While somewhat dependent on Anderson’s five step framework, Lo’s novel is not only a narrative of individuation, but also a story and quest for who can win Aishling’s affection and love. Lo builds context and readers soon find out that Sidhean’s love for Ash is caused by a curse placed on him by Ash’s mother Elinor. Aishling’s infatuation for Sidhean takes on a psychoanalytic

frame and details the need for her dead father and mother's spirituality, which is rooted in magic. In the same vein, her love and desire for Kaisa becomes problematic as she combats class constraints that deny her companionship. This love triangle foreshadows Aishling's tragic demise. Lo suggests that Ash's desire for Kaisa the Huntress begins as "something yet unnamed . . . [but is] coming into focus" (187). Thus, the latter half of the novel works to define female same-sex desire.

As the second part of Lo's narrative commences, class structures that typically confine *Cinderella* variants become more visible. For example, Aishling begins to plan happenstance encounters with Kaisa, the King's Huntress. During one moment of the narrative, Ash becomes aware of the King's hunt and follows Kaisa into the wood. Upon recognizing Aishling, Kaisa offers foods and asks if she would like to ride alongside of her one day. These small rendezvous with the Huntress begin to crystallize Ash's longing for same-sex love. While moments of intimacy with Kaisa begin to happen more frequently in the second half of Lo's novel, they come at the cost of bargaining with Sidhean for his magical assistance. Sidhean and the fairy world provide what Anderson would traditionally call the third step of the archetype Cinderella framework: magic help. Rather than a romantic interest, Sidhean becomes the access point for things Ash "needs" in order to be with Kaisa. When compromising what the exchange will be for these magic goods, Ash is unaware of the sacrifice she must make:

She looked up at his shadowed eyes and asked, "If you grant my wish, will there be a price to pay?"...

"There is a price for everything, Aishling."

"What is the price?" she asked.

He said: "You shall be mine"

She felt his fingers tighten on her shoulders, and she wondered if he were imprinting himself on her: would the mark of his hands be visible? For now they were surely bound together. (162-63)

Ultimately, Ash's exchange of identity and self become the price for same-sex companionship and the disavowal of a negotiated union with Sidhean.

The Queer Limits of a Bisexual Cinderella

Readers looking for the happy ending of lesbian eros can potentially find it, if only looking for a scene of same-sex intimacy. In the closing pages of the book, Lo depicts Aishling's homecoming to Kaisa with: "After I left last night I was not sure whether I would be able to return, but I hoped so, and now I can tell you that it is finished, and I am free to love you'...she knew at last, that she was home" (264). On the surface, what Lo calls a "lesbian" Cinderella rejoices in this union, but the refusal of Sidhean comes at a cost. After the Yule Ball Masquerade, and as the clock strikes midnight, Aishling flees to the woods to ask for one more cadeau from Sidhean: freedom to love. In an attempt to free

herself, Aishling begins to bargain with Sidhean: “Sidhean, for many years, you have been my only friend, though such a friendship is by definition a queer one, for your people and mine are not by definition meant to love one another. But you said that you have been cursed to love me, and I have realized that if the curse is strong—and if you truly love me—then you will set me free” (254). Sidhean agrees that in payment for her freedom he requires Ash for one night. The zenith of the novel provides the only distinct scene of sexual intimacy offered thus far. Lo writes, “He stepped back and extended his hand to her. She asked, ‘Will I die?’ He answered, ‘Only a little,’ and she put her hand in his, and she felt the ring between their palms, burning like a brand” (255). On the surface, this scene may offer readers insight into a fantastical land of magic, one where love can be exchanged through a token exchange in jewelry. Metaphorically, if we look at this moment as an act of sexual consummation, the price for freedom and female eros is one of a heterosexual consummation, one so strong that Lo depicts it in the following way: “[Ash] turned her palm up to the sunlight and saw a pale, circular scar” (257). The scar, while not from an act of physical intimacy or what we may think of as sex, establishes that the intimacy with Sidhean will forever mar Aishling’s body and potential desire. Aishling’s ring from Sidhean, the object that has branded her body in heterosexual intimacy, becomes a token that would “remind her of the fairy who had, in his own strange way, shown her how to save herself” (258). What Lo shows her readership in this quasi-masochistic scene of consummation is that to attain same-sex companionship, one must be branded by and bargain within the larger political institution known as compulsory heterosexuality to save oneself from the label “lesbian.” Or, perhaps a more interesting and critical reading would suggest how this branding acts as a necessary entrée to lesbian existence. Nonetheless, Lo anchors shame onto the body of the bisexual, letting shame act as the disruption to a lesbian existence and the zenith of individuation.

Shame, for Lo, distinguishes the queer from the normal. Deviant desires of polyamory and lesbian desire do not engage the act of shame in *Ash*, but, rather, shame wears itself on non-conformity. Shame becomes the antithesis of homonormative visibility; a visibility that creates sustained categories of institutionalized and hegemonic oppression such as marriage and monogamy. Shame, for Lo, acts as a haunting to Ash, a ghosting if you will. Rendering her desire and love for Kaisa invisible, shame and the branding from Sidhean make lesbianism a phantom desire unseen to readers. This type of (in)visibility is not uncommon. As Lydia Kokkola argues, “The ghosted lesbian character may be rendered deviant, she is not necessarily robbed of her subjectivity: she still allows herself to be seen to those with the willingness to throw off the shackles

What Lo shows her readership in this quasi-masochistic scene of consummation is that to attain same-sex companionship, one must be branded by and bargain within the larger political institution known as compulsory heterosexuality to save oneself from the label “lesbian.”

of society and look properly” (124). Thus, the reader sees the haunting of Ash the bisexual because Lo allows that reader to render her character, ultimately, as Ash the lesbian.

Although Lo’s winding narrative tells a “queer” story, as Aishling ultimately chooses a female love and life partner in what Rich calls the “face of institutionalized heterosexuality,” Aishling’s lesbian existence becomes secondary to the previous tryst with Sidhean (659). Like a wedding ring, Sidhean’s brand and ring fastens Aishling to heterosexuality. Lo depicts this “double-life” feature in the same way Adrienne Rich rejects it in light of binaries of self-described heterosexuality and self-described lesbianism. If bounded by the chains of oppression and the greater heterosexual matrix made compulsory by Sidhean, where do we then promote the story of the bisexual? Does such an analysis of binary oppositions and dichotomies of desire destroy the possibility of dual attraction and dual possibility inherent within bisexual desire? Angelides has argued that “[bisexuality] can only be accommodated by the hetero/homosexual opposition if it is to conform to the inherent binary logic” (61). While dichotomies may restrict Ash in her choice of either Sidhean or Kaisa, geographies of magic and realism, masculinity and femininity, the action of consent and the refusal of death leaves her bound to structural hegemony. Such a method, employed by Lo, not only brands Ash in her choice of a lesbian pairing but reinscribes institutional heteronormativity through the assumptions of monogamy and marriage which provide a happy ending. For Ash, if not for the queer reader, all has been neatly straightened out in the end.

Notes

1. I use the term heterosexual matrix throughout the essay to illuminate the grid of cultural intelligibility through which genders and desires are naturalized. I draw on Adrienne Rich’s notion of “compulsory heterosexuality” to characterize a discursive model of gender intelligibility that for bodies to make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through

a stable gender (masculinity as expressed by male, femininity as expressed by female). These genders are hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality.

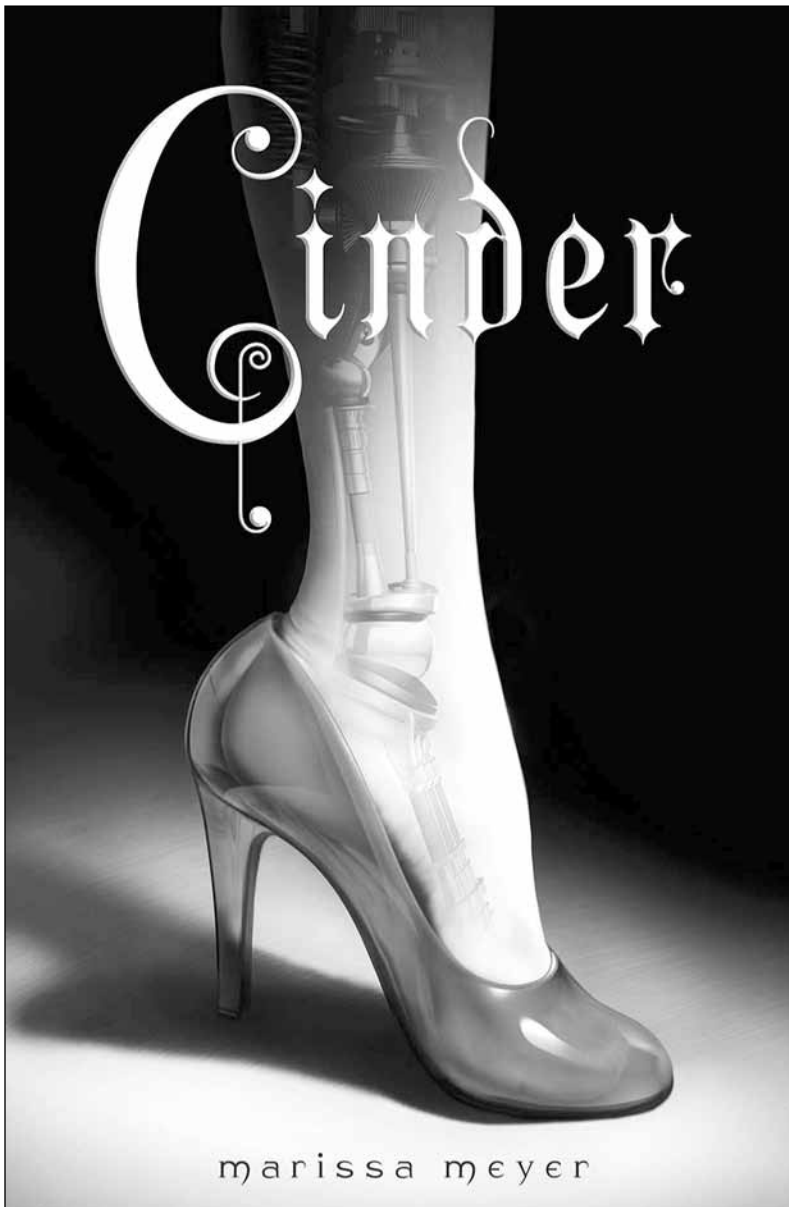
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"A girl. A machine. A
freak": A Consideration of
Contemporary Queer Composites

by JENNIFER MITCHELL

Approaching queerness as intrinsically tied to the rejection of notions of the self as fixed, stable, and monolithic, I argue that contemporary young adult literature that incorporates inter-species romances is a site of new queer possibilities. I read Marissa Meyer's Cinder and the first two novels in Laini Taylor's Daughter of Smoke and Bone series as broadening current metaphors for queerness.



Jennifer Mitchell is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Weber State University, having earned her doctorate in English Literature at the City University of New York-Graduate Center. In addition to teaching in these fields, she has published articles on adolescent fiction, sexuality and queer theory, and modernist literature.

Together David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz ask, “What’s Queer about Queer Studies?” in their introduction to the 2005 double issue of *Social Text* dedicated to the subject, and promptly answer, “A lot” (3). After a brief chronicle of the early days of queer theory and the recuperation of the term “queer,” Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz implicitly respond to somewhat bleak murmurs about the end of queerness, the twilight of the queer moment, and the hypothetical allure of arriving at some postqueer space, so to speak; as such, they locate the future of queer studies as focused on “global crises...geopolitics of war and terror, and national manifestations of sexual, racial, and gendered hierarchies” (1). Despite the keen insights that fill the pages of *Social Text* that follow, this foundational concern about the future of queer theory has not dissipated.

Approximately seven years later, in “Queer and Then?,” Michael Warner addresses this presumed end of queer theory in an editorial for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Citing the conclusion of Duke University Press’s Series Q and its long lineage of queer publications as the catalyst for the consideration of queerness that follows, Warner writes: “queer theory now has the shape of a searching and still largely undigested conversation, rich enough to have many branches, some different enough to be incommensurate with one another.”¹ Warner continues this account of the offshoots of the early, formative days of queer theory by posing the following parenthetical questions: “Does the embrace of queerness entail a romantic opposition to all normativity whatsoever? Is there something inherently antisocial in the experience of sexuality?” While Warner does not provide answers to such questions, he posits that, because the movements that stemmed from queer theory often sought to distance themselves from those origins, “queer theory has often seemed, from its very inception, to be elsewhere.” Unwilling to relinquish queer theory, its relevance, and its possible futures, Warner credits the activist and academic movements associated with it for keeping alive “a political imagination of sexuality.”

It is difficult, perhaps, to consider contemporary children’s and adolescent literature as possessing, perpetuating, and reconfiguring this type of politicized imagining of sex. Yet, the claims that I make in the argument that follows are based heavily on the future of queer theory imagined by Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz: “Queer epistemology insists that we embark on

expanded investigations of normalization and intersectionality” (5). I point to two different representations of queerness that expand such investigations in Marissa Meyer’s *Cinder* and Laini Taylor’s *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* series—both fairly contemporary young adult novels that, despite having a seemingly heteronormative framework, are ripe with the kind of queer epistemology that suggests that there is still, in

...Marissa Meyer’s Cinder and Laini Taylor’s Daughter of Smoke and Bone series... despite having a seemingly heteronormative framework, are ripe with the kind of queer epistemology that suggests that there is still, in fact, much more underneath the umbrella of queer studies with which to engage.

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In their introduction to *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd chronicle the etymology of the term “queer,” focusing primarily on its already expansive possibilities: “The word ‘queer,’ which first emerged in English in the sixteenth century, has long meant ‘strange,’ ‘unusual,’ and ‘out of alignment,’ even as it has been linked to non-heteronormative sexuality since around the turn of the twentieth-century” (3). Situating queerness as distinctly oppositional to normativity—the insinuation within Michael Warner’s parenthetical rhetorical questions—allows for an inclusive, expansive approach to queerness in and through children’s literature. Abate and Kidd identify a far more theoretically-driven, specific designation: “The term [queer] at once fortifies and dismantles the notion of a stable or knowable self, in relation to gender and sexuality especially but not exclusively” (4). Following in the logical footsteps of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s resistance to “the deadening pretended knowingness” that defines our notions of gender and sexual identities (*Epistemology* 12), Abate and Kidd shy away from any notion of fixity that closes off lived and theoretical possibilities.

For the purposes of this paper, I argue that Marissa Meyer’s *Cinder* and Laini Taylor’s *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* series can be read as queer in ways that, because of their sustained resistance to fixity, usefully expand previous conversations about metaphors for queerness. Indeed, the questions of selfhood and species identification raised in each novel—both in terms of cross-species desire and, more importantly to a certain extent, in terms of the species ambiguity ascribed to both heroines—are tied to queer theory’s claims about stable identity and the impossibility of the “knowable self” (Abate and Kidd 4). Both Meyer’s *Cinder* and Taylor’s *Karou* are of abstruse origins; their own species designations are virtually unrecognizable as they consistently straddle at least two often seemingly impossible identities throughout the novels, presenting alternative representations of what Sedgwick advocates as, “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t* be made) to signify monolithically” (*Tendencies* 8).

Rejecting any notion of monolithic signification, both *Cinder* and *Karou* find themselves swept up in the mystery that surrounds them, their origins, and their futures. *Cinder* and *Karou* spend much of the novels intentionally and accidentally discovering aspects of their characters and their histories that defy any solid notion of self. That extends, of course, to their inter-species romantic pursuits, as *Cinder*’s impossible attraction to Prince Kai and *Karou*’s unspeakable attachment to Akiva actively confuse the heroines and their supporting cast. The presentation of such romances as potentially threatening to the individual, to the family, and, remarkably, to the state is a testament to the argument put forth by Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley: “nowhere is this panic

[about children’s sexuality] more explosive than in the field of the *queer* child, the child whose play confirms neither the comfortable stories of child (a)sexuality nor the supposedly blissful promises of adult heteronormativity” (ix). The latter half of this claim is crucial to understanding the ways in which Meyer’s and Taylor’s novels are engaged with issues of queerness; such blissful promises of a hetero future, masked by superficial heteronormative traits ascribed to each dynamic—Cinder and Karou are feminized while the objects of their affections are masculinized—are challenged throughout the entirety of the narratives. Further, because the representations of romance are publically dismissed or condemned, with participating parties shamed or punished—thereby highlighting Bruhm and Hurley’s conception of “panic”—they are distinctly queer in scope.

Rather than thinking about queer as only a signifier for LGBT sexualities, I choose a more expansive (ultimately, queerer) and inclusive understanding of queerness. As Abate and Kidd articulate, “Understanding children’s literature as queer rather than more narrowly as lesbian/gay broadens the interpretive possibilities” (4). *Cinder* and the *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* series are ripe with such vast interpretive possibilities, which ultimately encourage a broadening of the designation of “queer” to extend fragmented, composite selves as well as cross-species selfhoods and sexualized desires. As such, I embrace, a consideration of queerness that overtly pushes the boundaries of Sedgwick’s foundational queer project and that seeks to continue presenting new, possible responses to the crucial “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now” question. Finally, the heroines of both novels, Cinder and Karou, can and should be read as queer. Such a reading acknowledges the importance of non-normative narratives in terms of their bodies, selves, romances, and, ultimately, activism.

Within the narrative confines of both novels is an invitation to focus on a primary issue in recent queer scholarship, the question of passing.

To Know or Not to Know: Cinder’s Selves

Within the narrative confines of both novels is an invitation to focus on a primary issue in recent queer scholarship, the question of passing. Kenji Yoshino defines covering, the broader umbrella term under which passing is subsumed, as “to tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream” (ix). Yoshino later uses the phrases “other closets” and “secret selves” as ways of considering lineages of queer experience (72-3). Whether Cinder and Karou can pass in their worlds—in other words, whether they can be read and recognized as “normal” human girls—is a formative concern in both texts. Karou’s “natural” blue hair, ambiguously tattooed hands, and alternative family, and Cinder’s combination of human corporeality, scientific machinations, and alien blood line all speak to ways in which the two heroines struggle with how they are perceived and understood—with whether they can pass as something other than what they are, something more seamless in its presentation.

Interestingly, this struggle, especially for Cinder, is tied in explicit and implicit ways to Donna Haraway’s conceptual cyborg, as chronicled in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. Haraway writes, “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (149). Cinder, referred to as a cyborg within the narrative, is first introduced while she is plotting the acquisition of a new, better-fitting foot. Demeaned as a “thing” and constantly mocked for her perceived lack of humanity by her stepmother, Cinder is concerned with her ability to pass as fully human, when in fact she is only partially human (27). In response to Cinder’s claim that she loves her dying sister, her stepmother hurtfully cries, “Don’t insult me . . . Do your kind even know what love is? Can you feel anything at all, or is it just . . . programmed?” (63). Although Cinder considers her own emotions to be substantial and meaningful, she is consistently dehumanized as the family scapegoat. Granted, much of Cinder’s concerns throughout the novel may echo the typical teenage angst about not belonging, but the specificity with which that angst is tied to Cinder’s bodily make-up invites queerer analyses.

The humanity of Cinder’s family is virtually contingent upon their constant disavowal of Cinder as *not* human. As Judith Butler articulates in *Undoing Gender*, “For the human to be human, it must relate to what is nonhuman, to what is outside itself but continuous with itself by virtue of an interimplication in life. This relation to what is not itself constitutes the human being in its livingness, so that the human exceeds its boundary in the very effort to establish them” (12). Cinder’s stepmother and stepsister use their constant highlighting of Cinder’s inhumanity to magnify their own humanness. Instead of questioning the validity of her emotions but still influenced by her family’s primarily antagonistic response to her, Cinder obsesses over the physical manifestations of her complicated humanity—her hybrid position. When she, like other incarnations of Cinderella before her, contemplates a new gown for the ball, more pressing and specific concerns for skin grafts that would hide “her cyborg parts” surface instead (31).

Cinder’s disjointed body is a constant reminder of her unknowable incompleteness; indeed, she looks down at the ill-fitting mechanical foot that has been forced onto her ankles without having a concrete understanding of the process by which it was acquired, the implications of its existence, and the connection between its placement and her sense of self. By bridging Haraway’s understanding of the cyborg with theories of trans identity, readers can approach Cinder’s evolution into a cyborg, which is treated as an invasive, though necessary, alteration to her body, as tied substantially to her awareness of visible gender identity. When thinking about how her younger sister had “already developed curves” that Cinder “couldn’t begin to hope for” (34), the narrator laments: “If Cinder’s body had ever been pre-disposed to femininity, it had been ruined by whatever the surgeons had done to her, leaving her with a stick-straight figure. Too angular. Too boyish. Too awkward with her heavy artificial leg” (34). While Cinder considers herself and is often read by others as a girl, there is much to be said for the absence of physical, recognizable markers of femininity, which contributes directly to the ambiguity surrounding Cinder’s sexual

identity; as Susan Stryker articulates, “Gender’s absence renders sexuality largely incoherent, yet gender refuses to be the stable foundation on which a system of sexuality can be theorized” (“Transgender” 212). Part of Cinder’s inability to recognize the interest of Prince Kai centers on what she perceives as the outward invisibility of her gender.

Stylistically, the short, amputated fragments that litter the text when Cinder is at her most unsettled, highlight the brutality of her disorientation: “A girl. A machine. A freak” and “Of a girl. A girl full of wires” (26, 82). The severed dynamic of these narrative moments indicates Cinder’s inability to conceive of herself holistically. Scientists and surgeons, then, are those credited with the cultivation of the identity of the girl who is “36.28 percent not human,” an “exemplary model of modern science” (82). Rather than an intrinsic conception of selfhood, Cinder’s identity comes from what others have put onto and into her body, once again destabilizing any notion of fixed coherence.

Highlighting the inorganic nature of the change to Cinder’s body, this focus on the surgeons and scientists as the harbingers of change draws a connection between Cinder’s development and other body transformations. Unlike what Nikki Sullivan identifies as “modificatory practices such as tattooing, branding, piercing” (552), the changes to Cinder’s form are made, presumably, without her desire, knowledge, and consent. Cinder explains her memory of this development: “At least, that’s what they told me. Like I said, I don’t remember any of it” (101). The narrator follows up with, “She only barely remembered the drug-induced fog, her mushy thoughts. And then there was the pain. Every muscle burning. Every joint screaming. Her body in rebellion as it discovered what had been done to it” (101). Because Cinder lacks any agency in what happens to her body, the violence ascribed to her process, though identifiable in Susan Stryker’s understanding of the transsexual body as “flesh torn apart and sewn together again” (“My Words” 240), is distinct, at least on the surface. As a result, thinking about the process by which Cinder transitions presumably

from human to cyborg as indicative of a trans mythology that is self-aware, if not self-reflexive, is initially problematic.²

However, Haraway’s cyborg, “a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation” (150), challenges accepted categorical norms in ways parallel to trans theory and experience. As “oppositional” and “utopian,” Haraway further explains⁶, “the cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense” (151). Haraway uses the cyborg to re-imagine struggles of difference specific to gender and sex. Cinder’s cyborg-ness, though, is a testament to the ways in which she is alienated from virtually *all* possible sources of origins and community. It is also a vital aspect of what Cinder perceives as her lack of sexual desirability. When Cinder admits that she is attracted to Prince Kai, she is frantic about the possibility that he will recognize her cyborg parts; after a slight fainting spell, Cinder is terrified at the prospect of Kai’s ability to know the machine part of her: “Fear clamped her gut. Was her retina display showing?” (231). Cinder can only imagine herself as a desired party if she can pass seamlessly as human. Toward the end of the book, Cinder finally comes to terms with the seemingly disparate aspects of her being, though her acceptance is still fraught with blame: “It was not her fault he had liked her. It was not her fault she was cyborg. She would not apologize” (338). At this moment, she looks forward to Kai possibly recognizing her simultaneously as cyborg and as a “normal girl” (348).

Despite Cinder’s acknowledgment that another might, in fact, read her as a “normal girl,” there is an inherent queerness in the sparks that fly between Cinder and Prince Kai. Whether he is fully able to acknowledge it or not, Kai is attracted to Cinder as *cyborg*, as *trans*, as *not-normal-girl*. Indeed, it is not the revelation that Cinder is a cyborg that threatens his attachment, but rather the revelation that she is Lunar, a more menacing alien species within the novel. The ultimate betrayal—the moment of Kai’s rejection—is tied, not to Cinder’s mechanical parts, but to her Lunar origins. Cinder’s humanity is undercut less by her

Ultimately, it is her status as conglomerate, as part-human, part-alien, part-machine—as fundamentally queer composite—that makes Cinder who and what she is: an icon of hope for the disenfranchised groups with which she identifies and belongs.

mechanical parts—the most overt representation of her hybridity—than by her blood, an inescapable affirmation of her origins, but still just another link in the seemingly endless chain of misplaced signifiers of Cinder’s identity. Notably, Kai’s final words to Cinder are tied directly to recognition and appearance: “You’re even more painful to look at...” (368). Of course, what Kai sees suddenly, what prevents him from reading Cinder as he has throughout the novel—Cinder’s problematic blood origins—is not actually visible on the surface. The paradox here, is that elements

of Cinder’s “natural” body, that which could not be altered through surgery, is what ultimately grounds her beloved’s misrecognition and subsequent rejection of her. Prince Kai’s romantic failure—which,

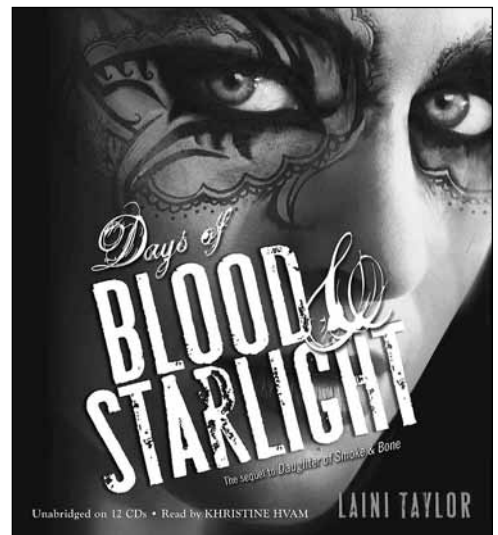
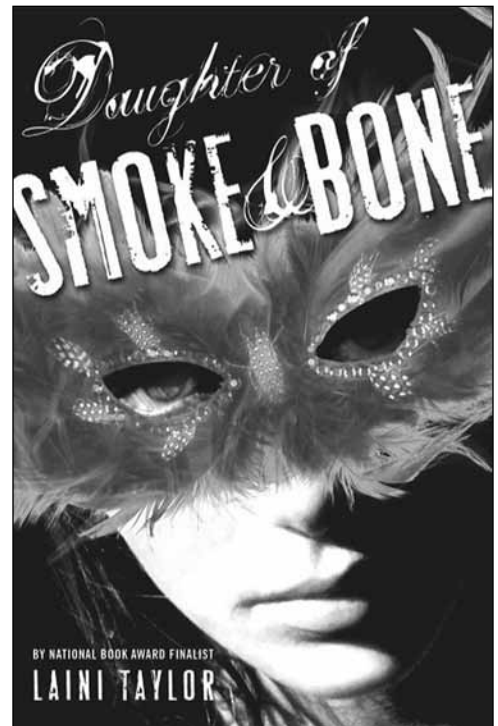
perhaps will be rectified as the series progresses—emphasizes the “truth” of Cinder’s trans body; his fear of the part of Cinder that she never understood, identified with, or embraced further emphasizes the potential trans nature of Cinder’s experience. Ultimately, it is her status as conglomerate, as part-human, part-alien, part-machine—as fundamentally queer composite—that makes Cinder who and what she is: an icon of hope for the disenfranchised groups with which she identifies and belongs. Cinder’s amalgamated trans status provides these contingents—Lunar, cyborg, servant—which are splintered and framed as often oppositional, with the potential for collective mobility.

The War of Forbidden Desire: Karou’s Queer Lives

In many ways, the degrees of queerness in *Cinder* are much more overt and identifiable than in Laini Taylor’s books. Cinder’s explicit corporeal queerness, the public shame of her being “outed,” and the seeming impossibility of her sexual desires make up the bulk of the novel. Readers are, it seems, invited to approach Cinder, in one way or another, as potentially queer. In Taylor’s series, however, the struggle for self and for desire is more subtly complicated—and, perhaps, even more radical as a result.

Daughter of Smoke and Bone’s two romantic entanglements—that of Karou and Akiva, human and angel; and Madrigal and Akiva, chimaera and angel—are presented to readers as simple impossibilities. Angels and chimaera are enemies; angels and humans have no business interacting.³ Any other conception of these relationships is inconceivable, treasonous, or blasphemous in kind. That Akiva is at the heart of both romances suggests the presence of a prototypical love triangle; however, that triangulation is made even queerer by the revelation that Karou and Madrigal have the same soul in different bodies at different times. Akiva falls in love with Madrigal as chimaera, and then falls in love with Karou as “human,” without realizing the connection between the two objects of his desire. As such, Taylor sets up the complex, and ultimately queer, ground rules for *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* and *Days of Blood and Starlight*.

Karou is, without question, complicated. From her ability to enact her wishes to her teeth-procuring missions for her guardian to her intricate hybrid family—including Issa, “serpent from the waist down and woman from the waist up”; Twiga, “giraffe-necked”; Yasri, “parrot-beaked and human eyed” (*Daughter* 8)—Karou’s existence and experience defy explanation. Of course, like Cinder, the mystery that surrounds Karou



makes up the bulk of the narrative. While certain causal details are available to address small idiosyncrasies, including the wishes that Karou uses to permanently acquire her signature blue hair, bigger questions surface at every turn. In the middle of the novel, when Karou finally lets herself talk to the monstrously beautiful angel Akiva, she thinks to herself “*Stupid, stupid, what are you doing? Answers, she told herself. I’m getting*

This search for answers enables Karou to seek out the disparate, almost paradoxical aspects of who she is without ever adhering to a neat, intrinsic notion of selfhood, sexuality, and purpose.

answers” (Daughter 202). This search for answers enables Karou to seek out the disparate, almost paradoxical aspects of who she is without ever adhering to a neat, intrinsic notion of selfhood, sexuality, and purpose.

In their earliest substantial conversation in the novel, Akiva asks, “But where did you come from? Who are you, really?” and Karou responds with, “Why does everybody ask me that?” (Daughter 206). Karou’s immediate, familiar disdain for the question is further explained: “Karou asked, animated by a flash of anger, though it was something she had wondered herself almost every day since she was old enough to understand the extreme oddness of her circumstances” (Daughter 206). Like Cinder, Karou struggles with the lack of coherence she feels when considering her identity. Karou’s circumstances are, in fact, odd, as she often fictionalizes the aspects of her life that cannot be adequately explained; as a result, her sketchbook is filled with portraits of the “imagined” creatures that make up Karou’s home life—they are simultaneously real and made-up. Indeed, these irreconcilable differences, made manifest in the simple but evasive response to Akiva’s question, “I’m *me*. Who are *you*?” are telling (Daughter 206). Without substantive details to justify her identity, Karou is at a loss and listens attentively to Akiva describe his initial fascination with her:

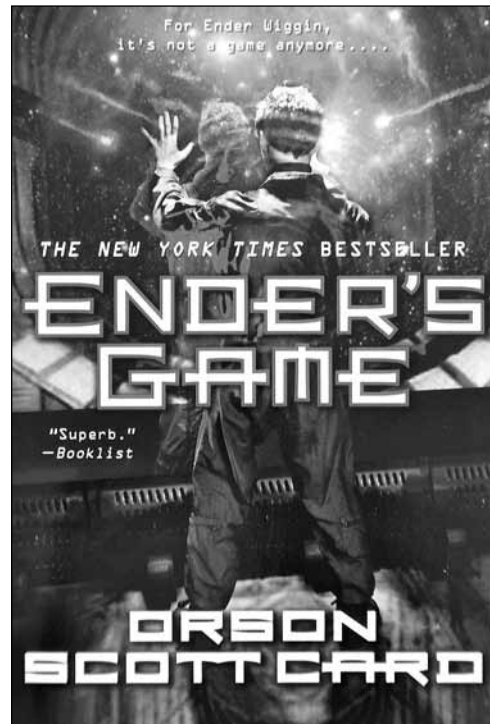
“I saw a girl... a girl with black eyes and gemstone hair, and...sadness. She had a sadness that was so deep, but it still could turn to light in a second, and when I saw her smile I wondered what it would be like to *make* her smile. I thought...I thought it would be like the discovery of smiling” (Daughter 210). Though Akiva and Karou are theoretical enemies—he an angel, and she tied to chimaera—this story indicates the root of his attraction: a sad, deep human girl. That straightforward identification is subverted when, shortly thereafter, Akiva declares, “Karou, I know who you are” (Daughter 250). Akiva *recognizes* Karou in ways that transcend Karou’s self-awareness. Whereas Cinder’s constant concern with the implications of Kai actually seeing her leads her to disavow and hide certain potentially disorienting aspects of her self, Akiva’s ability and desire to see those disorienting aspects of Karou encourages her to embrace those fundamentally incommensurate elements.

The explanation of Akiva’s leading claim is contingent upon the breaking of the wishbone that Karou possesses, a gift from Brimstone, her guardian. The newly broken wishbone reveals Akiva’s memory of, “waiting to die” after a battle between angels and chimaera, when he first sees Madrigal, a chimaera with “lean human thighs that gave way, below the knee, to the sleep taper of a gazelle’s legs,” with “fine cloven hooves” and folded “wings” (Daughter 269). Akiva admits, “Unaccountably, she was beautiful” (Daughter 269). The strangeness of Akiva’s attraction to Karou is overshadowed by the impossibility of Akiva’s attraction to Madrigal. In addition to the taboo against enemies, a greater taboo tied to bestiality surfaces. Such insinuations are quickly overshadowed by the humanity ascribed to Madrigal, both physically and personally. In a temporarily idyllic space, in which “they cupped their wings around their happiness and called it a world,” Akiva and Madrigal fall in love, despite the treachery inherent in their romance (Daughter 387). Although Akiva and Madrigal use their affair to dream up a “*different sort of life*” both for themselves and their “people,” the punishment, once they are caught, is Akiva’s front row seat to Madrigal’s public execution (Daughter 368).

Such torture accounts for Akiva’s subsequent familiarity with pain and misery, as the loss of Madrigal is palpable for Akiva and readers alike. Yet, as the build-up of memories gives way to the moment in which Akiva and Karou have broken the wishbone, it becomes clear that Karou and Madrigal are the same—sort of. Brimstone, as magical resurrectionist, re-creates Madrigal’s soul into a new body that he builds. That body ultimately becomes Karou: “She was Karou, and she was Madrigal. She was human and chimaera. . . . Within her, something was at work: a swift concrescence of memories, two consciousnesses that were really one, coming together like interlacing fingers” (*Daughter* 390).

While Cinder’s queerness is tied to the ways in which she straddles two identity categories, in this moment, Karou *is* two disparate beings; the violence with which Madrigal is executed is paralleled distinctly by the violence with which Karou is constructed. Earlier, Akiva explained that the price for wishes, or more accurately, the price for making bodies is pain: “To take from the universe, you must give. . . . If it were something easy to give, it would be meaningless” (*Daughter* 222). The queerness inherent in Karou’s circumstances, again, somewhat parallel to the violence ascribed to the trans process, reveals itself in Karou’s insecurities. When Akiva is reluctant to kiss her back, she asks, “Is it. . . is it because I’m not pure? Because I’m a. . . a made thing?” (*Daughter* 414). Highlighting the tension between Madrigal’s organic existence and her deliberately built body, Karou cannot reconcile the two identities she suddenly owns and the bodies that carried and carry them. She embodies the memories and experiences of Madrigal, but she has lived the past seventeen years as Karou; importantly, it is the inorganic “made” identity that rings true to Karou. As a result, even when she admits “She was Madrigal of the Kirin,” she is still Karou in the text, to her friends, to Akiva (*Days* 53). Karou chooses the body that was constructed, not birthed, the identity that was crafted, not intrinsic. Even when she is technically able to resurrect for herself a body more chimaera in appearance, Karou chooses the Brimstone-made human incarnation (*Days* 111). The impossible

reconciliation is made possible, once again, but only with an acceptance of identity not simply as whole and inherent but as conglomerate and queerly fashioned.



The End, or, More Aptly, the Ender

To situate the implications of queerness in both novels, I would like to take a look back at an earlier literary flirtation with interspecies queerness. Andrew “Ender” Wiggin, the titular character of Orson Scott Card’s science fiction adventure, *Ender’s Game*, evolves from a child prodigy into an ideal commander at the hands of manipulative adults in power throughout the novel. Yet, during this trajectory, and despite the allocation of sexualized characteristics to other players in the novel, Ender’s sexuality manifests itself in a notably distinct way. As *Ender’s Game* winds to its somewhat bleak conclusion, Ender explains his newly acknowledged intimacy with the enemy that he has so skillfully, albeit unknowingly, annihilated: “I know the buggers better than any other living soul, and maybe if I go there I can understand them better” (219). The intimacy with which Ender knows the buggers

and they, in return, know him, establishes Ender as tied more explicitly to the buggers than to his “fellow” humans on earth. In the novel’s final scenes, Ender discovers the bugger queen in her cocoon, imagines himself helping her repopulate the bugger world, and, theoretically, weds himself to the queen: “I’ll carry you...I’ll go from world to world until I find a time and a place where you can come awake in safety” (224). Conjuring up a series of images that involve a kiss between a bugger and a human, Ender ends the novel searching for a space wherein the buggers, and he himself as their new carrier, can “thrive” (226).

While subsequent books in the series chronicle Ender’s eventual “traditional” marriage, *Ender’s Game* frames an inter-species dynamic that is full of queer potential. Ender’s sexuality—removed completely from the confines of Battle School—begins to surface only when he feels the intimate pull of the bugger queen. Because Ender’s desire is tied to the bugger’s preemptive recognition of him, his orientation—in virtually every sense of the word—shifts from human to alien. Ender’s concern for the public’s acceptance of the buggers and his intense, intimate connection with the buggers themselves reflects an obvious fear of communal censure that mirrors the coming out process.⁴ As Sara Ahmed articulates, “To become straight means not only that we have to turn toward the objects given to us by heterosexual culture but also that we must turn away from objects that take us off this line. The queer subject within straight culture hence deviates and is made socially present as deviant” (554). Ender fails to “become straight” within the confines of *Ender’s Game*; instead, he turns not toward an object deemed appropriate by heterosexual culture, but to an object deemed previously unthinkable. Ender’s queerness manifests itself both in his desire for the bugger queen and his inability to “orient himself toward women as loved objects” (Ahmed 557). Although the novel’s attention to Ender’s potentially

romantic engagement with the buggers and the actual attention paid to the buggers as a species worthy of investigation and pursuit are fleeting, they set the stage for subsequent explorations of inter-special romance, a subject which has infiltrated the field of contemporary young adult literature and allowed for an expansive approach to queerness within the genre.

When Susan Stryker suggested that transgender studies “has the potential to address emerging problems in the critical study of gender and sexuality, identity, embodiment, and desire”

in new and unprecedented ways, she might not have predicted the way in which I would incorporate it here (“Transgender” 214). But, both *Cinder* and the *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* series allow for a “radical restructuring” of notions of identity, sexuality, bodies, and desire that broaden the scope of queerness. Indeed, *Cinder* and *Karou* embrace the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick deems an integral part

...they set the stage for subsequent explorations of inter-special romance, a subject which has infiltrated the field of contemporary young adult literature and allowed for an expansive approach to queerness within the genre.

of queerness (8). The literal open network of the girls’ bodies; the fissures in their identities; the disconnect between their understanding of who they are and the way in which they are perceived; the echoes of their past selves that are seemingly irreconcilable; the breaks in and multifaceted layers of their experiences, all encourage Cinder and Karou, and their struggles sexualities, to be read as boundary-blurring, as radical, as queer. Ultimately, this push toward an acknowledgment of new queerness has the potential to broaden the scope of our current and future conversations about queer characters, texts, and movements.

Notes

1. Even in this particular argument, much of what I claim could possibly be read not only in terms of queer theory, but also in terms of race theory and ethnicity studies.
2. It is difficult to discuss Cinder’s transition from human to cyborg precisely because, in the climactic moment of the novel, Cinder is revealed as Lunar—a literal alien rather than as human.
3. Allegorically, this series vaguely parallels the conflict in the Middle East. When Karou asks Akiva why he and his fellow angels consider the chimaera—Karou’s surrogate family—to be their enemies, he explains, “We have always been” (*Daughter* 205). The Hebrew and Arabic origins of character and place names, the ambiguous violence ascribed to all parties, and the seemingly eternal history of the war allows the text to be read in these rather specific allegorical terms. The perhaps problematic identification of villains and heroes within each warring faction further bolsters this reading.
4. For a specific reading of the buggers as queer, see Joseph Campbell’s “Kill the Bigger: *Ender’s Game* and the Question of Heteronormativity,” cited below.

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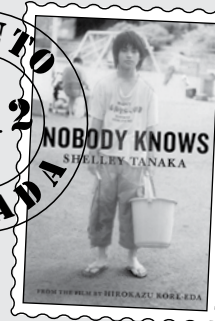
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As an adaptation of a Japanese film intended primarily for adults, *Nobody Knows* by Shelley Tanaka is an unusual addition to the North American children's book landscape. Stills from *Dare mo shiranai* (2009) directed by noted filmmaker and documentarian Hirokazu Koreeda grace the cover and some of the pages of Tanaka's minimalist but compelling novella for tween readers. This heartbreaking tale of four children who struggle to survive for a time on their own in Tokyo rings true partially because Koreeda's subtle and elegant film is based on actual events that occurred in the late 1980s. Written in the third person from the perspective of twelve-year-old Akira, Tanaka's prose mimics the documentary style of the film, displaying a sensitivity that rarely crosses over into the sentimental. This balance was undoubtedly difficult to achieve, given that the narrative describes the everyday travails that Akira and his three younger siblings experience after their flighty and overwhelmed mother essentially abandons them. The strength of Tanaka's emotionally powerful story lies in the absence of moralizing, whether on the part of the narrator or the children themselves. Tanaka achieves this feat by relying primarily on dialogue and clear-eyed, spare description of the children's matter-of-fact approach to daily survival. Young readers will be challenged to form their own judgments about the psychological and social implications of this unforgettable story.

Melek Ortbası



Shelley Tanaka
Nobody Knows
Toronto; Groundwood
Books, 2012
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(8-12)
ISBN: 978-1-55489-140-3

A Doctor for Who(m)? : Queer Temporalities and the Sexualized Child



Our analysis of the 2005 reboot of Doctor Who explores how the program has queered the figure of the child by playing upon tropes of innocence and sexuality. Incorporating readings of the televisual text, classic children's texts, and the production history of the show, we argue that Doctor Who presents two competing models of sexuality and the child. One privileges collective family viewership, emphasizing traditional family values and a sentimentalized vision of the child, and the other addresses child and adult viewers separately, presenting images of the knowing, sexualized child.

Introduction

The 2005 *Doctor Who* episode “Father’s Day” begins with a young woman’s voiceover: “Peter Alan Tyler, my dad. The most wonderful man in the world. Born 15th September 1954.” Accompanied by swelling orchestral music, we see a softly-lit mother showing her daughter pictures of her father and explaining how he “was always having adventures.” This little girl grows up to be Rose, the human companion of a time-travelling alien known as “the Doctor.” The episode sets up a fairy tale for Rose; she asks the Doctor to take her back in time to visit her father, and the Doctor responds, “your wish is my command, but be careful what you wish

for.” At the end of the episode, during which Pete sacrifices his life for Rose, she says “Peter Alan Tyler. The most wonderful man in the world. Died the 7th of November 1987.” One of the last images the episode presents is of the softly-lit mother telling little Rose about a girl who was with Pete as he was dying, planting the seed for Rose’s future life.

In contrast, the 2010 *Doctor Who* episode “The Eleventh Hour” begins with a view of abandoned child’s toys at night in the yard of a house, accompanied by an eerie vocal track. We hear a little girl’s voice straightforwardly saying, “Dear Santa...I hope I didn’t wake you, but, honest, it is an emergency. There’s a crack in my wall. [pause] Aunt Sharon says it is just an ordinary crack, but I know it’s not because at night there’s voices, so please, please, could you send someone to fix it? Or a policeman. Or ...” This is Amy, first seen kneeling by her bed praying, but her prayer is interrupted by the sound of the TARDIS, the Doctor’s time machine, crashing into her yard. Level-headedly, she grabs her flashlight and goes out to investigate in her white nightdress. The Doctor throws an anchor out of the TARDIS, climbs up, and suggestively asks her “can I have an apple? All I can think about are apples! I love apples! I think I am having a craving. That’s new. I’ve never had cravings before.”

These scenes encapsulate the two dominant images of the child and its relation to the family presented in the first six seasons of the new *Doctor Who*. The first, produced by Russell T. Davies, shows the sentimental child, who is so integral to conceptions of the nuclear family unit, futurity and time itself, whose life is fulfilled through traditional wishes. The second, produced by Steven Moffat, shows the sexualized child, who exists apart from the family and forges queer relationships with strangers.

The 2005 reboot of *Doctor Who* offers an excellent case study of the nexus between children’s culture and queer theory. Designed as a “family” show, it illustrates the all-too-often elided distinctions between “family” and “children’s” programming, in particular the differing emphasis on collective familial identity and individualized childhood identity. The program’s production model has allowed it to present two competing models of sexuality and the child: one that privileges collective family viewership, emphasizing traditional family values and a sentimentalized vision of the child, and another that addresses child and adult viewers separately, celebrating the sexualized child and illustrating the dangers of child-protectionism.

The split between these two approaches to *Doctor Who* roughly corresponds to contemporary divisions within Anglo-American gay and queer communities between a politics that emphasizes the “family values” of gays and lesbians (prioritizing marriage and parenting rights) and a stance that celebrates queer difference from social norms. The titular protagonist of the original *Doctor Who* (1963-1989) was an eccentric alien time-traveller, more interested in exploring the wonders of the universe than in wooing women or



Adrienne Wadewitz is currently a Mellon Digital Scholarship Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Digital Learning and Research at Occidental College. Her research and teaching interests include the history of children’s literature and sensibility, science fiction, and the digital humanities. Currently she is developing a website about the New England Primer and publishing about the gender gap on Wikipedia.



Mica Hilson is an Assistant Professor of English at Francis Marion University. He is currently completing his first book, a history of gay erotic fiction from 1965 to 2010. He has also embarked on a second project, tentatively titled *Queer Family Trees: Evolutionary Biology for Degenerates*.

settling down to start a family. Davies' reboot presents a more assimilationist Doctor, one who longs for the privilege of a normal family life. Moffat, on the other hand, celebrates the Doctor's eccentricity, his gleeful resistance to traditional family values. Furthermore, while Davies uses the sentimentalized child to represent the longing for domestic stability, the children in Moffat's episodes are themselves discontented with domestic order and its expectations. In Kenneth Kidd's terms, one might say that Moffat "queers the child" whereas Davies shows its "normative power" (183).

More importantly, Moffat shows how the queer child can embody a "queer temporality." Because, as Michael Cobb explains, children are "required to represent our future" as well as "remind us of time" (119). That is, children signify both future and past, in essence, the relationship between memory and time. Throughout his episodes, Moffat highlights these tensions and demonstrates that time is not "straight." Judith Halberstam, who introduced the notion of queer temporality, explains that, "One of my central assertions has been that queer temporality disrupts the normative narratives of time that form the base of nearly every definition of the human in almost all of our modes of understanding" (153-54). We want to use the idea of queer temporality to think about childhood in two different ways: first, that it can disrupt and reorder the expectations of how life should progress linearly and, second, that it can disrupt the "straight" and heteronormative expectations of life's trajectory. Rather than seeing the child as the beginning of a predictable story about "growing up," Moffat's *Doctor Who* allows us to think in "queer time" and to explore what such narratives might mean.

Rather than seeing the child as the beginning of a predictable story about "growing up," Moffat's Doctor Who allows us to think in "queer time" and to explore what such narratives might mean.

Who Watches *Who*?

Doctor Who is about an alien who travels through time and space, accompanied by a series of companions, mostly Earth women, although generally not romantic love interests. Together, they visit various times and places where, for example, they cure plagues, end wars, and liberate enslaved races. It is the longest-running science-fiction TV show in the world, having first aired from 1963 until 1989. Following a failed reboot attempt in 1996, the series was successfully relaunched in 2005. Because the show primarily aired on Saturday night in Britain, which is "family TV" time, it is enmeshed in the British consciousness and several generations of Britons are fans of the show—its language and characters are ubiquitous. Played by eleven different actors, the Doctor dies and "regenerates" into a new body whenever a new actor takes over.

Using a combination of approaches, we investigate the ways in which *Doctor Who* creates images of the family in children's culture. Our analysis employs materials produced by the BBC and the *Doctor Who* creative team, including advertising, press releases, interviews, official tie-in books, and episodes of the weekly "making-of" show *Doctor Who*

Confidential. As media scholar Jonathan Gray writes, such paratexts “tell us how producers or distributors would prefer us to interpret a text” (72). Thus, paratexts are more than simply marketing campaigns.¹ Paying close attention to the paratexts of *Doctor Who*, we observe how the production team hails different audiences—and how its conception of the program’s viewership has changed over time. However, while we make use of these production texts, we view them critically and do not feel bound by their interpretations.

From the paratexts of *Doctor Who*, we can see the ways in which the show has been successfully crafted to appeal to children. For the first two seasons, viewers under sixteen constituted around twenty per cent of the show’s audience; that means 1.2 million children were regularly watching *Doctor Who*, making it by far the most-watched show for that demographic (Russell 252). Furthermore, many of the tie-in promotions for the show have clearly been marketed to children. For example, there is a plethora of *Doctor Who* toys—action figures, a TARDIS, an alarm clock—and contests.² There was a “Script to Screen” competition aimed at elementary school children, ages 9–11, which asked them to write a 3-minute script for a *Doctor Who* mini-adventure (“Doctor Who Script to Screen”). Image 3.

Despite these marketing campaigns, the production team behind the 2005 *Doctor Who* conceived of it as “family TV” rather than “children’s TV” (Russell 38). This means that children are part of the viewing demographic, but not its sole demographic. James Hawes, a director for the new series, has pointed out that “focus groups ...had said family TV-watching was dead.... Somehow [*Doctor Who*] has proved the focus

groups wrong, because *Doctor Who* made families sit down and share a storytelling experience all over again” (Russell 42). Critic Mark Bould concurs that the new show appeals to “a longing for a return to the golden afternoon (probably Saturday teatime) of empire and the security of family and hierarchy” (225–26). “Family TV” in Britain likely addresses more multigenerational households than in the US. The number of people per household is much higher in the UK (3.90) (“The UK family in statistics”) than in the US (2.57) (“America’s Families and Living Arrangements”), and a much higher percentage of adult children in the UK live with their parents—in 2008, 52% of UK men aged 20–24 lived with their parents (“Third of men live”). The US also has roughly 50% more TVs per capita than the UK (“Televisions (per capita) statistics”). These statistics help explain why the UK is a more conducive environment for collective, multigenerational, synchronous, “whole family” television viewership.

With its appeal to both adults and children, *Doctor Who* is a quintessential “crossover text.” While the term has usually been used to discuss print, it is particularly suited for the “family TV” that is *Doctor Who*. While texts can “crossover” from an adult audience to a child audience (more common in the past than now) and from a child audience to an adult audience (more common since the *Harry Potter* craze), what really defines crossover literature is that there is “a space in which readers of all ages can meet to share their common experience” (Beckett 268–69). As Sandra Beckett emphasizes in her foundational study of the phenomenon, “While differences are acknowledged in crossover literature, they are considered insignificant in comparison to



the similarities. There is a move away from the polarization of children and adults toward a recognition of the continuity that connects readers of all ages” (268). Both Russell T. Davies and Steven Moffat acknowledge that the Saturday night viewing slot—a time when the BBC schedules mass-appeal, multigenerational light entertainment programs—is key to their aesthetics. However, they have slightly different ideas about how to develop a Saturday-night aesthetic. Davies structures his episodes around big emotional moments that connect with the widest possible audience while Moffat presents ambiguous moments that everyone can discuss from a different angle.

For Moffat, *Doctor Who* is not “family TV” in the same way it is for Davies. Moffat firmly sees himself as appealing to multiple audiences simultaneously. In response to TV critic Alan Sepinwall’s question about whether his stories were too complex for children, for example, Moffat replied that children watch TV “intently” and “if there’s something that maybe makes them say, ‘I didn’t quite understand that, Dad, what happened?’ and they have a conversation about it, can someone tell me what’s wrong with that?” (Sepinwall). The show for him thus has “semiotic thickness” that it doesn’t for Davies. For example, he explains that he constructs exciting television by periodically showing bizarre, mysterious images (e.g. a horse on a spaceship) so that viewers will want to keep watching (“From Script to Screen”). Moffat frequently references individual viewers such as this rather than groups.

Moffat uses this kind of “family TV” to question traditional ideas of the family. As Alec Charles has argued, Moffat’s era of *Doctor Who* is “generationally ambivalent” and therefore peculiarly equipped for an “exploration of that which adulthood might seek to repress” (Charles 4). While Charles highlights the role that terror, horror, and nightmares play in Moffat’s “return of the repressed,” we emphasize how he explores the taboo subject of childhood sexuality and its relationship to the construction of the family. First, however, we will explore how childhood sexuality is repressed in the Davies era’s family-oriented narratives.

Russell T. Davies, *Family Man*

In many of Davies’ public statements about his vision for *Doctor Who*, the terms “emotion” and “family” are virtually synonymous. For instance, he says that for the 2005 relaunch of the program, “we had to revamp the whole thing and I think we set that tone and mood in concrete right from the opening moments of that first episode. That whole Rose story, that whole family environment, that emotional base...most drama is already about emotions. *Doctor Who* really wasn’t before, but I wasn’t just going to write spaceships and robots and stuff like that.” (Russell 31). The “tone and mood” that Davies established was a highly sentimentalized and traditional vision of the family.

All of the Doctor’s companions in the Davies era are largely defined by their connections to their families, which are key to the emotional arcs Davies constructs. Rose’s (Billie Piper) mother features prominently in several episodes, as does her dead father. Martha’s (Freema Agyeman) family is so concerned about her welfare that they have the government looking for her. Donna (Catherine Tate) lives at home with her mother, and her grandfather is integral to many of her stories. Mickey’s (Noel Clarke) love for his grandmother is the determining factor in his decision to stay in an alternate universe. In this article, we focus on Rose because she is central to the emotional arc of the first two seasons, which set the tone for the new series and establish the Doctor’s identity. Even though the actor who played the Doctor (and to some extent the character of the Doctor) changed between Seasons 1 and 2, she remained the same.

“Father’s Day,” mentioned at the beginning of this article, reveals Davies’ sentimental take on family relationships. Rose’s father has been dead for years and she asks the Doctor (Christopher Eccleston) to take her to see him. However, when Rose saves her father from dying and later comes into contact with herself as a baby, she creates time paradoxes; these must be resolved by her father, Pete Tyler (Shaun Dingwall), voluntarily dying to right time. At the center of this episode is Davies’ trademark: “good, honest, heartfelt emotion” (“Time Trouble”). The aim of the episode was to

make the audience cry; the production team even began referring to it as the “Daddy’s got something in his eye” episode (Russell 170). It is the self-sacrifice of the father figure that is meant to produce catharsis in the viewer, even the usually stoic father; the emotional climax of the episode thus reinforces traditional family models and dynamics.

The implicit message of “Father’s Day” is that the child must be protected from her own desires; thus it simultaneously sexualizes and infantilizes Rose. “Father’s Day” is a story about growing up—leaving behind childish naïveté and the impulsive behavior it inspires—intertwined with an Oedipal narrative about choosing appropriate love objects. It comes in the middle of a story arc involving Rose’s increasing romantic attraction to the Doctor. After Rose saves her father from dying, thus disrupting the “natural order” of time, she is incensed by the Doctor’s indignant response and accuses him of having a personal agenda—“What? You’d rather him [Pete] dead? For once, *you’re* not the most important man in my life.” That line neatly encapsulates the episode’s central melodramatic conflict—Rose cannot have both men (her father and her romantic interest) at the same time, so one must be sacrificed. After Reapers—monsters from another dimension that “sterilize” time paradoxes, which Pete describes as “wounds in time”—devour the Doctor, Pete chooses to sacrifice himself, thus bringing the Doctor back to life. In turn, he preserves the flow of the Oedipal narrative that dictates that the child must renounce her libidinal attachments to her parent and transfer them to a more appropriate love interest.

Although Rose loses her father in this episode all over again, Season 2 ultimately pushes toward a reunification of the Tyler family. At the end of the season, Rose, her mother, and a Pete Tyler from another dimension are all united in a parallel world. Although they are stuck in that parallel world and unable to communicate with this world, they are together. Davies sees this family arc as crucial to the show: “The parallel worlds story was domestic, and therefore a much more real story... . I took the whole history, going all the way back to *Father’s Day*, as a big set-up for the only thing that could separate her from the Doctor” (Russell 238).

Seasons 1 and 2 are not just about Rose’s family reuniting but also about the Doctor learning to appreciate the value of family. Davies very specifically juxtaposed the lonely Doctor, who had no planet or family left, with Rose, who had a family and a boyfriend—they were “polar opposites” and this “put some emotion into him” (Russell 29). Davies’ Doctor is thus a “wounded” romantic hero, and one of the central narratives in the first two seasons involves how Rose, the self-proclaimed “ordinary shopgirl,” is able to “heal” him. Rose’s connection to her family helps to enable this “healing.” Though Rose is initially positioned as the child of a “broken home,” fatherless and raised by her irresponsible, downwardly-mobile mother in a council estate, her family home is eventually presented as a site of healing and unity. In the post-regeneration story “The Christmas Invasion,” for instance, Rose carries an incapacitated Doctor (now played by David Tennant) into her mother’s

council flat, providing him with a temporary sanctuary. Where the original *Doctor Who* show established that the Doctor needs to spend his post-regeneration recovery period in his own “home,” the TARDIS, “The Christmas Invasion” instead positions the Tyler family home as the primary restorative domestic space. Indeed, the Doctor fully returns to health when the aroma of tea awakens him, as the signifiers of the Tylers’ “homey” Englishness literally spill over into the TARDIS. This episode also includes several scenes of the Doctor and the Tylers gathered around the family television to watch major events; “The Christmas Invasion” first aired in Britain on Christmas Day—a high time for whole-family television viewership—and the episode is also set on Christmas Day, so the episode’s closing depiction of contented family viewing holds a flattering mirror up to its intended audience. In Davies’ *Doctor Who*, family unity, self-sacrifice, and tearful outpourings of sentiment are all integrally tied together.

Steven Moffat, Champion of the Sexualized Child

With the introduction of Steven Moffat as showrunner, the program’s take on family, childhood, and the Doctor changed dramatically. For instance, the Doctor’s first companion in the Moffat era, Amy Pond (Karen Gillan), has no family when we meet her; furthermore, in a direct inversion of how the Doctor’s previous companion, Donna, was introduced, Amy is fleeing her wedding rather than trying to get to it. Moffat’s era is not entirely hostile to families, but even at its most sentimental, it is still a far cry from the Davies era’s paeans to the glory of the family unit. For example, the Doctor appears to accept without comment that Amy has no parents and lives alone with an unseen aunt. Rather than expressing sympathy for the orphaned child, he brags, “I don’t even have an aunt.” An envious Amy tells him, “You’re lucky,” and the Doctor replies, “I know.” The Davies era positioned the Doctor as a tragic hero precisely because, as the last of his race, he had lost his family. A few minutes into his first episode as showrunner, Moffat stakes out his departure from that approach: his Doctor lives a charmed life precisely because he is not tied down by family connections.

Moffat’s Doctor also breaks down binaries between “adult” and “youth” in that he is an extremely old man,³ who appears young and rarely, if ever, “acts his age.” As Moffat himself explains, “There’s a lot of contradictions in the part of the Doctor....He behaves very childishly, but he also behaves in a very, sort of, magisterial way” (“Call Me the Doctor”). Though rather sprightly for a 1000-year-old man, he also often expresses a world-weary wisdom that makes him seem much older than he looks.⁴ The Doctor becomes a typical child for Moffat in a pattern that recurs throughout his episodes: children who are simultaneously “old” and knowing. He also provides a mouthpiece for the elements



of childhood subjectivity that don't fit our Romantic conception of "the child;" for example, we discover that the Doctor can "speak baby," and after communicating with a friend's adorable infant, he reveals that the baby would prefer to be known as "Stormageddon, Dark Lord of All" ("Closing Time"). For Moffat, childhood is not

For Moffat, childhood is not about blissful innocence; rather, it is about the tensions between play, responsibility, knowledge, and ignorance.

about blissful innocence; rather, it is about the tensions between play, responsibility, knowledge, and ignorance. The Doctor encapsulates this by being one-part Peter Pan, one-part Dorian Gray.

Peter Pan is one of several quintessential children's texts that Moffat draws upon. A key way that his *Doctor Who* positions itself as TV for children is by referencing classic children's literature such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *The House at Pooh Corner*, and *Treasure Island*. Additionally, the classic status of these books appeals to adults. Yet in many ways, the values in these books are alien to contemporary viewers, as they operate from a different set of cultural norms about the child. *Peter Pan*, for instance, presents a child that is both innocent and desiring, and all of the texts present children and adults interacting as equals even when it comes to matters such as sexuality. As if sensing Jacqueline Rose's contention that "there is no child behind the category 'children's fiction,' other than one which the category itself sets in place" (Rose 10-11), Moffat uses these texts to disrupt contemporary expectations about the nature of the child. Thus, not only is the Victorian and Edwardian children's literature he draws from transgressive in its own right, but he also often uses it in a transgressive manner to challenge adult sensibilities.

Of all of the children's texts that Moffat references, *Peter Pan* is the most important, because it permeates his depiction of the Doctor, his companions, and their relationships. When she

first appears in the show, for example, young Amy is wearing a white nightgown to emphasize her similarity to Wendy Darling. The episode even begins with a bird's-eye, or more accurately, a Peter-like view, of Amy's house: the camera slowly zooms in on her door and window, as if we, the viewers, are flying towards it. In the second episode, although she is a grown-up, Amy still wears a white nightgown throughout. Recalling the tableau at the end of *Peter Pan*, when the Doctor leaves Amy and her husband behind two seasons later, she watches through her closed window as he flies away.

Both the Doctor and Peter Pan are extraordinarily child-like and lack an adult understanding of sexuality. For instance, Peter is baffled when Wendy tries to kiss him, and similarly, the Doctor does not recognize the sexuality inherent in Amy. When he meets the adult Amy a few moments after he leaves little Amelia in "The Eleventh Hour," she is dressed up as a police-woman, but there are dead giveaways that she is wearing a sexy costume, not a regulation uniform. The camera emphasizes this by lingering on her miniskirt, panning up her stocking-clad legs and showing us the seam down the back of her nylons, but the Doctor cannot decode these signs. While the Doctor can detect hidden aliens that can only be seen "out of the corner of your eye" in this episode, he cannot see what is plainly in front of him. He believes she is a real police-woman, and Amy has to explain to him that she is a "kissogram." When Amy describes this work, kissing strangers for money, the Doctor is appalled: "You were a little girl five minutes ago!" Indeed, from the viewer's perspective, the shift from little Amelia to sexualized Amy is jarring, all the more so because the two look so similar—Caitlin Blackwood, who plays young Amelia, is the cousin of Karen Gillan, who plays Amy.

Using iconic moments from Edwardian children's literature and placing children at the center of his episodes, Moffat uses the Edwardian child as a way to investigate the queerness of childhood, a time when identity is more plastic. Over the past decade, numerous scholars—including Elizabeth Freeman, Lee Edelman, Kathryn Bond Stockton, and Judith

Halberstam—have developed notions of “queer temporality” that deeply resonate with Moffat’s work. Fundamentally, as Halberstam argues, “Queer time...is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing... Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death” (2). The Doctor also celebrates a very different “marker of life experience”: regeneration, which is figured as a simultaneous death and rebirth. Along the same lines, the show demonstrates both a rejection of heteronormative logics and an optimistic outlook on queer worldbuilding in the future. In his polemic *No Future*, Lee Edelman famously called upon queers to reject a politics built around the twin strands of a “fantasy of the future” and “the figure of the Child,” a “fantasmatic Child” whose future safety is privileged over the rights of consenting adults (11). However, rather than seeing the queer figure as being positioned solely against the future and “the Child,” as Edelman would argue, Moffat has created queer children who manipulate time and the future for their benefit.

This type of queer child with sexual agency is first introduced in the Davies-era episodes written by Moffat. Season 2’s Hugo-Award winning “The Girl in the Fireplace” foregrounds both the queerly aging child and the queerly folded nature of time. In this episode, the Doctor lands on a derelict ship that shows “windows” into different “spots of time” in the life of Reinette, better known as Madame de Pompadour (Sophia Myles). He peers through a fireplace into the young Reinette’s bedroom and enters it through the time portal. In typical Doctor fashion, he notices that there are extra clocks ticking and defeats a murderous clockwork automaton. The first entrance of the Doctor into Reinette’s bedroom establishes a sexual undercurrent to their relationship, even though Reinette is only a child. The Doctor, though he saves Reinette from the clockwork automaton, appears to be a

possible predator himself. Surely it is odd to have a strange older man appear in the bedroom of a young girl? However, when the Doctor enters her bedroom for the second time, he—a time traveler—is flummoxed by the passage of time;¹⁰ he is startled to see a beautiful woman and does not realize it is Reinette. She, however, knows exactly who he is and what she wants from him—a kiss. The sexualization of children permeates the episode, particularly in one of the final scenes as Reinette takes the Doctor into her reconstructed childhood bedroom at Versailles; she sends him back to the ship through the time portal in this room. The setting and the melancholy romantic parting bring the viewer back full circle to the first scene, reminding us that children as well as adults have sexual desires.

In his book *Child-Loving*, James Kincaid argues that modern Anglo-American society has attached “the central features of desirability... purity, innocence, emptiness, [and] Otherness” to the child (5). As Kincaid articulates so forcefully, Victorian society constructed a pure and innocent child that we inherited (13). In Moffat’s two-part Hugo-Award winning episode from Season 1, “The Empty Child” and “The Doctor Dances,” the Doctor and Rose visit WWII London and encounter Nancy (Florence Hoath), a plucky young girl keeping herself and a cadre of young children alive during the Blitz. Nancy, with her long, brown braids and wide eyes, first appears to the viewer as a scared but capable young girl. She initially appears to be an “adorable” and “sweet” adolescent. However, like the Nancy in one of Charles Dickens’ most child-centered stories, *Oliver Twist*, this Nancy is a knowing “young lady” who uses her knowledge of sex to make her way in the world yet still retains her sense of moral virtue. She organizes the local homeless children into a group and feeds them during air raids by stealing from people who have an overabundance of food. Nancy points out that the father she is stealing from only got his excess food by trading sexual favors with the butcher; thus, she indicts him for both his gluttony and his sexual transgression. In the absence of any adults, Nancy takes on a maternal role, blurring the line between innocent child and knowing adult.

Although Nancy is a protector of children, she is menaced by a spooky child whose face is covered by a gas mask, whose hand is scarred, and who keeps repeating the phrase “Are you my mummy?” Anyone touched by the child grows a gas mask, gets a scar, and repeats the same phrase. When these “zombies” attack, the Doctor treats all of them as children, ordering them to “go to your room.” Yet this is only a temporary solution; for the crisis to be resolved, the Doctor and Nancy must work together. It is clear that Nancy knows more about the “empty child” than she lets on, and she takes it upon herself to solve the mystery of how the child was created. As both she and the Doctor converge on the solution, the Doctor realizes that Nancy is the “empty child’s” mother—that, as a young girl, she had a child out of wedlock. Suddenly, our perceptions of Nancy switch dramatically as we discover she is 20 years old. While before she was a vulnerable, sweet, erotic, sexually knowing child, she now becomes a sentimental non-erotic maternal figure. As the empty child keeps asking her “are you my mummy?”, she finally answers “yes,” after which the undead are restored to life and all is made right in the world. Unlike the earlier “Father’s Day,” in which the messy overlaps between Rose’s adult sexuality and childhood desires are only resolved through a purifying act of sacrificial violence, there are no deaths in this episode. On the contrary, the embrace of Nancy’s apparent paradoxes (both “child” and “woman,” both sexual and maternal) is what leads directly to the life-affirming resolution.

The distinctions between the “innocent child” and the “sexual woman” are further collapsed in Season 5, which suggests that Amy’s childhood encounter with the Doctor shaped her adult sexual tastes. She flirts with the Doctor and is reluctant to reveal to him that she has a boyfriend, Rory (Arthur Darvill). When he meets the Doctor—a

figure he recognizes from Amy’s childhood references to her “imaginary friend,” “the Raggedy Doctor”—Rory is shocked and tells Amy, “He was never real!...He was just a game. We were kids. You made me dress up as him!” The line is tantalizingly ambiguous, raising more questions than it answers: What kind of dress-up “game” were Rory and Amy playing? Did it end when they entered adolescence? How did it impact Amy’s choice of Rory for her adult sexual partner? Once the Doctor returns, the ambiguity between childhood and adulthood is even greater, as he takes them on madcap adventures that encourage Amy to indulge her fantasies about the Doctor while simultaneously cementing her love for Rory. The Doctor is simultaneously an adult—saving Amy when she is in trouble and a romantic temptation—and a fellow child indulging in silly games. The plot arcs criss-cross so that the Doctor and Amy do not occupy the same times in their lives; Amy and the Doctor are not always “adults” together or “children” together, emphasizing that there are not



activities or feelings that are only appropriate at one moment in life.

The queer quadrangle of the Doctor, Amy, Rory, and the mysterious River Song (Alex Kingston) is at the heart of Moffat's exploration of queer temporality. As the Doctor slyly observes, "I've got a bit of a complex life; things don't always happen to me in quite the right order. Gets a bit confusing at times, especially at weddings... especially my own" ("Blink"). In Season 4, viewers first meet River Song at the same time the Doctor does, on what turns out to be the last day of her life. She is a middle-aged woman, and the Doctor has been the great love of her life, though she was more intimately acquainted with his later incarnations. At the start of Season 5, viewers meet Amy and Rory, who have a baby that turns out to be River Song. Along the way, Amy and Rory meet the adult River but they do not know that she is their child (nor do viewers for a while). In a further twist, their child is abducted and they are not allowed to raise her; instead, she is raised by the Doctor's enemies, and she comes back to kill both her parents and the Doctor. River is obviously a more complex version of Reinette and even Amy herself; in Moffat's storylines, the Doctor has a penchant for falling in love with women he meets as children.

As the River Song storyline unfolds, there are constant reminders of the "confusion" of the Doctor's life. For example, when the Doctor first meets River, she says "Hello, Sweetie," as if they have known each other for years ("Silence in the Library"). Viewers follow along with the Doctor, trying to figure out who she is, encountering her as a baby, a teenager, and a mature adult, but not in a linear progression. Since the Doctor and River fall in love "out of order," they even need a book to keep track of their meetings. In several episodes, the Doctor meets River both as a baby and as a sexualized woman in quick succession, challenging the idea that there are boundaries between the two. After spending an entire episode worrying about Amy and Rory's baby, for example, he discovers that the baby and River Song are the same person. He is simultaneously shocked and delighted by this turn of events, giggling as he tells the mature River, "But that means...ooh...but you and I...we...[makes kissing gesture, then gleefully rubs his hands] How do I look?" ("A Good Man Goes to War").

So what do we make of all these scenes in which the Doctor "seduces" children who, as grown women, become his lovers? In Moffat's storylines, the boundaries between the sexualized adult woman and the innocent little girl are non-existent. Instead, Moffat shows the power of the queer child. River, Amy, and Reinette make a strong impression on the Doctor, changing and shaping his character. Precisely because he encounters them "out of time," he feels an attachment for them that translates into epiphanic experiences. Unlike Davies' traditional sentiment, Moffat shows the more complex emotional effect that develops from queer time.

Amy and the Doctor are not always "adults" together or "children" together, emphasizing that there are not activities or feelings that are only appropriate at one moment in life.

These plotlines suggest a “lifting of the veil” that Moffat tries to perform on children’s texts. Rose has argued that all children’s literature is an implicit “seduction” between the adult writer and the child reader (2), but Moffat foregrounds that dynamic by including dramatic plotlines in which an adult man captivates the imagination of a young girl. Moffat reveals the mechanics of children’s literature, thereby undercutting the powerplay inherent in the usual construction of those plotlines. While Moffat deviates from traditional children’s literature in his presentation of sexuality, his sublimation of the traditional parental role fits with what Kincaid has argued: in most children’s literature “the child does something to release it from being tethered to parents” (283). Thus, Moffat invites the viewer to glory in being child-like with the Doctor and leaves parents out of the picture. Even though Amy and Rory are River Song’s parents, they rarely have a chance to show it. Parenting is not at the heart of these storylines; Moffat is not interested in showing a nuclear family unit. He shows their family displaced in time: a baby snatched from its mother, a mature woman encountering her younger parents, and even a child growing up as her parents’ best childhood friend, ultimately serving as her own namesake.⁵

Family television is often driven by plotlines in which heroic parents must protect their children from danger, but in Moffat’s stories, it is more often the villains who seek to “protect” the child and go to terrible lengths to do so. For instance, in “The Day of the Moon,” the Silence (a race of alien “super-parasites”) are raising a young girl. To keep her safe, they isolate her in an abandoned children’s home and brainwash the home’s caretaker, so that he follows the mantra, “The child. She must be cared for. It is important” (“The Day of the Moon”). As an extra level of protection, the child is sealed inside an astronaut suit, which includes complete life-support systems, providing her with nutrients and ensuring that she never has to remove the spacesuit.

On the rare occasions that Moffat’s heroes engage in child protectionism and its accompanying rhetoric, their plans often go awry. For instance, in Season 6 the Doctor assembles a

multiracial (alien and human) army to rescue his companion Amy and her newborn baby from their mysterious kidnappers. The rescue goes smoothly at first, but soon they are ambushed; as they fight for their lives, one leader of the Doctor’s army orders the others: “At all costs, we protect the child!” (“A Good Man Goes to War”) Yet, horrifyingly, as Amy cradles the baby in her arms, shielding it from the battle raging around them, the child suddenly melts into white goo; it was never a real baby but rather a remotely-controlled “flesh avatar.” In other words, all of the self-sacrifice designed to “protect the child” was worse than useless, because the object they were protecting was a phantasm far removed from the actual child.

Not only does Moffat show villains as protecting children, but he also shows the nuclear family as dangerous, thus undercutting the traditional role it plays in family television. For instance, in the first episode of Season 5, Amy and Rory are searching for a shape-shifting monster in a hospital when they run across a well-dressed mother and her two young daughters. The concerned mother tells them that something terrible has happened to the hospital staff, but before Amy and Rory can investigate, they experience the terrifying realization that the mother’s voice is coming out of her daughter’s mouth. As Amy and Rory try to back away from this monster-in-family-form, the “mother” and “children” suddenly grow sharp, piranha-like teeth (“The Eleventh Hour”). In quick succession, therefore, the family shifts from a “protected” category to what our heroes must protect themselves *from*.

Conclusion: Queer Theory for Kids

Rather than highlighting the sentimentalized figure of the child, Moffat refigures the child through a queer discourse about childhood sexuality, challenging conventional assumptions about the nuclear family and basic human relationships. Instead of using the child as a way to reinforce traditional narratives about maturation, he offers a series of alternatives that challenge the hierarchical adult/child binary through sexuality. Highlighting the queerness of childhood, Moffat

Instead of using the child as a way to reinforce traditional narratives about maturation, he offers a series of alternatives that challenge the hierarchical adult/child binary through sexuality.

shows that children can embrace queerness in the past, present, and future. While most representations of childhood queerness emphasize that it is a stage grown out of (Bruhm and Hurley xix), Moffat uses the time bending of *Doctor Who* to emphasize that queerness is a state that transcends typical linear narratives of family and maturation.

Queer theory might strike some readers as forbiddingly adult, both in its dense academic jargon and its mature sexual content, but Moffat's *Doctor Who* demonstrates how accessible and translatable these concepts can be. He brings queer theory into practice and shows its relevance and meaning for the masses, and even more dramatically, for young viewers. Rather than seeming esoteric or avant-garde, Moffat's queer *Doctor Who* has resonated with millions of viewers, young and old, suggesting that there is a place in the media spectrum for queer narrative arcs. In the introduction to their volume *Curiouser*, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley write that "[the storyteller] decides what is inside and outside the narrative world, which is also, implicitly, a decision about what is inside or outside a world whose language tries to normalize some behaviors at the expense of others" (x). In his vision of the time-traveling Doctor who not only embodies childhood but also embraces children, Moffat has presented viewers with a "new normal" that is queered through childhood.

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Notes

1. For an extensive discussion of paratexts, see Gerard Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997).
2. In the UK, "the top-selling toy of 2005, and the recipient of an industry award, was a remote-controlled Dalek" (Russell 253).
3. He is roughly 1000 years old, though there is no strict continuity on that point in the program.
4. The Doctor has been played by 41-year-old Christopher Eccleston, 34-year-old David Tennant, and 27-year-old Matt Smith.
5. Amy and Rory name their daughter Melody Pond—a name that becomes transliterated into "River Song"—after their childhood friend Mels (Maya Glace-Green). We later learn that Mels, a young Afro-British woman, is an earlier incarnation of Melody Pond/River Song. Thus, Amy and Rory's "missing" child has been hidden in plain sight and has grown up in close contact with them.

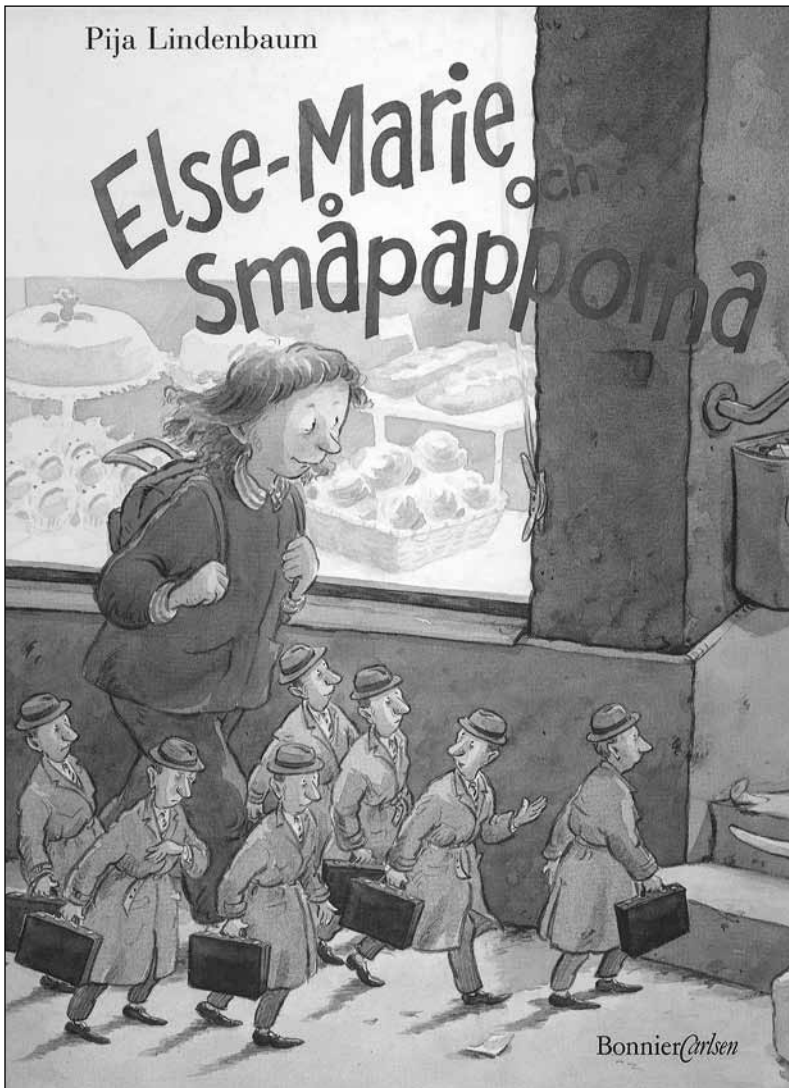
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Celebrating the Margins: Families and Gender in the Work of the Swedish Picturebook Artist Pija Lindenbaum



The picturebook author-illustrator Pija Lindenbaum (b. 1979) rose early to public attention in her native country of Sweden with her first book *Else-Marie och småpapporna / Else-Marie and the Seven Small Daddies* in 1990, but it was her second book *Boken om Bodil / Boodil My Dog* which brought attention from the International community and for which she received the *New York Times* award. Since her first book, Lindenbaum has produced roughly one book a year, many of which have been the recipients of major prizes, including the August prize and the Swedish Astrid Lindgren Prize. She is one of Sweden's most highly esteemed living children's book authors. She was also awarded a prize by Riksförbundet för Sexuell Upplysning / The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) for the sensitive way in which her books challenge sexual stereotyping among children, and her ability to leave the reader feeling "I'm OK; I can be precisely the way I am" (RFSU).

Many of her works are available in translation, and reviews of her works in English translations on sites such as Amazon often

by LYDIA KOKKOLA
and MIA ÖSTERLUND



Lydia Kokkola is Professor of English and Education at Luleå University of Technology in northern Sweden. Her research interests include bilingual literacy education, Holocaust fiction, Adolescent Sexuality and she has just begun a new project on advanced reading skills. Her latest book, *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality*, has just been released from Benjamins.



Dr. Mia Österlund is associate professor in Comparative Literature at Åbo Akademi University. Her thesis, "Girls in Disguise" (2005), was on cross-dressing in young adult fiction. She recently co-edited *Celebrations to a Displaced Hedgehog* (2012) in honor of Maria Nikolajeva. Österlund is an editor of *Barnboken: Journal of Children's Literature Research* and member of the jury for the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize.

draw attention to what is perceived to be the political correctness of her books, even as she challenges the concept by placing difficult issues in the margin and the commonality of children's experiences in the center. In Sweden, the liberal attitudes Lindenbaum expresses are so highly valued that many of her works carry a stamp of approval from the organization Rättviseförmedlingen / Equalisters, a pro-active equality project aiming "to correct the imbalances of representation in media, culture, business and other contexts" (rattviseformedlingen.se). In conjunction with the publishing house Olika [Different], they award prizes for picturebooks that promote diversity and challenge or broaden gender stereotypes in picturebooks: with an official stamp given to environmental friendly products, kravmärkning (literally, demand stamp), and krammärkning (literally, hug stamp) to signal that the books meet the Equalisters' criteria. The books by Lindenbaum we discuss in detail here carry the "hug stamp" of approval.

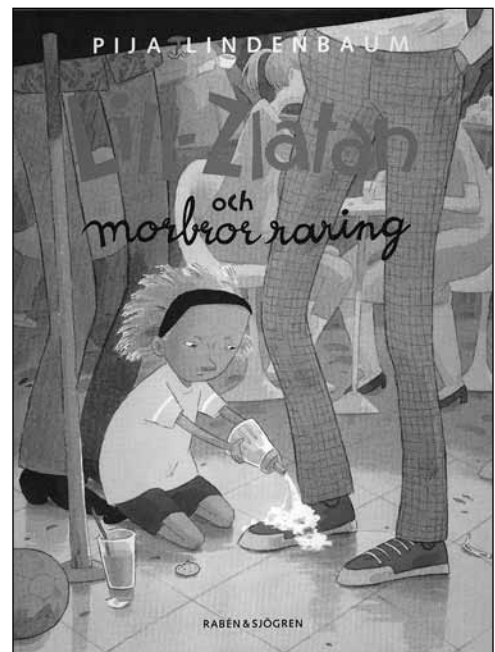
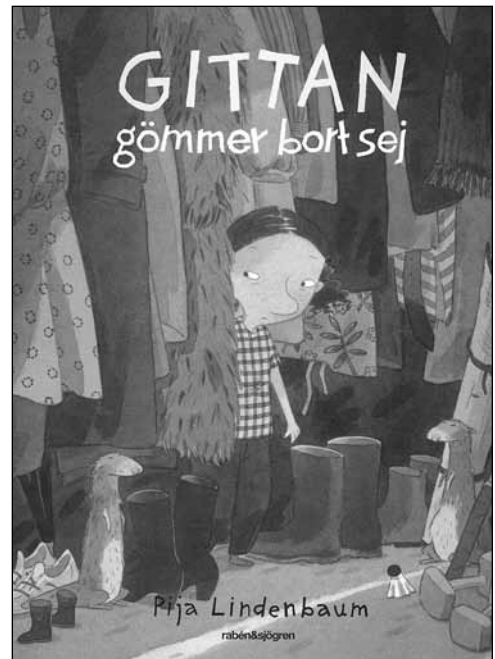
The common feature in all Lindenbaum's books is that she places the child character in the center of the event, and moves outwards to explore that character's family or other social situation from the child's point of view. Topics perceived as "issues" in reviews—such as single parenthood, race relations, verbal violence, gay parents and the child's gender identity—are part of the only world the child character has ever known. In and of themselves, they do not constitute "problems" that need to be solved; readers are simply invited to share the experiences of the child protagonists as their days unfold. The child protagonist is often the narrator. For instance, in Lindenbaum's first book, *Else-Marie och småpapporna*, Else-Marie lives in a high rise apartment with her mother and seven small Daddies who play with her, sleep beside her at night and, in the Swedish version, share her bathtub along with her mother. (In the English version, this picture was removed and replaced with a picture of Else-Marie and her mother sitting in an armchair reading together surrounded by the seven small Daddies.) The Daddies are all identical and stereotypical: they wear suits and carry briefcases. For an adult reader, it is clear that the Daddies represent Else-Marie's longing for her father, and the way she maintains his presence through her imagination. The text is never overt; Else-Marie simply states what her small Daddies do and allows the reader to take pleasure in the impact of the imagined miniature Daddies on the young child's life. And it is a happy life. The obviously tired but kind-hearted mother and her daughter have a warm and loving relationship. Åsa Warnqvist offers an alternative interpretation; she suggests that it is the first polyamorous picturebook in its depiction of a child raised in a family where there are numerous father figures.

The books we focus on in this letter are from a series of books about Bridget (Gittan in the original Swedish). These books about Bridget depict a child who wants to obey the rules. She is a single child who is neat and organized. In each of the books in the trilogy,

Bridget encounters animals that force her to confront her fears and tolerate messiness and rule-breaking behavior. Starting with *Gittan och Gråvargarna / Bridget and the Gray Wolves*, followed by *Gittan och fårskallarna / Bridget and the Muttonheads*, *Gittan och älgbrorsorna / Bridget and the Moose Brothers*, and most recently *Gittan gömmer bort sig / When Bridget Forgot*, Bridget uses her common sense to cope with unruly anthropomorphised animal characters. In the first book, Bridget is separated from her day care group while they are out on a walk. Lost and anxious about how to find her way back, Bridget finds herself surrounded by a pack of wolves. Summoning her slightly bossy, no-nonsense attitude, Bridget teaches the wolves how to play games. In the second book she finds some over-heated sheep stranded on an island. She shears the sheep and teaches them how to swim back to the shore. The third book reveals Bridget's growing sociability, as she now wants a sibling. Her wish is oddly fulfilled by the arrival of three moose. The moose brothers cannot play lego or draw, and there is plenty of scatological humor to enjoy before Bridget manages to persuade the creatures to leave her in her peaceful and tidy bedroom. In the most recent book, she gets the chance to be with babies, but unfortunately drops one of them and hides in the closet, where she again confronts wild animals that do not mind being thrown around.

The daycare center Bridget attends also appears in two picturebooks with queer characters: *Lill-Zlatan och morbror raring / Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle* and *Kenta och barbisarna [Ken and the Barbie dolls]*.¹ There are also humorous links between the books (Mini Mia reads *Bridget and the Gray Wolves* to her uncle when he is sick in bed and Kenta wants to play with Bridget and her two friends). Although the protagonists play only minor roles in each other's books, regular readers of Lindenbaum's books will be able to see how their characters come across from another child narrator's perspective. When the characters from the other books view Bridget, Mini-Mia, and Kenta, they are simply background characters; their animal taming techniques, cross-gender play, or queer family arrangements do not call undue attention.

The first of this pair of picturebooks to incorporate queer characters is *Lill-Zlatan och morbror raring / Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle* in which the obviously gay characters are the child's much adored Uncle Tommy and his partner, Fergus. The American reviews of this book focus on this same-sex relationship, but fail to comment on the female protagonist's own queerness, which we shall address shortly. The other picturebook in the pair also interrogates the child's gender identity by celebrating



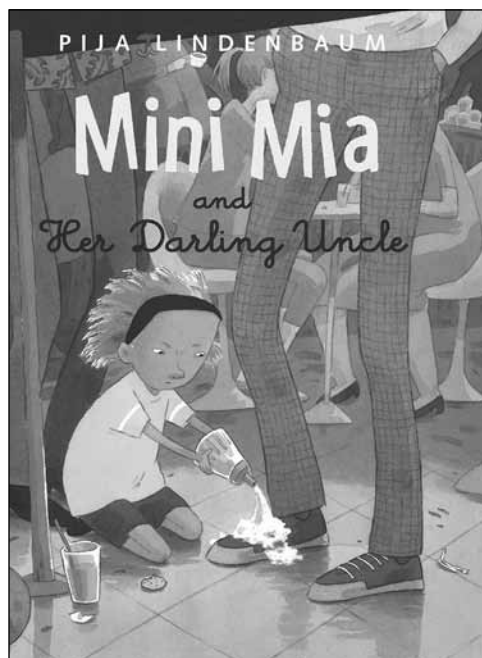
a male protagonist who takes pleasure in cross-gender play. In *Kenta och barbisarna*, the protagonist is a boy who likes to play with Barbie dolls and dress up in skirts.

In *Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle*, the “problem” faced by the young child is her jealousy over her uncle’s new partner. While her parents are away on holiday, Mini Mia is sent to stay with her Grandmother and her three boring (= heterosexual) uncles who work in offices, eat meatloaf, and go to watch soccer games (without taking their niece along!). Then her Uncle Tommy, a hairdresser, comes home from his travels bringing with him a dead snake in a jar for his niece. When Tommy’s partner, Fergus, turns up, Mini Mia is furious that she must share her darling uncle. She reacts by pouring sugar on Fergus’s shoes, throwing the toilet paper in a sink full of water, and pretending Fergus does not exist. Harmony resumes when Mini Mia discovers that Fergus can do the only thing that Tommy cannot: play soccer.

In the English translation, some of Lindendbaum’s more subtle commentary on gender matters is lost. In both versions, the protagonist’s real name is Ella, but the name that appears in the title is the pet-name given to her by her darling Uncle. In Swedish, she is Little Zlatan, named after Zlatan Ibrahimović, the Swedish striker who has played for Juventus and Internazionale amongst others, and whose transfer to Barcelona involved the second highest transfer fee in soccer history. In the English version, Ella is named after Mia Hamm, the American striker who scored more international goals (158) than any other player in the history of soccer. The translation of the name may simply be regarded as a form of adapting the name to suit the

Anglophone readers’ knowledge of the world of soccer. What is lost in the translation, however, is Ella’s own refusal to subscribe to gender norms.

Ella is a queer child. In their introduction to *Curiouser*, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley observe that “There is currently a dominant narrative about children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual” (ix). Lindendbaum’s picturebooks challenge this assumption, and reveal the queer child who “exists as a child” (Bruhm and Hurley xiv). Although Ella clearly identifies as female and is proud that she is “old enough to go into the women’s locker room by myself” (*Mini Mia* 19), many of her behaviors are stereotypically male. Her favorite pastime is playing soccer; she is delighted to receive a dead snake in a jar as a gift, and she wears brightly colored sporty shorts and t-shirts. Although on one occasion she does wear a flower in her hair, for the most part she enjoys allowing her



darling Uncle Tommy to dye her spiky, gender-neutral hair a different color every day. Her transgression of gender norms also extends to her gaze. Whilst changing into her swimsuit in the women’s locker room, she gazes at the nude body of a solidly built woman. The reader is able to observe the woman’s naked behind and Ella’s smile as she gazes off the limits of the page to where the woman’s breasts would be. As with Tommy and Fergus’s mutual desire, Ella’s gender transgressions are never mentioned in the text. Nevertheless, the use of the male name in the Swedish version signals that her family recognizes and accepts her masculinity. When the boring uncles come home from their professional soccer match, they applaud their niece as she becomes

the soccer world champion, which signals their approval of her gender bending behavior. Moreover, the use of a masculine name signals that Ella embraces this mixed gender orientation: this may not simply be a phase she is passing through. In the English version, Ella's passion for soccer is fixed to a female trajectory: she wants to become a woman soccer player not a male. She is more easily read as simply being a tomboy.

A girl-child adopting stereotypically male behaviors and clothing does not challenge the status quo as much as a boy-child engaging in stereotypically female forms of play and wearing female clothing. Females performing in masculine ways do not challenge the idea that the masculine is the desired form. A male choosing to give up such privileges and adopting feminine behaviors and dress codes is an affront to the patriarchal order. When a boy leans toward girlhood or vice versa, the effect is that both categories are, in fact, questioned. In *Kenta och barbisarna* [Ken and the Barbie dolls], Lindenbaum places the queer child in the center of the narrative. Without the distraction of a (gay) darling uncle and his new partner to divert the reader's attention, the child's own queerness is foregrounded (and this may explain why the book is not available in English).

On the cover Kenta is depicted sitting on the top of a slide holding a stick as if it were his penis. At the bottom of the somewhat shoe-fetishically designed slide, three girls—Mira, Agnes and Bridget—are playing with Barbie dolls. Kenta's desire to enter into the world of Barbie culture is very evident. Inside the book, three children observe Kenta playing soccer. They all seem to be boys but a Lindenbaum reader will recognize one of them as Ella/Lill-Zlatan/Mini Mia. Thus

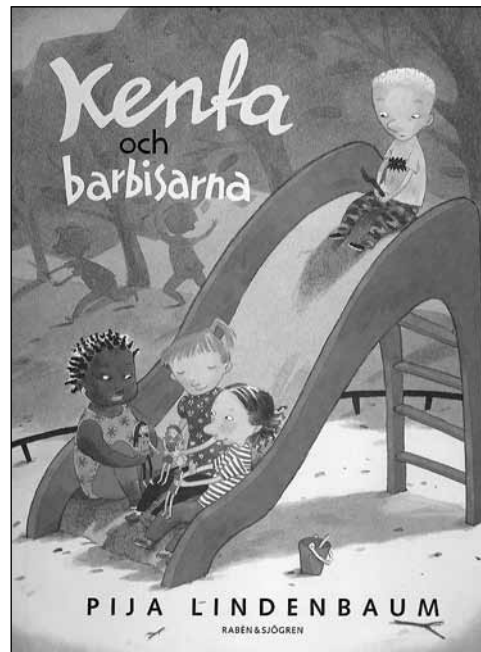
the Lindenbaum reader interprets her as a girl, although she is visually depicted as unisex. Her gender transgressions pave the way for Kenta to explore the limits of his own gender. Kenta is clearly bored by his role as a soccer player and wants to play with Barbie dolls and dress up as a princess. His access to a girl community and Barbie doll play at daycare is policed by Mira, Agnes, and Bridget who determine the rules of "correct" Barbie play. Despite their stereotypical toys, these girls are not typical "girly girls." On

the contrary, these strong, independent girls decide on the arbitrary rules of correct Barbie play, and in doing so guard their feminine community from the transgressive boy character. They are not nice, obedient, or meek; it is Kenta who represents these traditionally feminine traits. The girls laugh when Kenta says that his doll is named Barbie: "Can't be called that, says Mira." The girls' Barbie dolls give birth to a meatball; "Mine had a fish stick, Kenta claims" to complete the rather obvious reference to the

shapes of gendered body parts, but the girls say that that is impossible. The girls make the rules together, and Kenta has to persevere in order to be accepted into their world.

Once Kenta has finally managed to gain access to world of Barbie doll play, it gradually evolves into a princess dance. There is a brief moment when Kenta quite literally returns to the closet by hiding in the toilet when the other boys enter the playroom. But the story ends with a dance where girls and boys are together, and concludes with everyone playing soccer still in princess outfits. Kenta is able to maintain a masculine identity alongside his more stereotypically feminine side.

The shift from the first person narration in *Mini Mia* to omniscient narration in *Kenta och*



barbisarna means that readers are kept at more of a distance from the queer boy than they are from the queer girl. As a result, readers have much less insight into Kenta's mental world and it is harder to empathize with his desires or his emotions. Both children, however, foreground what Kerry Mallan terms *gender dilemmas* (in an allusion to Judith Butler's *gender trouble*). Gender dilemmas constitute underlying contradictions, problematizations, and subjective anxieties located in polarizing and popularizing discourses (Mallan 2). Within children's literature competing gender discourses are a sign of the immense difficulty of changing gender relations. Lindenbaum's books may play safe by employing techniques such as omniscient narration, but in her presentations of the queerness of pre-school children her works have a cutting edge.

Notes:

1. *Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle* is available in English, but *Kenta och barbisarna* is available only in Swedish, German and Polish. The citations from *Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle* are from the English translation, and the citations from *Kenta och barbisarna* are our own translations from the Swedish.

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Identifying Effective Trans* Novels for Adolescent Readers



Definitions of masculinity and femininity are expanding every day, and adolescent transboys are finding more creative ways to discover, and be, themselves. As their ranks grow, I imagine, they'll look for even more reflections of who they are and are becoming. And their teenage friends, who know them or wonder about them, need and often crave a way to understand their experience. That is why I'm so excited and hopeful about *I am J* and about the many books that others are writing about themselves and their friends right now. (Author's Note to *I am J* by Cris Beam, 2011)

From deciding whether to come out to their families or asking out a prom date, the protagonists of transgender adolescent literature can provide reassurance to trans* readers struggling through puberty. Effective transgender young adult novels provide a safe space in which readers can consider the arbitrary nature of gender or find a place to validate their frustrations as they

by MARY CATHERINE MILLER

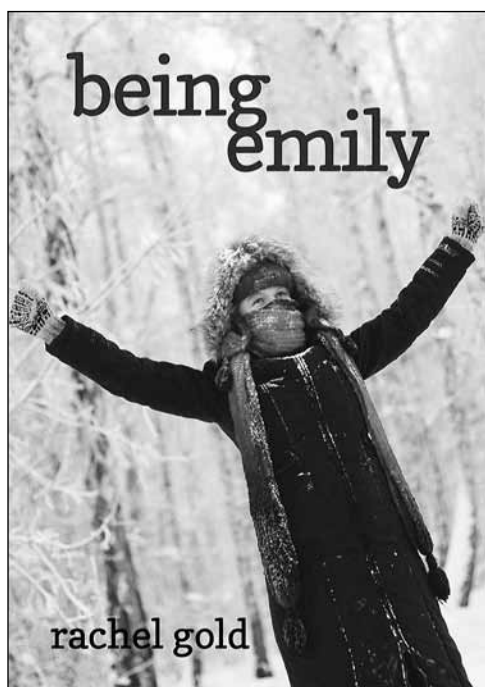


Mary Catherine Miller is a doctoral student at the Ohio State University, where she teaches undergraduate courses in children's and young adult literature. She earned her MA in English from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research interests include LGBTQ YA literature, comics, and multimodal literacies.

navigate the adolescent experience. Providing LGBTQ novels in classrooms and libraries has proven to be an effective way to inform students and promote discussions on gender and bullying in secondary schools. Beyond opening avenues for conversation through in-class discussions, adolescent literature fosters the development of individuality and provides coping mechanisms for personal conflict. By reading transgender literature and participating in conversations concerning gender variant roles and sexualities, students are able to more accurately articulate their own gender and sexuality as they move through adolescence.

Over the past decade there has been a steady increase in adolescent literature with transgender characters or trans* themes, though the canon is still in its formative stages. When there so few books to choose from, it becomes difficult to critique a genre for fear of limiting resources and accessibility for a group of readers who desperately need these novels. Despite these limitations, uncovering what makes an effective trans* novel is crucial to determining how to provide quality literature to gender-variant adolescents. Young adult novels with transgender protagonists are often criticized for being problem novels that revolve entirely around the struggle of a character to transition—in this sense, transitioning is painted as a “solution” to the problem, thus ostracizing readers who may not wish to fully transition and also making the assumption that one’s adolescent experience is entirely rooted in gender. Transgender adolescent literature needs to be moved out of the problem novel category and populated with complex characters who are defined by more than just their identity as transgender. While trans* readers need reflections of their own feelings about gender and personal identity, they also need to see the daily activities and mundane everyday experiences that comprise the human condition.

Publishing more trans* novels is hardly helpful if the characters and experiences do not match the lived experience of trans* youth. Here, I’ve provided an annotated bibliography of what I consider to be the most effective and realistic trans* adolescent novels:



Anders, Charlie Jane. *Choir Boy*. Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press, 2005. Print.

Berry, a twelve-year old on the edge of puberty, struggles with his desire to keep his voice from changing—so he tries to castrate himself and begins taking hormone pills. Berry does not actively identify as MTF; however, the story offers an interesting look at an adolescent understanding and developing gender identity.

Beam, Cris. *I am J*. New York: Little Brown, 2011. Print.

One of the few successful FTM adolescent novels, *I am J* is one of my favorite books in the genre. J identifies as both Jewish and Puerto

Rican, a breath of fresh air the sea of white trans* protagonists that make up the genre. As J comes out as trans* to his family (and subsequently must leave home), he struggles to pass in New York City and integrate himself into the LGBTQ scene at his new school.

Blacker, Terence. (2005). *Boy 2 Girl*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2005. Print.

Sam moves to London and starts the school year pretending to be female as the result of a dare from his friends. This novel is told through the voices of various characters, giving the reader multiple lenses from which to view Sam's identity as he continues to cross-dress to hide from his alcoholic father. While Sam does not identify as MTF, the novel can be used as a great starting point for readers who are looking to enter the trans* adolescent genre.

Gold, Rachel. *Being Emily*. Tallahassee, FL: Bella Books, 2012. Print.

This well-written narrative tells the story of Emily, a MTF high-schooler who must cope with coming out to her parents and friends. Claire, her religious girlfriend, grapples with her faith and what it means to be transgender. While some of the terminology used is a bit outdated, the book is sensitively written and is a quick and optimistic read for LGBTQ readers.

Goodman, Alison. *Eon: Dragoneye Reborn*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2008. Print.

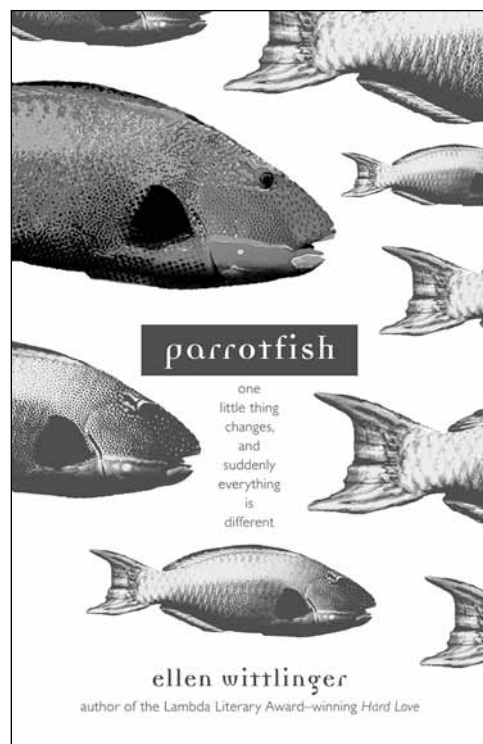
In this fantasy novel, the protagonist Eona must masquerade as a male character in order to become a Dragoneye, one of the powerful men who get power from their connection to dragons. Eona is a strong female protagonist who prompts discussions of gender and identity, but does not identify as FTM, though the book would make a great bridge for fantasy lovers interested in the trans* genre.

Hyde, Catherine Ryan. *Jumpstart the World*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Catherine Ryan Hyde's *Jumpstart the World* follows Elle, a female protagonist who cares for an older male mentor, Frank. However, Elle is shocked when she learns that Frank is transgender and the story follows Elle's ways of coping with this revelation.

Katcher, Brian. *Almost Perfect*. New York: Delacourte, 2009. Print.

Logan meets the new girl at school and wants to date her; however, Sage won't tell Logan why she is forbidden to date anyone, until she reveals that she identifies as transgender. Logan feels betrayed by Sage and must learn to cope with his feelings. Like *Jumpstart*



the World, Almost Perfect focuses more on the cisgender protagonist's feelings rather than the experiences of the trans* character and some readers critique it because Logan reacts negatively to Sage being trans*.

Peters, Julie. Anne. *Luna*. New York: Little Brown, 2006. Print.

Luna is told through the eyes of Regan, a female protagonist who has a brother, Liam, who reveals his true identity to Luna and begins coming out as MTF in high school. While *Luna* is considered one of the "first" trans* YA novels with widespread popularity, the novel is told from Regan's perspective

and focuses more on her process of coming to terms with her brother's identity.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2007. Print.

Grady identifies as FTM from the first pages of the novel and *Parrotfish* is one of those rare trans* novels that balances the "coming out" saga with the everyday, high school experiences of the protagonist. Grady makes and loses friends and his family struggles to accept their son's identity and adolescence. Wittlinger weaves in realistic high school events and Grady's passion for screenplays to create a well-rounded trans* novel.

Nataberne is an imaginative story that draws the reader into a world of fun, fancy, and some crazy primates. Bea is a young girl who enjoys bedtime because it allows her to visit the world of her friends, the night monkeys. These characters resemble members of her family and community, and Bea learns more about her mother, father, siblings and friends through this dream realm than she ever could have imagined. Sitoy's narrative creates a world where silly fancy become amusing reality, and Brogger's illustrations draw the reader in while remaining unique and original. The text itself is detailed and clever, so the story will resonate best with young children who are capable of following advanced vocabulary, but still enjoy a picture book. The story offers characters who have the ability to escape from the mundane activities and unfair restrictions of every day life to teach the primary character Bea, and the reader, to enjoy the freedom of childhood as long as possible, and to realize that appearances are not always what they seem. An interesting and eccentric story full of creativity and imagination, *The Night Monkeys* will send the reader off into a dreamland of strange creatures and even stranger actions, where adventure seems to lurk around every corner.

Tia Lalani



Lakambini Sitoy
Nataberne
{The Night Monkeys}
Illus. by Lilian Brøgger
Copenhagen: Forlaget
Hjulet, 2010
44 pages

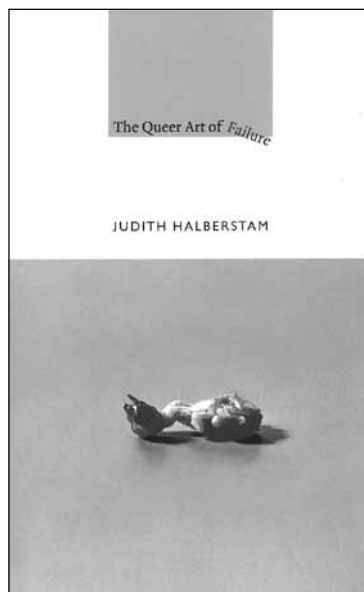
ISBN: 9788789213637
(Picture Book, Ages 6-10)

The Queer Art of Failure. Judith Halberstam. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011. 187 pages.

In the claymation film *Chicken Run* (2000), the feminist activist chicken, Ginger, attempts to rouse her sisters in the coop to join the revolt. In the midst of a rousing speech, she declares “We either die free chickens, or we die trying.” Rather than rising to the allure of such binary thinking, the “stupid” chicken, Babs, asks “Are those the only choices?”. Judith Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure* is a celebration of such “stupidity” that point to other ways of thinking, and so other ways of being. Her study of what happens when one chooses not to be a success (becoming Babs-style free chickens), and opts out of the thinking that demands that “you are either with us or you are against us” is a queer study in the widest sense of the term. It is queer in the way that it rejects binarisms such as male-female and homosexual-heterosexual, and it is queer in way that it revalues the subjects it uncovers.

The Queer Art of Failure is a provocative, hilarious, and insightful study of cultural manifestations of failure that practices exactly what it preaches. Adopting “low theory,”—“a kind of theoretical model that flies below the radar, that is assembled from eccentric texts and examples” (16)—Halberstam does not impose an established theoretical perspective onto her varied materials, but rather builds out from the animated films, art work, kitsch, and pop culture to develop not so much a thesis as an impression of what the potential of counter-intuitive thinking, silliness, forgetting—in short, *failure*—might have to offer, not as a pause on the way to success, but rather as a celebration of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms “middle ranges of agency” (13): the kinds of non-extreme power most of us have.

Animated films for children form much of the source material for Halberstam’s provocative argument. A well-established queer theorist best known for her insights into sub-cultures, this is Halberstam’s first adventure into the realm of children’s film studies. Given that her goals include a celebration of the trivial, I was not initially well-disposed towards her argument, but it is hard to stay angry with a theorist who cites SpongeBob SquarePants as an authority figure. Halberstam argues that “To captivate the child audience, an animated film cannot deal only in the realms of success and triumph and perfection” (27). Children are doomed to failure in a world that identifies success in adult terms, and so if a work is to appeal to the child, then it must celebrate the middle ranges of agency, the kinds of power children have at their disposal. Unlike more traditional studies of children’s empowerment, Halberstam is not seeking out examples where children subvert the adult-child binarism to emerge triumphant, even if only for a carnivalesque moment. Instead, she shows how films such as *A Bug’s Life* (1998) and *Bee Movie* (2007) can celebrate collective achievements over those of the individual:



an alternative way of being which rejects individualist, capitalist culture by simply opting out.

The book is not exclusively a study of animation films and childhood. It includes a chapter addressing the fetishized place of Nazi uniforms in gay culture, as well as sections of chapters on nature films, sport photography, and the work of artists who celebrate failure. The disparate nature of the material contributes to her argument that positive, creative forms of failure are present in all areas of humanity, but we have been trained to look away, and to ignore these other ways of being.

This is not a study for pompous academics, but to be fair, it is also not a study for the novice in the field of queer studies. The irony, the tongue-in-cheek humor, and the carnivalesque play with established modes of academic inquiry will be lost on those who are new to the field. But for those of us who have become somewhat jaded, who have lost sight of the radical potential of queer theory so loudly feted in their end of term marking, Halberstam breathes hope even as she celebrates failure. She challenges us to think not only about *what* we do as scholars, but also *how* we do it. Her counterintuitive arguments open fresh horizons not only in relation to the children's films she analyses, but also in her rigorously intellectual rejection of academic form. I should add that it is also a rollicking good read!

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Kokkola, Lydia. *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality: Sexy Sinners and Delinquent Deviants*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013. 236 pp. ISBN 9789027201553.

A welcome exploration of the representation of adolescent sexuality in young adult fiction, Lydia Kokkola's *Fictions of Adolescent Carnality: Sexy Sinners and Delinquent Deviants* fills a gap in contemporary scholarship

with its specific focus. Reading a corpus of close to 200 young adult novels and short fiction written in English since the Second World War, this book provides an analysis of the ideology of adolescence and its intersection with the representation of carnality. Kokkola presents three basic premises: first, that adolescence is constructed as a time of angst in order to exalt adulthood and preserve the notion of the innocent child; second, that Anglophone culture is much more fearful of teen-aged sexuality than its European counterparts; and third, that sexuality is the rigorously-policed boundary between adulthood and adolescence. Through her chapters on sexual empowerment, pregnancy, queerness, bestiality (metamorphosis into animals primarily), and sexual abuse, Kokkola finds that adolescent carnality is variously punished, policed, or problematized. The strength of Kokkola's investigation rests in her identification of the power of the reader to read queerly, to "read back and produce counter narratives," as she does in her study (214). While adult writers construct these stories where teens are anguished over sexuality, and then punished for it, Kokkola suggests that the reader potentially offers an intervention in that representation.

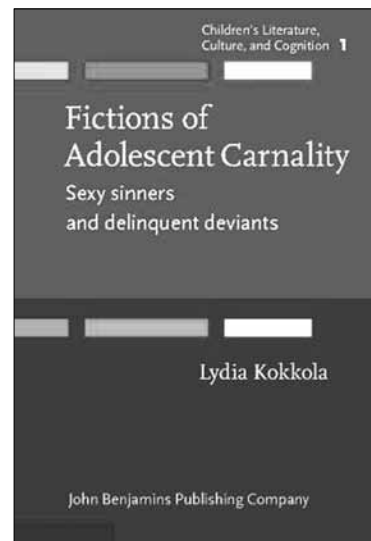
This book breaks new ground by offering a full-length, sustained exploration of the contentious topic of literature for young people and sexuality. Kokkola's writing style and sense of humour makes this work infinitely readable as well. She inserts parenthetical asides where she admits to her actual, non-academic response to something, for example, and she writes with a personality that is delightful. When she discusses the representation of crisis focused on adolescence, she writes: "Well, excuse me Chicken Licken, but I'm having a hard time working up a sense of anxiety about this particular crisis" (209).

As I read this book, I found myself growing increasingly disturbed that Kokkola did not engage with issues of race, and indeed, race only came up when the texts presented non-white characters. Kokkola does confront race, if it is late in the book. She writes, "So far, my enquiry has treated race as though it were a neutral category, although it clearly is not" (174). She points out here that her corpus contains mostly white characters and that, when racial or ethnic minorities appear, they are problematically connected to victimhood.

I would be remiss, as well, if I did not mention the numerous typos that pepper the pages of this edition. I'm not certain on whose shoulders the responsibility for the missing words, misspellings and sentence structure problems should rest; however, it seems to me that John Benjamins might consider employing a more attentive copy editor and proofreader.

That said, this book is a delightful read and an important contribution to the study of sexuality and of young adult fiction. I highly recommend it.

*Laura Robinson,
Royal Military College of Canada*



Books on Books

Compiled and edited by
CHRISTIANE RAABE
and JOCHEN WEBER



Christiane Raabe is the director and
Jochen Weber is the head of the language
sections of the International Youth Library
in Munich, Germany.

An allen Fronten: Kriege und politische Konflikte in Kinder- und Jugendmedien [On all fronts: Wars and political conflicts in media for children and young adults]. By Ingrid Tomkowiak [et al.]. Series: *Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendmedienforschung*; 3. Zürich: Chronos, 2013. 407 pages. ISBN 978-3-0340-1161-7.

Every day, television news feature reports on violent conflicts, civil and international wars. Children and young adults are also always among the victims of these confrontations, a topic literature for children and YA often addresses and attempts to come to terms with.

The representation of wars and conflicts in children's and YA literature is at the heart of this collection of essays. Films and computer games as well as autobiographical accounts from around the world are investigated alongside novels, picture books, and graphic novels to analyze "different narratives of war and political conflicts" (9). The results are presented in three sections: "War as topos," "Images of war," and "War history/War stories." They explore the various functions of space and place, the visual staging of wars, as well as narrative strategies used to convey war experiences.

In the introductory essay, Gabriele von Glasenapp identifies three phases for the representation of war in Western literature: The Pro-War-Phase (1870-1945) is closely linked to contemporary wars, inspired by salutary promise, and ends with WWII. This enthusiasm is followed by a retrospective phase, which eventually leads to the more critical representations taking hold in the 1970s: strongly individualized one the one hand or parabolic narratives on the other denounce war as the "ultimate perversion of existence" (25).

Caroline Roeder's contribution "Childhood landscape as warscape" heads the section "War as topos." Roeder analyses the symbolic coding of landscapes and shows how intertextual references can open up spaces of refuge. Christina Ulm illustrates how the space of a hermetic island can gain metaphorical meaning and serve to stage the conflict between "savage" and "civilized." Following these spatial takes on the symbolic representations of conflict, Susanne Riegler and Gabriele Scherer demonstrate how war is transformed into a "metalinguistic metaphor" in their essay "Grammar is a gentle song."

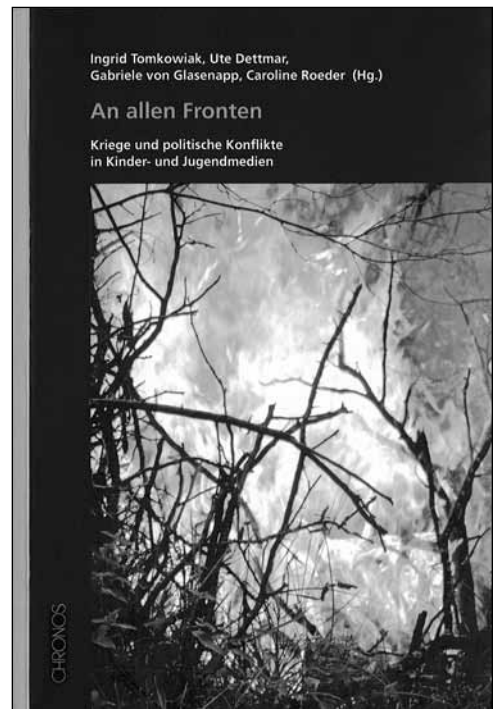
The section "Images of war" begins with a piece by Mareile Oetken, who uncovers the subversive potential of picture books: As the title "Images of (Un-)Masking" suggests, she argues that pictures deconstruct representations of power. Ute Dettmar takes a closer look at the computer-animated films "A Bug's Life" and "Antz," which cleverly expose the ideological mechanisms behind war. She demonstrates how anthropomorphized animals are used to illustrate the opposition between individual and collective, and how film-specific techniques work to create characters, to build complexity, and to allow for ambiguity. Felix Giesa reads American graphic novels as indicative of the state of soul of U.S.-Americans

following 9/11: With the initial conviction of invincibility slowly eroding, images no longer celebrate heroism or “salvation” after 2005; instead, they envision a prolonging of the suffering, to the point of “painlessness” (152). Benjamin Beil argues that the simulated and fictive images of war generated by computer games are strongly influenced by the war imagery disseminated by the media. Even though computer games are generally sophisticated enough to critically reflect these inter-medial connections, most games opt for uncritical representations and exploit the war-inherent special-effects factor.

In the first essay of the third section, “War history / war stories,” Bettina Heck compares different fictional and factual representations of the epic Battle of Teutoburg Forest, which pitched Germanic tribes against the Romans in 9 CE. Sebastian Schmideler focuses on the military propaganda of WWI, more especially on the related “literary [...] mobilization” (216) disseminated via flyers and booklets; he comes to the conclusion that indoctrination permeated all levels and covered the entire oratorical spectrum, from silver-tongued patronizing to aggressive rhetoric. In a close reading of Thea von Harbou’s novels, Andre Kagelmann shows how the motto of “delightful instruction” was meant to teach women and children the “proper” attitude towards war. Rüdiger Steinlein contrasts a Fascist text and one of the few leftist-pacifist texts from the period of the Weimar Republic, and Julia Hoffmann presents the anti-war novels of Maria Gleit.

The autobiographical account of children from Stalingrad, which Oxane Leingang has collected, testify to deep traumatization; at the same time, the process of remembering helps the victims come to terms with their past and reveals an uneasy ambivalence toward propaganda and heroic myths. Rolf Annas analyses “how very different childhood experiences of war and society are shaped in multicultural South Africa.” Changeful histories and multicultural make-ups lead to different evaluations of wars. Sarolta Lipóczy reads two diaries written during the time of the Hungarian Uprising (1956), which openly addressed the same ideological conflict later considered taboo. Veljka Ruzicka, Blanca Ana Roig, and Isabelle Leibrandt focus on conflicts in Spain. While Ruyicka and Roig ask how the Spanish Civil War is represented in the literatures of other nations, Leibrandt narrows in on emotional processes in three more recent texts, which also treat the 2004 Madrid train bombings.

How can literature help readers overcome their trauma, this is the question asked by Thomir Engler, Tamara Turza-Bogdan, and Andri-jana Kos-Lajtman, who analyse narrative strategies in the Croatian novel *Krik*. In the closing article, Heidi Lexe shows how 9/11 and the “war on terror” inspire literary dystopias such as Cory Doctorow’s novel “Little Brother” (2008), which imagines how a society, following a terrorist



attack, transforms itself into a totalitarian police state.

The many contributions to “On all fronts” dress a multifaceted, differentiated portrait of the representation of wars and conflicts in literature for children and young adults. The international scope helps widen the perspective and draws attention to wars and other violent historical events, which have been forgotten or are less familiar to German-speaking readers. The analyses show that the literary strategies for describing conflicts resemble each other, just as do their intentions: While the glorification of war and fighting dominates between the turn of the twentieth century to WWII, this ideology has largely lost its hold – except in many computer games. But because conflicts and war remain omnipresent, literature continues striving to convey and denounce the perversities of war and, at least in part, to help cope with them and to alleviate their traumatic effects.

Ines Galling
International Youth Library

The Child Reader, 1700-1840. By Matthew O. Grenby. Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 320 pages. ISBN 978-0-521-19644-4.

Whereas collectors of historic children’s books are usually on the lookout for pristine copies with as little traces of use as possible, Grenby, professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies at Newcastle University, is thrilled when he opens a defaced book, full of scribbles, dog-ears, blackened or even cut-out passages. For these reviled marks, he sensed, could be the missing clues to a fascinating story: the yet untold story of the child reader from the dawn of children’s literature to the end of what historians call the long eighteenth century.

In fact, Grenby deciphers this “graffiti,” ranging from “barely discernible, small pencil marks in margins that may indicate lessons to be learned” (25), and ownership inscriptions, drawings, inserted passages of text all the way to pages blackened with commentary, as a yet unexploited source of reading history. According to him, these marginalia can reveal children’s attitudes towards books, and show the use children—and their teachers/parents—made of them. To make these marks speak, he carefully combines and corroborates them with census data, autobiographies, letters, fictional, and pictorial scenes of reading. The study is based on a sample of 5,282 books from four major collections of historical children’s books: the Osborne Collection, the Cotsen Children’s Library, the Children’s Book Collection, UCLA, and the Hockliffe Collection of Early Children’s Books.

This highly readable book is divided into seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapter two looks at the owners of

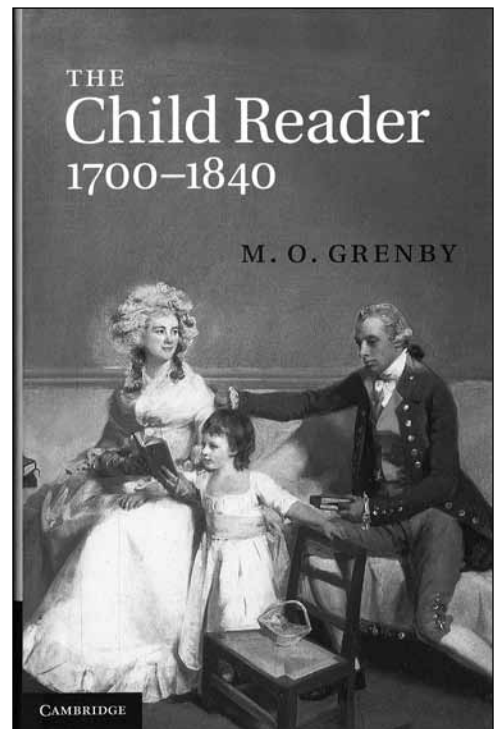
the children's books by age, gender, location, class, and religion. Not surprisingly, most books were owned by middle and upper class children; but Grenby finds much evidence for reading across class, age, and gender categories, which savvy publishers and concerned educators were trying to establish.

Following this sociological and demographic profile of book-owners, chapter three focuses on the number and kinds of books children owned and/or read. Apart from a growing number of titles especially targeting the child reader, all-age books, as we call them today, constituted the main fare for most: the Bible, popular literature, such as romances, chapbooks, and fairytales, poetry and drama also reveal that print for children was still very much part of an oral culture.

Chapter four analyses the modes of acquisition and asks who bought and chose the books the children were to read. A great number of books was given to children as gifts and tokens of affection, perhaps not surprisingly most often by aunts and mothers. Just like today, parents acted as gate-keepers and carefully selected books based on what their marketing promised. Parental control was all-important, which explains why circulating libraries, instead of being welcomed, were decried. Clara Reeve, for example, feared them as “great evil” since “young people are allowed to subscribe to them, and to read indiscriminately all they contain” (162).

This parental policing extended to the use children made of the books, which is the topic of chapter five. When, how often and how long did children read their books? The sources nuance and partly undermine the narratives of the history of reading. The increasing number of books, so one main tenet, was changing reading habits from intensive reading of a few books to extensive reading of a mass of books. Even though some children were reading more than before, intensive reading remained common practice among young readers; and while solitary, silent reading became the norm for adult readers, children generally read in closely monitored family or school community settings.

Chapter six focuses on the attitudes of young readers and reveals that children often cherished their books for very different reasons from the ones which had led the adults to acquire them. The combined evidence shows children to have been volatile readers, who appreciated books much more for their material and symbolic than for their textual qualities, using them to build houses or simply taking pride in their ownership and the honor it conferred. As readers, children responded emotionally rather than intellectually to books. While parents had an instrumental view of reading (to strengthen the morals and pave the career of their offspring), children found ways of appropriating the books in their own way.



Overall, “The Child Reader” offers a welcome mix of scholarly erudition and entertaining popularization. Grenby’s lucid style and a succinct summary at the end of each chapter as well as the many wonderful examples and judiciously selected illustrations make this not only an instructive but also a truly delightful read, and thus truly attuned to the credo of enlightened literature.

Nikola von Merveldt
Université de Montréal

La littérature de jeunesse migrante: récits d’immigration de l’Algérie à la France [Migrant children’s literature: Immigration narratives from Algeria to France]. By Anne Schneider. Series: *Espaces littéraires*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2013. 419 pages. ISBN 978-2-336-29200-7.

With this monograph, the French scholar and vice director of the Charles Perrault Institute, Anne Schneider, presents a seminal work on a neglected theme. The ambivalence of the title is fully intended: “Migrant” can qualify either “children’s literature” or only “children.” Who or what is actually migrating? Are only the (predominantly young) protagonists “migrating” in these stories? Does Schneider focus exclusively on the literary treatment of the experiences and consequences of flight, exile, immigration and emigration between Algeria (and other Maghreb states) and France? Or does she also explore other types of transgressions, imaginary or literary ones?

Do the analyzed narratives cross over the blurred boundaries of childhood, youth, and adulthood? Do the literary texts entice readers to rethink the at times arbitrary delimitations between genres, between the so called “national literatures” and “intercultural literature,” or between literature for children, adolescents or adults? Does the potential “literary migration” of texts lead to a new evaluation or new use of these texts and, if so, what are the consequences in society, the publishing landscape or in school?

These are some of the questions guiding the study, which is based on a corpus of 175 Francophone works. 116 of these cover a wide spectrum of genres from the realm of children’s and young adult literature, 59 are all-age or adult books. Schneider includes works by Leila Sebbar, Azouz Begag, Farid Boudjellal, Brigitte Smadja, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Mouloud Mammeri as well as “classics” of adult literature whose texts “migrated” to the young adult sector, such as novels by Mouloud Feraoun and Mohammed Dib. Alongside the literature of Maghreb authors, the voices of authors with a “Pied-noir” (people of French and other European ancestry who lived as privileged settlers in French North Africa)

or “Harki” (descendants of Muslim French loyalists and of soldiers fighting in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence) background are also included.

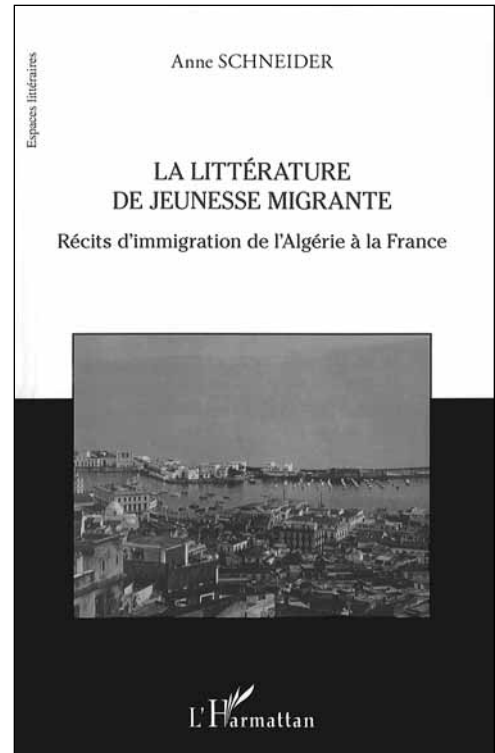
Schneider distinguishes four large thematic categories: travel literature, literature on topical themes, the Algerian War of Independence and Emigration/Immigration. Well aware of the fact that there is overlap due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the books, she analyses and compares their themes, discourses, and narrative strategies as well as their ideological, sociological, and historical implications. One of the recurring questions is how these books stage childhood and adulthood with their idiosyncratic twists, turns, and ambivalences.

The first and third sections are particularly noteworthy. In the first one, Schneider gives a succinct and highly perceptive overview of literary representations of flight, exile, war, and the loss of a home(land), and—drawing on psychological research on resilience—pays particular attention to the transformations and positive appropriation of these experiences. Regretfully, the predominance of Harki and Pied-noir authors in the chapter on the Algerian War somewhat skews the picture. While it may be important to give voice to marginalized groups, a complex and differentiated approach to this topic, which remains a taboo in France and Algeria to this day, has to include the perspective of Algerian or Maghreb authors on this traumatic event, which continues to cast a large shadow. It is also not clear why Schneider analyses texts for children by former French development workers and soldiers in this section.

The third section focuses on educational activities based on texts of “Migrant youth literature” in primary and high schools. It offers concrete, well-structured suggestions for class activities, including lesson plans and model activity sheets. This material is sure to encourage teachers to use these literary texts in class despite curricular or temporal constraints.

With her study, Schneider has laid the ground for a critical discussion of the topic “Intercultural literatures of France” and has provided thought-provoking answers to the question of how the political, cultural, and social relations between Algeria and France are represented in literature for children and young adults. Despite its limitation to works published between 1971 and 2007, the extensive bibliography at the end is excellent.

Sibylle Weingart
International Youth Library



Ehon Sakka to Iu Shigoto [Working as picture book creators]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2012. 183pp. ISBN 978-4-06-217584-5.

This book introduces readers to contemporary Japanese illustrators of note. The subtitle, “Why I Became an Illustrator of Picture Books” is important in setting the mindset for this book’s purpose. Using a journalistic style, interviewers ask illustrators questions of interest to readers who are curious about how they work, get their inspiration, and create their books. Were there particular ways in which their childhoods led to becoming an illustrator? How did they become interested in children’s book illustration work? Are they exclusively picture book illustrators, or do they also engage in other work? How do they find balance in their lives? This volume provides a collection of earnest searches for illustrators’ stories. In many instances, what may have appeared to as an uneventful childhood had episodes that later influenced books being created; learning about such episodes leads the book’s readers to further understandings of the creators and creations.

The profiles of illustrators in the book are arranged by Japanese alphabet with surname followed by personal name. Hence, the order of the chapters is: Abe Hiroshi, Arai Ryōji, Ishii Kiyotaka, Oikawa Kenji, Kitayama Yōko, Komine Yura, Suzuki Kōji, Takabatake Jun, Takeda Miho, Tashiro Chisato, Hasegawa Yoshifumi, Horikawa Rimako, Matsunari Mariko, Miura Tarō, Murakami Yasunari. It is important to note that with the exception of a few who have been featured in earlier books on Japanese illustrators, most are introduced here as contemporary working illustrators who are currently making notable contributions across a wide range of illustration styles.

Space allows introducing only one illustrator here; but one example offers a flavor of the rest. Arai Ryōji, winner of the 2005 ALMA (Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award) reveals a personable side as he reflects on his upbringing with classic “youngest child syndrome.” The language is informal, and it’s easy to imagine him speaking. Arai also reveals that his work stems from his multisensory awareness: he says that he can feel and smell air, and that he finds music emanating from his compositions of bold colors. He reveals his penchant for skipping classes in art school as a college freshman from the countryside, and instead, taking weekly pilgrimages to a children’s bookstore. He describes his surprise at finding Margaret Wise Brown’s *Goodnight, Moon* and the ensuing attraction to the beautiful world of picture books where tableaus could have words added, create a whole story in one artistically designed and beautifully bound book, and be sent to viewers all over the world. As a student with limited means, he frequently immersed himself in piles of books on the floor of the store, wallowing in his finds. His first purchase was *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Lionni. The photographs in this chapter on Arai communicate much about him,



with casual portraiture revealing a smiling artist in his atelier. A Gumby rubber figure introduces a book on Cy Twombly, a Charlie Brown doll sits on a shelf. There is paint here and there—bits of bright colors on the table, floor, music amplifier, and lamp. A somewhat cluttered wall resembles an orderly bulletin board of pinnings: folk motifs, dolls, cards, and toys. These elements provide an indication of his character and a peek into his world.

This book is primarily targeted for reading by the general public rather than a professional audience. The language, snapshot photography and layout design, as well as the book's physical characteristics are all designed with this audience in mind. However, academics may also be interested in the “back stories” and insights that offer personal glimpses of the people behind the books. In these sections, the illustrators contemplate their lives and offer their philosophical views. The interview questions are not about credentials or academic backgrounds. Rather, they focus on ways in which individual illustrators have established the foundations upon which they have honed their skills. Some are full time creators of picture books whereas others do other types of illustration work, or design work as well.

The book is written in Japanese, but the names of the illustrators are written in Roman characters, artistically placed at the bottom of each illustrator's opening spread, allowing non-Japanese readers to identify the person being portrayed. This highly visual book includes numerous photographs not only of the illustrators, but also of their studios and close-ups of their working environments, as well as some images of a handful of books by each illustrator, offering visual insights even for those not able to read the Japanese text. The layout is scattered with countless tidbits of information, presented as “words of wisdom” from the featured illustrators.

What makes this book especially important is that the sharing of insights presented straight from each illustrator, in their own words. It establishes familiarity with a sense of intimacy and makes for enjoyable reading. This is not a book of picture book theory, but it includes insights about illustrators and their books that are worthy of being studied and analyzed.

Bookbird has many kinds of readers. We believe this book will be of general interest to those interested in understanding illustrators; however, it will be of particular interest to those who are, or who desire to be, creators of picture books for children. The lives of illustrators are presented as joyful and appealing, and it will certainly delight the fans of the featured illustrators and has the potential to raise awareness of contemporary Japanese illustrators of note.

Fumiko Ganzenmüller, freelancer for the Japanese section, was formerly head of the Asian Language Section of the International Youth Library.

Junko Yokota, Professor Emeritus at National Louis University and Director of the Center for Teaching through Children's Books in Chicago, Illinois, formerly held a research fellowship at the International Youth Library.

That's Life joins a series of outstanding scientific literacy books for children by Robert Winston. It explores life and its rich diversity around major themes of contemporary biology including the cellular basis of life, the evolutionary history of biological diversity, ecological interactions and adaptation. Biological diversity and processes are illustrated with an impressive selection of engaging biological stories, from extreme places and organisms, to the unforeseen life hiding in familiar places. Clever, instructive and fun illustrations and a wealth of great photographs bring the author's writing to life in a very appealing and accessible book. Winston achieves the delicate balance of writing about biological concepts with remarkable clarity without oversimplifying them and portrays scientific inquiry with integrity, presenting what we do not understand as exciting challenges.

Doris Audet



Robert Winston
That's Life
 Dorling Kindersley, 2012
 96 pages

ISBN: 9781405391504
 (Illus., 7+)

Some books tell us a story; others cherish one. Some writers create a plot, others an atmosphere. Aka and Koprucu are two fresh authors creating a magical atmosphere through words and colors. They tell us about two lovers, Day and Night, whose contradictory natures laid an ambush to separate them. The adventure starts one night, as the Moon suddenly falls from its location making a voice "similar to the voice created as a sad bird stops chirping" and leaves behind an abyss "as black as burned forests." Since Night is terribly scared of the dark, he goes to Day who is "as bright as the day." As Night and Day find the Moon and place it where it belongs, the readers float among the pages as if flying in navy skies. When Day and Night part making promises for tiny reunions, you regret that you have to leave this sweet atmosphere and come back to the real world... a farewell to this naïve couple until the next twilight. The lyrical wording, harmonized by sentimental illustrations and clever graphical games (an actual hole created by the fall of the moon) make this book a piece to be valued by those who are after turning the impossible to possible.

Tülin Kozikoglu



Serkan Aka and
 Ayşe Pinar Koprucu
Lunar Eclipse
 Illus. Serkan Aka
 Istanbul: Iletisim Publishing,
 2012
 40 pages

ISBN: 9789750510281
 (Illus. 8+)

QUE TODOS SIGNIFIQUE TODOS
 may everyone really mean everyone

34 Congreso Internacional de IBBY
 IBBY International Congress
 Ciudad de México Mexico City
 10-13 Sep 2014

A leer
 IBBY MÉXICO

iBBY
 INTERNATIONAL BOARD
 ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

International Children's Book Day 2014: Imagine Nations Through Stories

Every year on or around 2 April activities to celebrate International Children's Book Day take place around the world as we remember Hans Christian Andersen and his wonderful world of stories. Since 1967 every year an IBBY National Section sponsors the special poster and message to the children of the world. In 2014 the materials are from Ireland. Author Siobhán Parkinson has written a letter to the children telling them that reader is just as important to the story as the writer. Siobhán is not only one of the most prominent authors for young people in Ireland, but also an editor, translator and the first Laureate na nÓg (Children's Laureate of Ireland). The poster was designed and made by artist Niamh Sharkey, the second and current Laureate na nÓg. Copies of the poster and message can be order from IBBY Ireland at www.ibbyireland.ie or from secretary@ibbyireland.ie

Compiled and edited by
 ELIZABETH PAGE



Elizabeth Page is
 IBBY's Executive Director

Letter to the children of the world:

Readers often ask writers how it is that they write their stories – where do the ideas come from? From my imagination, the writer answers. Ah, yes, readers might say. But where is your imagination and what is it made of, and has everyone got one?

Well, says the writer, it is in my head, of course, and it is made of pictures and words and memories and traces of other stories and words and fragments of things and melodies and thoughts and faces and monsters and shapes and words and movements and words and waves and arabesques and landscapes and words and perfumes and feelings and colours and rhymes and little clicks and whooshes and tastes and bursts of energy and riddles and breezes and words. And it is all swirling around in there and singing and kaleidoscoping and floating and sitting and thinking and scratching its head.

Of course everyone has an imagination: otherwise we wouldn't be able to dream. Not everyone's imagination has the same stuff in it, though. Cooks' imaginations probably have mostly taste in them, and artists' imaginations mostly colours and shapes. Writers' imaginations, though, are mostly full of words.

And for readers of and listeners to stories, their imaginations run on words too. The writer's imagination works and spins and shapes ideas and sounds and voices and characters and events into a story, and the story is made of nothing but words, battalions of squiggles marching across the pages. Then along comes a reader and the squiggles come to life. They stay on the page, they still look like battalions, but they are also romping about in the reader's imagination, and the reader is now shaping and spinning the words so that the story runs now inside his or her head, as it once did in the head of the writer.

That is why the reader is just as important to the story as the writer. There is only one writer for each story, but there are hundreds or thousands or maybe even millions of readers, in the writer's own language, or perhaps even translated into many languages. Without the writer the story would never be born; but without all the thousands of readers around the world, the story would not get to live all the lives it can live.

Every reader of a story has something in common with every other reader of that story. Separately, and yet in a way also together, they have re-created the writer's story in their own imagination: an act that is both private and public, individual and communal, intimate and international. It may well be what humans do best.

Keep reading!

Siobhán Parkinson

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INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR SOUND PEOPLE

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INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY

APRIL 2ND 2014



IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards 2014

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award continues to be of great importance to IBBY members and shows a wide appreciation of the numerous reading promotion programmes around the world that are working toward bringing children and books together. The Award was first given following the 20th IBBY World Congress held in Tokyo in 1986 under the name of the Rising Sun Award. In 1989 it was decided to change the name to what we know today: the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award. The generous support and constant interest that the Asahi Shimbun newspaper company has shown IBBY and its work is very much appreciated throughout these years and we sincerely thank them.

The following projects have been nominated by the IBBY National Sections for the 2014 Award. The winners will be announced at the IBBY Press Conference at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on Monday, 24 March 2014. The Awards will be presented at the 34th IBBY World Congress in Mexico City on Friday, 12 September 2014.

Nomination submitted by	Candidate
IBBY Armenia	International Book Art Festival: Back to Book, Yerevan
IBBY Canada	The Children's Book Bank, Toronto
IBBY France	ATD Quart Monde: Street Libraries, International
IBBY Germany	Room to Read, International project
IBBY Greece	The Travelling Library: Knowledge Beyond, Piraeus
IBBY Italy	Le Biblioteche di Antonio, Rome
IBBY Mexico	Palabra en la Montaña, Tepoztlán, Morelos
IBBY Peru	Voice Keeper Children of the Forest, Lamas
IBBY Poland	The All-Poland Tactile Book Library, Lublin
IBBY Slovenia	The Reading Badge Crossing Boundaries to all kinds of Minorities, National project
IBBY Sweden	PRAESA, Cape Town, South Africa
IBBY USA	Literacy Project, Lake Titicaca, Peru
IBBY USA	The Sullivan Literacy Center, Valdosta, GA
IBBY Venezuela	BBVA Provincial Foundation Papagayo Programme, Caracas

IBBY President joins IBBY Iran for 50th birthday celebrations

At the end of February 2013, the Iranian National Section (The

Children's Book Council) hosted the President of IBBY Mr Ahmad Redza Ahmad Khairuddin and his wife Ms Esrizalin Binti Subohi for one week as they attended the 50th Anniversary of the Foundation of CBC/IBBY Iran and visited Tehran and Isfahan. During their stay, besides visiting cultural sites, they visited NGOs related to children's literature and the promotion of reading and met different groups at various events. Redza's talks about the future of IBBY, the Malaysian publishing and children's literature as well as the promotion of reading in his country, were well attended. The culminating point of the trip was attending the 50th Anniversary Ceremony, where he read a message from IBBY to an audience of more than one thousand. He then helped Ms Noushin Ansari, CBC Secretary General, present the Annual Book Awards.

Ali Boozari



From left to right: Esrizalin Binti Subohi, Redza Ahmad Khairuddin, Yahya Maafi (Member of CBC EC), Noushin Ansari (Member of CBC EC & CBC General Secretary) and Touran Mirhadi (Member of CBC EC & Executive Secretary of The Iranian Encyclopaedia for Young People)

IBBY Poland: The Milestones 1973-2013

It was in 1973 when a group of Polish writers and publishers, most of them connected with the largest and oldest children's publishing house, Nasza Księgarnia (Our Bookstore), made the first contact with IBBY. It was not easy; the "iron curtain" was still hanging and foreign contacts, even informal, were not welcomed. However, thanks to the determination, persistence and diplomacy of small group, Poland joined IBBY in 1973 and the authorities paid the annual membership fee.

From the very beginning, IBBY Poland was busy with international activities: articles about contemporary Polish children's books were published in *Bookbird*, books were nominated for the IBBY Honour List, members attended their first IBBY congress in Athens in 1976, Poland hosted the 1980 International Children's Book Day (the poster was designed by Jerzy Czerniewski, the message was written by Wojciech Żukrowski), and in 1982 Zbigniew Rychlicki received the Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration.

In 1988 IBBY Poland established the most important and leading award for books for young people in Poland under the name the Book of the Year Award, which continues today. Since 1999 the award has two categories: literature and illustration.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Janusz Korczak in 1989, IBBY Poland set up the International Janusz Korczak Literary Prize, which was given annually until 2000. Thanks to that award many world famous books have become known in Poland.

The award-winning illustrator Zbigniew Rychlicki was also the art director in Nasza Księgarnia and was responsible for the Polish selections for the BIB from the start of the Biennale. In 1971 Andrzej Strumiłło received Grand Prix for the book *Narzeczonny z morza* (Fiancé from the sea). Since that early success, Polish illustrators have been

awarded with many other BIB honours: Grand Prix, Golden Apple, and BIB Plaques.

Up to 1990 IBBY Poland operated as a committee with no formal membership. Everything changed after the 1989/1990 political situation altered Europe. IBBY Poland had to be formally registered and it needed an official tax office number. With this new opening up, the newly elected board decided that it was very necessary to make the IBBY logo well known and invited all people working in the children's book society to join. To officially register an organization it was necessary to have 15 members to make the initial submission, this soon grew to be a powerful membership of 70, and over time the number has been increasing.

As soon as the International Youth Library began publishing their selection White Ravens in 1997, IBBY Poland has submitted Polish books; the most successful year was in 2013 when five books were included in the catalogue. Every catalogue of the IBBY project Outstanding books for Children with Disabilities has included a Polish title!

In 2003 Poland was guest of honour at the Bologna Book Fair and since then Polish prize-winning publishers, writers and artists are presented at the Polish national stand.

Our newest book award is called the Dong, after the nonsense poem *The Dong with the Luminous Nose* by Edward Lear, and has been given by IBBY Poland to publishers since 2007. The jury, comprising children and adults, focuses not only on native Polish books, but also on translations. Among the recent prizewinners are the translations of *Looking for Alaska* by John Green and *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak.

In 2006 the Polish nomination for the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award the reading campaign "All of Poland Reads for Kids" was presented with the award at the IBBY Congress in Macau.

As IBBY Poland celebrates its 40th anniversary it continues to be active looking for new members, sponsors and partners so that it can continue to move forward with new projects and ideas.

Maria Kulik
President of IBBY Poland

IBBY Regional Meetings

CANA (Central Asia to North Africa): "Bringing Books and Children Together" Sharjah UAE, 21-23 April 2013

Every child has the right to become a reader. It is our duty to ensure that all children, whether rich or poor, healthy or unwell, and irrespective of the country they call home, can enjoy the benefits of reading. This was the central theme of the first ever IBBY Conference for the Region of Central Asia to North Africa.



Prizewinners of the 2012 Book of the Year Awards

The issue of reading promotion is one that has been receiving increasing attention on the international scene, and with good reason. No child should have to live his or her life in darkness. And yet far too many children all over the world face darkness in its various forms on a daily basis, physical, emotional, social, or intellectual. If we are to empower these children to step out of the dark and into the light, we must work together to show ways to help them find their way out of the shadows and what greater illuminating force is there in this world than the guiding light of knowledge.

When we talk about bringing children and books together it is about so much more than just getting children to read. By giving our children access to books we are, in fact, providing them the tools needed to light their own paths. Between the pages of a book children can broaden their horizons learn new and exciting things. Books can spark their imaginations, bring them comfort when the world seems bleak, and give them

dreams to aspire to.

This is why the IBBY CANA Conference is such a landmark event. The unfortunate truth is that the CANA region has seen more than its fair share of darkness. Economic adversity and political unrest have taken their toll on the region and, as is so often the case, it is the children that have been paying a very steep price. Far too many of the children in the CANA region are growing up with poverty, war, and disillusionment as their childhood companions. Literacy rates are alarmingly low among adults in many parts of the region, which means that many of the children have no one to teach them or show them how to make a better life.

This however, was not always the case. There was a time when the traditions of literature and reading and writing were held in high regard—when books were cared for and protected at such festivals and literary gatherings as the Souq Oukaz. It is this tradition that IBBY CANA has started to revive.

The first IBBY CANA conference saw people and organizations that, in one way or another, are working to bring books and children together. They gathered together in Sharjah to find real solutions to the challenges the children's literature sector in this region faces. Authors, illustrators, publishers, librarians, academic institutions, and other experts in the field of children's literature, all came to work collectively and coordinate their efforts to solve problems and find creative answers.

The topics under discussion were diverse and the presentations and panel discussions touched on a variety of issues from "Promoting a culture of reading among children in the region – challenges and triumphs" to "Writing for young adults: How do we reach this tough age group?" We looked at how the Arab world is perceived in "Intercultural dialogue and tolerance in children's books" and debated the impact of the recent political upheaval in "Has politics found its way into children's books?" We delved into the riches of the region's past and explored ways to capitalise on our region's vast heritage in "Folklore and oral history: Transporting spoken traditions to the written page." We also gave recognition

to the amazing work that is being done by so many dedicated individuals and organizations throughout the region in the session IBBY National Sections in the CANA Region: From simple beginnings to inspiring successes. Professionals from all over the region and further afield took a critical look at the way in which school programmes are influencing children's reading habits during "From reading as a chore to reading for pleasure: Reading promotion in schools" and discussed the pressing need for greater investment in books for children who are visually or otherwise challenged in "Every child has the right to become a reader: Books for children with disabilities."

Marwa Al-Agroubi
UAEBBY President

Reflections from the 1st IBBY Asia-Oceania Regional Congress, 23-26 May 2013, Bali Indonesia

INABBY had never been in doubt about its ability to lead and organize the 1st IBBY Asia-Oceania Congress! An enthusiastic 120 attendees from 19 countries participated and INABBY successfully raised the spirit of friendship among the delegates, both of IBBY members and others who had travelled from Australia, Austria, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Finland, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA, as well as a massive 50 participants from Indonesia.

We are proud that in just seven months after IBBY world congress in London we managed to plan and hold this regional congress. The theme of this 1st congress, How to Strengthen Asia-Oceania IBBY and INABBY's strong commitment, with its support and cooperation from the Society for the Advancement of Children's Literature (SACL), has inspired other national sections in the region to continue the IBBY Asia-Oceania regional congress in the coming years: 2015 IBBY Malaysia and 2017 IBBY Thailand. During the congress there were 14 presentations of main theme and 29 presentations of sub-theme: Knowing your neighbours. INABBY also provided cultural events from Bali

and storytelling from different countries when children from around the island joined us. We hope that all participants will have good memories that will remain for a long time and with them bring a positive spirit to all IBBY friends from all over the world.

*Murti Bunanta
President of INABBY*

In Australia, IBBY has been referred to as the “foreign affairs department” of children’s literature. This was certainly true at the 1st Asia Oceania Conference in Bali with delegates from so many countries attending. There were many highlights. As an author living in a remote area, the conference provided a chance to hear inspirational speakers and catch up with friends from across the region. Having discussions in person is more valuable than communicating via keyboard! There was a wide range of presentations and book talks at the conference. I felt honoured to represent IBBY Australia and also to present a paper on my University of Western Australia PhD topic of “Anthropomorphism in Children’s Literature.”

The IBBY conference was a great way to meet people who share a passion for children’s literature. Despite some differences, we have so much more in common. Storytelling was a central focus and I was interested to learn more about the importance of oral stories, dance and folk tales, particularly in communities with a more limited book buying culture than Australia. A direct result of presenting sessions was an invitation to attend conferences in other regions. I hope to be able to do this. I would like to thank the WA Department for Culture and the Arts, IBBY Australia and the University of Western Australia for their support in making my trip possible. The conversations and experiences from my time in Bali will enrich my work for many months to come.

*Dianne Wolfer
Australia*

We were three representatives from the Brunei English Language Teachers’ Association (BELTA): an editor cum writer, a drama curricular writer and a literacy education officer. Though each of us had our own expectations of the IBBY congress, all of us returned to Brunei all inspired and buzzing with ideas! It was a surreal experience for us; meeting well-published authors and illustrators as well as the amazing people dedicated to the development of children’s literacy, literature and education; the fact that these people were from our region, made all the sharing sessions much more relevant and significant. What impacted us also were all the noble IBBY operations in the various different Asian and Oceania nations. Having been teachers and been working with children from all walks of life, we know well enough the limited access some children have to books. We also know too well, the many stories of people whose successes are nearly always related to a book. Therefore, it is exhilarating to learn that there is a movement such as IBBY working towards getting books to children. We are proud to be the first

Bruneians to attend an IBBY Regional Congress and we were honoured to be given the privilege to introduce Brunei to IBBY.

*Hana Valerie Abdul Muiz
Brunei*

This conference was a great opportunity to meet children's literature specialists, writers, illustrators, educators, publishers, librarians, storytellers, journalists, activists, children's book promoters and cultural enthusiasts from all over the world.

Different topics of studies, children's literature research projects, book talks, ideas of cooperation, story telling, were extremely important to inspire us, and to help us in improving our work. With "Book Start Thailand", folktales from India, Indonesia, books from Japan, Korea and many others countries, we think that new national section such as Cambodia has many things to learn. Meetings with those people will help IBBY Cambodia to learn of more ideas to develop its activities, such as:

Creation of the first International Children's book Library in Cambodia;

Finding authors/illustrators/publishers who would provide free training allowing IBBY Cambodia to find just the place and participants!

*Socheata Huot
IBBY Cambodia*

Most congresses of children's literature concentrate on books. Therefore, it was refreshing to attend the 1st Asia and Oceania Regional IBBY Congress in Bali, where also oral culture was taken to heart. During the congress delegates were invited to listen to storytelling from different corners of the world. It was fun to hear a folktale from Angola told by Danish Hans Laurens and Caribbean tales told by Margaret Read MacDonald from the USA, watch performances given by the local team, as well as the Indian storytellers from the world classic Panchatantra. But, the most impressive story-telling session for me was *wayang kulit*. It was my first experience of a Balinese shadow puppet theatre. The Dalang (puppeteer) Bagus Bharatanatya animated all the puppets giving them different voices and noises. Although the play was performed in the local language, the international audience really enjoyed it, probably because the Dalang gave references to famous international people, such as lady Gaga, in a play connected to Hanuman from the Indian epic the Ramayana.

Jo Henwood, an Australian storyteller, told a very tragic story during her storytelling workshop. She pointed out that today in Australia only Indigenous Australians are allowed to tell their stories. According to Jo outsiders have no right to tell Aboriginal stories.

Etsuko Nozaka's presentation about Kamishibai performances from Japan is worth of mentioning because Kamishibai is not well known in every country. It can be classified somewhere between storytelling and story reading, but even though it was born in Japan in 1930s, for me it

seems that it has remote relatives in Indonesia: *wayang beber* is a Javanese theatrical form where the Dalang tells stories that are drawn into huge bark scrolls.

*Niklas Bengtsson
Finland*

The Indian delegation, consisting of ten members of Indian BBY, was greatly impressed by the well-organised congress hosted by Indonesian section of IBBY in the picturesque setting of Bali, under the capable leadership of Murti Bunanta and her young team. It was a great bonding experience for the delegates of the Asia-Oceania region and beyond. During the conference, there were concrete suggestions on how to strengthen the Asia Oceania IBBY region. The congress highlighted the culturally rich traditions of the people of this region and opened avenues of mutual acceptance and greater appreciation for the national sections of the region. Although no joint initiatives were started, the ground has been set for such events in future in the spirit of cooperation. We came away with a better understanding of each other's aspirations and limitations.

*AWIC
India*

It has been great getting to know all the people at the 1st Asia and Oceania Regional IBBY Congress in Bali. My strong expression was of INABBY's organization's youthful energy. Most of the staff were very young and positive, which makes me wish that more young Japanese people could become involved in our events.

*Kimiko Matsui
Japan*

Like a "romantic" volcano: this experience was new in many senses: it was my first time as president of KBBY to meet members of other sections; it was the first regional congress for many participants from Korea; it was the first time any of us had visited Bali.

INABBY warmly welcomed us. When we checked into the hotel and sat at the breakfast table, we were miserably tired. So it felt like a

breath of fresh air when INABBY president and congress organizer Murti Bunanta so warmly greeted us. We soon realized how exciting regional congress like this can be. Break times were always busy with people talking and sharing their ideas. One participant from Korea was actually shocked at this scene! As a scientist who writes non-fiction for children, she was not used to this sight of genuine exchange of ideas. According to her, no scientists are ever willing to talk to one another, for striking up conversation always puts them at the risk of becoming preys to hours of lecture in fields they are not familiar with!

Indeed, genuine interest in others and passion for communication are what made this conference exciting. It may be said that the self-same interest and passion have formed and sustains IBBY. No one who is devoted to children and books can hesitate to share and communicate and this is what will make, not only the future, but the present interesting as well. I find this truth evident in the fact that all those devoted in the field of children's book are ever optimistic and bright. I remember the beautiful volcano of Bali that I saw before we left the city. My scientist friend called it "the most romantic volcano" she has ever seen. And for me it was this conference that was like a romantic volcano: a volcano in which people's passions erupted.

*Inae Kim
IBBY Korea*

Malaysian IBBY was represented by six members at this three-day congress, which was filled with a sharing of knowledge done in a relaxed atmosphere of enjoyment and friendship. I personally enjoyed all the sessions I attended. There were great presenters sharing their knowledge on the subjects of their choice, and great storytelling performances. I met old friends, made new friends as well. There were all wonderful people, talking with such enthusiasm and passion about children's books and activities. We discussed books, stories, and activities both during sessions as well as during breaks.

Congratulations and well done Murti and her Congress team. I love Bali.

*Alimah Salam
IBBY Malaysia*

My visit to the 1st IBBY Asia-Oceania Regional Congress was a very personal event. My first visit to Bali was in 1975 when three friends and I started a long journey throughout Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Northern Europe. My memories of this visit were transformational in that I came across a people who were friendly, artistic, and at peace with themselves in their environment and traditional lifestyle. Going back to Bali in 2013 was my second visit. Much has changed, but there was one aspect that is a constant: the warmth and friendliness of the people. This was evident in the wonderful learning and networking that took place during the congress. I recall the magic of storytelling by Jo Henwood and Hans Laurens; the depth of knowledge of Diane Wolfe telling us about talking animals in children's literature; the generosity of Sylvia Vardell when she gave me a copy of the amazing textbook on poetry for children; the warmth of the Indian delegation and their enthusiasm for children's books; the wisdom and joyfulness of the delightful Margaret Read MacDonald; the intriguing conversations with teachers/educators from the USA; the enthusiasm of Rosemarie Somaiah in sharing the stories she has authored and the truly inspiring story told by Murti Bunanta of the power of books for children with cancer in Indonesia. Often though, there is the unexpected. For me, it was the talk by Bruce Granquist from Australia as he shared his study of how Balinese tell their stories through painting and the visible differences to Western design principles. For 38 years I have had this wonderful framed picture of Balinese traditional life in my living room and his talk has given me fresh insight into this incredibly rich art form as well as joy in the coming together of memories of the past and the pleasures of the present.

John McKenzie
New Zealand

A trip to Bali to mingle with people from around the world who love children's books: it was an offer I could not refuse! Though I was busy setting off on another trip when I received the information about the 1st Asia-Oceania Regional IBBY Congress, I shot out my registration form right

away. I had only one concern – I do not usually write academic papers. There are a few reasons why, but one important reason is that I am a storyteller, not an academic and I love doing what I do too much to give it up to write about it from a theoretical framework. That does not mean that I do not reflect on my practice. Reflection is a significant part of my process. However, Murti Bunanta assured me that all I needed to do was to present my experience as a storyteller in Singapore. It turned out to be everything I imagined it to be. From the wonderfully gracious welcome us at the hotel, to the care taken at every stage of the congress to ensure the comfort of the guests, to the logistical arrangements that saw that every session ran on time, it was a conference that was worth attending. What was particularly exciting and valuable for me were the storytelling sessions that featured the local traditions of storytelling. In Singapore we are reinventing oral storytelling for contemporary society after the traditional forms seemed to have almost completely faded out. So, to be able to enjoy the performances by Indonesian artists, young and old, who come from unbroken vibrant living traditions was a particular joy. It was an honour and a great pleasure to meet so many wonderful people from all the other countries.

Rosemarie Somaiah
Singapore

Whenever I feel depressed, or feel gloomy, I'll try to remember the atmosphere of the first Asia-Oceania IBBY Regional congress.

Etsuko Nozaka
Japan

Winners Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) 2013

GRAND PRIX

Evelyne Laube and Nina Wehrle, Switzerland for
Die Grosse Flut (The great flood)

BIB Golden Apple

Rong Yu, China for *Yun Duo Yi ang de Ba Ge*
(Cloud mynah bird)

Nobuhiko Haijima, Japan for *Kikoeru?* (Can you hear that sound?)
 Chiki Kikuchi, Japan for *Shironeko Kuroneko* (White cat, black cat)
 In-Kyung Noh, South Korea for *Kokkeelee Anjeoseewha Paekgaeur* (Mr Tutti and the 100 water drops)
 Irma Bastida Herrera, Mexico for *La lectura, elogio del libro y la alabanza del placer del leer* (Reading, compliment and praise the book's reading pleasure)

BIB Plaque

Stella Dreis, Germany for *Grimms Märchenreise* (Grimm's Tales)
 Renate Habinger, Austria for *Hier gibt es Löwen* (Here there are lions) and *Schlafjetzt, kleines Kamel* (Sleep now little camel)
 Daniela Olejníková, Slovakia for *V melónovom cukre* (In watermelon sugar) and *Trinást'* (Thirteen)
 Ángela Cabrera Molina, Spain for *Hamelin*
 Iraia Okina, Spain for *Ilargia esnatu da* (The moon has woken up)

Honorary Mention for a Publisher

Maria Christania, Indonesia for Maria Christania: *Jerry Giraffe and the Giant Butter Cookie*
 Quilombo, Chile: *Cosmogoní*
 Amanuense, Costa Rica for Jaime Gamboa, and Wen Hsu Chen: *El cuento fantasma*

Honorary Mention for Innovation

Fakulta Umění Univerzity Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, Czech Republic for Martin Raudenský: *Darmo Mluvit*

Children's Jury Award

Gi-Hun Lee, South Korea (The tin bear)

Other Honours

Peter Uchnár was honoured with the Lord Mayor of Bratislava's award.

Murti Bunanta (Indonesia) and Heather Trebaticka (Slovakia) were honoured as The Ludmila Podjavorinská Plaque laureates 2013. The prize was established in 1972 as an award for individuals, groups or institutions from home or abroad that have made an important contribution to the promotion of Slovak children's literature in other countries.

The Jury for BIB'13 comprised Austra Avotina (Latvia), Murti Bunanta (Indonesia), Yusuf Gajah (Malaysia), Agnes Gyr (Rwanda), Yukiko Hiromatsu (Japan), Eun Young Cho (South Korea), Svjetlan Junaković (Croatia), Arja Kanerva (Finland), Igor Piačka (Slovakia), and Mingzhou Zhang (China).



Mingzhou Zhang receiving the BIB Apple on behalf of Chinese artist Rong Yu, Zusana Jaroslova BIB General Secretary, and Murti Bunanta receiving her Ludmila Podjavorinská Plaque



The 2013 jury discussing one of the entries.

In Kummallisuuksien käsikirja [The book of oddities], Mauri Kunnas, a famous Finnish author and illustrator, leads the readers to an incredible journey throughout every kind of mystery from ancient to modern times, from the Earth to the open space. This picture book, wonderfully illustrated and full of humorous elements like most Kunnas's works, offers legends and short stories from all over the world. Even though the book contains many spooky characters (vampires, skeletons, and fire dragons), they do not frighten young readers since characters have funny and ironical features since, such as vampires survive well on tomato soup, strawberries, or red beets. This book might be considered a "crossover" for different reasons. First, it contains a large variety of mysterious and supernatural elements that might appeal an audience of both children and adults. Second, since most illustrations used here are taken from many Kunnas's previous works (e.g. funny ghosts, vampires with terrible toothaches, a sleepwalking goat, Easter Island statues, and UFOs), they might be familiar also to adults who read those books as children. The last part of this picture book boasts activities in which readers can test their knowledge, and therefore their reading comprehension, on the oddities of the world.

Melissa Garavini



Mauri Kunnas
Kummallisuuksien käsikirja
 Illus. Mauri Kunnas
 Helsinki, Finland:
 Otava, 2011
 80 pp.

ISBN 978-951-1-25207-8
 (Picturebook, age +3)

Would you like to write for IBBY's journal?

Academic Articles

ca. 4000 words

Bookbird publishes articles on children's literature with an international perspective four times a year (in January, April, July and October). Articles that compare literatures of different countries are of interest, as are papers on translation studies and articles that discuss the reception of work from one country in another. Articles concerned with a particular national literature or a particular book or writer may also be suitable, but it is important that the article should be of interest to an international audience. Some issues are devoted to special topics. Details and deadlines of these issues are available from *Bookbird's* web pages.

Children and Their Books

ca. 2500 words

Bookbird also provides a forum where those working with children and their literature can write about their experiences. Teachers, librarians, publishers, authors and parents, short articles discussing the ways in which you have worked with children and their literatures, or have watched children respond to literature are welcomed. Articles concerned with a particular national issue are of interest, but should be written in a manner that appeals to an international audience.

Postcards and Letters

ca. 300 or 1000 words

Bookbird publishes reviews of both primary and secondary sources. Brief 'postcards' (ca. 300 words) on individual works of children's literature, or extended 'letters' (ca. 1000 words) introducing the work of a particular author or illustrator are welcomed. In addition to the full publication details, please comment on whether the works are available in translation.

For further information, please contact: Roxanne Harde, Email: rharde@ualberta.ca

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION, 10/1/12

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F. Total distribution	367	381
G. Copies not distributed	126	90
H. Total	493	471

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. William M. Breichner,
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INTERNATIONAL IBBY CONGRESS

MAY EVERYONE REALLY MEAN EVERYONE

Reading as an inclusive experience September 10-13, 2014

Hosted by:

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Central Topics:

1) The idea of inclusion

Inclusion is a process by which we create environments that recognize and accept the differences among people and respond to them by offering everyone the experience of coexisting in a cooperative, supportive and respectful manner in contexts where the heterogeneity of the group is considered an asset, not a limitation. This process is based on philosophical principles that value, embrace and celebrate diversity.

So that *May everyone really mean everyone*, we must examine the mechanisms of exclusion and the physical barriers that have existed, as well as the social and cultural factors that have limited the access and participation of certain groups, in order to deconstruct them, demolish them and consolidate the full social participation and belonging of all, with equal opportunities.

- Which are the theoretical and philosophical foundations of inclusion?
- Inclusion from a literary perspective. Access. Belonging. Participation.
- Inclusion in creative writing, illustration, publishing and the promotion of literacy.
- Proposals and experiences that involve inclusive actions.
- Primary barriers and mechanisms of exclusion.
- Causes of exclusion. Who is excluded in different countries and regions? How and why?

2) Inclusion in children's and young adult literature

Literature is the art that allows us to reflect more deeply on life, on ourselves and on others. There are elements within literary works that make that acknowledgment possible, however, some groups are not found in them. Moreover, literature that includes minorities is often excluded from publications and canon. This is why we consider it important to reflect on the following questions:

- What are the implications for the construction of the identity of a person or social group when they are not found in literature or are stigmatized?
- What is the reaction to not finding images of them, to not be present in the everyday events that construct literature?
- How can inclusive literature be promoted without forcing the creative freedom of the author and without turning the work into a mere transmitter of a message that is outside his/her art?
- Access of excluded groups to the appropriation of the literary action as readers and as writers. Efforts and actions required to achieve this. Challenges, experiences and proposals.
- Literature of minorities: self-recognition and recognition of others.

3) Literature as a hospitable house

As diversity is essential in all art, literature constitutes a space that offers us the opportunity to recognize and find ourselves. There are rich and meaningful stories about people who have been displaced or have migrated, been exiled or affected by some form of exclusion, and who have found refuge, self understanding and purpose in the literary experience.

- What are these experiences and what narratives have been recorded?
- Efforts aimed at creating alternative forms of reading: Braille, audio books, sign language, images, etc.
- The obstacles to carrying out these efforts and the strategies to overcome them.
- Books that show experiences of inclusion in their texts and illustrations.

4) Literature that excludes

Literature, as a mirror of the society that creates it, contains works that show examples of discrimination and exclusion.

- Works that depict these realities.
- Works that promote these realities of exclusion and the realities that lead to these works.
- Use literature that is exclusive to generate thinking and processes that will lead to inclusion.

5) In the Promotion of Reading

In many countries, there is a huge delay in terms of the formation of readers, especially in marginalized groups.

- Policies and strategies that could invert this reality.
- Creating communities that recognize the individual as the center of the cultural and social experience, and that promote their self-worth and self-recognition.
- Access to literacy from a participatory and inclusive perspective.
- Differences viewed as opportunities for learning and mutual enrichment.
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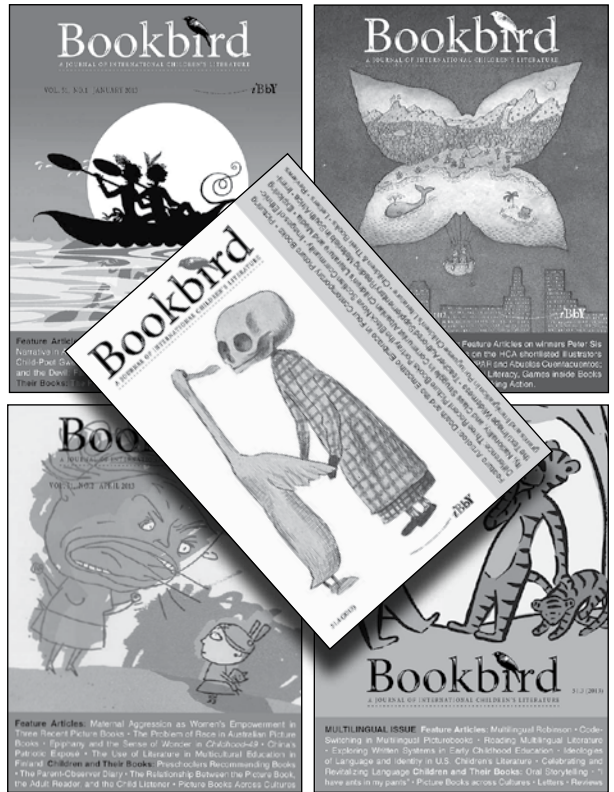
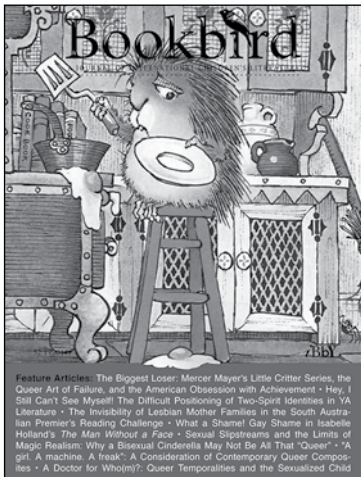
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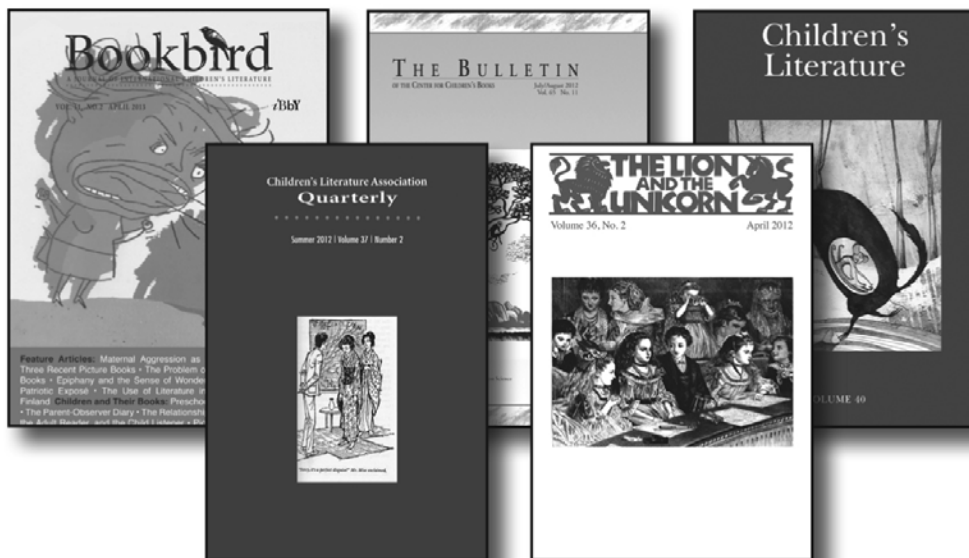
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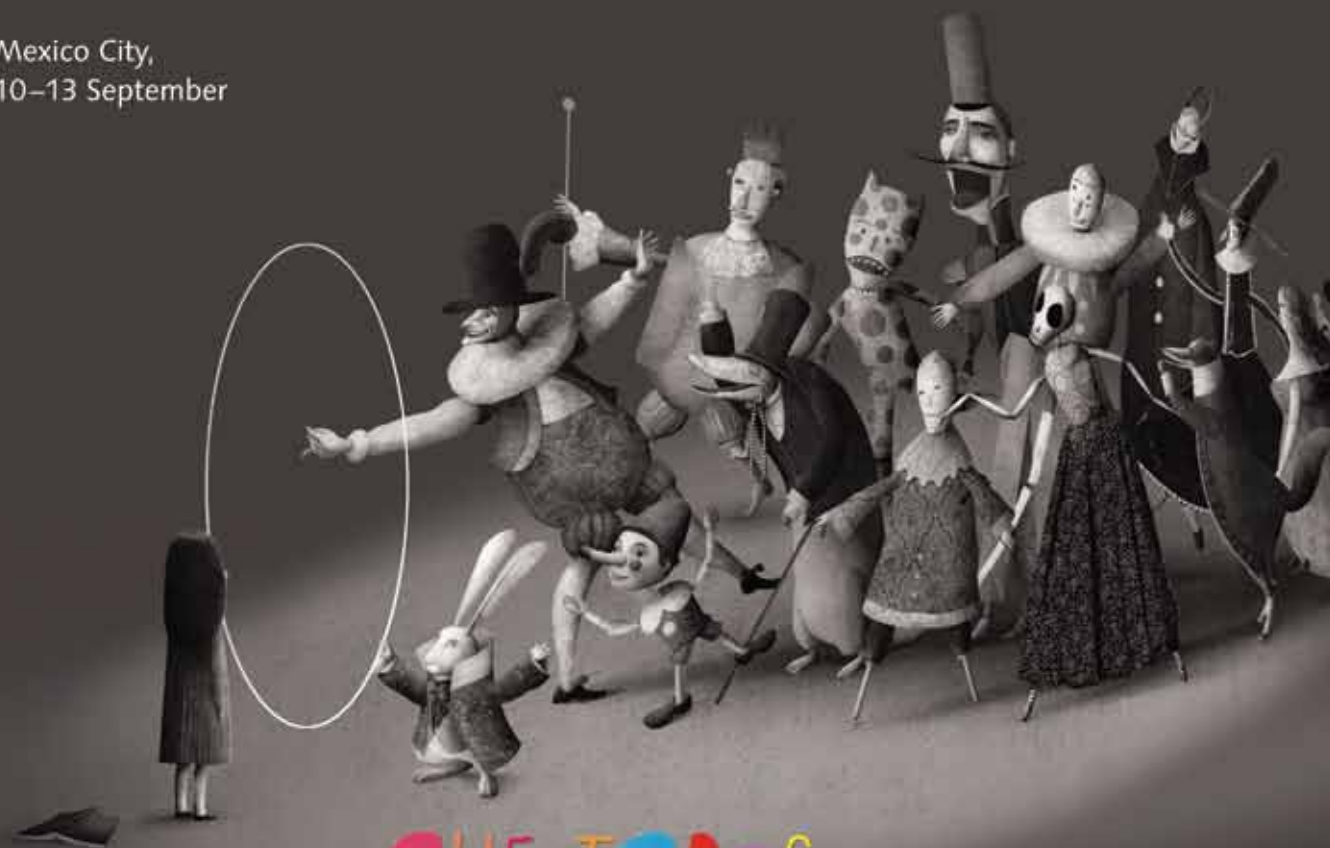
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