



Children's Literature Hawai'i, along with the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities,  
and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa present

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The Sixteenth Biennial  
Conference on Literature and Hawai'i's Children  
Featuring Pam Muñoz Ryan and James Rumford

A Humanities Guide to Children's Literature:

# Where Pictures Speak and Stories Paint

June 21~23, 2012  
Chaminade University,  
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HE CONFERENCE  
on Literature and  
Hawai'i's Children

is a biennial event for all who  
share an interest in the literature  
of children, including students,  
parents, teachers, librarians,  
writers, and illustrators.



# Collaboration and Children's Literature: Towards a Holistic Approach

By Rachel Wolf

**W**HEN, IN BETTY SMITH'S seminal novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Francie Nolan discovers that books can be rented free from the library, the young protagonist feels that, "From that time on, the world was hers for the reading. She would never be lonely again, never miss the lack of intimate friends. Books became her friends and there was one for every mood" (Smith 166). Francie's devotion to the library and to reading are considered unique to her particular position as a child in what are described as the shabby row houses of Brooklyn in the early twentieth century. However, the reader soon learns that Francie's mother, Katie, has fostered a love of reading in Francie and her brother since their infancies. We are told that, "Before they went to bed, Francie and Neeley had to read a page of the Bible and a page from Shakespeare. That was a rule. Mama used to read the two pages to them each night until they were old enough to read for themselves. To save time, Neeley read the Bible page and Francie read from Shakespeare" (Smith 51). Early, consistent exposure to literature (children's or otherwise) is shown as crucial to a developing adolescent like Francie, whose weekly highlight is her trip to the library.

Like Francie, I grew up with regular exposure to literature, particularly in the library. My father completed his Master's degree in library science while I was young, and by the time I was ten he was working full-time as the sole children's librarian for the Lummi Indian College library, which served the entire reservation-based Lummi Nation. The Children's Reading Room at the LIC library was glorious, at least for a preteen who was working her way through the Brian Jacques' *Redwall* series—it had high windows that overlooked the campus; an enormous, deep carpet; and a back room full of books waiting to periodically restock the shelves.

Now, many years later, I am completing my doctoral degree in English, and can point directly to those early library days as the main impetus for my career choice. In fact, it is amazing how many of my current literary heroes could be found among those stacks, years ago. Back then

I had no idea that renowned Canadian novelist and poet, Margaret Atwood (author of the dystopian *The Handmaid's Tale* and the Booker Prize-winning *The Blind Assassin*) is also the author of a series of alliterative children's books, the first of which is titled, *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut*, or that Salman Rushdie's postmodern style—as seen in books like *The Satanic Verses*—happens to translate beautifully into the whimsical *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. These code-switching writers are but a couple on an illustrious list that includes T.S. Elliot, James Joyce, and Aldous Huxley, among others.

Conferences such as the Biennial Conference on Literature and Hawaii's Children are one way to ensure that children's literature is in constant dialogue with adult literature and the wider literary community. These events help to foster a continued love of and engagement with children's literature at all ages. As crucial as solitary reading is, Francie Nolan's mother and other adults like her recognize the importance of creating a literary community. Children's Literature Hawaii is an organization that is committed to fostering just such a literary community here in Hawaii. For, as Stoodt and Amspaugh remind us, "Readers make books come alive. What they bring to literature is as important as the literary work itself [...] Readers construct and confer meaning on the text rather than extracting a single, given meaning from it" (3). Consequently, an important aspect of



Illustration from *Mango Rain*, copyright 2011 by James Rumford. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

our understanding of children's literature must come from open dialogue and community.

As a literary category, children's literature perhaps lends itself most readily to a conference that combines academic inquiry with creative practice and practical application. Children's literature is aimed at a populace that is still discovering and learning to use tools of creation

and interpretation, a populace that understands meaning in significantly separate patterns. As Deborah Lovitky Sheiman explains, "Children and adults absorb literature in significantly different ways. Message and meaning may be less conscious for a child who has yet to experience the array of situations that an adult has encountered. Abstractions are still to be formed in the child's mind. Experiences are viewed from a concrete perspective" (7). A conference dedicated to the holistic exploration of children's literature—creation, uses, and interpretation—seems like the most intuitive way in which to discuss literature aimed at this populace.

Conferences like the Conference on Literature and Hawai'i's Children also provide unique opportunities for collaboration among various literary communities. For a child, literature comes from a myriad of directions; parents, families, teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, and many other adults guide each child toward different literature. As adults, literary tastes can be self-chosen and cultivated; children, however, are always to some extent dependent on adults to choose or provide their literature for them. Consequently, it remains crucial that the various adults in a child's life are able to communicate and collaborate in order to provide a wealth of quality (from an objective perspective) children's literature.

The process of seeking to create, understand, and teach children's literature in a collaborative environment resonates crucially with adults as well as children. As Kimberley Reynolds explains it, "Just as the children we once were continue to exist inside and to affect us, so writing produced for children continues to resonate over time and to be implicated in the way societies are conceived, organized, and managed" (5). Reynolds sees children's literature ultimately as an agent of social change that works by following the cognitive developmental process in a way that highlights how larger entities (political, social, religious) might be rethought and consequently evolve. By collaborating in our efforts, various components of the literary community can work holistically to use children's literature as an opportunity for growth, both through the welcoming of the community's children into the joys of reading, and by examining the ways in which children's literature can create change in the adult world.

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## James Rumford

By Lavonne Leong



James Rumford

**A**CROSS THE CEILING of James Rumford's studio swirl the intricate bas-relief lines of a Hafiz poem, in the original Persian. The white words, on their white background, are exquisite—as art, as literature, and as craftsmanship. Where did he find the artisan who could execute that kind of commission? He didn't have to look far. As we stand in the studio, which looks out on a slope of Mānoa garden, Rumford describes how he got the idea, carefully cut out some cardboard, fixed it to the ceiling, and painted the results.

In fact, Rumford's handiwork is everywhere in his studio, from the hand-built stairs leading down to it, to the working astrolabe hanging on the wall. It's a fitting place to work for someone who has been figuring things out as he goes along, beautifully, for the length of his distinguished and unusual career as an author and illustrator of children's books.

Instead of going to art school, as a young man Rumford pursued his fascination with other languages and cultures, joining the Peace Corps and living in Afghanistan, Chad, Rwanda and Saudi Arabia before coming to Hawai'i. On the way, he married, had a son, became a Fulbright lecturer, studied more than a dozen languages, and founded Mānoa Press, learning to make paper and set type the old-fashioned way to produce handmade books.

He was forty-five years old, working at the Mission Houses Museum, when retired librarian Harriett Oberhaus encouraged him to follow up on an old dream. With a blue colored pencil and his son's crayons, egged on by Harriett, Rumford produced the sketches that would soon become the illustrations for *The Cloudmakers*, plucked from the slush pile and published by Houghton Mifflin in 1996. Twenty books later, his work has been translated into eight languages and has garnered more than a dozen national and international awards.



Rumford's books range across cultures and histories, from ancient Greece (*There's a Monster in the Alphabet*) to the 19th-century American West (*Don't Touch My Hat*) to modern-day Iraq (*Silent Music*). Often, they accompany a traveler on the journey of a lifetime—a giraffe in *Chee-Lin*, five brothers navigating the Pacific in *The-Island-Below-the-Star*, and the 14th century explorer Ibn Battuta in *Traveling Man*. They also frequently celebrate language, writing, or the making of books: the creation of a Cherokee alphabet in *Sequoyah*; the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs in *Seeker of Knowledge*; and Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in his forthcoming *From the Good Mountain*.

When Rumford starts a book, he begins with the words. For him, writing is the easy part. The text for *The Cloudmakers* was written in about an hour; others were written over the course of a day or two. But the illustrations—though publishers pay the same amount for text and pictures—can take him a year or more to complete.

Rumford produces dense, multilayered illustrations in which every detail has been carefully considered. He researches his subject thoroughly, drawing on historical information and looking to the work of a multitude of other artists and artistic traditions. Historical accuracy is important: if there's a real city in the story, you can be sure he researched not only what buildings went where, but whether they were there in the year the story took place, and how the light might have shone on them at that time of day, as he did with the city of Mainz in *From the Good Mountain*.

Characters' appearances also need to be thought out. First, the individual figures: how each character looks from different angles. Then comes how they might look together and in their settings, and after that, figuring out how the pictures will relate to the text, says Rumford: "What words do you illustrate? The first sentence on the page? The last sentence on the page? Or no sentence on the page?" After a subject is chosen, the composition of the picture—what to place where in order to best tell the story—is the next challenge. "You've already invested a lot" of time and energy in an illustration, he says, "even by the time you've thought of a composition."

There's also a great deal of mystery in the process of illustration, says Rumford. "It's very difficult to say how it happens. Sometimes I picture the thing in my head, then try to put what I picture on paper. Other times, I will look at a [blank] piece of paper and say, 'Well, what's on this paper for me?'"

Unlike illustrators whose simple styles can be instantly recognized across their body of work, each of Rumford's book has its own distinct visual fingerprint. Even the materials he works with vary widely. Starting out in the early titles with watercolor, he has gone on to pen and ink, markers, casein paint, pencil, pastels, gouache, collage, and increasingly, the computer.



Illustration from *Chee-Lin*, copyright 2008 by James Rumford. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

Rumford's willingness to embrace new technical challenges with each book is serving him well. As the publishing industry weathers crisis after crisis, he is actively exploring independently published print-on-demand books, with several POD projects in the pipeline, e-books, and more.

Despite a lifetime love of the printed page and the written word, there is a note of excitement in Rumford's voice as he compares the current state of publishing to Gutenberg's times. "What happened in 1450 is what's happening today," he says. "This revolution is transforming the way we connect with each other, and I almost think that the printed word and the written word will be a small blip in human history."

Though the future of the printed book is unclear, Rumford is confident that storytelling itself will survive. "Narrative is what makes us human," he says. "If we don't put our own stories out there, somebody will give us stories to tell. And then we lose ourselves."

*We discussed two of James Rumford's books to illustrate how his way of working has evolved over time.*

## *The Island-Below-the-Star* (1998)

At first glance, the illustrations for *The Island-Below-the-Star* look simple—a series of watercolor illustrations for the story of five legendary brothers who first navigated to the islands of Hawai'i from southern Polynesia—but the book, Rumford's second, took a year to do. Part of the challenge was the medium. "Watercolor is so unforgiving," Rumford says; it's impossible to erase, change, or overpaint. A watercolor needs to be perfect on the first try, with no splashes or splatters. In a composition involving a complex background with many figures, one mistake could ruin weeks of work. And then, when the book was finally finished, came every artist's nightmare: when Rumford sent the finals to the publisher, FedEx left the package in the rain. Rumford tidied up the altered work and decided to let the results stand.

The illustrations for *The Island-Below-the-Star* have a classic quality that reflects inspiration from a variety of artistic traditions. One scene, which depicts the sighting of the island after many weeks at sea, has what Rumsford describes as a “Renaissance religious” flavor in the relationship and positioning of its figures. Tilting the book on its side, he also shows how classical Chinese landscapes inspired the picture’s decidedly un-Western asymmetry and blocks of color.

One challenge of this picture was how to make this important moment stand out, since, like many of the pictures in a book about discovery, it “was a pointing picture,” says Rumsford. Now, only one figure points, and the rest form a kinetic, physical knot of joy: “It took me a long time to figure out that it was actually about exaltation.”

A good illustration, says Rumsford, “leads the eye into the picture. While the eye is going around the picture—this is all subconscious—it is also telling the story that you want to tell.” With a fingertip, he traces how the reader’s eye lands on the figures in this illustration, moves around them, and then travels with their attention to the distant horizon, where the island heaves out of the sea far away, circled by birds.

A print-on-demand version of *The Island-Below-the-Star* is forthcoming.

## *Silent Music* (2008)

Much changed in the decade between the publication of *The Island-Below-the-Star* and *Silent Music*. These days, all final illustrations are sent digitally; the watercolor disaster of *The Island-Below-the-Star* can never happen again. Though paints and paper are still essential, computer-based tools have become increasingly central to Rumsford’s work life.

To begin with, it means freedom from the drudgery of copying. The transference of good sketches to a more finalized work used to mean days of frustration, many trips to Kinko’s, and a nagging feeling that the sketches still had something the final work did not. “If I come up with a good drawing, I can’t copy it,” says Rumsford. “I don’t know why.” These days, he’ll start out with a blank sheet of paper and red paint. “If it spatters everywhere it doesn’t matter. After I have my idea down, I take a ballpoint pen and I’ll go over it, drawing what I see happening.” Then he scans it in, subtracts the red, and voila—a clean line that he can lighten almost to

invisibility, print many copies of, and then paint over, many times, until he gets it right. The art is still there, but “the stress of trying to copy myself is gone. What took me just an hour [today], in those days might have taken me two or three weeks.”

*Silent Music* takes place in a besieged Baghdad during the Iraqi war. At its heart is Ali, a little boy who finds solace in calligraphy. The book itself is a collage, full of tilework, paper cutouts, and gold-leaf patterns, but they were all created and assembled by computer. The exuberant backgrounds and complicated patterns in the book exist nowhere but on Rumsford’s hard drive; he made sheets of variously colored paper by hand, then drew single objects, transferred both to Photoshop, and reproduced them as many times as necessary to make wallpaper, cloth, and other collage material. For the rendering of gold leaf in *Silent Music*, laboriously applied by hand for the illustrations of *Traveling Man* (2004) he invented a Photoshop process that captures gold’s luminosity in digital form.

In addition, one wrong element can no longer ruin the entire picture, since all the constituent parts—backgrounds, individual figures, items, shapes, patterns—can be layered in, moved around, added or subtracted as needed, right up to the illustration’s final stages. “The computer allowed me to manipulate things so I could actually change the composition of these pictures to the way I wanted them,” says Rumsford.

In addition, he says, a relaxed, more playful mindset allowed him the experimental freedom to create a “visually lyrical, visually metaphorical” book that addressed a difficult subject for a young audience: “It helped me develop ideas I don’t know I would have had without the computer.” These ideas dance across the page in *Silent Music*, providing the book with a rich and subtle dialogue between picture and text.

In this illustration, a simple shape from a Persian tile pattern takes on two radically different meanings. Accompanied by a calligraphic rendering of the Persian word for peace, the shape makes a slow metamorphosis into a dove. On the opposite page the same shape transforms instead into a stealth bomber that flies around the Persian word for war. The text: “It’s funny how easily my pen glides down the long, sweeping hooks of the word HARB—war... how stubbornly it resists me when I make the difficult waves and slanted staff of SALĀM—peace.”



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For more information, please call Children’s Literature Hawai’i at (808) 956-7559, email [CLH@hawaii.edu](mailto:CLH@hawaii.edu), or send regular mail to:

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# Parenting Styles and Parent/Child/Adult Interactions in Four Novels by Pam Muñoz Ryan

By Christel Yount



Pam Muñoz Ryan

PAM MUÑOZ RYAN strums sensitive parent-child-adult chords in four of her novels for adolescent readers. Ryan demonstrates that human childhood is not what it used to be only a few decades ago, nor is parenting, nor is the value structure of family. In the animal world, family structures seem to be unchanging and therefore more predictable. The sub-story of the mare Artemisia in the novel *Paint the Wind*, with her role in a family of wild horses, resembles most the Leave-it-to-Beaver wholesome human family setting. Life in this group of horses seems to be organized, cooperative, and run by clear hierarchical order. The wholesome family model rarely works in contemporary times, and it is not featured in Pam Muñoz Ryan's novels.

When Ryan's positive animal parenting model aroused my interest, I searched and was rewarded with three distinctive animal parenting behaviors. I read on Wikipedia about certain egg-laying snakes and how they are non-interested, absentee parents. "Most egg-laying snakes are fairly uninterested in their clutches and will abandon them shortly after they lay them. Others, such as the king cobra and some species of pythons, will stay in the vicinity of the eggs until they hatch. Either way, the mothers leave after the eggs hatch." In Ryan's novels readers observe amazing "snake parenting." By contrast, the "kangaroo parent" does not let his/her offspring out of sight and gives it warmth and

shelter at all times. This warm environment of "kangaroo parenting" seems to be the dream parenting of the young protagonists in Ryan's novels. Then there are the current complaints about overbearing "tiger moms." Pam Muñoz Ryan gives vivid examples of this parenting style. The burden in this set-up is placed upon the human child who has to live up to hyperbolic parental expectations. The animal children don't have to worry about "filial loyalty" and reciprocal care and respect, while human children are burdened with realization of their role in the parenting process.

Pam Muñoz Ryan tackles the challenges of parenting, and/or problematic interaction of adults and children, in her four novels: *Becoming Naomi León*, *Paint the Wind*, *The Dreamer*, and *Esperanza Rising*. I am interested in the readership of these novels. How will the pre-teen and teen readers experience the various parent-child interactions in the novels? What will the young readers register as desirable, undesirable, or all-too-familiar interactive patterns or transactions in the fictional families of Pam Muñoz Ryan?

## Snake parenting

In the novel *Becoming Naomi León*, Naomi's mother left "to find herself" for seven years and placed her grandmother, Grams, in charge of the children Naomi and Owen. Now she reappears in their lives without warning and informs Grams she is moving back in.

'I need a place to hang out for a while,' said Skylar.

'These children don't know you.'

'Well, it's about time they did.'

'You should have thought of that years ago,' said Gram. 'I'm not going to have you come in here...and messing with their lives.' (22)

Naomi's reaction to her mother's whirlwind appearance is fractured.

Part of me couldn't wait to see her again. The other part of me was wringing my hands like a contestant in the Worrywart Olympics. All of a sudden I had a million questions. Why did she come back? How long was she going to stay? Would she like us? Would we like her? My thoughts dived into a jumble in the middle of my mind, wrestled around until they were wadded into a fistful knot, and attached themselves to my brain like a burr matted in a long-haired dog. (25)

Finally, Naomi finds her own voice in the struggle for guardianship over her and her brother: "Is this what you want, Naomi? To live with your mother?" asked the judge. I looked at Gram and Owen, and slowly shook my head. 'No,' I said" (235). Naomi could have experienced the fate of a snake child if Gram had not mothered her and her brother.



## Tiger parenting

The girl Maya in the novel *Paint the Wind* experiences a “tiger grandmother” and the boy Neftalí in the novel *The Dreamer* lives with a “tiger father.” Both grandmother and father have restrictive and unrealistic expectations of these pre-adolescent children. The new housekeeper informs the little girl:

‘Maya, your grandmother was very specific about how your day is to be structured. I escort you to and from school. Afterward, you are to do homework until dinner at six. No playing.’ She raised her eyebrows.

Maya gave her a sweet smile. ‘I already finished my homework. And I get straight A’s. So you don’t actually need to check on me. The other housekeepers didn’t. We made an agreement: I come down to dinner on time, and they leave me alone in my room. As long as my grades are absolutely perfect, Grandmother does not mind.’ (11)

Neftalí’s father announces his arrival with a whistle signal:

The screech of a conductor’s whistle snapped Neftalí to attention. He jerked around. Father’s body filled the doorway. Neftalí shuddered.

‘Stop that incessant daydreaming!’ The white tip of the father’s beard quivered as he clenched and unclenched his narrow jaw. ‘And why are you out of bed?’

Neftalí averted his eyes.

‘Do you want to be a skinny weakling forever and amount to nothing?’

‘N-n-n-no, Father,’ stammered Neftalí.” (10)

After Neftalí publishes a widely read article, the father is infuriated: “‘It was a mistake to ever allow you to work at any newspaper,’ said Father. ‘I forbid you to abandon the chance of an acceptable profession. And you will not use my money for such a venture. Do you hear me, Neftalí?’ ...There will be no more writing in this house!’” (322–324). Years later, when Neftalí says good bye to his family, “He looked directly into Father’s eyes and became lost in his gaze. Who was inside? Someone mean and hateful? Or someone so controlled by his own past that he dared not allow anyone he loved to control their future?” (340) Neftalí defies the father and becomes the acclaimed national treasure, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda.

## Kangaroo parenting

The family situation for Esperanza Ortega in the beginning of the novel *Esperanza Rising* is an ideal

“kangaroo” upbringing. There are the loving mother and father, proud of their only daughter; there is the grandmother, the wise and helpful Abuelita; and there are the many respectful servants and tenant farmers of the vast estate. Esperanza’s childhood seems to be evolving according to an inevitable life script: she is loved, understood, taught, respected, and cared for in all ways. However, all plans become futile when Esperanza’s father is murdered and two scheming uncles drive Esperanza, her mother, and a tenant family out of their estate into a fruit picker camp in California. Esperanza explains to Miguel, her companion:

‘I have lost everything. Every single thing and all the things that I was meant to be. See these perfect rows, Miguel? They are what my life would have been. These rows know where they are going. Straight ahead. Now my life is like a zigzag in the blanket on Mama’s bed. I need to get Abuelita here, but I cannot send her my pitiful savings for fear my uncles will find out and keep her there forever. I pay Mama’s medical bills but next month there will be more.’ (224)

In this camp, Esperanza, only a teenager, becomes the responsible caregiver for her mother and later her grandmother. She assures her mother: “Don’t worry. I will take care of everything. I will be *la patrona* for the whole family now” (178). There is a great shift from carefree childhood to responsible adulthood behavior in Esperanza, almost a role reversal between mother and daughter.

## Transactional analysis

When young readers identify with the protagonists of the novels, they might want to have a clearer understanding of the dynamics that dictate the great changes in the family patterns. Young readers may wonder what leads to the empowerment of the youngsters in Pam Ryan’s novels.

The role reversal in *Esperanza Rising* reminded me of a key book in my own coming of age: *I’m OK—You’re OK* by Thomas A. Harris. From his book, I learned the basic idea of transactional analysis. Harris borrows ideas and quotes terms from a study done by Dr. Eric Berne. Harris and Berne both believe in Sigmund Freud’s notion that ALL humans carry three personality aspects simultaneously within them: the Superego, the Ego, and the Id but call them Parent, Adult, and Child. Dr. Eric Berne, the originator of transactional analysis, distinguishes his analysis of three aspects operating in one from Freud’s theoretical analysis. Berne asserts and Harris concurs that “Parent, Adult, and Child are not concepts like Superego, Ego, and Id...but phenomenological realities” (24). They call the unit of social intercourse a transaction. “Transactional analysis is the method of examining this one transaction wherein ‘I do something to you and you do something back.’ and determining which

part of the multiple-natured individual is 'coming on'" (Berne 29).

To clarify the role of the young protagonists, fictional and real, I thought it worth a try to examine parenting situations in Ryan's four novels using the terms of transactional analysis. In my analysis of parenting patterns, I am following Berne/Harris in using the terms "Child," "Adult," and "Parent" loosely. A very general definition of transactional terms could be the following:

**CHILD =C:** Behavior of a small child dominated by feelings; a felt concept of life; the recording of internal events; life as he/she felt it or wished it or fantasized it

**PARENT=P:** Self-righteous behavior; rules-driven existence; a taught concept of self; recording of external events; life as it was taught or demonstrated to him/her

**ADULT=A:** Reasoning; logical behavior; develops a 'thought concept of life' based on data gathering and data processing; reality testing; life as he/she figured it out by him/herself,

How do transactional patterns in the four novels form the protagonists? Which personality aspects generate most of the critical transactions between the preadolescent protagonists and their caregivers? What do these transactions contribute to the growth and well being of the young protagonists? First, let us take a look at the dramatis personae in the family transaction field.

#### *Becoming Naomi León*

Naomi: First dominated by C, then becoming A

Mother Skyla: Mainly C, sometimes verbally insisting on P

Grams: A throughout

#### *Paint the Wind*

Maya: Dominated by C, giving P a try, and ending A

Artemisia (the horse): A throughout

Grandmother: Mainly P and a little of C, no tangible A

Aunt Vi: A throughout

Cousin Payton: Mainly C with small signs of A

#### *The Dreamer*

Neftalí: Mainly C with interludes of A. Finally great balance of C and A

Father: Exclusively P

Stepmother Mamadre: C and clandestine A

Sister Laurita: Mainly C

Brother Rodolfo: Small C growing quickly into dominant A

#### *Esperanza Rising*

Esperanza in Mexico: Exclusively C

Esperanza in California: Shifting rapidly from C into A

Father Sixto: Exclusively A

Uncles Tío Louis and Tío Marcus: Unrefined P's

Mother Ramona: Strong A, when sick accepting C

Grandmother Abuelita: Strong A with some comforting P

Miguel: Precocious A

This brief survey reveals that all protagonists evolve into strong "A's." All four have to overcome hardships which force them to examine their existence—in particular, their relationships with their caregivers.

Naomi has a very strong "A" caregiver in Grams. She has experienced emotional stability and can therefore sort out her jumbled feelings. Her mother Skyla's "C" does not convince Naomi's fledgling "A." Naomi figures out her own life trajectory. She knows that she and her brother are best cared for by Grams at this time.

Maya has been bullied by the overpowering "P" of her grandmother into an almost exclusive "C" position. The only coping mechanisms she knows are "C" trickeries and "P" pronouncements. Through the guidance of Aunt Vi and her brothers, all three strong "A's", Maya learns to drop the "P" pronouncements and take on responsibility for her own actions. Her cousin Payton's "C" personality offers Maya a mirror in which she can see the inadequacies of her "C" behavior. The best role model for Maya, however, is the mare Artemisia. She touches straight on Maya's "C" and redirects her impulses into reflected actions. Maya recognizes that freedom and responsibility can go hand-in-hand and is well on her way to becoming another "A" member in the Limner family.

Neftalí's "C" is constantly under attack by the bullying "P" of the father. First, he has only other "C's"



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in his immediate family for commiseration. Stepmother Mamadre's "C" and sister Laurita's "C" keep him company but can't protect him from father's irate "P." Then his brother Rodolfo leaves the family and becomes an "A" catalyst for Neftalí. Neftalí never becomes a straight "A"; he feels life as a "C" dreamer and poet. His balancing "A", however, allows him to leave the oppressive presence of the father's "P" and to figure life out on his own terms.

Esperanza in Mexico has no reason to give up an inch of her "C". Even Esperanza's haughty "P" pronouncements towards Miguel are somewhat playful and immediately regretted. Everything in her life is fed to her on a silver spoon. Her parents Sixto and Ramona and grandmother Abuelita are strong, respected "A's" with a modicum of sentimental "P." The overreaching "P's" of the two uncles seem too out of place, and are not integrated into Esperanza's vision of reality. Only in California does Esperanza experience ridicule for her exclusive "C" notions. Driven by the illness of her mother and her wish to reunite with her beloved Abuelita, Esperanza rises in record time into becoming a true "A," the patrona of the California family. The reader enjoys, however, how in the company of the steadfast "A" companion Miguel, a little of Esperanza's "C" floats back into their relationship.

In conclusion, the protagonists in Pam Muñoz Ryan's novels emerge as whole-hearted, mindful young adults. Through reasoning, reality testing, data gathering and data processing, they develop a 'thought concept of life' life as they figured it out by themselves.

Pam Muñoz Ryan provides reassuring proof for the adolescent readers that it does not really matter whether they are raised by "Snake," "Kangaroo," or "Tiger" parents. It does not matter whether or not the caregivers are of the parent generation. It does matter that the "C" in the young person has transactions with "A" and "P." While "P" provides the dramatic impetus for change, the "A" functions as a role model worth imitating. I still love the idea that the horse Artemisia proves the perfect "A."

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## What's in a Name: Meeting the young author behind *Kohala Kuamo'o: Nae'ole's Race to Save a King*

by Jaimie Gusman

THE COFFEE BAR STANDS QUIETLY inside the bustling Barnes & Noble at the Ala Moana shopping center. As I approach the counter, I notice a man with thick silver hair purchasing a juice, shaking its contents then ruggedly opening the plastic top. We exchange smiles, and I feel like I know him. I follow his steps with my eyes, keeping my face fixed on the cashier ahead, in case my eyes are wrong. I watch the man sit down next to a young boy, who must be twelve or thirteen-years old. This must be them, I think as I bypass the coffee bar and approach the pair. Ever since reading *Kohala Kuamo'o: Nae'ole's Race to Save a King*, I've been thinking about names, and the maps that unfold their stories. What would these names—*Kohala*, *Nae'ole*, *Kamehameha*, *kuleana*, and *'ohana*—reveal to me outside of the book, at a wooden table in the middle of a mall?

"Hi, I'm Jaimie," I say as I stop in front of their table. The man stands up, his large smile reaching over the chairs, and offers his hand. I shake it, and the boy's smaller hand, as he also stands up to greet me. I had never met Walter or Kekaulele in person, so when we're finally face to face, we have to take a moment to digest.

Before we start the interview, Kekaulele is caught reading a book. His grandfather, Walter, has to remind him to put the book down, and I have to remind myself that even though Kekaulele has been a published author for years, he's still a young man of thirteen who likes to read, play sports, be a kid. When I was his age I was writing stories too, on our old IBM computer, dreaming about the books I would write—short stories, novels, poems. Kekaulele is living my kid-dream, having published *Kohala Kuamo'o: Nae'ole's Race to Save a King* as a 6th-grader. My eyes are heavier than his backpack, but I can tell he is full of wisdom beyond years.

I begin our conversation by asking about the autobiographical aspects of the book, "Did your kumu really assign the class to go find out what your name means?" He



Illustration from *Tutu's Quilt*, copyright 2012 by James Rumford. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

says, "Yes. When I was given this assignment, I already knew the story in my head."

Walter, a historian himself, has been "searing" the story into Kekaulele's head since he was a baby. Walter tells me about Kekaulele's name—that even before Kekaulele was born, Walter's son, Aaron, Kekaulele's father, knew the name he wanted give his own son. Aaron was set on naming the newborn after Nae'ole, chief of Hālawā and Kamehameha's protector. After Kekaulele's birth, Walter researched the name. He came back to Aaron and said that he should name his son Kekauleleanae'ole, meaning "the flight of Nae'ole."

Before I know it, forty-five minutes have passed, and I haven't even reached question number two on my scribble-filled notepad. I decide to abandon my questions and just continue talking casually as they fill the coffee shop with an energy distinct from the usual hum of Barnes and Nobles.

The story behind Kekaulele's name has been mapped out in the book by the entire Kawai'ae'a. Kekaulele talks about his mother's love of books, his father's art, his grandfather's research, and his grandmother's stories. Kekaulele's eyes are big and bright, full of excitement as he talks about his family. He seems humble for anyone, regardless of age, who has received this much attention from a book.

"Envisioning your ancestor's stories as a book seems to make them more permanent," I observed. Kekaulele gives a mature nod of agreement. He tells

me about how the book got to print. Golden Pencils, Kamehameha School's program to encourage students to write their stories, inspired the project to take flight. "My dad said *why don't we do a book together?*" Kekaulele wrote the text first and Aaron illustrated the book on construction paper. The entire project was homemade, in every sense of the word. "It all fell in line," he says, because on the day Kekaulele submitted the book to Golden Pencils, resource teacher Ann Sumida's "jaw dropped" and she immediately submitted the book to Kamehameha Publishing in summer 2009.

On New Year's Day, Walter got the call. "I'll never forget it," he tells me. *Kohala Kuamo'o* would be a top priority for Kamehameha Publishing.

The journey sounds exciting, maybe even overwhelming at times. I imagine Kekaulele, a smidge smaller, taking it all in: the readings, book signings, conferences, discussions, and traveling. They tell me about the time the family gave a presentation to graduate students at American University, which ended up inspiring a young woman to investigate her own family history. Kekaulele was nervous at first, but it ended up being a mind-opening experience.

But the bit of literary fame is not the point. The purpose, which came to Kekaulele after all the interviews and trips to the Big Island, Maui, Washington DC settled down, is simple. "Our family that passed away wanted us to do this." The 'ohana's contribution to their family, children's literature and Hawaiian history is undoubtedly essential to keeping their ancestor's stories alive while giving others the motivation to tell their own stories.

We end our talk with a familiar question: "So what advice would you give to aspiring young authors?" Kekaulele chuckles, because he knows his answer is a good one. "Read," he says. He places his hands on the book I found him immersed in when I first sat down. He tells me about his plans to write a "700 page novel." *Ambitious*, I thought. But, why not? "I wouldn't be surprised if you did," I explained, "but remember that people are going to have to read those 700 pages." For this thirteen-year-old, reading, let alone writing, such a lengthy manuscript doesn't seem daunting. "I live with a big family, so I've learned to read while other things are going on." Reading is his escape, his entrance into another world.

I feel lucky to have sat down with Kekaulele and Walter, generations surrounding them. Their journey is an inspiring one. "It's nice to put a face to a name," Walter says as I stand up and gather my things. I feel the same way, thinking about Kekaulele's words, his father's illustrations, and his grandparents' ancestral stories embedded in the pages of *Kohala Kuamo'o*. I walk away with the beginnings of a map, tracing a young author's journey that will surely be long and influential.

# Some Thoughts on the Coming-of-Age Novel

By Sue Cowing

**P**ROVIDING WE DON'T DIE FIRST, we all come of age. Counted candles alone don't add up to a story, so why do we have a genre called Coming-of-Age? Not only is the term not descriptive, it is quite general, having been applied to books ranging from *Little Women* to *A Clockwork Orange*. We all know what it's supposed to mean: a coming-of-age novel is one in which a young protagonist, over time, undergoes adventures or experiences or grapples with personal or social conflicts and grows in the process. But take out the word "young" and you have the protagonist of most novels—the character with the most potential for change or growth.

"Coming-of-age" has an unfortunate "us/them" tone, suggesting that we adults, having put away childish things, are completed projects able to observe the young from a safe and wise distance. Thinking this way, we may forget that the young are us—not just who we used to be, but part of who we are now. We may then miss or dismiss some great stories we need, perhaps even some heroes.

The 19th-century term *bildungsroman*, "formation novel," with its focus on development and growth, seems a better fit, but in the traditional *bildungsroman* a young person suffers as an outsider, in conflict with his society, then matures by learning to accept the values and demands of that society. At the end of the story he reflects on the niche he has found for himself within it. The implied assumption is that society's values and rules are consistent and knowable and probably for the best in the long run, at least for the majority. In any case they are the reality—too big to buck without knocking yourself senseless—so you might as well find a way to accommodate. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was not a *bildungsroman*.

Nothing is required of a novel other than to be an engaging story, but a hopeful thing does take place when we identify with a novel's main character. We experience what she experiences. We see things from her point of view, try on her values and her desires, fear for her, pray for her success in the face of ever-lengthening odds, hold our breath when she takes a risk or makes things worse for herself. We become her. We empathize.

What if, as often happens, that main character is a kind of outsider whom we might have dismissed or ignored or made fun of in our daily life, but now we see him not as a kind but as an individual, and we realize just what he or she is up against, what the stakes are? That is some wonderful work a novel can do on the way to telling its story.

Certainly a great leap in popular sympathy and interest in Asperger's syndrome resulted from Mark Haddon's brilliant first-person novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (even though Haddon insists that he is no expert on Asperger's, and that the book is not about the syndrome). Not only are we not put off by the thoughts of this extraordinary 15-year-old boy who describes himself as "a mathematician with some behavioral difficulties"—we are moved by his courage, and ache to rearrange the world for him as he tries to face his fears and compulsions and use his abilities to solve two mysteries, save his own life, and see justice done.

*Curious Incident* broke new ground, and since then there have been several young adult and middle grade novels—including Siobahn Dowd's *The London Eye Mystery*, Francisco X. Stork's *Marcelo in the Real World*, and Katherine Erskine's *Mockingbird*—whose main characters have Asperger's and persevere in their complicated quests.

A similar thing has happened with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and dyslexia. Seeing the world from the point-of-view of Jack Gantos's off-the-wall Joey Pigza was a revelation to readers. Then came the poignantly humorous series about dyslexic Hank Zipzer by Henry Winkler ("The Fonz" is himself dyslexic, not diagnosed until adulthood). The dyslexia and ADHD that get Percy, the main character of the wildly popular *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, in so much trouble at school turn out to be abilities in disguise: assets in his true role as a demigod. We can only imagine the recognition and relief with which a dyslexic or ADHD student reads these books. But his classmates are reading them too, and suddenly their fellow-student's actions may make more sense to them, so that they can laugh with and for him, rather than at him.

None of these books can be called "problem novels," because they are not *about* autism or dyslexia or hyperactivity. Particular, engaging characters drive the story in each book, and it is only as a side effect of identifying with them that we come to better understand their disorders.

Of course you can be an outsider, as many if not most protagonists in fiction are, without having a disorder. From the moment we realize, at around age eight or nine, that we have both an inner and an outer life and that the two cannot always be reconciled, we are all, in some sense, outsiders. I'm not sure what we should call novels that focus on a young person's struggle between those worlds (and remind us of our own continuing struggle, regardless of age), but something more important than coming of age or even growing up goes on in these novels, and they end in a different place.

The protagonist in these stories holds to something in his inner life—a dream, a conviction, a quest, a desire, a quality of self—that he believes to be essential to him, so that he can't afford to give it up or give in, no matter how much



pressure or ridicule he may experience from others, sometimes very powerful others, who claim to know better for him or at least know better about how the world works.

Though he has to find his own path, he often gets support along the way—from a sympathetic adult (often someone considered an outsider) or some keepsake, either a physical object or a thought to remember that acts much like a magic object in a classic hero's quest story. He is tempted and discouraged along the way, and he may sustain great losses, but he gradually finds the courage to be true to himself, and he begins to see that those who oppose him are not as strong as he thought.

His courage allows him to persist in bringing that essential something forward with him. He does make peace with the realities of the outer world (there being fewer territories to light out for these days, at least physical ones), but he sets terms. When the handshakes are over, some new things have happened. The family or the town or the society has had to change a little too, to flex a moment and become that much more accepting, because of him. In a kind of ripple effect, people around him may have rediscovered their own courage by witnessing his example.

That tense night at the jail in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, when a group of townsmen shows up to kidnap and kill the prisoner, Tom Robinson, Scout and her older brother Jem burst onto the scene and defy their father's order to go home. Jem has taken the daring lead, but it is eight-year-old Scout who instinctively disarms the mob in the only way it could be done—addressing them each by name and engaging them in polite conversation about their children, her classmates. The mob then separates into individuals who can be shamed by her implicit call for decency, and they no longer have the heart to proceed with what they came to do. Do they reform and rethink their prejudice as a result of this? No. But at least in that moment the pattern of oppression and conformity cracks open, the men are brought back to their better selves, and the opportunity for change is created.

Ten-year-old Bud Caldwell in Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* lost his mother at six and has never known his father. His life is controlled by an orphanage barely able to hold together in the depths of the Depression and a foster family blind to the sadism of their own son. So he runs away, or rather toward, holding on to 1) his name and his dead mother's assurance that he is Bud, not Buddy 2) a beat-up cardboard suitcase containing certain old playbills and rocks he believes are clues left by his mother to the identity and whereabouts of his father and 3) a mental compendium he has created from his young experiences called "Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner



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Life and Making A Better Liar Out of Yourself." These three sustain him through hunger and danger and loneliness, even through profound disappointment when he does at last find his 'father,' Herman E. Calloway, a grumpy old jazz man who doesn't buy the father claim and wishes Bud would just go away. Members of Calloway's band don't believe the paternity story either, but they are so touched by Bud's insistence and charm they decide to give him the family he hasn't had. This gives Calloway time to discover, through proof from the rocks Bud carries with him always, that they are indeed related. Bud is his grandson, son of the daughter who ran away and over whom Calloway has been consumed with grief.

Nine-year-old Thomas, in Guus Kuijer's *The Book of Everything*, "sees things others don't see," like tropical fish in the canals. When he reports his sightings at the dinner table, his mother is charmed but his father is not. In fact he regards much of what Thomas says and does as the workings of the devil. He would know, because he is the family authority on the Word of God and, as husband and father, its embodiment. He routinely beats Thomas with a spoon for minor infractions, and also finds it "necessary" to hit his wife for disobedience.

Thomas is asked what he wants to be when he grows up and he says, "Happy. I want to be Happy." His father scoffs, but a neighbor, widely regarded as a witch, thinks it's a very good idea and gives him books, music, companionship, and a powerful thought: that to be happy it is first necessary not to be afraid.

Thomas doesn't know if he can manage that, but as he tries and learns, he is able to tell an older girl he adores that she is beautiful despite her leather leg and some missing fingers. Remembering the thought about fear ultimately helps him to stand up to his father and to inspire his sister and mother to do the same. These three join with the "witch" and Thomas' leather-legged friend to bring music and joy into the house and dismantle the father's dictatorship. Everyone is happier as a result, except the now small,

confused, and fear-driven father. Even Thomas's friend Jesus doesn't hold out much hope for change in him.

There is no guarantee that characters in these books will prevail, however much they may deserve to. Lizzie Bright, the straight-thinking free spirit in Gary Schmidt's *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, liberates her friend Turner Buckminster's thoughts and spirit from his rigid upbringing, but ends up being banished by the greedy and bigoted white townspeople to an institution for the feeble-minded, where she dies before Turner can rescue her. Turner must also sustain the death of his minister father, another victim of the town's narrow-mindedness and greed, but not before the father has come to see him not as recalcitrant and in need of correction, but as true and strong, and has taken his own courage from that. Turner "gets used to" being shunned and disapproved of by the town and proceeds with his plan to bring the remainder of the banished blacks back to live in town. In the process he and his mother begin to experience hints and gestures of acceptance from those who had previously been afraid to speak up.

Much is at stake in novels like this, and not just for the characters. We pull hard for them because we long to hope that the world can be big enough and wise enough to bend to their courage and make room for them. And for us.

For *that* story, any genre may be too small.

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# When Words Paint And Pictures Talk Out Loud: Reflections On Visual Media And Written Literacy

by Kathleen J. Cassity

**C**HILDREN (OF ALL AGES) have always enjoyed stories with accompanying visual images, and pictures have historically been considered enhancements rather than impediments to the development of literacy.

What would Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat* be without the iconic image of the tall, lanky feline whose facial expression alone foreshadows the mischief that is about to unfold? Would *Where the Wild Things Are* have any resonance without the vivid drawings that show naughty Max metamorphosing into one of those "wild things"? While words can create pictures in our minds, pictures can enhance or even fully narrate stories—hardly a novel idea, unlikely to provoke anxiety amongst those of us who care about children's literacy. Yet when those visual images become technological, moving

and speaking themselves—in movies, television, or video games—we often worry that print literacy is on life support.

Such concern is not entirely unfounded. Many contemporary readers of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, first published in 1953, experience simultaneous horror and amazement at Bradbury's eerie ability to predict a future in which books, having been declared illegal, now serve as fuel for deliberately set fires precisely because they provoke thought, ambiguity, and genuine emotional response. In Bradbury's arguably not-so-fictional world, the complexity inherent in reading has yielded to mind-numbingly shallow electronic entertainment; the antics of imaginary "families" on gigantic screens that cover entire walls, even entire rooms, vie for dominance with tiny "seashells" that deliver messages directly into the eardrums of brainwashed, zombie-like creatures who never question the status quo. Nearly sixty years later, Bradbury's dystopian vision feels both disturbing and disturbingly prescient; though our society may not have devolved to the point where firemen deliberately burn books, too much else about the *Fahrenheit* universe feels real, and when I teach the book in college classrooms, students frequently respond with amazement at Bradbury's apparent ability to predict the future.

For those of us who care deeply about literacy and literature, ominous signs that our world shares too much *Fahrenheit's* world lurk everywhere. Bookstores—not only small independents but major chains once believed to be

invincible—have shuttered their doors *en masse*. Libraries in many communities are open only a few days a week, with patronage down. In the site that should still be a bastion of reading, our schools, a seemingly endless barrage of challenges and attempted censorship by extremists of various persuasions suggests that the free speech necessary for literary art has landed on the endangered species list.

These very real signals that reading is threatened (along with, of course, ongoing anxiety regarding test scores and student competence), can be disheartening. In the search for a culprit, it's easy to blame those pictures that "talk" not just metaphorically but literally. Movies are never as good as their printed-and-bound counterparts, we assure ourselves, and the problem with kids these days is that they're made lazy by technological ease; nobody wants to read anymore, we lament, so it must be because of movies, or television, or video games, or iPhones, computers, iPads, and text messaging.

Literacy scholar Tom Newkirk argues to the contrary in *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and Popular Culture*.<sup>1</sup> Many educators and parents, Newkirk asserts, assume too glibly that visual narratives are "The Enemy ... the narcotic that keeps children, particularly boys, from more wholesome and self-improving activities like reading" (xix). This "crisis mentality" may lead us to demonize popular culture wholesale while failing to recognize "the role of popular culture as a powerful alternative literacy" (Newkirk 7). If we analogize visual texts to "a drug," says Newkirk, we may miss the opportunity to explore "questions about how these primary narrative attractions might serve a useful purpose in schools" (7). In fact, Newkirk's qualitative study suggests that, rather than simply "swallowing" visual narratives wholesale or directly mimicking the media they consume, many children perform a "re-mix," taking the "visual models they enjoy," then "transforming them . . . and mixing them with other cultural worlds" (184).

Visual media, argues Newkirk, can be a powerful resource for development of children's literacy, provided that adults are savvy enough to recognize the complexity of children's responses to it. Thus, rather than "encourag[ing] a bunker mentality where the visual media is seen as the enemy" (7), Newkirk proposes that we open our definition of literacy to include the full range of literate activities in which today's children are engaged, including the visual and popular. To do so does not mean abandoning "established literature"; instead we can create a room "big enough" to "admit popular culture *and* classical literature, and where children, in their writing, often merge the two in unexpected ways" (Newkirk 173).

<sup>1</sup>Though Newkirk's study emphasizes the role of popular culture and media in enhancing the literacy of boys, he also points out that "the issue of 'popular culture'—and its appropriateness in schools—also affects valuations of girls' literacy... [I] hope that [my] argument...will work to their advantage as well" (xix).

The challenges to reading in the 21st century are both numerous and real, and those of us who care about developing literacy in the upcoming generation have much to be concerned about. Yet we ultimately do ourselves a disservice if we too easily scapegoat technology and the "talking pictures" it produces while failing to acknowledge the multiple, deeply systemic, and arguably more potent threats to traditional reading—from poverty and social inequity to demands on overworked and stressed parents, to the ever-narrowing and consolidated publishing industry, to the landlord greed that prices too many small retailers out of their communities. Might children's literacy thrive more fully if, rather than demonizing popular visual media, we follow Newkirk's lead and conceptualize it as a potential resource? Even in *Fahrenheit 451*, the bookish Faber tells the protagonist Montag: "It's not books you need, it's some of the things that once were in books. The same things could be in the 'parlor families' [i.e., television] today... Take it where you can find it... Books were only *one type of receptacle* where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget" (Bradbury 82-83, emphasis mine).

Visual media and technology will be part of the world our children inherit whether we like it or not. Is this necessarily a bad thing? I'm not so naïve as to say a flat-out "no"—it certainly can be, and I've seen enough evidence in my own college classrooms to worry that in many cases, it is. But I'm also not pessimistic enough to claim that *all* technology and visual media are inherently negative. Just the other night, for instance, I noticed my eleven-year-old son (who loves to read books *and* play video games) engaging in just the kind of activity Newkirk describes: closely studying the images from one of his treasured video games, drawing and labeling his own renditions of strange aliens, and scouring the house for blank paper on which to write a spinoff—a new tale, remixed from the multiple strands of his life, narrated in his own voice.

And isn't that what storytellers throughout time have been doing all along? As Salman Rushdie's narrator puts it in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the Ocean of the Streams of Story contains all stories "in fluid form" so that they can retain "the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead, but alive" (72).

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# Beyond the Adult World: Where Children Read Translations

By Carmen Nolte

**B**EYOND THE ADULT WORLD lies the world of the child, and the books adults write and children read can serve as important negotiators between these two spheres. In other words, children's books can fulfill a mediating function as they open up the adult world to their young readers, even as some adult "secrets" remain hidden from the child's view. According to scholars of children's literature, a central feature of the genre is the adult/child power structure inherent to the construction of childhood and, consequently, to the production and reception of texts for children. While childhood is not a stable concept and includes varying ideas about children, leading also to differing definitions of children's literature, it is the adult's, not the child's, construction of childhood that is voiced in children's books. These texts, then, serve both to define adults—as the opposite of children—and, at the same time, to teach children what their role in society is. As a genre that helps to civilize its young readers, children's literature is often designed to explain a society's cultural norms to children, and it therefore translates cultural practices into a language understandable to them. In other words, children's books explain cultural norms and ideologies that the child, who is not yet completely acculturated, perceives at least partly as foreign. Consequently, children's literature in and of itself constitutes a form of translation and explication of culture, and particularly of the adult world.

This translation work is particularly apparent in those many texts for children that are set in a fantasy world. J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*, for example, explore a magical world from the perspective of a young boy who is a stranger to this world; consequently, all referents in the fantasy realm, unfamiliar to both the protagonist and the reader, are sufficiently explained—or translated—within the text itself. Yet a similar argument can be made for children's books that do not employ the magical realm as their setting, too, because the texts necessarily translate adult-world referents to the child, who thus learns about this world that she is

not yet part of but supposed to grow into. In and through these texts, children are defined and contained, and as their place in relation to adults is highlighted, the young readers are expected to learn how to behave—or how to be "child-like"—in that place they inhabit. At the same time, however, texts for children, like language-to-language translations, can also undermine and challenge existing structures by emphasizing marginalized voices—especially, in this case, the voice of the child.

Children's literature as a genre contains speech from the margins as it includes, even if in an already translated form, the voice of the child, and herein lies one primary challenge to the adult world that texts for children can pose. The incorporation of the child's voice represents an act of translation because this voice is, of course, not the unadulterated voice of the "real" child but rather an adult writer's representation. For the writer of children's literature, this process of translating the child's voice presents an important ethical challenge as the child is in books for children typically constructed as different from and inferior to the adult in terms of power, and hence her voice is easily silenced. To represent this voice in literature, then, an "intimate act of listening," to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's term, is imperative. In other words, when the adult author writes the voice of the child, a voice that comes from a space outside of the adult world to which the child is relegated, she needs to resist the impulse to silence it by fitting it into the hegemonic adult framework. Instead, the child's voice, different from the adult's, asks the writer to listen closely so that it can eventually be heard by the reader as well.

Books for children thus fulfill a translating function that is two-fold: on the one hand, they translate and represent, implicitly or explicitly, the child's voice, and on the other, they relate unfamiliar referents to their young audience, whether they be referents rooted in the culture the child is growing into or in a foreign culture. Moreover, texts for children "contain" the child in both meanings of the term: the child is contained by children's literature in

the sense that she is categorized and defined in and through the genre, and at the same time these texts contain, or include, the figure of the child in all its disruptive capacities, especially through representing its voice. For children's literature, then, to be understood for all the complex work it is doing in highlighting but also bridging the gap between the adult world and the world of the child, intimate listening seems to be an important responsibility for the authors of children's books—and for their readers as well.

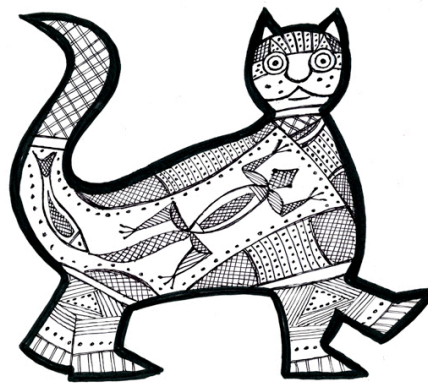


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