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It)

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From the Editor

Radical Change (Even if Not the End of the World as We Know It)

There is no other way to say it: 2012 was the year that the world was supposed to end. Or be made anew. Possibly both. In a story that received widespread media attention—and which became a source of anxiety for many individuals—according to some readings of the Mayan calendar, the world was scheduled to come to its finale on 21 December 2012. Failing total annihilation, the Earth would undergo some major cataclysmic change; human civilization as we know it would cease or, in keeping with another viewpoint, cycle back to the beginning of recorded time.

While the winter solstice passed without apocalyptic incident around the globe, this aura of looming, profound change was apt. Even without 21 December precipitating some form of end times, the year 2012 saw massive social, political, and economic transformations around the world. Public elections were held in Libya for the first time in more than four decades. Likewise, voters in France selected François Hollande, the nation's first Socialist president since François Mitterand. Finally, in the United States, President Barack Obama publicly supported same-sex marriage, the first such acknowledgment by a sitting president in American history.

The eight critical articles and one *Varia* piece contained in this volume reflect the spirit of large-scale transformation which came to typify the year 2012. Taken collectively, these essays provide an illuminating index of the ways in which children's literature scholarship has been changing and even reinventing itself anew in the twenty-first century.

The volume begins with an article that reveals the exciting new insights that can be gleaned when the field of children's literature is broadened to include that of childhood studies. In "Character Education and the Performance of Citizenship in *Glee*," Naomi Lesley situates the popular contemporary television show "within a discussion about the function of education in a democratic society." Beginning with the premise that "high school is a battleground for the develop-

ment of American values and resilient citizens, and that performance is somehow involved in that mission, whether to support or undercut it," she places "*Glee* in the context of conversations about the mission of public schooling, anxieties about the problems that bedevil the nation's schools, and the uses of arts education." During this process, Lesley does not ignore the oft-discussed issues of queerness, campiness, and the construction of teen identity that have been the subject of much previous commentary about *Glee*; rather, she makes a case that "these issues take on even more urgency when placed in the context of cultural contests over the purpose of education and the future of the nation's youth."

The next essay, Megan A. Norcia's "The London Shopscape: Educating the Child Consumer in the Stories of Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Martha Sherwood," focuses on a far different set of texts from another historical era, but with an equally interdisciplinary approach. Examining narratives that feature scenes of mothers and daughters shopping in London, the author demonstrates how messages cautioning against vain and frivolous materialism, along with stressing the importance of being a smart and savvy shopper, were pressing cultural concerns "long before Picadilly became such a circus and tabloids began tracking where Kate and Pippa shop." Norcia specifically spotlights Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), Edgeworth's "The Purple Jar" (1801–02), and Sherwood's *A Drive in the Coach through the streets of London* (1818). As she argues, "In addition to shedding light on the period preceding the mid- to late nineteenth-century interest in growing consumerist subjectivities, Wollstonecraft's, Edgeworth's, and Sherwood's works also enrich ongoing discussions about urban space through the representation of the London "shopscape" as a setting for moral and economic lessons." Drawing on both theoretical conceptions concerning the uses of urban space and sociocritical constructions of the flâneur, Norcia unpacks the ways in which these authors "used maternal characters to instruct their daughters that the *way* they consumed, as well as *what* they consumed, determined the meaning of their lives."

Joe Sutliff Sanders continues this interest in how texts encode literary, artistic, and cultural information in his article "Chaperoning Words: Meaning-Making in Comics and Picture Books." As he explains, "scholarship on comics and picture books frequently overlaps, often even as that scholarship tries to define what makes each form unique." Sanders's essay takes on the ambitious task of attempting to

do exactly that. During this process, he builds on the forum about comics and picture books which appeared in the Winter 2012 issue of our sister publication, the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, while also breaking from it in key critical and theoretical ways. Sanders proposes "a strategy for understanding comics and picture books that begins with form, specifically the production of meaning in texts that combine images and what Roland Barthes has called 'linguistic messages.'" But his examination does not end there. Aware that attending only to formal elements "would lead inevitably back to the definitional quagmire" discussed by previous critics on this subject, Sanders seeks to delineate the differences between these two genres by considering "the philosophies of meaning-making from which comics and picture books emerge." As he asserts: "Central to the solution I am proposing to the tangle of theory is attention to how each form limits the meanings possible in images, thereby encoding, enlisting, and distributing power with particular consequences for solitary and cooperative reading experiences."

The next essay, "Model Patriots: The First Children's Biographies of George Washington and Ben Franklin," spotlights both an oft-overlooked genre of children's literature—nonfiction—and an understudied historical time period, the early 1800s. As its author, Ivy Linton Stabell, reminds us: "The historical and cultural realities of early nineteenth-century America make children's biographies significant artifacts in the study of American identity and the expansion of nationalism in the early republic." Written and released during a time that not only saw important transformation in attitudes about children and childrearing, but which also witnessed a massive expansion of the children's book publishing industry, "biographies—which not only identify key Americans to admire, but also outline how to admire them—were frequently written for the 'rising generation' in order to instill values that would in turn ensure the state's survival." Accordingly, her essay details how the first juvenile biographies of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin managed the tricky task of describing the lives of these men, who were lauded for being revolutionaries, to an audience whose reading material was routinely envisioned as a means for instilling obedience. As Stabell illuminates: "in these biographies, Washington's and Franklin's rebellions must be contained for the texts not only to fortify political stability but also to maintain parental authority. To ensure these hierarchies, children's biographers liberally edit (and in some cases create or efface) the details of these two lives, imposing narrative control over these supposedly nonfiction works."

A. Robin Hoffman's "*Holiday House*, Childhood, and the End(s) of Time" is likewise situated at the intersection of history, culture, and identity. Offering an inventive and insightful new analysis of Catherine Sinclair's 1839 book, she argues that "*Holiday House* effectively inverts the image of childhood as a fantasy land of timeless, deathless utopia, and instead shows the grotesque suffering that results from a childhood ruled and distorted by time." Written and released during a period when "ever-more-precise and standardized timekeeping" was propelling both industry and the individual forward at an increasing rate, *Holiday House* can be seen as engaging with contemporaneous "efforts to bring society as a whole under the watchful eye of the clock." When placed against the backdrop of specific innovations like "the marriage of the railroad and the steam locomotive," along with growing societal interest in temporal issues like the problem of "wasting" time or the desire to receive "instant" results, *Holiday House* makes visible the way in which "these changes in adult society would continue to have corollary effects on children and the perception of childhood as the Industrial Revolution dawned and the British Empire extended ever farther."

Joyce E. Kelley's article, "'Mammy, can't you tell us sump'n' to play?': Children's Play as the Locus for Imaginative Imitation and Cultural Exchange in the Plantation Novels of Louise Clarke Pynelle," also takes up questions of power, memory, and history, but in the context of the antebellum American South. Examining the critically neglected work of Louise Clarke Pynelle, Kelley makes a case for the iconoclastic power and even liberatory potential of children's play in the plantation novels *Diddie, Dumps, and Tot* and *Miss Li'l Tweety*. As Kelley points out, "Though Pynelle's works uphold the system of slavery with their romanticized and paternalistic stance, the children in her texts sometimes operate within this system in ways which call into question the plantation's established cultural hierarchies." Focusing especially on depictions of girls' games in these narratives, the essay examines how "Left alone to amuse themselves, the children find subtle ways to mimic, test, rewrite, and even challenge the rigidity of the slave system through their stories, language, and imaginative play." Not only do these elements embody formerly overlooked sites of resistance to the plantation system in Pynelle's work, but they also signify "remarkable interest in children's play years before it was deemed significant by child psychologists."

The next article, "Naive Narrators and Double Narratives of Racially Motivated Violence in the Historical Fiction of Christopher Paul Curtis,"

by Jani L. Barker, approaches related issues from a different socioliterary perspective. This essay explores how Curtis negotiates the “conflicting imperatives” that authors of children’s narratives concerning historical violence must negotiate: providing a truthful account of the event that they are presenting, while also satisfying prevailing societal, parental, and often literary “demands to protect young readers.” Examining three of Curtis’s works of historical fiction—*Bud, Not Buddy*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, and *Elijah of Buxton*—Barker details how these texts “use the narrative technique of naive characters to create double narratives, rendering depictions of racism and violence against African Americans real and truthful, yet bearable.” Drawing on critical perspectives ranging from narratology and cultural studies to literary realism and race theory, her article elucidates the process by which the naive narrator in these texts both “shapes the stories told and guides their reception.” The critical endpoint for her analysis pushes beyond Curtis’s work, contemplating the ethical implications of historical fiction itself.

The final critical essay in the volume, Frances E. Dolan’s “Mastery at Misselthwaite Manor: Taming the Shrews in *The Secret Garden*,” brings together many of the themes present in the previous essays, including those of narrative doubleness and the anxiety of literary influence. The article makes a case that Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1911 novel *The Secret Garden* in general, and her portrayal of the character Mary Lennox in particular, can be placed in dialogue with the shrew tradition, “the disorderly character dating back at least as far as Socrates’s wife Xantippe, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath,” and, of course, Shakespeare’s Katharina. However, as Dolan points out in her essay, the book’s participation in this tradition is anything but simple or straightforward, with many passages that resist, revise, and even reject some of its supposedly signature traits. Thus Dolan makes the following compelling case: “In arguing that *The Secret Garden* is indebted to the shrew-taming tradition, an influence that Burnett does not seem to control or critique—and which many readers suffer but do not quite understand—I address why so many readers who remember *The Secret Garden* fondly also forget its conclusion in order to reverse or refuse the operations of its plot.”

This volume also includes a *Varia* piece, “Cultural Authenticity in Susan Fletcher’s *Shadow Spinner*,” by Taraneh Matloob. The *Varia* section is designed to offer articles, interviews, or short informative essays that would be of interest to scholars in the field of children’s literature. In the past, this feature has been used to spotlight a little-known author, call attention to an understudied genre, or shed light on a neglected

text, theme, or topic. Matloob's essay adds to ongoing discussions about identity politics and the potential problems that arise when an author writes about a culture, country, or religious tradition to which she herself does not belong. Specifically, her article examines the book *Shadow Spinner*, a retelling of *The 1,001 Arabian Nights* story sequence written by American author Susan Fletcher. As Matloob explains, "Since *Shadow Spinner* is a historical fiction about Iran authored by an outsider and well received by Iranians, it is a suitable book for testing debated questions about cultural authenticity and representation of others." Beginning with the large theoretical question of "what makes an authentically Persian text" and then offering close critical analysis of issues ranging from form and theme to imagery and characterization in *Shadow Spinner*, Matloob details the ways in which Fletcher was able to successfully bridge a cultural divide that was artistically formidable as well as politically fraught.

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to assemble this volume of essays. I would like to thank the contributing authors for sharing their stellar work, and the outside reviewers for providing such consistently fabulous feedback. A special note of appreciation goes to Lisa Radcliff at Hollins University for her excellent editorial assistance, as well as to Christine Doyle for her steadfast efforts as book review editor. I am equally indebted to the Children's Literature Association, Hollins University, and the readership of the journal for their ongoing support.

American journalist Gail Sheehy once commented: "If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living" (60). The year 2012 certainly affirmed this observation via numerous social, political, and economic events around the globe. The essays in this volume seek to do the same for the field of children's literature scholarship. I hope you find them as intellectually tantalizing and ideologically transformative as I have.

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Work Cited

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