

The Association for Research in Cultures of Young People & Ryerson English, MA Literatures  
of Modernity Presents:

## Children's Texts & Material Cultures

A Research Snapshot Symposium [Virtual edition]

**April 9, 2021 / RYERSON UNIVERSITY / TORONTO, ON**

**9:00-9:15 am: Coffee, tunes, and hellos**

**9:15-9:30 am: Welcome and Land Acknowledgment**

Jason Boyd (Grad Chair, MA Lit Mod Program, Dept of English, Ryerson)

Naomi Hamer (Ryerson, ARCYP President)

**9:30-10:25 Research snapshots roundtable #1**

Chairs: Natalie Coulter (York)

**The Fairest Fic of Them All: Fan's Recodification of Snow White AU FanFiction,**  
Harleigh Keriazes (Ryerson MA LitMod)

The fairy tale has been habitually commodified by adults for children's consumption. The tales continue to be re-codified or fit into the prominent ideology at the time of each new iteration. Entwined with Western storytelling the fairy tale, like most media for children has been told and changed by adults. The fairy tales' contents, pedagogy, as well as interactions (such as bedtime stories) have been filtered through an adult viewpoint. This paper will focus on how fanfiction creates a space where fans can conduct their own re-codification of the tale "Snow White" through the use of a Snow White AU. A similar concept, the fairy tale AU is described by Anne Kustritz as "fan fiction that borrows fairy-tale themes, specifically fairy-tale alternate universes (AUs), occupies a complex crossroads between mass and folk culture and can offer a shared language wherein anyone can negotiate, discuss, and

critique modern culture.” A Snow White AU refers to fairy tale themes specifically borrowed from the tale “Snow White.”

The intersection between mass and folk culture is what allows fan fiction writers to interpret or borrow aspects of fairy tales for their needs. In the case of fan fiction, this need is for exploration with sexuality and creativity. This paper will explore which aspects are added, removed, expanded on, or modified in the tale “Snow White” throughout Snow White AU fanfiction to evaluate how fans, some potentially young, interact with fairy tales with minimal guidance. It will seek to answer questions such as: How does fan fiction differ from typical adult produced content? What do these changes/similarities imply about fairy tale pedagogy?

**Harleigh Keriazes** is a current MA student in Ryerson’s Literatures of Modernity program. Her undergraduate degree was also at Ryerson in English, where she explored her research interest in folklore and mythology.

**Coming Out at Hogwarts: Sexuality, Play, and Performativity in Writing Harry Potter FanFiction**, Isobel Carnegie (Ryerson MA LitMod)

*Harry Potter* has gripped the world in its magical hold for over two decades now, seeping from the pages and onto the wild, unsupervised realm of the internet. This has materialized predominantly through fanfiction: from slash fiction to alternate realities, fanfiction has birthed writers and safe spaces. In this research paper I aim to explore how young writers can perform and practice sexuality within the safe confines of the *Harry Potter* universe, from the perspective of an acafan, an “[academic] who are themselves fans and who use their ‘subcultural knowledge’ to inform their academic work (Jenkins, Rand, and Hellekson 2011). I propose writing fanfiction is a form of play and performativity to explore one’s sexuality in a positive and sheltered manner. I will use Judith Butler’s “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” to prod fanfiction as a method of practicing performative acts of desire, as the online cocoon “offers a safe space for [fanfic writers to] explore discourses of sexuality, especially queerness” until they are ready to perform the actions themselves (Tosenberger 202). To bolster my argument for fanfiction as positive performativity and play, while grounding it in the personal, I will be using my own fanfiction and the comments I received between 2012 to early 2015. This will exemplify how fanfiction is used to

explore sexuality within a safe, supportive space. Through this exploration I will ask how exactly fanfiction prepares and supports the writer. My focus will be on the personal, interior experience of the fanfiction writer rather than the exteriority of the community – the popular subject being the platforms and social workings themselves, how writers interact, and the toxicity that can arise.

**Isobel Carnegie** is a Master's candidate in Ryerson's Literatures of Modernity program, pursuing an interest in Canadian Queer Literature and Toronto's Queer history. She did her Bachelor's at Victoria College University within the University of Toronto, earning a Specialist in English and a Minor in Sexual Diversity Studies.

**“Comics–They’re not just for grown-ups anymore!”: Play, Agency, and Metanarrative in *Little Lit*, Eli Burley (Ryerson MA LitMod)**

Both the comics medium and fairy tale genre have often been entangled in critical discussions attempting to delineate the boundaries between children's and adult culture along with those between high and low brow art. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's *Little Lit*, a collection of “Folklore & Fairy Tale Funnies,” is a book that playfully troubles these categorizations. *Little Lit* attempts to elevate comics and provide young readers with an education in visual, literary, and cultural literacy. Yet it also hopes to remediate the medium into an accessible form that grants children opportunities to participate in playful deconstructions of classic fairy tale formats and their didactic impulses. The book offers a pedagogical experience with an aspirational thrust, engaging in a program of nurturing refined taste and literary ambition. At the same time, it embraces a spirit of transgression, independence, and unrestricted storytelling. This paper will explore how the forms and genres of fairy tales and comics along with the specific vision of Spiegelman and Mouly lend themselves to these mixed imperatives. Through being invited to invent stories about stories, the readers of *Little Lit* are also invited to produce new stories about childhood itself. Yet there is still something oxymoronic in the idea of teaching children how to escape the clutches of a highbrow, aspirational education through an ostensibly anarchic play experience designed by adults to still be tasteful, literary, and avant garde. By close reading the text and paratext of *Little Lit* in the context of these discourses, this paper will aim attempt to develop a better understanding of how the dynamics of privacy and subversion enacted therein either resolve or

further open up the paradoxical relationships between high and low culture, supervision, instruction, play, and autonomy.

**Eli Burley** is a Master's candidate in Literatures of Modernity at Ryerson University. He holds a bachelor of arts with a double major in Western Society and Culture/ English and Creative Writing from Concordia University. His research interests include metanarratives, avant garde and postmodern literature, visual storytelling, pedagogy and practices of play, fairy tales, and material culture.

**The Cultural Influence of Barbie: The Progression of Representation and Impacts of Inclusivity,** Rachel Gopal (Ryerson MA LitMod)

In 1959, Ruth and Elliot Handler introduced a children's toy that would become the most popular and highest grossing doll of all time (The Toys That Made Us, 2017). Ruth Handler envisioned and brought to life a toy that would evoke imaginative play on young girls. The Barbie Doll allowed young girls to project their adult aspirations as well as envision themselves in a professional world, moving away from the imposed domesticity that was expected of girls in that time (The Toys That Made Us, 2017). Barbie is a huge cultural figure that has been both widely praised and criticized. While previous arguments have been made that were rooted in the lack of inclusion shown through Barbie Dolls, my research looks at the progression of represented identities.

Specifically, I would like to look at the various races that have been represented through the forms of Barbie Dolls as well as the body types that have been made to fit a wide demographic of identity representation. Other research questions I have focus on the effects of imaginative play with these dolls as well as if and how playing with Barbie Dolls as children has impacted adult identities. Connections in my research questions are also a possibility as race and body inclusive Barbie Dolls are a relatively recent phenomenon so to look at the adults that grew up without proper representation in their Barbie Dolls as children would be considerable. I intend to draw upon the work of Amy Nesbitt et al., in "Barbie's new look: Exploring cognitive body representation among female children and adolescents" and "We're Not Barbie Girls: Tweens Transform a Feminine Icon" by Lousie Collins et al., to look at whether or not the inclusive body types had made a difference on the way children identified with dolls. Additionally, Emily R. Aguiló-Pérez's "Tracing Puerto Rican Girlhoods: An Intergenerational Study of

Interactions with Barbie and Her Influence on Female Identities” and Inderpal Grewal’s “Travelling Barbie: Indian Transnationality and New Consumer Subjects” allow me to further explore the way representation of race (or the lack thereof) in Barbie Dolls impacted childhoods.

**Rachel Gopal** is a Masters Student in Ryerson’s Literatures of Modernity Program. Her research interests pertain to the equity of education as well as the diversity of representation of various identities in media

**What’s New Scooby Doo?** Vanessa Mainella (Ryerson MA Litmod)

The T.V. has been the stand-in babysitter for nearly a century; more specifically, television shows and their ability to enrapture children. A popular series that still pervades our screens is Scooby-Doo. Scooby’s gang of mystery-solving teens has been around since 1969, and since then, has grown into a multi-million dollar franchise. Like any cartoon, Scooby-Doo socializes its viewers in gender politics, sexuality, nationality, and several other areas of social understanding. I am interested in how this cartoon socializes children in sexuality, and how that socialization develops into adult content as the franchise grows. My research will take on three parts. Firstly, I will analyze Scooby-Doo as a vehicle for sexual socialization by looking at the sexual politics in the original tv show “Scooby Doo, Where Are You” (sexual politics refers to the LGBTQ+ representation of characters). Secondly, I will track the way in which the franchise has developed and extended into adult culture (sexy costumes, cosplays, fanfiction, and sexual roleplay games). Finally, I will continue the analysis of sexual socialization but apply it to Scooby-Doo’s adult content. All of this culminates to understanding Scooby-Doo as an agent of sexual socialization.

**Vanessa Mainella** is a MA Candidate in the Literatures of Modernity program at Ryerson University. She has a passion for children's culture and publishing, and hopes to combine the two into her dream career of children's text publishing.

**Insta Kids: Fashion and New Media,** Helena Wright (Ryerson MA LitMod)

The popular streetwear brand “Fashion Nova” is well known on Instagram as being trendy, stylish, and sponsored by Cardi B. In 2020 the brand entered the children’s fashion market as they launched a children’s wear section called Nova Kids. The concept of children’s fashion is not new, but the role of child “influencers” is exclusively a by-product of social media. Child Instagram

influencers present questions surrounding the concept of childhood and children's material culture. Through an examination of Nova Kids child influencers, children's fashion on social media commoditizes and excludes children from the making of material culture. Through a qualitative analysis of Nova Kids images, it becomes apparent that children do not participate in the consumption of media despite being the ones on display and the target audience of children's fashion. Alternatively, children are displayed in advertisements as a commodity that encourages consumers to buy Nova Kids products. Parents and adults mediate and curate children's social media, ultimately controlling the narrative surrounding children's fashion and products. Children's bodies are used to market and sell clothing, which in turn makes them objects of desire. Moreover, parents create the online identities of their children which effectively removes the child's ability to participate in children's material culture. Child influencers present issues of agency in children's culture and further reinforces the binary between child and adult. The power imbalance fabricates children as passive and unable to produce, create, and participate in their social reality.

**Helena Wright** is a student at Ryerson University and a candidate in the Literatures of Modernity program. She holds an undergraduate degree in English and philosophy and her interests include critical theory, media, and education. In particular, she is interested in the impacts of social media and internet culture on society and subcultures.

**Remediation and Cultural Responsibility: The Dr. Seuss Theme Park, Museum, and Immersive Experience,** Sabrina Pavelic (Ryerson MA LitMod)

What makes a remediation and to what extent does remediation perpetuate cultural discourse? In this paper I compare three separate spaces that remediate Dr. Seuss's picture books. These include "Seuss Landing" at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, with a focus on "The Cat in the Hat" ride, "The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum" in Springfield, Massachusetts, as well as the "Dr. Seuss Experience" pop-up in Mississauga, Ontario. The comparison of these three spaces offers us insight into the cultural impact of continuously promoting and remediating Dr. Seuss. Further, it suggests that the remediation of Dr. Seuss picture books is promoting a homogenized canon in children's literature where diversity and representation is not prioritized.

Through the analysis of these three spaces, I argue that companies catering to young children and young persons more generally, must recognize the cultural responsibility of remediations. Through analysis of the importance of theme parks, I also suggest that such attractions should plan their spaces as carefully as do museums. Theme parks are also sites of cultural significance and the narratives perpetuated here have equal or, I argue, even greater cultural impact than their museum counterparts.

First and foremost, I do not suggest that problematic narratives should continue to be remediated. Instead, I suggest an understanding and awareness of such narratives by spaces of cultural significance so as to promote future remediations that do consider diversity. To do this I will look at how each space considers marketing, theatricality and performance, as well as user experience or engagement.

**Sabrina Pavelic** is a current graduate student at Ryerson University in the Literatures of Modernity program. She has an Honours undergraduate degree from the University of Western Ontario in English Language and Literature as well as a minor in History. Her research interests include the intersection between literature more broadly and children's literature more specifically with politics, as viewed alongside historical and cultural contexts. Sabrina works as a freelance writer, editor, and proofreader in her free time and is acting Managing Editor for the *White Wall Review* through the Winter 2021 semester.

**10:25-10:30 AM: 5 minute stretch break with tunes**

**10:30-11:20 AM: Research snapshots roundtable #2**

Chairs: Cameron Greensmith (Kennesaw State, ARCYP Exec); Erin Spring (Calgary; ARCYP Treasurer)

**Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall, Who Gets the Happily Ever After, After All? An Analysis of Disney's Gender-Bending Villains**, Meg Glover (Ryerson MA LitMod)

Over the years, scholars have frequently criticized Disney for its racialized portrayals of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Indigenous peoples; however,

little scholarship exists concerning the franchise's overly heteronormative representations of gender and sexuality, especially with regards to its most villainous characters. In this research paper, I aim to explore the construction of some of Disney's most prominent villains and examine how their non-binary, transgendered, and queer characteristics are used by the franchise to further their displays of deviance and abnormality. Looking specifically at *The Little Mermaid's* Ursula, *Cinderella's* ugly stepsisters, and *Pocahontas's* John Ratcliffe, I will explore how Disney uses LGBTQ+ signifiers to construct an implicit message that performing gender outside of society's normative expectations is abnormal, nefarious and wrong.

Over the years, scholars have frequently criticized Disney for its racialized portrayals of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Indigenous peoples; however, little scholarship exists concerning the franchise's heteronormative representations of gender and sexuality, especially with regards to its most villainous characters. In this research paper, I aim to explore the construction of some of Disney's most prominent villains and examine how their non-binary, transgendered, and queer characteristics are used by the franchise to further their displays of deviance and abnormality.

As Johnson Cheu explores in his text *Diversity in Disney Films*, "most of the heroes and heroines of the beloved Disney film franchise are hyper-heterosexual"—presenting stereotypical heteronormative attributes and desiring heterosexual romances—while their villainous counterparts are frequently depicted as "women with either strong masculine qualities or as strangely defeminized, while the male bad guys are portrayed as effeminate" (Cheu 149). Looking specifically at *The Little Mermaid's* Ursula, *Cinderella's* ugly stepsisters, and *Pocahontas's* John Ratcliffe, I will demonstrate Disney's use of LGBTQ+ signifiers to create feelings of suspicion, distrust and fear in some of its key antagonists.

I will explore how, by portraying only wicked characters as non-binary, Disney constructs an implicit message that performing gender outside of society's normative expectations is abnormal, nefarious and wrong. Analyzing the ugly stepsisters' hyper-masculine features, John Ratcliffe's campy, effeminate style and the drag queen that inspired Ursula's creation, I aim to explore the intentional queer coding of these villainous characters to perpetuate heteronormativity and ingrain heteronormative values in the minds of Disney's child viewers.



**Meg Glover** is a Master's student in the Literatures of Modernity program at Ryerson University. She earned her BAH in English at Queen's University, focusing her studies on postcolonial literature, Indigenous literature and diaspora studies. Her research interests include Canadian literature, diaspora and transnationalism, gender studies and queer theory.

**Exploring Brownness in Disney's Princess: A critique of cultural representations in Disney or the lack thereof,** Laraib Khan (Ryerson MA LitMod)

The global fanbase of Disney is tremendous, and undoubtedly, the classic white face, golden hair and blue eyes have become the image of a princess in young minds. Neal A. Lester in his article "Disney's Princess and the Frog: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First," outlines Disney's initiative to introduce an African-American princess and highlights the problematic characteristics of Princess Tiana. While exploring the tension of cultural representation, Lester points out that "Disney's suspicious dusting of and regifting old racial and gender stereotypes" are visible in Tiana's character (Lester, 297).

I intend to expose Disney's stereotypical representation in their Princesses through the lack of diversity and excess 'whiteness,' the inaccurate depiction of the cultures they claim to represent and how these misrepresented ideologies affect the children who consume these narratives. In this paper, I will evaluate Jasmine's characteristics from Aladdin, screened in 1992, and the lack of Middle Eastern facial features she acquires. I argue Princess Jasmine's physical traits are not an accurate representation of the Middle Eastern culture in the original 1992 version. The 'white' casting of the contemporary Jasmine screened in Disney's live-action animation of Aladdin in 2018 is also a topic I intend to explore. Moreover, I will analyze the role of the coloured heroin, Elana, in Disney's recent show Elena and the Secret of Avalor (2017) as subordinate compared to her white counterpart Princess Sofia. In doing so, I hope to further confirm Disney's lack of sensitivity and political strategies to instill white supremacy in children's minds. Therefore, concluding on the importance of exposing children to transcultural literature to perhaps balancing the lack of diversity Disney has showcased and promoted thus far.

**Laraib Khan** is a MA candidate of Literature of Modernity at Ryerson University. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, with a double major in Psychology and English and a minor in Arts. Her research interests include Islamic feminist studies, cultural studies, colonialism, the rise of digitalization and remediation in relation to modernism. She is eager to expand her research through an open digital scholarship platform.

**The Curse of Censorship: Analyzing the Censorship in Untraditional Princess Heroines**, Alanna Sabatino (Ryerson MA LitMod)

The classic princess narrative has exploited the “damsel in distress” trope by presenting a submissive, traditionally beautiful – by the North American standard– woman finding her happily-ever-after after being saved by her “prince charming.” In doing so, these films expose children to a pigeonhole of experiences. In recent years, children’s media culture has attempted to diversify their female characters by categorizing them as ‘edutainment films’ which contain a historical or cultural element while providing a high level of entertainment for viewers. Unfortunately, when adapting these elements for children’s consumption, they undergo an extensive and damaging censorship process.

This paper will explore the untraditional princess heroine narrative in three children’s edutainment films and analyze the disguise of censorship behind the idea of a curse. Each film displays a level of edutainment– *Anastasia* (1997) is set in civil unrest during the execution of the Romanov family, *Princess and the Frog* (2009) presents the Black experience during the 1920s in New Orleans, and *Moana* (2016) depicts the Polynesian culture during The Long Pause – unfortunately, the appearance of edutainment in these films is merely that, an appearance. The censorship replaces each grim reality with a fantastic element to steer the narratives away from the truth and towards a magical narrative. This is done through the use of a curse – Rasputin curses Anastasia, Dr. Facilier curses Tiana, and Moana experiences the curse of Te Kā. This paper will seek to understand how using a curse works to mask censorship, distract the audience from the real societal issues of these experiences to avoid addressing the truth, and allow for the happily-ever-after trope to prevail.

**Alanna Sabatino** is currently an M.A. Candidate in the Literatures of Modernity program at Ryerson University. Alanna completed her undergraduate studies at Ryerson University with a major in English literature and a double minor in

History and Sociology. Her research interests include rhetorical analysis, children's literature, and feminist studies.

**Animating Girlhood**, Shubhneet Sandhu (Ryerson MA LitMod)

In an attempt to capture and recreate societal attitudes towards women and girls, the representation of girlhood in film remains in a state of constant development. This can especially be seen in Disney films where there is a conscientious effort to move away from the princess-character-waiting-for-her-prince trope towards more complex female characters exercising agency and facing challenges they must overcome. These differing representations are a result of shifting cultural views towards women and girls. Researching whether such depictions act as a reflection of society allows for a better understanding of the larger socio-cultural implications of what young girls are consuming and internalizing when watching animated films. Although there exists research on girl characters in animated films, this paper aims to explore co-existing representations from different cultures which speak to a larger global understanding of girlhood. Looking at two major film studios that make films for children: Disney Studios and Studio Ghibli, the research will center around three films from each studio released around the same time: *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Mulan* (1998) and *A Whisper of the Heart* (1995), and lastly *Lilo and Stitch* (2002) and *Spirited Away* (2001). This paper looks at each of these films in order to assess and explore the relationship between girl characters and the girl audiences they were created for.

**Shubhneet Sandhu** is a MA student in the Literatures of Modernity program at Ryerson University. She earned her BA in English at Glendon College, York University. Her research interests include children's literature, Canadian fiction, as well as 19th century literature. Part of what makes children's material culture and literature so interesting to her is the dynamic between the role of children's agency and interaction with various materials created for them and the intentions of adult creators.

**Modernity's Female Heroine: Taking an Intersectional Approach to Traditional Fairy Tale Princesses**, Selena Jodha, (Ryerson MA LitMod)

Young adult (YA) literature offers a new avenue for reconceptualization by allowing for new possibilities and agency that young people can realistically achieve by creating characters and settings that look and act like them, offering

a solution for many societal problems. According to Jack Zipes, fairy tales resist a universal definition which is why it continues to grow through adaptations –absorbing and embracing all genres, art forms and cultures– and why there are many forms of remediation that it embarks on.

Marissa Meyers, author of the sci-fi fairy tale *The Lunar Chronicles* series, invents a “collaborative fairy tale” which connects popular Euro-centric female princesses to diverse female heroines as they regain agency for their lives in a dystopian world. The female heroine concept was popularized by Susanne Collins’ Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, in which females began challenging stereotypical behaviours of the female hero prior to the late twentieth century. Through this paper, I intend to analyze how Meyers uses her contemporary YA fairy tale adaptation to transform the traditional princess into a modern female heroine. In doing so, she allows for the growing possibilities of racial and societal intersectionality; specifically, for collaborative fairy tales to succeed, intersectional approaches must be understood to advance the current female heroine concept. This paper will further explore the ideals missing from the modern female heroine –which lack a feminist consciousness that intersects with racial diversity– and continue to break away from the “damsel in distress” trope. Additionally, I hope to implicate the importance of intersectional approaches in young adult fairy tale literature.

**Selena Jodha** is currently a M.A candidate at Ryerson University. Her academic interests are currently in colonial discourse analysis, rhetorical and intersectional feminist theory and children's literature.

**Young Adult Fantasy Study in Academia**, Alessia Dickson (Ryerson BA)

Young adult fantasy is defined as a subgenre within young adult fiction for ages fourteen to twenty-two and is one of the most popular genres on the market. Despite its popularity, young adult fantasy is often understudied in academia, due to the misconception of young adult fiction being “juvenile.” In reality, young adult fantasy often mirrors the real-life experiences of young adults transitioning into adulthood, including important themes of identity, love, relationships, and injustice through fantastical elements. As such, young adult fantasy can act as a powerful tool for young adults to think critically about their identity, relationships, and place in the world, while also seeing their diverse experiences represented through fantastical fiction. Considering the

importance of young adult fantasy and university as a place for young adults, there, arguably, is no better place to study the genre of young adult fantasy. This research project seeks to fill the gap of this understudied subgenre in academia, by creating a hypothetical young adult fantasy course for undergraduate students. Built on the online platform Notion, this course uses an array of media tools to create three interactive online modules: the magical bildungsroman, diversity in YA fantasy and social justice in YA fantasy. Using three key texts with secondary sources, this research project will provide a close reading of texts that best exemplify the YA fantasy genre. In doing so, it will highlight the common themes and tropes that best represent the authentic experiences of young adults. This research project seeks to add to the scholarly conversation on modern young adult fantasy and how the subgenre can positively impact the lives of its readers.

**Alessia Dickson** is the award-winning author of her YA fantasy series, *The Crystal Chronicles*. During the school year, Alessia tours Ontario as a motivational speaker, encouraging elementary and secondary students to pursue their dreams. With her unique insight into the YA fantasy genre and experience with young adults, Alessia hopes her independent research project will bring a fresh perspective to the scholarly conversation on young adult fiction. Currently, Alessia spends her time working on her third book while also completing her undergraduate B.A in English at Ryerson University.

**11:20-11:25 AM: 5 minute stretch break with tunes**

**11:25-12:20 PM: Research snapshots roundtable #3**

Chairs: Abigail Shabtay (York, ARCYP Exec); Julie Garlen (Carleton, ARCYP Exec)

**Feminism in Louise O’Neill’s contemporary YA fiction**, Jennifer Mooney (PhD Dublin City)

Within the context of Irish and international twenty-first-century young adult (YA) literature, my research examines how Irish author Louise O’Neill’s contemporary YA fiction articulates and explores ideas and debates concerning power and empowerment, feminism, gender, and consent. I address how the concept of “rape culture” (“a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression

and supports violence against women” Buchwald et al. xi) and the intersections between feminism and power have become increasingly prominent in Irish cultural discourse in the years following the publication of O’Neill’s *Only Ever Yours* and *Asking For It* – in 2014 and 2015 respectively. My dissertation asks whether texts like O’Neill’s, that contain overtly feminist political ideology rethink freedom and empowerment for women and girls, really propose new ways of thinking about power and gender, or do they get lost in, or weighed down by, authorial agenda and controversy? I argue that O’Neill’s narrative approach to power results in a narrow focus on sexism, with damning limitations for male and female characterisation. My dissertation critiques the works’ representation of traditional notions of masculinity and emphasises their failure to consider men’s position within the gendered construct; women’s role in constructing masculinities; and male oppression. Considering the socio-political context in Ireland and broader Western culture from which O’Neill’s works are written, and taking into account a selection of Irish and international YA literature that addresses similar issues in different contexts, my research highlights the contradictions in O’Neill’s works. It illuminates the potential of O’Neill’s texts to function as a form of literary/social fundamentalism, which often undermines, rather than promotes, equality. By engaging with these aspects of O’Neill’s works, and, more broadly, those authored by other contemporary Irish YA writers committed to voicing a very different Ireland to that of previous generations, this dissertation offers a timely and necessary response to contemporary feminist Irish YA fiction and substantiates why such works are deserving of increased critical scrutiny.

**Jennifer Mooney** is in the final months of completing her PhD in children’s literature at Dublin City University and is in receipt of the School of English Doctoral Scholarship. Her dissertation focuses on the relationship between feminist theories of power and empowerment and the creative work of Irish author Louise O’Neill in the context of contemporary young adult literature. Her monograph will be published as part of the Routledge Studies in Irish Literature series. Jennifer’s MA thesis was shortlisted for the ISSCL’s Biennial Award for an Outstanding Thesis in Children’s Literature 2015 – 2017. Jennifer lectures in children’s literature at third level in Dublin City University and Marino College of Education, Dublin.

**The Extra-Ordinary Girl Under Neoliberalism, On and Off Screen: How Teen Girls in Toronto Negotiate Care, Connection, and Figurations of Girlhood,**  
Tina Benigno (PhD York)

This work examines society's fascination with the extra-ordinary girl, on and off screen, as she exists under neoliberalism today. Through a combination of qualitative group interviews with teen girls in Toronto, textual analysis, and cultural analyses, I explore the girl figure and figurations of girlhood. My use of the term figuration attempts to capture the quality of girlhood that materializes from the conversation between symbolic depictions of girlhood and real material practices and experiences of lived girlhoods, such as those from my focus groups. Katniss from *The Hunger Games* and Sabrina from *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* are two case studies within contemporary YA film and TV exemplifying an extra-ordinary teen girl protagonist. Through close analysis, it becomes apparent that these two case studies of the extra-ordinary girl figure - the warrior-activist and the witch - share some common traits. Moreover, the fictional practices and identities of the characters of Katniss and Sabrina reflect some dominant practices that real, material girls also engage in: activism and alternative spirituality. These practices are relevant to figurations of contemporary girlhood, especially as they comment on the exceptional girl figure. The exceptional power and visibility that the extra-ordinary girl possesses are wielded to affect positive social change. Both the actual girl activists and witches, who still oblige and fit within the extra-ordinary model, are largely inspired to fight injustice which is typically of a capitalist nature.

For the girls in my study, the extra-ordinariness of these characters, like the extraordinariness of the activist figure discussed in our sessions, is understood within the context of care and connection. Moreover, being extraordinary or powerful is overwhelming and intimidating for these girls. Both the relationships and collectivism that they value, and their underlying feelings of needing to work on being stronger, braver, and more confident reveal internalized neoliberal messages.

**Tina Benigno** is in her final year of the PhD program in Humanities at York University, where she researches young people's media and cultures, focusing on girlhood and cinema /TV. She holds a MA in Film Studies from York University and a BA in Cinema Studies, English, and Italian Studies from the University of Toronto.

For her next project she is interested in exploring materialities and practices of care for young people.

**Introducing Storied resistances: Rewriting & revisioning rape culture in YA fanfiction activist art**, Amber Moore (PhD University of British Columbia)

For this presentation, I wish to share a glimpse of my upcoming Banting-funded postdoctoral project entitled *Storied resistances: Rewriting & revisioning rape culture in YA fanfiction activist art*. With it and under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Marshall, I aim to build on my doctoral dissertation where I explored teacher candidates' responses to teaching and learning about sexual assault narratives and hone in on YA sexual assault fanfiction specifically. This genre powerfully rewrites some of the texts from my dissertation and particularly centers largely adolescent creators. Fanfiction, which primarily originated with adolescent girls' production and consumption (Skaines, 2019), is one of the fastest growing, most widely read yet largely ignored genres (Mirmohamadi 2014), especially by educators (Garcia et al., 2016). As such, its pedagogic potential is worthy of examination: how storied resistances against rape culture are enacted online through YA fanfiction that reimagines trauma experiences.

Because fanfiction is ultimately about creatively and critically challenging discourses, ideas, and representations in texts, I will examine how this genre is meaningfully operationalized as artistic and community-based anti-rape activism - a practice extending beyond representation of rape culture to respond to cultural supports for sexual violence (Rentschler, 2014). To begin this work, I ask the following: (1) how is rape culture reimagined and resisted through YA sexual assault fanfiction writing/art? (2) What is the pedagogical potential of this fanfiction and what pedagogic discourses emerge in its community commentary? (3) In what ways do fanfiction participatory communities archive sexual assault stories? I will employ a feminist theoretical framework because fanfiction originated and continues to be a largely feminist undertaking (Hellekson & Busse, 2014), as well as use feminist methodology, which is especially necessary as I center stories about characters that have experienced sexual trauma and explore how fanfiction authors respond to their knowledge(s).

**Amber Moore** is a SSHRC-funded Ph.D. Candidate and Killam Laureate at The University of British Columbia. Her research interests include adolescent literacies, feminist pedagogies, teacher education, arts-based research, rape



culture, and trauma literature, particularly YA sexual assault narratives. Her work can be found in journals such as *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and *Qualitative Inquiry*, among others. She is also an incoming Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at Simon Fraser University where she will be researching YA trauma fanfiction.

**Gender Presented in Children's Picture Books**, Ameera Ali (PhD York)

This presentation will briefly discuss my doctoral research which encompasses an exploration of gender and children's literature wherein 30 children's picture books featuring gender variant protagonists were discursively analyzed. By implementing a feminist poststructuralist theoretical orientation, this research utilizes a critical discourse analysis to respond to the following three guiding research questions: 1) *How is gender discursively constructed within children's picture books on gender variance?* 2) *How do characters constitute and navigate their gender subjectivities and subject positions within the narratives of these texts?* 3) *What subject positions are available for readers to identify and align themselves with within these texts?* Key findings that were elucidated through this research include that: 1) these texts emphasize a largely normative depiction of gender variance, wherein binary forms of gender variance are overwhelmingly overrepresented; 2) non-binary subjectivities were largely underrepresented as they were only marginally present; and 3) agender and genderless subjectivities were wholly non-existent. The overrepresentation of binary subject positions alongside the underrepresentation of non-binary and genderless subject positions has significant implications for the children engaging with these books. Children belonging to the latter two groups are not able to identify with these characters and thus do not find themselves represented within this genre of texts. These children learn that their subjectivity is 'other', peripheral, and fundamentally erased as they become relegated to the margins of a genre of literature that is *already* marginalized to begin with. More importantly, the prospect of existing 'beyond' and without gender is not a possibility within these texts as gender itself is principally naturalized and normalized.

**Ameera Ali** recently completed her PhD at York University, where her dissertation entailed a discourse analysis of children's literature on gender variance. She is now a Post-Doctoral Researcher at York's teaching and learning centre, the Teaching Commons, where she is researching student experiences of the transition

to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to her post-doctoral research, Ameera is also co-conducting a study on intersectionality in children's literature.

**Music Fandom and Participatory Culture, Katelyn Conferido (BA York)**

This small-scale research project explores how young people (aged 14-18) in the Greater Toronto Area experience music-focused participatory fan cultures. While there currently exists a great deal of research regarding fan studies and experiences within participatory cultures, much of the scholarship focuses on a demographic of older youth and adults and often treats these fans as objects of study, rather than active participants in the research process. By developing a study that approached this topic from a background of child and youth studies, this project brought youth perspectives to the forefront through an opportunity for youth to further engage in the study as co-researchers. Using qualitative focus groups as a method, this project explores the experiences of five music fans. The study found that for these particular youth, fan culture experiences are largely based on having an emotional connection to a musical artist and their work. In addition to this, the project examines participants' experiences of interacting with other fans, and the opportunities that arise to share experiences, have their feelings validated, and form meaningful relationships. The research also highlights the ways in which the participants negotiate their fan identities in spaces beyond the fandom. Through positioning young people as experts on their lived experiences, this project ultimately showcases the fact that young people have so much to share; they are just waiting for someone to listen.

**Katelyn Conferido** is an undergraduate student in the Children, Childhood, and Youth program at York University. She has been awarded an honourable mention in the LA&PS Writing Prize (2020) and the recipient of the LA&PS Dean's Award for Academic Excellence (2018-2019). She will be attending the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto in the fall to pursue a Master of Arts in Child Study and Education.

**12:20-1:30 PM Lunch, break and games. For game-time at 1PM go to:**

**<https://backyard.co/p/F8S68M?code=youngster>**

**1:30-3:00 PM: ARCYP new books roundtable**

Chairs: Kristine Alexander (Lethbridge/Institute for Child and Youth Studies); Naomi Hamer (ARCYP President/Ryerson)

**Hannah Dyer** (Brock) *The Queer Aesthetics of Childhood: Assymetries of Innocence and the Cultural Politics of Child Development* (Rutgers U Press)

In *The Queer Aesthetics of Childhood*, Hannah Dyer offers a study of how children's art and art about childhood can forecast new models of social life that redistribute care, belonging, and political value. Dyer suggests that childhood's cultural expressions offer insight into the persisting residues of colonial history, nation building, homophobia, and related violence. Drawing from queer and feminist theory, psychoanalysis, settler-colonial studies, and cultural studies, this book helps to explain how some theories of childhood can hurt children. Dyer's analysis moves between diverse sites and scales, including photographs and an art installation, children's drawings after experiencing war in Gaza, a novel about gay love and childhood trauma, and debates in sex-education. In the cultural formations of art, she finds new theories of childhood that attend to the knowledge, trauma, fortitude and experience that children might possess. In addressing aggressions against children, ambivalences towards child protection, and the vital contributions children make to transnational politics, she seeks new and queer theories of childhood.

**Dr. Hannah Dyer** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Child & Youth Studies at Brock University. She is a critical theorist of childhood with concentration in art/aesthetics, critical theory, queer theory, and psychoanalysis. She is interested in how aesthetic and expressive cultures of childhood reframe relationships to political crises, historical traumas, sexuality, racialization, and social debates about belonging. While taking the child's material vulnerabilities and pressing need for care into account, this work also emphasizes fantasy and futurity.

**Kenneth Kidd** (Florida) --*Theory for Beginners: Children's Literature as Critical Thought* (Fordham U Press)

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Philosophy for Children movement (P4C) has affirmed children's literature as important philosophical work. Theory, meanwhile, has invested in children's classics, especially Lewis Carroll's Alice books, and has also developed a literature for beginners that resembles children's literature

in significant ways. Offering a novel take on this phenomenon, *Theory for Beginners* explores how philosophy and theory draw on children's literature and have even come to resemble it in their strategies for cultivating the child and/or the beginner. Examining everything from the rise of French Theory in the United States to the crucial pedagogies offered in children's picture books, from Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Are You My Mother?* and Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* to studies of queer childhood, Kenneth B. Kidd deftly reveals the way in which children may learn from philosophy and vice versa.

**Kenneth Kidd** is Professor of English at the University of Florida. He's the author of *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale*; *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature*; and *Theory for Beginners: Children's Literature as Critical Thought*. He has co-edited *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*; *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*; *Prizing Children's Literature: The Cultural Politics of Children's Book Awards*; and *Queer as Camp: Essays on Summer, Style, and Sexuality*. With Elizabeth Marshall he co-edits the Routledge series *Children's Literature and Culture*.

**Elizabeth Marshall** (SFU)---*Witnessing Girlhood: Toward an Intersectional Tradition of Life Writing* (with co-author Leigh Gilmore, Fordham U Press)

When more than 150 women testified in 2018 to the sexual abuse inflicted on them by Dr. Larry Nassar when they were young, competitive gymnasts, they exposed and transformed the conditions that shielded their violation, including the testimonial disadvantages that cluster at the site of gender, youth, and race. In *Witnessing Girlhood*, Leigh Gilmore and Elizabeth Marshall argue that they also joined a long tradition of autobiographical writing led by women of color in which adults use the figure and narrative of child witness to expose harm and seek justice. *Witnessing Girlhood* charts a history of how women use life narrative to transform conditions of suffering, silencing, and injustice into accounts that enjoin ethical response. Drawing on a deep and diverse archive of self-representational forms—slave narratives, testimonio, memoir, comics, and picture books—Gilmore and Marshall attend to how authors return to a narrative of traumatized and silenced girlhood and the figure of the child witness in order to offer public testimony. Emerging within these accounts are key scenes and figures that link a range of texts and forms from the mid-nineteenth century to the

contemporary period. Gilmore and Marshall offer a genealogy of the reverberations across timelines, self-representational acts, and jurisdictions of the child witness in life writing. Reconstructing these historical and theoretical trajectories restores an intersectional testimonial history of writing by women of color about sexual and racist violence to the center of life writing and, in so doing, furthers our capacity to engage ethically with representations of vulnerability, childhood, and collective witness.

**Elizabeth Marshall** is Associate Professor of Education at Simon Fraser University. She is the author of *Graphic Girlhoods: Visualizing Education and Violence*.

**Derritt Mason** (Calgary) --*Queer Anxieties of Young Adult Literature and Culture* (UP of Mississippi)

Young adult literature featuring LGBTQ+ characters is booming. In the 1980s and 1990s, only a handful of such titles were published every year. Recently, these numbers have soared to over one hundred annual releases. Queer characters are also appearing more frequently in film, on television, and in video games. This explosion of queer representation, however, has prompted new forms of longstanding cultural anxieties about adolescent sexuality. What makes for a good coming out? story? Will increased queer representation in young people's media teach adolescents the right lessons and help queer teens live better, happier lives? What if these stories harm young people instead of helping them?

In *Queer Anxieties of Young Adult Literature and Culture*, Derritt Mason considers these questions through a range of popular media, including an assortment of young adult books; *Caper in the Castro*, the first-ever queer video game; online fan communities; and popular television series *Glee* and *Big Mouth*. Mason argues themes that generate the most anxiety about adolescent culture queer visibility, risk taking, HIV/AIDS, dystopia and horror, and the promise that It Gets Better? and the threat that it might not?challenge us to rethink how we read and engage with young people's media. Instead of imagining queer young adult literature as a subgenre defined by its visibly queer characters, Mason proposes that we see queer YA as a body of transmedia texts with blurry boundaries, one that coheres around affect specifically, anxiety?

**Dr. Derritt Mason** is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Calgary, where he teaches and researches at the intersection of

children's and young adult literature, media and cultural studies, and gender and sexuality. He is the author of [Queer Anxieties of Young Adult Literature and Culture](#) and the co-editor of [Queer as Camp: Essays on Summer, Style, and Sexuality](#), which reached #1 on the *Calgary Herald* bestseller list. For his current research on young people and digital culture, Dr. Mason was awarded a 2019 Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Dr. Mason has given public talks, lectures, and keynotes at local and international venues including the Norwegian University of Science and Technology's Department of Teacher Education, the Institute for Research on Digital Learning, the Galt Museum and Archives, the National Center for the Study of Children's Literature, and Calgary Public Libraries. Dr. Mason is also an executive board member of the [Children's Literature Association](#) and Vice President of the [Association for Research in Cultures of Young People](#).

**Angel Daniel Matos** (Bowdoin) and **Pamela Robertson Wojcik** (Notre Dame) --*Media Crossroads: Intersections of Space and Identity in Screen Cultures* (co-editor Paula J. Massood, Duke University Press)

The contributors to *Media Crossroads* examine space and place in media as they intersect with sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, class, and ability. Considering a wide range of film, television, video games, and other media, the authors show how spaces—from the large and fantastical to the intimate and virtual—are shaped by the social interactions and intersections staged within them. The highly teachable essays include analyses of media representations of urban life and gentrification, the ways video games allow users to adopt an experiential understanding of space, the intersection of the regulation of bodies and spaces, and how style and aesthetics can influence intersectional thinking. Whether interrogating the construction of Portland as a white utopia in *Portlandia* or the link between queerness and the spatial design and gaming mechanics in the *Legend of Zelda* video game series, the contributors deepen understanding of screen cultures in ways that redefine conversations around space studies in film and media.

**Pamela Robertson Wojcik's** *Gidget: Origins of a Teen Girl Transmedia Franchise* (Routledge)

*Gidget: Origins of a Teen Girl Transmedia Franchise* examines the multiplicity of

books, films, TV shows, and merchandise that make up the transmedia Gidget universe from the late 1950s to the 1980s.

The book examines the *Gidget* phenomenon as an early and unique teen girl franchise that expands understanding of both teen girlhood and transmedia storytelling. It locates the film as existing at the historical intersection of numerous discourses and events, including the emergence of surf culture and surf films; the rise of California as signifier of modernity and as the epicentre of white American middle-class teen culture; the annexation of Hawaii; the invention of Barbie; and Hollywood's reluctant acceptance of teen culture and teen audiences. Each chapter places the Gidget text in context, looking at production and reception circumstances and intertexts such as the novels of Françoise Sagan, the *Tammy* series, *La Dolce Vita*, and *The Patty Duke Show*, to better understand Gidget's meaning at different points in time. This book explores many aspects of *Gidget*, providing an invaluable insight into this iconic franchise for students and researchers in film studies, feminist media studies, and youth culture.

**Pamela Robertson Wojcik** is Professor and Chair in the Department of Film, TV and Theatre and Concurrent in Gender Studies and American Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is the Past President of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. She is author of *Fantasies of Neglect: Imagining the Urban Child in American Film and Fiction* (Rutgers 2016), *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945 to 1975* (Duke 2010), and *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Duke 1996) and has edited volumes on apartment plots, film acting, stardom in the 1960s, and film soundtracks. Her most recent books are *Gidget: Origins of a Teen Girl Transmedia Franchise* (Routledge 2020) and the volume co-edited with Angel Daniel Matos and Paula J. Massood, *Media Crossroads: Intersections of Space and Identity on Screen* (Duke 2021).

**Philip Nel** (Kansas State), **Lissa Paul** (Brock) --*Keywords for Children's Literature, Second Edition* (with co-editor Nina Christensen, NYU Press)

Over the past decade, there has been a proliferation of exciting new work across many areas of children's literature and culture. Mapping this vibrant scholarship, the Second Edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature* presents original essays on essential terms and concepts in the field. Covering ideas from "Aesthetics" to

“Voice,” an impressive multidisciplinary cast of scholars explores and expands on the vocabulary central to the study of children’s literature.

The second edition of this *Keywords* volume goes beyond disciplinary and national boundaries. Across fifty-nine print essays and nineteen online essays, it includes contributors from twelve countries and an international advisory board from over a dozen more. The fully revised and updated selection of critical writing—more than half of the essays are new to this edition—reflects an intentionally multinational perspective, taking into account non-English traditions and what childhood looks like in an age of globalization.

All authors trace their keyword’s uses and meanings: from translation to poetry, taboo to diversity, and trauma to nostalgia, the book’s scope, clarity, and interdisciplinary play between concepts make this new edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* essential reading for scholars and students alike.

**Philip Nel** is University Distinguished Professor of English at Kansas State University. He is the author or co-editor of thirteen books, including *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children’s Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books* (2017), four volumes of Crockett Johnson’s *Barnaby* (co-edited with Eric Reynolds, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2020), a double biography of Crockett Johnson and Ruth Krauss (2012), *Keywords for Children’s Literature* (co-edited with Lissa Paul, 2011; second edition co-edited with Lissa Paul and Nina Christensen, 2021), and *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children’s Literature* (co-edited with Julia Mickenberg, 2008).

**Lissa Paul** is a professor at Brock University . She lives in Toronto and is author most recently of *Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist* (2019) and co-editor, with Phil Nel and Nina Christensen, of new edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* (2021). She is currently working on an edition of Fenwick’s letters and on another project to memorialize people of the fugitive slave ads of Canada and Barbados.

**Brigitte Fielder** (Wisconsin-Madison)-- *Relative Races: Genealogies of Interracial Kinship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Duke University Press)



In *Relative Races*, Brigitte Fielder presents an alternative theory of how race is ascribed. Contrary to notions of genealogies by which race is transmitted from parents to children, the examples Fielder discusses from nineteenth-century literature, history, and popular culture show how race can follow other directions: Desdemona becomes less than fully white when she is smudged with Othello's blackface, a white woman becomes Native American when she is adopted by a Seneca family, and a mixed-race baby casts doubt on the whiteness of his mother. Fielder shows that the genealogies of race are especially visible in the racialization of white women, whose whiteness often depends on their ability to reproduce white family and white supremacy. Using black feminist and queer theories, Fielder presents readings of personal narratives, novels, plays, stories, poems, and images to illustrate how interracial kinship follows non-heteronormative, non-biological, and non-patrilineal models of inheritance in nineteenth-century literary culture.

**Brigitte Fielder** is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is the author of *Relative Races: Genealogies of Interracial Kinship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Duke University Press, 2020) and coeditor of *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2019). She is currently writing a book about racialized human-animal relationships in the long nineteenth century which shows how childhood becomes a key site for (often simultaneous) humanization and racialization.

**3:00-4:00 PM:**

**Undisciplined closing remarks drop-in coffee/cocktail hour**