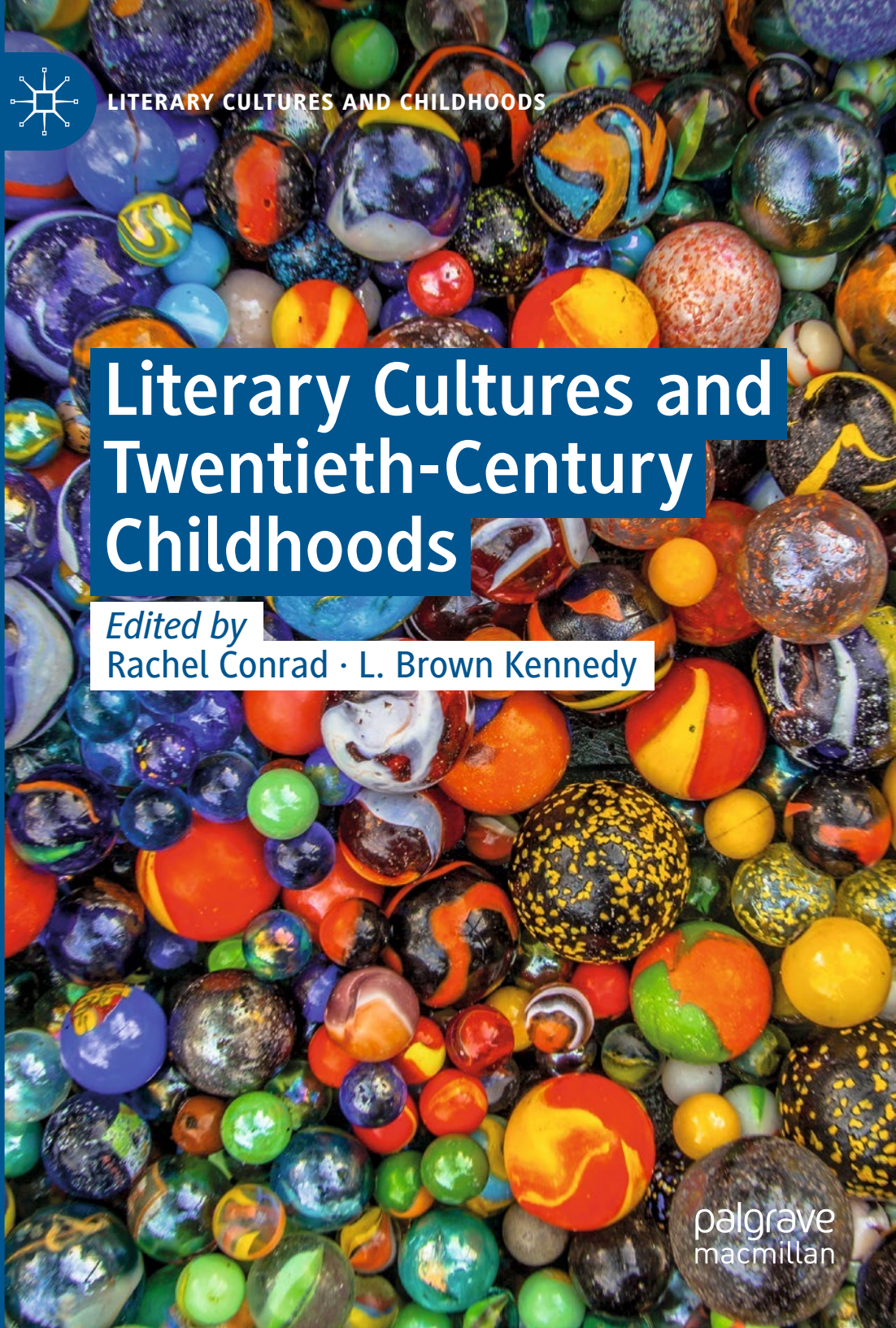
LITERARY CULTURES AND CHILDHOODS
Literary Cultures and Twentieth-Century Childhoods
Edited by
Rachel Conrad · L. Brown Kennedy
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Literary Cultures and Childhoods

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Scholarly interest in the literary figure of the child has grown exponentially over the last thirty years or so due, in part, to the increased attention given to children's literature within the academy and the development of the multidisciplinary field of Childhood Studies. Given the crucial importance of children to biological, social, cultural and national reproduction, it is not surprising that child and adolescent characters may be found everywhere in Anglo-American literary expressions. Across time and in every literary genre written for adults as well as in the vast and complex array of children's literature, 'the child' has functioned as a polysemous and potent figure. From Harry Potter to Huck Finn, some of the most beloved, intriguing and enduring characters in literature are children. The aim of this finite five-book series of edited volumes is to chart representations of the figure of the child in Anglo-American literary cultures throughout the ages, mapping how they have changed over time in different contexts and historical moments. Volumes move chronologically from medieval/early modern to contemporary, with each volume addressing a particular period (eg 'The Early Modern Child', 'The Nineteenth Century Child' etc). Through the aggregate of the essays, the series will advance new understandings of the constructions of the child and the child within different systems (familial, cultural, national), as communicated through literature. Volumes will also serve, collectively, as an examination of the way in which the figure of the child has evolved over the years and how this has been reflected/anticipated by literature of the time.

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"Trauma Studies" in *Blackwell Companion to Children's Literature*, edited by Karen Coats and Deborah Stevenson.

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culture of the fin-de-siècle. Her work has appeared in *Dickens Studies Annual*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, and *Children's Literature*. Her book *Between Generations: Intergenerational Collaboration in the Golden Age of Children's Literature* was published in 2017 and is a winner of the Children's Literature Association Book Award.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Literary Cultures and Twentieth-Century Childhoods

Rachel Conrad and L. Brown Kennedy

The history of the twentieth century, if not airbrushed, is brutal. What stories should be told, and how should they be written for child readers who will approach them from various points of identification, as "insiders" or "outsiders" to diverse histories? How do literary texts built for or through children (or adult ideas about children) enter into these histories? How have literary cultures more broadly intersected with children and childhood across the twentieth century? How have children themselves been involved in the construction of twentieth-century literary cultures?

In 1900 the Swedish feminist reformer Ellen Key called for the twentieth century to be *The Century of the Child* through her book of that title, which became a surprising bestseller. Key's concerns included child labor, schools that commit "soul murder" (203), and patriarchal families in the context of industrial capitalism. In the United States, those invested in matters concerning children, as Michael Zuckerman argues, "took up the title of her book and, with obtuse optimism, changed it from a summons to a slogan" (228). One could argue that calls to place the child at the

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center of adults' thinking in the twentieth century resulted only in adults' ideas about children taking center stage. And in this regard, the twentieth century ended as it began, with an opportunity to rethink how to center children in cultural and political actions, projects, and texts.

A major issue in recent scholarship rethinking twentieth-century treatments of childhood across the disciplines has been the recognition that "the child" is not a unitary category, that childhoods are plural, and that the experience of being a child is culturally and historically specific, as Allison James, Adrian James, and others discuss.[1] In her "call for our scholarship … to grow" (238) through "resituating diversity within children's literature and the academy" (251), Katharine Capshaw eloquently argues for centering race and ethnicity when considering writers, readers, and representations. The scholars writing in this volume—working in and across disciplines including literary studies, history, psychology and psychoanalysis, education, cultural studies, and the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies—foreground diverse representations of childhoods and focus on texts that have not necessarily been part of the standard English-language repertory for child audiences, including texts from former US and British colonies.

Beyond the unquestionable need to add writers and texts to the "canon," contributors to this collection also ask us to shift the questions and frameworks we use in reading literary and cultural texts. They engage major intellectual movements and political crises so as to reconfigure our conception of how childhoods were understood and represented during a twentieth century marked by war, by political struggle over civil and political rights, and by the cultural clash of postcolonial, racial, class-based, gender, and sexual identities. They ask us not just to "include" the "peripheral," but rather to take up stances that reposition us as readers and critics and re-center our view of the whole. As they work from different methodologies and theoretical bases, their chapters come together here to insist that literary and visual representation are not neutral processes but are historically and culturally shaped, no less than are child subjects who themselves act—as readers and as creators—to reshape culture.

This volume engages with two crucial acts of re-centering: not only focusing on the multiplicity of childhoods, but also centering the agency—or in certain cases critical and parodic lack of agency—of children, as subjects of representations, as readers, even as writers themselves. Richard Flynn's recent essay in *Jeunesse*, included in a panel on "Divergent Perspectives on Children's Agency," hones in on "children's competence and capability as social actors" (262) in contrast to the developmental

discourse of children's incapability, ignorance, and incompetence. Flynn draws in part on Allison James' delineation of what is meant by children as "social actors" in her 2007 essay problematizing adults' interest in and mediation of children's voices: "Childhood is a social space that is structurally determined by a range of social institutions, but, precisely because of this, children as subjects are also structurally and culturally determined as social actors with specific social roles to play, as children" (270). Children's agency doesn't merely emerge within social institutions but helps to construct them, as the anthropologist Myra Bluebond-Langner writes in her prescient 1978 book, *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*, in which she articulates a view of children "as willful, purposeful individuals capable of creating their own world, as well as acting in the world others create for them" (7). Centering children's agency, then, involves not only the idea that children are capable and competent, but also the recognition that children's experiences as and views of children and childhood enable them to shape their social worlds and to redefine our understanding of childhoods and, in the case of child writers, of aspects of literary culture. Adults writing literary childhoods can foreground the idea of agency in imagining their young characters and/or young readers. Yet another theme of this volume is to see literary culture not simply as a body of materials produced by adults for consumption by children, but also as co-created by young people in their actions as speakers, artists, readers, and writers.

The chapters in this collection pursue multiple avenues to constructing literary cultures of childhoods, with emphasis on the plural of both "literary cultures" and "childhoods." Without pretending to be exhaustive, we have been particularly interested in scholars and writers who are grappling with received notions of childhood, depicting active children engaging with their worlds, and representing diverse childhoods. Contributors approach writers who worked to rewrite scripts of the "natural" child (Holly Blackford, Aneesh Barai), writers who positioned child protagonists so as to offer young readers multiple points of entry and identification (Adrienne Kertzer, Nithya Sivashankar), or writers who crafted child subjects so as to do justice to complex aspirations and identities (Karen Chandler, Amanda Seaman). Other contributors undertake critiques of hegemonic perspectives (Kevin Quashie and Amy Fish, Solsiree del Moral), explore projects that directly involved young people as participants in or makers of literary culture (Victoria Ford Smith, Rachel Conrad and Cai Rodrigues-Sherley, Leslie Paris, Awad Ibrahim), and write about the role of child-oriented texts in larger cultural projects (William Moebius, Karen Coats).

In the context of this volume, the term "literary cultures" implies, in part, the exchange and circulation of texts and ideas among those who read and write. These texts include here the written genres of poetry, biography, fiction, and historical fiction. Increasingly through the twentieth century, though, this general notion of "literary cultures" was augmented by other cultural forms used to circulate the ideas and the imaginary of those who are literate. Chapters within this volume consider such other cultural forms as visual art and illustration, the picturebook, spoken word poetry, and television, as well as the institutions that support and "authorize" cultural circulation: schools, libraries, museums and archives, and the publishing and production industries.

Texts that feature child protagonists and appear to seek child readers draw on an immense range of intertextual reference. Hughes and Bontemps' *Popo and Fifina* bears useful comparison to Rousseau, so Aneesh Barai argues, while William Moebius notes that Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* echoes Wagner's *Parsifal*. Child readers and writers, no less than adult writers, participate in this circulation of literary cultures and are both enabled and at times constrained by its assumptions and practices. Young writers Hall and Whitlock draw not only on Ransome, but on Keats and Matthew Arnold. And Rachel Conrad and Cai Rodrigues-Sherley speak to the engagement of Kali Grosvenor with Langston Hughes' poetry, and to the role of Gwendolyn Brooks in promoting, from her position as poet laureate of Illinois, the work of young poets such as Aurelia Davidson.

Across the twentieth century, the enlarging circulation of what people imagine, write, reference, and sample regarding children and childhood encompasses recent narratives and images as well as time-worn myths, tropes, and, yes, stereotypes. Part of what circulates in and through literary cultures are figures and plotlines that can alienate or delimit as well as attract or delight their readers, sometimes by means of a complex symbiosis. This is especially the case when the school curriculum or books with an explicit educational mission become the agent of transmission. Fictions and their writers can also, however, serve to rewrite old narratives, expose or mock cultural constraints and bigotries, and open new possibilities for their young readers. The "reading" young person—whether present through representation or as the "implied reader" of the text—is the direct concern of many of the contributors to this volume.

Part I, "*Framing the Twentieth Century: Spectacle, Self, and Specularity*," begins with two chapters that take up the cultural context and value of a range of texts across a broad span of the century, offering

very different but usefully complementary perspectives on intersections between "literary cultures" and "childhoods." In "Spectacle and Parody: Burlesque Subjectivity in the American Picturebook," William Moebius looks at the rise of the picturebook as a cultural institution in the United States of the 1930s through the 1970s, fueled paradoxically by immigrant artists leaving World War II Europe—even as cultural institutions like the American Library Association's Caldecott Medal promoted picturebooks as an "American" form. Child figures may feature in these large-scale and visually spectacular cultural projects, Moebius argues, but they are not necessarily their focus and may finally be heavily ironized. The grandiose and ultimately grotesquely spectacular masculine self that Moebius sees at the heart of the emergent picturebook form stands in useful tension with the vision of the child-self as it is constructed in Karen Coats' account of the same 50-year arc in US and British culture in her chapter "The Self in Twentieth-Century Children's Literature: A Tale of Two Schemas." Examining intersections between the emerging field of psychoanalysis and a range of books and cultural artifacts designed for child consumption, Coats undertakes a broad survey of issues of self and identity as they emerge in twentieth-century views of childhood. Contrasting a "neoliberal, individualistic self" with a more interpersonal view of the self—one that intersects with the psychological models of, respectively, Melanie Klein and Harry Stack Sullivan—Coats argues that while the individual self dominates in many mid-century texts for child readers, another group of texts creates an important alternative view that is more communitarian, less isolated and narcissistic, and less preoccupied with economic success.

If books and other cultural representations help to construct the child-self, as Coats argues, or bedazzle and restrict the subject (child or adult), as Moebius suggests, reading and looking can also be an instrument of critique and a source of perspective. In "A Subjunctive Imagining: June Jordan's *Who Look at Me* and the Conditions of Black Agency," Kevin Quashie and Amy Fish remind us that to author is also to "authorize" a reader, in the sense of conveying power and critical authority. The authorization of young black readers was a focus of efforts in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s as well as during the 1960s and 1970s. Quashie and Fish discuss Jordan's *Who Look at Me* (1969)—a long poem accompanied by paintings by black and white American artists—which begins by invoking "blackness as spectacle" to a white audience and then proceeds by inviting young readers "to interrogate (through) looking"

and to "shape a subjunctive ethic of human connectedness." In examining not only Jordan's authorization of black child readers, but also archival evidence of "failures of understanding" with her editor in a mainstream (white-dominant) publishing house, Quashie and Fish present Jordan's work as an innovative "meta-text, a book about black looking and making—and being."

Part II, "*Representations of Childhoods: Questioning or Re-Imposing Received Tropes*," begins with two chapters on early-century texts that implicitly or explicitly criticize cultural restrictions and sympathetically represent child "natures" that offer what Aneesh Barai calls "new childhoods" beyond the majority cultures of those eras and locations. In "Seeing Red: The Inside Nature of the Queer Outsider in *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Well of Loneliness*," Holly Blackford rereads Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1908 novel retrospectively in the light of Radclyffe Hall's 1928 controversial adult-audience text. She explores the two texts as "coming-in stories" in which girl characters who are outsiders to their conservative communities find the fulfillment of their emergent selves in intellectual activity and female companionship. At stake, Blackford suggests, is the definition of "the natural," as the two texts claim for their "odd" girl protagonists a connection both to an internal spontaneity and to the physical landscapes of the novel that serve to naturalize their "queerness." Analogously, in "New Spaces and New Childhoods: Challenging Assumptions of Normative Childhood in Modernist Children's Literature," Aneesh Barai argues that the Modernists in Britain and the United States very provocatively write for child audiences, creating texts which echo earlier Romantic tropes of childhood "innocence" and the natural—in order to parody them in the case of Gertrude Stein (*The World Is Round*, 1939), or to appropriate and reassign them to black child figures in the case of Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps (*Popo and Fifina*, 1932). Whereas a repressive pedagogy figures centrally in Barai's analysis of Stein's child protagonist (for whom education and personal perception do not cohere), Hughes and Bontemps' child character finds in rural Haiti compelling adult mentors and a nurturing cultural education.

The impact of cultural stereotyping and the trope of education also dominate chapters by Solsiree del Moral and Karen Chandler, who ask us to consider the role of literary culture in education, and of reading as an instrument of acculturation, particularly in pedagogical contexts. In "Modern Family, Modern Colonial Childhoods: Representations of Childhood and the US Military in Colonial School Literature," del Moral

explores themes of aspiration, education, and the complex problems of identification and loyalty presented to child readers in pedagogical stories written for Puerto Rican schoolchildren during the 1920s by the young American teacher Elizabeth Kneipple. Part of the official project of the "Americanization" of Puerto Rico, Kneipple's texts use the guise of language instruction to rewrite the history of the island and position the American military not as occupiers, but as modernizing saviors and, effectively, a new "family." Just as del Moral exposes a rhetoric which presented, under the guise of inclusion, racially "othered" children as subordinate and dependent on North American and dominatingly white perspectives, so too Karen Chandler in "Reading for Success: Booker T. Washington's Pursuit of Education in Two Children's Books" analyzes the rhetoric and contrasting illustrational strategies in paired biographies of Booker T. Washington, and critiques textual biases which inscribe a middle-class and often white female perspective on scenes of education and aspiration. Looking critically at the ideology of literacy in 1980s children's biographies of Booker T. Washington that were published for instructional use, Chandler argues that Marie Bradby's *More Than Anything Else* locates the young Washington's introduction to literacy within the African American family and community, thus "insisting on the compatibility of blackness and print culture."

Chapters in Part III, "*Identity and Displacement: Narrating History and Culture*," explore the effort, emergent in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not just to enlarge representation but to give young people critical tools for thinking about their own relation to history and culture. In her important 1990 framework, Rudine Sims Bishop discusses how books can provide "windows," "mirrors," and "sliding glass doors" that permit variously positioned child readers to understand more about lives different from their own and imagine for themselves new possibilities, or else see themselves reflected in new contexts. Adrienne Kertzer, Amanda Seaman, and Nithya Sivashankar share an interest in the writer's task of engaging twentieth-century child readers with their child protagonists' points of view during cataclysmic times in history. In "'I remember. Oh, I remember': Traumatic Memory, Agency, and the American Identity of Holocaust Time Travelers," Adrienne Kertzer takes up the debate over the effects on child readers of encountering traumatic histories through consideration of late twentieth-century novels and films concerning the Holocaust. Comparing Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (1988) to Han Nolan's *If I Should Die before I Wake* (1994) and Cherie Bennett and Jeff

Gottesfeld's *Anne Frank and Me* (2001), Kertzer asks who are the intended readers of these texts and considers why Holocaust memory matters. Reflecting on the time-travel plot as a figure of access to the past, Kertzer asks what kind of engagement with the past may be necessary in order to "know" it. As Kertzer suggests, the standpoints of these texts' protagonists may prefigure those possible for the young readers of the novels who must themselves venture out imaginatively and return to make ethical choices.

Amanda Seaman's chapter "Yoshiko Uchida: Loss, Displacement, and Identity" considers the career of Uchida (1921–1992) as a writer for young audiences whose works provide a complex view of children's negotiation of Japanese American identity, pressures from family and religious community, and rampant discrimination. Seaman focuses on Uchida's set of "Rinko" novels, written amid the anti-Asian, anti-immigrant political tumult of the early 1980s, which extend and complicate her earlier novels for young readers representing Japanese Internment during World War II. As Seaman suggests, in response to the dearth of realistic and sympathetic representations of Asian American young people, Uchida depicted both for Japanese American children and for a general audience of young readers the culture of a vibrant Japanese American community in the pre-war period, even as she clearly showed the painful impact of racism and prejudice. Similar themes of conflict over family loyalty, religious and national identity, and response to identity-based violence frame Nithya Sivashankar's chapter, "'I Would Not Be a Pilgrim': Examining the Construction of the Muslim Child as an Authentic Witness and a Dynamic Subject in Anita Desai's *The Peacock Garden*." Noting the paucity of Anglophone texts for young audiences about the Partition of India and Pakistan that present the point of view of a Muslim child figure, Sivashankar analyzes Anita Desai's narrative strategies in *The Peacock Garden* (1974) to argue that Desai's narrative ethics requires the child protagonist and the child reader to actively form their own judgments.

The chapters in Part IV, "*Children as Culture-Makers: Young People, Agency, and Literary Cultures*," explore young people's active roles in literary cultures and their direct engagements as participants, collaborators, and writers. The scholars included in this section make visible some of the varied roles young people have taken in Anglo-American literary cultures in the twentieth century: responding to and engaging with adult-produced texts, crafting literary texts themselves, and collaborating with other youth or adults. The young culture-makers discussed in these chapters help

expand views of agency beyond a focus on autonomous action toward models that engage with interdependence and collaboration.

In "Katharine Hull, Pamela Whitlock, and the 'Ransome Style,'" Victoria Ford Smith explores models of the child writer in considering the novel *The Far-Distant Oxus*, which was co-written by British teens Katharine Hull and Pamela Whitlock in the 1930s in the style of Arthur Ransome. While Hull's and Whitlock's work has typically been seen as imitative of Ransome, Smith reveals how Hull and Whitlock imaginatively and critically engage with Ransome through their own writing practices and by representation of their child characters' literary knowledge. Rachel Conrad and Cai Rodrigues-Sherley, in "Kali Grosvenor, Aurelia Davidson, and the Agency of Young Black Poets," also rethink child writers' agency in relation to their literary engagements and relationships with adult mentors through discussing poems by Kali Grosvenor (1970) and Aurelia Davidson (1980) as complex texts that engage with themes of Blackness, youth, and "the role of the past for futurity." Exploring the enabling but constraining roles that adults played in relation to the public presentation and reception of these young poets' work, Conrad and Rodrigues-Sherley's analysis highlights a key dimension of youth agency—"that it must be on young people's own terms and serve their own purposes."

In "'Send it to *ZOOM*!': American Children's Television and Intergenerational Cultural Creation in the 1970s," Leslie Paris writes about "intergenerational cultural creation" in the public television show *ZOOM*, which emerged from the emphasis on children's participation associated with 1970s liberal culture in the United States. Paris uses archival research to consider the complications of adults' and children's roles in relation to the show, and to underscore the innovative ways in which *ZOOM* produced a participatory children's culture through collaboration with adults. Finally, in "Tupac Shakur: Spoken Word Poets as Cultural Theorists," Awad Ibrahim discusses young people's involvement with spoken word poetry in the late twentieth century and offers a "genealogy of the spoken word culture" and its literary cultural possibilities. The heart of Ibrahim's chapter focuses on Tupac Shakur and his movement "from consumption to authorship" of spoken word poetry, as well as the "social critique and social theorizing" evident in his work. Ibrahim interweaves critical examination of ideas of childhood and youth, particularly in relation to the lives of black and brown children, and argues for the value of nonlinear "rhizomatic" frameworks that consider youth and childhood "as complex processes that are always to become and always in progress." Ibrahim's chapter

thus demonstrates the value of critically engaging with models of childhood and youth while considering the active roles of young people in literary cultural production, and attending to the changing landscape of literary cultural genres in which young people participate.

Although the loosely chronological structure of each section of this collection allows for useful juxtapositions and comparisons, a chronological narrative of the twentieth century—either of decline or of progress—is not our point. The volume does end with an element of hopefulness, noting a century that, despite its violent and repressive histories, its manipulations and excesses, still has at times made space for the concerns and voices of young persons.

Note

1. Sarada Balagopalan offers an important critique of current discourse on plural childhoods, arguing that the "distancing" of the lives of children outside European American contexts serves to, problematically, "continually reinforce … the higher truth of an universal, linear, and singular narrative of childhood" (24).

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PART I

Framing the Twentieth Century: Spectacle, Self, and Specularity

CHAPTER 2

Spectacle and Parody: Burlesque Subjectivity in the American Picturebook

William Moebius

There shall be sung another golden Age,
The rise of Empire and of Arts,
The Good and Great inspiring epic Rage,
The wisest Heads and noblest Hearts.

Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly Flame did animate her Clay,
By future Poets shall be sung.

Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way;
The four first Acts already past,
A fifth shall close the Drama with the Day;
Time's noblest Offspring is the last.

—*George Berkeley, A Miscellany*[1]

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Bishop Berkeley's vision of the course that empire would take on American soil, the "rise of empire and of arts," heralds both a final act and the "noblest" of offspring. He pays homage to the youthful stage of European history as a "golden age." In Berkeley's imaginary, the childhood of Europe, its Renaissance, was, in effect, its golden age. America's childhood itself would be the last, the final act of empire.

In this chapter I examine instances in which picturebook artists in post-depression America and their adult readers seized the land of childhood as their playground and turned the wonderland of British or continental childhood into an American extravaganza. To make an extravaganza is to make something big and impressive, feature animals as well as humans, include acrobats or dancers, and draw a huge crowd of spectators of all ages. Whether housed in a burlesque theater or a huge tent, under the shadow of large skyscrapers or on the grounds of a zoo, these often urban habitats themselves would breed spectacle, inviting insiders and outsiders, children and adults, to take part, but once there to be treated to caricature and parody, strong medicine for those seeking the "good and great inspiring epic rage" which can also be the "great inspiring epic page."[2] For American picturebook makers and their publishers, "grabbing and sustaining" the attention of the child reader would play an important role[3]; the publisher also would need a bold new concept to prompt an adult consumer's choice of the book as a keeper, with its "epic page," "big bang," or "read-all-about-it" quality.

To some readers, the picturebook would evoke a scaled-down readership or listening experience, suitable for the small, vulnerable, and even gullible; if we think of childhood as small and vulnerable, such picturebooks as James Thurber's *The Last Flower: A Parable in Pictures* (1939) or Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings* (1941) or Margaret Wise Brown's *Good Night Moon* (1947) may come to mind. But the gullible aspects of childhood might also play into scenarios of what was, in the late nineteenth century, called "brutehood" or the "brute-inheritance."[4] Brutehood would have plenty of room for theriomorphic caricature, that is, in the shape of a beast, and in the first half of the twentieth century could still be read as linking childhood to Haeckel's discredited notion "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" and therefore to earlier stages of

human development. The once presumed science of Johann Caspar Lavater's physiognomy had already validated such distortions. Such caricatures could include Edgar Degas' young ballerinas, labeled "les rats."[5] If we, as adults, were to think of childhood as a drama of the disqualified, as a caricature of ineptitudes, as a mobilization of freaks, clowns, and mischief-makers, then the scope of the picturebook itself expands, competing with the greatest shows on earth.

It cannot go without notice that both authorship and readership of the picturebook were not and have never been limited to the small and the vulnerable; but for American authorities in charge of measuring the worthiness of picturebooks, they had better be American. Scenes of nudity or alcoholism found in picturebooks from abroad might be deemed "risqué" and "frowned upon." The sanctimony of the picturebook was closely guarded by the American Library Association (ALA), which counted some 14,626 members back in 1938, the year *Animals of the Bible, A Picture Book* was awarded the first Caldecott Prize for best American picturebook. Based in Chicago, the ALA represented both the book industry and its constituent readers, large and small. Librarians were specialists in books for children as well as for adults, and picturebooks had to be reviewed and checked for quality and content with greater scrutiny than any detective novel for adults. Immigrant picturebook artists like Ludwig Bemelmans or H.A. Rey and his wife Margret could settle in the big cities of the East Coast, but the destination of their work would just as well be a school library in the "heartland." Eventually, the "place" of the picturebook could be in a *lieu de mémoire* such as the De Grummond collection at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, where, each year since 1969, a small medal, bearing the likeness of the author or illustrator on one side and of a favorite character on the other, would be awarded by a group of adults, not children, for best children's book of the year. A medal of modest size would stand for honor and respect; more than 15 of those awards would go to picturebook makers, not all of them of American nationality.

Yet cherished picturebooks could also be viewed as ephemera, as what Winnicott called "transitional objects"; smaller than the tabloid *New York Daily News* (once known as the *Illustrated Daily News*) or Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, their size was by no means a new concept in journalism in the 1920s.[6] Until 1911, there had been no room at the New York Public Library, "the largest marble structure ever attempted in the United States,"[7] for picturebooks, any more than there would be room for comics