Panel 5: Constructions of Girlhood

**Margaret Masterson, Collecting Girlhood: Intersections in the Archive**

This paper examines constructions of girlhood through bibliography and book collecting in the Pollard Collection of Children’s Books at Trinity College Dublin. A collection of over 10,000 school books, Irish imprints, female authors and girl books printed before 1914, it is the largest collection of children’s books in Ireland. I argue that this collection illuminates not just authors’ textual constructions of girlhood, but also the ideological motivations of the printer and bookseller, and the assumptions about girlhood made by the collector, and the researcher. The Pollard Collection is a place where many versions of girlhood coexist, opening a new forum to discuss girlhood in both historical and contemporary contexts. It is a space where attempts to define girlhood happen through what Peter Hollindale calls “a constant dialog between experience and memory,” through the books and their readers, between archive and researcher. I examine girlhood in the Pollard Collection through the works of its most prolific author, Maria Edgeworth, that present a distinctly feminine, if not quite feminist, view of girlhood. I suggest a further construction of girlhood is fashioned by the collection’s creator, Mary Pollard, who could be said to have collected her own childhood by gathering these books. Using bibliography, with particular focus on book production, design, and paratexts, I identify intersecting constructions of girlhood as a way to uncover the cultural clues that define girlhood in the archive. This paper will demonstrate how bibliography and book collection practices can broaden our understanding of our own positions as researchers in the archive, as we attempt to balance modern and feminist constructions of girlhood with a historically accurate interpretation present in the collection.

**Margaret Masterson** is undertaking a doctorate in children’s literature at Trinity College, Dublin, working on the Pollard Collection of Children’s Books, Maria Edgeworth, and the construction of girlhood through bibliography and book collection. Maggie was a children’s librarian in the Chicago area before coming to Trinity. Her research interests include memory and constructions of childhood in the children’s literature archive, eighteenth and nineteenth century adolescent fiction for girls and Irish identity in American children’s fiction.

**Lindsey Geybels, Construction of Girlhood in the Oeuvre of Joke van Leeuwen**

Research in the field of children’s literature studies recognizes the role fiction plays in the socialization of its readers. The representations of gender in fiction for young readers are considered to be constructs that shape the concepts of “boyhood” and “girlhood” (Marshall, 259). Although these social categories and the way they are shaped have received much attention in the field of children’s literature studies, most research has been done using close reading strategies. This paper reports on an ongoing ERC-funded project, “Constructing Age for Young Readers,” that supplements traditional narrative analyses with distant reading and digital tools. This paper examines how the representation of girlhood is influenced by the age
of the intended readership. I use the oeuvre of the acclaimed Dutch author Joke van Leeuwen, who writes books for children of different ages as well as books for adults, as a case study. Her sixteen novels were digitized and annotated in xml with information about direct speech and references to characters in each text. Using this extra layer of data together with tools for digital analyses (such as Scattertext, developed by Jason Kessler), we can explore questions relating to the speech of male versus female characters, young versus old characters and any combination thereof. A second set of questions I will address in the paper concerns adjectives and possessions related to age and gender. Which adjectives are used to describe girls but not boys? Which characteristics are associated with children but not adults? What do girls possess, and which parts of the young female body are most frequently discussed? The results of this digital analysis will be framed in theories of childhood studies, children's literature studies and gender studies.

**Lindsey Geybels** is a children’s literature researcher at the University of Antwerp, where she started her PhD in February 2019 as a part of the ERC-funded project “Constructing Age For Young Readers” led by Vanessa Joosen. She has a background in interior architecture, literary theory and English literature. Her current research focuses on the influence that the age of the intended reader has on the construction of age in fiction for children and young adults. For this study, she uses digital tools to look into the work of authors who write books for children, adolescents and adults.

**Ana Batinić, Jagoda Truhelka’s *U carstvu duše (In the Realm of the Soul)* in the Context of Croatian Girls’ Literature**

The paper will attempt to shed light on a literary work titled *U carstvu duše (In the Realm of the Soul)* written by a Croatian authoress and paedagogical worker Jagoda Truhelka (1864–1957). It was published in 1910, at the time when literature for girls in Croatia already had an established tradition, since the first book explicitly intended for girls’ audience appeared in 1865 (Franjo Klaić’s *Mala gospodarica/The Little Mistress*). *In the Realm of the Soul* is written in the form of 27 letters addressed to Truhelka’s unnamed female student. The authoress dedicated her work to her own teacher Magdalena Šrepel, whose correspondence with Truhelka served as the main inspiration for this educational, epistolary text. Advertised as “the book for female youth”, it offers insight into various aspects of everyday life, the world of emotions, philosophical thoughts, relationship between nature and culture, music, poetry, aesthetics and arts, moral values and ethics, concepts of duty, friendship and altruism, fashion, wisdom and, finally, Truhelka’s notion of the future woman – a perfectly enlightened and well-educated woman who will make a great impact on building more harmonious male-female relations and a better life on Earth. According to Truhelka, due to her specific qualities such as warmth and kindness, need for caring for others and desire for peace and harmony, an educated woman is capable of bringing changes and reforming the society. One of the aims of this research is also to provide data regarding the book’s reception from the time of its publication until today, showing the way in which Jagoda Truhelka constructed the conception of both girlhood and womanhood and how her ideas correspond to contemporary viewpoints.

**Ana Batinić** graduated in Croatian and English language and literature (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), obtained a PhD in 2011. Employed as a research fellow at the
Division for the History of Croatian Literature, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Her topics of research include Croatian children's literature, literary animal studies and women authors. Currently is member of a team working on the scientific research project *Modern Women Thinkers: Intellectual Development of Women in the 20th Century Croatia* (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education). Has participated in some thirty scholarly symposia and published some fifty scientific and professional papers.

**Anne Morey, The Junior Literary Guild Selects Selma Lagerlöf: Girls’ Reading in 1930s America**

This paper explores the phenomenon of *The Diary of Selma Lagerlöf* as a book selection of the Junior Literary Guild in February 1937. The Junior Literary Guild, an offshoot of the Literary Guild, was the dominant American children’s book club, flourishing from 1929 to 1955. Its editorial board consisted of luminaries in child development and education such as Sidonie Gruenberg (head of the Child Study Association) and Angelo Patri (principle of Public School 45 in New York and author of *A School Master of the Great City*). The board also included Eleanor Roosevelt and Helen Ferris (also author of the afterword to the *Diary* sent out to subscribers), who were particularly invested in the question of appropriate reading for older girls. Their sensibilities trended in two directions that made the selection of Lagerlöf’s diary an obvious one for the book club – they were concerned with reading as a means of preparing girls for both domestic and international citizenship in the years before World War II and they were both committed feminists. Ferris and Roosevelt, who later collaborated on two books, both had their eyes on the creation of capable, energetic, informed young women – agents in their own lives – in the most direct social or political sense. This shared concern with female Bildung or self-cultivation emphasized nonfiction and that hoped to present genres such as biography as useful in preparing young women for careers, marriage, and adult life generally. This paper explores what the book club’s choice says about the reception of Lagerlöf’s work for girls in the United States, and how this book illuminates the construction of girlhood in which the book club was engaged.

**Anne Morey** is an associate professor in English at Texas A&M University. Her book *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913-1934* deals with Hollywood’s critics and co-opters. She has published an anthology on Stephenie Meyer’s “Twilight” phenomenon (Ashgate 2012) and has completed with Claudia Nelson a book on the reuse of the ancient world in contemporary children’s and YA fiction (Oxford UP 2019). She is now at work on a book about the Junior Literary Guild and children’s preparation for citizenship and is co-writing with Shelley Stamp a history of women’s involvement in American silent cinema to be published by Columbia University Press.