Conceptions of Girlhood Now and Then: “Girls’ Literature” and Beyond

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Keynotes

Nazera Sadiq Wright, Black Girls and their Nineteenth-Century Autograph Albums

Scholars have explored how nineteenth-century scrapbooks and friendship albums circulated among free black women in the North to showcase their middle-class status and close networks. However, little is known about how black girls participated in this sentimental practice. In this lecture, Nazera Sadiq Wright will discuss how histories of black girlhood are often “buried” in literary genres less likely to be studied. Recovering these histories involves using types of literature that move beyond the bound book. To locate evidence of their lives, she explores the often uncatalogued signatures and inscriptions written in nineteenth-century black girls’ autograph albums to reveal the wide-ranging impact that early friendships, alliances, and associations had on black girls’ intellectual and political development. For example, autograph albums owned by Sallie and Miranda Venning, two sisters from a middle-class African American family in Philadelphia reveal that in their youthful years, the Venning girls were building alliances that would connect them to a black elite. Through such “unexpected spaces” as autograph albums, Wright will discuss how it is possible to recover buried histories of black girlhood in the nineteenth century.

Dr. Nazera Sadiq Wright is Associate Professor of English and African American and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky. She is the author of Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century (University of Illinois Press, 2016), which won the 2018 Children’s Literature Association’s Honor Book Award for Outstanding Book of Literary Criticism. Her Digital Humanities project, DIGITAL GI(RL)S: Mapping Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century documents the cultural activities of black girls living in Philadelphia in the nineteenth century. In 2019, she was elected to the American Antiquarian Society. Fellowships through the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded archival research for her second book, Early African American Women Writers and Their Libraries.

Åsa Warnqvist, and Mia Österlund, What about the Fat Girl in Fiction? Perspectives on Children’s Literature, Girlhood and Fat Studies

The fat body is written into a number of discourses, often surrounded by stigmatizing notions. Fat studies show that fat bodies are part of structural contexts where enforced healthiness, medicalisation, and neo-liberal adjustment are prevailing paradigms (Rothblum & Soloway 2009; Kyrölä 2010; Tolvhed 2017; Harjunen 2017). As is often the case with complex phenomena, these parallel discourses co-exist (Raisborough 2016; Flynn 2013).

Fat studies, with its roots in gender and queer theory, have highlighted fat as politics, social construction, and aesthetics (Kulick 2005; Rabinowitch 2008). However, Esther Rothblum and Sondra Solovay note that “fatness remains a relatively understudied category of oppression” (2009). This is especially true for children’s literature research. Lately the material turn has led to renewed interest in examining depictions of the body (cf Nikolajeva 2015; Beauvais & Nikolajeva 2017). Yet, fat studies has not entered the scene, and the combination with girlhood studies remains to be explored. While fat studies have been preoccupied with adolescent girls,
studies in children’s literature focus on children’s bodies, and in the extension of these readings we address the embodiment of the girl child, as well as the girl’s gaze on adult bodies.

How fat operates in textual and visual narratives for young readers is at the core of our discussion. We study how bodies are negotiated and how fat girls’ or women’s bodies can be read in contemporary picturebooks, graphic novels, and novels. Our discussion of the interplay between fat and gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality aims to highlight how children’s literature studies, girlhood studies, and fat studies can be brought together. We problematize the underlying fat shaming and fat haunting that characterise many depictions of fat girls and women, and fat linked to aesthetic approaches such as the child’s gaze, size norms, hyperbole, resistance, norm-breaking, and grotesque. Illuminating how these approaches interplay or are played out, we read fat as a complex narrative in contemporary children’s and youth literature.

Dr. Åsa Warnqvist is the Research Manager and Director of the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books. She is also affiliated with Linnaeus University. Warnqvist’s research has primarily been focused on Canadian writer L.M. Montgomery, the Swedish children’s book market, gender studies, and normativity studies. Her ongoing research is on depictions of fat characters in children’s and young adult literature, transgender narratives, and the impact of L.M. Montgomery on Swedish readers. Warnqvist is the editor of the Swedish academic journal *Barnboken: Journal of Children’s Literature Research* and a member of the editorial board of *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*. She is also a member of the IRSCL executive board (International Research Society for Children’s Literature), organizer of the IRSCL Congress 2019, and vice-president of IRSCL.

Mia Österlund, Docent, is Associated Professor in Comparative Literature at Åbo Akademi University, and principal investigator of the research project “Competing Temporalities: Chrononormativity in Postmillennial Finland Swedish Literature and Culture for Children and Young Adults 2019–22” at the Swedish Society for Literature in Finland. As a pioneer within Nordic girlhood studies, much of her research is centered on gender and children’s literature, for example fat studies and picturebooks. Österlund has published a book on crossdressing in young adult fiction and co-edited a range of studies such as *Novel Districts: Critical Readings of Monika Fagerholm* (2016) and published extensively. Her research interests are girlhood and gender studies, queer studies as well as picturebook and young adult fiction studies. She is co-editor of *Barnboken: Journal of Children’s Literature Research*. 
Roundtable

Hilda Jakobsson, Birgitta Theander, Eva Söderberg, Maria Nilson and Malin Alkestrand,
Girlhood in Academia: A Nordic Perspective

The history of comprehensive analysis of “girls’ literature” as a genre is an established study in Nordic scholarship. Scholars such as Birgitta Theander, Marika Andræ and Mia Österlund have explored girls’ literature and coming-of-age stories in Swedish-language texts as well as in translated texts. The concept of “flickbok,” which roughly translates into “girls’ book,” is a specific genre label with a defined set of characteristics within a Swedish-language context. In English, however, there are several different terms for girls’ literature, such as girls’ fiction, girls’ stories, and classic books for girls. The contrast between the use of the term “flickbok” in a Swedish-language context and the multiple terms used to describe girls’ literature in English-language research raises interesting questions, not only about genre definitions but also about the genre as a whole. Using the Swedish/Nordic “flickbok” as its starting point, this roundtable will discuss questions such as the differences and similarities between the Swedish/Nordic “flickbok” and English-language girls’ literature, and the implications of labels like “flickbok” in the context of girls’ literature and girlhood studies.

Hilda Jakobsson has a doctoral degree in literature since 2019 and presently works as a teacher in child and youth studies, Stockholm University. Her dissertation is about the Swedish author Agnes von Krusenstjerna’s early works, her depictions of girls becoming – or not becoming – women in encountering love and sexuality, as well as her relationship to the girls’ book genre. Jakobsson has published an article on the Swedish girls’ book series Kulla-Gulla and presented several papers on the subject of girls’ books. Furthermore, she has taught children’s and young adult literature. She is particularly interested in depictions of love and sexuality, queer and intersectional theory.

Birgitta Theander is PhD in literature since 2006. She is now affiliated researcher at Lund University. Her main interest is girls’ fiction from the early and middle twentieth century, on which subject she has written two books, Loved and Denied: Girls’ Fiction in Sweden 1945–65, and To the Work! Vocational Dreams and Working Life in Girls’ Fiction 1920–65. She has also presented Astrid Lindgren’s Kati-books on the net-based Litteraturbanken and contributed with several articles for The Swedish Biographic Encyclopaedia of Women.

Eva Söderberg is a Senior Lecturer in Literary Didactics at Dalarna University and has also been part of the interdisciplinary research projects “Challenging Gender” at Umeå University and “Normalization and the Neoliberal Welfare State” at Mid Sweden University, both in Sweden. One of her research focus is on children’s literature (girls’ fiction and picture books) and gender. In her dissertation (2004) she broadens the contextual space surrounding the classic girls’ story series about Kulla-Gulla by Sandwall-Bergström. Söderberg is also one of the pioneers in the interdisciplinary research network FlickForsk! Nordic Network for Girlhood Studies and has been active on its steering committee since its inception in 2008 until 2013.

Maria Nilson is a senior lecturer at Linnaeus University. In her research she focuses on popular literature and has written on popular romance, steampunk and YA dystopias among other subjects.

Malin Alkestrand, PhD, is currently an Assistant Professor in comparative literature at Linnaeus University, Sweden. In her dissertation Magiska möjligheter: Harry Potter, Artemis Fowl och Cirkeln i skolans värdegrundsarbete [Magical possibilities: Teaching values in schools with Harry Potter,
Artemis Fowl and the Circle] (2016) she explored how fantasy literature can be used to discuss and problematize democracy, human rights, and multiculturalism in a school context. She is currently working on a project about the relationship of power between adults and adolescents in Anglophone and Swedish YA dystopias.
Invited Speaker

Lisa Källström, Pippi as Bullfighter: Illustrations as Mediatized Spectacles

Pippi Longstocking has encouraged countless girls to believe in themselves, both in Sweden and abroad. She has become something of a role model in gender equality. Drawing from intermedial concepts of the mediatized spectacle, this presentation is underlined with visual examples from Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, German, and Russian editions showing Pippi as a bullfighter. Pippi is an interesting object of study, as she demonstrates the instructional character of children’s books. As a spectacle, Pippi uses the transcendental power of the comic, but not to violate propriety, but rather to set it aside as irrelevant. The point is not that Pippi is ridiculed as a savage without common sense. Instead, the conventions appear as comical under the sway of Pippi’s wild progress, when she draws a full-size horse on the floor in the school hall, eats the whole cake as she attends a party, walks the tight-rope, throws herself on the horse’s back behind a circus girl or rides a bull. This interpretation of spectacle is central, as it reveals a movement in what at first seemed to be a locked position. The unforeseen potential of humour is that it shows the absurdity of attempting to accommodate everyday rules at the expense of basic human needs. Bullfighting as a spectacle is constructed through repetitive performance. It is a physical contest that involves a bull, a fighter and a set of rules and cultural expectations. Drawing from the intermedial concepts of illustrations as ongoing processes, as performances I claim that they are not stable identities. Instead they could be seen as stylized repetition of acts, also including bodily gestures, movements, and enactments.

Lisa Källström holds a PhD in rhetoric from Lund University. In Pippi between Worlds and Word, she describes the gaze as a form of techne. The point of departure is illustrations, sketches and cover images of Pippi Longstocking from French, German and Swedish editions. Her main focus lies in visuality stressing the creative act of looking. She is presently writing about pictures in children’s books from an ecocritical approach.
Session 1

PANEL 1: Relationships

Ann-Sofie Persson, *In the Company of Horses: Girlhood in Pia Hagmar’s Series about Klara*

Within the genre of girls’ literature, certain books or series of books depict the girl in the company of horses. In these stories, the construction of girlhood interconnects with the becoming of a person used to handle the large and potentially dangerous animal, which is the horse. Susanna Hedenborg has studied the history of the subgenre, focusing on three series including the one on Klara (Hedenborg 2013). Her study shows the image of a non-traditional girl, used to hard and dirty work, but also, in the case of Klara, a classical fearful and shy girl outside of the interaction with horses. In Helen Asklund’s study of the same series (among others), the investigation uncovers a construction of girlhood in contrast with antagonistic characters (Asklund 2013). This paper will take a slightly different orientation, concentrating on the relationship Klara develops with different horses along the series, and their impact on her identity as a girl. The main theoretical framework will be ecocriticism. When using an ecocritical approach, anthropocentrism is at the heart of our concerns. What does Klara’s interaction with horses unveil about her potentially anthropocentric world view, and how does that inflect on the notion of girlhood in this specific arena where girls are shaped according to slightly different norms?

Ann-Sofie Persson is an Associate professor at Linköping University, where she teaches Comparative Literature, Swedish as a Second Language, French and Didactics for language teachers. Her research interests include ecocritical, postcolonial and gender approaches to literature, as well as didactic. She has published extensively on francophone female autobiography. A few articles with an ecocritical approach can also be added to the list, and she has participated in conferences with paper presentations concerning fiction about horses.

Johari Imani Murray, *Modern Girlhood in America: A Look at Intergenerational Female Relationships in Four Children’s Books*

Nazera Sadiq Wright in writing *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (2016) rescued the stories of middle class African American girlhood found in unexpected places among archival sources, stating in her Introduction, “… [family and community] networks… nature and shape the growth of black girls.” It is among these created networks of family and community in literary works readers of children’s and young adult literature engage with the subjectivity of girlhood’s plane of immanence as it emerges within the fictional narratives. Using the theoretical framework of critical content analysis (Johnson et al 2017), this paper locates girlhood through intergenerational relationships, social-economic pressures and movements from home in four fictional works: two picture books and two chapter books. The two picture books are *A Chair for my Mother* (1982) by Vera B. Williams and *Tell Me a Story, Mama*
(1989) by Angela Johnson. By the same author, Toning the Sweep (1993), a short chapter book, is contextually analyzed alongside Esperanza Rising (2000) by Pam Muñoz Ryan. The agency portrayed in the roles of grandmother, mother and child is rooted in the experiences and expectations which Linnaeus University’s conference’s theme: Conceptions of Girlhood Now and Then seeks to interrogate. Girlhood, as depicted in these works, runs contrary to the Gurlesque Movement and is layered with different contemporary time periods and shifting living spaces. While there are similarities among the four books regarding the consequences of social-economic events, what is of primary interest is the continuity observed in the different storytellings of what it means to be a girl within a strong matriarchal family. The assemblage of these four works as metafictions, following Mia Österlund’s citation of Patricia Waugh in her chapter of Critical Readings of Monika Fagerholm (2016), “draws attention to the relationship between fiction and reality,” and the repertoire of modern girlhood across ethnicities in America as understood through intergenerational female relationships.

Johari Imani Murray is an African American PhD candidate at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Spain. Her dissertation about children’s literature and the narrative self is co-directed by Dr. Carmen Martínez Roldán from Teachers College Columbia University and Dr. Kira Mahamud Angulo from UNED. A member of the IRSCL and the ChLA, Johari has presented on and has taught about language and literacy. Before becoming an educational entrepreneur, she earned her BA from Manhattanville College in English and psychology and her MA in Deaf Education and Bilingual Education from Teachers College Columbia University.

Malin Nauwerck, Rational Women: Romance as Threat in the Work of Louisa May Alcott and Astrid Lindgren

Why is the love story between Jo March and Professor Bhaer in Louisa M. Alcott’s Little Women’s so unengaging? In 2016, the divisiveness in readers’ perception of the character of Friedrich Bhaer sparked a series of essays in The Paris Review (Sadie Stein, 2016) about who this professor ‘really is’. In the 2019 film adaptation of Little Women, director Greta Gerwich attempts to answer the question by using inspiration from Louisa M. Alcott’s biography: the love story between the writer and the professor seems like an artificial romance because it is primarily a concession to a book market in want of happy endings embodied in heterosexual marriages.

A similar lack of romantic engagement, I argue, can be found in the love stories in Astrid Lindgren’s ‘girls’ literature’ which have occasionally been considered conventional and bleak (Vivi Edström, 2003). This paper will address the relationship/conflict between romance and writing in ‘girls’ literature’ by these authors. In different ways, I argue, both Alcott and Lindgren can be said to consciously have replaced traditional romance with a rational choice that benefits work life and creative ambition.

Taking Little Women and Lindgren’s partly Alcott-inspired debut novel Confessions of Britt-Mari (Britt-Mari lättar sitt hjärta, 1944) as starting point, I will explore the implied view of romance and romance fiction in the work of these authors, and discuss these views against the
backdrop of previous feminist scholarship as well as the notion of literary quality in and outside the books. Why is romance a threat – and what is being threatened?

Malin Nauwerck finished her PhD in comparative literature/literary sociology in May 2018. In her doctoral thesis, A World of Myths – World Literature and Storytelling in Canongate’s Myths series (Uppsala University, 2018), she explored contemporary transnational publishing and marketing storytelling. Her ongoing postdoc project “The Astrid Lindgren Code” centres around Swedish author Astrid Lindgren’s original, stenographed manuscripts which she approaches through methods from digital humanities such as digital image analysis and crowdsourcing.

PANEL 2: Girlhood and National Identity

Anna Greek and Hans Hägerdal, *Frida på Sumatra*: A Nordic Colonial Girlhood

The paper applies postcolonial perspectives in the intersection between literature and history, focusing on imaginations of the exotic and colonial in a young girls’ novel written in the heyday of Western colonialism. *Frida på Sumatra* (1921) is an adventure story written by the Danish author Helene Hörlyck and tells the story of Frida, a teenage girl who lives with her uncle Thomas on his estate on Sumatra in the Dutch East Indies. Frida is represented as independent, intelligent and full of initiative, resisting attempts to make her into a proper European young lady – a circumstance which is shocking to her various Anglo-Indian and Dutch suitors, while tolerated by her Danish guardian. Frida also has a close relationship with a number of Batak people, who are linked to her uncle’s estate in various ways and she speaks their language well, having been a captive of “wild savages” for a time before being saved and brought to her uncle’s estate.

This paper has a threefold purpose: First, the novel is placed within the genre of stories of adventurous young women directed at young women readers in the first decades of the Twentieth Century. Secondly, Hans Hägerdal situates imaginations of the savage permeating the novel within the 19th and early 20th century processes of Northern European colonialism in Southeast Asia. Finally, Anna Greek investigates the novel’s representations of race, gender and power concentrating on comparing and contrasting the portrayal of the Danish girl Frida and the Batak girl Lola.

Anna Greek is an Associate Professor in English Literature at Linnaeus University. Among her research interests are intercultural pedagogy and modern African Anglophone literature.

Hans Hägerdal is a Professor in History at Linnaeus University. He has conducted research in colonial and cultural encounters in Southeast Asia, and the professionalization of Chinese historical studies.

Jessica Medhurst, Transcending and Challenging National Identity: Anglophone Constructions of Chinese Girlhood in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century

Childhood in nineteenth and early twentieth century Anglophone accounts of China is a marginalised topic, girlhood even more so. Through close analysis, this paper scrutinises fictional, and one purportedly non-fictional, accounts to discuss the ways in which girlhood is
unsurprisingly constructed as an aside to the norm of boyhood and in terms of the tropes of female infanticide and foot binding. It then compares these with constructions of the girls to whom these ideas are addressed, concluding that girlhood in these texts is presented as a universal condition that transcends nationality, society and culture.

It will discuss Nell Parsons’s fictional *Little Chinese Girl* (1909) and Mrs Bryson’s apparently non-fictional *Child Life in China* (1901), drawing out the similarities of the fictional conventions they employ (White, 1978). This will be undertaken alongside a discussion of the apparent absence of girls in the imaginative trip to China in Louisa May Alcott’s *Eight Cousins* (1875) and the role of girls in Adele M. Fielde’s *Chinese Fairy Tales*. In addition to analysing the physical of appearances of girls, both Chinese and Western, it will compare the values ascribed to them and discuss the ways in which this both conforms with and challenges prevailing notions of the cultural binaries between China and the Anglophone West in the period.

Although it may be no surprise that girlhood in these texts is largely petite, obedient, faithful and bound, a close analysis of the ways in which the texts negotiate this against a backdrop of colonialism, occupation and religious conversion threatens the dichotomous paternalism of the Western saviour trope.

Dr Jessica Medhurst completed her PhD (*Constructions of Childhood in Lewis Carroll’s Photographs*) at the University of Reading (2014) and undertook a Knowledge Transfer Partnership postdoctoral project at Newcastle University and Seven Stories, The UK’s National Centre for Children’s Books. She now teaches and researches English Literature at Beijing Normal University (China). Her publications cover constructions of childhood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both literature and photography.

**Kanthaporn Changprasert, Brave New Girl: Making Sense of Girlhood through Space and Place in Jane Vejjajiva’s The Happiness of Kati**

This study argues that space and place is brought into play as a crucial setting to construct a brave new girl, Kati, the protagonist in Jane Vejjajiva’s *The Happiness of Kati* (2006). This poetic novel portrays a simple and happy life of a nine-year-old Kati, a Thai girl whose positive attitude and character traits are embodied throughout the story of significant setting, yet she has to come to terms with the fact that her mother is dying from an incurable disease. In terms of spatiality studies, this study explicates sociocultural background of Thailand, the conceptual framework of literary geography is also employed to analyze how Kati embraces the surrounding nature, people, and the community where she belongs, thus, empowers her to cope with the sense of loss and then regain courage and confidence to move on with her future life.

It is found that, despite the poignant and moving event, Kati gradually weaves the canvas of girlhood and her strengths dealing with her family situation, including the loss of her mother. The three different settings of home in contemporary Thailand, as well as other exotic geographical features portrayed in the novel convey the sense of the locales, root, and identity of Kati. Having been nurtured by the place of her root, she bravely and securely makes the decision at the end of the story to live her life without her biological parents. This “girl’s book”
marks as the idea of being a girl in contemporary children’s literature as well as exposes girls how they define and make sense of this world.

**Kanthaporn Changprasert** is a lecturer of English Language, Department of Western Languages and Linguistics, The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Maha Sarakham University, Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand. She has been teaching English for the university since 2010 in a wide range of courses such as Children’s Literature, American Short Stories and Novels, Introduction to Prose and Poetry and so forth. Her research interests include narrative empathy in children’s literature, cognitive literary studies, feminist memory studies as well as other interdisciplinary studies.

**PANEL 3: Girls’ Voices**

**Yan Du, Locating Girl Writers Then and Now: The Emily of New Moon Trilogy and the Beginning of the Modern Girl Writer Story**

The figure of the aspiring girl writer has haunted our imagination ever since Alcott introduced Jo, the first heroine to establish the classic model of girlhood authorship in juvenile fiction. However, little attention has been paid to how narratives depicting girl writers have traditionally participated in, and were shaped by, the historical development of girls’ literature. Tracing girl writer narratives from the latter half of the 19th-century through to early 20th-century, this paper probes the origins of the girl writer discourse, particularly its roots in the sentimental domestic genre of the 19th-century Anglophone girls’ literature and culture. It then highlights Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Emily of New Moon* trilogy as a text that could be regarded as a modern turning point for the girl writer discourse since Alcott and others popularized it in the past century.

This paper begins with a contextual survey of young women’s intellectual and creative culture within Victorian girls’ literature, underlining authors such as Yonge, Ewing and Alcott, all of whom describe the complex literacy practices and artistic apprenticeship that define (fictional) girls’ private lives. Siding with scholars such as Sanders (2011) and Emmett (2016), I will then turn to Montgomery’s *Emily* books. Published in 1923, L.M. Montgomery’s autobiographical series deeply engages with 19th-century conventions of fictional girlhood authorship, while also revising them in several important aspects. I unpack how the *Emily* books signal a departure from the sentimental mode of affective discipline upheld in girls’ fiction of the previous decades, allowing the girl writer to challenge ideas of sympathy and self-censorship, especially when it comes navigating the tensions between her creative freedom and adult authority. Having considered Montgomery’s revision of 19th-century sentimental rhetoric, I examine how Montgomery reshapes the girl writer narrative by introducing the writer heroine’s diary voice.

By analysing Emily’s highly idiosyncratic diary entries, I evoke a dialogue between Montgomery’s text and late Victorian young women’s diary culture (Hunter, 2002), arguing that Emily’s private writings make an important comment on the role of diaries as a playground for negotiating gendered consciousness and girlhood subjectivity in literature for girls. They also respond to attitudes toward girlhood writing in the past century, especially issues concerning privacy and the function of writing in girls’ coming of age processes. Finally, I end
the paper with a brief note on how the *Emily* books influenced girl writer narratives that came after.

**Yan Du** (Zoe) is a PhD Candidate based in the Centre for Research in Children’s Literature at the University of Cambridge. Her research interests are girlhood writing culture, adolescent girls’ fan culture and teen media literacy.

**Nic Hilton, Female Control of Voice in Patrick Ness’s *Chaos Walking* Trilogy**

Voice has the power to incite rebellion. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss uses her voice to speak up against the Capitol and as her connection to her family, but what happens when the choice to remain silent is just as powerful as the one to speak up? Silence and voice are major themes in Patrick Ness’s *Chaos Walking* trilogy. In this paper, I will consider how the discrepancy between female silence and male ‘noise’ (the audible nature of men’s thoughts), represents power and agency for Viola in these texts.

In these novels, men’s thoughts are broadcast to everyone around them, creating an ever present and inescapable “Noise”. Women, however, do not suffer this transparency, and can remain silent. Silence then, becomes both a privilege and a threat. For men, the feminine silence is a natural privilege and a threat. For the women, when men gain control of their noise and become able to be silent, it acts as a threat to established power structures of the society, making the right to be silent a key marker of power. On a narrative level the silencing of women’s voices through both discourse representation and mental suggestion privileges one discourse with devastating consequences to those whose voices are disenfranchised. The control of voice is thus directly linked to power, diegetically and extradiegetically.

For girls, voice is pivotal in considering maturation and agency as Carol Gillighan explores in her study *In a Different Voice* (1982). Modelling my analysis of power after Roberta Trites, I intend to explore the power of voice and wilful withholding of it. With this notion of choosing to speak or remain silent, I will consider the power Viola gains in having this choice. Further to this, the “Noise” can be read as a performance of social media within the text. I will expand this reading into sociocultural ramifications of movements like #MeToo, #MeAt14 along with movements such as ‘No I will not debate you’ and #silenceisviolence.

The trilogy brings to light the importance of personal privacy and the importance of having the right to remain silent, particularly for girls. However, it also highlights the dangers of remaining silent, particularly in the face of the manipulation of information by those who speak the loudest. As such, reflections on the roles of both the ‘noise’ and silence are essential to our navigation of issues of agency. Academic work which explores how these issues are represented in children’s literature can aid us in our navigation of real-world problems of control over feminine silence and voice, and its impact on male-female power relations.

**Nic Hilton** is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Research in Children’s Literature, University of Cambridge, and has an MPhil in Children’s Literature from Trinity College, Dublin. Her research is on maturation and the works of Patrick Ness and is funded by Mary Hesse PhD Scholarship at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge. She recently organised the ‘Let’s Talk about Sex in YA’ conference.
Hanna Liljeqvist, Speaking Up by Writing Down: Diary Writing and Empowerment in Meg Cabot’s The Princess Diaries

Diary writing has long been considered a feminine form of writing, and as such it has often been dismissed as a trivial activity of little value. The notion of diary writing as girls’ or women’s writing is reflected in children’s and young adult literature, where the diary frequently is linked to femininity. However, these works tend to present the diary as anything but trivial. Instead, it is often depicted as a safe space for introspection and for exploring issues of voice, agency, and control. One example of this is Meg Cabot’s young adult series The Princess Diaries (2000–2009) that tells the story of the teenager Mia who learns she is a princess. Written in diary form, these teen chick lit novels describe Mia’s struggles with high school drama, princess lessons, and a never-ending quest for self-confidence. By the end of the series, however, the insecure girl introduced in the first novel has turned into a young woman comfortable in her own skin – a transformation that can be linked to Mia’s diary writing.

Drawing on previous research on Cabot’s novels by Sara K. Day and Valerie Bherer, I will outline the ways in which The Princess Diaries novels not only highlight positive aspects of diary writing, but also subvert traditional notions of the diary as trivial. I argue that Mia’s diary becomes a portable “room of her own,” in which she learns to express herself and speak up for herself through writing. Using Roberta Seelinger Trites’ theories on the links between voice and writing in children’s literature as my starting point, I argue that by repeatedly drawing attention to the diary’s empowering functions in Mia’s life, the novels suggest a wish to inspire young female readers to keep diaries of their own – and learn to speak up by writing down.

Hanna Liljeqvist is a research assistant at the Swedish Institute for Children’s Books. She holds an MA in English Literature (Stockholm University) and this paper is based on her thesis “Royal Subjects: Feminist Perspectives on Diary Writing and the Diary Form in Meg Cabot’s The Princess Diaries Series.”
Session 2

PANEL 4: American Girls

Dawn Sardella-Ayres and Ashley Reese, Girls’ Literature as Genre: American and Canadian Girls’ Lit in Discussion

In this presentation, we will discuss how classic works of American and Canadian girls’ texts can be grouped together as a distinct genre, the North American girls’ Bildungsroman, through which we might explore unique ideologies of space, place, heritage, gender, and social structures. We argue that the girls’ Bildungsroman is a text or series of texts in which the heroine is portrayed constructing and developing, or engaging in acts which construct/develop, a gendered identity within her social and domestic environment. In the simplest of terms, we posit that the girls’ Bildungsroman is one in which the heroine (or potentially, more than one heroine) learns her place in society, as a woman. This encompasses her physical, psychological, and moral coming of age.

One key facet of this genre is that secondary female figures often guide the heroines as they come of age and integrate into their communities. These figures include a mother or mother-like women, a sister or sister-like friends, or an arch-enemy foil. These females guide or influence the heroine, providing inspiration either by embodiment or by contrast. Interestingly, since many of the Bildungsromane primary characters cannot transgress social boundaries, the secondary characters end up demonstrating alternative options, worst-case scenarios, or idealized examples of women’s social roles. By examining the ways in which girls and girlhood have been presented, defined, and performed in popular and enduring works of literature about and for them, it is possible to raise new questions about what it means to be a girl today.

Dawn Sardella-Ayres received her PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2016. She completed a 2019 tenure as the Ofstad Guest Scholar at Truman State University, teaching a course on girls’ literature and the girls’ Bildungsroman in the United States and Canada. Sardella-Ayres has published on Alcott, Montgomery, Johnston, and Wilder, and researches issues related to gender and race performativity, as well as the Kunstlerroman, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth century girls’ texts. An article on her critical work on girls’ literature as genre will appear in a forthcoming issue of Girlhood Studies in 2020.

Ashley Reese is a Learning and Development Coordinator with the Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE) at the University of South Florida. Her current book project is “The Rise of Girls’ Literature” (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Her research focuses on both pedagogy and gender in turn-of-the-century American girls’ literature.

Claudia Mills, Defense of a Mid-20th-Century Portrait of Happy, Harmonious Girlhood: The Betsy-Tacy Series of Maud Hart Lovelace

As well-documented by Dawn Sardella-Ayres, building on work by Jerry Griswold, North American girls’ Bildungsromane have tended to share certain features: the heroine experiences double oppression as both female and child, is “othered” in some way relative to her peers, and
undergoes rites of transition to young ladyhood that often involve a “taming” that transforms her in ways that sacrifice much of the reason why readers identified with her in the first place.

One mid-century North American girl’s Bildungsroman, however, shares none of these features. The autobiographical *Betsy-Tacy* series of Maud Hart Lovelace, with ten titles published in the 1940s and early 1950s, presents the gradual maturation of a girl who is raised in one of the happiest families in children’s literature, comfortably middle-class, popular with girls and boys alike, thoroughly reveling in her femininity, and consistently supported by parents, siblings, and peers in her aspirations as an emerging writer. In a striking departure from other series that trace their protagonist’s growth and development from childhood through to adult married life, such as the *Little Women* trilogy and *Anne of Green Gables* series, Lovelace’s protagonist maintains the same exuberant identity even in the final volume in the series, despite her many intervening life changes.

Although it can be difficult to sustain reader interest in stories of happy girlhood in a harmonious family (see Brian Attebery’s work on the family story as genre), I argue that it is beneficial to be able to provide young female readers with the model of a protagonist who is able to reconcile a clearly feminine identity with committed professional striving, to maintain intensely close female friendships while also being intensely interested in heterosexual romance, and to pursue creative ambitions without sacrificing other valued life goods.

Claudia Mills, who received her Ph.D. from Princeton University, is Associate Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Colorado at Boulder and a faculty member in the Graduate Programs in Children’s Literature at Hollins University. The author of almost 60 books for young readers, including *Zero Tolerance, Write This Down,* and *Vera Vance, Comics Star,* she has published numerous articles on children’s literature, including work on Louisa May Alcott, Maud Hart Lovelace, Betty MacDonald, Rosamond du Jardin, and Eleanor Estes. Her book *Ethics and Children’s Literature* won the 2016 Edited Book Award from the Children’s Literature Association.

Ya’ara Notea, *The Mythic Everyday of the Frontier in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House Series*

Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series (1932–1943) is the most enduring and influential representation of pioneer life in the American West. For eight decades, the series has played a significant role in the propagation and reinforcement of American frontier ideology, and scholars have identified its traces throughout American culture, education and politics (see for instance: Fellman, 2008). This talk suggests that Little House’s lasting cultural resonance is due to its particular version of the West. I argue that this rendition, which has become synonymous with the American frontier, is possible only because Wilder writes the frontier via girlhood.

Employing critical and historical frameworks in a close literary analysis, I propose that by creating a girl’s West, Little House is capable of fusing overarching national narrative and individual everyday experience, bringing the worlds of the American frontier to life. Laura’s story enables this merge of the mythic and the quotidian as it captures both the adventurous ideal of the West (which Laura learns from Pa) and the mundane realities of the domestic (which she must practice with Ma); both expansion and settlement, culminating in continuity through
procreation. Laura’s own development, I suggest, embodies the process of settling the West in its supposed entirety, from self-subsistent survival on indigenous land to communal consumerism in a bustling town.

Reading the novels through what I term “the mythic everyday” illuminates the manner in which, through Laura, the series rewrites the origin story of the West, mediating American colonialism and the development of capitalism on the frontier. Little House thus sutures up inherent contradictions of frontier ideology and forecloses the violent consequences of settler colonialism in the West.

Ya’ara Notea is a PhD student at King’s College London, researching 20th century popular American girls’ fiction. She has previously published on F. Scott Fitzgerald’s portrayal of female coming-of-age.

Melanie J. Fishbane, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy: Discovering the Jewish Girl in Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women

At the beginning of Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women, the novel’s most popular and beloved heroine, Jo March, grumbles: “Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents” (11). This Christian-centred opening steeps the novel in what scholars, such as Anne Phillips and Shannon Murray, have argued is Alcott’s feminist adaptation of her father’s favourite book, John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress. However, in “Discovering Louisa May Alcott’s Jewish History on Portuguese Tour,” Eve LaPlante writes that Alcott was often told her darker features were most likely because of her Sephardic Jewish roots. According to LaPlante, Abigail May Alcott’s paternal ancestors were Portuguese Jews who immigrated to England at the end of the fourteenth century. While Alcott never wrote about this in her fiction, and though the family was proud of this heritage, Emily Schneider suggests that the Jewish characters in Little Women are “meek” and stereotypical. This might have shown Alcott’s unintended bias towards Jewish people. As well, there are two references to German immigrants, the Hummels and Professor Bhaer – the latter being featured in an article by Sadie Stein about his potential Jewishness. If one considers the role of the midrash in Jewish theology, as a collection of stories that expands on details and characters not fully described in the Torah, and how contemporary rabbis and scholars are taking the male-authored/male-centred text and putting it through a feminist lens, then how might we reimagine the connection between Little Women and The Pilgrim’s Progress? As well, as how can “the girls” (Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy) be imagined through a Jewish lens? This paper will explore this connection, while also analyzing how Alcott’s understanding of the nineteenth century Jewish experience might have influenced her writing.

Melanie J. Fishbane holds an M.F.A. from the Vermont College of Fine Arts and an M.A. from Concordia University. Her work has been published in L.M. Montgomery’s Rainbow Valleys: The Ontario Years 1911-1942 and Reconsidering Laura Ingalls Wilder: Little House and Beyond. Her YA novel, Maud: A Novel Inspired by the Life of L.M. Montgomery was shortlisted for the Vine Awards for the best in Canadian Jewish Literature.
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 Klaič’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
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 (principal 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.

PANEL 6: Memories

Lena Ahlin, Elusive Girlhood in Adoption Memoirs

This paper begins by arguing that when the concept of girlhood is considered in relation to the presently growing body of memoirs by transnational adoptees, two central tensions emerge. On the one hand, the adoptee authors/protagonists are seen as perpetual children always being spoken *for* by adoptive parents, social workers, or other adults. On the other hand, the full story of their own girlhood is elusive; haunted by a past that was never to be.
The analysis focuses on adoption from South Korea using Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom’s graphic novel *Palimpsest* (2016) as a case in point; reading it in relation to other Swedish, and American memoirs of transnational adoption (Jane Jeong Trenka, Katy Robinson, Soojung Jo, Nicole Chung, Astrid Trotzig, and Sofia French). Hübinette (2005) notes that Swedish YAL about Korean adoption focuses on adoptive, rather than biological, relationships and promotes a liberal and progressive view of adoption as a form of family-making well suited to the idea of a multicultural society. The memoirs challenge this view, offering a more complex picture. All center on the theme of finding identity and a sense of belonging. By putting her life story into words, the adoptee memoirist writes herself into being, and the journey to South Korea constitutes a rite of passage in which the encounter with the mother (country) enables a reconciliation with past, and serves as a necessary step on the way to adulthood and motherhood. In addition to investigating the trope of adoption as enabling independence and hybridization (Novy 2001), the paper focuses on representations of an alternative past, and the persistent need to fill in the gaps about one’s childhood, which for many of the writers amounts to a yearning for memories that were never formed.

**Lena Ahlin** is Senior Lecturer in English/Head of English at Kristianstad University, Sweden, where she teaches literature and academic as well as creative writing. Research interests include African-American and Asian-American literature, and she is currently completing a project on memory, nostalgia and affect in transracial/transnational adoption literature. Her work on adoption has been published in *Humanities* (2019), and *International Adoption in North American Culture*, edited by Mark Shackleton (Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

**Mateusz Świetlicki and Justyna Mętrak**, “Girls should be plump and round. Men don’t care for bony women”: Girlhood, Femininity and Next-Generation Memory in North American Diasporic Children’s Literature

In the proposed presentation, we want to use the theoretical framework of memory studies (Ulanowicz, Hirsch, Oziewicz) and gender studies to analyze the various ways in which femininity is constructed in three Ukrainian-Canadian novels. Our aim is to show that the physical and emotional maturation of the protagonists symbolizes the Ukrainian diaspora’s capability to survive. It is no coincidence that the protagonists of most contemporary North American diasporic children’s novels are girls and young woman, as gender plays a vital role in the memory narratives of diasporic communities (Ulanowicz). While in Ukrainian-Canadian coming-of-age stories girls become the receivers of next-generation memory passed on them by elderly women, usually their grandmothers, the eponymous protagonists of Gloria Kupchenko Frolick’s *Anna Veryha* (1992), Laura Langston’s *Lesia’s Dream* (2003), and Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch’s *Prisoners in the Promised Land: The Ukrainian Internment Diary of Anya Soloniuk* (2007) also represent the changes in the traditional understanding of Ukrainian gender roles (Świetlicki) caused by migration to Canada. Though girls in the novels are symbolically responsible for the persistence of their communities, in the process of becoming the givers of memory they have to struggle with misogyny, childism (Joosen), and ethnic prejudices.
Dr. Mateusz Świetlicki is an Assistant Professor in the Department of American Literature and Culture (Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław). He is a founding member of the Centre for Research on Children’s and Young Adult Literature (Faculty of Letters, University of Wrocław). He was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago (2018) and was awarded fellowships at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (2014) and Harvard University (2012). His expertise is contemporary children’s and YA literature and culture, as well as popular culture and film. He has taught American literature, film, and popular culture at the University of Wrocław and the University of Illinois at Chicago. His recent publications include: “Such Books Should be Burned! Same-Sex Parenting and the Stretchable Definition of the Family in Larysa Denysenko’s and Mariia Foya’s Maya and Her Mums”, Children’s Literature in Education 2019; “Oh, What a Waste of Army Dreamers…’: The Revolution of Dignity and War in Contemporary Ukrainian Picturebooks”, Filoteknos 8, 2018, 119–130; “Coming Out of the Ghostly Gay Children in Truman Capote’s ‘Other Voices, Other Rooms’ and Harper Lee’s ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’”, Prikarpats’kiy visnyk NTSH Slovo 3 (39), 2017, 201–210. He is currently working on a book project on memory in Canadian children’s literature. He is a representative for the Childhood & Youth Network of the Social Science History Association and a member of IRSCL and MSA.

Justyna Mętrak is an MA student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Wrocław, Poland. Scientific interests: YA literature, memory of the margins, queer theory, popular culture. She is currently working on a thesis about queerness and boyhood in Patricia Nell Warren’s fiction.

Maria Freij, Anastasia and I: A Fictocritical Essay about Reading and Writing Girlhood

This paper explores, in a fictocritical manner, the potential impact on childhood reading on identity-formation. The intermingling of memory and imagination can inextricably link a reader and a literary character, blurring the line between their experiences, feelings, and actions. Lois Lowry’s Anastasia Krupnik series captures many of the key features of (pre-)adolescence: the unease of interaction, of the body, of being. The books are about a sense-making, but they are also books about writing, about voice. Anastasia expresses her loves and hates through lists, those first steps of beginning to order the universe through words. Like her parents are strong role models and representatives of humanist values, so Anastasia herself becomes a role model for the girl reader, and for the girl writer.

If “autobiographical memory becomes a site for the individual and social construction of truth” (Fivush 2013), it may be that “genuine” childhood memories intermingle with the memories of fictional narratives: if “[t]o remember is to re-present” (Braunstein 2010, p. 12), then to remember is also to re-create. In the case of Anastasia and I, we became each others’ mirrors. I was convinced that signing the walls of beloved houses was inspired by her actions, but some thirty years later, I realised that my first such signing predated reading the book by three years. If Néstor Braunstein is correct in the assertion that “we are what we remember” (p. 22) then we are also what we remember we read, and who we were when we read. The girls Anastasia and I were shared many traits and experiences, as we were written into being. This paper explores this experience against Pierre Bayard’s four hypotheses of strange coincidences (2005), and how reading may intermingle with writing to form the site for the formation of “decisive events” (Braunstein, p. 144).
Maria Freij is Senior Lecturer in English, Kristianstad University, Sweden. Teaching interests include Creative Writing, poetry, literature, grammar, and translation. Research interests include representations of selves and identities through the imagery of childhood landscapes, primarily in the poetry of Lars Gustafsson. Her critical work appears in Humanities, AJFS, and TEXT; translations in the Redroom Company/Lyrikline Project and Mascara Literary Review; and creative work in journals including Meanjin, Blue Dog, Southerly, Softblow, and Overland. Her translation of Boris Vian’s Je Voudrais pas Crever was published in If I say If—The Poems and Short Stories of Boris Vian (Adelaide University Press 2014, ed. Rolls et al.).
Session 3

PANEL 7: Empowered Girlhood?

Nicola Burke, I Like a Girl Who Can Eat: Female Hunger, Food and Desire in the Supernatural Romance

In mainstream discourse on the genre, the contemporary Young Adult (YA) supernatural romance is frequently dismissed as one dimensional and low quality; literature that reproduces traditional and conservative ideologies of gender and sexuality for an undiscerning adolescent female audience. In this paper I contest this dismissal, arguing that the genre contains complex and contradictory representations of femininity and female sexuality, and that these representations expose and rehearse ambivalence surrounding adolescent girls and girlhood in the early twenty-first century. Drawing on the growing disciplines of both romance and YA studies, I conduct this contestation through a genre study of the contemporary supernatural romance, as well as close reading and analysis of Maggie Stiefvater’s (2009–2014) Wolves of Mercy Falls series (Shiver, Linger, Forever and Sinner). I argue that ambivalence and complexity are present in the texts, as seen through representations of female hunger, food and feasting and scent and the sense of smell within the series. Furthermore, the presence of the supernatural allows these representations to act as unique sites for cultural criticism and negotiation. Representations of aromatic scents within the texts, for example, work to reproduce normative conventions of femininity while simultaneously allowing for the positive representation of female sexual desire and pleasure. Conversely, malodorous scents and the act of scent-marking reinforce well-established contemporary fears surrounding female sexual activity and the notion of the monstrous feminine. Similarly, scenes of female gustatory hunger and feasting attempt to negotiate the engrained diet culture and repression of adolescent female sexual desire within contemporary society, through the symbolic associations of food with sexuality and sexual activity. Female hunger and appetite (both sexual and gustatory) are at once encouraged and praised, and presented as dangerous and in need of restriction, emphasising the still-rigid boundaries surrounding adolescent girls and girlhood. In conducting this research, I not only analyse the contemporary ambivalence surrounding adolescent girls but emphasise the importance of popular literature as a site in which these attitudes and anxieties can be explored, resisted and reproduced.

Nicola Burke is a PhD candidate and academic at Western Sydney University, in Sydney, Australia. She works in the school of Humanities and Communication Arts teaching social and cultural analysis, children’s literature and culture, and literary studies. Her research focuses on representations of adolescent girls and girlhood within contemporary YA fiction, with a specific focus on the romance genre. She is graduating with her PhD (Mills and Fur: Feminism and Femininity in the Supernatural Romance), focusing on the adolescent girl and girlhood in contemporary YA supernatural romance retellings of Little Red Riding Hood, in December 2020.
Dona Pursall, Britain's First Supergirl? Pansy Potter Comic Strips as a Model for Girhood

“[The Beano gave us a superheroine] in 1938, forty years ahead of [Britain's] Sex Equality Act. She was ‘Pansy Potter, The Strongman's Daughter,’ Britain’s answer to Wonder Woman.” (Christopher Murray paraphrasing Denis Gifford in The British Superhero (2017) p. 61)

Through platitudes of high praise such as this, the status of this hugely popular icon of a tough little girl has remained idealised but unexplored for over 80 years. This paper complicates Gifford’s comparison to Wonder Woman, suggesting that Pansy’s ambitions were not those of a powerful and independent freedom fighter, but rather to limit her strength, to conform and seek acceptance within the expectations of society. Whilst recognising how she powerfully advocated for the independence of young girls, this study simultaneously explores the ways in which the character reinforced codes of cultural submission for females at the time. Moreover, as the daughter of a strongman, Pansy’s agency is related to circus ‘otherness,’ a physical identity positively associated with breaking against conformity. However, despite her potential, Pansy strives to embody as a ‘normal’ girl, submissive and contained.

Britain in 1938 was preparing for war, and that year saw the establishment of the Women’s Land Army, Air Raid Protection, and Women’s Auxiliary Air Force. This was a time in which women were being asked to step forward and serve their country physically through manual labour and through self-sacrifice. In reconsidering Pansy through this contextual prism, this paper problematizes the comic strip. Through a close analysis of the physicality of the character, the construction of humour, and the socio-political context, selected Pansy strips from 1938 to 1950 will be unpacked, highlighting how complex negotiation of empowered girlhood and constrained self-hood played out. Through interrogation of this one specific character, this paper wishes to engage with wider questions of how girls were represented, idealised and addressed as reader of comics ‘for boys and girls’ (marketing phrasing used by D. C. Thomson publication The Beano and other comics of this type).

Dona Pursall is a PhD student of Cultural Studies, currently embraced within a wider European project seeking to piece together an intercultural history of children in comics: https://www.comics.ugent.be. Dona’s research explores children, childhood, imagination and culture within the history of humorous comics within the context of social unrest and political change. As a teacher with over fifteen years of classroom experience Dona is especially interested in children’s reading experience. Her Master’s degree explored young adult readers and notions of identity and consumerism within vampire fiction. She recently published an article on the history of British children’s comics and naughtiness on the Henry Jenkins weblog: http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2019/11/17/on-the-beano-naughty-national-icons-and-a-history-of-misbehavior-part-1-of-3-by-dona-pursall.

Sara Kokkonen, The Popular and Contradictory Heroine Tiina in Finnish Girls’ Literature

Finnish girls’ literature represents pictures of both ideal girls and those who cross the normative boundaries. According to Myry Voipio (2015) the collision of didacticism and emancipation is built into the genre. It produces contradictory features in novels and girl characters. In my
presentation, I explore the most popular girl character in the history of Finnish girls’ books. Anni Polva wrote a 29-part series about girl named Tiina in 1956–1986. The Tiina-books were targeted at girls, aged 8–12 years. I study the contradictory girl description of this popular girls’ series.

Tiina’s character has the classical elements of the tomboy. She fights against the boys, climbs in the trees, is very athletic and her masculine traits are valued, especially by the boys. Tiina breaks the conventional norms and expectations of the girlhood showing that girls can do equally well as the boys. On the other hand, Tiina represents the ideal girl of good properties according to the conventions of the classic girls’ literature. She is a protector of animals, weaker or poor people such as children and elders. She is an honest and decent heroine who is superior to other girls in the fiction as well as in real life. Tiina became the role model over the generations to many Finnish girl readers. Finnish girls even founded clubs called Tiina-clubs. The idea was that for lying or swearing one had to pay the penalty and the money went to charity.

The world of Tiina books is old-fashioned from the perspective of the modern reader. The series began in the 1950’s and ended in the 1980’s. Although the society is changing radically at that time, it doesn’t show much in the books’ timeline. In the manners of series books, the protagonist does not age much in the series. Despite the Tiina books being very popular during the whole appearance, literary critics did not appreciate the books and the author. Girls’ series can offer their readers the greater independence or freedom and sense of power. However, the norms breaking Tiina series emphasises simultaneously differences between gender and presents traditional gender role models in patriarchal context.

Sara Kokkonen is a doctoral student at the University of Turku, Faculty of Education, Finland. Her doctoral thesis investigates particularly Finnish girls’ literature. Her research interests are classic girls’ books and reading experiences.

PANEL 8: Emotions

Lydia Wisisthen, Emotional Socialization in Swedish Post-War Literature for Girls

This paper examines a selection of Swedish post-war novels for girls through the lens of emotions. During the 1950s and 1960s a new culture of emotion developed in the Western world, as a growing number of young people were rejecting and opposing the dominant values and behavior of society. This process, with its 1950s teenage revolt and 1960s counterculture, produced a shift in how the young generation is thought of and represented on the one hand, and in emotional norms and expression on the other. For the first time in history, teenagers became important culture assets and trendsetters.

This change, in turn, affected the contemporary girl’s book. Drawing on the history of emotions studies, the paper investigates how emotional expressions are utilized to negotiate and contest given norms on the one hand, and the literary conventions of the girl’s book on the other. The material consists of novels such as Britt-Mari lätta sitt hjärt (1944) by Astrid Lindgren, Aldrig en lugn stund hos Oskarssons (1952) by Martha Sandwall-Bergström, Flicka i april
Theoretically, the paper is inspired by Sarah Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) and William Reddy’s *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (2008). The point of departure is intersectional and focuses on the relationship between emotion, power, and socialization. In particular, the paper considers how intersections of age, gender, and class relate to depictions of feeling and establishing of new emotional norms. By critically comparing how different representations of emotion are used to affirm or contest norms, the paper will shed light on the shifting role of morals in the post-war Swedish girl’s book.

**Dr. Lydia Wistisen** is a researcher and lecturer at the Department for Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University. Her research interests include YA, picture books, emotion history, intersectionality studies, spatial studies, urbanity. She is a part of the editorial board of *Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics* and the guest editor of one of the latest volumes of *Barnboken: Journal of Children’s Literature Research*. Additionally, she reviews children’s and young adult literature for the Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*.

**Laura Leden, Mystery of Nancy Drew in the Nordic Countries: Emotional Characteristics Lost in the Norwegian and Finnish Translations**

In honour of the 90th anniversary of the first *Nancy Drew* books published in 1930 by the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate under the pseudonym Carolyn Keene, my paper will solve the mystery of the abridgement of the Finnish 1950s translations by examining the origins of the abridgement and its effects on characterization. The series about the detective girl Nancy Drew is one of the internationally most well-known formula fiction series for girls. Nancy is known as an escapist feminist icon representing ideal girlhood of freedom and adventure (Nash 2005). The series was created with marketability in mind and the books have undergone major adaptation in many countries (Skjønsberg 1994).

A comparison of early Finnish *Neiti Etsivä* (Miss Detective) translations with their American originals shows that the translations have been subject to major abridgement, since both the page count and number of chapters are considerably lower. Skjønsberg’s (1994) report of similar abridgement in the Norwegian *Frøken Detektive* translations from the 1940s is a clue to the origin of the Finnish abridgement.

The abridgement, which travelled to Finland via Norway, is driven by target-oriented business norms and a wish to produce books for a younger audience than the original 10–15 years. It can be called narrative abridgement, which affects how the story is told by shifting the balance between narrative, descriptive and argumentative elements (types of narration described for example by Bal 2017). Descriptive analysis of shifts affecting the characterization of Nancy shows that the translations favour narrative elements advancing the plot and the character indicators actions and speech on the expense of descriptive elements and the indicators thoughts and feelings, which makes the female detective presented to Norwegian and Finnish readers
less emotional and tougher than the original character. The simplified, more fast-paced translations present a more action-oriented image of girlhood.

Laura Leden is a PhD candidate at the University of Helsinki and holds an MA in Swedish Translation Studies and a BA in Scandinavian Literature. Her thesis examines adaptation of the image of girlhood in translations of girls’ books from English into Swedish and Finnish. She has published on translations of L.M. Montgomery’s works in the children’s literature journals Barnboken, The Lion and the Unicorn and The Looking Glass and presented several papers, for example at the L.M. Montgomery conferences organized by the University of Prince Edward Island.

Vera N. Veldhuizen, Good Girls, Bad Girls, and Suffocating Softness

In this paper I analyse the untranslated Dutch YA novel A Mouth Stuffed With Down (1994) [Een Mond Vol Dons] by Lydia Rood. This novel, which won the prestigious Zilveren Griffel upon publication, deals with the troubled close friendship of two girls, and how their different reactions to the feminised softness with which they are approached by their parents push them apart. The protagonist-narrator, Marjan, lives with her single and pragmatic mother and obedient bully sister. Her best friend, Sophie, has run away from her caring and gentle parents. Feminised softness (the limiting of “correct” emotional display to passive and gentle emotions) plays a significant part in both girls’ lives; Marjan is timid, and is given almost complete freedom at home as a means of encouraging gentle obedience. Sophie, on the other hand, is not allowed to argue at home; every disagreement has to be handled through gentle discourse. She describes this situation to Marjan as “suffocating”, recalling dreams of her mouth being stuffed with down.

In this paper, I analyse the forms this feminised softness takes in the narrative, and the contrasting impacts it has on the two main characters. To do this, I combine a cognitive narratological approach to examine the different emotions portrayed by the characters with a thematic approach using which I demonstrate the roles of intimate teenaged relationships (parents-child, bosom friendship, sibling, and romantic) in creating this sense of suffocating softness. The resulting fallout reveals that the obstruction of non-soft, non-feminine emotions in this narrative leads to the breakage of the key relationships involved, and the permanent impact emotional limiting discourse can have on teenaged girls. I argue that through displaying this impact, the narrative critiques the extra-textual narratives surrounding girlhood in the Netherlands in the 90s.

Dr. Vera N. Veldhuizen is Assistant Professor of European Languages and Cultures at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Her research expertise lies with cognitive approaches to children’s literature. Her most recent publications include “Empathy Across Time in Speculative Children’s Shoah Fiction” in English Association: Issues in English (2019) and “Narrative Ethics in Robert Westall’s The Machine Gunners” in Children’s Literature in Education (2020). She is currently adapting her Cambridge PhD project, supervised by Professor Maria Nikolajeva, for publication as a monograph.
PANEL 9: Reimagining Girlhood

Jade Dillon, (Re)Imagining Girlhood: The Artistic Evolution of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

This paper will perform an iconographic reading of multimodal creations of Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. I will outline the visualization of the ‘Alice’ figure through a selection of radical artistic representations including Kaneko Kuniyoshi, Camille Rose Garcia and Benjamin Lacombe. The visual gaze will be used to frame the discussion of Kuniyoshi’s ‘Alice’ figure through Lolita fashion and the Japanese idealization of shōjo. While the term ‘shōjo’ is associated primarily with Japanese culture, there are also evident assertions of shōjo – or, cuteness – in Garcia’s artwork that contain elements of metapicture through allusions to Walt Disney’s 1951 Alice in Wonderland. Garcia fuses the uncanny and the cute in her selection of images to capture the layers of meaning and interpretation in relation to the ‘Alice’ figure. Meanwhile, Lacombe’s collection of illustrations is formative of a modified Alice who exists on the cusp of puberty and womanhood. He presents a gothic and abstract Alice who distorts the normative view of feminine identity. This paper will analyse the changing representation of girlhood in Alice illustrations in order to investigate how the interpretation of girlhood can create a transcultural and transtemporal character identity for the ‘Alice’ figure. This work is important because it challenges the gender stereotyping of young girls in literature and illustration. Children’s literature has a significant impact on the mindset of a child, and the representations of gender that are presented to the reader can create an unconscious bias of what is classed as ‘typical’ feminine or masculine portrayal. Alice is often misconceived as a doe-eyed child who is docile and unassuming; however, this representation does her a disservice. She is a strong and self-assured character who independently seeks adventure by herself. This paper will prove how multifaceted female representation in children’s stories can, and should, be.

Dr Jade Dillon holds a PhD in children’s literature and visual culture. Her research focuses on the visual iconography of the ‘Alice’ figure created in Lewis Carroll’s Alice books and it traces the progression of Alice’s characterization through multimodal platforms including illustration and fine art photography. She has published her research with numerous academic journals and books, as well as general articles on children’s literature with RTE Brainstorm (Ireland).

Mette Hildeman Sjölin, The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines

In 1850, a story collection called The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines was published, written by the author and Shakespeare scholar Mary Cowden Clarke. The stories are what we would now call ‘prequels’ to Shakespeare’s plays, following some of his female characters from birth to the point where Shakespeare’s story begins. These coming-of-age stories, written about and (at least partly) for girls, might be counted as examples of Victorian ‘girls’ literature’.

Cowden Clarke’s work can be compared to Henrietta Bowdler’s The Family Shakespeare (1807), a family-friendly edition of Shakespeare’s works, and Charles and Mary Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare (1807), a collection of stories retelling Shakespeare’s plots in narrative form.
Where Bowdler and the Lambs present the events from Shakespeare’s plays in versions aimed at children, Cowden Clarke invents new stories, focusing not on the most central (male and adult) characters of the plays, but specifically on the girls in their shadows.

The stories can also be contrasted with feminist re-visions of Shakespeare’s plays from more recent times. The Women’s Theatre Group’s play Lear’s Daughters (1987) is also a prequel offering an explanation for why Shakespeare’s female characters have turned out the way they have and what they may have been like as girls; this re-vision, however, has a more obviously political aim in its analysis of the power structures in King Lear. Like Lear’s Daughters, The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines gives young girls more space than Shakespeare’s plays do, but these prequels confirm Shakespeare’s versions rather than question or contradict them.

Cowden Clarke does, however, offer psychological readings of Shakespeare’s female characters and sees their girlhoods as determining their fates. This paper explores the conception of girlhood in The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines, contrasting it with the conception of girlhood in Shakespeare’s plays.

Mette Hildeman Sjölin defended her doctoral thesis in English literature at Lund University in 2017. Her thesis deals with appropriations of Shakespeare’s tragedies, written for the stage between 1980 and 2010, with a particular focus on the depiction and performance of women and familial relationships. A revised version will be published in the series Lund Studies in English in 2020. Hildeman Sjölin is also co-editor of Subjectivity and Epistemicity: Corpus, Discourse and Literary Approaches to Stance (2014). She is currently teaching English at Lund University.

Jennifer Gouck, Becoming Pixie: Conceptualising and Challenging the Manic Pixie Dream Girl

Coined in 2007 by film critic Nathan Rabin, though arguably in our cultural consciousness for much longer, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG) can be found across literature, cinema, and popular culture. A quirky, ethereal figure, the MPDG “exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures” (Rabin, ‘Bataan March’). In YA fiction, the Pixie can be found in a novel type I call ‘MPDGYA’. Merely a prop for self-actualisation, in these kinds of stories the MPDG has no narrative purpose beyond that of enriching the life of a male, white protagonist – thus sending a troubling message to young, female readers.

In recent years, interventionist MPDGYA has emerged, in which authors seek to challenge, dismantle, and disrupt the trope. Indeed, author John Green argues in a Tumblr post that his 2008 novel “Paper Towns is devoted IN ITS ENTIRETY to destroying the lie of the manic pixie dream girl.” A more recent interventionist novel can be found in Gretchen McNeil’s I’m Not Your Manic Pixie Dream Girl (2016), in which brilliant mathematician, Bea, invents a formula for Pixieism as part of an MIT scholarship application – with the seemingly more important goal of securing the affections of her crush and achieving social success along the way.
This paper seeks to examine how Bea attempts to ‘become Pixie’ and conceptualise the MPDG trope, while also considering the extent to which McNeil is successful, or not, in her challenge of the ever-pervasive trope. Modelling her novel on the traditional YA rom-com and transformation story, and in making use of the makeover paradigm, does McNeil intervene in Pixie patterns? Or does she simply reproduce – and repackage – that which makes the MPDG such a problematic representation of teen girlhood in contemporary American YA?

Jennifer Gouck is a third year PhD student at University College Dublin. Funded by the Irish Research Council, Jennifer’s thesis focuses on representations of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl in contemporary American Young Adult Literature, Media, and Culture. She is a contributor to the YA Literature Media and Culture Network blog founded by Dr Leah Phillips. In 2018, Jennifer was shortlisted for the Irish Society for the Study of Children’s Literature Biennial Award for an Outstanding Thesis on Children’s Literature for her work on rape (culture) in Louise O’Neill’s Asking for It (2015).
In novels for girls from early 20th century a recurring theme is that of girls becoming women in encountering and choosing a male partner who they are going to marry or in fact marries. This tends to be a part of a happy ending of a novel or series of novels.

The Swedish author Agnes von Krusenstjerna (1894–1940) debuted with two novels (1917/1918) about girls growing up in encountering love and sexuality, which were perceived as girls’ books, even though they were not published as such. They both adhere to the frequent pattern in the girls’ literature tradition mentioned above. Her subsequent trilogy (1922–1926) about the young, noble girl Tony, was compared to the same genre but considered unsuitable to its girl readers due to its explicit depictions of sexuality and mental illness and furthermore depicts love in a different fashion than the previous novels.

The aim of this paper is to explore the ending of the Tony trilogy in comparison to the endings of classical girls’ books from late 19th and early 20th century, which in different ways thwart reader’s expectations that the heroine will make a right choice in love and that the novel will end happily. I draw upon queer temporality theory, especially by Jack Halberstam, which I combine with Scandinavian “skev” theory (In a Queer Time and Place, 2005; The Queer Art of Failure, 2011). “Skev”/skewed (meaning approximately crooked, warped and lop-sided) is a Scandinavian variation of queer that I use to discuss “skeva” endings and how they are linked to the “life schedule” or, to use another term, “lifeline” (Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, 2006; Halberstam, 2005; Maria Margareta Österholm, Ett flicklarboratorium i valda bitar, 2012). I argue that “skeva” endings and the lifeline of the protagonist are intrinsically linked together.

Hilda Jakobsson has a doctoral degree in literature since 2019 and presently works as a teacher in child and youth studies, Stockholm University. Her dissertation is about the Swedish author Agnes von Krusenstjerna’s early works, her depictions of girls becoming – or not becoming – women in encountering love and sexuality, as well as her relationship to the girls’ book genre. Jakobsson has published an article on the Swedish girls’ book series Kulla-Gulla and presented several papers on the subject of girls’ books. Furthermore, she has taught children’s and young adult literature. She is particularly interested in depictions of love and sexuality, queer and intersectional theory.

Marianna Koljonen, Girls’ Ambivalent Presence in Animal Rights Oriented Children’s Literature

In this paper, I examine the representation of human and nonhuman girls in animal rights oriented children’s books (AROC).
According to various studies and statistics, women feel more empathy towards nonhuman animals than men. Women form the majority of vegetarians and vegans, and the largest growing group of vegans consists of young women, reaching 25% of the age group. Women volunteer for animal shelters and animal advocacy groups more often than men. Girls are also the main target group of horse and dog books, popular genres for young readers tracing back to Anna Sewell’s equine liberationist not-children’s book *Black Beauty* (1877).

However, in AROC books that focus on veganism, boys are predominant both in number and agency. In my sample of 31 books centering around vegan identity of child(like) characters, nine books have female protagonists. In the case of childlike main characters, usually predators or fictional monsters, none of the protagonists are female. On the other hand, books with female characters tend to discuss many diversity issues, such as ethnic diversity (out of four non-white characters, three are girls) and diverse family backgrounds (out of four single parent families represented in the books, three have female protagonists). Thus, male characters are considered neutral and are used to normalize veganism whereas girl protagonists vindicate diversity.

In AROC books in general, nonhuman animals are predominantly male except for cows and hens who are depicted as mothers mourning for the loss of their babies. Girlhood is practically nonexistent in animal kingdom apart from Esther the Wonder Pig, a real-life sow and the main character of a children’s picture book by the same name (2018). Esther is portrayed as a stereotypical modern girl who loves cupcakes and pink sunglasses. Her anthropomorphized girlhood challenges the concept of pigs as filthy and stupid animals but also celebrates nonconforming girlhood in terms of body normativity and appreciates girlhood as a permanent, rather than liminal, state.

Marianna Koljonen is a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki. She explores the ethics of meat in the tradition of Western children’s literature from a critical animal studies viewpoint. In published articles, she has discussed vegan children’s literature and the animality of animals reared for food. She is a secretary to the Finnish section of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People), an active member of the Finnish Critical Animal Studies network and of a vegan parenting group in Helsinki. She has previously worked as a teacher and in animal rights campaigns and instructs humane education.


Easy readers, a text type for children and young adults has expanded radically in Sweden during the last ten years. The target groups for the YA-easy readers used to be young people with reading disabilities, but nowadays they are also read by newly arrived refugees and reluctant readers (Nordenstam and Olin-Scheller 2018). An earlier study (Nordenstam & Olin-Scheller 2017), based on a selection of easy readers published between 2006–2015 showed that the YA-easy readers were rather stereotype according to gender. The girl characters were portrayed in a passive way, they were taking care of the social relations, and they were often exposed for violence or other assaults. For the boy characters, the opposite was the case. They were active, had hobbies and used violence. Thus, the YA-easy readers were seen as a new form for “girls’ literature”.
Since 2017, with the #MeToo movement (Case & Craig 2020), we have had an intense discussion about gender, sexual harassment in the society, and at the same time an ongoing debate about the refugee crises. The hypothesis of this paper is that the last three years YA-easy readers are less gender stereotype while they are picking up themes from these debates. Are the girls more variously represented today? Are the Swedish girls portrayed in another way than the newly arrived girls? Who are the main intended readers? The material of this paper consists of all YA-easy readers, published by the publisher houses Nypon, LL, and Hegas, except the fantasy books, from 2016–2019. The easy readers are analyzed from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 2003, los Reyes & Mulinari 2005) and by focusing on different kinds of girl representations (Österlund 2005, Nilsson 2013).

Anna Nordenstam is Professor in Comparative Literature at University of Gothenburg and Professor in Swedish and Education at Luleå University of Technology. Nordenstam has written extensively in the field of children’s literature. Her latest publication is “Women’s Liberation: Swedish Feminist Comics and Cartoons from the 1970s and 1980”, *European Comic Art*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2019 (together with M. Wallin Wictortin).


The fashion model is a highly visible presence within contemporary culture. Models are featured in fashion shows, magazines, television programmes, websites, and wherever fashion and female beauty imagery are present. Melania Trump, the current First Lady of the United States, is presented as a former model on the US government website. Dress, behaviour, and fashion play important roles within fiction, including in girls’ series books. From Louisa May Alcott’s novels *Little Women, Little Men, and Jo’s Boys* (1868–1888), Carolyn Keene’s *Nancy Drew* books (1930-) to contemporary series such as *Gossip Girl* (2002–2011) by Cecily von Ziegesar, *Airhead* (2008–2010) by Meg Cabot, and *Geek Girl* (2013–2017) by Holly Smale, series books have evolved and remained popular over the last 150 years. What girls wear and how they look have been important aspects of the genre. Books aimed at girls and young women are historically connected to fairy tales, religious fiction, and education, and have been important in setting standards of behaviour for girls and young women. The fashion model became a frequent role model in girl culture in the 1960s, and her influence has grown over the years. As the chapter explains, in girls’ novels, fashion has been more important than romance. The methodological approach of this study is literary and cultural content analysis; it emphasises a sociological and historical viewpoint to understand the role of the fashion model, then and now; fashion cities; female beauty culture; and notions of female achievement as depicted in Janey Scott’s four 1961 girls’ series of novels, entitled *Sara Gay Model Girl*.

Erika Lunding is a writer/independent scholar with a B.A. in General and Comparative Literature and an M.A. in Fashion Studies, both Stockholm University. Former research librarian at Kungl. Biblioteket/the National Library of Sweden, Stockholm (Poster Collection). Member of PCA/ACA, Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. Member and Independent Scholar Representative of International Girls’ Studies Association (I.G.S.A). Research focus on fashion and the modelling profession as portrayed in girls’ series books.
PANEL 11: Versions of Anne

Tuva Haglund, Diana Barry 2.0: Reimagine the Bosom Friend in Anne with an E and Its Fandom

L. M. Montgomery’s books about Anne Shirley are classics among girls’ literature. Throughout the twentieth-century new generations of readers have found their ways to engage with her fictional world. How a story resonates differently in different times is partly captured in adaptations. In the case of Anne of Green Gables there have been several, and my paper will discuss the latest, namely the Netflix-production Anne with an E (2017–2020). Like many other tv-shows for young adults a significant part of the storytelling in Anne with an E takes place within fan communities in social media. In fanfiction and fanart the audience transform and add content to the original story, often with contemporary interests in focus. The narrative strategies fan-readers use to expand on the storyworld, have influenced today’s media and popular culture, and Anne with an E is a good example of this. Creator Moira Walley-Beckett adds new elements and characters to, in her own words, “explore important, contemporary themes” that will resonate with the intended audience. Topics such as queer identities, genderfluidity, racism and women’s rights are addressed explicitly, often in obviously anachronistic ways. I will use the context of fandom to examine the chain of transformation from book to adaptation to fan work (more exactly fanfiction from Archiveofourown). The analysis will focus on Diana Barry, one of the original character that is radically rewritten in the tv-show. Walley-Beckett expands on the traditional “good girl” that Diana represents, by exploring themes like class, education and empowerment, a negotiation that continues in the fandom. Looking at these different interpretations of Diana, I hope to show how a contemporary audience make Diana relevant for them.

Tuva Haglund is a PhD student at Uppsala University. Her research project focuses on the fandom surrounding The Engelsfors Trilogy (2011–2013), a Swedish fantasy series by Mats Strandberg and Sara Bergmark Elfgren. Of particular interest to her work is the fans’ own creative works, which constitute a significant part of their social interaction.

Irina Levchenko, Formula and Feminist Impulses in the Russian Translations of Anne of Green Gables

Many classic Anglo-American stories for girls, including the internationally beloved Anne series by the Canadian author L.M. Montgomery, were first published in Russia only in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union when translated literature was used to build new identities and a new literary canon (Hellmann 2012). This included introducing new literary role-models for girls, which would be different from those of the Soviet times (Batishcheva 2005).

Montgomery writes about a woman’s place in society in a complex way: working within the restrictive formula of the genre domestic romance she had to conform to the conventional expectations of her publishers and audiences, but she also subtly employed feminist strategies to challenge the patriarchal authority and traditional views (Rubio 1992).
The six Russian translations of Anne deal with these tensions between the traditional formula and feminist impulses in totally different ways: Batishcheva (1995) translates as literally as possible while remaining ambivalent about the position of women, Bobrova (2000) emphasises Anne’s rebellious spirit, Enas (2008) includes Anne in their series of girls’ books to promote “eternal” values, Ezdra (2013) rewrites Anne to preach a religious lesson, Ranok (2017) adapts the novel for younger girls and two 1990s publishers even sell sequels about the grown-up Anne as trivial romances.

I analyse this variety of interpretations within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies. According to Andre Lefevere (1992), translation strategies are determined by two factors: the translator’s ideology and the poetics dominant in the receiving literary system at the time the translation is made. Using this approach, I explore how the different ways of translating and marketing Anne reflect the tensions between conservative and feminist values in post-Soviet Russia as well as different perceptions of the genre girls’ books and its function in the Russian literary system.

Irina Levchenko is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna and a literary translator. In her doctoral thesis she explores the translations and reception of Montgomery’s work in Russia, focusing on ideological and poetical reasons behind various translation strategies and reception patterns. Her main professional interest lies with translating picturebooks and children’s fiction. She works with various Russian publishers and has translated several children’s books and other titles from German and English into Russian.

Natália Dukátová, Meaning of “Girlhood” in Slovak Children’s Literature of Communism

Being a small country, Slovakia always depended not only on domestic book production, but also on translations, which over the years formed and completed the picture of Slovak children’s literature. When a translation of a book such as Anne of Green Gables arrives in the literary world, its readers cannot remain the same as before. In 1959, a Slovak literary journal criticized children’s literature for girls, depicting the lack of any patterns and “treasures.” In the same year, the first treasure appeared in Anne, a book that led the way for other gems, this time finally written in Slovak, as if the authors of literature for girls suddenly knew what this concept encompasses and what it should look like.

In 1963, four years after the release of Anne, one of the Slovak popular books, called Jedina (The Only One), was published. This book is about a 15-year-old girl hitting puberty who talks about her everyday experiences and troubles. It uses first-person narrative and depicts a girl who is sensitive, a little unbalanced, talks back, sometimes misbehaves, and is opinionated, yet caring and smart. The novel was a huge success, which demonstrated the equal position of children’s literature for girls; a positive heroine is necessary, important, and does not have to exist only in the background.

A lot changed after this book and the new era of children’s books began. Works about girls stopped being taboo, and many excellent books were written. In 1967, the only publishing house in Czechoslovakia funded a new imprint called “Čajka (Dove),” (Schmidova-Hornisova,
Anette Svensson, Politicizing Anne: Literary Adaptations and Girls’ Literature

*Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery is a classic piece of youth literature often referred to as girls’ literature. Anyone who has read the novels about Anne from Avonlea has been introduced to a beautiful Canadian landscape. First published in 1908, the story has been adapted into films and tv-series several times, most recently into the tv-series *Anne with an E*, currently on its third season. Taking a closer look at various fan productions, Jenkins (1992) claims that they are created not only in relation to a source text, but also in relation to other fans. Though not a fan production, the tv-series *Anne with an E*, shares traits with fan productions since this adaptation is created not only in relation to the source text, Montgomery’s series of novels, but also in relation to numerous fans of these novels. Discussing fan fiction in particular, Jenkins describes fans’ treatment of the source text as “stretching its boundaries to incorporate their concerns, [and] remolding its characters to better suit their desires” (1992, p.156). The aim of this study is to analyse the most recent adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables*, the tv-series *Anne with an E*, in order to see how the story, produced for an audience in 2017–2019, is, in Jenkins’ words, ‘stretching its boundaries to incorporate their concerns’ by providing the audience with representations of stronger women and by re-claiming a place in the literary tradition for homosexual characters who have been marginalized or silenced in classical literary texts including Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*. Using a theoretical framework of transmedia storytelling and a close-reading method of analysis, the study shows that *Anne with an E*, though following the basic plot of Montgomery’s novel, contributes to a more politicized version of the story as it brings up themes of women’s fight for equal rights and homosexuality.

Anette Svensson is Associate Professor in Literature Teaching & Learning and Senior Lecturer in English Literature at The School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University. Her current research projects concern Literature Teaching and Learning with a specific focus on the use of multimodal narratives in Literary studies.

PANEL 12: The Girl as Hero

Susanne Schneider, Girlhood in Early Historical Fantasy: Challenging the Traditional Hero’s Quest

Strong girl protagonists have increased in fantasy (Nilson 2010 & Ehriander 2018) which is a change from the traditional male norm, where girls either support the hero, are love interests or
strong and independent witches (Nilson 2018 & 2010). The aim of this study is to analyse the
girl protagonists in two early historical fantasy books, in relation to the traditional hero’s quest.

The protagonists design and function are analysed (Nikolajeva 2004) with an intersectional
approach, and in view of the concept of ‘gender contract’. The common theme of a mission or
a quest found in fantasy also appears in historical fantasy (Ehriander 2012). Usually, it has been
the male hero’s journey. He goes out in the world on a mission, fights enemies, succeeds and
finally comes back home. The characters Penolope, from Penelope: en resa i tiden (1939) by
Alison Uttley, and Abigail, from Vem är rädd för Beatie Bow? (1980) by Ruth Park, are
compared to this concept and pattern.

The girls’ quests are different, but they both have reasons for their time travel and they face it,
and the magical element, with strength. They are also quite round and dynamic protagonists.
Both girls are like outsiders in their own time and also in the past, although a few finds out the
truth. While they really can’t change the future, they still make an impact and evolve as
characters. The implications, in these older books, are that even though there are elements of
more traditional gender roles, the girls challenge the traditional hero’s quest, as more silent
heroes.

Susanne Schneider, philosophy licentiate, works as a teacher of Swedish, Literature and Religious
Studies at an Upper Secondary school in Karlskrona, in the southeast of Sweden, and as a lecturer at
Karlstad University. She wrote her licentiate thesis at Växjö University (2008) about pupils’ reception
of Imre Kertész’ novel Fatelessness. She also writes books for children.

Leah Phillips, Female Heroes in Young Adult Fantasy Fiction: Reframing Myths of
Adolescent Girlhood

Hero stories are deeply rooted in Western Culture. From religion and myth to blockbuster films
and YA literature, the story is everywhere, and it shapes how we, the ones who hear and see it,
understand the world around us. For too long, hero stories, which could also be called dominant
discourse, have undertaken this social and cultural work through the archetypal hero: a white,
often ‘god’-touched, and young man who exists in opposition and superiority to that which he
is not, including adolescent girls. This paradigm works by imposing radical alterity on that
which is not-hero to ensure his heroicness. Crucially, while this exclusion affects all girls, it
does not do so evenly. If the girl is also Black or Brown, disabled, or otherwise not performing
expected and accepted versions of adolescent girlhood, marginalisation increases.

This paper explores how the heroes in a subgenre of YA fantasy, one it names mythopoeic YA,
intervene in narrow and limiting heroic norms by breaking the boundaries and blurring the
borders of what it means to be hero, girl, and even human. Emerging in the early-1980s with
the work of Tamora Pierce and Robin McKinley, mythopoeic YA is a speculative, ‘imaginary
world’ fiction initially by women and still ‘for’ adolescent girls. This fiction is ‘about’ creating
a new mythology, a new way of seeing and understanding the world, not through opposition
but connection. It undertakes this work through the female-hero: Tamora Pierce’s Alanna the
Lioness, Marissa Meyer’s Cinder, and the heterogeneous ‘crew’ at the heart of Leigh Bardugo’s
Six of Crows duology. These heroes, who are not always girls, frustrate the system of opposition
at the heart of the archetypal hero story. In so doing, they offer an alternative and inclusive model of being-hero, one directly impacting adolescent girlhood and beyond.

Dr Leah Phillips is Senior Sessional Lecturer at the University of Warwick. Her research interests include representations of female adolescence in Young Adult (YA) fiction, especially fantasy. Her paper today is a version of her forthcoming monograph Female Heroes in Young Adult Fantasy Fiction: Reframing Myths of Adolescent Girlhood. It is due out with Bloomsbury in early 2021. She’s a member of the Children’s Literature Association’s Phoenix Award committee and founder of the YA: Literature, Media and Culture association. Her next research project will focus on a re-theorizing of YA, paying particular attention to markets and fields outside of the dominant American.

Tzina Kalogirou and Voula Chourdaki, Antigone: A Tragic Heroine, A Rebellious Teenager

The myth of Antigone is one of the greatest myths of classical antiquity. According to the legend, Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, secretly buried her brother in defiance of the orders of Creon, king of Thebes. Creon sentenced Antigone to death, but, before the order could be executed, she committed suicide. The conflict between Antigone and Creon has captured the Western thought and has been depicted in literature, philosophy, and art. Antigone has been a rebellious girl who, revolting against the patriarchal law, experiences what we call in ancient tragedy a “tragic fall”.

This paper takes under discussion the challenging adaptation of Sophocles’ Antigone by Ali Smith, namely The Story of Antigone, illustrated by Laura Paoletti (2015). The analysis – informed by various critical theories, from post-feminism to cultural politics and visual poetics – is focused upon the ways in which the author re-appropriates the figure of the heroine and the fundamental antitheses she embodies, young vs. old, divine law vs. human law, state vs. individual, etc. We are also particularly interested in the possible similarities/differences between Smith’s version and Greek tragedy’s notions of hybris (ὑβρίς), atis (ἀτίς), nemesis (νέμεσις), tisis (τίσις). In tragedy, the disturbed moral order is usually restored, and the audience experiences a form of catharsis. In Smith’s post-feminism/ postmodern version catharsis is treated with skepticism.

Dr. Tzina Kalogirou is a Professor of Modern Greek Literature and Literature Teaching in the School of Education/ Department of Primary Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece, and Director of the Postgraduate Programme of “Rhetoric, Humanities, and Education”. She is the author, editor or co-editor of 16 academic books (in Greek and English) and numerous chapters/papers (in Greek, English and French) in edited volumes, international and national refereed journals, and conference proceedings. She is a member of the steering committee of The Child and the Book International Conference and the co-editor of the international academic Journal of Literary Education. She is also an official partner of the international research project TALIS and member of the Scientific Committee of the editorial series “Laboratorio Children’s Books”, for Anicia Edizioni – Rome, and “Niata” for the University of Palermo.

Voula Chourdaki holds a Master’s Degree in English Literature and Media. She is a doctoral candidate at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece and her research interests are referred
to the poetics of experimental fiction, creative writing, and theory of literature. She is the author of an academic book on contemporary detective fiction and two collections of poems.
Session 5

PANEL 13: Negotiating Girls as Agents

Louise Couceiro, ‘Fantastically Great Women’ and ‘Rebel Girls’: Do Children’s Biographies about Women Inspire or Responsibilize Young Girls in their Conceptions of Girlhood?

A new wave of children’s literature has emerged with exciting vivacity in the United Kingdom since 2016. Feminist biographical illustrated books (abbreviated as FBIBs) such as Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls (Favilli & Cavallo, 2017) and Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World (Pankhurst, 2016) present stories of women’s achievements throughout history. These books position themselves as part of ‘the answer’ to the detrimental effects of gender stereotyping in children’s books, and make their primary aim – to inspire (female) readers into action – very clear.

Whilst there are numerous studies that consider conceptions of girlhood in fiction, there is significantly less work attending to girlhood in nonfiction. I thus begin with an overview of the literary, socio-cultural and academic contexts from which FBIBs published from 2016 onwards, have emerged. Whilst children’s biographies about women and girls existed prior to 2016, I argue that the latter part of the 2010s, which witnessed the ‘watershed’ cultural phenomena of the MeToo movement, offered a burning platform that enabled these books to rise with particular force and popularity.

I then discuss the presentation of girlhood in these books, contending that, despite the positive and admirable intentions underlying these books’ creation, the overarching definition of girlhood that they emanate is complex. Specifically, there is a dangerous undertone that responsibilizes girls. In Good Night Stories (2017: xi-xii), the authors note it is important for girls to understand the ‘obstacles that lie in front of them’ and to ‘find a way to overcome them’. Thus, as female readers are inspired to take responsibility for their aspirations and lives, other factors that produce and maintain their unequal status in the first place, are eschewed. Drawing primarily on feminist and post-structuralist theories, I consider the potential opportunities and consequences of presenting girlhood in this way.

Louise Couceiro is a PhD student at the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. She has a strong interest in gender theory, literature and children’s education. Her current research explores how children respond to and engage with feminist biographical illustrated books published since 2016.

Charlotte Johanne Fabricius, A Utopia of Co-Becoming? Figurations of Girlhood in Superhero Comics

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of comic book superheroes identified as girls, as the comics industry attempts to diversify and update a genre which is almost a century old and mired in patriarchal culture. In this paper, I will draw on my work on
mapping the emergence of these super-girls and their negotiations of identity in an attempt to understand the potentials they hold for imagining girls as agents of change.

Taking the Marvel Comics series *The Unstoppable Wasp* (2018-) as my point of departure, I will investigate the figurations of girlhood explored in these comics, as well as connecting them to general trends of how girls are imagined in the superhero genre since the turn of the millennium (Gibson, Mel. 2018. “Let’s Hear It for the Girls! Representations of Diverse Girlhoods, Feminism, Intersectionality and Activism in Contemporary Graphic Novels and Comics.” *MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture*). Girlhood emerges across identity categories and interpellations, and is discussed in relation to excellence, collaboration, friendship, and morality. As well as pointing to these themes and how they exemplify trends in the wider corpus, I will also be situating this new superheroic girlhood in the market logics of superhero publishing (Resha, Adrienne. 2017. “The Blue Age of Comic Books.” The Blue Age of Comic Books. https://scalar.usc.edu/works/blue-age-of-comic-books/index) and the controversies surrounding the launching and cancellation of girl-led titles.

**Charlotte Johanne Fabricius** is a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Denmark. Her doctoral work investigates manifestations of superheroic girlhood in contemporary superhero comics through intersectional critique of comics aesthetics. She has previously written about monstrosity and body politics in superhero comics (publication forthcoming, 2020).

**Piia K. Posti, “Girly Methods”, or “Doing Science” in Lena Andersson’s Picture Books**

Recent research in girlhood studies has certainly endeavoured to answer Mary Celeste Kearney’s call to “subvert the white, heterosexual, middle-class, Western, and presentist framework that continues to dominate girls’ media studies and thus public perceptions of girls’ media culture” (*Mediated Girlhoods*, 2011). New research areas like girls and activism, girls’ bodies and sexuality, black girlhood, girls and hard science, and queer girlhood have contributed vastly to the knowledge of girls’ and young women’s complex realities, and shown the need to redefine girlhood and girl culture. This paper aims to contribute to a similar redefinition. However, I will not endeavour to subvert. Instead, I will show that children’s books which at first glance seem highly representative of the dominating framework can still provide contemporary girl readers with empowering examples. Beside subverting the framework, we also need to un-learn this framework and re-read the texts that have contributed to the framework. In this paper, such an un-learning and re-reading is directed at the concept of science and girls’ relation to science. Swedish illustrator and writer Lena Andersson’s picture books from the 1980s and 1990s portray traditionally sweet and quiet girls in domestic situations: gardening, baking, and enjoying nature. Andersson’s girls have none of the lauded characteristics of today’s exemplary girl characters: they are not brave, exceptionally strong, temperamental, or active. Her picture books are distinguished by their picturesque beauty and nostalgia. In short, they belong in the white, heterosexual, middle-class, Western framework of girl’s books. However, I will argue that her picture books provide an alternative path to evoke and promote girls’ scientific interest, an interest which one-sidedly has been directed toward STEM at the neglect of other scientific endeavours. For girls’ who do not wish to pursue hard science, what other representations of science are there to identify with?
**Piia K. Posti**, PhD is Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature at Linnaeus University, in Växjö, Sweden. She is affiliated with the Centre for Childhood Research in Literature, Language and Learning (CHILL) at Linnaeus University. Posti teaches courses in postcolonial and non-European literature, children’s literature, and world literature. She has published on exoticism, discourses of otherness and rewriting stereotypes in recent Swedish adventure and travel stories for children.

**PANEL 14: Queer Identities**

**Robyn Dennison, Loving Girls: Romance and the Realisation of Queer Identity in Young-Adult Fiction**

This paper analyses the representation of queer girlhood in three Anglophone YA novels (two North American, one Australian) published in the last fifteen years. I argue that in these novels to be a girl, regardless of sexual identity, is to pursue a version of womanhood in which subjectivity is defined and legitimised through the achievement of romantic relationships. Each novel features a narrative strand that introduces a love object with whom the protagonist seeks romance, which establishes tension that escalates over the course of the narrative as the potential couple face obstacles, but which will be resolved by the end in either success or failure. Informed by the work of Roland Barthes, I analyse Julie Anne Peters’ *Far from Xanadu* (2005), A. S. King’s *Ask the Passengers* (2012), and Jared Thomas’ *Songs that Sound Like Blood* (2016), demonstrating how the protagonists’ acceptance of their non-heterosexuality relies upon the pursuit or fantasy of normative romance in ways that reinforce expectations about women, sex and identity: that sex is risky outside the confines of a monogamous relationship; that in order for queerness to be legitimised, sexual desire must be accompanied by romantic feelings; and that the fantasy of a normative romantic relationship – long-term, monogamous, potentially-procreative, and carried out at the domestic site of the shared home – is the key driving force of a woman’s life. I thus show how heteronormative expectations about adult life are mapped onto queer girls. Ultimately, while I find much to be celebrated in the increasing visibility of queer women in YA since the end of the twentieth century, I also find in these novels the perpetuation of reductive ideologies about girls’ satisfaction and value being tied to romantic success, and about queer identity being an essential, internal reality that emerges gradually through a process of realisation and self-acceptance.

**Robyn Dennison** is a PhD candidate at Melbourne University, where she teaches creative writing and is researching girlhood, narrative theory, and queer young-adult fiction. Her research has previously appeared in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*.

**Dalila Forni, Young Adult Graphic Novels and Female (Bi)sexual Identity in Long Red Hair and Blue is the Warmest Color**

The proposal aims to examine two graphic novels considering female bisexuality: *Long Red Hair* by Meags Fitzgerald (2016) and *Blue is the Warmest Color* by Julie Maroh (2010). Although many studies analyzed homosexual representations in literature, comics and culture, bisexuality is usually an invisible minority linked to persisting stereotypes. Moreover, few
works of art directly focus on bisexual identity and openly defines this orientation. Novels, comics and graphic novels on the topic are usually labelled as lesbian or gay works of art. For this reason, the present study aims to analyze from a bisexual, gender-based point of view two graphic novels that may present bisexual female identities and to examine their portrayal of love and sexual relationships.

The presentation will be based on Young Adult Literature, LGBTQ Studies and Gender Studies in order to investigate the selected texts and their potential in presenting bisexual and female subjectivities to young adults. Literature – and graphic novels in these specific case studies – has a strong influence on young readers’ perception and interpretation of reality since they offer precise behavioral and social models. Inclusive literature, sensitive to different aspects of sexual orientation, may encourage self-awareness in new generations. For this reason, the two books will be interpreted from a bisexual perspective in order to discover limits and potentialities in portraying different sexual orientations related to femininity through images and words.

Dalila Forni is a PhD candidate in Education and Psychology at University of Florence, Italy. She obtained her MA in European and Non-European Languages and Literatures at the University of Milan. Her research interests include children’s narratives and gender identity. She is currently researching how gender identities are represented in children’s storytelling, from picture books to videogames.

Miranda A. Green-Barteet and Jill Coste, Non-Normative Bodies, Queer Identities: The Marginalization of Queer Girls in YA Dystopian Literature

Recently, Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction has been heralded for featuring strong female protagonists who question gender norms. From The Hunger Games trilogy and the Divergent series to more recent works like Amy Ewing’s The Lone City series, authors of YA dystopian fiction are creating female protagonists who overwhelmingly challenge the gender and age limitations facing real-life girls. Further, many of these protagonists resist oppressive social structures as they work to make their worlds more progressive. These efforts toward progress are notable, but they mask another reality of this supposedly subversive genre: while the dystopian protagonists do often transgress gendered expectations, most still are white, able-bodied, heterosexual girls.

In fact, queer girls rarely feature as protagonists in this popular genre, and YA dystopian novels with queer girls as secondary characters often render their experiences as less important than those of the heterosexual main character. Many queer characters sacrifice themselves for a purported greater good, resulting in the main character’s increased awareness of systemic injustice; alternatively, queer girls often simply disappear from the text, suggesting that they matter not at all. When queer female protagonists are present in the genre, their experiences are often presented as explicitly non-normative, and in their quest to empower themselves and claim subjectivity, their queerness is routinely sidelined. In this essay, we examine the tendency to minimize queerness, arguing that despite its seeming emphasis on presenting strong, fully-actualized adolescent female protagonists, YA dystopian fiction continues to overlook queer girls.
We focus on Francesca Lia Block’s *Love in the Time of Global Warming* and Erin Bow’s *The Scorpion Rules*, both of which center on queerness: each features bisexual protagonists who claim subjectivity and celebrate their sexuality. In these books, the protagonist’s individual journey toward self-awareness and sexual identity merges with the social critique expected of the dystopian genre. These teenagers learn how the poor decisions of adults now shape their restrictive environment, and they also learn that their personal experience of love is important, and, indeed, necessary in empowering them to fight the system.

However, Block’s and Bow’s representation of queerness is restrictive as their texts equate queerness with non-normative bodies. The protagonists in both novels must sacrifice their own physicality to change the dystopian paradigm in which they live. While both characters seemingly make empowered choices to alter their bodies, their physical changes heighten their marginalization. Drawing on Queer Theory, we argue that these texts offer a narrative of empowered queer girlhood that is usually missing from this genre, but that the books’ emphasis on non-normative bodies mutes that power, reinforcing that queer girls are non-normative themselves. Thus, the protagonists’ queerness becomes secondary to the physical alterations that cause them to re-evaluate both their physical bodies and their subjectivity. These texts then imply that their protagonists’ sexuality – and, by extension, that of their YA girl readers – is less important to their identities than the circumstances of their dystopian worlds.

**Miranda A. Green-Barteet** is an assistant professor cross-appointed in the Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research and the Department of English and Writing Studies. She has published on Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, Sarah Pogson, as well as on race and gender in *The Hunger Games*. She is the co-editor of *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*. She has also co-edited *Reconsidering Laura Ingalls Wilder: Little House and Beyond* with Anne K. Phillips.

**Jill Coste** is a PhD candidate at the University of Florida. Her dissertation work focuses on forms of resistance in contemporary YA fairy tales. Her areas of interest include children’s and young adult literature, diversity in YA dystopias, fairy tale retellings, and 20th-century American culture. Publications include “Going Postmodern Gothic: Neil Gaiman’s Feminist Fairy Tales,” in *Critical Insights: Neil Gaiman*, and “Subverting Standards and Formulating Fairy Tales: Sarah Fielding’s Conventionally Unconventional Use of Fantasy in *The Governess*,” a peer-reviewed article in San Diego State University’s *The Unjournal of Children’s Literature*.

**PANEL 15: Communities and Outsiders**

**Claudia Nelson, Alienated Girlhood in Works by Christabel Coleridge**

Like her more famous mentor Charlotte Yonge, Christabel Coleridge (1843–1921) spent much of her writing life thinking about girlhood and its travails. In her youth, Coleridge was a member of the Goslings (to Yonge’s “Mother Goose”), a group of privileged “home daughters” who produced the manuscript magazine *The Barnacle* as an outlet for their creative and intellectual aspirations. A fragment of one of Coleridge’s *Barnacle* contributions, a serialized historical novel from 1867 titled “Giftie the Changeling,” is among the first known literary productions of a writing career that extended well into the twentieth century. Shut out emotionally by her family because they believe her to be a changeling (a child of the fairy folk left to replace a
stolen human infant), Giftie inaugurates a series of girls in Coleridge’s works who are characterized as out of place, unable to conform to the pattern of girlhood considered appropriate by their society. In later works such as the school story *The Green Girls of Greythorpe* (1890) and an essay collection addressing depression among “middle-aged maids,” *The Daughters Who Have Not Revolted* (1894), Coleridge continues to explore alienation among girls and former girls. In this preoccupation she was by no means unusual among the writers of her era, as both conservatives such as Dinah Mulock Craik and New Women feminists such as Sarah Grand also spent considerable time on the topic. But discussion of alienation in works by Coleridge is desirable not only because she has received little attention from scholars but also because in her role as editor of *The Monthly Packet* – a role that she inherited from Yonge, who founded the magazine to educate affluent Tractarian girls and nurture their literary aspirations – she influenced understandings of girlhood among the magazine’s young female readers and contributors.

**Claudia Nelson** is Professor of English, Emerita, at Texas A&M University. A former president of the Children’s Literature Association and former editor of the *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, she has published six edited books and six monographs, most recently *Topologies of the Classical World in Children’s Literature: Palimpsests, Maps, and Fractals*, coauthored with Anne Morey (Oxford UP, 2019). Two of her books are being translated into Chinese. She is also the editor of the book series Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present, now published by Routledge.

**Sara Pini, Brave New Heroine? Katniss Everdeen, the Burnt “Girl on Fire” Who Did Not Revolutionise Young Adult Dystopian Fiction**

Praised by most of the critics (for example, *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy: A Literary and Cultural Analysis*, McFarland & Company, 2012; *Of Bread, Blood and The Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*, McFarland & Company, 2012) both as a revolutionary, long-awaited female character and a solid, independent model for young generations, who defies traditional gender roles and the usual limitations imposed to “female heroes”, Katniss Everdeen seems to be the best example of those “tomboy” heroines at the basis of contemporary dystopian fiction for young adults. Katniss is considered pivotal to show how girlhood is presented nowadays: she is an inspiring leader and she saves others rather than being saved. Suzanne Collins’ world-wide successful series *The Hunger Games* (2008–2010) may have paved the way to a radical change in how girls are presented (and expected to be) in young adult fiction. Thus, all’s well that ends well?

Not at all. This paper will show how Katniss is all but a revolutionary heroine and how she is more a potential danger than a model for young readers. Not only is she a passive, selfish character – it is also doubtful that she should be addressed as a heroine at all, as she reacts to other characters’ stimuli rather than making decisions on her own and pursuing aims beyond her own benefit. She refuses to take on an active role in the community as well as to socialise with her peers and the society, which are basilar steps to reach adulthood. The paper will offer examples according to two recurring themes – fire and voice – that will be analysed by making reference to the concepts of empowerment and agency, as well as Roberta Seelinger Trites’ theory on the relationship between adolescents and institutional authority (*Disturbing the*
Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature, University of Iowa Press, 2000). The excerpts will make clear that fire is not Katniss’ weapon, but her enemy, and that despite being given many chances to make her voice heard, she remains silent, gradually dying as symbol of the rebellion, as promising revolutionary character, and as model for adolescent readers. Thus, she embodies a missed chance to offer a proper heroine to young readers.

Sara Pini is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures of the University of Bologna, Italy. She has been awarded a three-year scholarship for her PhD research project about contemporary Holocaust literature in English for young readers. She is part of the WeTell project and she has translated Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray into Italian. She has previously obtained a BA in Foreign Languages and Literatures and a two-year MA in Modern, Comparative, and Postcolonial Literatures at the same University, both with honours. This paper is based on her MA dissertation “‘She has no idea. The effect she can have.’: Power and Agency in The Hunger Games”.

Birgitta Theander, Girls Living Together: A Feministic Utopia?

In this paper I will analyse three kinds of all-female communities that are not infrequent in classic girls’ literature, and discuss their relation to the surrounding society.

I will concentrate on the following examples:

- The collective accommodation in Patty’s Place (Carolinas tjäll) in Lucy Maud Montgomery’s Anne of the Island, 1915.
- The pair of self-supporting young women setting up a home in Astrid Lindgren’s Kati på Kaptensgatan, 1952.
- The boarding school life depicted in the Dimsie-books by Dorita Fairlie Bruce. These were written in the 1920’s and translated to Swedish in the 1950’s.

These kinds of accommodations are loved by the protagonists themselves, and they have, as Gabriella Åhmansson (1991) says about Patty’s Place, also had “an endless appeal to girls all over the world”. From the 1990’s and onward these all-female communities have by several scholars been called “female Utopias”.

In my analysis I show how this epithet is, in many ways, quite adequate. But then I take a step further and discuss different meanings of the concept “Utopia” and the intriguing question: How do these texts relate to the feminist notion of an oppressive patriarchal society?

Birgitta Theander is PhD in literature since 2006. She is now affiliated researcher at Lund University. Her main interest is girls’ fiction from the early and middle twentieth century, on which subject she has written two books, Loved and Denied: Girls’ Fiction in Sweden 1945–65, and To the Work! Vocational Dreams and Working Life in Girls’ Fiction 1920–65. She has also presented Astrid Lindgren’s Kati-books on the net-based Litteraturbanken and contributed with several articles for The Swedish Biographic Encyclopaedia of Women.