

Papers

Explorations into Children's Literature

Foreword

I'm really pleased to be able to deliver this (unfortunately) much-delayed edition of *Papers*. 2018 has been a frantic year for many of us in the academic world, and this has led to some hold-ups in our peer review and publication process. So I'd like to open by thanking both our readers and – especially – our contributors for their patience as we pulled together this edition.

But it gives me great pleasure to be able to present you with these four engaging papers, which explore a range of challenging ideas around gender, sexuality, representation, and liminality.

In our first paper, Dr. Ilona Urquhart, of Deakin University, uses the recent revival in interest in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as a contextualising device to examine the representation of reproductive rights in dystopian fiction for contemporary adolescent readers. With particular reference to the works of Megan McCafferty, Jane Rogers and Lauren Destefano, the paper is a fascinating examination of YA fiction that works as both an exploration of sexual agency, and as a call to political action.

Our second paper, by Amber Moore of the University of British Columbia, also explores the representation of gender and sexuality, this time in relation to Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* – another novel that has recently seen a significant resurgence in public interest, again because of a television adaptation. In this paper, Amber argues that the representation of sexism – both hostile and benevolent – in the novel is instrumental to framing the protagonist, Hannah Baker, and allowing her to 'come to voice'. Drawing on the work of Sara

Ahmed and bell hooks, the ideas explored in this paper articulate nicely with those proposed by Ilona Urquart in her paper.

Still in the area of representation, though this time with a postcolonial focus, Sophie Stanton from The University of Canberra, considers the award-winning novel *Nanberry: Black Brother White* by Jackie French. Using some of the ideas of Melissa Lucashenko and Clare Bradford as a theoretical framework, this paper interrogates both the text and paratext of the novel as an exemplar of the myriad ways in which even the most well-intentioned novel can nevertheless find itself in problematic spaces.

Finally Sophie Masson, from the University of New England, takes us into the world of contemporary afterlife fiction and explores the degree to which liminal spaces and settings are the key drivers for both the plot and character framing in these types of work. Her paper a thoughtful consideration of the way this very popular subgenre of contemporary YA fiction functions at both structural and thematic levels.

We're already on track for a fantastic June edition in 2019, and are now taking submissions for our December 2019 edition. Some great papers came out of the Australasian Children's Literature Association Conference, which was held in Wellington in July this year, and you can look forward to seeing at least a couple of them in our next edition. We also have a number of books waiting for review, and if you're keen to do some reviewing, then please shoot me an email – I'm always on the lookout for reviewers!

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, and wish all of our readers, contributors, and reviewers a restful festive season, and a well-deserved break.

Associate Professor Anthony Eaton

Editor