Frontiers in American Children's Literature

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Edited by

Dorothy Clark and Linda Salem

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FOREWORD

THE GREAT INCLUDED

KENNETH KIDD

When Dorothy and Linda kindly asked me to write this foreword, I was delighted, as I find the volume before you timely and exciting. I think everyone in children's literature studies should read it. I'm not exactly an experienced writer of forewords, however (ok, this is my first), and so I wasn't sure what else to say.

Naturally I turned to the Internet, with the query "what does a good foreword do?" Unfortunately the search engine autocorrected to "forward," so the first results were concerned with how to be a good forward in soccer. I learned, for instance, that creativity and practice are both vital to effective ball striking. A more pertinent hit was "pay it forward," which nicely calls up community, collaboration, generosity—all on abundant display in this collection, to be sure.

My task, I eventually learned, is to introduce the author/work to potential readers, and that can be done in any number of ways. In fact, one site assured me that there were no firm rules and plenty of room to be creative and have fun. So that's some relief, if also added pressure (must . . . have . . . fun). Bottom line: connect with potential readers, get them to trust me, explain what the book is and how it will benefit them. And do it quickly, so the real show can start.

I'm not sure how to gain your trust if I don't already have it. Please believe me when I say that this is a terrific collection of essays, one from which anyone will learn much, including experienced scholars of children's literature. In fact, while forewords are supposed to be written by people in the know, we are of course forever learning how ignorant we are, and this book introduced me to many important writers and works and topics. As Dorothy and Linda explain in their introduction, the volume emerged out of four years or so of excellent panels at the Children's Literature Society within the American Literature Association annual conference. Some were joint sessions with the African American Literature

and Culture Society and the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures, one reason for the diversity and range of subjects and methodologies herein. The book is lovingly curated, its essays organized into five thematic sections that still respect that diversity and range. Dorothy and Linda also identify three leitmotifs across the collection—the triumph over trauma, transformational borders, and moral vision—and one centralizing keyword, *frontier*. This is not your parents' children's literature! Or at least, not only: this book is about the incredible present and exciting future of our field, as well as its rich past.

Here is original scholarship you won't encounter elsewhere, although some of it will surely find its way into longer form. Among its many delights: Oona Hatton's analysis of Jose Cruz Gonzalez's young adult play about the Mexican Repatriation, *The Highest Heaven* (we have precious little scholarship on YA plays in general); Anja Ulanowicz's terrific meditation on the dialectic of memory and forgetting in M. T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*; April C. Logan's important treatment of Mrs. A. E. Johnson's *Clarence and Corrine; or, God's Way* as the first children's novel by an African-American woman; Kate Capshaw's fabulous-as-usual work on Haitian female revolutionaries and history plays; Anne K. Phillips' fascinating discussion of "The *Birchbark* Fair," a pedagogical project organized around Erdrich's novel; Alida Allison's comparison of pre-9/11 and post-9/11 interpretations of Russell Hoban's *Monsters*; Steven Herb's work on the important (and under-researched) graphic novelist and illustrator Lynd Ward; and Linda Salem's study of the Edward Gorey archive at San Diego State University. I'm a huge Gorey fan and so was especially excited to see him featured; he's a fascinating test case for the limits/borders/frontiers of what we call children's literature. I don't mean to give short shrift to the other very excellent essays. There are engaging pieces about monsters, about multimedia fandom, about emotional survival in YA novels, about the important Czech author-illustrator Peter Sís. So much good stuff it's impossible to have favorites!

Francelia Butler, a prime mover and shaker of children's literature studies, called children's literature the "great excluded" in the academy. That's changed, thanks to her efforts and the work of many others. We're now dealing with the great included, and while that can sometimes be overwhelming, it's a great problem to have.

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We would like to thank the members of the Children's Literature Society for their continued support, scholarship, and commitment.

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INTRODUCTION

DOROTHY CLARK AND LINDA SALEM

There is a natural alliance between a vision of childhood as "discovery" and childhood as itself a kind of frontier—a space of exploration, of new beginnings, of innovation, and, of course, a space in which the imagination can run free. As Perry Nodelman has noted, "discovery—an encounter with newness" is at the heart of children's literature.[1] This genre, in fact, embodies the uniquely American trait of "making it new"—of incorporating the myth of the frontier in expansive, inventive, explorative and exploitative ways. Children's literature, in the vanguard of both artistic and theoretical innovations, continues to evolve, characterized by its dynamic response to social change, economic upheaval, human rights policy, and innovation in book arts and textual and image reproduction technology.

Our use of this idea of newness and discovery to frame American children's literature scholarship through this century's beginning decades, results in the publication of this volume, *Frontiers in American Children's Literature*. This collection of essays represents the innovative work of scholars associated with the Children's Literature Society between the years 2009 to 2013 at the American Literature Association's annual conferences. These include essays from our Society's unique collaborations with both the African American Literature and Culture Society and the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures, allowing for the exploration of the frontier of race and language and the effects of these constructs on the transformation of historical perspective.

Here are authors working with a wide range of scholarly trends in children's literature. For example, they explore texts with unconventional protagonists (e.g., *Twilight*), visual narratives exploring and exploiting new technologies, and topics as "unchild-like" as war trauma, slavery, and mob violence; and, in so doing, they have pushed the field into and across

[1] Perry Nodelman, "Discovery: My Name is Elizabeth," in *(Re)imagining the World: Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times*, ed. Yan Wu, Kerry Mallan, and Roderick McGillis. (Berlin: Springer 2013): 43-53.

frontiers not yet addressed by "adult" texts. In another example, authors here investigate how child readers grasp at fantasy worlds where they can act as monsters with violent responses to their own lives as they and we are haunted by the kind of inexplicable violence we experienced at Sandy Hook.[2] In this way, they push the field into the frontier of awareness that we all live in—children included—a world of violence and trauma, and the breaking of traditional structures.

Significantly, these essays locate for a moment in time the role and place of American children's literature within a world focused on new media communications, participatory digital discovery and research, and the deconstruction of comparative studies. They pair the dynamic nature of the social construction of the child and childhood with the influence of visual language on narrative structure, the story itself, and turn the text/image relationship of illustrated children's books on its head.

The volume reveals a radical change in the implied child reader and, hence, radical changes in subject areas deemed appropriate for children. The notion of the Romantic idealized child characterized by such familiar "golden age" traits as innocence, vulnerability, imagination, and a lack of any adult responsibility (e.g., Peter Pan and Winnie the Pooh) has given way to what has been termed the "adultified" child[3]—a child with a kind of "knowing innocence"—no longer protected from the harsh realities of the world, a child who is street smart and aware of the darker dimensions of the self and human nature. During the last decades of the twentieth century and into the present twenty-first century, we have seen children's narratives and illustrations reflect the integral relationship between this construction of childhood and what we consider suitable subject matter for "children's texts." The idea of the Romantic/idealized child in need of protection from harsh realities is now long gone; we now readily confront children with the truths of a cruel world in what some have suggested as a kind of new didactic/moral literature that hopes to mend the world by educating children about its flaws. This has been true for several

[2] On December 14, 2012, twenty-year-old Adam Lanza shot twenty children and six staff members at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The shooting was the deadliest mass shooting at either a high school or elementary school in United States history. It focused attention on the young shooter, who had killed his mother before the school shootings and committed suicide afterwards. Barron, James."Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut; 28 Dead, Including Killer." *New York Times (1923-Current File),* Dec. 15, 2012. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1705875952?accountid=13758.

[3] Joshua Meyrowitz, "The Adultlike Child and the Childlike Adult: Socialization in an Electronic Age," *Daedalus* 113, no. 3 (1984): 19-48.

decades—certainly since the 1970s; we have seen the development of realistic fiction—new realism, bibliotherapy, historical, and multicultural literatures—that hide very little of the ways of the world from young children. The powerful work of Patricia Polacco (whose work is discussed by Raphael Rogers) is one writer who comes to mind. So, whether these are picture books about interracial families, interracial identity, transgender identity, the abuse of Chinese workers in the building of the transcontinental railroad, the plight of the homeless and the farmworkers, the struggle of dealing with death, abandonment, mental illness, or sexual abuse—the realities of human interactions as well as historical truths are common now in picture books; these are books that appear to be directed to that idealized Romantic innocent child, books with vivid illustrations and large expansive pages that speak not of innocence and wonder but of brutal truths.

While the acknowledgement of this radical change in the construction of the child and the resultant changes in subject matter have been a recognizable area of scholarship and discussion, what strikes the reader about this collection are the innovative scholarly approaches and new perspectives on these texts that lead us into new frontiers of awareness of historical truths and moral and philosophical domains. Each of the edition's five parts reflects the stretching of boundaries and a significant frontier in recent children's literature texts and scholarship; yet, although each part develops its unique focus, readers will find remarkable thematic leitmotifs—overarching themes—which weave through the seventeen essays and speak to a shared perspective, a vision from the collective imaginary of children's literature scholars.

Throughout and between all of these leitmotifs run our dual understandings of frontier, that is, as "the border, boundary or dividing line between two countries" and also as "the extreme limit of settled land, beyond which lies wilderness."[4]

Thematic Leitmotifs: The Triumph of Reality over Trauma, Transformational Borders, and Moral Vision

The edition's cover image provides a good starting point for reflecting on the new worlds pointed to and explored in these essays. The image comes from Lynd Ward's illustrations for Hildegarde Hoyt Swift's *North Star Shining* (Ward's work is discussed by Steven Herb) in which four

[4] frontier.OxfordDictionaries.OxfordUniversityPress.http://www.oxford dictionaries .com / us/definition/ american_english/frontier (accessed October 05, 2015).

people, who have been enslaved, reach their arms up into the heavens for the light of the North Star that they will follow as a compass "to freedom somewhere."[5] The North Star's light illuminates the extreme limit of human sorrow and anguish beyond which lies a vision of hope so compelling readers must join with these characters in their journey across a boundary of enslavement to the universal human right of freedom. We are forced not to look away—but to face such realities—to acknowledge that extraordinary human suffering has and does exist. Although children's literature has for some time been in the forefront of teaching such truths, the scholars included here both explore these realities and bring to these explorations new insights that taken together bring us to a new frontier of children's literature. This is the frontier where traditions of storytelling continue, stronger than ever, and where narrative power breaks down boundaries of silence—those held up by an unwillingness to look at and see unspeakable traumas—in order to reveal hidden reality and moral truth. Liminality itself becomes a new kind of frontier—a space in which boundaries and borders are shattered so that characters and narratives emerge in new constructions of reality and perspective, to create a space in which hope and a kind of redemption can arise. These essayists point to the revolutionary, powerfully interrogative nature of children's literature and its scholarship—how it breaks old boundaries and perspectives to take us to new frontiers that challenge our history and our beliefs, and point to new spaces for us to inhabit—new worlds of humane and moral embrace—not so much an idealized world, but a new world that through wisdom and knowledge can actually be found.

Also acting as a leitmotif here is the effect of trauma, as essayists explore how it influences both the individual (in struggling to discover resilience and hope) and historical memory. Enslavement, rape, the murder of children, and the heartbreak of those who have been voiceless and invisible, underdogs whose realities were distorted or submerged by a history that has willed us to forget are central concerns of these essays. The essayists show readers the harsh truth of monstrous acts, and they reclaim voiceless subjects who were vanquished to an historical netherworld. They destabilize accepted perspectives to effect a renewed exploration of what it means to be human. Just as many authors in this collection engage history in their essays, many also write essays that speak

[5] This reference to the North Star is taken from Raphael Rogers' essay "Slavery on Their Minds: Representing the Institution in Picture Books" in *Frontiers in Children's Literature* edited by Dorothy Clark and Linda Salem (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2016) where he quotes this phrase from Shange, Ntozake. *Freedom's a-Callin me.* (New York: Amistad, 2000).

to how recent, contemporary events challenge and alter our perspective—further recontextualizing our understanding of familiar texts. In this way, new frontiers are created through the destruction of borders, releasing us into a new space that is border*less* and also liminal—one where truth can be told, where we are forced to not look away, and where moral vision is compellingly conveyed.

In Part I, Frontiers in History: Exploring War, Trauma, Immigration, and Resilience in Children's Literature, essayists acknowledge the adultified construction of the child as implied reader in narratives about trauma and emotional survival. They explore stories of survival—both physical and emotional—as well as depictions of historical events through a more subtle and complex historical lens. The idea of the "triumph of reality over trauma" is the recurring theme of this part as well as a theme that weaves through the volume as a whole. The complexities and re-envisioning of historical perspectives are powerfully and insightfully revealed by trauma scholar Anastasia Ulanowicz in her contrast of Esther Forbes' 1943 revolutionary war story *Johnny Tremain* with M. T. Anderson's 2006 novel *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*. Ulanowicz reflects on how the historical "will to forget"—what she discusses as "we remember to forget"—becomes a marker of the historical interrogation and "correction." In her analysis, Ulanowicz makes us vividly aware of the notion of "collective forgetting" and, in effect, indicts historians, scholars, and teachers in their complicity to forget, tasking us all to fight against such "forgetting" by pointing to the extant evidence in primary documents which we must not ignore. Anderson's novel, she asserts, identifies the traumatic beginnings of the United States as marked by slavery, torture, genocide, disease, and mob violence, gesturing "towards the degree of untold loss and suffering upon which the American myth of national progress is built." Her re-envisioning of American history expands the boundaries of children's literature in a number of significant ways—from the integration of disturbing, traumatic realities into a children's story to the powerful critique of American foundation mythologies.

Kathleen Nigro's discussion of Ann Rinaldi's young adult novels about the civil war era pursues a similar trajectory—from collective forgetting to the truth of traumatic history by evidencing historical documentations—in this case, slave narratives as the foundation for Rinaldi's novels. As Nigro states, "The trauma of violence and its effect on memory creates complications, blurring the line between truth, distortion, and historical revisionings." In pursuit of truth, Nigro asserts that in revealing these true harsh historical realities of sexual exploitation and emotional trauma, these texts "counteract their historical erasure and

humanize the experience for the young reader." She focuses also on the "visible/invisibility" of the black body and connects this historical pattern of compromised perception and blurred memory both to the perception of the violence of slavery and to a continued invisibility (both of the body and historical truth) in such contemporary events as the deaths of Emmitt Till and Michael Brown.

Essays by Oona Hatton and Melanie Koss and Nance Wilson also powerfully speak to the "triumph of reality over trauma." In her analysis of José Cruz Gonzales' play *The Highest Heaven,* Hatton examines issues of trauma and immigration resulting from the Mexican Repatriation Act, which allowed for the removal of individuals of Mexican descent—whether or not they were citizens. Her analysis of borders and identity destabilizes constructed categories—whether of race, ethnicity, or nationality—and affirms a "border defying" vision that is humane and morally transformative. In their essay about emotional survival, Melanie Koss and Nance Wilson also affirm the "triumph of reality over trauma" as they analyze two young adult novels that depict the realities of two adolescents' self-destructive behaviors—eating disorders and self-mutilation—as responses to familial sexual abuse and painful social experiences. These, like the historical narratives, are stories of survival which demand that readers face the harshness of reality in order to reach a restorative vision and an understanding of self and the human condition.

Parts II and III, Frontiers in African American Children's Literature and Frontiers in American Indian Children's Literature, reflect the explosion of multicultural children's literature during the ending decades of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century, indicating the changing American demographics and expanding what is "appropriate" subject content for children. Graphic and unflinching accounts of the history of slavery have become picture books in which, as scholar Katharine Capshaw notes, there are no happy endings. These essayists powerfully address the erasure of history by the collective memory's will to forget. In asking us to face the truth of the United States' history of enslaving its people and the genocidal policies enacted on American Indians, these essays disrupt collective memory's amnesia about historical truths and work towards a redemptive understanding that destabilizes boundaries and borders, creating a new frontier—a liminal space from which vision and human understanding can arise, providing insightful and powerful new understandings of essential American issues of the construction of race, identity, and human rights.

All the essays in Part II, Frontiers in African American Children's Literature, "correct" collective memory's erasure or distortion of history

and point to new perspectives on identity. Katharine Capshaw examines an area of children's literature virtually untouched by scholars—1930s and 1940s plays by African American women that explore Haitian identity. Capshaw notes the unique effect of black children's culture: "[B]ecause of its interrogative critical position in the early twentieth century, [it] can play with familiar tropes and categories of knowledge in order to create a novel perspective on the past . . . [focusing] on representations of female identity" and creating a re-envisioning of race and gender. This relatively invisible area of children's culture and literature becomes here a beacon, illuminating America's aggression towards Haiti and the power of female anti-colonist and feminist endeavors. Again, correcting history is central to the examination in this discussion of the suffering and heroism of women whose "actions had been erased by history."

In a similar vein, Raphael Rogers and April Logan respond to both historical and scholarly inaccuracies. Raphael Rogers examines several picture books that bring the black slave from the margins by representing slavery from the perspective of the enslaved. These "counter-narratives" from this perspective vividly convey the violence, brutality, and trauma of the black slave's experience. These picture books—Rogers insightfully notes—present complex concepts through images that directly convey irrefutable truths of barbarism and the desire for freedom. The fear, terror, and horror of slavery are visually and graphically communicated in a new frontier of children's literature.

April Logan also confronts the "will to forget" by "correcting" a misreading of A. E. Johnson's first novel *Clarence and Corinne; or, God's Way* (1890), considered to be the first children's novel published by an African American woman. Logan responds to the assessment of many critics that the apparent absence of explicit descriptions of the characters' races is a "metonym for whiteness—white racial features." She demonstrates how reading through the lens of signifying corrects scholarship and history as it reveals characters who are coping with Jim Crow America and class anxiety within the African American community. She also considers the implicit bi-racial characteristics of characters, denoting the prevalence of rapes of black women.

The triumph of reality over trauma, the correcting of the collective memory's will to forget historical catastrophes and the resulting trauma, is a thread that runs through Part III, Frontiers in American Indian Children's Literature. Margaret Noodin and Anne Phillips each analyze Louise Erdrich's *The Birchbark House* and illuminate complex realities about American Indian history and culture—and in both instances show how this complexity is grounded in genocidal historical erasures. Both compare *The*

Birchbark House to Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, with which it tends to be linked.

Noodin makes Erdrich's text a platform for the discussion of harsh realities like white supremacist genocidal thinking, treaties, and land rights. The erasure of the language is itself a form of genocide, so that the inclusion of Anishinaabemowin language in the novel, affirms Noodin, not only teaches about and reveals the culture, but achieves revitalization and survival. In this way, the use of the language becomes itself another site of the frontier, bringing to the reader an understanding of the culture, of its construction of reality that can only be gained through knowledge and some sense of the language. It is finally survival that is here affirmed—a way beyond historical trauma through stages of pain and loss that celebrate survival and resilience.

Anne Phillips also affirms the power of *The Birchbark House* to bring to the reader an almost lost world, through its use of Indigenous language, its cultural references, and its construction of a different understanding of reality. Phillips' essay presents a process by which to teach Erdrich so that these historical and cultural realities are made accessible; her work takes us into a pedagogical frontier—one in which diversity and cultural issues are central to the literary text and yet may also present a barrier to its positive reception. As does Noodin, Phillips perceives the text in terms of resilience/survival and a different construction of reality.

Michelle Stewart explores Eric Gansworth's contemporary young adult novel *If I Ever Get Out of Here* that celebrates the liminality of the protagonist Lewis who must negotiate his two worlds, the "rez" (the reservation) and the school he attends. This essay explores how the history of the boarding school and its brutal history of the destruction of Indigenous culture complicates the Otherness experienced by the main character and his confusion about his identity. It is in his liminality, asserts Stewart, that Lewis finds his empowerment—outside borders, in between both cultures, in a new frontier space. In *If I Ever Get Out of Here*, the voice of the underdog, the view of the historically disadvantaged is valorized, as we the reader move from a world of historical trauma to one that affirms moral and human value.

Part IV, The Liminal Frontier of Monsters and Revenants, further engages this new frontier of liminality, of the underdog, of those who experience themselves as Other; this is a dynamic space, one that underscores the powerful presence of the "adultified" child implied reader. During the last decades of the twentieth century and into the present twenty-first century, contemporary narratives representing the child as Other are now normative—whether that representation is a monster,

changeling, or vampire. This part engages a frontier whose liminality revisits the urgent philosophical question of what it means to be human.

Alida Allison notes, for example, that the child has gone from fearing monsters to identifying with and becoming a monster himself, in effect, empowering "the youngster into being open to absorbing all kinds of experiences, even from dark, restrictive areas." Allison's analysis of Russell Hoban's picture book *Monsters* provides a vivid example of how historical context has changed our perception of childhood—how the "monster" as imaginative plaything pre-9/11 has morphed into the monstrous as murderous nightmare post-9/11. She charts this change of the Hoban child initially as an imaginative innocent—that Romantic idealized construction—with overly anxious overbearing, constrictive parents—into a child become truly monstrous—a transformation of innocent into murderer. Again, we are changed by the trauma of history—however, in this case our perception of human nature as the site of redemption is not evidenced.

Emily Thomas' essay explores the non-traditional female, the monstrous and sympathetic identity and liminality of the changeling in Eloise McGraw's *The Moorchild*. Thomas employs Kristiva's idea of abjection and Otherness to consider the changeling, Saaski, as a kind of ultimate Other. She struggles with a double identity—a hybridity that neither allows her a place with the Folk of her heritage nor with the community in which she has lived. But she also challenges our understanding of the Other and "monster" by becoming an agent for the good within a community that rejects and banishes her. Applying Kristiva's ideas, Thomas argues that despite the final seeming resolution that places Saaski in a liminal place, a borderland, outside her community, the ending affirms abjection rather than, as Thomas contends, finds a way to affirm the Other and bring her into the community. Saaski's kindness and acts of benevolence challenge her monstrous, liminal status—again, evoking the question of what it means to be Other and what it means to be human, issues informing this "frontier" as well as the essays in general.

In Laura Nicosia's analysis of Paolo Bacigalupi's young adult novel *Ship Breaker*, she asks us to think about these ontological issues in relation to what she suggests is a posthuman, "monstrous" figure, Tool: "Created primarily from human and dog genes, half-men are programmed as 'tools' to serve with loyalty to the point of death." Tool is a complicated hybrid: he is a monster, a "half-man"—not wholly human, not quite robotic, yet a strange genetically created "thing" that is meant to act without thought, without reflection. And, hence, Tool is, in a way, the penultimate Other; and, as such, he becomes a lens through which we learn about what

defines our humanness. As Nicosia notes, "By being a 'horrible Other,' monsters like Tool enable protagonists to attain a more full view of humanity and society." Here, too, the liminal space becomes empowered, a new frontier, where the apparently monstrous Tool, a seeming mechanical function of genetic engineering, becomes the site of conscience, of agency, of moral self-awareness—the effect is to bring into relief that which is most human and to affirm the good. What does appear "robotic" are those human figures in the novel for whom conscience has been supplanted by greed. The monstrous, thus, becomes the beacon of moral truth and a gateway into that which is most hopeful about being human. As Nicosia affirms, "without the monster, therefore, humanity is doomed."

Our final frontier, Part V, Illustration and the New Frontier: Breaking Boundaries in Picture Books and the Digital Humanities, explores this traditional and powerfully innovative genre. Children's illustrated art has been central to the pure delight and pleasure that one associates with children's literature; indeed, every picture has told a story that in addition to delighting us has also reflected significant changes in cultural values and technological innovation. American children's illustrated art has signaled such change and innovation, changes in what we understand as the text/image relationship, re-envisioning what illustration means into a new genre/category—what may be called "visual literature" or sequential art. This last frontier explores the innovative and transformative ways technology and social change have affected children's literature.

Visual literature/storytelling encompasses the traditional and the new—expanding and transforming established categories as well as blurring accepted audience demographics. Part V explores this new and old territory in discussions of established children's illustration artists and new media technologies that are changing the notion of the writer/reader/artist.

All the essays in this section examine innovative artists whose work has broken new ground both in terms of artistic style and vision and in terms of producing a site with the thematic leitmotifs informing this volume: the triumph of reality over trauma—necessitating the telling of the harshest historical truths—and a moral vision that underscores the triumph of human values. Steven Herb's discussion of the innovative artist Lynd Ward underscores Ward as an artistic pioneer, exploring new frontiers both artistically and morally. Ward's work has been the recipient of many awards (including the Caldecott and illustrations for Newbery awardees); his works have been honored by recent innovative artists such as Art Spiegelman as both precursors of the graphic novel as well as

continual works that inspire. This artistic frontier is, also, remarkably informed by a powerful moral vision. This volume's cover art is Ward's illustration from *North Star Shining: A Pictorial History of the American Negro* (1947), "created in reaction to the discrimination faced by African American soldiers returning from service in World War II." This concern with the plight of humanity informs Ward's work; as Herb notes, "Ward said many of his children's books represent his lifetime search for answers about the condition of humankind."

Linda Salem's discussion of Edward Gorey takes us into Gorey's remarkable artistic vision through an exploration of the Edward Gorey Personal Library collection. In a number of ways, Salem's discussion explores several new frontiers—not only those discovered in Gorey's work, but also the collection itself becomes a new frontier for scholars and researchers, in particular the way in which participatory digital humanities discovery tools might be used to engage researchers with a personal library in a new way. As Salem notes, Gorey's point of view was to look at evil and the horror of the world straight on, to let children see and know its nastiness. Gorey's remarkable concept of the rational fake fairy tale, as Salem points out, provides a surreal context as a liminal space from which to depict the harshness of reality and violence.

Norma Aceves's essay takes the idea of image and illustration into an entirely different domain, exploring the new and transformational visual frontier of the digital world where multimodality is challenging traditional understandings of narrative. She focuses on the phenomenon of fandom around the *Twilight Saga,* exploring how postings from three fan forums and YouTube create new conceptions of narrative, reader, and author as well as new communities: "[F]andom produces a multimodal community of discourse through a continuous production of stories and re-conceptualizations of the same text." These explorations insightfully apply the theoretical lens of French feminist Hélène Cixious' concept of *écriture féminine,* or women's writing, that "favors multiplicity in writing rather than linearity." Although wordless books produce a new reading of narrative, multimodality creates an entirely new world—a frontier just beginning to be explored. Aceves' analysis points to the effects of such important new digital narrative forms as computer games and tablet and mobile apps, not to mention the complications posed to researchers by pastiche creations popular in fan fiction.

Zara Rix's essay on the works of Peter Sís rounds out this insightful collection because it artfully plays with the concept of Sís's maps and the layered meanings of frontier. She confronts the complexity of history and human plight. These works repeat the theme of breaking boundaries and

borders to lead us into a new domain, a borderless, liminal space that points to the promise of human moral transformation, affirming what is essentially human. Rix identifies Sís's remarkable maps as "maps of meaning," emphasizing values which strive to be universal so that "political and socio-cultural boundaries are shown to be important in shaping human subjects, but remain subservient to the universal values of friendship, creativity, and treating others with good will." Rix leads us to see that Sís's maps as "maps of moral meaning" communicate emotively and experientially, requiring a different mode of reading; Sís, she argues, attempts to disrupt "overly easy interpretations of the land and the history of the people living upon it." The effect of this new mode of reading is "to slow the reader, immersing her in multiple understandings of time and space." We are led from our old world transformed through this new vision into a new world, a frontier where we experience a combined emotive and cognitive understanding of the powerful interconnections of what makes us human and the universal values that reinforce that vision.

These scholars bring not only a deep knowledge base and imaginative commitment to the study of children's literature, but also unique insights that may help us to see the "frontiers" of children's literature through new lenses—a new vision that continues to distinguish this dynamic genre, marking it culturally, aesthetically, and historically revolutionary.

PART I

FRONTIERS IN HISTORY, IMMIGRATION, TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

CHAPTER ONE

REMEMBERING TO FORGET: HISTORICAL TRAUMA, PARATEXT, AND VISUAL RHETORIC IN M. T. ANDERSON'S *THE ASTONISHING LIFE OF OCTAVIAN NOTHING*

ANASTASIA ULANOWICZ

In his 1829 essay, "What Is a Nation?", Ernest Renan argues that a nation cannot be defined by such traditional categories as language, race, religion, or geographic barriers; instead, a nation "is a soul, a spiritual principle" that is supported by the common consent of its diverse members (10) and is composed of free and diverse citizens who not only "desire to live together," but who also possess in common a "rich legacy of memories" that connects them to the "true glory" of their shared past (10). Renan also insists that a mutual *forgetting* of past traumas and conflicts is as crucial to national cohesion as the remembrance of glorious milestones. Such forgetting, he argues, involves in part the renunciation of ethnic, linguistic, and political sympathies that previously distinguished members of a newly-articulated nation. Moreover, Renan maintains that citizens of recently-sovereign nations tacitly agree to forget the bloody circumstances that preceded unification. "Unity," he writes, "is always brutally established" (3). Thus, any collective narrative that celebrates the free and equal fraternity of a nation's constituent members depends upon the willingness of each individual citizen to in effect *remember to forget* previous distinctions and conflicts in order to subscribe to a new, state-based concept of communal belonging.

If there is one contemporary work of literature for young people that is particularly concerned with this dialectic of memory and forgetting, it is M. T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation*. Anderson's novel is committed to reminding readers of the instances of willful forgetting that riddle US American narratives of the nation's "glorious" founding. In contradistinction to "classical" works of

Revolutionary-themed children's literature such as Esther Forbes' *Johnny Tremain* (1943) and Christopher and James Lincoln Collier's *My Brother Sam is Dead* (1974), which both offer free white male protagonists, it features an African slave as its protagonist. In the course of this two-part novel, its eponymous hero gradually becomes conscious of his position as a slave in a provincial New England academic enclave; Octavian joins the colonial Patriot cause and later defects to British ranks in a desperate gamble to secure freedom from slavery. It also dares to claim that Revolutionary-era discourses of liberty were limited to white property-holding men whose economic interests in the institution of slavery significantly proscribed their concept of "freedom." Moreover, by charting its protagonist's ultimate decision to fight in a British regiment upon learning that his service might win him emancipation—an act that, according to the subtitle, renders him a "traitor to the nation"—the novel calls attention to discrete, immanent, and racialized conflicts of power that have become repressed or forgotten in the service of a grand and uniting narrative of a US American Revolutionary origin story.

Octavian Nothing's critique of willful national forgetting extends beyond its narrative content to its very form. This two-part volume is organized as an assemblage of fictive manuscripts including Octavian's direct testimony as well as documents such as newspaper advertisements, letters exchanged between slave-holders and slave-catchers, crude maps produced by combatants, and diary entries by disinterested colonials who briefly engaged with the protagonist. By presenting these various and disjointed fictional papers—inspired by the archived works that Anderson consulted in his composition of the novel—*Octavian Nothing* challenges its reader to piece together a new narrative of Revolutionary American history in such a way that challenges the "remembered forgetting" inherent within traditional and conventional narratives of US history. Moreover, by employing a type-face popularized during Octavian's eighteenth-century moment—and also by presenting moments in which this type-face is literally blotted-out—Anderson's novel calls attention to the material processes by which crucial historical events have been overtaken by nationalist and historicist economies of memory and forgetting. Finally, Anderson's strategic use of paratext calls attention to the ways in which overlooked traces of the past exist—paradoxically, often in plain view—at the margins of official national historical narratives.

Reading Between the Lines

An analysis of Anderson's first volume, *The Pox Party* (2006 [hereafter cited in-text as TPP]) should begin not, as one might expect, with its narrative body but with its title page. As this page states, the novel's narrative is "taken from accounts by [Octavian's] own hand and other sundry sources" that were "collected by Mr. M. T. Anderson of Boston." Here, the reader is given implicit instructions in how to engage with the novel. She is prompted to recognize that the narrative does not offer a single voice whose authority she might take for granted; nor does it furnish an unbroken chain of events she might passively consume. Rather, the reader is called to assume the role of the historian who must take into account the various and divergent perspectives represented within a collection of source materials. She is also reminded that the documents she will presently peruse are mediated—"collected by Mr. M. T. Anderson of Boston"—and, therefore, that their deliberate arrangement presents a narrative she must continually analyze, question, and judge. At its very outset, *Octavian Nothing* cautions against passive or uncritical modes of engaging with national history. It demands, rather, that the reader actively engage with its narrative and remain attentive to both what it reveals and conceals.

The implicit caveat issued by the novel's title page is followed by a narrative body that, according to Anderson's conceit, presents transcriptions of Octavian's originally hand-written memoirs. Here, the protagonist introduces the reader to the "astonishing" circumstances into which he was born: not unlike Rousseau's fictional Émile,[1] he is the subject of a grand

[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile: Or a Treatise on Education* (1762) outlines its author's reflections upon education and the cultivation of the ideal human person through a fictional account of a young boy's training at the hands of his careful tutor. In the course of the text, Émile is removed from an increasingly urbanized French society—whose influence Rousseau deems deleterious to his "natural" development—and is isolated in a rural setting, where he might learn from direct interactions with his immediate environment. Ultimately, however, Émile's engagement with his surroundings is not direct at all, but rather mediated by his tutor, who draws on his observations of the boy's carefully planned experiential lessons to support his preconceived notions of human development and understanding. Anderson's depiction of Octavian's own experimental education might thus be read as a critique of Rousseau's treatise—as well as a critique of Rousseau's problematic concept of the "noble savage." Indeed, Anderson's critique of Rousseau becomes explicit in an epigraph—yet another paratextual source—excerpted from *Émile*, in which the boy's tutor purposefully leads him astray in the woods and then expects him to find his way safely back home.

experiment to evaluate the physical and intellectual potential of the developing human child. Like his French counterpart, who is ushered through the stages of childhood by an ostensibly disinterested but nevertheless scrupulously observant tutor, Octavian is educated by the faculty of the Novanglian College of Lucidity, a fictional version of the American Philosophical Society founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743. They instruct him in Latin, Greek, mathematics, and music, and also meticulously record the details of his quotidian physical activities. Having grown accustomed to his tutors' regular intrusions into his daily life, Octavian does not question their motives until he befriends one of the College's African slaves, Pro Bono, who bluntly informs the protagonist that he is himself a slave purchased by the scholars for the purpose of satisfying their quasi-scientific curiosity. Once Octavian recognizes his subaltern status, he considers his condition with "eyes from which the scales had new-fallen" and begins to interrogate his masters about their designs on him (TPP 2006, 42). Initially, Octavian's tutors indulge and even invite his questions; the College's head scholar, Mr. Gitney, candidly tells him that they "wish to determine your capacity, as an African prince, for the acquisition of the noble arts and sciences" (49). However, once the College falls into debt and is forced to seek out benefactors who do not approve of their supervision of Octavian's "education," the protagonist is silenced and violently reminded of his ultimate status as a slave. The once-coddled Octavian is whipped, for example, when he objects to his mother's attempted rape by the College's first patron, the rakish Lord Cheldthorpe. Subsequently, he is divested of his lessons in classical literature and impressed into menial service when the College's second patron, an investor named Mr. Sharpe, insists that the conditions of the "experiment" confirm his view of Africans' "hereditary savage nature" (130). Sharpe's treatment of Octavian and his mother is so brutal that the protagonist eventually flees and joins a Patriot regiment with the hope that his service might win him his freedom. He, however, is discovered and returned in chains by members of the Sons of Liberty, who are grateful for Sharpe's financial support of their "twin causes of (a) liberty and (b) property" (306).

If, as Anderson's title page suggests, the reader is to remain aware of the nuance and subtext of the "collection's" content, then Octavian's subsequent narrative challenges her to question her received knowledge of US American history. If Pro Bono's revelation that Octavian is an African slave is as much as a surprise to the reader as it is to Octavian—for, up to this point, neither Octavian's status nor even his racial identity is explicitly mentioned in the narrative—then this reader is prompted to recognize how