



From the Editors

“All” in the Family: Conceptions of Kinship in Young Adult Literature

The idea of family is complicated by the reality of life. While some may envision family as consisting of those to whom we are related by blood, others might hold a more inclusive definition. Family might be associated with home and safety and tradition and love or connected to feelings of betrayal and loss and loneliness and anger. Although our unique experiences with family might conjure differing definitions and perceptions along the continuum, we all likely have some type of emotional response to the concept.

In this issue, we invite consideration of how YA literature might influence how young people make sense of their own and others’ families. Contributors help us contemplate how family is perceived and depicted in YA literature and the roles parents and guardians, extended family members, siblings, neighbors, teachers, caregivers, friends, etc. play in defining family. They encourage us to explore whether it is true that “Everyone plays a purpose, even fathers who lie to you or leave you behind” (Silvera, 2015, p. 84). They offer suggestions as to how YA titles might help adolescent readers consider the moral obligation to stand by family, exploring the question, Is the family bond immutable, or can/should we cut ties and under what circumstances?

As adult readers of the articles in this issue, we are challenged to evaluate the claim that “[N]o matter what, we’re still family, even if we don’t want to be” (Quintero, 2014, p. 168). And as educators, we appreciate the opportunity to learn how our colleagues have reached out to families to foster young people’s read-

ing and engagement with stories and to learn more about how and why they have valued and celebrated the funds of knowledge and lived experiences of those in our students’ families.

We begin this issue with the voices of several acclaimed authors for young adults, David Arnold, Jenny Torres Sanchez, Teresa Toten, Jeff Zentner, and Ibi Zoboi. In “Unconventional Families and Making Our Own: A Collaborative Conversation,” these writers explore the concept of family. They bring to light the reality of how characters in books and people in life form families in ways that differ from more traditional definitions. Their words demonstrate how unconventional families might be just what characters—and people—need.

The next three articles in this issue turn to considerations of mothers, fathers, and daughters and how their portrayals in young adult literature might be understood and have important implications for readers and their teachers. In “‘Sorry I’m not your little angel anymore’: Reading Good/Bad Girlhood through Mother–Daughter Relationships in Latina YA Fiction,” Rachel L. Rickard Rebellino and Christine N. Stamper examine three award-winning works of Latina young adult literature: Guadalupe Garcia McCall’s *Under the Mesquite* (2011), Meg Medina’s *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* (2013), and Isabel Quintero’s *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* (2014) to explore how the characters’ identities as young women, specifically young Latina women, are navigated through mother-daughter relationships. They argue that these books, in telling the simultaneous stories of mothers and daughters, allow

for a nuanced understanding of Good and Bad girlhood and a complex portrayal of intersectionality.

In her article, “Good Mother/Bad Mother: The Representation of Mothers in Prinz-Award-Winning Literature,” Heidi Lyn Hadley explores the ways in which highly genderized roles like motherhood matter for all young adult readers. Drawing from Printz Award and Honor Books from 2016 and 2017, Hadley analyzes the discourse around mothering in YA literature. She focuses particularly on the ways in which the performance of mothers is written using literary markers of “good” and “bad” and the implications of these portrayals for teachers and adolescents.

Linda T. Parsons’s “Maligning Mothers and Forging Fathers: Maintaining the Motherhood Mandate in Response to Parents in Two Young Adult Novels” analyzes preservice teachers’ engagement with and responses to *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* (Mackler, 2003) and *Luna* (Peters, 2004). Findings reveal that students expected parents to embody traditional, gendered parenting consistent with the breadwinner/caregiver model and faulted mothers for not following the motherhood mandate. Parsons describes how young adult texts can be used as sites for deconstructing and disrupting perceptions of these parenting models and mandates.

The last two research articles featured in this issue explore chosen and adopted families and their implications for research and practice. Summer Melody Pennell, in “Chosen Families: Using and Creating Queer Cultural Capital in a Queer YAL Course,” explores how university students used queer familial cultural capital to analyze both queer texts and their own experiences. Analysis of student work, end-of-semester surveys, and tweets revealed how queer familial cultural capital provided support for queer identities, enhanced student learning experiences, and offered opportunities for adventure.

In “No Longer an Orphan: Narratives of Adoption in Young Adult Fantasy and Science Fiction,” Tara Moore analyzes examples of positive adoption language and adoption microaggressions to initiate a spectrum of adoption sensitivity in young adult novels. She explains how educators can use these adoption narratives as a means through which to sensitize readers to adoption issues and advocate for children in adoptive families.

In his Book in Review: A Teaching Guide col-

umn, “Looking beyond the Classroom: Accessing Our Students’ Funds of Knowledge through Young Adult Literature,” Bryan Gillis speaks to the essentialness of developing strategies that enable educators to learn more about their students so they can better support these adolescents in their learning and their living. Using two YA texts written by A. S. King, *Still Life with Tornado* (2016) and *I Crawl through It* (2015), Gillis provides strategies for teachers to do just that.

Victor Malo-Juvera partners with David Macinnis Gill for this issue’s Right to Read column, “Writing across Identity Elements: An Interview with Cynthia Leitich Smith, William Alexander, and Kekla Ma-goon.” The column features the voices of authors who write the types of texts that educators want, particularly those that feature diverse characters and cultures. Guest columnist David Macinnis Gill interviews these authors to get a glimpse into how they view matters of identity and how their views may or may not influence their work.

The Layered Literacies column, “Finding Our People: Kinship Connections and Young Adult Literature,” explores kinship networks—both traditional and non-traditional. Shelbie Witte and Pamela Unruh Brown highlight three kinship themes focused on adolescence and describe useful and compelling YA texts and multimodal resources for readers to extend conversations about these themes in complex, interesting ways.

We conclude this issue with “Family Influence across the Ages: A Collaborative Conversation.” Four accomplished YA authors, Kristin Elizabeth Clark, Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock, Rahul Kanakia, and Sara Zarr, discuss considerations of family history in the lives of individuals and the influence of family relationships on both adolescent identities and across the life span. They help us think carefully about the connection between our family history and individual present. The authors also consider the lingering effects of our past, whether there exists a moral obligation to stand by family, and how cultural and/or societal expectations and norms shape the family lives we lead.

References

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Quintero, I. (2014). *Gaby, a girl in pieces*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Punto Press.
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Call for Manuscripts

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscript submission guidelines are available on p. 2 of this issue and on our website at <http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines>. All submissions may be sent to thealanreview@gmail.com.

Winter 2019: How We Play the Game: YA Literature and Sport

Submissions due on or before July 1, 2018

Sport, culture, identity, and power are intimately related. Sport can both reaffirm and challenge societal beliefs, strengthening and calling into question existing ideologies related to gender, race, and class. While it might be true that “it’s a long race and you can always outwork talent in the end” (Matthew Quick, *Boy 21*, p. 8), the relationship between sport and socioeconomics, for example, is real: sport is an industry driven by profit, and young people pay to play. Working hard sometimes isn’t enough to gain access, leading us to wonder who gets to participate and if and how such issues are addressed in YA literature.

Sport can also unite and divide people—with real consequences. It’s true that the team element of sport can connect people in memorable ways, as “it’s amazing how two thin pieces of clothing can hold such deep memories. Laughter, pain, victory, defeat, friendship, fatigue, elation . . . they’re all there, but only to the person who’s worn the uniform” (Wendelin Van Draanen, *The Running Dream*, p. 187). But it’s also true that sport can perpetuate inequities across people and across time, as evidenced by this scene from Sherman Alexie’s *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*: “Last night I missed two free throws which would have won the game against the best team in the state. The farm town high school I play for is nicknamed the ‘Indians,’ and I’m probably the only actual Indian ever to play for a team with such a mascot. This morning I pick up the sports page and read the headline: INDIANS LOSE AGAIN. Go ahead and tell me none of this is supposed to hurt me very much” (p. 179). For this issue, we invite you to consider the presentation of sport in YA titles and how YA sports literature might be used to foster a more nuanced understanding of the game and its players, its history and institutional norms, and its impact on life on and off the court.

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Summer 2019: What's Now? What's New? What's Next?

Submissions due on or before November 1, 2018

The field of young adult literature has exploded over the past few decades. As a result, we have enjoyed increasing numbers of memorable stories written by authors willing to trust their readers with complexity and challenge. We have learned from colleagues who have implemented innovative approaches to teaching and thinking about this literature and its implications for the young people who read it. And we have begun to think carefully and critically about whose voices are present and not present and how literature both reflects and has the potential to shape the sociocultural realities in which we live and work.

In our final issue as editors of *The ALAN Review*, we aim to create space for reflection, contemplation, and anticipation around young adult literature. We invite you to consider where we are, what we've accomplished, and what we all might tackle in our collective pursuit of scholarship and teaching. As we engage in this work, we find inspiration in the words of Nicola Yoon: "I was trying so hard to find the single pivotal moment that set my life on its path. The moment that answered the question, 'How did I get here?' But it's never just one moment. It's a series of them. And your life can branch out from each one in a thousand different ways" (*Everything, Everything*, p. 305). And we are reminded that we can (and must) do better in this work, knowing that "Sometimes you can do everything right and things will still go wrong. The key is to never stop doing right" (Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, p. 155). Given our shared commitment to books, young people, and a better tomorrow, we are hopeful that our forward momentum will impel us to move the field ahead in ways that foster equity and social justice for all. As Renee Ahdieh intones, "When I was a boy, my mother would tell me that one of the best things in life is the knowledge that our story isn't over yet. Our story may have come to a close, but your story is still yet to be told. Make it a story worthy of you" (*The Wrath and the Dawn*, p. 387).

As always, we also welcome submissions focused on any aspect of young adult literature not directly connected to these themes. Please see the ALAN website (<http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines>) for submission guidelines.