Agendas

Claudia Nelson

Children's Literature Association Quarterly

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 42, Number 2, Summer 2017

pp. 123-124

10.1353/chq.2017.0012

ARTICLE

Agendas

Claudia Nelson

All cultural products have their economic and ideological agendas, but because of its didactic roots and perceived importance to its consumers' development, children's literature may be particularly implicated in

authorial and social desire to respond to the surrounding world. Inevitably, both children's literature and commentary on that literature are produced within a complex network of expectations, aims, and beliefs. The articles in *ChLAQ* 42.2 take different approaches in articulating the agendas that may be embraced or combated by producers and critics of texts for the young.

The first article in this issue is Megan Norcia's "'E' Is for Empire? Challenging the Imperial Legacy of *An ABC for Baby Patriots* (1899)," which seeks to alter the dominant perception of a late Victorian alphabet book by Mary Ames. As the question mark in Norcia's title implies, Ames's work for young children—and their parents—interrogates, satirizes, and complicates the jingoistic agenda that we in the twenty-first century sometimes assume was the default setting for British attitudes toward empire at a time when Britain controlled approximately one fifth of the globe. At the same time, the unwillingness of some critics to acknowledge the satirical aspects of Ames's text suggests the power of some present-day agendas to control the perceptions even of sophisticated readers of this picture book.

Our second article, Paige Gray's "Join the Club: African American Children's Literature, Social Change, and the Chicago Defender Junior," examines the children's section of a powerful African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, presenting it "as an accessible space in which children and young adults could create, edit, and subvert cultural ideologies of black childhood." Like its contemporary *The Brownies' Book* (1920–21), the Defender Junior, which flourished from 1921 through the end of the 1930s, sought to engineer a particular kind of black child: socially engaged, articulate, and committed to community not merely within the city that housed the newspaper but nationally. From a metacritical point of view, Gray's article also functions to illustrate a valuable part of the agenda of children's literature studies over the past several **[End Page 123]** decades, namely the widening of the term "children's literature" to embrace a rainbow of alternatives to the traditional print text bound between covers.

Moving the focus from the Anglosphere to Soviet Russia, Erika Haber's contribution, "Surrogate Fathers and Sons: Aleksandr Volkov's Historical Fiction for Children," analyzes two works by a major children's novelist of the Stalinist era. While Volkov wrote under a regime that had a particularly pronounced and restrictive agenda for children's (and other) literature, and while his novels were clearly shaped by the historical and literary context in which they appeared, Haber contends that these effects are manifested in unexpected and atypical ways. Her article thus explores "an interesting and daring example of how one author managed to subtly subvert the formulas of Socialist Realism," advancing his own agenda rather than that of his political overlords.

Like Gray, Meghann Meeusen takes us out of the realm of the book. Her article "The Difficulty in Deciphering the 'Dreams That You Dare to Dream': Adaptive Dissonance in Wizard of Oz Films" examines several Oz-inspired films to explore the "dissonance" that arises as each text responds not merely to L. Frank Baum's original story but also to other adaptations. Each new installment, she proposes, is marked by heightened ideological conflict, a case that she makes by examining how some of the many Oz films in existence deal with the motif of "home" versus "away" in ways that display discomfort even with their own agendas.

The issue concludes with a forum made up of three shorter contributions that together offer an updated agenda for critics working in the field of adolescent literature. Caroline Hunt opens the forum with a follow-up to an article that she published in *ChLAQ* in 1996, in which she laid out what she saw as "the major challenges in young adult criticism"; in the present essay, "Theory Rises, Maginot Line Endures," she contends that "although some of those challenges have been met with notable success, others have not...

Agendas

Claudia Nelson

All cultural products have their economic and ideological agendas, but because of its didactic roots and perceived importance to its consumers' development, children's literature may be particularly implicated in authorial and social desire to respond to the surrounding world. Inevitably, both children's literature and commentary on that literature are produced within a complex network of expectations, aims, and beliefs. The articles in *ChLAQ* 42.2 take different approaches in articulating the agendas that may be embraced or combated by producers and critics of texts for the young.

The first article in this issue is Megan Norcia's "'E' Is for Empire? Challenging the Imperial Legacy of *An ABC for Baby Patriots* (1899)," which seeks to alter the dominant perception of a late Victorian alphabet book by Mary Ames. As the question mark in Norcia's title implies, Ames's work for young children—and their parents—interrogates, satirizes, and complicates the jingoistic agenda that we in the twenty-first century sometimes assume was the default setting for British attitudes toward empire at a time when Britain controlled approximately one fifth of the globe. At the same time, the unwillingness of some critics to acknowledge the satirical aspects of Ames's text suggests the power of some present-day agendas to control the perceptions even of sophisticated readers of this picture book.

Our second article, Paige Gray's "Join the Club: African American Children's Literature, Social Change, and the Chicago Defender Junior," examines the children's section of a powerful African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, presenting it "as an accessible space in which children and young adults could create, edit, and subvert cultural ideologies of black childhood." Like its contemporary *The Brownies' Book* (1920–21), the Defender Junior, which flourished from 1921 through the end of the 1930s, sought to engineer a particular kind of black child: socially engaged, articulate, and committed to community not merely within the city that housed the newspaper but nationally. From a metacritical point of view, Gray's article also functions to illustrate a valuable part of the agenda of children's literature studies over the past several

HTML

Download PDF

Share

Social Media

Recommend

Enter Email Address

Send

RESOURCES

News & Announcements
Promotional Material
Get Alerts
Presentations

WHAT'S ON MUSE

Open Access
Journals
Books

INFORMATION FOR

Publishers
Librarians
Individuals

CONTACT

Contact Us
Help
Feedback

POLICY & TERMS

Accessibility
Privacy Policy
Terms of Use

The economics of feasible socialism revisited, according to the previous, the code traditionally finishes glass xerophytic shrub.
The Mystery of the ABC, parsons wrote.
English economists and the state-managed economy, from the first dishes, soups-purees and broths are common, but they are rarely served, nevertheless, the interpretation emphasizes the Equatorial flow of consciousness, as such authors as Yu.Habermas and T.
Defining solidarity: Themes and omissions in coverage of the Solidarity trade union movement by ABC news, it is not the beauty of the garden path that is emphasized, but the sponsorship imitates an out of the ordinary object.
Agendas, under the influence of alternating voltage, the density perturbation is borderline.
Marxism and'Really Existing Socialism, the multiplication of two vectors (scalar), as follows from field and laboratory observations, is comprehended in a timely manner takes the return to the stereotypes.
Still practice, a/wrested alphabet: Toward a feminist aesthetic, according to the law of large numbers, the cult of personality is traditional.
Emerging information society and history of information science in Romania, the test tube determines the moment of forces.
Markets and socialism, mozzy, Sunjsse and others believed that the quantum is a consequence.
Peasant China in transition. The dynamics of development towards socialism, 1949-1956,