

Editorial

Alison Waller, Patricia Kennon, and Emily Corbett

ALISON WALLER

Transitions and transformations are at the heart of YA narratives. This issue reflects these themes in many ways, but also marks a particular moment in the story of *IJYAL* itself. It has been three years since I had the idea for the journal. In 2019, I had just completed my monograph on memories of childhood reading and was returning to YA research with some writing on recent British teenage fiction. My PhD student at the time, Emily Corbett, ran an excellent YA symposium and was looking to publish the proceedings. More personally, my mother had died early that year, and the precious months I spent with her while she was ill were a reminder to persevere with the things that feel meaningful. As 2019 waned and 2020 brought with it the challenges of a global pandemic on top of existing geopolitical and environmental crises, an international, online YA journal seemed even more important. Understanding how cultures speak to, and represent, their young adults has become a pressing need in a world where the future is uncertain. I gathered my energies and, with the encouragement and support of Emily and my colleague Amy Waite as Associate Editors, launched the journal with Fincham Press in November 2020. After three issues, it is time to reflect on *IJYAL*'s achievements and consider what still might be done.

My ambition for the journal was initially very simple: to provide an intellectual space for current research on young adult literature, and to publish this work without having to defend its importance or demonstrate how it sits alongside more established fields of study. I also wanted to facilitate the expansion and development of YA Studies: so that new and experienced scholars can feel inspired to explore texts from all parts of the world and from different times in history, knowing that their ideas can circulate amongst readers who are

Dr Alison Waller has been General Editor for *IJYAL* from 2019-2022.

Dr Patricia Kennon and **Dr Emily Corbett** are the journal's incoming Co-General Editors. Patricia is Associate Professor in Children's and YA Literature at Maynooth University, Ireland. Emily is Lecturer in Children's and YA Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London.

eager to learn. I think this current issue is a good example of how *IJYAL* has achieved at least some of these objectives. It features discussions of YA literature in the broadest terms, from popular fantasy fiction and memoir to historical novels and a contemporary, streamed TV show, and covering material from South Asian, European, South American, and Anglo-American traditions. Contributors represent a range of career stages, and the book reviews give a taste of fantastic and innovative research that is being generated in YA Studies. I'm delighted that we have been able to support a group of doctoral students to publish a special section based on their symposium, *Let's Talk About Sex in YA*, and would point readers towards their valuable Editorial, which presents a series of articles on this important topic. I'm also pleased that this issue – like all of *IJYAL*'s content – is published open-access, meaning that this lively corner of literary scholarship is available to students, academics, practitioners, and interested people whatever their circumstances.

There are ways that the journal can continue to transform. There is still work to be done in welcoming voices from the Global Majority and under-represented YA literatures. I would like to see more collaboration across nations and between generations of scholars. It would also be exciting to expand definitions of YA and start some structured debates amongst our international community.

Nevertheless, I'm very proud of what *IJYAL* has managed to do in three years. But I can't take credit for all, or even most of it! First and foremost, our contributors and their articles and book reviews are of course the heart of the journal. I am grateful for their original thinking and rigorous research in bringing the whole project to life, as well as for their patience throughout editorial processes. The Editorial Board has offered essential critical friendship from the journal's inception to its current moment of transition, not only helping to review articles and suggest topics for special sections, but also guiding our course in making decisions about the future. There has also been an army of other reviewers helping behind the scenes. The generosity of busy academics never fails to amaze me. The University of Roehampton, Fincham Press, and staff at the Ubiquity platform have provided invaluable practical support, and Amy took a key role as Associate Editor for Issue One. The biggest acknowledgement should go to Emily, however, who has been a constant cheerleader for *IJYAL* and a dedicated Associate Editor. She has an astute editorial eye and a most ethical way of working. Her determination to ensure accessibility, diversity, and equality in all aspects of the journal's production have been inspiring and I can't imagine having a better colleague during my time as General Editor.

This brings me to a final note and a further explanation of the journal's own moment of transition. It is time for me to step back as General Editor and hand over to a new team. I'm thrilled to see what comes next and I look forward to seeing *IJYAL* flourish under their very capable direction.

PATRICIA KENNON AND EMILY CORBETT

Greetings to *IJYAL*'s community of contributors, readers, reviewers, and friends. We would like to introduce the new editorial structure of *IJYAL* and ourselves in our new roles as the two Co-General Editors of the journal. For each of us, this is a continuation of a pre-existing relationship with the journal.

Patricia: I was previously a member of the *IJYAL* Editorial Board and it is a personal and professional honour to move into this new position and to follow on from Alison's admirable leadership.

Emily: I have been Associate Editor since the journal began in 2019. With Alison at its helm, I have seen *IJYAL* grow from an ambitious idea to a journal that has fostered YA scholarship from researchers around the world, and that has an unwavering commitment to the growth of YA studies and the publication of innovative, international, open-access scholarship. I am pleased to be leading *IJYAL* in its next phase.

Together, we would like to thank Alison for her care, integrity, and impact in conceiving and establishing *IJYAL*. As part of the ongoing evolution of the journal, *IJYAL* will have an expanded editorial structure and we will be joined by two Associate Editors: Dr Susanne Abou Ghaida and Dr Nithya Sivashankar. Our editorial team is excited to continue *IJYAL*'s mission and work, to publish robust and innovative YA scholarship, and to further develop the journal's global expertise and its international reputation and reach.

We are committed to highlighting global connections, inclusive texts, and diverse approaches to YA Studies, and to including and amplifying a multiplicity of international voices, traditions, and perspectives. The open-access nature of *IJYAL* enables these values of inclusion, participation, and community, and we will continue to showcase original and rigorous research from scholars of all career levels and across a range of cognate disciplines. We are both based in university Education Departments, and we strive to provide an exemplar of how these cross-currents, collaborations, and co-constructions of knowledges can successfully work and grow together. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dimensions of YA are rich and enriching and we hope that all academics, readers, teachers, students, librarians, publishers, practitioners, and advocates of YA will feel welcome participants in the *IJYAL* community of ideas, debates, and discussions.

ISSUE OVERVIEW

Issue Three opens with Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Jörg Meibauer's "Divided Berlin and Divided Germany in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders from the East to the West and Vice Versa". In this article, the authors provide a critical overview of six German YA novels published from 1958 to 2004, demonstrating the influence that historical events have exerted over this postwar literature. They examine in detail how the novels tackle issues around restricted movement between East and West, unpicking the narrative tension that is created when young protagonists face conflict between personal desire and ideological beliefs. While Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer's focus is on physical, geopolitical, and cultural transitions, the article that follows works on a more symbolic plane. Victoria Bovalino's "The Function of Liminal Entities in the Grief Process of Young Adult Contemporary Novels" considers the role YA can play in helping readers explore loss through a reading of three recent novels featuring grieving characters. Bovalino argues that an understanding of the transitions between life and death, and between denial and acceptance of the absence of a loved one, are crucial parts of adolescent development, and that liminal entities are figures who transcend dying in these narratives in order to guide those left behind.

Traversing similar terrain, Laura Marie Lopez's article, "Testimonio Witnessing of Gender-Based Violence in Belinda Acosta's *Sisters, Strangers, and Starting Over*", explores how YA testimonio texts by US Latina feminist writers can offer counter-hegemonic representations and give voice to silenced and erased women and girls in Latinx culture. Focusing on the second of Belinda Acosta's *Quinceanera Club* series, *Sisters, Strangers, and Starting Over* (2010), Lopez examines the histories and realities of gender- and class-based violence and murder for Chicanas in Latinx society, such as the Juárez femicides, as well as practices within the Latinx family of rejecting, victimizing, and silencing girls and women who do not conform to Latinx family and cultural norms. The next article, Jenna Spiering and Nicole Ann Amato's "Nothing to do but be borne and steered': Unpacking Feminist Scripts in Elana Arnold's *Damsel*", shares Lopez's concern with female agency, power, and powerlessness. The authors consider how contemporary feminist frameworks might be mobilised in pedagogical settings to stimulate and encourage more nuanced readings of YA fiction marketed as feminist, such as Elana Arnold's Michael Printz Honor novel, *Damsel* (2018). Informed by three feminist frameworks — popular feminism, feral feminisms, and material feminist theories of becoming — the article examines Arnold's choices in language, imagery, and narrative structure as well as the novel's peritext, marketing, and reviews in its proposal of ways that educators might deploy this and similar YA literature to frame and trouble the complexities of feminism for students. Bill Hughes' review of Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska's *Girls in Contemporary Vampire Fiction* (2021) complements Lopez's and Spiering and Amato's articles, bringing attention to the monograph's examination of the

ambivalences regarding female adolescent embodiment, aesthetics and beauty, norms of ableism and ageism, and female desire in the arena of YA vampire fiction.

The tensions in feminist discourses and the potential for enabling teenage girls' autonomy and agency are also investigated by Dag Skarstein and Synnøve Skarsbø Lindtner in the next article, "Travelling Girlhood: Feminist Discourses as Narrative Resources for the American Adaption of the Norwegian High-School Drama *SKAM*". Drawing on theories of melodrama, dramaturgy, and YA studies and examining the impacts of the two shows' different approaches to the use of point of view, voiceover, interrelational conflicts, and ways of positioning the audience, Skarstein and Lindtner undertake a comparative analysis of the second season of the acclaimed and internationally popular Norwegian teen television drama, *SKAM* (*SKAM 2*) and its 2018 US translation and adaptation, *SKAM Austin 2*. Their article explores how the original television show deployed a mode of realist melodrama in its examination of culturally-specific dilemmas and experiences of Norwegian adolescent girlhood, and traces how the original show's dramaturgical structure and achievement of audience engagement changed during its adaptation from one cultural context to another. Amanda K. Allen's review of Julie Pfeiffer's *Transforming Girls: The Work of Nineteenth-Century Adolescence* (2021) touches on similar themes, celebrating the monograph's analysis of the German-American 'Backfish novel' for "mak[ing] an important methodological case for more comparative cross-national and cross-language studies of children's and young adult literature" (4).

Several pieces included in this issue concern the development of different narrative traditions in YA and their examination in recent YA scholarship. While Allen draws attention to Pfeiffer's work to explore *Backfischliteratur*, Amy Naylor's review of *The School Story: Young Adult Narratives in the Age of Neoliberalism* (2022) highlights David Aitchison's attempts to move away from traditional notions of the school-story genre to "cement the school story as a permanent feature in the YA world" (3). Andrea Burgos-Mascarell's and Mateusz Świetlicki's reviews focus on two recent and significant collections that examine the shifting tides of sex, sexuality, and LGBTQ+ representation: Paul Venzo and Kristine Moruzi's *Sexuality in Literature for Children and Young Adults* (2021) and B. J. Epstein and Elizabeth Chapman's *International LGBTQ+ Literature for Children and Young Adults* (2021). Burgos-Mascarell commends Venzo and Maruzi's attention to diversity in a collection that critically examines representations of sex and sexuality for young people, drawing together threads that also weave through Hilton and Duckel's special section. Świetlicki's review of Epstein and Chapman's work addresses global developments in LGBTQ+ literature, suggesting the edited collection offers new insights (for English-speaking scholars) into a broad range of national literatures and reveals that the positive developments in Anglophone LGBTQ+ representation are not necessarily replicated elsewhere.

The next article in Issue Three, Alex Henderson's "From Painters to Pirates: A Study of Non-Binary Protagonists in Young Adult Fiction", also brings to the fore themes of change in

LGBTQ+ YA in its investigation of how gender identity is expressed and explored in a sample of non-binary YA novels published from 2017-2020. The author's findings reveal numerous possibilities for non-binary embodiment in recent YA texts – with protagonists who “may be an art student or a swashbuckling pirate, on a quest for revenge or falling in love, exploring their sense of self online or trying to figure out their zombified body” (21) – suggesting that the development of this fiction is emblematic of queer YA's proliferation into different genres and narrative types. This expansion is also reflected in David Clark's review of *Thinking Queerly: Medievalism, Wizardry, and Neurodiversity in Young Adult Texts* (2021) by Jes Battis, which pitches the monograph as offering “a heady witch's brew of reflections on contemporary medievalism, young adult literature, queer theory, and neurodiversity” (1). While Henderson's work presents a snapshot of non-binary YA as a blueprint for the field's future growth, Casey Wayne Patterson's “Towards a Manumissive Black Fantastic in Fandom, Fantasy, and Literature for Young People; or: A Case for the Black Hermione” revisits a prominent, and increasingly notorious, series to explore how race and melancholy inflect experiences of fandom. Concluding with a piece of original fan fiction, Patterson considers the question: “[w]hy am I so sad when I imagine Black Hermione?” (2). In this article, the author builds on Ebony Elizabeth Thomas' *The Dark Fantastic* to consider racial grief and the unrealised desires shaping fans' relationships with *Harry Potter*'s creator: work which is especially urgent in our current cultural moment. Jennifer Mooney's piece complements Patterson's detailed analysis of Hermione, offering a review of Mike Cadden's *At Arm's Length: A Rhetoric of Character in Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2021) which celebrates the monograph for “provid[ing] a valuable structure for exploring issues central to the study of children's and young adult literature: authorial power and ethical implications of representation” (4).

It is important that we continue to recognise the potential of YA and YA studies to disrupt, as well as perpetuate, prevailing ways of thinking, and this issue concludes with the most recent iteration of Emily Corbett and Leah Phillips' “Ploughing the Field”. This roundtable feature brings together 10 scholars working across literary studies, book studies, creative writing, library sciences, and education studies to reflect on the state of YA and probe some of the (inter)disciplinary boundaries in our field. Their conversation highlights the need for increased collaboration, while at the same time evidencing YA's and YA studies' position as rich and fertile ground for critically engaging with our contemporary cultural landscape.