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Representations of Gender in Young Adult (YA) Literature, 1960-2010

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Mária I. Cipriani

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Mária Cipriani

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree,

hereby recommend acceptance of this dissertation.

EK Tan, Associate Professor, Cultural Analysis & Theory,
Dissertation Co-Advisor

Ruth Bottigheimer, Research Professor, Cultural Analysis & Theory,
Dissertation Co-Advisor

E. Ann Kaplan, Distinguished Professor, Cultural Analysis & Theory
and English, Chairperson of Defense

Judith Halberstam, Professor, University of Southern California,
Gender Studies and Comparative Literature, Outside Member

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Charles Taber
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation focuses the lens of queer studies and trauma studies on YA literature published in the United States between 1960 and 2010 to demonstrate that authors embed cultural messages in YA texts. Those messages for YA readers intend to model behavior considered appropriate and teach about normative sex and gender roles. Individuals between the ages of 10 and 20 comprise YA readership, and the means of teaching these readers cultural norms include imagery and cautionary tales. The content of the literature inculcates views of acceptable behaviors with respect to sexuality and gender roles and generally conflates sex and gender. The ways in which queer characters are treated constitutes an aspect of the normative behavior presented to YA readers.

This dissertation begins with a close textual analysis of selected YA novels pairing a novel written between 1960 and 1985 with one written in the twenty-five years after 1985 in four categories—normativity, androgyny, gender ambiguity, and gender fluidity. Its overall purpose is to reveal normative messages, to determine whether cultural definitions of sex and gender roles have changed over time, and to demonstrate the rewards that characters who conform to the norms receive for their conformity. Once the norms and recognizable patterns are established, the dissertation considers the literary treatment of characters who transgress the norms and demonstrates the applicability of trauma studies to YA novels' messages about sexuality and gender roles. In addition, the dissertation illustrates that as the culture's conceptualization of trauma has developed, depictions of painful events and their effects, whether or not considered traumatic at the time of their writing, are in alignment with current understandings of trauma. Although only YA novels are considered in this dissertation, the sociohistorical examination of the cultural models provides a way to determine the underlying messages imparted to YA readers in all media.

Dedication Page

I dedicate this dissertation to my partner, Joan Woodbridge, who read through many drafts, commented and questioned to keep me thinking, and whose enthusiasm and interest from the first day to the last got me started and kept me going.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Frank and Judith Cipriani, without whose support and encouragement it would not have been completed.

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Chapter 1

> …as psychoanalysts from Freud and Jung onward have observed, myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts. –Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* 36

Histories, Methods, and Assumptions for the Study of Young Adult Literature and Gender Representation

> Prior to the advent of young adult literature, adolescents read books in which men were men and women were women. Traditional roles for both genders were held up as the desirable norm. As these roles have drastically changed, young adults need to see different types of people engaging in the myriad roles available to them in today's society. –Rachel Laskey Bilz, *Life is Tough: Guys, Growing Up, and Young Adult Literature*, ix

This introductory chapter addresses language use and coded messages embedded in YA literature that speak directly to non-heteronormative (queer) readers. The chapter also sets forth the purpose, assumptions, and methodologies used in this dissertation. It summarizes the history of children's and young adult (YA) literature, and distinguishes between children's and YA literature. It also briefly discusses representations of sexuality and gender and normative sex/gender roles as described in successive editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) to demonstrate the ways in which these descriptions relate to normative gender roles advocated in the YA novels I discuss in the following chapters. The DSM, the codification of mental illnesses published by the American Psychological Association (APA), documents a quasi-official history of homosexuality and gender identification along a of binary male/female gender delineation. Successive editions of the DSM[1] chart the initial classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder to its final declassification as a diagnosable mental illness.

[1] For ease of reference, textual citations of different versions of the DSM will refer to the edition number followed by the page number (e.g., DSM-IV-TR ##), instead of following the conventional MLA format which would list the author, work and page number (e.g., APA, DSM-IV-TR ##).

Society communicates to young adults examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and expectations based upon their age, gender, race, and socioeconomic standing. In normative cultural discourse, each biological sex is closely aligned with a corresponding gender and concurrent expectations. Society enforces these norms by rewarding or punishing the individual. For young adults, rewards often take the shape of success and acceptance; punishments are usually meted out by rejection, which includes shame and violence.

History shapes a culture's definition of "normal." Definitions of "normal" can be found in language and silences, as well as in "coded" messages for individuals considered to be outsiders within a specific culture or group at any particular time in history (Doty, *Queering* 1). In addition, as social scientists Marcia Segal and Vasilikie Demos observe, language has the power to include some groups by naming them and exclude others by silence: "Language serves as a major obstacle to the alleviation of gender based violence, directing our attention away from it and helping to maintain its invisibility" (5). Philosopher and queer theorist Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo states that even when sexual difference theorists do account for positions that exist outside the traditional binary, trans-invisibility, including "trans-erasure" persists (86). The subjects that language does not represent are rendered invisible; for example, transgendered individuals are not specifically covered by the law (although some laws cover "gender expression"[2]) and therefore not expressly protected under the law. "[L]anguage—the definition of words and the scripts and frames considered appropriate—can be used to conceal violence and …the use of language in making violence visible can jar us" (Segal and Demos 5). Likewise, "a binary

[2] The Human Rights Commission defines "gender expression" as "all of the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions" (HRC.org/resources). Laws such as ENDA (Employment Non-Discrimination Act), do not specifically mention transgender individuals, rendering these individuals invisible to the law.

definition of gender means that trans*[3] people cannot be recognized for who they are" (Segal and Demos 5). This observation echoes Foucault's statement that "[t]here is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (27). When those discourses involve groups of individuals who fall outside a culture's accepted norms, the silences become personal: "the problem with any ascribed [or] adopted identity is not what it includes but what it leaves out" (Queen and Schimel 21).

An examination of YA literature's inclusions and omissions alongside the historical developments in psychology, and the parallel social and cultural developments for the period 1960 through 2010, reveals the ways in which history, psychology, language, and cultural silences have impacted YA literature. Children's literature scholar Kenneth Kidd observes, "American culture and American popular psychology…is where the encounter of psychoanalysis and children's literature has most vividly played out, especially since the mid-twentieth century" (xxi), emphasizing the interplay of the historical, psychological, linguistic, and cultural forces in children's and YA texts.

Language Considerations and the Enforcement of the Gender Binary. The culture makes conformity to the binary easy and deviation difficult. Language complies by entrenching the binary in people's psyches and habits. Further, conflation of sex and gender, gender and sexuality, and sexuality and sexual preference according to gendered assumptions makes transcending the gender binary difficult in the extreme.

[3] This neologism, which borrows directly from computer language, sometimes called "trans-star," but often read simply as "trans." The term reflects computer-based "wildcard" in which an asterisk in a search term denotes any number of unknown or unspecified characters in the search string. Therefore, a search of trans* would render anything from transatlantic to trans fat to Transylvania. In terms of gender studies and queer theory, individuals and graduate programs are increasingly using the term trans* as an inclusive term to signify individuals who are "transgender, gender nonconforming and gender questioning" (lgbtq.Yale.edu/resources).

"Gender" has its etymological root in the Latin *genus* ("race" or "kind"). In a humans, in a binary system, gender distinguishes between feminine or masculine. Linguistically, gender distinguishes among grammatical kinds such as feminine, masculine, or neuter. Eurocentric languages have categories such as "he," "her," and "it," which inscribes normative gender difference in the very language we speak. This linguistic distinction has contributed to constructions of gender understandings which allow and disallow behaviors and experiences based on biological sex (Hateley 86). Nodelman and Reimer, Hateley, and others note that children's literature from its inception "not only created literate citizens, it also located them in a gendered social order" (Hateley 87).

The gendered social order includes gender binary assumptions inherent in language, which are many and subtle. "Western culture is deeply committed to the idea that there are only two sexes [/genders]. Even language refuses other possibilities…" (Fausto-Sterling 20). "Identity categories and nouns convey meaning according to a structure of binary oppositions, with one term of any pair valued more highly than the other" (Turner 33). "…the border between homo- and heterosexuality…[is] a boundary that our society is heavily invested in maintaining, …[but] just getting people to recognize its prevalence could help chip away at the hetero-versus-homo monolith and facilitate a dissolution of oppressive, traditional notions of what it means to be a man and a woman" (Fairyington 33). Linguistic structures, identity structures, and power structures are all rooted in the gender binary. The idea of either-or is deeply inculcated into the dominant cultural psyche in U.S. and Western European language and thought processes, which tend to be linear, and metaphors, which tend to be rooted in the gender binary.

While grammatical gender does not necessarily follow rules of human gender, romance languages feature gendered nouns and pronouns with corresponding gendered verbs and

adjectives; Germanic languages, which feature feminine, masculine, and neuter nouns, similarly do not necessarily follow human gender specifications, for example, *der Mann* (man) and *die Frau* (woman) are grammatically designated as masculine and feminine respectively, but *das Mädchen* (girl) is neuter. English and Hungarian are considered to have neutral noun forms, although English third person singular pronouns denote the subject's gender, whereas Hungarian uses one ungrammatically gendered third person singular pronoun for all subjects, regardless of gender. Neither the English nor the Hungarian language is truly ungrammatically gendered. Although grammarians distinguish between grammatical gender and so-called "natural" gender, Butler, citing Wittig, argues that "persons cannot be signified within language without the mark of gender" (29).

A 1993 study produced evidence to support Butler's observation. That study demonstrated that grammatical gender is perceived as a mark of "natural" gender, concluding that grammatical gender affects meaning. That study asked native German speakers in Germany and native Spanish speakers in Mexico to judge 54 high-frequency translation equivalents on semantic differential scales, using words reflecting dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity. Half the words were of feminine gender in German but of masculine gender in Spanish (Type I words), and half were of masculine gender in German and of feminine gender in Spanish (Type II words). German speakers judged grammatically masculine German (Type II) words higher in potency than Type I words; Spanish speakers judged grammatically masculine Spanish (Type I) words higher in potency than Type II words (Konishi).

A 2002 study (Boroditsky et al.) repeated the experiment. This experiment was conducted entirely in English: a group of native Spanish speakers and another group of native German speakers all of whom were also fluent English were tested in English using a list of 24 objects

which had opposite genders in Spanish and German. Subjects were asked to generate three adjectives in English for each noun on the list. Object gender in the participants' native language influenced the descriptors they produced. For example, the word "key" is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. "German speakers described keys as *hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated,* and *useful*, while Spanish speakers said they were *golden, intricate, little, lively, shiny,* and *tiny*. The word for 'bridge,' on the other hand is feminine in German and masculine in Spanish. German speakers described bridges as *beautiful, elegant, fragile, pretty,* and *slender* while Spanish speakers said they were *big, dangerous, long, strong, sturdy,* and *towering*" (Boroditsky et al. 70). Both studies provide evidence that grammatical gender influences the ways in which people think about objects, adding an extra component to Butler's observation that people necessarily are marked by gender within the binary when signified in language—not only are the marks of gender inescapable, they reflect stereotypes that reinforce gender prejudice.

One attempt to move beyond the gender binary by English-speaking genderqueer individuals involves changing language to evoke gender neutrality consciously. The gender-neutral third person subject pronoun "ze" replaces the gender specific pronouns he or she; and for the object pronouns him or her, "hir" (pronounced like "here") is substituted. This innovation avoids the grammatically incorrect use of plural pronouns "they" or "their" when referring to an individual in the singular and creates language that is gender-free.

Language has the ability to clarify or to obfuscate, and if users agree, language can eliminate the gender binary as easily as it now reinforces it. This language clarification has occurred in American English with much racist vocabulary and connotation, but has yet to be introduced to the sexism of gender binary usage. With respect to gendered language, Butler asserts that "if gender itself is naturalized through grammatical norms…then the alteration of

gender at the most fundamental epistemic level will be conducted, in part, through contesting the grammar in which gender is given" (xx). YA and queer theorist Kerry Mallan builds on Butler's observation: "the reappropriation of terms such as queer by the popular culture…might appear as a strategic political act of wrestling a term away from its prior contexts or resignifying it within a dominant discourse" (*Gender Dilemmas*126), but, Mallan notes, raises further questions, such as whether such a reappropriation may, in fact, strengthen rather than undermine dominant discourse (*Gender Dilemmas* 126). Mallan goes on to state that "this question is important for our reading of children's and YA fiction as we need to be alert to the subtleties of language and the discursive positioning that a text offers its readers and its characters" (*Gender Dilemmas* 127).

Subtleties of language and the gendered assumptions inherent in the words that appear in YA texts are discussed with respect to specific texts in the chapters that follow, in order to further the discussion of those particular texts. Of primary importance to the overall discussion of unconscious messages embedded in gendered language is the discussion of implied hierarchies in the historical meanings of commonly used words (e.g., "witch" and "wizard" used in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), and the discussion of Virginia Woolf's seemingly unconscious use of the universal "he" when discussing the androgynous mind of the (in this case female) writer.

Young Adult. While a separate glossary of pertinent terms is included at the end of this dissertation, a term of particular importance is Young Adult. YA scholar Lee Talley notes that the *OED* does not include the term "young adult," but that "teenager," "juvenile" and "young person" are synonyms for young adult, defined as "a person in the early years of adulthood," by the *Random House Webster's Dictionary* (229). Talley further notes a discrepancy of age range

for defining "young adult"—a range anywhere from 12-18 to 10-25 years old. For the purposes of this dissertation, Young Adult or YA refers to individuals between the ages of 10 and 20.

Young Adult (YA) literature refers to novels, short stories, poetry, plays, films, and new media (including gaming, blogging, and social media) presentations created for audiences between the ages of approximately 10 and 25 years old. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, YA literature refers to print novels written for readers between the ages of 10 and 20, those given the YA designation, and Science Fiction and Cyberfiction novels, as discussed below.

Genre. In order to limit the current study, this dissertation focuses only on YA novels. A much longer work would consider film, poetry, drama, and various forms of new media for young adults, as well as graphic novels and anime, which attract YA readers, but which are likewise excluded from this inquiry. The focus here is novels designated as YA, those not necessarily YA-designated but featuring a main character aged 10-20, and those that are designated Science Fiction (SF) and Cyberfiction (CF). SF and CF genres are undisputedly popular among both adult and YA readers (Gander), an example of the bridging aspect of YA literature. Most SF and CF readers start a lifelong love of the genre in their early teens, thus a study of YA literature appropriately includes these texts. SF and CF are included here also because they offer a different series of representations of gender than do realist fiction. In addition, novels that are cross-designated as Native American fiction (e.g. Erdrich's and Alexie's, as historical realism (e.g. Watson's), and as magical realism (e.g. Rowling's), but which are marketed primarily as YA fiction are included in this dissertation and treated as YA novels because they fulfill the criteria for a YA novel and because they are marketed for the YA audience.

Purpose. This dissertation focuses on YA literature through the lens of queer studies to discover the messages about sexuality, portrayals of gender and gender roles, and definitions of normativity and non-normativity as defined by adults charged with socializing young adults. This inquiry examines YA literature published in the U.S. between 1960 and 2010, with specific reference to descriptions of sexuality and gender roles.

While making no assumptions about child and YA readers' sexuality or gender identification, this dissertation does begin with the assumption that children from the earliest stages are indoctrinated with normative assumptions of sexuality and gender roles by society, religion, and family. The means of imparting these norms to children include images and cautionary tales in children's and YA literature. The content of those depictions inculcate views of behaviors acceptable with respect to sexuality and gender expression (i.e., normative views), even when that literature depicts queer protagonists. Thus, the ways in which queer characters are treated constitutes an aspect of the normative behavior presented to YA readers, whether those readers are queer or not. Parents' beliefs about how young adults should behave and think determine which books they encourage their children to read.[4] Representations of non-heteronormative sexuality and gender roles in YA literature are prevalent enough to present recognizable patterns from which to discern the messages that YA novels impart to YA readers.

Focus and Assumptions. Literature for children (a branch of which is literature for young adults) spans the globe and has a centuries-old history. This dissertation, however, limits its focus to written texts produced in the United States. The literary and cultural history in question is limited to the years 1960 to and including 2010. This study assumes a linear progression of history and parallel social and intellectual developments, including, for the time

[4] The question of adult (parents, teachers, religious leaders) influences on YA readership, that is, issues regarding how young adults get access to YA novels, is well documented by the ALA and in many educational journals devoted to secondary education and literacy. A review of this material is beyond the purview of this dissertation.

period specified, expansion of civil rights, developments in psychology, and concurrent changes in notions of normativity. Changes in the subject and focus of YA literature progress along the same historical path, although at a slightly slower rate (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 128). This study also assumes that gender is performative, which is to say that gender is constructed by an individual's repetitive performance of gender, as posited by Judith Butler (34). A third assumption operating in this study posits that a standard history of children's literature exists, and the uniqueness of that literature stems from the fact that its intended readership is children and young adults, a distinct and separate group from its authors: adults. Adult authors of YA literature write for YA readers to entertain them, but they write with the ultimate purpose of instructing them (Demers, Cart, Pattee). Thus this dissertation also assumes that YA texts impact, educate, and influence YA readers.

Scholars of children's literature, including Nodelman, Reimer, Demers, and Kidd, all support the premise that children's and YA literature implicitly or explicitly instructs its readers, sometimes through overtly didactic instruction, but more often implicitly through the example set by characters' actions and their consequences. YA authors write to teach readers who are younger than themselves. For the most part, adults write what they assume YA readers want to read, and often writers of YA texts write about what they would like YA readers to know—one YA author, Robert Lipsyte, says, "There is a messianic streak to what we do; at the very least we think we are teachers as much as we are artists" (qtd in Pattee 32). A clear example of this can be found in the writings of Louise Erdrich, whose YA and adult novels cross genres. All of Erdrich's novels qualify as Native American fiction, and her adult novels also qualify as contemporary fiction. Likewise, in addition to qualifying as Native American fiction, her novels for young adults are marketed as YA and fulfill all the criteria for YA novels, including the

instructive element: unlike her novels for adults, Erdrich's YA novels contain a glossary of Ojibwe words, illustrations sketched by the author, clear teaching stories about Ojibwe culture and prayers sprinkled with words from the Ojibwe language, all designed to teach (instruct) while they entertain (delight).

Adult writers and censors also determine the types of information and situations YA readers encounter in YA texts, again with the idea that YA readers will learn from the situations, vocabulary, and possibilities presented to them. The outcomes that YA characters experience serve to inculcate YA readers with sets of ideas deemed "acceptable" by those adults, while at the same time eliminating or not presenting other ideas or outcomes. Even S.E. Hinton, a young adult writing for young adults, expressly intended to instruct her readership (and their adult guardians) about the lives of real kids in real situations (Hinton *Bonus Materials* n.p.).

In *From Instruction to Delight,* which traces the history of children's and YA literature, children's literature scholars Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer include in their title a key phrase that children's and YA literature scholars (and many children's and YA writers) agree is part of the objective for most writers of books for children and young adults. Nodelman's and Reimer's history of books for children indicates that the inception of children's books was an illustrated set of manners and religious instructive texts. Patricia Demers and other children's literature scholars, who trace the history of books for children back to the 16th century when books were written expressly to instruct children in religion and manners (xiii), concur with this history. These scholars all agree that the instructive element in books written by older writers for younger readers is an elemental characteristic of this genre. Educators in the twentieth century

also subscribe to this notion, noting that the best students are the ones who read because they read in order to learn.[5]

Additionally, YA literature historian Leonard Marcus notes that children's books have a 300-year long history in the United States, although many scholars of canonical literature are surprised that children's literature has any history at all (Marcus, *Minders* ix). Agreeing with Nodelman and Reimer, Marcus observes that the reasons for this surprise are themselves historical, since historically scholarship has overlooked or dismissed children's literature as inconsequential and therefore not worthy of study (Marcus, *Minders* x). The comparatist Seth Lehrer adds, "[F]or a long time what was *not* literature was the ephemeral, the popular, the feminine, the childish" (7 emphasis in original).

This elitism in scholarship continues, as noted by Cindy Lou Daniels, who observes that since the enormous success of the Harry Potter series, YA literature is are beginning to "attract the critical attention it deserves" (78), despite the fact that many scholars continue to believe that YA literature is merely a secondary category of "childlike storytelling—didactic in nature—and unworthy of serious literary evaluation" (78). The didactic nature of children's literature is one reason that this genre has been ignored by "serious literary critics" (Daniels 78). Yet the notion that children's and YA texts instruct their readers is part of their ability to disseminate ideas. The ideas disseminated, no matter how good or bad, provide the instructive power of the texts: any person who has read Margaret Wise's book *Good Night, Moon* (1991) to a toddler multiple times knows that these repetitions are the toddler's way of learning.[6]

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[5] As with the topic of adult influences on child and young adult readers, a discussion of the educational merits of reading, and child and young adult readers objective of reading both to be entertained *and* educated, is well documented (see ALA.org, literacy.org, the National Coalition for Literacy, among many other organizations funded to study this subject) and goes far beyond the purview of this dissertation.

[6] Many examples of learning by repetition exist. One of these is described by Freud who, observing his grandson, noted in *On the Interpretation of Dreams* that the "several months" (*Collected Works* 905 *n* 1) of practice in separation from the primary object by his grandson demonstrated "a successful piece of self-discipline which he had

Awards for writing celebrate the literary excellence of YA fiction. The Newbury Medal is awarded annually for most distinguished contribution to literature for children published in the U.S. by a U.S. citizen or resident; The National Book Award, and the ALA's YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) Book Awards, all select annual winners in YA fiction for their prestigious writing awards. In addition, the Hugo and Nebula medals are awarded for best Science Fiction writing annually. While these awards often contribute to their recipients' commercial success, their distribution generally promotes and recognizes literary excellence, and winning awards keeps well-written books in print (Nodelman and Reimer 121). Moreover, an appearance of any YA title on *The New York Times* Bestseller List or as a YA selection of the National Book Club virtually guarantees a reprinting, and thus, further dissemination.

In terms of the literary merit of the eight YA texts that are the primary focus in this dissertation, with the exception of Sally Watson's *Jade* and Caitlin Sullivan's and Kate Bornstein's *Nearly Roadkill*, the texts have had their literary merit acknowledged either by winning industry-recognized awards for writing (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* [Nebula, Whitbred], *Left Hand of Darkness* [Nebula, Hugo], *Middlesex* [Pulitzer]), by being on *The New York Times* Best Seller List (*The Outsiders, Harry Potter, What Happened to Lani Garver, Middlesex, The Left Hand of Darkness*), or by being continuously in print since their inception (*The Outsiders, Harry Potter, Harriet the Spy, Lani Garver, Middlesex, The Left Hand of Darkness*). Several of these novels have won other awards, as noted in the introductions to the works in the discussions below. While continuous printing or appearance on *The New York Times* Best Seller List does not guarantee quality of writing, the widespread readership of these texts indicates the widespread dissemination of the ideas presented in them.

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achieved at an early age" (905 *n* 1). The key to this object constancy by the grandson was due to the repetition of the game and the learning involved in that repetition. Likewise, the repetition of textual materials inculcates child and YA readers with the ideas disseminated in those texts.

As with books of any genre for any age group, the commercial aspects of YA literature are a consideration: putting books on shelves makes them available for YA readers. As will be shown with *Jade*, a well-written and well-researched YA historical adventure novel by Sally Watson, the best way to make ideas contained in a book unavailable is to stop printing the book, thus time in print is a consideration in terms of the support or suppression of the ideas presented in a text. In terms of the quality of the fiction studied in this dissertation, YA novels are deliberately less complex than novels written for adults. Most of them follow a single character and present one clear plot. The sophistication of the language used in the texts included in this dissertation is at a tenth- to twelfth-grade level, that is, at or above the level used in *The New York Times*.

Methodology. This interdisciplinary study uses a close reading of the primary YA texts informed by the lenses of feminist, psychological, socio-historical, cultural, gender studies, and queer studies. In particular, focusing a feminist/women's studies lens on YA texts involves questioning norms and focusing on the use of language and the actual and implied meanings of words used in the YA texts. This includes noting silences or gaping absences in subject and content (e.g., few female characters depicted in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) disciplines). Queer studies, taking its lead from women's studies (Warner viii), focuses on heterocentrist and homophobic discourses and presuppositions. The cumulative effects of history on psychology, society, and culture and the subsequent lessons taught by psychology, learned by society, and enacted by culture form the backdrop of this inquiry.

Characteristics of YA Literature. For the purposes of this dissertation, YA literature refers to novels written for readers aged 10-20. YA literature usually addresses the themes of coming of age and sexuality as well as ethical and social dilemmas. These novels generally fit

the literary genre of realism, although some, like the Harry Potter series, are better described as magical realism. For a novel to be considered YA, it must feature at least one main character within the 10-20-year-old age group, usually move the character through a single plot, and often depict life-defining situations for that character, whose decisions and consequent actions drive the story. As discussed above, SF and CF novels provide the exception to this rule because the SF and CF genres are widely read by young adults even though the ages of their characters are often much older (sometimes centuries older) than their YA readers.

Publishing houses created the category YA literature, which became a discrete branch of children's literature, with J.D. Salinger's 1951 novel, *Catcher in the Rye*. Published for adults, this novel "achieved an anthemlike status among America's teens" (Marcus, *Minders* 185), and most YA scholars consider it foundational for the new category, "young adult" fiction (Cart, *From Romance* 14). Today, scholars and publishers generally define YA novels as realistic fiction which addresses the issues, problems, and growing complexities of life of interest to readers from ages approximately 10-20 years old (Cart, Marcus, Nodelman).

The "bridging function" (Cart, "From Insider" 95) that differentiates adolescence from both childhood and adulthood also provides an apposite metaphor for the transitory nature of adolescence. The interconnections between children's and YA literature and between YA and adult literature become apparent when one considers the question of the attributes that qualify a text as YA literature. Individuals at each end of the age range between 10 and 20, or even between 12 and 18 (as the ALA (American Library Association) defines YA readership) are vastly different, again emphasizing the transitional nature of this group. YA literature theorist Roberta Seelinger Trites observes that "the evolution of adolescence as an educational and psychological concept could only emerge in a culture that believed a transitional stage between

childhood and adulthood existed" (xvi). Trites conceives of the transitional nature of adolescence as creating the perfect audience for introducing ideas of change and reform (143). From this observation follows the idea that introducing new concepts to YA readers will facilitate the mainstreaming of those concepts; likewise the suppression (or erasure) of concepts from the same group hinders the social and cultural acceptance of those concepts.

Along with the notion of a standard, linear history of children's literature comes the notion of the uniqueness of children's and YA literature as genres for which, with very few exceptions, the authorship comprises a group distinct and separate from its intended readership, as noted above. YA texts are usually written for youth by adults, with S.E. Hinton being one noteworthy exception to this generalization. Nodelman and Reimer observe that children's and YA literary texts "are written by adults for people younger than they are. Indeed, something called 'children's literature' exists only because people are convinced that children are different from adults—different enough to need their own special texts" (14). Thus, adults impart messages about sexuality and gender (among other things) to YA readers, and parents, teachers, religious personnel, and librarians vet those messages to determine whether the messages are acceptable and appropriate for adolescents. When any member of the first three groups deems a book unfit for YA readership, it informs the ALA, which then lists the book as "challenged,"[7] a notation that a directive for librarians has been made to make that book unavailable on children's and YA library bookshelves in certain locations.

[7] Contrary to popular belief, the ALA does not ban books; it merely reports which books have been banned or challenged by various groups (parental, school, religious). The ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) celebrates freedom of speech and promotes awareness of challenges to books which would make them unavailable by publishing annual lists of books that have been challenged during that year. "Challenged" books indicate texts that various groups have attempted to restrict or make inaccessible to YA readers because of content, language, subject matter, or other aspects of the book that the challenger finds objectionable. The OIF receives reports of attempts to ban books in communities across the country from libraries, schools, and the media and compiles lists of challenged books in order to inform the public about censorship efforts that affect libraries and schools. According to the ALA website, "[t]he ALA condemns censorship and works to ensure free access to information."

As documented by Nodelman and Reimer, Demers, Hunt, and Cart (among others), one unique feature of the children's and YA genres is a level of censorship by adults who ultimately seek to control young adult readers' self-definition by controlling their notions of right and wrong. Books placed in children's and YA sections of libraries tend to reinforce the cultural and social norms deemed appropriate by adults. Such norms include acceptable social and sexual behavior, choices, and actions for boys and girls. These range from moral and cultural standards (for example, telling the truth, standing up for "what's right," and, especially in the United States, enforcing "rugged individualism" and the idea of the "melting pot") to gender and sex norms (for example, looking "like a boy," acting "like a girl," and accepting heterosexual values strictly enforced according to the gender binary as normative). Characters not conforming to culturally accepted norms routinely experience shaming and shunning, or else they conform, succumbing to a mix of peer pressure and violence. Books depicting characters not punished for non-conformity are routinely removed from YA readers' literary options (ALA.org).

Absences of information may influence YA readership as much as the material presented. Information that influences YA readers includes depictions of racial integration, sexuality, and gender roles. Amy Pattee, advocating for less censorship in YA fiction, observed in 2006 that with the U.S. Federal government's abstinence-only educational policy, which excluded any discussion about birth control, teens were getting their sexual education, including information about birth control, from the mass media, and most of their sexually explicit education came from pornography (Pattee 31).

Despite the reluctance of schools and many parents to discuss sexual topics (Pattee 31; Paul, "Sex" 222), librarians and YA readers know that young adults are free to browse beyond the YA shelves in libraries or bookstores; therefore assumptions by adults that YA readers like,

or even are reading, the material selected for them, may be questionable,[8] yet the likelihood that a majority of young adults are reading the literature set out for them is high because in the volatile world of book marketing, the companies that sell the books make sure that the intended readership is buying those books (Nava, et al 89). Nodelman and Reimer point out that "what all the different kinds of texts described as children's [and YA] literature have in common is the gulf between their writers and their intended readers" (14). However, both young adults and authors of works directed at those intended YA readers assume certain things about the readership: age; tastes and interests; factual, cultural, and literary knowledge; vocabulary; and an ability to make meaning from a text, that is, an ability to understand that words on a page are not experiences themselves but depictions of possible experiences (Nodelman and Reimer 17). The depiction of possible experiences is YA literature's power and its danger: if authors present ideas that are revolutionary or contrary to accepted norms, the readers to whom the ideas are presented might start a revolution (Trites 143).

When practicing their craft, adult authors of YA texts assume, to a certain extent, that their readers will "get lost in" (Nodelman and Reimer 17) the texts they create; this potential disappears when authors do not share with their readers the same vocabulary, essential life experiences (e.g., of racism or sexism), or technology. Hence authors with no concept of texting-as-connection or multitasking as a way of life today will have difficulty creating stories to which their multitasking, media-savvy present-day YA readers can relate.

[8] Despite the truth of this statement, child psychologists, marketers, parents, and censors place great weight in the children's literature and YA designations. This is partly due to the fact that everyone, young adults included, look to these labels as a place to begin a search for reading material. This is particularly important for young adults who look for books online. Many will initiate searches for books with a YA designation, venturing elsewhere only when they cannot find material of interest at that starting point. Others will not venture further, being "sold" on the books designated for them for a variety of reasons that are beyond the scope of this dissertation (see., e.g, Nava, et al.).

On the other hand, writers who successfully connect with YA readership make a lasting impression. Carolyn Heilbrun, a feminist literary scholar and mystery author, states about Nancy Drew: "Everybody perks up at her name, though few remember the plots or many of the details…The pleasure comes from her autonomy, her taking events into her own hands" (qtd in Rehak 307). Readers of *Harriet the Spy* remember Harriet decades later for her spunk and self-reliance (Bernstein 26). Most adults who read as children remember noteworthy texts that influenced them.

This study considers YA novels as cultural texts. The portrayals in these texts depict social and cultural conventions of the day; SF and CF novels, while portraying futuristic landscapes, depict and comment upon those same social and cultural conventions. The novels under consideration in this dissertation also portray psychological beliefs current at the time they were composed, and they depict and comment upon sexuality and gender roles within the ambient U.S. society.

History of YA Literature. "For more than two hundred years….children's literature followed the evolution of its society. It absorbed and recorded the major changes in the American outlook…though more slowly; children's literature is usually conservative" (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 128). The linear progression of history also applies to the history of children's and YA literature. Because YA literature did not come into existence as a separate section of children's literature until the 1950s, its history inextricably converges with that of children's literature (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 130). The history of children's literature has been well documented by scholars such as Peter Hunt, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, Patricia Demers, Seth Lehrer, and Leonard Marcus, among others. A brief outline of that history

appears here, and the pertinent details are presented in the discussion of normativity in the following chapter.

The history of literature for children written in English begins in the late 15th and early 16th centuries with instructive texts in religion and manners. In the 17th and 18th centuries (when children were considered to be miniature adults), children's literature featured texts instructing on morals and right action. In the nineteenth century, the idea of childhood was romanticized, and during this period, adults believed that children should discover "timeless" works for themselves. Beginning in the 20th century, this task of discovery was no longer left to children because of changing moral and social codes, and librarians and teachers were the adults primarily charged with the responsibility of determining which texts children would read to provide them with a strong moral compass and good social and civic values (Marcus, *Minders* ix-x). The late 1940s saw a rapid expansion of the field of juvenile fiction (Marcus, *Minders* 180), and by the mid-1950s, YA literature was a discrete entity, a separate category under the umbrella designation of Children's Literature.

YA Literature within Ambient Media. Prior to the 1950s, stories for readers aged 10-20 were influenced by and reflective of overarching historical events. Between 1917 and 1945, the United States engaged in two world wars, which significantly impacted the content and focus of YA literature. Books were often serialized to make them available to a mass market. The Hardy Boys (1927) and Nancy Drew (1930) series originated during this period, the initial texts providing insight into then-current cultural expectations and normative values. Nancy Drew, self-sufficient, smart, and active, also exhibits the "feminine" traits of her day: she can sew, cook, and bandage a wound. While unfettered by the responsibilities of a job or college (and no longer in high school), Nancy has a boyfriend, knows how to drive an automobile (though she is

never shown driving a truck or operating heavy machinery), and appears independently wealthy—attributes presumably exemplifying goals to which teen girls (since Nancy exists perpetually as an 18-year-old, her readership was generally younger) might aspire.

In a striking example of the ways in which YA literature is used to inculcate ideas into its readership, Nancy Drew's femininity, which was progressive for the time, actually reflected the messages that women were being given by society during the war. The progressive, "We can do it" attitude of Nancy Drew introduced to young adult readers of the time the same messages that their mothers were being given by the government. Rosie the Riveter, the iconic cultural symbol of women working, created by the U.S. government during World War II, was designed as a propaganda campaign to convince women to take jobs doing work that was historically considered "men's work." This campaign not only provides a cultural explanation for the progressive femininity of the original 56 books of the Nancy Drew series,[9] it reinforces the idea of gender roles as culturally defined and inculcated concepts which can be changed and redefined by the culture and its people.

From 1945 to 1960, after World War II ended and men returned to their jobs, women were moved out of the workplace and back into the home. Print media for YA readers, such as *Young Miss* and *Boys' Life*, provided normative presentations of distinct activities, appearances, and expectations for girl and boy readers during this time. The conservative swing back to the pre-war era was not completely possible because the U.S. Army had introduced culture-changing

[9] The history of the Nancy Drew series further reinforces the theme of this dissertation, that YA literature reflects the values of the culture in which it is written. The wartime Nancy Drew series showed a main character who worked, was progressive for her time, had a female friend with a boy's name, and was not primarily romantically inclined. In 1973 Nancy Drew's cookbook was introduced as a way gendering the activities of Nancy Drew the detective (who does not cook in the actual books), and in 1979 when Simon & Schuster began publishing the series in paperback, a new, more feminine Nancy appeared. The character was paired up with The Hardy Boys by 1981; in 1986, the Nancy Drew Files series begins (Nancy is more modern and more romantically inclined); 1995 saw Nancy Drew go to college, and in 2004, the classic Nancy Drew Books series was replaced with the current Nancy Drew Girl Detective Series, the diminution "girl" in the series title amply reflecting the state of Nancy's current feminism.

policies, such as racial integration, which had ramifications for the country in peacetime. Thus, in the 1954 the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Jim Crow laws of the south were challenged, and in 1955 the court mandated a prompt integration of the schools (Woodward and McFeeley 222). At the same time, one example of the non-verbal messages communicated to YA readers through the periodicals of the 1950s can be found in YA magazines' quiet enforcement of the racism of the time by exclusively depicting white individuals on their covers and in their content (Larrick).

The first glimmerings of major cultural changes that impacted YA readership emerged in the 1960s: the Civil Rights movement of the early to mid-1960s and the beginnings of the Women's Rights movement with Betty Friedan and *Ms. Magazine* in the late 1960s. The effects of these two movements continue to impact U.S. culture and attitudes, and at the time they provided the groundwork for other cultural shifts.

In the 1970s, gay rights activists, using the women's rights movement as their template, asserted their cause. Within the women's rights movement, the so-called second wave feminists saw debates ensue between lesbian and straight feminists and between white and non-white feminists, both straight and lesbian. In 1980, the year that the DSM III—which depathologized homosexuality—was published, the AIDS epidemic became recognized as a major medical concern. By the mid-1990s the medical community recognized that AIDS was not simply "the gay disease," since the epidemic by then was spreading at a faster rate among heterosexuals than homosexuals. During this time, as more public figures "came out" as gay, homosexuality appeared almost mainstream.

The mid-1990s produced two policies that seemed to be a backlash: the 1993 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" directive to the armed forces stated that as long as gays and lesbians kept closeted,

they would not be discharged from the services, and the "Defense of Marriage Act" codified the notion that marriage was legal only between one man and one woman. Both of these decrees reinforced (often previously legislated) heterosexual norms. For YA readers, the predominant message was that heterosexuality was the only acceptable lifestyle; "society wants its queer children to conform or (and this is not a figure of speech) die" (Sedgwick, *Tendencies* 3).

At the same time, the transgender movement began to take hold, and with it arose questions about gender assumptions, gender role expectations, and issues about transgender individuals within the gay and lesbian communities. Concurrently, major changes occurred in technology in general, and in the publishing field in particular. The personal computer and printer became widely available and affordable for everyone, including young adults. Also widely available was the internet, and the convergence of the personal computer and the internet signaled the end of many print magazines, including several that were directed to YA readers. *Lone Scout* (a magazine for boy scouts, first published in 1915) was no longer published in the 1990s. *YM* (the offshoot of *Young Miss*) went out of business in 2004 after 72 years. *Teen* magazine (a lifestyle magazine for girls aged 10-15, first published in 1954) published its final edition in 2009. *Seventeen Magazine* (a fashion magazine for older teen girls which debuted in 1944) was maintained on the newsstands by its parent company, Hearst, and by its ability to change its format to include Seventeen.com. Technology[10] gave as well as it took: teens at the turn of the millennium lost their print magazines to the technological advances of the time, but they gained social media, which, in their ability to connect instantaneously and ubiquitously, provide teens with "real time" information on fashion and style, and, moreover without the adult supervision of print materials provided to previous generations by librarians and others.

[10] While the development of television, the advent of cable channels, and the continuing popularity movies had an enormous influence on young adults' notions of sex and gender roles and would be included in a longer project, this dissertation focuses only on the written materials that influenced YA readers.

YA Literature as "Big Business." As demonstrated above, the didactic nature of children's and YA literature holds that children should be "encouraged but not taught" (Nodelman and Reimer 33), and that "children's books [provide] messages passed down by generations—messages forged at the crossroads of commerce and culture" (Marcus, *Minders* xi). If any doubts exist about the "commerce" of children's and YA books, one need only consult the trade magazine *Publisher's Weekly* to see that the Harry Potter phenomenon was not an anomaly in children's publishing. Considering only the top five best-selling books in the categories of hardcover, soft cover, and e-book in 2012 (the last book in the Harry Potter series was published in 2007), each YA and children's book in each category sold well over 1.5 million copies, and none of the titles sold for less than US $5.00 (Roback). These numbers do not include the income generated by films based on these books, nor do they calculate the increased audience size (and therefore capital) generated by films and interactive new media.

As children's and YA literature moved from religious and moral instruction to profitable entertainment, the texts' original premise, to instruct and socialize readers, never dissipated. That original premise provides a foundational notion for this dissertation: that historically YA texts were created to instruct readers, and that they continue to be instructive, both directly (by what they say and show), and indirectly (by what they eliminate or do not depict). Thus, for example, while few non-white characters or queer protagonists can be found in YA literature, they nonetheless appear on occasion (Doll); the depiction of characters of many races interacting equally in a single YA text is much more difficult to find (Larrick). Queer characters central to a YA text whose problems do not derive directly from their queerness are nonexistent (Cuseo 169). This presents troubling messages to YA readers—about the dominant culture, about interactions between races, about queer characters' ability to "pass" (i.e., to conceal their

queerness), and about assumptions regarding readership in general and YA readership in particular. Literacy instructor Corrine Wickens restates this premise in her observation that children's and YA literature are "powerful socializing forces" (162). Wickens's essay discusses linguistic influences on YA readers' perceptions of queer characters, and Wickens concludes her essay with the recommendation that "studying these texts for the ways they enact and engage with ongoing discourses around sexuality and gender helps [to] effectively trace these cultural shifts and their impact on future generations" (162). This dissertation provides the study that Wickens suggests by tracing the impact of these cultural shifts in discourses on sex and gender roles.

In literature for YA readers, the stories and themes intended to instruct and delight (Demers xv) the audience provide a cultural artifact that mirrors the degree to which non-heteronormativity was acceptable at the time of publication. Inherent in its instructional premise is the socializing aspect of YA literature, which includes both topics and situations that YA texts encompass and those that they exclude. In addition, the dissemination and restriction of ideas presented to YA readers through literature written for them offers a powerful vehicle for activism, critical thought, and social change (Trites 143*ff*).

Representations of Sexuality, Gender, and Normative Sex/Gender Roles in the History of Psychology. The standard history of psychology with respect to homosexuality begins with Sigmund Freud at the turn of the 20th century. In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," Freud notes that while homosexuals "are described as having 'contrary sexual feelings', or better, as being 'inverts'…[t]he number of such people is very considerable" (1465). Freud then distinguishes between three types of inverts and enumerates the several "facts [which] go to show that in this legitimate sense of the word inverts cannot be regarded as degenerate"

(1468). He wrestles with the notion of bisexuality and with "[t]he theory of psychical hermaphroditism [which] presupposes that the sexual object of an invert is the opposite of that of a normal person. An inverted man, it holds, is like a woman in being subject to the charm that proceeds from masculine attributes both physical and mental: he feels he is a woman in search of a man" (1473). Freud concludes that he cannot determine the cause of introversion, but has discovered that

> [the e]xperience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together—a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. …People whose sexual objects belong to the normally inappropriate sex—that is, inverts—strike the observer as a collection of individuals who may be quite sound in other respects. (1474-5)

A modern reader can see in this statement presuppositions of what constitutes "normal" and the inherent disavowal of what consequently becomes defined as abnormal, although Freud uses these presuppositions without question. Likewise for readers of YA texts, presuppositions are posited without acknowledgement, and this project seeks to determine and elucidate the unspoken presuppositions and the messages posited on them.

Freud's consideration of homosexuality, inversion (which he changes in later editions to "homo-eroticism," with an attribution in 1920 to Ferenzi [1473]), is abstract and clinical. Similarly, in Freud's brief discussion of lesbians, with whom he states he had very little clinical contact, he observes, "[a]mong women, too, the sexual aims of inverts are various: there seems to be a special preference for contact with the mucous membrane of the mouth" (1474), a reference to kissing, couched in the clinical language of a century ago. Likewise, Freud's use of "normal" and "abnormal" are abstract and clinical; they do not carry with them the type of pathological judgment that later readers would associate with Freud's observations of "normal" and

"abnormal" that impacted diagnostic categories for the next sixty years. The case that the negative judgment commonly associated with the word "abnormal" was not present for Freud can be made from his subsequent statements in "Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality" about adults having sex with children, an action that he proscribes, with the phrase "severe aberrations of the sexual instinct" (1475). Here he uses a harsh tone not found in his discussion of inversion or homosexuals.

In fact, Freud states about homosexuality,

> [p]sycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character. By studying sexual excitations other than those that are manifestly displayed, it has found that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious. (1473, *n*1915)

In this statement, Freud seems to be saying that while the dominant, heteronormative culture calls homosexuality "abnormal," in fact, homosexual object-choice seems universal because all humans seem capable of this object-choice. Further, in Lecture XX of his "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis" (1915-17), Freud states:

> By means of careful investigations (only made possible, indeed, by disinterested self-discipline) we have come to know groups of individuals whose "sexual life" deviates in the most striking way from the usual picture of the average... We call such people homosexuals or inverts. They are men and women who are often, though not always, irreproachably fashioned in other respects, of high intellectual and ethical development, the victims only of this one fatal deviation. Through the mouth of their scientific spokesmen they represent themselves as a special variety of the human species—a "third sex" which has a right to stand on an equal rooting [*sic*] beside the other two. We shall perhaps have an opportunity of examining their claims critically. (3376)

In other words, for Freud, most homosexuals seem to be in all other respects "normal," and Freud did not take the "opportunity of examining their claims critically" during his career.

This resulted in the continued labelling of homosexuality as "abnormal," as an illness for which psychoanalysts and biologists would continue to search for a cure (Freud 1473 *n*1920).[11]

A review of the history of the declassification of homosexuality is instructive for two reasons. First, it is an indication of the changing attitudes about homosexuality during the time period designated by this dissertation. Second, it is an indication of the likely path that transgender status will following in future editions of the DSM (since a DSM diagnosis is required before an individual can undergo SRS—sexual reassignment surgery), and therefore, in the culture at large, since this history demonstrates that as the DSM changes, so do cultural attitudes.

The DSM-I listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance: sociopaths were individuals diagnosed as "ill primarily in terms of society and of conformity with the prevailing cultural milieu" (38). The DSM-II, published in 1968, was in most respects identical to its predecessor. According to the APA, the most significant change in the DSM-II was the elimination of the word "reaction," and with it the elimination of the conceptualization of mental disorders as merely reactions to external factors. This resulted in a clinical change in the treatment of mental disorders, including providing a rationale for the clinical use of drugs.

The DSM-II also represented an attempt by the APA to create more uniformity of classification with the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Historically, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, psychiatrists, sociologists, and behavioral psychologists were

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[11] The codification of mental illnesses in the United States was initially done by the U.S. Army during World War II, according to the American Psychiatric Association (APA). At the same time the World Health Organization (WHO) created its own classifications for mental illnesses, listed in the sixth edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-6). The resulting confusion prompted the APA's Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics to publish DSM-I in 1952. According to the APA,

> DSM-I contained a glossary of descriptions of the diagnostic categories and was the first official manual of mental disorders to focus on clinical utility. The use of the term "reaction" throughout DSM-I reflected the influence of Adolf Meyer's psychobiological view that mental disorders represented reactions of the personality to psychological, social, and biological factors. (APA "DSM: History")

mounting challenges to the concept of mental illness. Early gay rights agitators objected specifically to the APA's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder (Clegg 367), objections that were supported by a 1957 study conducted by psychologist Evelyn Hooker which documented (as Freud had observed decades earlier) that male homosexuals were no more or less well-adjusted than heterosexual males. Hooker argued that the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder was based on a false correlation between homosexuality and mental illness (Drescher 434) because the original data considered only homosexual males with other pre-existing mental conditions.

The 1974 reprinting of the DSM-II also signaled the commencement of work on the DSM-III, published in 1980. The DSM-III, which introduced the term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, featured specific diagnostic criteria, a multiaxial system of diagnosis, and a descriptive approach that attempted to be neutral with respect to theories of etiology (APA "DSM: History"). One significant change featured in the DSM-III was the declassification of homosexuality as a diagnosable mental disorder. Another was the addition of diagnoses pertaining to gender dysphoria in children, adolescents, and adults, along with the addition of transsexualism (Drescher 437).

Homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness after a referendum in which the entire APA membership voted to do so by a 58% majority (Drescher 434). The politics of this decision, documented by Jack Drescher, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and the substitutions for the diagnosis of "homosexuality" with a new diagnosis "Sexual Orientation Disturbance" (replaced by "Ego Dystonic Homosexuality" prior to publication), show the APA's difficulty in arriving at its decision. The publication of the DSM-III-R (R indicating "Revised") eliminated the Ego Dystonic Homosexuality classification. It also added "gender identity disorder of adolescence

and adulthood, nontranssexual type" (Drescher 434). The end result of the declassification of homosexuality was that the WHO followed the APA's example and removed "homosexuality" from its ICD-10 in 1992. In 1994, the APA published the DSM-IV, and according to the APA, the developers of the DSM-IV and the developers of the WHO's ICD-10 "worked closely to coordinate their efforts, resulting in increased congruence between the two systems and fewer meaningless differences in wording" (APA "DSM: History").

The DSM-IV also removed the diagnostic category "gender identity disorder of adolescence and adulthood, nontranssexual type" (Drescher 434), thus eliminating from diagnostic consideration the category of people whose gender identity distress would not result in sexual reassignment surgery. In its place, the umbrella diagnosis Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was introduced. This featured different criteria for children, adolescents, and adults. The most significant change of the DSM-IV, according to its Introduction, featured a greater emphasis on culture-specific aspects of diagnosis—including new considerations of "cultural variations," "culture-bound syndromes," and "cultural context" (xxiv). The Introduction to the DSM-IV also states that it relies more on evidence and field-testing than any previous version of the manual (xviii). All these changes reflected changes within the ambient culture, and the APA's difficulty in declassifying homosexuality—and its eventual decision to do so—was also a reflection of the ambivalence within the ambient culture at that time.

The publication of the DSM-IV-TR occurred in 2000. This edition included significant additions and clarifications to the PTSD diagnosis and additions to the existing GID diagnosis. Drescher, who was part of the Workgroup on Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders for the DSM-V, observes in an article written prior to the publication of the DSM-V the progression of current developments in diagnosis of gender identity along the same historical lines as the prior

developments in the diagnosis of homosexuality. Drescher further notes that "changing cultural attitudes about what exactly constitutes 'appropriate' expressions of gender are leading some clinicians to encourage parents in helping their children transition at earlier ages" (439).

The current iteration of the manual, DSM-V, released in 2013, contains significant changes. These include changes in the conceptualization and diagnosis of PTSD. Additionally, the DSM-V contains significant changes to GID, including creating a new class called Gender Dysphoria. According to the APA white paper on the changes in the new edition, this new diagnostic class "reflects a change in conceptualization of the disorder's defining features by emphasizing the phenomenon of 'gender incongruence' rather than cross-gender identification per se, as was the case in DSM-IV gender identity disorder" (APA, "History" 14). Interestingly, the wording has been changed to move away from a strictly binary conceptualization: "In the wording of the criteria, 'the other sex' is replaced by 'some alternative gender.' Gender instead of sex is used systematically because the concept 'sex' is inadequate when referring to individuals with a disorder of sex development" (APA, "History" 14). In addition, posttransition specifiers have been added, and the word "remission" has been eliminated due to its symptom reduction implications (APA, "History" 15).

Normativity and Mental Health. When homosexuality was considered a mental illness, homosexuals were threatened with loss of loved ones, death, rape (if lesbians), and ostracism, in life and in fiction. Once the depathologization of their sexual preference occurred, depictions of gay men and lesbians were slowly brought into mainstream texts. YA novels followed suit, and by 2012, five lesbian-themed novels were listed on *Kirkus Review*'s[12] 100 Best Teen Books of

[12] *Kirkus Review*, a respected publishing industry magazine, features reviews of fiction, nonfiction and children's and teen novels, has been in existence for 80 years. A print and digital publication, its distribution includes bookstore buyers, librarians, publishers, agents, film executives, and foreign publishers.

2012. According to Jill Guccini, who writes the book club page for *AfterEllen.com*,[13] the question currently being addressed in queer literary circles like the Lambda Literary Foundation (which promotes LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) writers) concerns whether non-LGBT writers can accurately depict the LGBT experience. Lambda apparently believes that they can, as several 2012 Lambda Literary Awards went to non-LGBT writers of LGBT content.

The question of whether non-LGBT writers can accurately depict LGBT experiences mirrors that of YA authorship: can non-YA writers accurately depict YA experiences, especially as technology and social conditions change rapidly? With these changes, the problems that teens face change equally rapidly. Guccini observes that those who write outside their identity attempt to comprehend the world through the eyes of another, to create empathy, one of the purposes of literature, although the violation felt by members of a subaltern group when "their" experiences are being presented by writers who are members of the dominant culture seems particularly significant: "[T]he level of hurt seems to increase when it's a writer of privilege (straight; white) writing about those with less of it (gays; anyone who isn't white)" (Guccini). This becomes a double-edged sword when the non-YA, non-LGBT writer writes for that audience: what subtle messages about normativity and "acceptable" gender roles and sexuality do these texts convey to YA readers of any sex/gender persuasion?

The majority of authors of YA literature are not young adults, most are heterosexual, and many are writing with the intention (express or implied) that their stories will instruct their readers, as discussed above. YA literature since 1960 reflects and depicts the influences of historical developments in the United States during the same time period with respect to

[13] AfterEllen.com is a website created for lesbians after the cancellation of the situation comedy, *Ellen*, one of the first prime-time nationally syndicated television shows to feature a principal character who comes out as a lesbian. The show ran for 109 episodes from 1994-1998 and starred Ellen DeGeneres. The website AfterEllen.com was founded in 2002, and its current readership makes it the largest and most comprehensive website dedicated to the representation of lesbian/bi women in popular culture.

changing gender roles. These developments include changes precipitated by the Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements, the acceptability of homosexuality, and the beginning of acceptance of transgender youth at younger and younger ages (Frosch, Padawer). A YA novel such as Sapphire's *Push* (1997) with its themes of incest, rape, teen pregnancy, obesity, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs[14]) would not have been written in 1960, nor would it have been considered appropriate for teens in the 1970s or 1980s, although the story features a 16-year-old protagonist and thereby qualifies as YA literature.

In addition to the historical nature of many of the problems and questions faced by teens, the question of acceptability and censorship—which topics are and are not considered to be appropriate for teen readers—is also historically determined. So, for example, Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) was ultimately placed on the ALA's list of banned books in part due to "bad language"—11-year-old Harriet imitates her father and uses the epithet "damned," stating "I'll be *damned* if I'll go to dancing school" (Fitzhugh 83, italics in original). The explicit language in Sapphire's *Push* (one of the reasons that novel was also placed on the ALA's list of banned books) and its striking themes are far more graphic than those of most YA novels written in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s. These two novels each represent a YA novel of its decade and offer an insight into the ongoing issues faced by teens and the willingness of adult writers of YA fiction to depict then-current themes.

Along with language and themes, the messages communicated to YA readers about conforming to social norms are worth noting. Three decades separate *Harriet the Spy* and *Push*, yet both novels stress the importance of writing as a tool each character uses to achieve overall development and maturity. Eleven-year-old Harriet and *Push*'s 16-year-old Precious, the main

[14] Now referred to as STIs—sexually transmitted infections.

character, exhibit approximately the same level of emotional development. Harriet is inquisitive, verbal, and precocious; Precious is street-wise, uneducated, and (as the mother of two) world-weary. Each text depicts its main character as a "problem" child—Harriet, because she tries to defend herself from her schoolmates' taunts due to what she has written about them in her private diary; Precious, because she has been pregnant twice, and school officials assume the pregnancies are the result of her choices. Both suffer from mental health issues. Harriet becomes withdrawn and depressed after the confiscation of her notebook; Precious, who suffers from severe PTSD, dissociates as she tells her story, giving the reader an experience of the cognitive interrupt that dissociation, a symptom of PTSD, induces.

Although the authors of *Harriet the Spy* and *Push* do not present gender as a primary issue, gender expectations and socially defined gender roles are evident, both when the characters are being punished and when they are being rewarded. I argue below that had Harriet been a boy, her behaviors would have been treated differently and had a boy-Harriet been keeping a notebook, it is likely that his fellow students either (a) would not have read it, or (b) would have reacted to it differently. Had Precious been a boy, that boy would likely have experienced incest as Precious does, but certainly without the resultant pregnancies. A boy's story would have led to different consequences, such as incarceration or death. In these texts, literary silences and unarticulated topics, like gender role and social expectations, are communicated as effectively as those that are written. All YA novels contain silent communications which, I argue in the following chapters, make statements as potent as those explicitly detailed and deliberately aimed at YA readers.

Coding, an authorial technique used in some YA texts, sends hidden content to queer readers. Coding assumes a mainstream dominant culture and a subaltern one that the mainstream

disapproves of in some way. Recognition of the coding, and deciphering it, requires an understanding of, and attention to, the subaltern experience. Writers insert coded messages into novels to attract and address non-mainstream readership while avoiding censorship for doing so. Sometimes a book's cover art features a coded message, as discussed in Chapter 3; at other times, one or more of the story's premises contain coding. For example, one of Nancy's fellow sleuths in the Nancy Drew series is a girl named George. This smart, athletic, and able "tomboy" character, who has a boyfriend and wears skirts, was nonetheless read by many lesbian YA readers as a depiction of their experiences and abilities (Rehak). Many lesbian YA readers interpreted *Harriet the Spy*'s androgynous preteen Harriet as a burgeoning lesbian (Bernstein n.p., Paul, "Harriet" 68). The coding may have been deliberate or inadvertent. In the case of Nancy Drew, the syndicate of authors vehemently denied any depictions of lesbianism; in the case of Harriet, author Louise Fitzhugh did not live long enough to answer the question. Nonetheless, it was seen in the illustrations and read in the stories by queer YA readers seeking verification of their experiences. In both cases, the Nancy Drew series, which originated in 1930 and continues in a less feminist mode today, and *Harriet the Spy*, written in 1964 and still in print, capitulated to the heteronormative mainstream while providing queer readers with an experience, albeit closeted, of their (usually closeted) reality.

Greater acceptance of queer adolescents results in fewer incidents of mental illness from the stress created by the non-conformity of queer adolescents' self-experience with stated cultural and social norms (Padawer). However, developments in the use of technology increasingly include teens' use of technology to bully and harass other teens.

While bullying per se goes beyond the purview of this study, many of the cultural considerations that contribute to bullying, which includes cyberbullying, have been discussed

here in terms of the gender binary, including the notion of the higher valuing of one term in a binary pair over the other; of the privileging of normativity and the punishment of deviation; and of the idea that a culture historically based upon capitalism and founded upon imperialism has at its roots the us-them binary that fuels bullying, including bully bystanders and bully-victims[15] (Underwood, et al. 12). The chapters that follow discuss representations of gender in selected YA novels, all of which show characters who experience bullying at some time within the story. While both heteronormative and queer characters experience bullying, the bullying of queer characters results directly from their gender and/or sexuality. The didactic message to YA readers is: conform, or else suffer rejection and violence because of your sexuality. The traumatic consequences of non-conformity include suicide and raise a particularly troubling set of concerns about the suicide rates of queer teens.

In Western dominant culture (the notion of "dominant" itself carries in it the idea of an us-them binary), males and females are assigned corresponding masculine and feminine roles, behaviors, and appearances which change as psychological and cultural norms change, and the stories written for YA readers reflect these normative expectations. Recent developments in technology have altered the speed and methods of stories' delivery, and readers' experiences today may be less controllable by adults charged with monitoring the concepts to which YA readers are being exposed. Although only YA novels are considered in this dissertation, a sociohistorical examination of the cultural models presented in YA novels written between 1960 and 2010 provides a way to determine the underlying messages imparted to YA readers in all media.

[15] Bully-victims is a term used by educators and researchers which refers to children who experience bullying and in turn bully others.

Chapter 2

The Outsiders and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*: Normativity in YA Literature

> If normality were normal, everybody could leave it alone. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself. But people… had doubts about normality. They weren't sure normality was up to the job. And so they felt inclined to give it a boost. –Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* 446

This chapter examines the nature of the normative aspects of YA novels with respect to appropriate behavior for girls and boys. With only slight variations, representative texts, whether from 1967 or 1997, convey the same messages about suitable conduct for girls and boys. The YA texts from both periods depict girls as ancillary to boys, and the 1967 depiction of girls' roles appears to have changed very little from the depictions presented by Louisa May Alcott a century earlier. Boys can acceptably enact and experience violence, but not sex. Queer sex, so far from being an option for either gender that it does not exist within the pages of YA texts until 1969, carries dire consequences for gay and lesbian YA characters when those characters do appear.

As reflections of ambient society, children's and YA literature serves a normative function which enables a reading of YA texts for descriptions and methods of reinforcement of the dominant culture's rules and expectations. The stated assumption has its roots in the well-documented history of children's literature (Hunt, Demers, Nodelman & Reimer, Bottigheimer). Specifically, from the Middle Ages through the rise of Puritanism, instructive stories were the principal means by which children were taught about religion, morality, life, death, and the afterlife. In the 17th century, John Locke was a steadfast proponent of William Caxton's concept of a child's mind as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate waiting to be filled (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 11), and books written for children at that time were intended to fill young minds with

appropriate instruction (Demers 1). In the 18th century, John Newbery's carefully constructed books and stories for children brought a new era to the publishing of children's literature. The instructive nature of children's literature remained, as Newbery's best-known work, The *History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes,* indicates.

Scholars consider the late nineteenth century the golden age of children's literature with Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1861) and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) as two of its iconic classics (Trites 30). In these two texts, one finds a shift away from instruction in religion and toward normative exemplification of acceptable girl and boy behavior (Trites 31). Alcott's girls come from humble beginnings, exemplify virtuousness, and grow into docile, submissive, and marriageable women;[16] Twain's boys also come from humble origins, get into trouble and cleverly get out of trouble, and (in a significant deviation from the theologically based moral instruction of earlier texts) blur distinctions between right and wrong (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 239). In these early texts, one can see the initiation of the marked differentiations between girl behavior (submissive, virtuous, pious) and boy behavior (adventuresome, mischievous—albeit heroic—and brave) (Hunt, *Understanding* 117). Thus, the history of children's and YA literature, a literature for the most part written for children and young adults by adults, traces a literary genre which has, since its inception, been used to model acceptable behavior for its readers (Demers, Nodelman and Reimer, Bottigheimer, Hunt). These behaviors indicate an absolute conflation of sex and gender along a male/female binary and make gendered assumptions about the ways young men and young women should appear, be educated, and function in society.

[16] This applies even to the feisty Jo March, a character depicted as attempting to challenge the gender roles of her time. However, despite her quick mind and love of learning, Jo does not go to college (instead she marries a professor), she does not continue in her ambition to make a living as a writer in New York, and in *Jo's Boys,* readers see that she succumbs to the role of mother (Mother Bhaer), wife, and helpmate—ultimately being "successful" in curbing her desires and ambitions that are inappropriate to her gender.

Since the late nineteenth century, publishing literature for children has been, and continues to be (with the notable exception of proselytizing publishing), an inherently commercial undertaking: a publisher must cover production expenses and achieve some profit. This remains true whether a publisher addresses young adults or any other readership. In turn, successful marketing of books depends upon satisfying the expectations of potential purchasers. Since dominant expectations normally parallel the ambient values of the dominant culture, one can conclude that the socio-cultural values projected in YA literature correlate with values in the dominant culture, if only to make a book's content acceptable to the largest number of potential buyers. Thus, the marketing decisions of publishers have the effect of embedding in the pages of YA literature normative messages for YA readers with respect to acceptable and unacceptable behavior by the depictions they allow, as well as the ones they disallow.

YA literature scholar Allan Cuseo charted an increase in the number of gay and lesbian characters in YA novels that follows slightly behind the historical events of the 1970s and 1980s, supporting Hunt's observation of YA literature's conservative documentation of its society's evolution (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 128). Cuseo also notes a trend beginning in the early 1990s toward marginalizing those same characters (Cuseo 215).[17] The frequency with which YA texts show boys to be the active perpetrators of violence, girls to be passive and the recipients of violence, and both boys and girls to be presumed heterosexual demonstrates that these conditions constitute social expectations that thus deliver normative messages in most YA literature. The

[17] While many make the case for the inherent normativity of all children's literature, some may read the argument presented here as implying that YA texts which include sexuality—homosexual or heterosexual—as not normative. In fact, I am arguing that the treatment of sex generally, and queer sex in particular, serves a normative function when included in YA texts. Depictions of sex in YA texts send a clear message to YA readers about sex and gender norms as well as the consequences of deviating from the norms of gender and sexuality defined by the cultural sex/gender binary. Butler observes that Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" establishes that "normative sexuality fortifies normative gender" (ix). I argue here that YA literature depicts normative sexuality, normative gender roles, and demonstrates the negative consequences of acting outside the sexuality and gender roles defined as "normal" by society—either by punishing those who act outside the cultural norm, or by rewarding those who stay within, or return to, heterosexuality and culturally accepted gender roles.

infrequency of depictions of sex and sexuality in YA texts is also normative, as is the rarity of gay and lesbian characters in mainstream YA texts.[18] Additionally, the extent and nature of fictive negative experiences caused by the sexuality of gay and lesbian characters in YA literature further confirms the implicit acceptability of the punishment and marginalization in YA literature of characters who do not conform to ambient social norms for gender and sexuality. The equally notable absence of the depiction of specifically transgender characters within the pages of YA texts prior to 2004 in and of itself constitutes a normative message to YA readers, while the social and familial rejection and death/disappearance of the few transgender characters depicted *after* 2004 reinforce a sense of the unacceptability of sexuality that deviates in any way from the traditional heteronorm.

An underlying message in YA literature about gender and sexuality for young adults strongly cautions them against expressing queer sexuality or moving beyond the customary male-female gender binary. YA readers are expected to constrain their sexual individuality within ambient cultural norms, and any challenge to the existing binary sex/gender system must eventually be abandoned. Although a small degree of challenge may be acceptable, norms of gender and sexuality must be respected, even in a country like the United States that adheres to the philosophy of rugged individualism.

Traditional gender roles have determined acceptable behavior in YA literature from its inception to the present time. Thus, while some forms of acceptable behavior have evolved, for example, YA texts increasingly depict girls as being athletic, courageous, and adventuresome, much of the behavior deemed acceptable in YA literature is determined in accordance with

[18] Studies show LGBT individuals comprise between 3.8-37% of the population, while the common estimate is usually that approximately 10% of the population is LGBT. According to YALSA, of the 5,000YA titles published in 2011, 55 were LGBT-themed, making about 10+% of the titles LGBT themed, a percentage that conforms to the estimated percentage of the population.

traditional gender roles. Therefore, in 1999, as it was in 1967, boys can acceptably enact violence in YA texts, and girls are expected to be manipulative and non-aggressive. Two works that represent the types of normative messages that underpin YA fiction are *The Outsiders* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

The Outsiders

The Outsiders (1967) is a coming-of-age novel narrated by 14-year-old "Greaser," Ponyboy Curtis. Author S.E. Hinton wrote the novel as a fifteen-year-old and received a publishing contract for the book and a high school diploma on the same day (Wilson 9, Daly i). The novel, immediately popular with YA readers, now has the distinction of being considered the best selling YA novel of all time (Peck). According to publisher Penguin Press, to date the title has sold more than 13 million copies, at an approximate rate of 500,000 per year.

Known as "The Voice of Youth" after its publication (Daly 3), *The Outsiders* documents the ambient culture of the 1960s and reflects, consciously or not, the gender roles and gender rules followed by the majority of young adults in the 1960s. For teens of that time, the question of identity as depicted by Hinton began with issues of survival, not with issues of sexual identity. The group to which teens belonged provided help in surviving and defined their identity. In *The Outsiders*, teens may belong to one of two gangs: the Socs (pronounced "sōshes," short for socials) or the Greasers (Daly 14). A boy's socioeconomic status, for the most part, determines his group, and girls attach themselves to boys based on the same socioeconomic determination. For these teens, survival on the most basic level means dealing with home, school, and street life problems in order to stay alive into adulthood.

Threats to life and limb for *The Outsiders*' teens come from different quarters depending on their socioeconomic position. The Socs fall prey to gang wars and suicide, while the Greasers

succumb to gang wars and the police. All the characters are attempting to stay alive, and in the course of the novel, two Greasers and one Soc fail to do so. On a socioeconomic level, well-to-do Socs attempt to survive their parents' expectations of acceptance to Harvard while the working class Greasers endeavor to survive daily struggles for food and shelter (Daly 16).

Hinton's characters are predominantly male because in Hinton's view, females in the 1950s and 1960s did not have the same opportunities as males. "The world of girls was too limited for what Hinton wanted to do" (Wilson 20). In Hinton's own words, "When I was young, girls never got to *do* anything" (Daly 1, emphasis in original). Thus, according to the author, and as reiterated by the critics, Hinton's "gritty realism" (Wilson 20, Daly i, Peck) reflected young adults' experience of the ambient culture of the time, rather than attempting to change the status quo.

The Outsiders received an impressive number of awards, including a listing as one of the ALA's Best Young Adult Books of 1975.[19] More importantly, critics widely acknowledge that this text changed YA literature (Daly, Peck, Wilson). A novel about young adults, for young adults, and written by a young adult "set a new standard for the YA genre" (Wilson 23), offering a text that was more realistic, darker, and more relevant to YA readers' actual experiences (Wilson 9) than the then-standard Mary-Jane-goes-to-the-prom[20] YA plot of the sort that moved Hinton to write *The Outsiders* (Daly i, Peck, Wilson 23-4). Readers were shocked, which was Hinton's intent: "I just wanted to write something that dealt with what I saw kids really doing" (Hinton, "Bonus Materials" n.p.).

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[19] Other awards for this title include the *New York Herald Tribune*'s Best Teenage Books List, 1967; the *Chicago Tribune* Book World Spring Book Festival Honor Book, 1967; Media and Methods Maxi Award, 1975; and the Massachusetts Children's Book Award, 1979.

[20] This references Maureen Daly's *Sixteenth Summer* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1942).

Hinton's attempt to portray authentically the difficult realities of life was radical for the time, especially in a novel by and about teens (Daly 17). The realism of the text made, and continues to make, the novel controversial. Hinton biographer Jay Daly notes that Hinton fueled the controversy by arguing in *The New York Times* that teenagers needed fiction that reflected their reality (Daly 17). Although appearing on the ALA's list of the Best Young Adult Books of 1975, *The Outsiders* routinely appears on the ALA's list of most frequently challenged books, ranking 38th in listings for 1990-1999 (ALA.org). *The Outsiders* continues to be challenged for depictions of gang violence and child abuse (termed "family dysfunction") and for depictions of underage smoking and drinking, as well as for the use of slang and "strong language" (ALA.org). Despite the controversy that has long surrounded this novel, however, many middle schools and high schools currently include it as part of the standard curriculum.

The Outsiders focuses on a group of socially and economically disadvantaged teenagers who are "outsiders" because their lives fall outside the norms set for them. They are not well-to-do, and their families do not resemble the father-mother-children model considered "normal" in the 1950s. For instance, the just-turned-14-year-old narrator, Ponyboy Curtis, lives with his two older brothers, Sodapop and Darry, as their parents died in an automobile accident eight months before the opening of the story. Darry, the eldest, has custody of his younger brothers and works to make ends meet. The main conflict centers on the gang war between the Greasers and the Socs. Social and economic status distinguishes the rival gangs, as do their prospects of graduating from high school and attending college. Unlike Socs, Greasers must work for a living, are not expected to graduate from high school, and routinely experience violence, both in the privacy of their homes and in the public spaces that they share with their economically privileged

peers. Ponyboy's steady progression toward high school graduation makes him an exception, rendering him an "outsider" even among his Greaser cohort.

Much of the action involves Ponyboy who, with other Greasers, experiences harassment by the Socs. The gang rivalry results in violence when a group of Socs attack Ponyboy and his friend Johnny one night after Ponyboy speaks with a Soc girl at a movie. Johnny kills a Soc who is attempting to drown Ponyboy, forcing them to flee. They hide out in an old church for a week before leaving it briefly only to find it in flames when they return. Some local children are trapped inside, and the Greasers save the children, but the roof collapses, critically injuring Johnny. The ensuing violence, including Johnny's death, the confrontation between the gangs, and the shooting death of another Greaser by the police, culminates in the question of whether Darry will be able to retain custody of his younger brothers. The subsequent hearing, Ponyboy's eventual coming to terms with Darry's strictness, and Johnny's deathbed request that Ponyboy "stay gold" (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 134) lead to the story's conclusion that both Greasers and Socs share a longing for love and a feeling of belonging, a desire to avoid shame, and a need for a meaningful identity.

Hinton's motivation in writing the story was to "let off steam" after "nice" kids attacked one of her greaser friends without provocation (Hinton, "Bonus Materials" n.p.).With reference to the core inquiry of this dissertation, it is notable that *The Outsiders* violates behavioral boundaries of swearing, drinking, and violence but leaves gender roles unchallenged. That is to say, Hinton challenges the idea that only lower class youth smoke, drink alcohol, or engage in violence—a challenge to which many adults in 1969 objected. Hinton does not, however challenge gender stereotypes in the same way: she does not, for example, show any girls fighting

in the rumble, smoking, or drinking alcohol—adult activities that were possibly for boys, but not for girls.

In *The Outsiders*, normative messages about appropriate behavior for boys and girls are clear and unwavering. Behaviors in which boys engage include fighting (2-6, 54-8, 171), violence from child abuse—e.g. Johnny being beaten with a two-by-four by his father (33-4, 122-3)—gang warring in the form of a "rumble" (4-6, 142-5), and murder (54-8). Older boys flirt while younger ones are embarrassed simply by being around girls (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 25-8). Sex, always heterosexual, falls outside the realm of possibility; that is, the "gritty realism" of this text does not include sexuality. Although boys might cry in private and with their closest friends (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 32-4, 50-1, 75, 97-8, 149), they resort to violence to cover tender feelings in public. Since girls in *The Outsiders* function as possessions that boys fight over, the text presents girls as objects for boys to own or trophies for boys to win. Other normative messages regarding girls' behavior in *The Outsiders* include being cute (25, 84, 127), smart and manipulative (14-5, 34-5, 38-41), flirtatious (25-8), and submissive (44-5, 128).

Hinton did not intend to teach moral lessons or change the sex/gender status quo with *The Outsiders*; hence, the sex/gender depictions function normatively. Hinton's stated agenda in 1967 was to portray the harsh realities of middle and lower class youth who did not have the social and economic status of the youth customarily portrayed in novels written for and about teens before 1967. When Hinton observed in 1967 that girls did not *do* anything, she was indicating that at the time girls had little agency. They could help boys to effect action, but did not themselves instigate action. This type of secondary role is embodied by Cherry Valance, the single foregrounded female character in *The Outsiders*.

Cherry appears at the beginning of the novel, precipitating the fight between Ponyboy and the Socs, and again toward the end as an intermediary between the Greasers and the Socs (128), taking no action to change the status quo. While boys fight for their territory and for their pride, girls in *The Outsiders* exhort the boys to be cognizant of, and, thereby to maintain, the class status quo (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 38-9, 46, 85, 128-30). Cherry's unchanged behavior effectively enforces the societally established codes of gender and class presented in *The Outsiders*, verbalizing her reluctance to break the unspoken rules that govern class or social boundaries when she tells Ponyboy, "[I]f I see you in the hall at school or someplace and don't say hi well, it's not personal or anything" (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 45). Similarly, Ponyboy's brother Sodapop's girlfriend rejects him because he is not a Soc (Hinton, *The Outsiders* 172), and, therefore, not someone she is willing or able to marry, presumably opting instead for a boy from a higher social class. Upper class girls negotiate the complex, unspoken rules that govern interactions within their own social class and never accept Greasers as friends or boyfriends. Neither does any girl take part in the rumble, engage in physical violence, or hold membership in the Greasers' or the Socs' gangs, and not one is a tomboy.

The normative gender messages in *The Outsiders* are clear: boys can be violent, they can drink and smoke, but girls cannot. Other novels of the 1950s and 1960s considered appropriate teen reading in 1967 and sanctioned by writing awards and best-seller status include books such as *Sixteenth Summer* (1942), *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Like *The Outsiders*, these YA novels depict the dominant culture's assumptions of heteronormativity, acceptable gender roles, and the gender binary. However, unlike *The Outsiders*, the protagonists in these older novels are uniformly well-educated, middle-to-upper

class, heterosexual teens.[21] With the exception of Holden Caulfield's swearing,[22] teen characters in these earlier novels do not use profanity, smoke, drink, or engage in sex. Characters who engage in unacceptable behavior, as those in *The Lord of the Flies*, experience unequivocal censure. None of these novels consider, much less depict, the idea of sexuality other than as a reference to a vague future (e.g., boys may have a girlfriend "some day"), and all texts are completely silent on the topic of homosexuality.

As discussed more completely in the next chapter, a novel like Sally Watson's *Jade* (1969), which merely hints at sex, but which depicts a teenage girl in traditionally male situations (Watson portrays Jade as an expert dueler who takes beatings without flinching and liberates captive slaves from slave ships) did not enjoy the long-enduring popularity of *The Outsiders*, despite being a well-written and well-researched story. Critics panned *Jade* as "unrealistic" in its foregrounding of a girl who is an expert with a sword and who willingly becomes a pirate, thus relegating this novel to eventual obscurity (Watson, "Introduction" n.p.). According to Watson, challenging gender roles in 1969 exceeded critical audiences' tolerance.

Further instances of publishers' and critics' rejection of depictions of non-traditional gender roles emerge from the publishing history of *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip* (1969), which offers the first frank depiction of a gay youth in YA literature. This novel had only one printing, despite its appearance on *The New York Times* Best of 1969 Book List and *School Library Journal*'s Best of 1969 Book List. Likewise, *Nearly Roadkill*, a CF novel that depicts gender fluid characters in a world perhaps too similar to readers' own, is no longer in print .

[21] All the characters are white, and continue to be, as the title of a recent (March 15, 2014) article by Walter Dean Myers in *The New York Times*, frames the problem: "Where are All the People of Color in Children's Books?"
[22] *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) was a controversial book when it was first published, but by 1967, it had become standard high school reading.

Although Hinton never had a conscious desire to be passive (Daly 1), she was aware of contemporary gender expectations and did not aim to challenge them. Although a self-described "tomboy" (Wilson 9), Hinton made all her principal characters, especially the narrators, male because she feared that a female point of view would invalidate her stories (Wilson 20). Her publisher confirmed her narrative gender choice (male narrator) by identifying her as S.E. Hinton rather than Susan Eloise Hinton (Daly 7), fearing public rejection of a female (and a girl) author of a gritty, violent novel such as *The Outsiders*. This would not have been an issue had Hinton been a male, and it may not have been an issue had the novel been written fifteen years later,[23] but Viking had a commercial fear "that the reviewers would assume a girl couldn't write a book like *The Outsiders*" (Hinton, "Bonus Materials" n.p.) and would question the novel's authenticity rather than giving it a fair reading and review[24] (Daly 7), which would in turn affect sales (Daly 17). That marketing decision,[25] along with Hinton's acknowledgement of then-current acceptable gender expectations, may well have contributed to the success of *The Outsiders*, while *Jade* was ultimately dismissed by critics and relegated to obscurity two years later.[26]

Hinton's tacit acknowledgement of readers' gender expectations undeniably popularized the novel, since her gritty realism did not challenge gender assumptions. Thus, by focusing on male characters—not portraying female characters experiencing or engaging in the same or similar acts of violence—Hinton was able to make the point that teens experienced violence,

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[23] Hinton noted in a 1982 interview that author E.L. Doctorow told her that when he used his initials, everyone assumed he was female (Daly 7 *n* 8).

[24] In fact, the reviews were quite, though not uniformly, favorable as the story's New Realism offended some and was considered "too melodramatic" by others (Daly 16). However, overall reviews ranged from sympathetic to "impressive" (Daly 16).

[25] Originally marketed as an adult trade novel, sales were slow at first. Eventually the book found its way to its intended audience, YA readers, and sales grew (Wilson 22, Daly 17), with 8 million copies in print in 2003 (Wilson 22); 13 million in 2009.

[26] This begs the question of whether Sally Watson's book would have received a more critically favorable review if she had been listed as S.J. Watson; presumably a male author would have been perceived as having more authority to write a pirate story, even one about the historical female pirate, Annie Bonnie.

whether through random acts like the accident that killed Ponyboy's parents and the fire that kills Johnny, or through deliberate acts like the attempted murder of Ponyboy by the Socs, the rumble, or the police shooting of their friend. Hinton and her publisher effectively chose between the shock of violent imagery and a challenge to gender roles, choosing the former and rejecting the latter.

All young male characters in *The Outsiders* experience shame and fear, powerful emotions Hinton depicts as related to one another. Gang members ignore even the fear of injury or death in order to escape shaming by or in front of the group. Shame also spurs anger, which erupts into violence as the Socs and Greasers confront each other over perceived wrongs. Young people in both groups choose to conform, within group norms, unless they feel a threat to their core identity. For instance, tension between individual identity and group conformity causes one Soc to decide against participating in the rumble, while one Greaser goads police into shooting and killing him rather than lose his cool and seemingly uncaring identity by expressing the pain he feels at Johnny's death.

The themes relevant to young adults' experience, including shame, belonging, and identity, coupled with portrayals of violence and death made *The Outsiders* a best seller, and created a template for an entirely new trend in YA literature (Wilson 9, 53) that flourished in the later decades of the 20th century.[27] *The Outsiders* challenged the legitimacy of the tradition that proscribed the portrayal of youthful experiences of violence and death in YA texts, arguing for inclusion of these experiences in the stories written about youth. However, *The Outsiders*'s reinforcement of contemporaneous gender stereotypes and its unwavering assumption about

[27] Hinton was the first recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award, presented by the Young Adult Services Division of the ALA and by *School Library Journal*. The lifetime achievement award, and Hinton as its first recipient, indicates the importance of Hinton's work to the field of YA literature (Wilson 52). For the purposes of this study, this award also provides confirmation that Hinton's books in general, and *The Outsiders* in particular, "influenced generations of readers" (Wilson 52).

heterosexual sex and sexual preference imparts these sex and gender stereotypes to generations of readers.

Issues of females as agents of action in YA literature have changed since 1967. Female agency has expanded, and women with careers and a degree of independence are more acceptable now than they were fifty years ago. Along with expanded definitions of acceptable girl behavior (acceptable boy behavior has not expanded at the same rate), depictions of heterosexuality as the norm, and clearly-delineated male and female gender roles have remained remarkably constant, especially as these depictions serve to reinforce the sex and gender binary. Changes in publishing during the past fifty years, which include the consolidation of many publishing companies into a few major publishers of physical books, coupled with the availability of e-books and self-publishing technology, including self-published books, and online webpages, e-zines, fan fiction, and blogs, have enabled wide-ranging independent dissemination of queer options for young adults. In mainstream publishing houses, however, those texts that receive the largest proportion of readership continue to reinforce heteronormativity, a conflation of sex and gender, and the gender binary. The underlying message conveyed to young adults continues to proscribe asserting oneself too far beyond the customary binary of male-female gender roles and to advocate heteronormativity. Individualism for YA readers is supported within broadly accepted cultural norms, as long as that individuality does not fundamentally challenge the traditional binary sex/gender system which is not explicitly articulated, but pervasively assumed.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Young adults in the real world who fall outside the norms of gender and sexuality often change aspects of heteronormative storylines to fit their experience (Halberstam, *Female*

Masculinity 19). From changing gendered pronouns in songs to fit their personal desires and experiences to identifying with a member of the opposite sex whose actions and desires align with theirs, queer youth create their own subtexts (Halberstam, *In a Queer Time* 167) by reading between the lines. These readers, defined in the cultural context of 1967 as mentally ill, would have had to struggle to maintain a sense of sanity. Though homosexuality was no longer considered a mental illness in 1997, queer youth in the 1990s were still marginalized, still considered very much outside the norm (Sedgwick, "How to" 69), and still reading between the lines to find stories to which they could relate (Warner xvi).

Queer YA readers found in Harry Potter a character with whom they could identify. The experience of queer youth as "other" in a heteronormative world and their sense of belonging when they finally encounter others like themselves parallel Harry's experience as a magical boy in a "muggle" world where his aunt and uncle mistreat him simply because of his difference. At Hogwarts School of Witchraft and Wizardry, however, Harry is among other magical youth and understands that he was born with magical ability that provides experiences of which he can be proud, rather than occasions for punishment. Queer youth can substitute "magical" with their own self-identifying adjective and find within Harry's experience their own experience of being outside the norm.

However, even with the possibility for queer readings of this series, young adults who are cisgendered[28] will not queer the text, and all young readers, queer or not, will read gender role norms being enforced. All YA readers will see that the girls shriek and the boys roar, the girls run from and the boys run toward trouble, the girls give help and the boys take risks, and nowhere is there a place for a reader or character who is girl-and-boy or neither-girl-nor-boy,

[28] Cisgender, which uses "cis-" a Latin-derived prefix meaning "on the same side as," and which is the opposite of "trans," signifying "across from," denotes those whose biological sex, culturally defined gender, and gender identification are all in alignment.

unless they read between the lines. YA readers who do not fall outside the norm will not read queerly (why should they?), and, for the most part, they will not think differently—queerly—unless examples of difference are presented to them as possibilities. Do young adults read (novels and films) literally? Yes they do. As an example, one need only to search the internet for "freestyle wall run" or "parkour" to see young adults imitating moves (without safety ropes) performed by actors using safety ropes in films like Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) or in online video games like Ubisoft's *Assassins Creed*.

Thus, despite, or in addition to, the possibility of queer readings of the best-selling Harry Potter series, the first volume of which was published thirty years after *The Outsiders*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, provides an adequate example of the norms of sexuality and gender roles, as well as uncritical acceptance of the conflation of sex and gender that continue to be reinforced in YA literature. While Hermione, the main female character in the Harry Potter series, is more central to the action than any girl in *The Outsiders*, her actions and appearance continue to be described in distinctly feminine terms, and there are neither witches nor wizards in the Harry Potter text who are ambiguously gendered or queer. The third book of the seven-book series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), is no exception. Each volume in the series exemplifies normative sex and gender roles found in YA literature after 1985, any one of which might be compared with *The Outsiders*. However, the third volume presents the protagonist, Harry Potter, at approximately the same age as Ponyboy Curtis, and, like Ponyboy, Harry is prepubescent and in need of parental guidance. Thirteen-year-old Harry does not have conscious sexual feelings for girls; he does, however, need to individuate and explore his independence as a teenager. Harry exhibits more self-awareness and more awareness of his status in his wizard community in the third book than he does in the first two books of the series,

displaying a self-awareness in this book similar to Ponyboy's. This greater self-awareness within society along with the absence of conscious sexuality on the part of both characters enables a comparison between the two texts of the normative behaviors of appropriate girl-behavior and boy-behavior depicted for YA readers in 1967 and 1999 before the question of sexuality is introduced. It also enables a better comparison of the two characters' behaviors, abilities, and maturity than it would if one character were eleven years old and the other eighteen.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban features Harry in his third year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Orphaned as a one-year-old when his witch mother and wizard father were murdered by the series villain, Voldemort, Harry has the distinction of being the sole survivor of a Voldemort attack. After the attack, leaders in the magical world send Harry to live with his muggle (non-magical) maternal aunt and her muggle husband.

Harry's uniqueness in the muggle world results from his being a wizard; his uniqueness in the wizarding world results from his unique survival. In this book, Harry has the additional distinction of being the only third-year student who lacks a permission slip to leave the school grounds. Thus, at times Harry finds himself essentially alone at Hogwarts. One of Harry's teachers uses those times to instruct Harry in creating a "patronus," a powerful, "adult-size" spell to protect himself from attacks by Dementors (soul-less Azkaban Prison guards) who are at Hogwarts looking for an escaped Azkaban prisoner. In the book's denouement, Harry again singles himself out by creating an adult-size patronus to protect himself and the escaped prisoner from a group of Dementors intent on killing them.

Notable similarities exist between the 1967 Ponyboy Curtis of *The Outsiders* and the 1999 Harry Potter. Both male protagonists are young teen males created by female authors. Both were orphaned suddenly: Ponyboy by a car accident (which is the Harry's guardians' cover story

for the deaths of Harry's parents), and Harry by the murder of his parents. Additionally, both Ponyboy's and Harry's most important relationships are with their peers.

Both Ponyboy and Harry exhibit a combination of masculine and feminine traits. Both are described as being sensitive and good listeners, traditionally feminine traits; however, as is stereotypical of male characters, both are equally willing to fight. Additionally, as is typical of boy protagonists, both Ponyboy and Harry court trouble, that is, both act rashly without weighing the consequences of their actions: After a late-night argument with his brother, Ponyboy flees his house, and a group of Socs attack him. This attack serves as the catalyst for Johnny's murder of a Soc, forcing the two to hide from the authorities. Harry runs from his uncle's house late at night, having illegally used magic outside of school and unknowingly places himself in danger as the Azkaban Prison escapee is purportedly intent upon killing him.

Harry breaks many school rules in addition to the prohibition on underage wizards and witches using extracurricular magic. He goes into town without permission where he uses his cloak of invisibility (also illegal) to enter rooms where he listens to conversations between adults not meant for students to hear. Moreover, Harry joins Hermione in breaking the rules of the space-time continuum, traveling back in time to save a magical creature and to help the escaped prisoner elude the Dementor pursuers.

Although Harry is the protagonist, his two friends, Hermione and Ron, assist him at critical points in his adventure, and, unlike the female characters in *The Outsiders*, author J.K. Rowling has created Hermione as more than a two-dimensional accessory for one of the boys. In fact, the text depicts Hermione as intelligent, sensible, clever, and essential to many of Harry's successes. However, she also stands for the status quo, reminding the boys of the rules, although she demonstrates her willingness to break those rules when necessary. Additionally, in her

resourcefulness, she breaks rules that Harry and Ron do not know can be broken, such as the rules of the space-time continuum, allowing her to repeat a segment of time in order to perform an alternate activity.

Hermione is one of many female characters with agency in this series, in which respect *Harry Potter* differs greatly from *The Outsiders.* Specifically in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, both boys and girls play on the school's four Quidditch[29] teams; girls and boys are presented with the same challenges and rewards in all subjects, including the hazardous Care of Magical Creatures and the Defense Against The Dark Arts classes, and boys and girls are represented equally in the four houses of the school, although they are segregated within the house dorms according to two sexes.

The social and historical context at the time of the publication of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* places the text in the center of the cyber revolution in the United States and much of Europe. Thirteen-year-olds in 1997 were born in 1984. For those in the United States and much of Europe in 1997, a world without television, telephones, or computers was unknown. They faced Y2K and the onset of the new millennium, and they did not know a world without HIV/AIDS.

The women's movement and the gay rights movement changed discussions of gender and sexuality in the three decades between the publication of *The Outsiders* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, with discussions of teen sex and sexuality moving from frank to explicit (Brennan and Durack). In addition, possibilities for girls and activities in which girls were

[29] Quidditch, a rough, semi-contact sport that resembles a combination of polo and soccer, involves one ball for scoring, and six goals which are airborne through which the scoring ball can be thrown to score goals worth ten points each. Seven players on each of two teams attempt to score goals while airborne on broomsticks and trying to avoid (a) other players on broomsticks who may be trying to unseat them, and (b) two additional balls that are in the field and have minds of their own, attacking random broomstick riders without notice with the intent of unseating them. The game, of indeterminable length, ends only after a team has scored fifty points and manages to catch the golden "snitch."

allowed to engage broadened materially in the same three decades. The Harry Potter series, however, reflects only this last change.

In terms of literary quality and distribution, the commercial success of the third volume of the Harry Potter series was instantaneous, unlike that of *The Outsiders*. But like the reception of *The Outsiders*, the critical reception of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* was positive for the most part, and it won the 1999 Whitbread Children's Book Award (among the United Kingdom's most prestigious literary awards[30]), despite one commentary written by Anthony Holden, a judge of the Whitbread award, which stated that other books in competition for the prize were better written than J.K. Rowling's. Overall, however, the book was a success, selling 68,000 copies in its first two days of publication, and 61 million copies as of January 2013.[31]

Girls function as the agents of literary action more often in 1997 than they did in 1967, yet the gender binary remains reinforced in many ways, including silent instruction about normative sex/gender roles for 61 million readers of the Harry Potter series. Theorist Meredith Cherland notes (reinforcing Turner's observation [33]), and, as discussed above, where there is a binary, there is a hierarchy (274). In the world created by Rowling, boys are wizards and girls are witches, and while they have similar and usually equal powers, girls do not become wizards; boys are never witches. This characterization along gender delineations reinforces the gender binary in a way that calling all magical people "wizards" would not. In addition, the binary subtlety implies a hierarchy in which wizards take precedence over witches. When referring to a combined group of witches and wizards, the group is referred to as "wizards" (Rowling 13, 14, 29, 83, 85, 118, 176). When Hogwarts's headmaster Albus Dumbledore talks about adults not

[30] *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* also won the 1999 Bram Stoker Award (for excellence in fantasy and horror writing), the 2000 Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel, and was a short list nominee for the 2000 Hugo Award for best science fiction.

[31] Scholastic.com provides these statistics, although the 61 million figure, and most other statistics from this title, refer to the series in its entirety, not any individual title in the series.

believing the word of Harry and Hermione specifically, he says, "the word of two thirteen year old wizards" (Rowling 286) will not convince anyone.[32] The text reinforces the fact that the wizard has a slightly higher status, and the extremely good and extremely bad magical people in this series are all wizards. Language also reinforces the slightly higher status of "wizard": in common usage, outside the Harry Potter text, "wizard" holds positive associations with wisdom, expertise, and maleness; traditionally "witch" has negative connotations (Bottigheimer 50) and associations with evil magical powers and with women who are ugly, disliked, and old. [33]

While *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* depicts some equality of males and females, notably in terms of intellectual and physical abilities in sports, magical powers, scholarship, and in both "good" and "bad" behaviors, the book also expresses a more insidious set of inequities. These appear in the language and cultural myths that Rowling uses to create the Harry Potter fantasy, such as in the linguistic distinction between witches and wizards noted above. Readers' perceptions of males as wizards and females as witches (rather than both males and females being, for example, wizards) reinforce the separate and unequal status of the two gender-based categories, which also functions in the implied difference between words like "poet" and "poetess."

This separate and unequal linguistic distinction is the precise reason that male and female thespians are increasingly referred to as "actor" rather than "actor" and "actress," respectively—it

[32] Perhaps Rowling invoked the traditional grammatical rule that mixed or unknown genders revert to the masculine. This traditional rule exemplifies another one of the ways in which language, the English language in particular (but also many Indo-European and Semitic languages, among others worldwide), reinforces the gender binary and the hierarchy associated with it.

[33] Historically a woman who was seen as a "witch" implied the notion of someone playing with the male fear of female sexuality (Pearson 37-8). Some argue that the fear of female sexuality led to the witch hunts in Europe and in Salem, Massachusetts in the United States. That witch hunt, according to feminist writers such as Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, and Merlin Stone, never really ended but rather mutated into myriad forms. These feminists assert that the witch as a symbol of female sexuality and power is thus as firmly entrenched as ever, but women are now creating the image to reflect their own interests and concerns (Pearson 37). This may not be the case for Rowling's books, but it provides a psycholinguistic explanation as to why the Harry Potter series does not feature male witches.

is a way of making the status of all thespians equal, not gender-based. The Harry Potter book provides one example of inequity caused by language in the statement, "Hermione was the cleverest witch in Harry's year" (9), as opposed to Hermione being the cleverest student overall. The statement begs the question of who is the cleverest wizard in Harry's year, and further implies that the wizard in question might also be understood to be the cleverest student (a gender-neutral term that encompasses the entire class), a recognition that the preceding quotation does not necessarily confer on Hermione.

As an indication of some progress that has been made in gender expectations between 1967 and 1999, in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, boys and girls act in ways that they do not in *The Outsiders*. For example, the only character, male or female, to punch someone in the third volume, and in the entire series, is Hermione (Rowling 216). Unlike the experiences and writings of S.E. Hinton, Rowling's Harry Potter series features female characters with agency. Specifically in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, in addition to providing Harry with the technical support he needs to defy the limits of space and time, Hermione helps Harry outwit a werewolf and the Dementors.

The hierarchy created and enforced by binaries extends beyond the gender binary and reflect those encountered by YA readers in their own lives since *The Prisoner of Azkaban* also includes binaries of class, (magical people versus muggles 12-14, 29), race and racial status among magical people (pureblood witches and wizards versus "mudbloods," magical people—like Hermione—one or both of whose parents are not magical), and economics (Harry is wealthy [44] while Ron, and all the Weasleys, are poor [12]). These binaries include the inherent hierarchy associated with each. However, with respect to the gender binary, and central to the theme of this dissertation, the hierarchy along gender lines is so commonplace as to be

unnoticeable, and therefore unremarkable to most YA readers whose lived expectation is that sometimes, and to a limited extent, girls can act like boys, but boys cannot act like girls in the same way.

In fact, as critics Ximena Gallardo C. and C. Jason Smith note, readers "of all ages and genders can identify with the Harry Potter stories, not *in spite of* the gender inequality but *because* they see in the stories a reflection of their own experiences of gender disparity" (192, emphasis in the original). The re-enforcement of gender norms occurs in various ways in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. For example, despite female characters' agency within the story, the male characters' actions move the plot forward. The hero (Harry), the villain (Voldemort), the protectors of the school, the school's headmaster, and the Minister for Magic are all male. Males also instigate all evil, as well as beneficial, events. None of the characters is ambiguously gendered, and none presents any serious challenge to existing gender roles or gender rules.

Further, the roles and depictions of secondary characters also typify traditional gender expectations. For example, Filch, the school's caretaker and resident enforcer of Hogwarts school rules, has been rendered impotent, despite his status as a pureblood (the child of a witch and a wizard), as he has no magical powers or abilities, but only power in the ability to bully and punish students. Thus, students scorn the spiteful Filch whose ubiquitous cat, Mrs. Norris, has the effect of feminizing Filch, who dotes and fusses over her. Rowling portrays Filch as the same sort of bully as Harry's Uncle Vernon Dursley (20), who wields power over Harry, and, like Filch, has very little power anywhere else. The best exemplification of Dursley's bullying lies in his often articulated threats to expel Harry from his home, although Harry continues to live with the Dursleys, returning to them at the end of each school term.

Rowling portrays both Filch and Dursley as bullies scorned by their author. In contrast, the portrayal of Ron's father Arthur Weasley as a kind-hearted and well-meaning man, demonstrates the opposite of a bully. However, Mr. Weasley also does not have much status in the wizard community; he delights in being a father to his eight children, he has a fascination with muggles, and he doesn't care much about making money (and, therefore, he does not care about being upwardly mobile or socially and economically advantaged), a combination of factors that makes him an object of scorn by some in the wizard community. Another male character, Hagrid, a giant portrayed as unaccustomed to caring for himself, dotingly devotes himself to "misfit" magical creatures. The object of affection and trust by Harry and his friends, Hagrid, like Filch, and, to some extent, Arthur Weasley, is portrayed as "soft," which is not generally considered a masculine trait. However, each of these male characters, despite potentially feminine characteristics, is proactive, while those with a wife (Dursley and Weasley) rarely take their wife into consideration when being proactive and acting in ways that affect their entire family.

Rowling depicts Dursley's and Weasley's wives as reactive, despite their demonstrated influence on their husbands. Petunia Dursley, Harry's maternal aunt, has had some say in the fact that her nephew has stayed in her home for twelve years, despite her husband's anti-wizard bigotry, although readers never see her doing anything but agreeing with and following her husband. Petunia remains throughout this volume, and the entire series, a satellite figure, whose husband unilaterally makes the family decisions.

Arthur Weasley's wife, Molly Weasley, also remains secondary and reactive to her husband, exemplifying domesticity (Rowling 53, 54). Arthur Weasley and his boys are continually getting into trouble; Molly keeps the boys in line (including her husband). Molly and

Arthur are always portrayed together (unless she is waiting for him to come home from his job at the Ministry for Magic). She expresses her obviously potent magical power when performing the ultimate stereotypical "girl" spell (Bottigheimer 40): teaching the young female witches, including Hermione and her own daughter Ginny, how to create a love potion (Rowling 56). The entire notion of a love potion reverts to the adjectives used for girls in *The Outsiders*, since the creation of a love potion implies girls acting cute, smart, flirtatious, and manipulative.

Rowling also depicts other female characters in traditionally female roles. For example, "the witch who push[es] the food trolley" (59) is in the position of taking care of children on the train to school. The school nurse is also female; at one point, Rowling describes her as "clucking" (70) with the implication of "like a mother hen." Rowling describes Professor McGonigall, the witch who heads Gryffindor House, Harry's living and learning community at Hogwarts, as a spinster (Rowling 69, 196). Although McGonigall is not the only unmarried professor at Hogwarts, she is the only one to whom that adjective is applied. Rowling also depicts McGonigall as being motherly at times, more a function of her gender than her authoritative and rigid character, which is predominantly authoritative and rigid. The text also depicts Professor Trelawney, the female teacher of "the inexact art" of Divination (Rowling 25), as vague, hysterical, and comical, an object of ridicule not to be taken seriously (Rowling 80-3).
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The Prisoner of Azkaban variously depicts the most active and constant female presence in the series, Hermione, as maternal (60) and "the mature one" (63). At the same time Hermione exemplifies standard acceptable gender characteristics in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, as she squeals (73, 110), giggles (56), screams (250, 253, 262), shrieks (291), is shrill (217), and is characterized on several occasions as a know-it-all (83, 85, 98, 101, 172, 175). None of these

characterizations apply to any of the series' male characters in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, who routinely yell (90, 104, 110, 197, 210, 221, 227, 250), bellow (104, 306), shout (104, 114, 123, 270, 315), roar (73, 87, 89, 93, 104, 221, 285), and snarl (115, 209, 256, 258, 260), verbs not associated with any female character.

Interestingly, the gang of Greasers in *The Outsiders* resembles the old "gang" at Hogwarts that consisted of Harry's deceased father and his father's three chums[34] who return to Hogwarts in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. The male groups in both *The Outsiders* and *The Prisoner of Azkaban* are headstrong, daring, and loyal,[35] and Harry's father's three chums (along with Harry and punctuated by Hermione consistently helping and coaching Harry for the denouement) move the story forward. Thus, while Hermione's actions in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* carry more import and agency throughout the text than do the actions of Cherry Valance in *The Outsiders*, the text nonetheless relegates Hermione to much the same secondary role as Cherry—the helper rather than the principal.

The books in the Harry Potter series become increasingly violent as Harry matures from pre-teenager to young adult.[36] Critics compare the "kiss" of the Dementors[37] to depression (Caruso and Treccasi), and Harry seems more susceptible to it (the "kiss" and depression) than anyone else at Hogwarts. Harry's initial childhood trauma, witnessing the murders of his parents, and a secondary trauma, the ongoing rejection he experiences living with the Dursleys, are events that would typically precipitate depression in a teen. As the series becomes increasingly violent, and as Harry's world falls further into chaos, witches and wizards participate equally in

[34] Synchronistically, Harry's father and his friends would have been approximately fourteen years old in 1967.
[35] The exception to this is in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*: Peter Pettigrew the student from the old "gang" who shapeshifts into a rat, a fitting shift because his loyalty has turned from his friends to "the Dark Lord," Voldemort.
[36] One can speculate that the violence in this series would have increased similarly if the main character were female because the violence in this series does not discriminate by sex.
[37] The Dementors are ghostly soul-less beings who guard Azkaban prison and maintain order by administering the "kiss" which slowly causes their prisoners to go insane, i.e., "demented," by sucking the soul out of them.

their battle against Voldemort and his coterie, with the final volume of the Harry Potter series, showing fighting, torture, and death visited upon witches and wizards equally. One might conjecture from this that Rowling's "feminist conscience" (Oprah.com) to which she refers when discussing her choice of gender for Harry Potter, continues to blossom and grow as the books are successful and as her characters mature into adulthood. Another possibility is that Rowling knows that in times of war everyone is called upon to contribute (as in the Rosie the Riveter World War II discussion above), but the progress that is made in wartime can be reneged when the war is over.

The issue of a male hero created by a female author presented as much of an issue for (female) author J.K. Rowling[38] in 1997 as it did for S.E. Hinton in 1967. Although U.K. authors customarily use initials rather than full names, one reporter states that Rowling was "persuaded to endure the indignity of hiding behind her initials to spare young male readers the embarrassment of enjoying a book by a woman" (Holden). Three decades after the publication of *The Outsiders* written by a female author about adolescent males, publishers continued to fear that overtly identifying female authors of stories about males would adversely affect sales. The same consideration has not seemed to pose a problem for male writers of the children's and YA fiction that feature female protagonists. From Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) to *13 Reasons Why* by Jeffrey Archer (2007), publishers have not required male authors to use gender-hiding initials when writing female characters or for female audiences.

Hinton's characters are boys because in 1967 girls did not "do" anything; Rowling, when asked in a 2001 interview why she made her protagonist a boy, answered, "I had been writing the first book for six months before I stopped and thought, 'Why's he a boy?' And the answer is, He's

[38] Rowling tells Oprah Winfrey in an October 1, 2010 interview that she did not have a middle name and decided to use her grandmother's name (Kathleen) for the requisite second initial (JKRowling.com).

a boy because that's the way he came. If I had stopped at that point and changed him to Harriet, it would have felt very contrived. My feminist conscience is saved by Hermione, who's the brightest character" (Oprah.com). As a reflection of the ambient culture, the Harry Potter series demonstrates prevailing cultural gender roles and gender expectations, from Rowling's seemingly unconscious choice to make her main agent male to her seemingly conscious decision to portray her version of feminism in the clever (yet ultimately maternal) Hermione. Rowling, who portrays Hermione as a more interesting, active, and three-dimensional character than Cherry Valance in *The Outsiders*, ultimately conveys to YA readers the same message in 1999 as Hinton did in 1967: boys are active; girls are their helpmates.

In addition to the recapitulation of the gender binary and the depiction and reinforcement of traditional gender roles in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, sexuality, when portrayed at all, is heteronormative. All couples depicted in the text are heterosexual (the (deceased) Potters, the Dursleys, the Weasleys), and Harry seems oblivious to sexuality, whether his own or others'. Additionally, Rowling describes Ron's sister, Ginny, as "very taken with Harry" (51), and Ron's older brother, Percy, as having a girlfriend (Rowling 56). Like *The Outsiders, The Prisoner of Azkaban* implies sexuality only in terms of male-female relations through the portrayal of heterosexual, married couples. In the case of adolescents, the text restricts male-female relationships to momentary flirting, dutiful companionship (Rowling 191, 312), and awkward behavior (Rowling 51, 215) while non-heterosexual relationships are nonexistent.[39]

The normative messages for YA readers about relationships in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* did not change significantly from the messages for YA readers of *The*

[39] After completing the seven-book series, J.K. Rowling confirmed in 2007 that the headmaster of Hogwarts, Dumbledore, is gay. This was not made implicit or explicit in the series, however, which reinforces the idea of the invisibility of queer characters in mainstream YA literature.

Outsiders. Both texts depict typical YA readers' desires to belong to a group, to have at least a few good and loyal friends, and to be a dependable friend in return. In addition, an explicit theme that frequently motivates characters in both novels involves avoiding shame and fear (Hinton 149, Rowling 68) at any cost.

The unarticulated message of both texts demonstrates the difficulty but worthiness of asserting one's individuality and upholding one's principles (within gendered limits). Both texts show that society will accept a certain degree of nonconformity for a poet like Ponyboy or a celebrity like Harry, but, by their absence, both texts demonstrate that deviations from heteronormativity and traditional gender roles remain unacceptable, no matter how otherwise remarkable the character.

In addition to the strict guidelines of conformity to which both *The Outsiders* and *The Prisoner of Azkaban* adhere, similarities of the male characters' agency and female characters' secondary roles also remain constant between the two texts. Neither text features any character who is queer (despite Rowling's post-publication revelation about Dumbledore's homosexuality), and Rowling does not depict any openly gay or lesbian students at Hogwarts, just as Hinton does not depict any gay Greasers (or Socs).

As a cultural artifact, *The Prisoner of Azkaban* demonstrates that thirty years after the publication of *The Outsiders*, YA texts depict females with greater agency. A significant number of female characters appear in the Harry Potter text, and they actually "do" many things. From the actions of Harry's aunt and his uncle's sister at the beginning of *The Prisoner of Azkaban* to female students who actively participate at Hogwarts and Hermione's clever machinations throughout, female characters are agents of action, unlike the female characters in *The Outsiders.* Additionally, while the teens in both texts share the need to belong to and feel part of a peers

group, expectations for both male and female characters in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* are less polarized than in *The Outsiders*. Both male and female characters display self-sufficiency, reliability, and loyalty in the Harry Potter text; whereas in *The Outsiders*, only male characters evidence those traits.

Although Harry is a male character, he has two best friends, one male, one female, and *The Prisoner of Azkaban* avoids sexuality with the result that YA readers are free to interject their own sexuality (or not). Rowling's avoidance of explicit sexuality presents censors with fewer reasons to contest the text.[40] Thus, while the Harry Potter series provides a heteronormative metamessage (in its several implied heterosexual couplings and one heterosexual wedding), and while Rowling fashioned the text to underscore the idea that no homoerotic activity exists between Harry and Ron, no heteroerotic activity exists between Harry and Hermione, and that girls develop crushes on boys, and boys on girls, a potential coding for queer readings distinguishes the Harry Potter books from *The Outsiders*.

Harry Potter fan fiction confirms that some readers find textual submessages which allow alternate readings of the Harry Potter series, and that others posit submessages from reading "between the lines." Fan fiction, or "slash," self-published reader response to texts, films, or television shows, has become widely popular on the internet.[41] Catherine Tosenberger notes that

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[40] Harry Potter series ranked first on the ALA's list of the most frequently challenged books for the decade 2000 to 2009; it had ranked 48th on the same list for the previous decade. The series was the most challenged text each year from 1999 to 2003, when it fell to second place behind the Alice series (written by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor and first published in 1997), which features explicit sexual content and language. Challenges to the Harry Potter series are due to its depictions of witchcraft and violence, not due to depictions of sexuality.

[41] Fan fiction, or "slash," started in the 1970s with the underground publication of *Star Trek* pornography, a subculture of *Star Trek* fandom. This subculture, comprised of several hundred women who were responsible for a radical rewriting of the *Star Trek* series, seems to have arisen spontaneously in several places in the U.S. during the early to mid-1970s. Fans saw a homoerotic connection between Spock and Kirk and made it explicit. They self-published their stories in "zines" and referred to their creations as "K/S" (Kirk-slash-Spock) or "slash" fiction (Penley 100-2, Tosenberger 330-1, BBC). With the proliferation of the internet, these publications, which at one time the authors typed and passed around chain-letter style, have become available online in both written and video form. Most recently Harry Potter slash has posited relationships between Harry and Ron, Harry and Snape, and

most slash fiction focuses on reading gay male subtexts in popular fiction, although "femmeslash" or "saffic" (a blend of "Sapphic" and "fiction") also exists (331). Initially, slash presented a primarily adult female response to story lines within the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative culture as it existed in the entertainment industry. Queer youth, equally adept at creating subcultures (Halberstam, *In a Queer Time* 160-1), soon followed with the apparent purpose of creating a comfortable queer space within the dominant culture. In particular, with respect to Harry Potter fan fiction, Rowling's revelation of Dumbledore's homosexuality came in response to this type of fan-generated fiction and one fan's direct question about Dumbledore in light of the fan fiction storylines.

Queer theorist Michael Warner notes that "[e]very person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom…truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence…and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body" (xiii). Youth who come to this self-realization today still confront stigmatization, as indicated by incidents of bullying and the proportion of queer teen suicides (documented in Chapter 5).

Changing gender pronouns in song lyrics and fiction, experimenting with gender alternatives in science fiction, cyber fiction, and slash, as well as connecting with subcultures of like-minded individuals exemplify ways in which queer youth seek a place for themselves within a dominant heteronormative culture. Today, as in 1997 and in 1967, YA readers continue to experience the need to be loved, to belong to a group, to avoid shame, and to have a meaningful identity. At the same time, normative messages about acceptable and unacceptable behavior in

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Dumbledore and his childhood friend-turned-enemy, Gellert Grindelwald. Rowling gave this last slash pairing a nod of approval when she confirmed after the series concluded that Dumbledore was gay (Tosenberger 331).

mainstream YA fiction, particularly with respect to gender rules and gender roles, remain relatively unchanged.

Chapter 3

Jade, Middlesex, Harriet the Spy, and *What Happened to Lani Garver*: Gender Ambiguity, Androgyny, and Gender Variants in YA Texts.

> It is popularly believed that a human being is either a man or a woman. Science, however, knows of cases in which the sexual characters are obscured, and in which it is consequently difficult to determine the sex. –Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" *Collected Works* 1470

The thesis of this chapter is that androgyny, while an attempt to go beyond the gender binary, ultimately reinforces that gender binary, as does hermaphroditism by emphasizing, rather than blurring, distinctions between female and male. Gender ambiguity goes beyond the gender binary, although normative aspects of dominant culture seek to quell this as much as possible. In YA literature to reinforce the gender binary the hermaphrodite and the androgynous character are compelled to move back into the structures of the gender binary, while the ambiguously gendered characters are forced either to conform to a self-representation more closely aligned with the binary norm (e.g., Harriet) or be killed (e.g., Lani). This chapter demonstrates the unacceptability of androgynous and ambiguously gendered characters as models for readers of YA literature. In this context, gender ambiguity signifies deviation from a strict, traditional male-female gender binary. Mainstream presses convey this message through their books' narrative treatment of androgynous or ambiguously gendered characters. These books, which routinely reinforce normativity with respect to the male-female gender binary, present a single, clear code of conduct for boys and a different, equally specific one for girls. YA characters deviating from their prescribed code of conduct experience ostracism and punishment; as do androgynous characters. The ultimate punishment for deviating from the gender binary is figurative or literal death. The message to genderqueer YA readers is: Conform or die.

Marketing, however, uses gender ambiguity in subtle ways to sell books as the discussion of cover art at the end of this chapter demonstrates. An ambiguously gendered image potentially appeals to the greatest number of buyers. While the texts within the covers tell stories that enforce gender norms, the subsequent discussion of cover art demonstrates that the images appear to be one step ahead, presenting possibilities for cisgendered readers and coding for queer readers.

The Gender Binary. As defined in Chapter 1, the gender binary refers to the traditional Western dualistic conceptualization of gender as either male or female, a dichotomy which classifies human beings as belonging to one of only two sexes and categorizes and labels their actions as either masculine or feminine. Feminist scholar Gayle Rubin noted in 1975 that the traditional gender binary assumes heterosexuality because the heteronormative point of view dictates that the acceptable sexual preference for a female is a person of the opposite sex, a male; with the obverse presumably true for males. In 1990, philosopher Judith Butler reiterated this concept, asserting that the gender binary implies heterosexuality, which in turn reinforces the gender binary (xxx). Butler went on to posit gender as performative, stating that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (34), a notion tacitly supported by the YA mainstream publishing industry's steadfast portrayals of the gender binary and its correspondingly gender-determined actions and preferences.

The notion of a clearly delineated gender binary informs the code of behavior presented as normal for girls and boys: the notable absence of any characters not clearly identified as either girl or boy implies the gender binary. Literature intended for boys and girls instructs them about acceptable behaviors through the examples of its clearly gender-defined, gender-identifiable

characters. That instruction continued until 2002, when Carol Plum-Ucci introduced the ambiguously gendered Lani in *What Happened to Lani Garver*. Two years later, Julie Anne Peter's *Luna* featured the first explicitly transgender character in a YA novel.

The first gay character to appear in a YA text (in 1969 in John Donovan's *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip*), is a boy whose lover is another boy. Neither of Donovan's characters is a feminized boy, a girl dressed as a boy, or a girl in a boy's body, which would put the gender binary into question for YA readers. In 1969, the depiction of an outright gay character was considered a move to undermine heterosexuality. Even though Donovan's novel depicts two boys in a homosexual relationship, it troubles neither the gender binary nor heteronormativity. Instead, Donovan's text reinforces the norms of gender and sexuality because David, the novel's narrator and the main character, suffers psychically and personally because of his homosexuality, thereby reinforcing the norms of gender and sexual preference. Because the text feminizes neither David nor his lover, it thus questions neither their gender nor their sex. All David's other actions and his appearance are appropriately masculine: he plays baseball, has fistfights, and wears short hair and appropriate boy-attire. His sexual preference is the only issue.

Despite advances beyond the gender binary in literature for adults, mainstream children's and YA literature remains dichotomized along the traditional male/female divide. From the initial identification of a baby at birth or *in utero* ("it's a girl!" or "it's a boy!"), to the assignment[42] of the color blue for boys and pink for girls, through the use of gendered pronouns and the specific gender expectations for behavior and appearance that accompany each, the binary has been, and continues to be, strictly enforced for readers of mainstream YA literature.

[42] The phenomenon of gender specific colors in children's clothing has been documented from the 1890s onward; however, prior to 1920, blue was designated as the color for girls, and pink for boys. This trend reversed in the 1920s, and the marketing of the 1940s solidified the current customary color designations (Paoletti).

In 1975, Sandra Bem, a psychologist at Stanford University, developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Bem's study opens with the observation that "masculinity and femininity have long been conceptualized as bipolar ends of a continuum…This sex-role dichotomy has served to obscure two very plausible hypotheses: first that many individuals might be 'androgynous'… [and second] that sex typed individuals might be limited in range of behaviors" (155). The goal of Bem's study was to examine psychological androgyny and to show that individuals heavily invested in their gender-dependent sex-role[43] are less likely to have a range of adaptable behaviors available to them when faced with difficult life stressors.

Bem developed the BSRI, also called "the Bem," to assess the extent to which an individual's self-assessment reflects social definitions of desirable female and male attributes. Bem's study cataloged definable characteristics that were socially accepted as masculine or as feminine in 1970s America.[44] These personality attributes, I argue, are those modeled and reinforced in YA literature as socially acceptable behaviors for females and males. Bem based the study, without question or comment, on the presupposition of only two clearly delineated genders. Bem further catalogued a list of attributes considered "Neutral," traits such as "Sincere" or "Conceited,"[45] considered acceptable or unacceptable for either gender (see Appendix 1).

Bem's source population for determining gender-appropriate characteristics makes the study an apposite adjunct to this discussion of YA literature: Bem used as the subjects of her study Stanford freshmen (that is, subjects within an age grouping that traditionally falls at the

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[43] Bem defines "psychological androgyny" as "a term that denotes the integration of femininity and masculinity within a single individual" (Bem, *BSRI Sampler* 4), and "sex-role" as "a conception of the traditionally sex-typed person as someone who is highly attuned to cultural definitions of sex-appropriate behavior and who uses such definitions as the ideal standard against which her or his own behavior is to be evaluated" (Bem, *BSRI Sampler* 5).

[44] While this scale may seem reductive and dated, it was retested in 2001 for accuracy and reverified at that time by R. M. Hoffman and L.D. Borders. Thus while the results seem dated by 2014 standards, the texts addressed in this dissertation are all published between 1965 and 2004, thus the scale was reverified and in use when all the texts discussed in this dissertation were originally published and first read.

[45] The terms that appear on Bem's lists are denoted here with an initial capital letter and quotation marks.

end of the age range assumed in this dissertation for YA readership). The Bem study, which is grounded in the traditional male-female binary and which consequently conflates sex and gender, asked subjects to self-identify as one of two sexes and then to complete a questionnaire rating personality traits, both positive and negative, of their own gender and those of the other gender. Respondents were also asked to rate as appropriate to both genders terms which then formed the Neutral category.

Among then-existing sex-role inventories, the BSRI was the only one to include separate Masculinity and Femininity scales. Significantly, the results of this part of the study showed male and female freshman to be in statistical agreement with regard to "positive" as well as "negative" traits for each gender. Some of these traits included, for males, "Self-reliant," "Defends Own Beliefs," and "Independent," and for females, "Yielding," "Compassionate," and "Childlike."[46]

Bem also introduced the "Neutral" category of traits that were desirable to both males and females in American society, and these traits comprised the Social Desirability Scale. Personality traits that respondents considered "Neutral" with respect to sex, that is, traits independently judged by both males and females to be no more desirable for one gender than the other, included "Adaptable," "Jealous," "Inefficient," and "Truthful." The close statistical agreement by both genders participating in the study demonstrates the uniform reinforcement of normative behavior for both genders among young adults and the complete understanding of which behaviors constitute acceptable codes of conduct for boys and girls by all young adults.

[46] This last female characteristic, which both YA texts and American culture reinforce, may be seen in the prevalence of anorexia in girls aged 13-18. These girls attempt to keep their "childlike" appearance through an unregulated concern for shape and weight, as observed by Sedwick (*Tendencies* 269) and clinically reinforced by Darcy, et al. Another example of the reinforcement of this characteristic appeared recently (2013) with the feminization of Merida, the leading character in the 2011 film *Brave*. Disney Enterprises gave Merida "princess status" which entailed removing her bow and arrow and adding makeup and a feminine waistline, sending a message about "feminine traits" to Merida's young audience.

Bem's study, from which she developed the BSRI scale currently in use, introduced the two sex-types, "Androgynous" and "Undifferentiated." The original BSRI scale calculated androgyny by taking the difference between "Masculine" and "Feminine" traits using a *t*-statistic.[47] A psychologically androgynous person displayed equal, or nearly equal, male and female traits. The final 1981 version of the BSRI lists Bem's four different sex-types: "Masculine," "Feminine," "Androgynous," and "Undifferentiated." In Bem test terms, "Masculine" and "Feminine" indicate individuals who are overwhelmingly identified with their sex-role. Individuals classified as "Androgynous" in the 1981 BSRI scored high in both "Masculine" and "Feminine" traits and appeared to be the most adaptable in a variety of situations, while the added classification of "Undifferentiated" indicated those with low scores in both "Masculine" and "Feminine" traits.

Bem removed several characteristics included in the 1974 test from the 1981 short form: "Gullible" and "Childlike"[48] from the "Feminine" traits (although she retained them on the online and long forms), an early indication of the changing nature of sex-role attributes in the 1970s and 1980s. With respect to the 1981 form, Bem notes that "Masculine" traits include "Assertive-Dominance" while the "Feminine" category contains "Nurturing-Interpersonal Warmth" as prevalent characteristics of each gender (Bem *Professional Manual* 19).

Although the BSRI has not been changed significantly since the early 1980s, one would expect some changes in sex-role attributes in conjunction with changes in social attitudes. A

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[47] Also known as a *t*-ratio, the *t*-statistic, or test statistic, refers to a ratio of the departure of an estimated parameter (in this case the Masculinity and Femininity scales), from its notional value and the standard deviation from the sampling distribution. Bem states, "the Androgyny score is defined as Student's *t* ratio for the difference between a person's masculine and feminine self-endorsement" (*Professional Manual* 158). The use of the ratio to create the index, rather than a simple subtraction of masculine from feminine scores, "allows us to ask whether a person's endorsement of masculine attributes differs significantly from his or her endorsement of feminine attributes and, if it does...to classify that person as significantly sex typed" (Bem, *Professional Manual* 158).

[48] These traits are included in Appendix 1 in brackets because the online and long form Bem tests still include these characteristics.

1998 study replicating Bem's methodology found that all the descriptors except "Masculine" and "Feminine" remained valid for assessing sex-roles, although "evidence was revealed that traditional masculine and feminine gender role perceptions may be weakening" (Holt & Ellis 924). A 2001 replication of the Bem study (Hoffman & Borders) notes that the BSRI reinforces and codifies gender binary assumptions, despite Bem's recognition in 1981 of "society's ubiquitous insistence on the functional importance of the gender dichotomy" (Anderson & Bem 74). Bem, in the field of psychology, observed the roots of the performative aspect of gender that Judith Butler would later articulate in the field of philosophy.

The BSRI is relevant to normative gender roles and gender expectations reinforced by YA literature. Boys and girls learn a set of uniformly enforced norms throughout childhood and young adulthood in the literature they read, as well as in the ambient cultural messages they receive from their families, churches, and schools. Bem's sex-role inventory reflects the binary gender system underlying those norms and the resultant values, as defined by college freshmen in 1974, 1998, and 2001. The population whose attitudes provided the raw data for the BSRI had grown up with age-appropriate literature that affirms gender roles based on the binary, and Bem's gender role analysis thus reflects those same values.

Traditional boy/male/masculine norms according to the BSRI (see Appendix 1) include "Assertive," "Competitive," and "Forceful," traits that imply (and assume) corresponding behaviors for boys. The list also implies that the opposite traits—non-assertive, non-competitive, non-forceful—are not-male, i.e., not acceptable boy behavior. Thus boys, in fulfilling stereotypical norms for boy behavior, must not behave in stereotypical girl-norm fashion, an expectation that extends to appearance. From baby boys dressed in blue, to boys not wearing dresses, long hair, frilly pink shirts, or bows (with the exception of a bow tie), boys' appearance

signals their gender, as much (if not more) than their behaviors. Evidence of this begins at the very moment of the ascertainment of a child's gender, either at birth or prenatally. As discussed above, "it's a boy" traditionally means blue, short hair, and assertiveness (Paoletti), and YA literature reinforces these norms.

Similarly, traditional girl/female/feminine norms specify acceptable girl behavior, appearance, and gender-role expectations. According to the BSRI, traditional girl traits include characteristics and corresponding behaviors, such as "Affectionate," "Compassionate," and "Soft-spoken" (see Appendix 1). Similarly, traditional girl appearance, while less rigid than traditional boy appearances, expect girls to exhibit indications of femaleness, i.e., not to look like boys. Thus, girls can wear pants, have short hair, and wear tailored (rather than frilly) clothes, but must disclose, either by appearance or behavior, that they are not boys, by being, for example, "Gentle," "Compassionate," and "Soft spoken." Gender-ambiguous characters in YA literature, and, often, their real-life counterparts, routinely experience stigmatization for defying the norms set out for them, as shown below.

Androgyny. Androgyny, a word derived from the Greek stem *andr-* (man) and *gyné* (woman), describes a person who unites physical characteristics of two sexes. Depicted in classical Greek form with male genitals and female breasts, an androgynous person fails to fit either the feminine or masculine gender role. Bem's concept of psychological androgyny "implies that it is possible for an individual to be…both feminine and masculine, [a]nd it further implies that an individual may even blend these complementary modalities in a single act" (4). While Bem's classification of "Androgynous" denotes a healthier, more adaptable personality type than either "Masculine," "Feminine," or "Undifferentiated," in YA literature, characters who

are not easily identified as "it's a boy" or "it's a girl" become targets for torment by their gender-typical peers.

Mythic androgynes in Plato's *Symposium* constitute a third sex "having a name corresponding to this double nature, which once had a real existence, but is now lost, and the word 'Androgynous' is only preserved as a term of reproach…" (Plato/Jowett 157). Plato's androgyne is a spherical being with "four arms and four legs, its one head had two faces looking in opposite directions, with four ears, two privy members, and all other features correspondingly doubled. The androgyne could walk upright, …backwards or forwards, … he [*sic*] could also roll over and over at a great pace…" (Plato/Jowett 157), and had great strength. Because of their great strength, androgynes attacked the gods, in consequence of which Zeus humiliated and punished them by bisecting them. After the division, the creatures were miserable in their separated state, and on the verge of dying. Then Zeus took pity on them and transmuted them into humans as we know them today: "the male generated in the female in order that by mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed and the race might continue; or if man came to man [or woman to woman], they might be satisfied, and rest, and go their ways to the business of life: so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted within us…" (Plato/Jowett 159). The Greek mythic history of humiliation and punishment for androgynous figures was to continue in modern YA texts.

In the early 20th century, Freud espoused positions about gender that reinforced and codified the gender binary. For most Victorians, behavior outside the traditional gender binary and its corresponding masculine and feminine roles represented an aberration, "a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul…" (Foucault 43). A clear example of the entrenchment of the gender binary and its corresponding positive value can be found in Freud's version of

Plato's account of the androgynes (called hermaphrodites[49] by Freud) in "Three Essays on Sexuality":

> The popular view of the sexual instinct is beautifully reflected in the poetic fable which tells how the original human beings were cut up into two halves—man and woman—and how these are always striving to unite again in love. It comes as a great surprise therefore to learn that there are men whose sexual object is a man and not a woman, and women whose sexual object is a woman and not a man. (1465)

Plato's version of the story does not specify the division of the androgynes into man and woman—if anything, the notion that "if man came to man" indicates that some of the androgynes' "other features correspondingly doubled" were truly doubled as male-male and female-female sexual organs, while still others' doubled sexual organs featured one set of male and another of female "that the race may continue." Indeed, as noted by Freud (1468), Greeks of antiquity considered love between men as the highest form of love. That would imply from the Platonic version of the myth that some androgynes were split into two males, others into two females, and still others into male-female, with "androgynes" referring to the entire race rather than individual instances of the creatures. Freud assumes that the split is only along the male-female binary, and thus it comes "as a surprise" to him that some humans seek their "other half" in someone of their own sex. Freud goes on to label as inverts "[p]eople of this kind [who] are described as having 'contrary sexual feelings'" (1465), despite his observation that "[t]he number of such people is very considerable" (1465). A queer reading of Plato's account takes exception to Freud's inversion of the story and the myriad heterosexual and gender binary assumptions on which it rests.

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[49] Freud, a medical doctor by training, preferred the word hermaphrodite (a word which combines the names of Hermes and Aphrodite), denoting a person who has the physical presence of both sets of sex organs, a condition usually altered surgically at birth to ensure that the child's biological sex is visually unambiguous (the chromosomal "true hermaphrodite" with a 46/XX and 46/XY karyotype is not so easily altered). The word androgynous, on the other hand, usually denotes a person with male and female appearance, behavior, or attitude, but not the chromosomal ambiguity.

A contemporary of Freud who took exception to his view of androgyny as an aberration was Virginia Woolf. Androgyny, for Woolf, signifies a fusion of both the masculine and the feminine parts of the mind that is necessary for noteworthy writing, like the writing of Shakespeare, Keats, and Coleridge (103). In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf states,

> If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly. (98)

While Woolf's characterization of the androgynous mind of the writer resembles more closely Jung's notions of the anima/animus than Freud's gender polarization, Woolf seems to intuit the conclusion Bem would draw decades later, that the androgynous mind is an adaptable mind. Woolf concludes, "[i]t is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. …And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death. It ceases to be fertilized" (104).

While Woolf purports to write about androgyny, Elaine Showalter sees in Woolf's man-womanliness/woman-manliness the mark of Bloomsbury elitism and bisexuality, not androgyny (Showalter 288). Showalter further notes that Woolf uses "Freudian analogy coupled with biological sexuality" (287) in her discussion of androgyny, especially in her statement: "Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated…the writer, I thought, once his experience is over, must lie back and let his mind celebrate its nuptials in darkness. He must not look or question what is being done" (Woolf 104). Showalter's assessment, while accurate with respect to Woolf's inability to clearly articulate androgyny in the Platonic meaning of the word, fails to recognize that the reference to "a marriage of opposites" here is more the statement of the gender binary than an elitist restatement of bisexuality.

Ultimately, androgyny, the "perfect blend of the masculine and the feminine and the creation of gender harmony… always returns us to…the balanced binary in which maleness and femaleness are in complete accord" (Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* 215). Showalter, writing a chapter entitled "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny" in her 1977 *A Literature of Their Own* (a title that mirrors Woolf's title *A Room of One's Own*), underscores the gender binary emphasized by the existence of androgyny. Showalter observes that despite Woolf's discussion of androgyny, *A Room of One's Own* emphasizes a differentiation between male and female writers. "The androgynous vision, in Woolf's terms, is a response to the dilemma of a *woman* writer…" (286, emphasis added).

Showalter takes Woolf's reference to the generic writer as "he" (Woolf 98) as evidence of Woolf's unconscious adoption of the notion of the androgynous mind as a male mind:[50] "In a book exquisitely in control of its pronouns, this is not a small thing. It suggests, I think, how unconsciously [Woolf] had …censor[ed] even this innocent metaphorical fantasy, and transferred it to the mind of a male voyeur" (Showalter 288). An alternate reading of the text, however, might place Woolf in the male part of her androgynous mind, to account for her use of the male pronoun, but Showalter makes an interesting (if disingenuous[51]) point. If Woolf had been conscious of the impact of gendered pronouns, she might have added "or she" after the

[50] Showalter conjectures that Woolf has "seen the punishment that society could inflict on women who made a nuisance of themselves" (289) by being outspoken—a lesson that Harriet of *Harriet the Spy* demonstrates in 1964.

[51] An eminent research professor familiar with the goings-on at the MLA in the 1980s has pointed out that this reveals a blind spot on Showalter's part. The initiation of the use of "he or she" or "s/he" in academic writing occurred in the 1980s at the behest of the MLA, of which Showalter was at that time a leading voice. Prior to that time, all students were indoctrinated in the use of "he" as the general universal pronoun. This indoctrination exemplifies the type of normative thought control that I am asserting YA literature perpetuates.

"he," or Woolf might have rewritten the sentence in order to revert to the use of "one" (as in her title) when referring to the writer.[52]

Showalter's observation about Woolf's slipping back into nineteenth-century gender delineations, even in the midst of a discussion of androgyny, demonstrates the learned nature of gender roles and the reinforcement of those roles in language. Indeed, Showalter's close reading of Woolf's text reveals that ideas of gender are so thoroughly inculcated that they dominate and direct the unconscious. Even a writer as "honest and perceptive" (Showalter 293) as Woolf had difficulty escaping social conditioning and the gender delineations of her time; it is similarly impossible to escape the gender binary when discussing androgyny, as Woolf evidences in her discussion of the androgynous mind as man-womanly or woman-manly—terms that themselves directly articulate the binary.

Freud and Woolf (and Showalter) agree that all humans exhibit aspects of the masculine and feminine. Freud sees the lack of a clearly delineated gender choice and heterosexual preference, i.e., the lack of dominance of masculine traits in men and feminine traits in women (including opposite-sex sexual attraction), as abnormal, as inversion. Whether somatically hermaphroditic or psychologically androgynous, individuals who are not clearly either male or female are considered outside of the norm. Woolf, in her feminist struggle as a writer, sees the fusion of feminine and masculine traits in the mind of the writer as necessary, if that writer is to be of the caliber of Shakespeare or Coleridge. Showalter sees Woolf's version of androgyny as

[52] The observation that nineteenth century schoolchildren were indoctrinated to use "he" as the appropriate pronoun for an unspecified referent, and thus Woolf was simply using the patriarchally initiated linguistic conventions of the time, provides another example of the ubiquitous nature of the gender binary and the many ways in which children are indoctrinated into the binary gender system. In addition, Woolf's subject is female writers. Had Woolf called her essay "A Room of His Own" or "A Room of Her Own," the use of a gendered pronoun when referring to the author would make sense; however, in the context of *A Room of One's Own*, especially as Woolf makes the point that a writer must have both a male and a female mind, the sentence would have been better if stated without the gendered pronoun: *the writer, I thought, once the writing experience is over, must lie back and let the mind celebrate its nuptials in darkness. The writer must not look or question what is being done…*

"inhuman…it represents an escape from the confrontation with femaleness or maleness" (289) and ultimately avoids feminist issues (294).

In the end, while some would view the depiction of androgyny as an attempt at moving forward, androgyny, like bisexuality, emphasizes rather than minimizes differences between two genders, and therefore reinforces rather than blurs the differences between two genders. The Freud-versus-Woolf analysis of androgyny contributes to the discussion at hand, because Freud, 26 years older than Woolf, was a household name whose ideas were mainstream in the 1920s and 1930s when Woolf was writing about and wrestling with ideas of sexuality and gender. Freud's characterizations of androgyny/hermaphroditism codified the social and sexual norm for Europe and the United States, while the Bloomsbury group's more nuanced perception of bisexuality did not. Woolf's struggles with gender and sexuality were informed by these opposite extremes. On one side, Freud represented socially acceptable ideas of gender and sexuality; on the other side, the Bloomsbury group represented liberal ideas of gender and sexuality, including Woolf's own formulation of androgyny and the Bloomsbury group's lived bisexuality (Showalter 270), which were, on the whole, rejected by the general public. Both formulations, however, remain entrenched in a binary gender schematic because both emphasize male and female rather than blur the distinctions.

Beginning in the 1960s, adherents of the sexual revolution that had begun with widespread use of birth control medications read Freud's writings critically, amending their overall thrust by modernizing them somewhat: "…homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged" (Foucault 101). In the practice of psychology, this began with the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness as previously discussed. Concurrently, in the popular media, artists such as Twiggy, Mick

Jagger, and David Bowie capitalized on their androgynous appearance in the 1960s and 1970s, as did artists like Richard Marx and Boy George in the 1980s, and k.d. lang in the 1990s, all of whom brought images of androgyny to the mainstream. While these cultural icons also serve as extraordinary examples of gender possibility, their self representations are as individuals of one gender portraying themselves in the guise of "the other gender." Thus, their portrayals, while a historically limited attempt to move forward from culturally defined gender roles and gender rules, nevertheless serve to re-emphasize and reinforce the gender binary.

The self-conscious self-placement outside the binary norm by these icons of androgyny underscores the binary as the norm and reinforces the gender binary, in the same way as, for example, Barbra Streisand's rendering of Yentl in the 1983 film of that name, or Tilda Swinton's depiction of Orlando in the eponymous 1993 film version of Virginia Woolf's novel suggest alternatives to the binary. Cultural theorist J. Jack Halberstam notes about the latter, "Swinton's cross-dressing androgyny has distinctly unqueer limits" (*Female Masculinity* 214) as filmmaker Sally Potter's rendition of pre-transition Orlando "refuses to capitalize on the queer sexuality" (*Female Masculinity* 214) which many of the scenes posit, instead staying safely within the heteronorm. These androgynous performances emphasize the gender binary because as one looks at a woman who is not-man, such as Streisand in *Yentl* or Swinton in *Orlando*, one immediately confronts the binary.

Androgyny in YA Literature: *Jade* and *Middlesex*. Two works of YA literature which exemplify the fact that androgyny reinforces the gender binary are Sally Watson's *Jade* (1969) and Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* (2002).

Jade

Jade, set in seventeenth-century Virginia, tells the story of 15-year-old Melanie's rebellion against becoming a "lady." She also rebels against behavioral prohibitions (a girl's using a dagger and wearing pants), slavery, and women's inequality. Melanie's father sends her to her slave-trading uncle in Jamaica to be "broken" of her high spiritedness and propensity for swordsmanship by her slave-trading uncle, but when Jamaica experiences an outbreak of smallpox, Melanie is sent back to Virginia. Just as the ship's captain is about to whip her for attempting to free the ship's cargo of slaves, pirates attack the slave ship and capture her. Led by the infamous (historical) pirate, Anne Bonney and her androgynous first mate, Mark, (later revealed to be Mary, also a historically based character), the pirates discover their prisoner's skill with a rapier and invite her to join them. Melanie does so, renaming herself Jade Loupin and cutting her hair short to effect a total transformation. Captured by Jamaican authorities, Jade and the rest of the crew are sentenced to be hanged, but Jade's sex brings her a reprieve, and Mary's and Anne Bonney's pregnancies forestall their fates. Eventually, Jade's original fencing mentor secures her freedom and aids her as she becomes a pirate freedom fighter against slave trading.

This fast-paced and well-written story has all the characteristics of an excellent pirate adventure. Despite the wolf reference in her chosen name, Loupin, her captors refer to her as a fox or vixen (155, 240) as well as describing her as a "she-wolf" (239). When her acts are deemed "unfeminine," Melanie/Jade most often experiences beatings, or threats of beatings, the first of which occurs while she is still Melanie, when her father discovers her wearing boy's pants and using a sword. The ensuing dialogue reveals that her father has punished her in this manner before. This particular beating follows Melanie's rejection of the advances of several suitors,

whom she humiliates by refusing to act less intelligent than they and by showing her disinterest in their self-aggrandizement.

In this text, the words "ladylike" and "feminine" text function negatively, like the words "shame" (234) and "weakness" (246). They are intended to control and insult those against whom the speaker uses them, principally Jade and Annie. In this novel, whining and quibbling are considered signs of cowardice. For example, when Jade first discovers that her father has arranged to send her to her uncle in Jamaica, she expresses her unhappiness to her fencing mentor that her training will case. He responds that God does not admire quibblers and whiners and tells her to expect more of herself than anyone else does. "Otherwise you become merely a tiresome rebellious young girl who wants that the whole world should change to suit her whim. The world is full of such as these...They are against everything, *for* nothing" (33, emphasis in original).

The three female pirates, each is a superb swordsman, neither quibble nor whine when wounded. Each receives wounds in various battles, and, in fact, Mark/Mary receives a near-fatal slash near the throat artery, but manages to defeat of the adversary, a slave trader named Barton. The long and arduous battle ends in skilled swordplay: "A whistling downward sweep [of the saber], a circle unpausing, a swift horizontal arc—and Barton fell where he stood, like a tree" (176).

Jade, well researched and compellingly written, was panned by (male) critics and printed only once. The cultural climate of 1969 demanded a more feminine example of girlhood in its YA literature, as Sally Watson, clearly describes in the Author's Comments in the 2002 Image Cascade reprint:

> [E]very male who reviewed *Jade* back in the '60's simply *hated* it. Females were not *supposed* to behave like that, much less with the tacit approval of the author,

> who was clearly no better than she should be, and in danger of Corrupting the Young. What was more, two of them, despite the careful historical notes, simply refused to believe that Anne Bonney and Mary Read really existed. (n.p., emphasis in original)

Readers, on the other hand, wrote to Watson, requesting copies of *Jade* long after it went out of print: "Everyone asked for *Jade*! Gratifying but frustrating [to reply]…'Sorry but …I have only a single battered [copy] left myself'" (Author's Comments n.p.). Thus, while readers were begging for copies, publishers determined that the substance of the story was unsuitable for (girl) readers and took an action that was worse than placing the book on a banned list: they removed the book from circulation, demonstrating in the clearest terms possible that successful androgynous characters and characters whose actions are ambiguously gendered, and who are not forced back into clearly identifiable, socially accepted gender roles, are unacceptable models for YA readers. In the case of *Jade*, the story ends with Jade returning to the high seas and continuing to undermine gender norms, despite the (disappointing) reformation of Anne Bonney to a clearly gender-defined role as non-piratical mother and wife at the end of the story, a historically accurate account of the real Anne Bonney's life.

Middlesex

In contrast to the fate of Sally Watson's 1969 *Jade*, Jeffrey Eugenides's 2002 novel *Middlesex*, which deals with an equally edgy subject, hermaphroditism, won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. A bestseller with more than three million copies sold by 2012, it also received Spain's Santiago de Compostela Literary Prize, the Ambassador Book Award, and the Great Lakes Book Award.

Middlesex tells the story of Calliope Stephanides and her family. Narrating in the first person, Calliope begins with Desdemona and Eleutherios "Lefty" Stephanides, her grandparents who were also brother and sister. They married on the ship when they immigrated from

Bithynios, Greece to settle in Detroit, Michigan. Desdemona predicts that her son's second child (Calliope) would be a boy. Of the twenty four prenatal predictions that Desdemona made, this is the only one that was, apparently, incorrect. This story centers on Calliope's discovery, at the age of fifteen, of her hermaphroditism.

The hero(ine) of *Middlesex* suffers as a boy who has been mistakenly identified as a girl from birth, raised as a girl, and comes to realize that he is male: "To the extent that fetal hormones affect brain chemistry and histology, I've got a male brain. But I was raised as a girl" (19). The crisis that precipitates the discovery of her genetic make up comes as Calliope is taken to the hospital having been struck by a tractor. Dr. Luce, the New York gender-identity specialist consulted by Calliope's parents, determines that she should have hormone injections and surgery. "It was not a difficult decision [for my parents], especially as Luce had framed it. A single surgery and some injections…" (Eugenides 429). At issue is the fact that Calliope, raised as a girl, actually has the XY chromosomal status of a boy. She lies to the doctor about her sexual preferences and attractions to girls because they are not considered normal for a girl:

> I had miscalculated with Luce. I thought that after talking to me he would decide that I was normal and leave me alone. But I was beginning to understand something about normality. Normality wasn't normal. It couldn't be. If normality were normal, everybody could leave it alone. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself. But people—and especially doctors—had doubts about normality. They weren't sure normality was up to the job. And so they felt inclined to give it a boost. (Eugenides 446)

When Calliope finds her file, left open on Luce's desk, and reads it, she decides to run rather than undergo the feminizing surgery he recommends because the report states, "To leave the genitals as they are would expose her to all manner of humiliation. Though it is possible that the surgery may result in partial or total loss of erotosexual sensation, sexual pleasure is only one factor in a happy life" (Eugenides 437). Later, Calliope reflects, "It wasn't all Dr. Luce's fault. I

had lied to him about many things. His decision was based on false data. But he had been false in turn" (Eugenides 438).

The doctor's falseness begins when he tells Calliope's parents that she is "a girl who has a little too much male hormone" (Eugenides 420), minimizing the extent and magnitude of the surgeries and hormone treatments necessary for Calliope to undergo successful feminization because, in fact, he is proposing SRS (sexual reassignment surgery). The doctor neglects to mention that Calliope is biologically a male, stating instead that she is "a girl whose clitoris [is] merely larger than those of other girls" (Eugenides 433).

Middlesex pairs physical hermaphroditism with emotional and psychological androgyny, and the story is set in a time when prohibitions against homosexuality are still in full force, though changes are imminent: "Why should I have thought I was anything other than a girl? Because I was *attracted* to a girl? That happened all the time. It was happening more than ever in 1974. It was becoming a national pastime" (Eugenides 388). Despite this observation on Calliope's part, she and a girl from her high school, identified only as the Obscure Object[53] hide their feelings and their love affair. When Calliope courts the Obscure Object, she seems attractive to the Object, like a boy, and understanding, like a girl: "The Object laughed. She was smiling at me, marveling. 'You understand everything I say,' she said. She shook her head. 'Why can't you be a guy?'" (Eugenides 389). Later, when Calliope returns to Detroit as Cal, almost a year after running away, her-now-his brother picks him up at the airport. On the ride home, before their father's funeral, Cal requests that his brother drive through their old neighborhood in downtown Detroit. As they stop at a traffic light, a black man catches Cal's attention:

[53] "Obscure Object" refers to the 1977 Luis Buñuel film titled *The Obscure Object of Desire*. This film is narrated by a man whose obsession with a girl consumes him so greatly that he fails to notice how different two different the sides of her personality are. The girl's two different personalities are so different that they are represented by two different actors. Eugenides is alluding to Calliope's dual nature, despite calling the other girl the Obscure Object.

> Not part of my suburban world, this figure; therefore exotic…When I was little, street-corner dudes like that would sometimes lower their shades to wink, keen on getting a rise out of the white girl in the backseat passing by. But now the dude gave me a different look altogether…the tilt of his head communicated defiance and even hate. That was when I realized a shocking thing. I couldn't become a man without becoming The Man. (Eugenides 518)

Despite this realization of the larger social consequences of gender change, Cal's transition to living as a male presents fewer difficulties than he imagined. Cal notes that his father, who died before seeing him as a male, might have had difficulty adjusting because he very much wanted a daughter before Calliope's birth. Upon his return, Cal, hermaphroditic in his body and androgynous in his attitude, sensibilities, and behavior, remains his mother's daughter, despite the fact that he lives as a male:

> [When I] started living as a male, my family found that, contrary to popular opinion, gender was not all that important. My change from girl to boy was far less dramatic than the distance anybody travels from infancy to adulthood. In most ways I remained the person I'd always been. Even now, though I live as a man, I remain in essential ways [my mother's] daughter…Like any good daughter I'll be the one to nurse her in her old age. We still discuss what's wrong with men; we still, on visits back home, have our hair done together… (Eugenides 520-1)

Unlike *Jade*, this story ends with the cultural norms of binary heterosexuality reinstated after having been out of balance. The hermaphroditic boy, chromosomally male, but raised as a female, becomes the man he should have been. At the end of his story, Cal reminisces about his life while guarding his house on (appropriately named) Middlesex Drive, upholding an old Greek custom, blocking the door so that the dead person's spirit does not reenter the house:

> It was always a man who did this, and now I was qualified. In my black suit, with my dirty Wallabees, I stood in the doorway … [of] a place designed for a new type of human being…I couldn't help feeling, of course, that that person was me, me and all others like me…The wind swept over the crusted snow into my Byzantine face, which was the face of my grandfather and of the American girl I had once been. I stood in the door, … weeping for my father and thinking about what was next. (Eugenides 529)

In Cal's descriptions of himself as male or female, he always includes a detail of each of two genders, once again reinforcing the binary. For example, in the quotation above, he wears a

man's suit with schoolgirl Wallabees. He has a face that belongs both to his grandfather and to the girl he once was. Yet Cal is able to transition easily between the female world in which he grew up and the male world that he will inhabit as an adult, because he is becoming "normal"—a heterosexual male. When Cal is Calliope, he walks like a girl, hips swaying and "back end twitching" (Eugenides 441). In one day, Cal learns to walk like a boy: "To walk like a boy you let your shoulders sway, not your hips. And you [keep] your feet further apart" (Eugenides 441). And, similar to Jade in Sally Watson's novel, Cal's haircut finally exorcises Calliope:

> [The barber] turned me to face the mirror. And there she was, for the last time, in the silvered glass: Calliope. She still wasn't gone yet. She was like a captive spirit, peeking out…What was I doing? What if Dr. Luce was right? What if that girl in the mirror really *was* me? How did I think I could defect to the other side so easily? What did I know about boys, about men? I didn't even like them that much. (Eugenides 442)

The observations that Eugenides makes about the sameness and the difference between males and females serve to underscore and reinforce the binary even as he tacitly demonstrates the performative nature of gender. The Pulitzer Prize-winning ending for the story depicts the reinstatement of the status quo after three generations of inbreeding and secret-keeping. Cal belatedly receives his birthright as a male, and, the text implies, his residual problems as an adult (needing to tell his potential girlfriends "what" he is) result from his lingering female qualities and his remaining hermaphroditism. In other words, the degree to which Cal does not fit the norm equals the degree to which he will continue to experience problems as an adult.

With respect to the Bem study, Cal retains characteristics which classify him as psychologically "Androgynous," and, therefore psychologically healthy: "Adaptable," "Conscientious," "Helpful," "Moody," "Reliable," "Secretive," "Sincere." Jade, on the other hand, exhibits many more "Masculine" traits than either "Feminine" or "Androgynous" traits, an

indication that she does not have the same degree of adaptability as Cal, and would more than likely fail to survive if forced into a conventional feminine gender role.

Non-binary Classifications: Gender Ambiguity and Gender Variant

Gender Ambiguity. In contrast to androgyny, gender ambiguity calls into question the gender binary. Cal in *Middlesex* needs to be either a male or a female, and the author makes it clear that he is a male. However, despite the biological determination of his maleness, his slippage into some female behaviors, for example, listening when another person speaks, puts him on the gender ambiguity slope. Fulfilling dominant cultural expectations, Eugenides problematizes this ambiguity, which emphasizes the binary. Cal, an adult male narrator, conveys an experiential awareness of gender. With chromosomal maleness and female conditioning in a hermaphroditic body, Cal has had to make culturally informed choices about gender appropriate behavior, initially as a "girl:"

> I was hailed by intergalactic streetwalkers…as I pedaled past their lineup…my feelings toward them were not a man's. I was aware of a good girl's reproachfulness and disdain, along with a perceptible, physical empathy. As they shifted their hips, hooking me with their darkly painted eyes, my mind filled not with images of what I might do with them, but with what it must be like for them, night after night, hour after hour, to have to do it. (Eugenides 307)

As the story continues, and as Cal reinforces the binary by thinking and acting as the male he is, rather than the female he was raised to be, he has ever fewer problems.

Ambiguity, which denotes the quality of having more than one possible meaning or interpretation, plays a central role in *Middlesex.* In a binary gender system, gender ambiguity refers to the possibility of only two[54] interpretations with respect to a person's or an individual

[54] The word "ambiguous" provides an example of how language (in this case English, but this phenomenon occurs in other languages as well) reinforces the gender binary. The OED defines ambiguous as "admitting more than one interpretation, or explanation; of double meaning, or of several possible meanings." However, when used in connection with gender ambiguity in a binary system, the "more than one" meaning of the prefix *ambi-* no longer implies "several" and instead becomes limited to only two.

character's gender. If one were to use the word "ambiguous" to mean more than one *and* more than "both," with respect to gender—which is allowed by the meaning of the prefix *ambi*—the resultant multiplicity would trouble the gender binary. Halberstam observes that few individuals actually exemplify an unreadable or ambiguous gender, in contradistinction to the "balanced binary" of maleness and femaleness that characterizes androgyny.

Halberstam additionally states that an example of ambiguous gender is seen in the "It's Pat" character on *Saturday Night Live*[55] (*Female Masculinity* 27), as opposed to the Tilda Swinton depiction of Orlando in the film version of Virginia Woolf's novel and Barbra Streisand's depiction of Yentl, discussed above. Both Swinton's and Streisand's portrayals of male characters, as Halberstam notes, do not provide any ambiguity with respect to the female actors portraying male characters. In particular, Barbra Streisand's rendition of Yentl would have been much more effective if the audience would not have been able to determine the gender of the actor playing Yentl. The fact that Barbra Streisand plays (and sings) the role leaves no doubt in the mind of the viewer that this is a female portraying a male, which, I maintain, is a reinforcement of the gender binary. Halberstam makes the same point about Swinton's Orlando: we see a female portraying a male, and this reinforces the two sides of the binary that we have been conditioned to see.

In contrast, the "It's Pat" character is genderless, sexless. Those who needed to know the sex of the actor waited for the credits: Julia Sweeney, a female. However, the character Pat is never defined as either male or female, and therein lies the ambiguity. In contrast to Swinton and

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[55] The sexless "It's Pat" character was a recurring part of the repertoire on the *Saturday Night Live* television show in the early 1990s. The skit's running joke showed Pat, "a person of indeterminate gender," entering into situations (at the gym, in an office, at the hair stylist) where others would try and determine Pat's gender. The jingle that preceded each skit (*A lot of people say, "What's that?" It's Pat!/A lot of people ask, "Who's he? Or she?"/A ma'am or a sir, accept him or her/or whatever it might be./It's time for androgyny./Here comes Pat!*) also provided the premise for each skit. See., e.g., http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xl4bbr_saturday-night-live-it-s-pat-birthday-party_fun#.UeK6_qypOdk.

Streisand, females portraying male characters, Sweeney, a female portrays a character who is genderless and remains so. This ambiguity of gender is a move beyond the binary that does not reinforce the male-female separation reinforced by the dominant culture.[56]

Gender Ambiguity and Gender Variants: *Harriet the Spy* and *What Happened to Lani Garver*

YA literature deals harshly with characters displaying gender ambiguity: either their ambiguity is clarified, or the characters are eliminated. While YA literature depicts ambiguously gendered characters, it does not support those characters, unless they abandon their ambiguity. Two such characters are Harriet of *Harriet the Spy* and Lani of *What Happened to Lani Garver*. The nonconformity of both characters lies exclusively in their gender ambiguity. Both characters suffer humiliation and punishment for unwillingness to conform. Harriet's family and peers punish her for not behaving like a girl and ostracize her until she capitulates to social expectations, and "fish frat" boys punish Lani for their inability to identify their victim as either a boy or girl.

Harriet the Spy

Harriet the Spy, Louise Fitzhugh's 1964 coming of age novel, told in the third person, presents Harriet's first-person thoughts to readers in block capital letters. Through the character of Harriet, this novel challenges gender roles and calls adult role models into question. In the end, the challenge is quelled, and Harriet is forced to recant and reintegrate, which is the instructive message to YA readers condemning ambiguous gender. Eleven-year-old Harriet, a self-proclaimed spy, tells all the adults around her "I do not go out to PLAY, I go out to WORK" (38-9, emphasis in original). Her best friends, Janey (who spends her free time performing

[56] It should be noted that the "It's Pat" character was shown on late Saturday night television, after 11:30PM, after the "family viewing hour," at a time when most children and young adults were presumed not to be part of the audience. Indeed, no one under the age of 17 (Motion Picture Association of America—MPAA—defines young adult as 13-17) is allowed into the live tapings of the show.

science experiments) and Sport (who keeps house for his father) also focus on work over play. Janey and Sport are also gender-atypical: Harriet usually finds Janey in her chemistry lab after school, and Harriet often meets Sport when he is grocery shopping or cleaning his apartment.

As a spy, Harriet records everything she sees in a notebook, writing her observations along with personal commentary. After her classmates steal the notebook and read her unedited notes (essentially "outing" her secret life as an observer-spy), they ostracize her, which leads her to an emotional collapse. Eventually Harriet makes her peace with her friends, but only after she learns difficult lessons about the ambiguities of telling the truth and being true to herself.

In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet is a girl-with-boy-characteristics, a less acceptable narrative model in 1964 than in 2014. This novel raises questions about ambiguity itself and about its tolerability among YA readers. The text implies culturally sensitive options: What if individuals do not live in a binary mindset? What if a person can both tell the truth *and* lie? What if life is not a series of simple either-or choices? What if individuals, even if they are children, have to live with difficult shades of grey, choices they must make that are not straightforward, black or white?

Harriet the Spy challenges traditional gender roles and incites girls to spy, to speak the truth, *and* to lie. In the decade after *Harriet the Spy* was published, YA girls could be found secretly spying on their friends and family—and writing their observations in notebooks (Paul, "The Feminist Writer" 72), just as the adults who criticized and banned the book had feared.

Harriet self-identifies as female. The gender pronouns that refer to Harriet are female, and many of her actions are feminine. For example, she does not object to wearing dresses, although she and Janey both object to being forced to go to dancing school, "to find out you're girls" (Fitzhugh 81), as Janey's mother tells them. Louise Fitzhugh, who wrote and illustrated the

text, depicts Harriet as gender neutral in a spy outfit of old jeans, sweatshirt, sneakers with holes at the toes, and round black-rimmed (Harry Potter-like) lens-less eye glasses (41). Fitzhugh's illustrations show Harriet with jaw-length blonde hair (40, cover) (see Appendix 2, Figures 1 and 2). In text and illustration, Harriet always carries her notebook.

While androgynous in appearance, Harriet, in fact, exemplifies a gender-ambiguous character. In YA critic Lissa Paul's view, Harriet learns that as a feminist writer she must juggle her role in society with her role as a writer ("Harriet" 67). As originally noted by Virginia Woolf, Paul states that being a writer demands selfishness a statement that begs the question of whether being female and being a writer demands a type of "selfishness" (a quality that does not appear on any Bem list) not traditionally attributed to females, who, in many cultures, are generally expected to take on the role of selfless helper. Paul's observation corroborates the Bem findings that females are expected to be "Nurturing" and "Understanding." However, more accurate descriptions of Harriet from the BSRI are "Self-reliant," "Self-sufficient," and "Competitive," which are "Masculine" attributes, rather than "Feminine" ones such as "Gentle," "Eager to soothe hurt feelings," or "Sensitive to the needs of others." Bem would say that Harriet lacks adaptability because of her singularly gendered (to the "Masculine") presentation. Therefore, when faced with stressors, Harriet does not adapt easily and, thus, experiences an emotional collapse.

Reading *Harriet the Spy* through Harriet's gender ambiguity raises the question of whether she would have had any difficulties at all—i.e., whether her notebook would have been read, or if it had, whether the consequences would have been as severe—had she been a boy. The dialogue and actions of Harriet's schoolmates indicate that had Harriet been a boy, her

schoolmates would have thought of him as a "brain," a smart kid who carries a notebook, rather than as an eccentric outsider.

Harriet's eccentricity differentiates her from her peers. Despite being an outsider and a rebel, the eleven-year-old Harriet needs a degree of acceptance by her classmates to survive the sixth grade. She pays a high price for her difference by being ostracized and feeling crazy in her loneliness. She follows the pattern of many rebellious females: she experiences humiliation, shunning, and being declared mentally ill (Gilbert & Gubar 36), and in fact, Harriet's parents send her to a psychiatrist when she starts acting out her rage at the students who read her notebook. Eventually, she must recant and re-enter the fold or continue enduring ostracism and humiliation, a pattern found in much YA and children's literature.[57]

In asserting her individuality in the face of peer pressure, lack of family support, and contrary social messages, Harriet falls on the "Masculine" side of Bem's list. Her success in holding her own against peer pressure made adult readers and censors in 1965[58] find her offensive, badly behaved, mean, and a bad influence so that the book was eventually banned from some school libraries and children's/YA sections of some public libraries. After all, the book advocates lying and presents a bad example for girls who would imitate Harriet and become spies themselves (Bernstein).

Harriet and Janey voice and exemplify notions such as becoming a professional, remaining unmarried, and being routinely unladylike, all of which ran counter to the common socialization practices for girls in 1964. At that time, girls generally were not brought up to

[57] This theme can be found in works discussed in this dissertation, including *Jade*, *Happy Endings are All Alike*, and *Push*. It can also be found in other works on YA reading lists including, for example, *The Scarlet Letter*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *13 Reasons Why*, and *The Golden Compass*.

[58] According to the ALA, *Harriet the Spy* was banned because it supposedly taught children to "lie, spy, back-talk, and swear" (quoted in *The Christian Science Monitor* http://www.csmonitor.com/ Books /2012/1003/ 30-banned-books-that-may-surprise-you/ Harriet-the-Spy-by-Louise-Fitzhugh).

believe in personal independence, individuality, or life without a male point of reference. Thus, the messages conveyed to YA readers by *Harriet the Spy* disrupted social gender roles as understood by adults educated in the 1950s. *Harriet the Spy* thus challenged adults (teachers, parents, librarians) charged with keeping children "safe" and with maintaining cultural mores and norms. In turn, these adults mounted challenges against the book with the ALA. Nonetheless, *Harriet* continued to thrive as child readers continued to read the story.[59] Today, while no longer routinely challenged as it was in the late 1960s, *Harriet the Spy* remains a controversial children's book because of Harriet's "bad behavior," according to the ALA.

A second of Harriet's gender ambiguity derives from her asexuality (Bernstein). Fitzhugh's narrative avoids the issue of Harriet's sexuality, even when she finds herself alone with Sport and with Janey in their respective bedrooms. Instead of the bedroom's implied potential for sexuality, Janey focuses on blowing up the world (74), and Sport worries about money (50). The text opens possibilities for a more intimate interaction when Harriet goes into Sport's bedroom, as "Sport put the dishtowel down, took her by the hand and led her into his room" (50). Harriet (and Sport) seem unaware that any sexual possibility could arise from Sport's gesture, even though Harriet jokingly refers to him as her "husband" (15).

That nothing sexual happens in either Sport's or Janey's bedroom exemplifies not only Harriet's asexuality but Sport's and Janey's as well. Harriet does not seek to merge with either of them, emotionally or physically. Rather, she observes the ways in which Sport and Janey are different from her, and she is different from them. The reading of her notebook by her classmates is often read by queer readers as a metaphor for being "outed." While this possible metaphor for homosexuality in a 1965 novel may be circumstantially supported by the author's own life and

[59] *Harriet the Spy* received a single award, the 1967 Sequoyah Children's Book Award, selected by Oklahoma students in 3rd-5th grades. *Harriet the Spy* has not received an adult-juried award.

experiences, critics have given equal evidence for why Harriet cannot rightly be read as a lesbian, and the principle of these reasons is her asexuality (Bernstein).

This reluctance to introduce sexuality of any inclination into the novel is likely due to a number of cultural issues. First, in 1965, adults were even more reluctant to consider children and sexuality in the same thought than they were in 2005 when Lissa Paul observed that reluctance on the part of adults (Paul, "Sex" 222). The avoidance of sexual matters in a book that was fraught with other issues that would make it unpopular with adult supervisors of child readers (strong language, lying, breaking and entering, and feminist themes of independence and unladylike behavior), would have caused the book to be rejected by the publisher in 1965. As it was, editor Ursula Nordstrom had to work to make sure the book was published despite the "dicey" material (Marcus, *Dear Genius* xxv). Second, Harriet is very aware that she is "only eleven" (Fitzhugh 10, 101) as she says repeatedly in the book. In 1965 when "damned" was considered strong language and sexual situations were not graphically depicted, sexuality proper was not likely to be introduced. Nordstrom encountered tremendous resistance when a book by another author she edited, Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen*, depicted a naked boy who was not in a sexual situation. Given the year and the target audience, sexual situations were not likely to be included in a young adult book. Third, Fitzhugh's story is not about sexual desire, it is about a child who is unladylike and independent and ostracized for not acting acceptably enough like a girl.

While queer readers can (and do) impute queer readings to *Harriet the Spy* (Bernstein, Paul, Horning), Fitzhugh's intent is to show the problems Harriet confronts for not acting like a girl, thus Harriet's desire focuses on spying and writing. Deep personal connections are not something Harriet forms, even with her two closest friends, and that is part of the reason she gets

into trouble. Another part of the reason she gets into trouble is because she is outspoken, opinionated, and unfeminine. In a tribute for the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication, Leonard Marcus wrote,

> *Harriet the Spy* broke a laundry list of taboos when it was first published... She is a girl who dresses like a boy. She skulks angrily through the streets when she should be exhibiting the benefits of a fine Upper East Side address and dance lessons. (At one point, she tells her parents that she will 'be damned' if she will ever take dance lessons.) She commits the felony crime of breaking and entering. She betrays her friends. Her parents for their part drink like fish and take their daughter to see a therapist. None of this was typical of the young people's fiction of the time, and it touched a cultural nerve. (Marcus, qtd in Lodge n.p.)

Harriet, a spy, an asexual voyeur by definition, defies categorization even as she, the agent of the gaze, spies. That in itself queers her gaze in the sense that it is neither a male nor a female gaze, but both masculine and feminine, switching between male and female. By resisting categorization at either pole of the gender binary, Harriet opposes established gender norms and thereby overturns all categories. In the process, she turns social norms upside down for her YA readers, who routinely imitated her (Bernstein). Harriet's unfeminine actions become most apparent when she behaves in a distinctly non-girl fashion and exacts revenge on each of her classmates for humiliating her rather than simply capitulating to peer censure. Harriet's actions can thus be described as "Aggressive," "Assertive," and "Defend[ing her] own beliefs"—all "Masculine" traits on the Bem inventory—rather than "Understanding," "Yielding," and "Shy," which are "Feminine" traits according to the BSRI. Harriet escapes easy categorization: as asexual, she is not a lesbian, as a tomboy (she occasionally wears dresses), as a child (she goes to "work," not to play), or as either a truth-teller or a liar (she does both). Creative and courageous, she is an outsider and queer, terms not included on the Bem charts. A child who does not conform, she is coached by her former nanny to conform just enough to survive the sixth grade by apologizing (thus demonstrating social acceptability) and by lying (maintaining her

individuality to herself, but not threatening others by flagrantly demonstrating that characteristic).

Harriet does not conform to the gender binary that requires an either-or classification. If she is a girl (with all its attendant girl-characteristics), then she must be not-boy (excluding all boy-characteristics), but neither category applies exclusively. Adults' and, ultimately, child readers' inability to fit Harriet easily into a well-defined box made, and continues to make, *Harriet the Spy* a controversial book. In 1965, the book was described by adult readers as both "too distorted" and "too realistic" (Bernstein), on the one hand, while on the other hand, many child readers showed their approval by emulating Harriet (Bernstein). Although Harriet's ambiguities do not diminish or disappear as the plot develops, she tempers them so that she may rejoin her peer group: she apologizes (by stating, in essence that she is sorry she wrote those mean things about them) and lies (by stating that what she wrote about them wasn't true). Emerging a bit wiser, a bit more secretive, and a bit more confident as a writer, Harriet survives and reintegrates into the sixth grade by making amends with her sixth-grade classmates.

What Happened to Lani Garver

The character of Lani in Carol Plum-Ucci's novel, *What Happened to Lani Garver* (2004) does not emerge as fortunately as does Harriet. This cautionary tale, whose fictive narrator is another teen, Claire McKenzie, tells the story of Lani, the new kid in the small town of Hackett Island. Everything about Lani is a mystery: where Lani comes from, Lani's age, and even whether Lani is a boy or a girl. The text answers none of these questions directly. The "fish frat," a gang of local teen boys, torture Lani to the point of inadvertently drowning him, but authorities never recover Lani's body. The community effectively eliminates Lani, and the ambiguities surrounding him are never resolved.

Lani, a teen identified by peers as male, does not self-identify as either male or female. The novel presents Lani as a singular ambiguity in Claire's world of absolutes. Unlike *Harriet the Spy*, which offered a third person narrative interspersed with Harriet's first-person notes, *What Happened to Lani Garver* tells of the ambiguously gendered Lani from Claire's first-person point of view. Claire's life, unlike Lani's, consists of absolute problems with absolute and immediate consequences. In remission from leukemia, Claire fears a recurrence. Claire's father has become distracted and distant, and her mother's occasional drinking has devolved into alcoholism. They divorce shortly after her diagnosis. Claire's gaze must see Lani as either male or female, and she opts for male.

When Claire initially speaks with Lani about Hackett Island and his life experiences, Lani refuses to be identified by gender, sexual preference, or intelligence. He does, however, tell Claire that he was adopted (of ambiguous parentage), has been homeless, and does not have a birth certificate, making his age as ambiguous as his gender. Lani acknowledges that while homeless he spent a lot of time reading in libraries to understand how people think: "[i]n the city you could get mugged. Around [Hackett]? You could get lynched" (48).

Although Lani refuses to self-identify with a specific gender, the story, told from Claire's point of view, consistently refers to Lani as male, and all the adults in Lani's life, including his adopted mother, similarly identify him as male. However, an implied gender divide separates Lani's life on the mainland from that on the island: his mainland friends avoid gender pronouns in referring to him but Claire uses male gender pronouns.

With respect to gendering, Lani discloses his adoptive military father beat him for playing dress-up that when he was a child; Lani's adoptive mother hopes Claire will be the girlfriend who will "make" Lani straight. Claire "looked into her eyes….and …saw something

there. Almost an urgency. She *was* hoping we did the nasty... As if my presence made her son not gay" (43, italics in original). Lani's adoptive mother feels ambivalent about his appearance, suggesting that by choosing to look as he does, he invites the harassment he experiences in the Hackett Island community.

Plum-Ucci's initial description of Lani (pronounced to rhyme with Donny), from Claire's point of view, provides a model of ambiguity:

> The first challenge was the combination of shoulders and face. I wouldn't say there were muscles, just larger bones that made the shoulders broad. And yet, you could look at this face and think, *Girl*. *No question*. Geneva had a point, because the face looked to be done over with really subtle makeup—until it got within about six feet of you. Then you realize, *That's not makeup*. It's just really peachy skin, overly thick eyelashes, natural pipeline lips. The dark hair was to Lani Garver's shoulders—with the top layers kind of bobbed under and going behind the ears. Guys don't plan their hair. *Girl*, I thought. …no one can fault a girl for being over six foot and flat-chested. "God almighty. I hope it's a girl." (13, italics in original)

The first and ongoing ambiguity in this text stems from Lani's refusal to self-identify as male or female. When he arrives at school as a new kid, Claire and her "cool group" of friends try (for nine pages) to figure out his/her gender. Finally, Claire and her friend Macy, the group leader, talk to him/her, trying to determine Lani's gender, first by his/her name (it's Hawaiian and gender neutral), then by his/her reading material (*The Essential Jung*), and, finally, by school subjects (Lani likes psychology, not chemistry). When all this fails, Macy simply asks:

> "Are you….a girl?" Macy asked.
> I was turning all shades of red, but Lani didn't flinch. "Oh! No. Not a girl. Sorry."
> We waited, I guess because we were expecting to hear the natural next line, *I'm a boy*. The smile on his face left me feeling he enjoyed the awkward pause and the notion that our heads might be slightly confused.
> "Okay," Macy finally stumbled. "You're a guy."
> After that I forever thought of and referred to Lani as a he. The truth is, he never actually answered. (20)

Like Harriet, Lani provides an example of a gender-ambiguous character. Like Harriet, Lani must learn to function in society in order to survive. On the Bem scale, Lani's sensitivity to

the others' needs comes under "Feminine," as do descriptions of Lani as "Cheerful," "Compassionate," and "Understanding." On the "Masculine" side of the Bem scale, Lani displays "Individualistic," "Independent," and "Assertive" characteristics, as well as studiously avoiding harsh language ("Feminine" for Bem) but speaking bluntly when telling others what he observes about them ("Assertive" and therefore "Masculine" according to Bem).

In *Harriet the Spy,* Harriet's nanny, Ole Golly, whom she often cites in her notebook, instructs Harriet in the art of compromise as a sixth grade survival technique; Lani, in contrast, has no adult to coach him about survival on Hackett Island. Thus, when Tony, the burly town bully, a closeted gay man, drunkenly propositions Lani and becomes enraged when the "fish frat" guys (including Tony's brother) discover them, and pretends to "fight off" the smaller, defenseless Lani, life in Hackett becomes dangerous for Lani. Harassed by Tony with phone calls, Lani observes that the caller "doesn't care that I know [his name]. He *wants* me to know…He thinks I'm over here all by my lonesome, shaking in my little pink bedroom slippers'" (136).

A smart street kid, Lani has been beaten, harassed, and sexually abused because of his ambiguous appearance. Before the incident with Tony, Lani endures stares and ostracism, but afterward harassing phone calls at home and cat calls at school plague Lani. Like Harriet, who tries to remain unseen as a spy, Lani attempts to keep a low profile. After the incident with Tony, Lani is in a very public position, involuntarily moving into the spotlight with a reputation as a "faggot" who tries to pick up drunks. The angrier and more threatened Tony feels, the more danger Lani faces.

Personal unconventionality has a significant geographical aspect. Harriet's eccentricity makes her different from her New York City peers, but Lani's appearance distinguishes him from

his peers in a small, conservative island community, where his difference will never be accepted. In fact, the longer Lani stays on the island, the more dangerous his situation becomes. Like Harriet, Lani is shunned for his difference, but rather than feeling crazy in his loneliness, humiliation, and rejection, Lani studies psychology to survive (reading Jung, talking with mental health professionals at the hospital on the mainland), which helps him to recognize when the time has come to leave. When Tony and the "fish frat" decide to teach Lani a lesson (on the icy night that Lani intends to leave the island for good), Lani at first seems to recant and beg for his life, but then returns to his customary bluntness and taunts his tormenters, who put him in their fishing net and threaten to drown him. Ultimately, when Claire attempts to aid Lani, they threaten to drown her, too.

Eventually one of the "fish frat" boys sets a limit. Referring to the 1998 gay-bashing and killing of Mathew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, he says, "Nobody's dying off this boat! ...We aren't some fucked-up Wyoming cowboys. And we aren't killing no girl" (263). Tony, however, cuts the rope that supports Claire and Lani above the harbor's icy water. Claire survives, but Lani, a weak swimmer, sinks and disappears forever.

The final ambiguity of the story lies in the question of whether Lani has drowned (the most likely conclusion) or has escaped. Claire finds evidence for Lani's escape when she checks his room and discovers that his backpacks are missing, though his prized possession, his book of angels, worth $900, is still on his bed. Like Harriet, Lani asserts his individuality in the face of peer pressure, social messages, and absent family support. Lani apparently dies, because (unlike Harriet) he refuses to conform or compromise (or capitulate to the gender binary).

Carol Plum-Ucci's novel contains elements (violence, swearing, sexual situations) that would cause it to be challenged, although *What Happened to Lani Garver* has not been placed on

the ALA's "Frequently Challenged" list. This is not to say that *What Happened to Lani Garver* has never been challenged, rather it is likely that other books have been challenged more often in the decade since Plum-Ucci's book was published. Unlike *Harriet the Spy*, however, *What Happened to Lani Garver* has been honored as an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a New York Public Library Book of the Teen Age. As of 2014, the book continues to be in print, a decade after its initial publication, and it is published as an e-book.

The epitome of ambiguity, Lani, whose refusal to be put into any "box" (95) whether "female," "male," "gay," or "straight," defies categorization and renders him "queer" in the sense that he fits into no available classification. The inability on the part of others to classify Lani is dangerous to him. Like Harriet, Lani opposes the established norms of categorization, and in so doing upends the social norms of Hackett Island. When he crosses a line by threatening a local with exposure as a homosexual, Lani must leave or be killed. The ambiguities that characterize Lani include the fact that he can be described both as theatrical and secretive, as forceful and nurturing, and, in terms of the BSRI, as "Assertive" and "Childlike," and as "Masculine" as well as "Feminine." Ultimately the question of whether Lani has been killed or has escaped remains unanswered, the biggest ambiguity of all.[60]

Harriet's ambiguities are tempered rather than extinguished, allowing her to reintegrate into her peer group. Lani's ambiguities with respect to his gender, sexuality, and sexual preference lead to the impossibility of remaining on Hackett Island, and thus to his disappearance. A noteworthy example of an ambiguously gendered character, Lani refuses to conform to any well-defined box and does not temper his ambiguities. Unlike Harriet, he cannot return to his peer group. However, everyone who comes into contact with Lani is irrevocably

[60] The ambiguity of Lani's fate might interpreted as an avoidance of closure which would open the possibility for a sequel as well as raise the moral question of whether or not the boys, whose intentions were homicidal, did in fact murder him.

affected ("everybody… was touched by Lani Garver's visit to Hackett Island…" [Plum-Ucci 306]), even though Lani's fate exemplifies a cautionary message for YA readers: Conform or be killed.

Gender Variant. As defined in detail in Chapter 1, "gender variant" refers to the entire spectrum of individuals with gender-atypical behavior (Meyer-Bahlburg 462). The term also includes expressions of gender nonconforming dress and/or behavior (Riley 242). The four texts discussed in this chapter provide examples of gender variant characters (Jade, Calliope/Cal, Harriet, Lani), introducing YA readers to characters who do not conform strictly to the gender binary, but none of whom posit the possibility of a third gender, or even a fourth or fifth.

While the prejudices of the dominant U.S. medical establishment are apparent in its creation of Gender Identity Disorder as a "disorder" (Roen 59), other cultures identify other gender options. Halberstam notes, "the world is a big place; the systems we use in the United States and in Europe are neither natural nor inevitable, and around the world people have devised different systems to make gender and sexuality make sense" (*Gaga Feminism* 80-1).

Many indigenous peoples subscribe to a more complex gender system. For example, the Native American concept "two spirit," a term adopted in 1990 during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference to denote a traditional tribal practice, refers to Native American traditions of gender diversity and the traditions of multiple gender categories and sexualities institutionalized in Native American/First Nations tribal cultures (Jacobs 2). In Mexico, Zapotec residents in the state of Oaxaca, who live in a matriarchal society, have integrated the personhood category of *muxes*, a unique gender of male-to-female transgender individuals, who hold a distinct, even esteemed place in society (Keeps n.p.). Similarly, the *hijra*, in South Asia, and, historically the *bissu* in Indonesia, are identified as a third gender. The *hijra*,

"male bodied" individuals, sacrifice their male genitals to a goddess in return for spiritual power and subsequently live and identify as female (Hossain 495). Historically in Southeast Asia, the *bissu* were males who lived as females and married men, combining elements from the male-female binary and transcended that binary, according to Leonard Andaya, Professor of Southeast Asian History at University of Hawaii. Further examples of a third gender can be found in the *kathoeys* of Thailand (Keeps), the *fa'afafine* of Samoa, and the *fakaleiti* of Tonga. While Westerners refer to the Pacific Islanders, the *fa'afafine* and the *fakaleiti*, as "transgendered," anthropologists and sociologists who have studied these cultures in depth uniformly characterize the *fa'afafine* and the *fakaleiti* as falling into "gender-liminal"[61] groups (Farran 21) that comprise a third gender that may be either male or female, or neither male nor female. Most are biological males either raised as females or functioning as females in their respective societies.

Most scholarly articles addressing the subject of gender variance, including those referred to here, focus primarily or exclusively on males living as females, although broader aspects of Andaya's work focus on women. The problem for Westerners conditioned by a binary two-gender perspective occurs when the gender possibilities of the observers must expand to allow for the possibility of more than two genders to describe fully and accurately the phenomena they observe. The restrictions and assumptions of language that have developed along with binary gender assumptions partially account for this dilemma, including inattentional blindness, a phenomenon in which observers do not see observable data because it exists outside the realm of their experience,[62] and which also contributes to observers' limitations. Thus, most studies by

[61] "Gender liminal" is a term used by anthropologists that "captures many attributes of intermediate gender status, (Besnier 287).

[62] Arien Mack and Irvin Rock, cognitive psychologists provide evidence to support the hypothesis that "there is no perception without attention" (115). They further explain that

Western observers of multigendered cultures begin by referring to the groups in question as "transgendered," and couch their observations in terms of the gender binary. Yet, nevertheless, many conclude with the observation that each group can be represented more accurately as a discrete third (or fourth, in the case of some Native American groups) gender.

Freud, aware of the complexities and historical ambiguities of gender, approaches, but does not cross, the binary line in his writings. "Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality" clearly demonstrates the deep roots of his idea of two and only two genders (any deviation from the binary was labeled "inversion"):

> …account must be taken of the fact that inversion was a frequent phenomenon—one might almost say an institution charged with important functions—among the peoples of antiquity at the height of their civilization.
>
> It is remarkably widespread among many savage and primitive races, whereas the concept of degeneracy is usually restricted to states of high civilization… and, even amongst the civilized peoples of Europe, climate and race exercise the most powerful influence on the prevalence of inversion and upon the attitude adopted towards it. (1468)

Western cultures' predisposition to the gender binary as the norm (Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw* 105), along with the attendant physical dangers of non-conformity to the binary norm, are acknowledged in all cultures, perhaps because of the enormous influence of the West and its absolute investment in the gender binary (Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, 81). Similarly YA literature represents the emotional dangers of non-conformity as absolute and traumatic for

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> [b]y decreasing the probability that attention would be paid to some object, we significantly reduced the probability that its presence would be perceived and, in fact, demonstrated in a few experiments that this probability could be reduced almost to zero. In fact, in no experiment we have described has any stimulus presented under conditions of inattention been reliably perceived when efforts were made to shield it from attention by placing it: (1) outside the focus of attention (2) at fixation where a process that inhibits attention seems to operate, or (3) in a location that subjects have come to ignore. In other words, the evidence thus far presented supports the conclusion that in the absence of attention observers are functionally blind to a highly visible stimulus… (Mack & Rock 115)

All three conditions described above apply to observers who observe new worlds or different cultures with the assumption of the gender binary.

young adults in texts such as *Harriet the Spy, Jade*, *Middlesex*, and *What Happened to Lani Garver*, whose gender variant main characters experience internal and external conflicts by living outside the norm. YA literature documents the dangers faced by gender variant characters in stories that often serve as cautionary tales for YA readers.

Cover Art. In a culture that relies heavily on visual cues, the visual aspect of recognition and observation of androgynous and ambiguously gendered characters is vital. Thus, the consideration of cover art inheres in discussions of androgyny and gender ambiguity, especially as cover art serves as a visual reminder that gender variants, whether androgynous or gender-ambiguous, both reinforce and trouble the gender binary.

While gender ambiguity lies outside the acceptable gender binary norm, for the purposes of marketing to YA readers, gender ambiguity provides an effective way to sell a YA book, precisely because the ambiguous image has a wide appeal and intends to attract readers of both/all genders. Thus, while heteronormativity and its values are pervasive, depicting ambiguously gendered humans in cover art is an expedient way for marketers to appeal to the widest audience. One reason for this is that most cisgendered people, when looking at an image, will project onto that image a gender with which they can identify. Therefore, most people, looking at the cover of *Harriet the Spy* (Figure 1) and reading its title will identify the figure on the cover as Harriet, someone with a girl's name, and therefore, a girl.

Even in YA literature, ironically, sex sells—despite adults' discomfort with the idea of children's sexuality. Thus the sexually *im*plicit cover of the YA novel *Luna* (2004) by Julie Anne Peters depicts a feminine shoulder in a t-shirt with a green butterfly (or moth) on it (see Figure 11). The cover also announces "Everything is about to change." This lets the prospective reader know that the insect on the girl's shoulder is a moth (probably a luna moth that looks like a

butterfly—those who read the story might understand the double metaphor of the butterfly's change from a worm and the moth's deadly attraction to flames). People who are sensitive to gender coding may be a bit more hesitant to ascribe femininity to the figure depicted, but those who are not will see a girl, although the story (and the cover) depicts a teenage boy who feels like a girl inside and wants to transition to female.

The marketing technique of depicting a figure to which many people might relate intends to appeal both to cisgendered people who may quickly pick up the book because of its cover, and to transgendered people who are looking for stories in which they can see themselves; those who turn the book over to read the back cover, especially the last line, "Yeah, I loved her. I couldn't help it. She was my brother" might turn away, although others may take up the book to solve the mystery. The word "transgender" is not used in the title or on the cover. In fact, "transgender" does not appear until the fifth page of this novel, and it appears only five times in the entire book. Parents are met with the National Book Award Finalist medallion on the front cover and "Rave Reviews" from *Kirkus*, *The New York Times*, and *School Library Journal* on the back.

In the same way, the cover for *Almost Perfect* (2009) by Brian Katcher depicts an up-close lower part of a face, a mouth with smeared lipstick, a neck, and, behind it, curly hair. The lipstick makes the mouth appear to be female, and the vaguely blurry curly hair in the background also appears to be feminine. Like the cover of *Luna*, the *Almost Perfect* cover features an award medallion, this one from the ALA's Stonewall Book Award, and like *Luna*'s cover, the cover of *Almost Perfect* does not use the word "transgender" on either the front or the back, although "transgender" does appear on the inside cover text. The back cover text discloses the topic of the story in one sentence for a prospective reader: "one day [Logan] acts on his growing attraction and kisses her. Moments later, he wishes he hadn't. Sage discloses a secret:

biologically, she's a boy." As with *Luna*, the subject is disclosed for readers on the back text, but it is done quickly and not made the focus of the story. In an additional marketing technique, the front cover image is repeated on the back, only on the back, the image is much more faded, a hint of the front cover image, as if to remind readers why they picked up the book in the first place. With both books, in an ironic twist on the idea of using the female image to sell a product, the female images on these covers are being used to sell the books, although readers will discover that the female image is not what they expect.

In this chapter, I have argued the paramount importance of the ability to distinguish females and males in a culture deeply imbued with a binary gender system. The difference between androgyny and gender ambiguity can be characterized by the difference between accentuating the binary (in the case of androgyny) and deviating from the strict, traditional male-female gender binary (in the case of ambiguity). Most individuals initially assess others by the way they look, hence YA readers are not alone in their inclination to look at a person (or a book cover) and make assumptions based on what they see. Most readers, including YA readers, judge books by their covers, and, correspondingly, book-marketing depends on cover art to draw readers to texts.

Most books for YA readers are unillustrated, or only sparingly illustrated. Thus, the role of cover art in visually gendering a book's characters provides a rare visualization of a character for its readers. This discussion of cover art intends to clarify distinctions made between gender ambiguity and androgyny when studying texts that feature androgynous or ambiguously gendered characters. Alan Cuseo notes the psychological impact that subliminal messages have on both dominant and satellite cultures (257), further observing that a depiction of an ambiguous character who may be either male or female sends a message to members of a satellite culture

that this could be a book that represents their experience (258), while members of the dominant culture, looking at the same image, are likely to project upon that image one gender or the other, depending upon the content of the book's back cover text. Because this chapter focuses on androgyny and gender ambiguity, the images discussed here show ambiguously gendered characters (Harriet, Lani, and Lang of M.E Kerr's *"Hello," I Lied* [63]) and distinguish gender ambiguity from androgyny.

Before 2000, specifically androgynous characters cannot be found in texts of YA literature, with the sole exception of Ursula Le Guin's 1969 science fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (although Le Guin's characters are more accurately described as gender fluid, changing genders at will). Nonetheless, cover art for *Harriet the Spy* (1965) and M.E. Kerr's *Hello, I Lied* (1993) (see Appendix 2, Figures 1, 2, and 3, respectively) feature ambiguously gendered characters. These cover images seem designed to pique a reader's interest without disclosing the gender of the book's protagonist, even though Fitzhugh's title character bears an unambiguously gendered name.

Harriet the Spy provides a prime example of an ambiguously gendered character whose ambiguity extends to her appearance. Fitzhugh, as much an illustrator as an author, represents her title character in a decidedly ambiguous manner, as has been noted above. Appendix 2, Figure 3 shows Lang, of *"Hello," I Lied.* One sees jaw-length blonde hair, freckles, a slightly squared jaw, and a small earring in the exposed right ear lobe. Only the back cover text answers

[63] While the substance of this book is not discussed in this dissertation, its story, about an openly gay teen who agrees to chaperone a rock star's daughter for the summer because the star perceives him as a "safe" male companion for her. This novel is written by M.E. Kerr, another of Ursula Nordstrom's authors, who was also Louise Fitzhugh's friend (Sandra Scoppettone was also a mutual friend). This group of authors addressed queer themes in their YA fiction, and they discussed these themes as they swapped stories with each other: one of the chapters in the autobiography of M.E. Kerr (one of the pen names used by Margaret Meeker) is "Maryjane the Spy." Meeker acknowledges her friendship with Fitzhugh and her confronting Fitzhugh with stealing "her" story for *Harriet the Spy*. Kerr reports that Fitzhugh had replied that "all kids are spies when they're little. She was and I was…and she just beat me to the punch and told the story first" (Kerr, *Me* 58).

the question of Lang's gender; the front image does not disclose this information. Potential purchasers might notice the right-lobe earring and (whether or not the other ear, with or without an earring, is shown) recognize the self-identifying symbol for someone who is gay or lesbian, which coding was well known in the 1980s and 1990s.

Cuseo observes that texts were coded so that members of satellite cultures could be addressed without raising censors' suspicions (258). An examination of Fitzhugh's art proves particularly instructive in this regard. As a member of one of the satellite cultures to which Cuseo refers, Fitzhugh's ambiguously gendered representations of her character are not happenstance. The gender ambiguity of Harriet in Fitzhugh's renderings extends to the art inside the book (see Figures 4 and 5), as well as to the cover of the 1965 UK edition (Figure 6), which was not drawn by Fitzhugh. Harriet's appearance, by all accounts, cannot be characterized as either male or female, and Harriet's hair, like Lang's in Figure 3 and Lani Garver's in Figure 7, is also jaw-length. If one needs further indications of the importance of hair length and style as visual indications of gender, one can see for evidence Cal's haircut as the final exorcism of Calliope, Melanie's haircut that transforms her into Jade, and Claire's observation of Lani's bobbed, layered haircut when she attempts to determine Lani's gender: "Guys don't plan their hair" (13).

By way of contrasting images of gender ambiguity with those of androgyny, the cover of *Jade* (Figure 8) presents a girl with short hair on a pirate ship. While the setting (the deck of a ship) conveys adventure (which falls into the "Masculine" list on Bem's scale), Jade, in a dress, clearly appears as a female in a male environment, not as a gender-ambiguous character. By way of providing a more androgynous image to contrast with the ambiguously gendered images of Harriet, Lang, and Lani, Figure 9 shows Tilda Swinton as Orlando, an androgynous character

who begins as a man and ends as a woman. Although Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is not a YA novel, the images from the film provide an illustration of an androgynous character. Unlike the images of Harriet, Lang, and Lani, Halberstam asserts that with Swinton, "we cannot forget that we are looking at a woman in drag" (*Female Masculinity* 214). The same is true of Barbra Streisand, shown in Figure 10, as Yentl, a character who must "pass" as a male in order to study at a yeshiva. Yentl self-describes as "neither one sex nor the other," but Halberstam's observation about Swinton applies equally to Streisand's androgynous depiction of Yentl. The contradiction conveys an ambiguous message to potential readers or viewers while underscoring the gender binary. The cover of *Middlesex* (Figure 11), however, provides perhaps the most illustrative example of androgyny. That cover incorporates the binary using the two of clubs playing card: the male/female image clearly indicates the *andro*/*gyne* of the gender binary.

Androgynous or hermaphroditic characters emphasize the gender binary as the standard from which they diverge, even as they switch gender roles because they switch between roles dictated by two genders that compose the gender binary. Cal, a biological male raised as a female, cannot exist in a middle place—the middle sex—and the story consequently charts his movement from one gender to the other within a binary system. In a similar manner, Jade is punished for acting like a boy when she is, in fact, a girl. Jade wants to change not her sex but society's expectations of her gender role. Without a strong advocate, Jade's refusal to conform means certain death, just as Lani's refusal to conform precipitates his apparent demise. Again, the ultimate cautionary message to YA readers of these two novels is a warning that gender nonconformity results in death.

With respect to gender variant characters, messages for YA readers are clear: the gender binary culture responds negatively to gender variants, and individuals who challenge the gender

binary norm suffer ostracism, humiliation, shame, physical battering, isolation, and possibly death. Because YA readers are encouraged to live through the vicarious experiences of the characters in YA novels, it would appear that texts such as these are meant to dissuade YA readers from imitating behaviors that lead to abuse and death. Critics consider *Harriet the Spy* a controversial text because, despite the demonstrated suffering Harriet endures as a result of her eccentricities, YA readers have been very much inclined to follow her example (Bernstein) even if that means fusing deceit and dissembling to survive.

While androgyny inevitably reinforces the male/female gender binary, gender ambiguity suggests the possibility of more than two genders. Messages contrary to social norms for YA readers notwithstanding, when one moves beyond the male/female binary implicit in representations of androgyny and gender ambiguity, the notion of multiple gender variations can be introduced and then added to an inquiry into depictions of gender in YA literature, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

The Left Hand of Darkness and *Nearly Roadkill*: Genderqueer Characters and Gender Fluidity

> Society wants its queer children to conform or (and this is not a figure of speech) die. –Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* 3

This chapter builds on material in the previous chapter, moving from the discussion of ambiguously gendered characters to multiple possibilities for gender and depictions of gender that trouble binary assumptions. Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Caitlin Sullivan and Kate Bornstein's *Nearly Roadkill* (1996) both posit characters that are gender fluid in the most literal sense. In each novel, genders change, and in each novel characters problematize the gender binary system by simultaneously embodying more than one gender.

The Left Hand of Darkness is a science fiction (SF) novel which presents a futurist world in which humanlike non-humans change genders to procreate, but remain for most of the time in an genderless state. *Nearly Roadkill* a cyberfiction (CF) novel, set in a time much closer to our own, depicts characters who change gender at will, sometimes inhabiting both genders at once. These novels move away from the realist fiction of the novels previously discussed because the presentation of possibilities for gender fluidity are, ostensibly, not yet part of humans' lived experience.

This chapter considers messages communicated to YA readers with respect to the untenablility of a non-binary gender system in American culture and in the dominant cultures of the world at large. Just as the experiences of gender-ambiguous and androgynous characters discussed in Chapter 3 depict potentially deadly consequences for non-conformity, so too does a message of threat emerge for genderqueer YA readers: experiences of genderqueer characters suggest that they too must either conform or be killed.

The way in which genderqueer characters are killed differs from the ways in which gender-ambiguous or androgynous characters are eliminated or forced to conform. Because genderqueer, or gender-fluid, characters threaten existing social and cultural norms, their nonconformity is considered treasonous; they are treated as traitors, and as enemies of the state, they are subject to execution.

Queer and Genderqueer. William Turner defines "queer" as "the failure to fit precisely within a category" (8). For Turner, the word queer "has the virtue of offering, in the context of academic inquiry…a relatively novel term that connotes etymologically a crossing of boundaries but that refers to *nothing in particular*, thus leaving the question of its denotations open to contest and revision" (35, italics added). Because of its porous definition, "queer" potentially connotes myriad boundary crossings. With particular reference to YA characters, "queer" can be applied to a range of characters from John Donovan's openly gay Davy in *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth the Trip* (1969), to Sherman Alexie's teenage, heterosexual Native American "Junior" Polatkin in a white high school in the contemporary YA novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007).[64] The gender ambiguity of the eponymous Jade and of Harriet in *Harriet the Spy*, the androgyny of Cal in *Middlesex*, and the gender variance of Lani in *What Happened to Lani Garver* are all examples of queer characters.

The pages of YA novels repeatedly depict gender as learned behavior, exemplifying Butler's observation "that the gendered body is performative" (185), a condition suggesting that "the body has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (185).

[64] This novel, while written by a Native American, is a YA novel that is popular because it is written for the dominant culture in the style of YA coming-of-age novels which the dominant culture expects and accepts. Although its main character, Junior, is a young adult of Spokane descent, the novel is a good depiction of queerness—that is, of a character who falls outside a given set of norms, in this case whiteness—that has nothing to do with gender, sex, or sexuality. Instead, Junior's queerness stems from his being non-white and not of European descent in a white high school where all the other students come from European backgrounds.

In fact, the pages of the YA texts examined here are primary examples of the "decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy [which perpetuates] an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (Butler 185-6). Butler's statement reiterates the social imperative to maintain the idea of only two genders which are completely separate and distinct, an imperative which YA literature supports in its consistent reinforcement of the gender binary.

A child ambiguously gendered at birth, challenges the illusion of a strict gender binary. Eugenides's descriptions of Cal/Calliope as both male and female, hermaphroditic, culminate in the word *monster* (431). This echoes the social imperative that Calliope articulates in recognizing that "parents must be told that their child is either male or female" (413). To be neither, or both, is monstrous. The social imperative is reinforced by an unspoken social agreement. Thus when Cal, with long hair, walks into a barber shop wearing a suit and tie, the barber sees a male, whereas with the same haircut on Callie in a dress, the hairstylist sees a female.

The performances that signal gender are taught on television, in books, at home, in church, in shops, and in school, and Cal exemplifies the notion that the enactment of one gender or the other is learned. He observes that there was a time when girls learned to walk like ladies by balancing books on their head, while he masters walking like a boy in half a day (441). Cal's barbershop meditation concludes with a statement that reinforces Butler's notion of gender as illusion: "By the time I came out of Ed's Barbershop, I was a new creation" (Eugenides 445). Despite his conscious awareness of his created persona, Cal's choice of one of two genders does not trouble the binary. Building on Butler's ideas, Halberstam observes that masculinity (like femininity) is "at least in part, a construction by female- as well as male-born people" (*Female Masculinity* 13). In a footnote to this quotation, Halberstam, like Eugenides, comments on the

social imperative of assigning one of two genders at birth, and attempting to escape the gender binary implicit in language, Halberstam uses "female born" and "male born" to suggest that "these assignations may not hold for the lifetime of the individual" (*Female Masculinity* 280 *n.*10). Halberstam's further suggestion "… that binary gender continues to dominate our cultural and scientific notions of gender but that individuals inevitably fail to find themselves in only one of two options" (*Female Masculinity* 280 *n.*10) is embodied by Lani in *What Happened to Lani Garver*. Falling outside the binary and failing to conform to ambient cultural notions of gender, Lani has no social support system. He tells Claire: "My mom...thinks I bring this on myself. She'll give me another few choruses of how I should join a gym and take steroids" (242). Ultimately "fish frat" bullies circle gender variant Lani for the kill because he fails to choose one of only two gender options. (See Chapter 3.)

While common parlance often uses "queer" to refer to non-heterosexuals, and queer theory uses "queer" to imply an openness with respect to gender and sexual identity, scholars in sociology, social service, and cultural studies[65] increasingly use the term "genderqueer" to denote ambiguous gender and sexual identity, deliberately intending to move beyond the male/female binary. Halberstam observes that "[d]espite feminist and queer rearticulations of the meanings and effects of sexuality and gender, we continue to live in an age of gender conformity" (*Female Masculinity* 118). Thus the openness of the term "queer" does not carry with it the impact that it might if more individuals were thinking outside the male/female binary.

Another queer theorist, Brett Genny Beemyn, explains the history of the term "genderqueer" as a word

> commonly used at the turn of the twenty-first century by youth who feel that their gender identities and/or gender expressions do not correspond to the

[65]See, e.g., Stephen Kerry, quoted below.

> gender assigned to them at birth, but who do not want to transition to the "opposite" gender. Characterizing themselves as neither female nor male, as both, or as somewhere in between, genderqueers challenge binary constructions of gender and traditional images of transgender people. (Beemyn)[66]

The term genderqueer has thus emerged relatively recently in queer/transgender literature and has yet to be solidified semantically. According to queer theorist Stephen Kerry, the term does not replace "transgender" or "trans" but extends epistemologies, praxis, and identities (702). "Trans" denotes movement between the two dominant sexes and genders; genderqueers cannot be so easily located (Kerry 702).

Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*, while ostensibly enforcing the gender binary in its title, complements Kerry's project by calling for "new and self-conscious affirmations of gender taxonomies" (9). Halberstam observes that Western culture cultivates a disbelief in female masculinity (15), because its language and action equates/conflates masculinity with maleness and femininity with femaleness. Thus, in *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam examines the "collective failure to ratify the masculinity produced by, for, and within women" (15). This collective failure, I argue, stems from cultural processes, of which YA literature forms an

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[66] The Genderqueer page of glbtq.com offers a succinct list of the various possibilities for genderqueer. These include:

1. neither man nor woman (without gender, agender, neutrois, non-gendered)
2. both man and woman (example: androgyne)
3. moving between two or more genders (gender fluid)
4. third gendered (to which some object because "third" precludes fourth, or more) or other-gendered (which includes those who prefer "genderqueer" or "non-binary" to describe their gender without labeling it otherwise)
5. having an overlap or blur of gender and orientation and/or sex (girlfags and guydykes)
6. [66]those who "queer" gender, in presentation or otherwise, who may or may not see themselves as non-binary or having a gender that is queer; this category may also include those who are consciously political or radical in their understanding of, or being, genderqueer

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[66]The website further notes the differentiation between #4 and #1 insofar as those who identify as neither man nor woman, such as neutrois, may either see their identification as agendered (without gender, #1), or as a "third gender" (#4, having a non-binary identified gender). Group #6 may include those who are binary-identified (man or male, woman or female) but "queer" in gender presentation or other ways. Binary-identified genderqueer individuals may occupy a contested space in the realm of genderqueer identity due to issues of appropriation. (Taken from http://genderqueerid.com/what-is-gq)

integral part. The process of reinforcing cultural norms that define success with actions that underpin the gender binary rewards those who embody, enact, and reinforce the binary. Such "successes" in YA literature include Harry Potter and his friends, who embody and exemplify gender expectations and heteronormativity, as well as Harriet, once she learns to lie (lying arguably constitutes a performance) and apologize for her "bad" (i.e., unfeminine) behavior, and Claire, who, in contrast to Lani, presents herself as a feminine-enough female and lives to tell Lani's (cautionary) tale. "Failures"[67] include Lani, who disappears, and Jade, whose story disappears by virtue of not being reprinted.

While finding positive images of gender variant characters is rare, Louise Erdrich is able to featuring gender variant characters YA series, likely because she can depict those characters as existing in a non-European culture that no longer exists Erdrich's YA series, *The Birchbark House* (1999), *The Game of Silence* (2005), and *The Porcupine Year* (2008) introduces Ojibwe culture to young readers as it tells a coming of age story in a format well-known to YA readers. While most of Louise Erdrich's adult novels are listed as Native American fiction,[68] this YA series is first and foremost part of the YA genre, intended by its author to be a coming of age story. The cultural expectations of a gynocentric Native American culture that includes three or more genders provides more opportunities for assimilation for a gender variant child than does a culture defined by the gender binary. Written for Westerners about a culture that is being deracinated by Western patriarchal values, the Birchbark series is told by a child who conforms to Western heteronormativity, whereas the series' genderqueer characters succumb to loneliness and death: The young genderqueer Two Strike, who displays arrogance and youthful self-

[67] In *The Queer Art of Failure* Halberstam remediates the idea of "failure" presented in these cautionary YA novels observing that "failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior…with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods" (3). As discussed in Chapter 5, traumatic examples by "failures" in the conventional sense depicted by Lani are designed to portray the punishing norms.
[68] See, e.g., goodreads.com. and louiseerdrich.com

centeredness, seems destined to hunt and live alone, and Old Tallow, also genderqueer, who is humble and concerned with the good of the community, ultimately dies saving her extended family. On the other hand, Omakayas is partnered with the boy that both she and Two Strike desire—the only time Omakayas "bests" Two Strike.

To find meaningful, positive representations of strong genderqueer characters, one must turn to depictions of those characters in cultures that have moved beyond Western gender limitations. The Birchbark series follows the typical YA adventure story line, although it is set in the 1840s and early 1850s and tells the story of an Ojibwa girl Omakayas and her family. Erdrich's mission to "instruct and delight" takes the form of teaching YA readers about the history and culture of a people who existed in North America but were vanquished by the invading white culture. Critic Dan Latham, writing about two "manly-hearted" women in this series, Two Strike and Old Tallow, notes that these two characters have a profound influence on Omakayas and the entire community, although they are marginalized and misunderstood even in the accepting and nurturing Ojibwe culture. Two Strike grows up as a gender variant child; Old Tallow also genderqueer, lives to adulthood, demonstrating the possibility that the gender variant child can survive, and Old Tallow becomes a heroic figure in the process (Latham 131).

According to Beemyn's and Kerry's definitions, Two Strike and Old Tallow are considered genderqueer. Neither specifically self-identifies as female (or male). Old Tallow, in particular, embodies masculine and feminine traits and performs equally male and female tasks. Two Strike, on the other hand, scorns "women's work" and has a wildness that members of her community consider arrogant, not because of her gender variance, but because Two Strike places her own needs and desires above the good of the community.

Using Butler's notion of performativity, Latham observes that Erdrich's series sets up and then subverts the Western gender binary through two gender variant characters who fluidly embody and enact both masculine and feminine traits, behaviors, and sensitivities. The text depicts these characters in the language and with the understandings of the culture that defeated them militarily, eradicated their language, and undermining their culture. The dominant Western culture seems more able to see the gender-fluid secondary characters as heroic, albeit solitary, in a story about a subaltern culture. The otherness of the Ojibwe culture combined with the unambiguous heterosexuality of the main character, Omakayas (both a nurturer and a warrior), depict the characters' gender variance in ways acceptable to Westerners. Erdrich does not cross the line that Sally Watson does with *Jade*, because Erdrich's Omakayas, performs within the binary, while the characters who challenge it, as part of a defeated culture, pose no threat to the dominant culture that defeated them. However, as Latham observes, Erdrich affirms the viability of gender variance while also acknowledging the problems that gender limitations can pose for all children (Latham 131).

Gender fluidity. Gender fluidity implies a non-binary gender categorization; those who are gender fluid embody and perform two or more genders simultaneously. Conceptualizing and writing about gender fluidity involves linguistic and cultural problematics. With respect to sex and power, whose interdependent connection is deeply rooted in Western history, Foucault notes, that

> [p]ower is essentially what dictates its law to sex. Which means first of all that sex is placed by power in a binary system…Secondly power prescribes an order for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility…And finally power acts by laying down rule: power's hold on sex is maintained through language. (83)

"Power" especially as Foucault uses the term, depends heavily on cultural principles, and here Foucault articulates the relationship between language and culture as well as the binary's dependence upon

language and culture for its perpetuation. The power of language extends to the reinforcement of the illusion that a specific gender is necessarily connected to a specific sex. As Butler observes,

> [t]he construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run *rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem* to follow from gender… (185)

In other words, the projection of masculinity, or masculine behavior, onto certain individuals and, correspondingly, femininity, or feminine behavior, onto others hides inconsistencies, voids, and contradictions in human behavior. "So even a 'real man'—all muscles, Clint Eastwood clenched teeth, and Sly Stallone dominance—might one day find himself crying during a movie…or feeling strange physical empathies with his pregnant wife" (Nestle, et. al 13).

Inconsistencies such as crying or feeling physical empathy with one's pregnant wife—whether or not one is male—are easily ignored or discounted because the ambient culture has firmly in place a binary system that excludes such inconsistencies from acceptable masculine behavior. Kate Bornstein's memoir, *Gender Outlaw*, meditates on desire without gender, observing that "sexual orientation/preference remains culturally linked to our gender system (and by extension to gender identity)…This link probably accounts for much of the tangle between sex and gender, [although] the conflation of sex and gender contributes to the linking together of the very different subcultures of gays, lesbians, bisexuals…and the transgendered" (37). Bornstein goes on to note that "dominant culture tends to combine its subcultures into manageable units" (38) which results in combining otherwise unrelated subgroups under the single umbrella term "queer." The concepts of sex and gender seem to overlap around the phenomenon of desire, she further observes, and desire connects to identity: "I need an identity appropriate…to the context in which I want to experience [a] person or thing… so even without

a gender identity *per se*, some workable identity can be called up and put into motion" (39). This phenomenon makes the discussion of gender fluidity important, and possibly dangerous, for YA readers who are at an age of experimentation and identity formation. The dominant culture may consider the presentation of gender fluidity dangerous for this group in particular because it has an investment in maintaining the gender binary, and young adults are in a crucial developmental stage with respect to learning about their role in the binary. Halberstam's observation of "how fiercely heterosexual and gender-invariant popular culture seems to be" (*Female Masculinity* 40) articulates Western culture's investment in young adults' acceptance of, and conformity to, the gender binary.

YA and queer theorist Kerry Mallan notes, in considering cyborgs and other non-human YA fictional characters, that aliens "continue to hold on to their gender and sexual identities…[c]onsequently they repeat gender performatives that are familiar to children from their previous engagements with narratives of adventure, romance, and heroes defeating the forces of evil" (*Gender Dilemmas* 123). In contrast, the novels discussed in this chapter, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill*, feature characters who change gender at will. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the inhabitants of the planet Gethen live in a natural state of being between the two genders assumed on Earth. A space traveler from Earth projects familiar genders onto Gethenians based on his relationships with them. The male earthling perceives every Gethenians leader he encounters as male because they leaders to have male titles (e.g., king, not queen), and this despite the fact that Gethenians are (wo)manly all the time and that it is the translation process that changes the ungendered Gethenian terms into fixed-gendered English ones like "king." The projection of fixed gender onto gender-fluid characters is partly a function of the conventions of the English language (the novel implies that Gethenians do not gender their

language in the same way that English is gendered), and partly a function of the Earthling's gender expectations (that leaders and negotiators are men—even after the Gethenian king becomes visibly pregnant).

YA literature, according to literature theorists Sarah Hertz and Don Gallo, allows YA readers to connect to stories "immediately because it deals with real problems and real issues that are central to their lives" (3). The "problem" novel forms a subgenre of the realistic adolescent novel: the problem novel tends to be narrower in focus, usually less rich in narrative scope, and often begins with the problem rather than with plot or characters. Moreover, the problem novel most often tells a story about a "child defined by the terminology of pain" (Egoff 3). It is this aspect that is particularly relevant to the situation of genderqueer characters in the *Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill*.

Educators Suzanne Reid and Sharon Stringer observe that literature of high quality helps YA readers focus their attention outside themselves and "learn to accept others who may at first seem distant and different" (16). However Reid and Stringer note, because "problem" novels provide an up-to-date and accurate mirror of YA readers' lives, they may prove to be disturbing or traumatic to some YA readers.

Most traditional YA novels of whatever quality do not address the difference represented by gender fluidity. While many YA problem novels involve frank discussions of sex and sexuality, very few addressed gender identity before 2004. Generally, YA problem novels address psychosocial problems such as identity issues, the desire to fit in, and sex and sexuality (Herz and Gallo). However, the majority of YA novels neither challenge nor question the gender binary. The few that address transgender issues reinforce without question the binary gender system.

Science Fiction (SF) and the Gender Binary. A traditional reference work like the *OED* defines Science Fiction (SF) as postulating scientific discoveries or environmental changes that take place far in the future or on distant planets and that often involve space or time travel. However, scholars and writers of SF, such as Adam Rogers, Daimen Broderick, and Norman Spinrad, dispute this definition, while SF author and theorist Isaac Asimov defined SF as "that branch of literature that deals with the human response to changes in the level of science and technology" (10). According to SF author Ursula Le Guin, the SF writer "is supposed to take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now, purify and intensify it …and extend it into the future" (xi). Part of the problem of definition involves the distinctions between SF and other forms of fantasy, distinctions which, Rogers observes, effectively become "mere tautologies, as if 'we' all know what it is and elaboration is superfluous" (ch 1). YA literary critic Harrison Means adds, "[n]o one has produced satisfactory definitions which distinguish SF from fantasy. Nevertheless, everyone, including me, claims to know the difference between the two after a novel or short story of one kind or the other is in hand and has been read" (1059). Spinrad is more blunt, pointing out that marketing often determines the category: "Science fiction is anything published as science fiction" (ix). Critics generally concur that SF uses technologies and scientific thought to posit situations and events that are theoretically possible according to the laws of physics, even if those situations or events have never been achieved. Fantasy, on the other hand, involves magic or supernatural powers which have no basis in science (Hastings).

While most YA novels address themes of finding one's identity or coming of age, SF generally does not do so. Rather SF depicts worlds in which a radical and permanent change has occurred, "a permanent change in the world as presented in the novel," as A. Waller Hastings observes (204). Thus, while the "permanent change in the world as presented" could be a

metaphor for young adults reaching maturity, it would seem that the SF and YA genres are incompatible. Readership age for the two genres, however, is similar: SF readership generally begins around the age of twelve or thirteen (Broderick, Gibson, Disch), as does that of YA readership.

Literary scholar Waller Hastings traces the history of SF from its origins in Thomas More's 1516 and *Utopia* Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*, postulating a division into two separate SF streams, through publishers' differentiation of adult and juvenile, during the post-World War II era. Hastings brings this differentiation into question by outlining an argument made by YA literature scholar Farah Mendlesohn (Mendlesohn qtd in Hastings 204) which attempts to answer the question "Is There Any Such Thing as Children's Science Fiction?" The "heavily qualified 'yes'" (Hastings 204) indicates that YA readers of SF, as with YA readers of all types of fiction, often stray beyond the bounds designated for them by adult publishers and authors. SF novels that win both the Hugo and Nebula awards are likely to attract many YA readers of SF. Means sees no real distinction between "juvenile" and "adult" SF in his interactions with young adults and literature:

> I am not sure what there is about science fiction and fantasy which entices the young adult readership. Maybe it is adventure—space-opera style—as in *Star Trek*, that very successful TV show which still pulls a crowd even on reruns. Perhaps it is the social criticism implicit in novels which have Huxley's *Brave New World* as their ancestor. Or maybe (to paraphrase Frank Herbert) it is because SF and F[antasy] cross thresholds never before imagined and thereby excite and prepare the reader for thresholds in his [*sic*] own thinking and his [*sic*] own life. (1059)

Means considers SF and fantasy to be related, with many similarities in style and content; the only difference between the two genres for Means is that SF borrows from science and technology (on which the effects for, e.g., the 1970s *Star Trek* television series were based) whereas fantasy depicts images and events that are not physically possible (e.g.,

the magical effects seen in the *Bewitched* or *I Dream of Jeannie* television series of the same period).

The subject matter of SF changes as technology and science advance. The idea of taking a rocket ship to the moon, science-fictional in 1940, becomes a reality in 1970. Computers that fit into the palm of one's hand, unheard of in the 1960s, are carried around by young adults, in the form of cellular "smart" telephones, today. At the same time, Science Fiction is big business. According to Worldcon.org, last year's World Science Fiction convention boasted more than 5,000 attendees from more than thirty countries during its five-day event. Members of the "Worldcon" (the World Science Fiction Convention) paid $230 as adults, $100 as YA (17-21) and $75 (under 17) to attend the event, based for the last seven years in Chicago, where the annual Hugo award for SF writing is presented. The high registration fee suggests that those who can afford to attend do not necessarily represent the bulk of SF readership. Many sources—including bloggers, participants in "fan fiction" (referenced in Chapter 2), and critics—indicate that convention attendees do not accurately represent overall SF readership.

SF-Fantasy Divide: Marketing and the Gender Binary

Despite the female authorship of *Frankenstein* (1818) as one of the first works of SF literature and Ursula Le Guin's overwhelming success as an SF author (Broderick, Means, Gibson), a recent trend of overt sexism in SF publishing and blogging has used gender to separate SF from fantasy. This tendency did not exist in 1969 when Le Guin wrote *The Left Hand of Darkness*. In fact, Le Guin, who won both the Hugo and Nebula awards for Best Science Fiction Novel 1967, is the writer that many current SF authors acknowledge as their inspiration. However, an August 8, 2013 article in *The Guardian* gave statistics on the dearth of female writers and attendees at recent SF conventions. *The Atlantic Wire* journalist Arit John

states that "[p]art of the reason [for the gender disparity] is that women's speculative fiction gets treated as 'fantasy,' while the imaginings of men are deemed 'science fiction,' which seems to have more of a connotation of gravitas," a statement which demonstrates the reinforcement of gender stereotypes according to the gender binary.

The issue of marketing in publishing is important, and the recently claimed distinction between SF and fantasy along gender lines may be due to marketing as well as cultural considerations. Studies of SF readers indicate that a disproportionate number of young, white, males from middle to upper-income homes comprise SF readership.[69] Educators Mary Anne Moffatt and Ellen Wartella observe that much male leisure reading is SF, marks a trend in the process of change. As STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs in the 1980s and 1990s attracted more females to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs, females became more visible readers of fiction that addresses these subjects.

It should be noted that most studies of SF readership were conducted during SF conventions which cater to a well-to-do demographic, which could also skew perceptions of SF readership. At the same time, recent reports of the sexism in SF publishing raises questions about SF readership demographics.[70] Furthermore, distinctions made in SF-fantasy readership along gender lines seems arbitrary since series such as the Harry Potter series, which falls under the scope of fantasy, rather than SF, has attracted a readership that crossed gender lines.

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[69] Traditionally, SF has been a literature predominantly written by males for male readers. As shown by the Maine researchers, one magazine, *Astounding/Analog*, reported a female readership of only 6.7% in 1949 and 11.9% in 1958. Surveys taken for the British magazines *Nebula* and *New Worlds* during the 1950s and early 1960s report female readership of between 5% and 15%. This orientation began to change during the 1960s. The *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fictio*n (F&SF), normally considered the least technologically oriented of the three major American science fiction magazines, reported a female readership of 29% at that time, a figure paralleled in 1974 by *Analog*, the most technologically oriented magazine, with a female readership of 25% (reported by Alan Berger, *SF Studies*, 1977).

[70] See, e.g., Alison Flood's June 12, 2013 article "Science Fiction Authors Attack Sexism Amid Row Over SFWA Magazine" in *The Guardian* (http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/12/science-fiction-sexism-sfwa).

In 1969, space was considered "the final frontier" as the introduction to the *Star Trek* television series announced. In the 21st century, GenderPAC[71] founder and activist Riki Wilchins notes, as "the youth of today already know…gender is the new frontier: the place to rebel, to create new individuality and uniqueness" (Wilchins qtd in Nestle, et al. 13). "Self-definition, the quintessential task of adolescence, often becomes in YA science fiction the problem of defining what it is to be human in an alienating world" (Hastings 205). In the 21st century, then, SF, despite its problems with sexism and gender wars, is the genre which is likely to continue to depict and explore gender fluidity, as well as the possibility for multigendered—or non-gendered—humans.

Ursula Le Guin has stated that science fiction "is not predictive; it is descriptive" (*Left Hand* xii), with descriptions of gender fluidity in humans, or human-like inhabitants of other planets, exploring the "hint of another kind of person we might have been if only we didn't inhabit a world where every one of the 6 billion human beings must fit themselves into one of only two genders" (Wilchins qtd in Nestle, et. al 13). As Le Guin and Wilchins intuit, SF is a genre well-suited to the exploration of this new frontier, and YA readers, building their sense of identity, can read in the pages of SF texts the possibilities of life beyond the gender binary.

The Left Hand of Darkness

In Le Guin's SF novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the Ekumen, a muliplanetary confederation formed to effect trade of goods and information sharing, sends an Envoy to convince one of the two leaders of Gethen (called Winter by the Ekumen due to its ice-covered environment) to join their alliance.

[71] According to its website, GenderPAC, the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, was a GLBT rights organization whose mission was to make sure that school and work places were safe for every person to grow and succeed, whether or not they conform to cultural expectations of masculinity or femininity. The organization was founded by Riki Wilchins in Washington DC and was in existence from 1995-2009.

Gethenians are ambisexual (Le Guin's word) and ambigendered people. As Genly Ai, the Earth-born Envoy, attempts to fit the Gethenians into the gender binary that he knows, he observes:

> Though I had been nearly two years on Winter I was still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him [*sic*] [72] into those categories so irrelevant to his [*sic*] nature and so essential to my own. (11-12)

The entire story, narrated mostly by the Envoy and partly by his Gethenian counterpart, Estraven, depicts a world which is in its ice age and people who are father to some children and mother to others, depending upon which sex they assumed during their "kemmer," the time in which they are able to procreate. The Gethenians see the Envoy as a pervert, one who is constantly in kemmer, who cannot escape the bonds of his procreative state to focus on taking care of business:

> The society of Gethen, in its daily functioning and in its continuity, is without sex…Anyone can turn his [*sic*] hand to anything…The fact that everyone between seventeen and thirty-five or so is liable to be "tied down to childbearing," implies that no one is quite so thoroughly "tied down" here as women, elsewhere… Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally… therefore nobody here is quite so free as a free male anywhere else. (93)

Children are raised communally on Gethen: "There is no myth of Oedipus on Winter" (94), and as the Envoy observes, there is no rape, and there is no war. There is also no binary division of humanity according to sex or gender: strong/weak, dominant/submissive, owner/chattel, active/passive do not apply. "When you meet a Gethenian, you cannot and must not do what a bisexual naturally does, which is to cast him [*sic*] in the role of Man or Woman…Our entire pattern of socio-sexual interaction is nonexistent here. They cannot play the game. They do not see one another as men or women" (94).

[72] The use of [*sic*] here intends to bring attention to the problem of translation into a language dependent upon, and confined within, the gender binary.

The planet Gethen features four sectors, two of which, at the poles, have weather too brutal to support life. In the other two sectors are two countries, Orgoreyn and Karhide. Each country has its own language, and each has very different sets of customs, economics, and government. The Envoy speaks both languages, and he also has the ability to "mindspeak," a type of telepathic communication for which the Gethenians have the ability, but not the inclination. At one point the Envoy observes, "perhaps a Gethenian, being singularly complete, feels telepathic speech as a violation of completeness" (255). The Envoy, aware of the limitations of language, observes in his account of the Gethenians that lacking the '"human pronoun'…I must say 'he,' for the same reasons as we used the masculine pronoun in referring to a transcendent god: it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine. But the very use of the pronoun in my thoughts leads me continually to forget that [the Gethenian] I am with is not a man, but a manwoman" (94). The Envoy's overall observations convey to the reader that even the idea of manwoman does not truly capture the Gethenians' physiology.

Le Guin has created a world of people who are both male and female four-fifths of each month, and either male or female, interchangeably, for the remaining one-fifth of the time. The world is described in the reader's gender binary-based English, although both the Envoy and the Gethenian who narrate the story bring the reader's attention back to the levels of language that are being invoked. The two Gethenian languages in which the Envoy communicates are translated into English for the reader, and the Envoy attempts to indicate the limitations of those translations; the Gethenians also switch between the Kardhidish and Orgoreyn languages, depending upon the country through which they travel. The reader receives reminders of the multiple levels of language, as well as the stark absence of language in mindspeak, by the

author's use of untranslatable Gethenian words and footnotes that provide explanations of cultural phenomena that do not have exact translatability.

The changing points of view between the Gethenian and the Envoy, presented in diary form, fills in narrative gaps would result from a singly-voiced first-person point of view. The changing points of view also serve to depict the Envoy, seen as a pervert to most Gethenians, through the eyes of a sympathetic Gethenian. When circumstances conspire to make the Envoy an outlaw (presumed dead) in Orgoreyn and the gender-fluid Gethenian a traitor in Karhide, the two travel across the harshest part of Gethen together to retrieve the Envoy's telecommunicator so that he can call his spaceship down to Gethen to prove (a) that he is alive, (b) that he is from another planet, and (c) that his Gethenian ally is not a traitor.

Despite the projection of linguistic limitations (allowing only a fixed gender for Estraven, the Gethenian), Le Guin carefully reminds readers that this false impression is due to the Envoy's prejudice: "I saw [finally]…what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in [Estraven]: that he [*sic*] was a woman as well as a man…I had not wanted to give my trust, my friendship to a man who was a woman, a woman who was a man" (248-9). Even in this realization the Envoy, trapped in the gender binary, cannot escape the masculine pronoun that reinforces his preconceptions, and makes it impossible for him to appreciate the Gethenian fully. The Envoy's conditioning keeps him ensnared in the gender binary, and his indoctrination—the performativity explicated by Judith Butler twenty-five years later—with fixed gender assumptions proves to be a limitation for him: "A man wants his virility regarded, a woman wants her femininity appreciated…On Winter they will not exist. One is respected and judged only as a human being. It is an appalling experience" (95).

Le Guin's novel demonstrates that gender fluidity is hard to represent in English in its current usage, because of English speakers' indoctrination into male or female behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, and the gendered nature of the language itself—"ze" and "hir" are not in common use, although more individuals are invoking the grammatically incorrect use of "they/them" in the singular to avoid the gendered "he/him" or "she/her."

Throughout most of the novel, the Envoy is pejorative the Gethenians' ambisexuality, referring to it as "degrading" (94), and wondering, "what would a society of eunuchs achieve?—but of course they are not eunuchs…rather [they] are more comparable to pre-adolescents, not castrate, but latent" (95).

The unflattering Gethenian view of the Envoy casts him primarily as a pervert. The challenge to readers is twofold: first, readers must keep in mind the gender fluidity of the Gethenians, despite the envoy's entrenchment in the gender binary of Earth. Second, readers must remember that on Gethen, they, too, would be considered "perverts" if they identify as either male or female.

In the end, however, the Gethenian, the ambisexual, gender-fluid character, is assassinated as a traitor to his country (he is accused of lying about the spaceship in order to discredit and then overthrow his pregnant king) before the Envoy can call his spaceship. The gender-fixed male from Earth, although considered a pervert by the aliens, lives, succeeds in his mission, and, presumably, receives rewards for his efforts.

The assassination of the traitor, who is also the most visibly gender-fluid character, communicates subtly but powerfully that gender fluidity is unacceptable. Among the alien Gethenians, only one is consistently shown as gender fluid, and he is assassinated.

Le Guin complicates the issue of gender fluidity by layering onto it other identity issues, such as, age, race, and notions of self. In addition to assumptions about gender, the novel also challenges notions of self with respect to gender. The Envoy, a human from Earth, is changed by travelling among the gender-fluid aliens, just as along with the Envoy, readers' gender assumptions are challenged. Further, the Envoy recognizes when the gender-fixed members of the spaceship's gender-fixed crew finally appear on Gethen, that the long journey he has made with the gender fluid Gethenian, has changed the way he sees the crew (Fayad). Likewise, Le Guin implies, the reader might also be changed by reading of the journey and by the questions about gender assumptions that have been raised: "The whole tendency to dualism that pervades human thinking may be found to be lessened or changed" on Gethen (Le Guin, "Is Gender" 94), or, a YA reader who has vicariously visited the planet may find it easier to question Earth's gender dualism. Referring to Le Guin's quotation above, SF critic Adam Rogers, notes that "*The Left Hand of Darkness* is remarkably non-binary as a novel. This may be one reason why some critics like it so little" (ch 3).

Le Guin's intent in creating a non-binary world was to depict a world without war.[73] All the characters are automatically perceived as male, becoming female only to bear children. This, Le Guin notes, presents a "real flaw in the book" ("Is Gender Necessary" 168). The argument made in this chapter maintains that this "automatic" assumption of maleness results as much from the binary conventions integral to the English language as from the way Le Guin formulated the text. Le Guin makes the Gethenians' gender fluidity evident enough to cause discomfort for readers and critics (as noted above) who are attached to a binary gender system. Le Guin introduces a number of phrases that challenge the binary, despite language restrictions.

[73] Following the discussion in Chapters 1 and 2 in which Turner and Cherland observe that where a binary exists, a hierarchy exists, wars are fought, in essence, to assert dominance within a binary opposition. Le Guin recognizes that a world without war can only exist where the gender binary has been eliminated.

In addition to the pregnant king, the reader meets the envoy's "landlady, a voluble man" (47), the Envoy's host in Orgoreyn, "a substantial man…but a little vague" around the edges, effeminate (145), and Guam, the "extraordinarily handsome human being by any standards and as either sex" (138), among others. All characters are introduced as male, but all have enough roundness and effeminacy, and most are described as being "not as tall even as many women of [the Envoy's] race" (130), to remind a reader of their gender fluidity.

The irony in the text of *Left Hand of Darkness* is that the fixed-gender Earth human is considered the "pervert" on the planet Gethen. When the Envoy has an audience with the king about joining the Ekumen, the king asks about the Envoy's gender fixity, reminding the reader again about the discrepancy: "'They're all like that—like you?' That was a hurdle [the Envoy] could not lower for them… [The king went on,] 'So all of them, out on these other planets, are in permanent kemmer? A society of perverts…'" (36). Le Guin puts readers from the gender binary world into the uncomfortable position of being considered the "perverts."

The Envoy observes that the Gethenians would have to learn to take the "perversion" in stride, but in fact, readers must learn to take the Gethenians' gender fluidity in stride to fully appreciate the text. This includes acknowledging the fact of the Envoy's prejudice and the gender-binary nature of the language they are reading. With this acknowledgement, words like "sir," "man," "Mr.," "king," and "grandfather" must be read as gender fixed, and therefore inaccurate translations of words that have no genderless equivalent in the Gethenian languages from which they are being translated.

Are YA readers up for this task? As any adult who has tried to master the arcane rules of Yu-gi-oh[74] card play, the intergenerational relationships of Pokémon,[75] or the workings of a

[74] Yu-gi-oh, a manga-based trading card franchise first launched by Japanese toy company Konami in 1999, sells packs of cards for a battle-style dueling competition. According to the Konami's website, "in this game, two players

Sims[76] world can attest, YA readers, presented with a protocol, seem able to work within that set of rules. This would also seem to apply to Gethen's rules of gender fluidity or the grammatical rules introduced in *Nearly Roadkill.* Perhaps that presents the real problem seen by critics who object to the gender fluid world Le Guin has created: that world offers YA readers, in their formative years, an option that excludes the gender binary. Rogers affirms this possibility by suggesting that "most of our literary tradition, certainly in the novel, has come out of a binary aesthetic. …Indeed some critics (for instance Harold Bloom in his book *Agon*) have argued that such binarism, or more specifically the conflict inherent in such opposition, is the root of the energy and appeal of literature" (87). *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which eliminates binaries, war, hierarchies, and even the question of whether the Envoy will be successful in the end (he goes to a foreteller, a Gethenian oracle, and is told that he will succeed in his mission), does not create the sex and gender tensions that usually move a story forward. Instead, Le Guin creates intricate landscapes and a tension between the reader's lived reality in a binary world and the non-binary world between the pages. The strategy works, in the literary critical world insofar as the text won two major writing awards and is still in print more than forty years after its initial publication.

The title of *The Left Hand of Darkness* itself implies two binaries: left/right and dark/light. In this way, the title brings the binary to the forefront. The explanation of the title,

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Duel each other using a variety of Monster, Spell, and Trap Cards to defeat their opponent's monsters and be the first to drop the other's Life Points to 0." The "simple" rule book features 13 rules; the "advanced" rule book is 27 pages long and details the intricacies of the various types of dueling monsters, spells, traps, and levels, as well as the six different Attributes, multiple Effects, Monster attack points, and Monster defense points for each card. Each card also has unique features specific to that card. Cards provide players multiple ways to summon, flip, and capture other players' cards. All play has the goal of increasing one's life points and decreasing an opponent's points. In addition, cards can be used in conjunction with multiple player online video game play.

[75] Pokémon, a Nintendo roleplay video game, is considered to be the second largest video game franchise in the world, according to Pokémon Company International. The main premise of the video game series requires players to battle and catch Pokémon, anime creations that mutate intergenerationally to aid their players acquisition of power and their ability to capture or kill other Pokémon creations.

[76] Sims, a life simulation video game series, allows players to create manage, and expand multiple simulated worlds simultaneously, with random and directed effects.

found within the text, indicates the wholeness of the gender-fluid Gethenians that is reminiscent of Plato's androgynes: "It is yin and yang. *Light is the left hand of darkness…* how did it go? Light, dark, fear, courage. Cold, warmth. Female, male. It is yourself, [Estraven]. Both and one" (*Left Hand* 267). Le Guin frequently reminds readers that in the gender-fluid world of the novel where war, hierarchy, and fixed genders do not exist, neither do marriage, rape, and inheritance. Progress moves very slowly on Gethen, and rules of the Hearth (the sharing of warmth and food) replace rules of economic competition and rapid technological growth. A YA reader who may not yet be fully schooled in the rules of the gender binary, or who may have begun to question or reject those rules, experiences a non-binary option in this SF novel. Thus, the YA reader sees Estraven, the character most consistently and clearly depicted as gender fluid, accused of treason and marked for execution. At the same time, the YA reader is invited to see either a fixed gender binary which is considered "perverted" on the host planet, or the possibility for a movement beyond the binary, depending upon whether a reader has fully entered Le Guin's world.

From the beginning of the novel, the Envoy's gender fluid companion, Estraven is the bridge between the readers' gender-binary world and the gender-fluid world of Gethen. The Gethenian appears untrustworthy both to the Envoy (who sees Estraven as too much a woman to be trusted [7]) and to his own people (for participating in a fiction that an interplanetary alliance exists to which his king and nation should surrender their sovereignty [30]). Estraven is also the only character that the Envoy fully perceives and acknowledges as gender fluid. Thus, even though the Envoy's mission succeeds, permanently changing the Gethenian way of life, ultimately, the text demonstrates to YA readers that the gender-fluid character cannot survive. The subliminal message indicates to YA readers that those who challenge the gender binary challenge "our" way of life, usurping power, and, thus, must be considered enemies of the state.

Estraven is not, in fact, a traitor, although the novel leaves the reader with the image of "hir" assassination.

Cyber/cyberpunk Fiction and Gender Fluidity. According to the *OED*, cyberpunk fiction (CF) is a subgenre of SF. The setting is usually a lawless subculture of an oppressive society dominated by computer technology. SF writer Damien Broderick elaborates on this definition, adding that CF depicts dystopian near futures set on Earth, rather than utopias on distant planets in the far future (80-1). Rogers adds that CF is entirely dependent upon intersections of television, computer, and technologies of mass reproduction for its premise and metaphors (124). "The particular goal of cyberpunk [is to] emphasize the impact of technological transformation on its human characters as the subjects of technoculture: cyberpunk starts from the assumption that technoculture is exactly our currently all-encompassing 'way of life'" (Hollinger 143). CF endeavors to critique and expand notions of our "way of life," although SF also engages in this type of critique and expansion.

Much of CF imitates film noir (Broderick 80), and often depicts characters who are marginalized, loners connected by computer to society and corporate greed in urban, dystopic landscapes (Bacon-Smith 253-4). William Gibson, whose 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, is considered the first work of CF, created the neologism "cyberspace" (Gibson 132-4) from which followed the naming of the CF subgenre.

With its depictions of interactions between humans and technology while positing post-human bodies' interacting in virtual worlds, CF is well suited to non-binary portrayals of gender, and specifically to descriptions of gender fluidity in a virtual space. SF texts are generally considered utopic; in contrast, CF literature tends to be dystopic. "Dystopic texts are structured in such a way that the reader may benefit from being able to envision his [or her] current world

order in a way that enables critiques that may not have been considered prior to his [or her] interactions with a particular text" (Abbamondi 134). For YA readers, this benefit includes the introduction of other possibilities for definitions of self. CF characters are adept in the use of cyber technology, and often have little interaction with the "real," i.e., non-virtual, world. These characters, already marginalized by virtue of their isolation, are not likely to be well socialized with respect to the norms associated with the gender binary.

Virtual environments, free from both social convention and the physical laws of space-time, position CF characters to expand the boundaries of gender far beyond the traditional binary. Queer theorist Veronica Hollinger and others speculate about human sexual interactions with technology: "[W]hat sets cyberpunk apart from much earlier science fiction is its relatively neutral, and sometimes even celebratory, acceptance of the ways in which technology has come to over-write innumerable features of the natural world, including human sexuality" (Hollinger 143). The CF novel *Nearly Roadkill* depicts the expansion of human conceptions of gender as human interactions mediated by technology help them explore performances of gender.

Nearly Roadkill

Nearly Roadkill, the 1996 CF novel by Caitlin Sullivan and Kate Bornstein, uses the conventions of cyber technology to explore the possibilities of gender fluidity. This novel is set in a cyberpoliced world in the very near future, and most of the physical action takes place on the East coast, much of it at Coney Island. The United States government and an unnamed corporate conglomerate have conspired to make the "Infobahn," the information superhighway, free for everyone if all users sign up for a free account and provide demographic data that will enable "appropriate" information to be marketed to them. The corporate conglomerate delivers to the

government an extensive set of facts about each citizen, and the corporation funding the Infobahn gains a very specific targeted marketing system.

The technology described clearly reflects that of 1996 (bulky desktop computers—not laptops—green monitor screens, dial-up internet connections even at the governmental level, and neither hand-held computers nor cellular phones), which positions the story in the last millennium. Nonetheless, some of the issues addressed are uncannily current: the lack of privacy in cyberspace with governmental tracking of personal identities and corporate tracking of individuals' tastes for marketing purposes and the casting of whistleblowers as traitors on a heavily used world cyber network.

The Left Hand of Darkness connects the gender binary to issues of age, race, and notions of self. *Nearly Roadkill*, on the other hand, connects the gender binary to physical space-time, whose primary narrator, a 13-year-old boy, Toobe (pronounced "tube"), acts as the intermediary between two characters, whose screen names are Scratch and Winc. These characters, who have never met in non-virtual reality, repeatedly meet in different chat rooms while appearing as people of different genders, ages, races, personae, and sexual orientations. The novel's futuristic cyber environment has the United States government requesting all internet users to register voluntarily in a thirty-minute process and ascertains each user's identity and identifying characteristics (age, education, consumer preferences, and gender). Provided with only two choices for gender, Scratch and Winc refuse to register.

Scratch and Winc, both loners in the "real" world, spend a lot of time in the virtual world using personae, such as Frankie and Johnny, Digqueer and Lovboy, Mythter and Gyrl, Leila and Karn. Often appearing in the same chat rooms, they eventually recognize each other. Multiple conversations in different chat rooms occur simultaneously, with Scratch and Winc chatting

privately with each other at the same time as they chat "publicly" and privately with others in a variety chat rooms.

Like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Nearly Roadkill* is told as a series of diary entries, with Toobe providing the central narrative as Scratch and Winc send him reports of their online exploits. Toobe is mentored a sophisticated webmaster with a screen name (Jabbathehut) that refers to the large, slug-like alien of George Lucas's space opera film series *Star Wars*. Protecting Toobe, Scratch, and Winc from the cyber police, Jabbathehut provides the reader with reports on how the cyber police fare as they pursue Scratch and Winc. Eventually, the text introduces "cyberwitch" Gwynyth, formerly a bearded lady at the Coney Island amusement park and Jabbathehut's friend. Gwynyth, who runs a server "node," can create and stop computer viruses. She also and writes computer code (which she calls "spells") to hide users—specifically Toobe, Scratch, and Winc—from the cyber police.

The principal cyber cop is an "old fashioned" gumshoe lieutenant named Wally Budge who works for the Federal Bureau of Census and Statistics. Budge, who proves much better at detective work than computer use, signs up as a web user inadvertently selecting the "wrong" gender and being called "Ms. Budge" for the remainder of the narrative: in this cyber world, once a user selects a gender, it is unchangeable.

The novel's language intersperses American English with slang and "cyberspeak," a glossary for which includes the gender-neutral pronouns "ze" and "hir" as well as terms that are now in common usage (email, emoticons, chat room, web) and acronyms (lol: laughing out loud; ROTFL: rolling on the floor laughing; sysop: systems operator) with which many 1996 readers would have been unfamiliar. Bornstein's and Sullivan's glossary also defines unspoken cyber conventions, such as punctuation that describe action in cyber space. For example, asterisks

placed around a word emphasizes that word, e.g., I mean *now*—emphasizes "now"; double colons indicate action, e.g., ::giggling::. >> << differentiate between simultaneous statements of various users on a cyberspace bulletin board or in a chat room. The novel depicts multiple concurrent conversations visually by showing the main chat in conventional script dialog form (speaker's name followed by what the speaker says) and private simultaneously sent messages printed in grey boxes with headings describing the message type and its intended recipient. In addition, white boxes show governmental messages, with distinctive fonts guiding the reader through space and time changes as the story progresses.

The conventions of cyber interactions and the novel's changing points of view add dimensionality to the story as they show the words, movements, and, to some extent, the emotions of both the hunter (Lt. Budge, together with his cyber tracker/virus, Typhoid Mary) and the hunted (Scratch, Winc, and Toobe). Toobe's familiarity with both Scratch's and Winc's genderlessness and Toobe's use of the appropriate genderless pronouns, along with the counterpoint—Budge's rigid insistence that the criminals he is chasing are young rebellious males—serve to underscore the falsity of gender assignment by someone trapped in the gender binary (Budge) for people who have moved beyond the binary.

Eventually, Budge creates a list of all the names that Scratch and Winc have used on the internet and sends the Typhoid Mary tracker virus to find and disable the two users. Having delivered the list to the government officials and the marketing gurus who have collaborated to create the web sign-up system, Budge asks them to provide him approximate identities for the people being tracked. The marketers describe "Citizen Winc" as

> …a young senior white Native American female male earning between $6000 and $500,000 annually. Objects of regular perusal include, but are not limited to *Vogue Online catalog*…*Scientific American*, *Urban Sportsman* and *Girlfriends* magazines…Citizen also frequents multiple university libraries searching for

> information in the field of Ethnomethodology…is a regular subscriber to several Vertigo comic book titles…Pattern indicates Citizen is a heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual male ages 13 through 58 or heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual female ages 23 through 72… (95)

Likewise, according to product interest area frequency, the marketers report "Citizen Scratch" as

> …a middle-aged senior female male African-American Caucasian of Irish descent, living on several welfare programs, alternately earning up to $75,000 annually. Objects of regular perusal include…*Ms.*, *On Our Backs*, *Off Our Backs*, *GQ*… Citizen also frequents multiple university libraries searching for information in the fields of Psychology of Mind, Goddess Culture, and Weaponry…indicating the citizen is a heterosexual, homosexual bisexual male ages 12 through 58 or heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual female ages 23 through 72… (96)

Scratch and Winc become unwitting folk heroes due to their refusal to register as Infobahn users and to their continued "illegal" use of multiple identities. Young people initiate Scratch's and Wink's fame and show their support by scratching and winking as they pass each other in malls and other public places. When Scratch and Winc t-shirts, buttons, and other paraphernalia begin appearing in concession stands and roadside vendors' carts, other Infobahn users begin registering as Scratch or Winc, or both. Finally, as the government leaders blame Lt. Budge for failing to catch the culprits quickly, Infobahn users discover that they have been profiled and have been allowed access only to certain parts of the web based upon their profiles. A protest movement begins in support of Scratch and Winc with all users agreeing to log off the internet for twenty-four hours. As these developments occur, the government, pressured by its conglomerate sponsor of the "free" internet, calls for the apprehension of the two "vaders" (Registration evaders) because "the multipersona factor is a dead giveaway to the types of flagrant abuse of the Net we've been concerned about…such profiles are almost always linked to criminal activity…" (119). As the two heroes continue to evade capture, higher levels of government become involved. Eventually, the Undersecretary of the Bureau issues a Public

Safety Announcement that appears simultaneously on all computer users' screens warning users of "the status of suspected criminals…'Scratch' and 'Winc' [whose] suspected activities now include the formal charge of 'Conspiracy to overthrow the government of the United States of America.' This is an act of High Treason, punishable by death…" (277). A coda, eerily reminiscent of the caveat against aiding Estraven in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, warns that any "attempt to provide aid to, or harbor the persons of 'Scratch' and/or 'Winc' will automatically carry a similar charge of conspiracy" (277).

The "conspiracy" begins as Scratch's and Winc's admirers question the registration process and the reasons for the government's tracking their internet use. It becomes a treasonous offense when Winc offhandedly posts on a chat room that everyone should stop using the net for twenty-four hours. In the government escalation of charges against Scratch and Winc Budge, removed from the investigation finally manages to engage Scratch and Winc in a chat as users are signing off the internet in record numbers. That chat is emblematic of Scratch's and Winc's gender fluidity as well as the extent to which it bewilders Budge:

> **Scratch:** Cat got your tongue?
> **Winc:** ::leaning across the table toward the handsome officer, allowing cleavage to show:: Something distracting you, officer?
> **Ms. Budge:** Why do you pull that shit with me?
> **Scratch:** Maybe she'll go for this: ::straightening my tie:: Can I buy you a drink, hon?
> **Winc:** ::leaning back, stroking my moustache, watching Scratch pick up the pretty girl cop:: (324)

Gender fluid in cyberspace, Scratch and Winc change their genders from one line to the next and change Budge's gender at the same time. This confuses Budge as much as it confounds the internet cybertracker that created the contradictory reports on "Citizen Scratch" and "Citizen Winc." Budge and the government's cyber technology, utilizing accepted gender-binary language and assumptions in their attempt to track Scratch and Winc, fail because Scratch and Winc fall

outside the generally accepted notions of gender and because the "outlaws" are aided by two powerful webmasters who hide them and disable the trackers and the viruses created to catch them.

In the novel, adolescents become the first net-users to join the Scratch and Winc rebellion against registration, and it is also adolescents who initially scratch and wink at each other in solidarity with the rebels. YA character Toobe and his internet friends are facile in both gender-neutral language and the "technospeak" of internet chat rooms and computer code. Lt. Budge, Scratch (who goes out for food and bike rides, but does not seem to read the newspaper), and others of their generation, such as Toobe's father, need youthful helpers to help them navigate the virtual world of cyberspace. Outcasts and loners, like Jabbathehut, Gwynyth, and Winc, sophisticated in their use of the Infobahn, remain ensconced in their apartments with computer technology that they make work for them. Outcasts from the dominant society, they teach and mentor Toobe and his cyberfriends, which some in the dominant culture would see as setting a dangerous precedent.

Toobe and his cyber-savvy friends transcend the linguistic gender binary and navigate the new technological internet world. Between Toobe's easy use of gender-neutral pronouns, his acceptance of the ever-changing genders of Scratch and Winc, and his quick and easy use of "technospeak," Toobe exemplifies a futuristic individual who incorporates constantly changing technological progress and gender multiplicity into his life. In this novel, technological developments parallel those in gender multiplicity, and in the English language, whose ever-increasing vocabulary (Baugh 9) expands to encompass the developments in both technology and gender. Thus, despite the rootedness of the American language and culture in the gender binary,

and the difficulty of representing gender fluidity in English, the new technology and the new gender system require and easily produce new vocabularies in English.

Like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Nearly Roadkill* expands language to encompass new ways of existing. Technological language adapts acronyms and assumes technology's conventions for describing computer code's working and effects. For instance, a GUI (Graphical User Interface) allows a user to create WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get—pronounced wizzy-wig) images). Ironically, the computer code itself works on a binary system of 0s and 1s.

Gender fluidity requires new words to replace or which eliminate gendered vocabulary. In *Nearly Roadkill*, Toobe uses "ze" and "hir" to invite a more gender-neutral convention that he and his friends substitute for gendered language. Users like Scratch and Winc, who refuse to identify themselves by gender, reinforce the gender-neutral convention and find that other internet users eventually accept fluidity, although most have some reservations about relinquishing the gender binary.

> **Toobe Entry**…
> Here's an example of Scratch torturing some poor dude who wants hir to be a girl. But ze won't cooperate. The other one's not Winc, though. Just some guy who found Scratch online.
>
> **>>FORWARDED CHAT LOG: Scratch---> TOOBE**
> **AWESOME**: You a guy or a girl?
> **Scratch**: Does it matter?
> **AWESOME**: I'm pretty loose about most things, but I don't fuck no dudes.
> **Scratch**: Ah, that's a shame, hon. You'd probably enjoy it if you loosened up. That's OK, I'm not anything tonight.
> **AWESOME**: I take it you enjoy watching guys together. No, I don't think I would enjoy it, and yes I am pretty loose.
> **Scratch**: I enjoy lots of things, like guys who can be receptive, as it were. :)
>
> **That little :) symbol is a smile (turn it on its side and you'll see). I don't use them, way too cute for me. Scratch doesn't usually either, but I guess ze was "in character."…**

> **AWESOME**: Somehow I get the impression you're a guy. … Your attitude is all fucked up. But I think that is just great. LOL<< (12)

The exchange above provides an example of the way the text functions to show Toobe's ease with Scratch and Winc's gender fluidity and the lack of ease that other internet users have with the transition between binary gender assumptions and gender fluidity. As depicted in this text, most individuals engaging in role playing in internet chat rooms either assume a persona that resembles their own or a diametrically opposite one, in either case, an instance of gender as performativity. Scratch and Winc carry their individual gender performances to an extent not conceived by other net users or by its government overseers. They discover, when they must finally physically interact in non-virtual reality, that their gendered bodies impede their customary net-mediated interactions. As a consequence, while the internet goes down and the government issues an all-out (non-virtual) "man" hunt for them, they can interact with each other only by sitting side by side in a computer room, evoking a persona, and "talking" to each other by computer (Sullivan and Bornstein, *Nearly Roadkill* 353).

Nearly Roadkill depicts adults as set in their individual ways, each with an individually identifiable point of view. This affords each a vantage point on the overall story informed by "hir" individual experiences (prior to the action in the novel) and "hir" level of technological savvy. Toobe moves easily and nonjudgmentally among them, and the reader sees the formation of Toobe's own identity being influenced by the technology and the non-binary gender expressions that he sees around him.

The novel challenges readers to maintain awareness of their own gender prejudices and their need to know (or not) the genders of Scratch, Winc, and Jabbathehut, just as they are challenged by the rampant anachronisms in Gwynyth's entries. Clearly computer-literate,

Gwynyth intersperses her Tech Notes (e.g., "have [created computer code] for bypasses allowing passage without being traced") with astrological observations (e.g., "12 hours until Mercury goes Retrograde") (307). Eventually Gwynyth and Jabbathehut create a "Tar Baby" virus that disables the Typhoid Mary virus tracking Toobe, Scratch, and Winc, which leaves "Ms. Budge" with only one course of action: to delete his tracker virus.

The novel also challenges readers to confront gender fluidity within the context of identity issues such as race and age. Online, Scratch and Winc easily change all aspects of their identities. When Budge asks why they have to "play at being something else… why not just be yourselves?" Winc answers "::gently:: Maybe this *is* ourselves" (324). Winc implies that one's attitude toward aspects of one's self—gender, race, culture, age—determines the fluidity of those aspects, and all are, to some extent, performative. The concept and practice of gender fluidity are culturally and linguistically problematic, because the gender binary informs so many aspects of our language and culture. Other types of fluidity—age, for example—are more accepted with "60 is the new 40" a common phrase and cosmetic surgeries, hair colorings, and other physical enhancements common practice.

With respect to gender fluidity, however, the government portrayed in *Nearly Roadkill*, considers gender-fluid characters traitors, just as the gender-fluid character was in the 1969 *The Left Hand of Darkness*, where Estraven is shot and killed. Once identified, Winc is shot, but with Scratch escapes and returns to cyberspace. They cannot live in the "real" world and maintain their gender fluidity—although the authors suggest there is a chance that Toobe's generation will be more accepting of gender fluidity. Ironically in *Nearly Roadkill*, the humans who are considered anomalies in "real" life, and who cannot live or be accepted "out" in the world, become heroes in virtual reality.

Nearly Roadkill qualifies as a YA novel due to its thirteen-year-old narrator and to the fact that it addresses issues of identity. Technologically dated by rapid changes in technology during the last twenty years, gender fluidity issues seem linked to the past, and therefore become less threatening. Like *The Left Hand of Darkness, Nearly Roadkill* in challenging the gender binary, that threatens the essence of literature (Rogers 87).

Like *Jade, Nearly Roadkill* was banished into publishing obscurity, and as with *Jade*, critical reception of *Nearly Roadkill* was virtually nonexistent, with critics preferring to silence the gender-fluid message of the text with inattention. Thus, *Nearly Roadkill* has been relegated to a "cult" following of Kate Bornstein's other writings about life outside the binary and outside the mainstream. Bornstein has written another book for YA readers that addresses the darker side of reality for youth who find that they cannot fit themselves into the gender binary: *Hello, Cruel World. 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and other Outlaws* (2006).

A contemporary reader of *Nearly Roadkill*, instantly aware of changes in technology since 1996; also recognizes that attitudes about gender fluidity and the gender binary have not changed appreciably in the same decades. The technical language used by Toobe (and others) in *Nearly Roadkill* are now in common use and would not require a descriptive index today, but gender fluidity and gender-neutral language have not been generally accepted. Instead, anecdotal evidence from kindergarten and grade school teachers since 2000 indicates a reversion to a more rigidly enforced gender binarism with parents trending to favor gender-specific colors, toys, clothing, and behavior reinforcement. In a parallel literary trend, Cuseo illustrates the fact that lesbian and gay characters, visible in YA literature from 1969 until the early 1990s, again became marginalized after that point, as are genderqueer characters.

Problem novels, such as *What Happened to Lani Garver* and *Luna*, posit gender identity as the main issue faced by their characters. Characters in those novels choose either to remain undefined in terms of gender (and lose their lives) or change from one gender to another, thereby reinforcing the gender binary. YA readers seek texts that mirror their experience, and the lack of gender-fluid characters eliminates a range of gender-fluid behaviors for YA readers to consider. The paucity of gender-fluid characters also limits exposure to a range of acceptable lifestyles for all YA readers.

The SF and CF novels discussed in this chapter feature characters who are unable, or unwilling, to conform to the gender binary. These novels, however, do not identify gender fluidity as a primary problem. Instead, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill* present the primary problem for the gender-fluid characters as the accusation of treason for acts (other than gender fluidity) perceived as threatening to the majority's way of life: gender fluid Estraven wants to introduce the Ekumen to his planet; Scratch and Winc cause a marketing conundrum by unwittingly instigating an internet shut-down. In both cases, novel's the gender fluid characters are accused of treason, and will be killed not by sixth graders (as Harriet fears), or by local "fish frat" bullies (as Lani is), but by the government itself.

The plots of novels that depict gender-fluid characters, like those that depict androgynous and ambiguously gendered characters, enforce the gender binary to the extent that the language and culture in which the stories are presented remain entrenched in the gender binary. Characters within the novels reiterate the centrality of binary gender socialization. Both *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill* demonstrate the conflation of sex and gender along the gender binary: female equates to femininity, and male equates to masculinity for characters in both novels. At the same time as elements of both *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill*

reinforce the gender binary, these novels also trouble that binary, and undermine it with gender-neutral language and objections to gender-specific identities.

Finally, both novels call into question the gender binary by modeling possibilities for more than two sexes and two genders and by challenging cultural assumptions about sex that conflate sex and gender. Above all, by harshly punishing those who are gender fluid, both novels illustrate the hazards of trying to change a culture's fundamental characteristics. Thus it is perhaps inevitable that *The Left Hand of Darkness*, portrays gender fluidity among aliens, while *Nearly Roadkill* positions gender fluidity in the virtual space of the cyber world. For both texts, the fact that the gender-fluid characters become identified as traitors signals the restoration of "order," that is, the gender binary, at the end of each novel.

Although a shift in values occurs between 1969 and 1996 with respect to some aspects of gender fluidity, overall, the reinforcement of the gender binary continues to maintain the otherness of individuals who move beyond the gender binary.

While genderqueer characters can be depicted within the pages of a novel, the "real" world does not accept those who are genderqueer. Additionally, while structures of language have been developed to support gender fluidity, those linguistic structures are not widely used. To live beyond the gender binary as gender fluid, one must be prepared to encounter rejection, isolation, and possible death. Those responses to gender fluidity are traumatizing, and provide another aspect of representation of gender in YA literature.

Conclusion

Considered as cultural artifacts, the YA texts written between 1960 and 2010 examined in this dissertation reveal a shift in attitudes toward queer characters that mirrors changes in the ambient culture during the same half century. Concurrently, YA literature continues to embed conservative, normative messages about sex, gender, and sexuality with the majority of YA texts reinforcing the sex/gender binary in their stories. These texts also conflate, without question or comment, sex and gender as male and female, corresponding respectively with masculinity and femininity.

Overall, gradual but significant change marks YA textual messages in the period 1960-2010. From the invisibility of queer YA characters prior to 1969 to the slow emergence of genderqueer YA characters, messages presented to mainstream YA readers in the new millennium increasingly assert that intolerance is not to be tolerated. However, more messages about trauma caused by nonconformity to the gender binary are available to YA readers than are messages about openness to new lifestyles and freedom of choice in moving beyond traditional sex and gender binary strictures. While four YA novels specifically featuring transgendered youth have been published between 2004 and 2010, depictions of gay and lesbian youth have decreased, so that YA novels with principally gay or lesbian characters are not being produced by major publishing houses in proportion to the number of gay and lesbian youth in the population. While it is no longer acceptable to criticize gay and lesbian youth or to require them to hide their sexuality, new and positive depictions of these and other genderqueer characters in texts produced by major publishing houses are noticeably absent.

YA authors and critics acknowledge the instructive potential of YA texts, and the normative messages about acceptable and unacceptable behavior in mainstream YA fiction has

remained relatively unchanged for the last fifty years. YA fiction demonstrates that young adults need to be loved, to feel part of a group, to avoid shame, and to have a meaningful identity; the overriding message in YA texts is that if young adults respect gender rules and conform to the expectations of a gender binary, they will be afforded the benefits of social acceptance. YA texts which depict characters who move outside acceptable social norms, whether due to their androgyny, gender ambiguity, or gender variance, experience rejection and "punishment" in the form of trauma as long as they exist outside the binary. Gender fluid characters, few in number, are considered traitors, a threat to "our way of life." Thus, YA readers receive the message that while the idea of genderqueer characters can be depicted within the pages of a futuristic SF and CF novels, the "real" world has no place for people who are gender fluid.

Messages about gender identity presented to YA readers underscore widely accepted notions that conformity brings the reward of social acceptability and non-conformity brings the penalty of social rejection. On the other hand, the stories themselves present the idea that YA characters are struggling to discover and assert their individuality. Jade says, "I'm *me*…I have to be *me*" (6). Harriet says the same thing, as do Cal, Jaret, and Lani. YA readers are bound to observe this, just as they are also bound to see the consequences suffered by YA characters who challenge the heteronorm. It is hard to imagine that YA readers miss the many deaths that follow short-lived rewards of self-assertion in these texts.

The novels analyzed in this dissertation are written in English, a language whose twentieth- and twenty-first century semantic and grammatical attributes reinforce the sex/gender binary. The use of gendered pronouns in English, and with them, the reinforcement of traditional gender assumptions, and the continued linguistic conflation of sex and gender seem immutable, despite the capacity of the English language for adaptation and expansion. That adaptability is

evidenced by the new and growing English vocabularies in the fields of computer science and technology. Yet newly created gender neutral pronouns have not taken hold in the same way as technological neologisms. Because technology is ubiquitous, its language must be equally widespread and instantly comprehensible. The seeming ubiquity of cisgendered people renders changing gendered language less imperative, especially when society rewards conformity to the gender binary and punishes challenging that binary, as YA literature demonstrates.

A study of depictions of heteronormative and genderqueer characters reveals messages intended to instruct YA readers. The messages and metamessages of YA texts uniformly steer YA readers to make choices that conform to gender binary: to live beyond the gender binary as gender fluid, a character—and YA readers by extension—must be prepared to encounter traumatic cultural problems of rejection, isolation, and possible death.

This reading of YA novels from the period 1960-2010 confirms a continuing enforcement of traditional gender roles, and with those roles, a continuing enforcement of the gender binary. Although texts themselves reflect the expansion of girls' sphere in this period, girls still remain more often than not in secondary roles. Boys who cross gender boundaries are less likely to be rewarded than girls, though YA characters of either sex who do not conform are often punished. In terms of gender fluidity, the fact that straightforward depictions of genderqueer characters exist for YA readers (despite the negative messages about them) confirms a slow but definite shift toward acceptance of possibilities beyond the gender binary.

Epilogue: Representations of Traumatic Reactions in Queer-themed YA Novels

"*E pur si muove.*" Galileo Galilei

Knowledge is always moving and changing. As time passes and humans develop a more sophisticated understanding of themselves and the world around them, their acceptance of natural phenomena broadens and social norms change according to new acceptances. Shakespeare and Galileo were contemporaries. Shakespeare presages Galileo's demonstration that the earth revolves around the sun when he has (young adult) Hamlet say to Ophelia: "Doubt thou the stars are fire,/Doubt that the son doth move…" (II.ii.116-117). This brings me back to the first epilogue of this dissertation which states that YA texts tend to reflect the ambient culture's " sentences" with uncanny accuracy.

Thus, when the APA characterized homosexuality as a mental illness, queer people were considered mentally ill; when homosexuality was no longer a mental illness, queer people, while still shunned in some circles, were accorded an accepting role by society at large. In 2014 trans* people are experiencing the type of social coming-to-acceptability that gay and lesbian people did in the 1980s. YA literature, as cultural documents that reflect the ambient culture, reflect this growing acceptability, and depictions of acceptability in YA literature further the overall social movement toward acceptability.

The presumption here is that young readers, perhaps exploring their sexual orientation, perhaps merely looking for some entertainment, find particular YA novels, and in those novels they see representations of characters and acceptable treatment of those characters. In the pages of YA novels, for the most part, these young readers will see very few people of color, very few non-normative characters, and very few characters who challenge normative gender roles. In addition, while YA characters who fit within the norms of sex and gender predetermined for

them by society suffer from traumatizing events, but these events—war, social violence—are external to their identity; queer characters, on the other hand, suffer identity-based trauma that is internal and personal. The suffering that characters experience determined whether their traumatization is internal or external, dictates the kind of damage done and the type of suffering characters endure, all this, I argue, goes on in the background of any type of entertainment in which young adults engage. While I focus here only on YA novels, the fact is that this indoctrination permeates all forms of entertainment, social media, and games engaged by young adults.

This chapter presents the genderqueer individual who is terrorized for failing to fit into the preconceived patterns of gender and sexuality imposed by the society in which that individual is attempting to survive. Whether a young adult has identified his or her own sexuality or not, YA novels present readers with societally defined preconceptions of gender and sexuality and create a locus of vulnerability, rejection, and failure for individuals who cannot conform to them. Queer theorist J. Jack Halberstam observes, "Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well" (*Queer Art* 3). Halberstam identifies the mainstream quality of messages proffered to children and young adults through the media and deconstructs those messages, specifically the failure to be perfect, infinite, and immortal (*Queer Art* 187). Halberstam observes the "indoctrination of youth through seductive and seemingly harmless imagery" (*Queer Art* 174), further noting that the "combination of text and image, the layering of mechanisms of identification …allow for cartoons to serve as attractive tools for the easy transmission of dense ideologies" (*Queer Art* 175). For a slightly older audience, the YA readership of the novels discussed in this dissertation, the words of mainstream texts serve as the same type of "attractive tools for the easy transmission of dense ideologies" (Halberstam, *Queer*

Art 174). Such ideologies, when they include messages of belonging and rejection, fit into Kaplan's expanded definition of trauma with its incorporation of messages of rejection.

The seriousness of the issue of trauma and the traumatic effects of violence experienced by queer youth is supported by statistics gathered by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In 2009, the CDC found that because of their sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation), queer (the CDC uses the identifier "LGBT") teens aged 13-21, reported being verbally harassed at school (8 in 10), physically harassed (4 in 10), and feeling unsafe at school (6 in 10). For the same period, one in five had been the victim of a physical assault at school (CDC.gov). Further, the CDC reports that "[a] nationally representative study of adolescents in grades 7–12 found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth were more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers" (CDC.gov).

Queer adolescents also experience parental rejection more commonly than do their gender-conforming counterparts, which links to "significantly higher rates of mental and physical health problems" and self-destructive behavior (CDC.gov) at rates that could be 6-8 times higher than LGBT young adults who experienced very little or no parental rejection.[77]

Depictions of Trauma in YA Novels

[77] Statistics show LGBT youth who were rejected by their parents were more than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide; nearly 6 times as likely to have high levels of depression; more than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs; and more than 3 times as likely to engage in unprotected sexual behaviors that put them at increased risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections than those who were not (http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm).

The problems in problem novels produce trauma. Until the mid-1980s, YA authors presented homosexuality as a source of psychological trauma for queer characters in problem novels. After the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness in the mid-1980s, the focus on problematic sexuality began to shift to gender and sexual ambiguity, such as transgender status and nonconformity to normative gender roles and expectations within the gender binary, as these norms are emphasized by Sandra Bem's study of androgyny and cataloged in Alan Cuseo's study of YA literature.

Like their real-life counterparts, YA characters in problem novels experience traumatic events and suffer the effects of those events, often exhibiting symptoms of PTSD. Current diagnostic criteria identify exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation as triggers for PTSD (APA "Highlights" 1). Thus, a person who witnesses a murder, suicide, or accidental death, or a person who is nearly killed in an attempted murder or accident, or someone who experiences rape or attempted rape is considered as likely to suffer acute stress (diagnosed as Acute Stress Disorder) and, if the symptoms continue for as long as a month, or more, PTSD.

In the case of sexual violation, the person violated may experience helplessness, hopelessness, shame, rage, or some combination of these feelings in the aftermath of the violation. When the threat or perceived threat is due to a person's sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, or non-normative self-presentation, the individualized nature of the threat adds a layer of trauma that is intensely personal. Unlike random acts of violence, such as that of a random shooter in a mall, a highway accident, or an act of wartime violence, an act of violence based on the victim's gender, gender identity, or sexual preference is an act precipitated by an essential aspect of the targeted victim, and the violence is directed at a discrete individual. The

individual particularity of such violence carries with it an implication that such violence may well be repeated, and its personalized nature becomes a source of increased anxiety for that individual. Anxiety may be exacerbated by other factors, such as rejection and ostracism by either family or peers, or both. Thus, the victim lives with the threat of repeated violence and the experience of isolation due to the same identity factors that precipitated the original attack. In addition to the immediate experience of the violence, the in-person witnessing of violence, or violence being aimed at a close family member or close friend, the DSM-V includes the experience of "the first hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event" (APA "History"). These criteria underscore the direct and first-hand nature of the violence that precipitates symptoms of PTSD.

Genderqueer characters' experiences of trauma and YA authors' representations of causes and effects of trauma remain consistent throughout YA novels. Characters whose gender and sexuality conform to culturally accepted norms experience trauma due to external and impersonal circumstances such as war; trauma experienced by genderqueer characters, in contrast, results specifically from personal attacks due, directly or indirectly, to their gender identity. Trauma studies' clinical approach to literature, used in this dissertation, illuminates literary representations of trauma as a method of reinforcing heteronormativity. Those representations of trauma depict all the symptomology described in the 2013 DSM-V. (See Appendix 3.) This, despite the fact that the DSM-V was published ten years after the most recently published YA novel discussed in this dissertation.

The Outsiders* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. In the novels discussed in Chapter 2, the gender-conforming principal characters in *The Outsiders* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* respectively, experience traumatic events and exhibit symptoms of post-

traumatic stress that fulfill the DSM-V diagnostic criteria for PTSD. However, in both texts, the PTSD is due to impersonal acts of violence rather than to personal attacks due to the characters' gender/sex nonconformity. The discussion in this section is intended to demonstrate that heteronormative characters experience trauma that aligns with the DSM-V trauma symptomology. The discussion serves as a baseline for comparison with queer characters' trauma symptoms, which also align with the DSM-V. Queer characters, however, suffer from personally directed traumas rather than the acts of violence experienced by their heteronormative counterparts.

Both S.E. Hinton and J.K. Rowling create characters who fulfill the criteria for PTSD. Both Hinton's Ponyboy and Rowling's Harry exhibit PTSD symptoms based on an initial loss of their parents. Their lives subsequently lead them into a series of retraumatizations, discussed in Chapter 3, but these traumas do not result from nonconformity with socially acceptable gender and sex roles. In fact, both characters' PTSD stems from acts of general violence in hostile situations—acts of war—not from attacks in response to their gender/sex presentation or lifestyle choices.

Gay/lesbian Traumatization Pre-1980: *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth the Trip* and *Happy Endings Are All Alike*. In 1980, the DSM declassified homosexuality as a mental illness. It is striking that before 1980 gay and lesbian characters in YA novels, like their real-life counterparts, suffered traumatization principally because they were homosexual. In addition to the social ramifications of the characters' choices of a somewhat openly homosexual lifestyle, pre-1980 homosexual characters suffer personal attacks precisely because of non-heteronormativity that appears to begin with the stigma of mental illness prevalent at that time. Davy, a gay character in *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth The Trip* (1969), sees the loss of his

beloved dog, Fred, his primary companion who was a gift from his recently deceased grandmother, as resulting directly from his homosexuality. Similarly, Jaret, a lesbian character in Sandra Scoppettone's *Happy Endings Are All Alike* (1979), is singled out for rape because she is a lesbian, with the rapist threatening disclosure of that fact (with the consequent stigmatization of her girlfriend), if she reveals his identity. Both novels add materially to the understanding of depictions of trauma in YA novels.

The first openly gay protagonist in a YA novel, thirteen-year-old Davy Ross in *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth The Trip*, experiences profound loss as the novel opens, the heart attack and death of his grandmother, who has cared for him. Returned to his alcoholic mother in New York City, Davy's experience of her alcoholism and her erratic behavior is a second trauma amid his worries about whether he will be able to keep his dog Fred in a New York City apartment. Davy's father also lives in New York City, and Davy is able to spend some weekends with him and his new wife.

When author John Donovan initially returns Davy to living with his mother, he does not attribute behaviors to Davy initially that seem like a trauma reaction. But after Davy's dog is killed by a car, Davy begins to exhibit symptoms that correspond to post-traumatic distress. The circumstances that lead to the dog's death occur when Davy's mother finds Davy and his friend Altschuler sleeping together in the living room, which she sees as something "unnatural" (169), and she calls in Davy's father to talk to him. While father and son talk, Davy's mother walks Fred, who runs into the street and is killed instantly, hit by a car. Davy, who witnesses this, connects Fred's death to his homosexuality (Donovan 180). Subsequently he has recurrent distressing memories of Fred's death and persistent thoughts of his grandmother and begins to avoid things that remind him of Fred ("I can't touch anything Fred touched" [Donovan 179]).

Davy, blaming himself for Fred's death, demonstrates diminished interest in activities that had been significant to him prior to Fred's death (Donovan 181), including his friendship with Altschuler.

Davy's irritable behavior and angry outbursts begin about six weeks after Fred's death, which, coupled with his reckless behavior (Donovan 185), indicates the level of Davy's distress. The emotional disturbance depicted by Donovan impairs Davy's occupational/school functioning in a clinically significant manner as he begins to come to classes late and leaves as quickly as possible (Donovan 181). Donovan makes Davy's disgust with alcohol clear, leaving no doubt that Davy is not a substance user, and therefore his behaviors cannot be attributed to substance use. Having connected Fred's traumatic death with a personal attribute (his gayness) Davy's self-blame for this trauma precipitates a self-loathing that is unique to a gay character in YA fiction.

The 1979 novel *Happy Endings are All Alike* by Sandra Scoppettone, features trauma in the form of a rape of a lesbian. The rapist declares that he is raping Jaret because she is a lesbian, and he beats her into unconsciousness to reinforce his message. Thus the main character's initial trauma is personalized, specific to her lesbianism. A secondary trauma arises from a police interrogation that intimates that Jaret herself precipitated the rape and beating.

Yet another series of traumas are inflicted as Jaret's relationship with her girlfriend becomes public knowledge. Social ties are broken in their small town. Jaret's girlfriend abandons her when she courageously determines to press rape charges: "I *am* a lesbian, and I don't intend to live the rest of my life sneaking around pretending to be something I'm not" (Scoppettone 180). Jaret's anger and her recurrent distressing dreams of the rape and beating continue for more than a month, indicating that Scoppettone is depicting a character with PTSD. Jaret feels empowered by her decision to press charges, despite the relationships that suffer as a result. Jaret

avoids distressing stimuli with respect to the rape, although her decision to press charges means that she will face her rapist in court (after the book's end). Jaret's feelings of rage, detachment from others and implied sleep disturbance correspond to PTSD symptomology, while the effects of the rape (clinically significant impairment in social functioning as Jaret is shunned by people in her town, and the necessity of moving to another town), indicate that the trauma she has suffered also fulfill PTSD diagnostic criteria. Finally, the story makes clear that she uses no substances and has no other medical conditions that would warrant a differential diagnosis.

In *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth the Trip*, the openly gay character believes that he experiences violence as a result of his homosexuality, and in *Happy Endings are All Alike*, the openly lesbian character, in fact, does so. Each novel's sequence of events and consequences correspond to current understandings of traumatic reactions. In normative narrative terms, the resultant losses for each, depicted by loss of loved ones and social isolation, serve as cautionary messages for YA readers.

***Harriet the Spy* and *What Happened to Lani Garver*.** In *Harriet the Spy*, the titular character's loss of her caretaker Ole Golly, the primary adult contact in her life, while shocking, does not qualify as a trauma-inducing stressor. Harriet's neglectful parents often leave her on her own or in the care of the cook, but Harriet is never technically traumatized by the actual or threatened death of a loved one. Once her peers read her private diary, however, her fears that she will be seriously injured by them qualify as a traumatic event.

Harriet's experience of others reading her diary and subsequent peer ostracism serve as reminders of the traumatic reading of her original diary, which cause prolonged psychological distress, especially when new diaries are confiscated by her parents and teachers. In addition, Harriet displays marked reactions to external cues that remind her of the original stressor. Her

subsequent refusal to return to school, problems with concentration ("for once, she didn't feel like reading" [Fitzhugh 258]), and her nightmares (Fitzhugh 263) further depict a child who is suffering from PTSD.

Harriet's distress is so obvious that her usually oblivious parents take her to a psychiatrist (Fitzhugh 253), to whom she expresses persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about herself within an ongoing negative emotional state of anger and shame. After her notebook has been read, she writes in a new notebook, "I DON'T FEEL LIKE ME AT ALL. I DON'T EVER LAUGH OR THINK ANYTHING FUNNY. I JUST FEEL MEAN ALL OVER. I WOULD LIKE TO HURT EACH ONE OF THEM…" (Fitzhugh 241-2), a quotation that demonstrates Harriet's irritability, while her aggressive actions against each student in her class exemplify aggressive and reckless behavior. The length of Harriet's disturbance, her avoidance of school, and the absence of extraneous behavioral precipitators depict the level of her distress.

I argue in Chapter 3 that had Harriet been a boy, the issue of spying together with certain aspects of her bad behavior would have been accepted as gender appropriate, whereas it is her gender ambiguity that leads to the novelistic trauma. Her misalignment of sex and gender norms—the fact that in 1969, she is a girl who spies, who has a "career," and who is loud and outspoken—targets her for scrutiny by her peers.

Part of boys' socialization includes learning (usually from their fathers) how to fight on a playground; not having been so instructed, Harriet's lack of preparation to defend herself heightens her fear of personal injury and leads readers to conclude that the attack by her peers is deliberate, personal, and due to "boy-behavior" by a girl, a conclusion that aligns *Harriet the Spy*'s plot with Donovan's and Scoppettone's plots. In this regard it is noteworthy that a traumatic reaction may be especially severe or long-lasting when the stressor is interpersonal and

intentional. This observation applies to Harriet, who experiences the reading of her private diary as a personal violation she fears will lead to violent reprisal (Fitzhugh 180). So deliberate a theft of Harriet's private thoughts qualifies, for Harriet, as an intentional interpersonal violation, although the threatened serious injury of typically adolescent behavior better describes Harriet's actions:

> [A]dolescents may judge themselves as being changed in ways that make them socially undesirable and estrange them from peers (e.g., "Now I'll never fit in")…Irritable and aggressive behavior in children and adolescents can interfere with peer relationships and school behavior… (DSM-V 277)

In addition, individuals suffering a trauma reaction

> …may be quick tempered and may even engage in aggressive verbal and/or physical behavior with little or no provocation (e.g., yelling at people, getting into fights, destroying objects). They may also engage in reckless or self destructive behavior…PTSD is often characterized by a heightened sensitivity to potential threats, including those that are related to the traumatic experience. (275)

The above description fits Harriet and describes her reaction once her notebook has been seized by her parents who determine that the notebook is the root cause of her lack of concentration and bad behavior in school.

Risk and prognostic factors for prolonged trauma reactions include "Pretraumatic factors," temperamental, environmental, genetic, and physiological (DSM-V 277). One pre-traumatic factor in particular that applies to Harriet is pretraumatic obsessive-compulsive behaviors: Harriet eats only tomato sandwiches, she invariably follows a precise routine every day, and any variation to that routine causes her distress, all behaviors that would alert a clinician in 2014 to Harriet's predisposition to a severe and prolonged reaction to a traumatic event because that event has disrupted her routines.

YA readers might reasonably conclude that spying on people risks ostracism, but dissembling and mollifying detractors gains forgiveness. Critics disliked Harriet's dissembling

and mollifying because lying is wrong (Bernstein 26). Furthermore, if Harriet had apologized truthfully, she would have conformed to standards of girl-behavior (being docile and submissive, according to Bem), would never have lied again, and would have ceased aspiring to become a spy.

In the case of Lani Garver in *What Happened to Lani Garver*, the character's trauma is significantly clear-cut, and the PTSD is more easily identifiable than in the case of *Harriet the Spy*. In Lani's case, the initial trauma of bullying is followed by sexual abuse and repeated death threats brought about by Lani's gender ambiguity. Secondary traumas include Lani's repeated physical and verbal abuse, Mrs. Garver's apparent unwillingness to support him, and the death threats that end in Lani's apparent murder. Lani evidences intense psychological distress at exposures to external cues that represent a traumatic event, first seen in his lack of affect in response to threatening phone calls from Tony, the molester, and later, in Lani's provocative reaction to Tony and other members of the "Fish Frat," which ultimately pushes them to torture and kill him. Lani's extreme measure of running away from home on several occasions, and his persistent negative beliefs about the world and his feelings of detachment from others (Plum-Ucci 132), exemplify characteristics of a severe trauma reaction. Additionally Lani's irritable behavior (Plum-Ucci 132) and recklessness (Plum-Ucci 164), along with duration and significance of impairment in Lani's social functioning (missing school, ostracism by family and peers), indicate the level of Lani's trauma and his subsequent reactions to it.

Claire, the narrator of *What Happened to Lani Garver*, also exhibits PTSD symptoms. In remission from leukemia, Claire fears a relapse. She has had direct exposure to her own death and exhibits intrusion symptoms, most notably, violent, recurring nightmares. Her avoidance of trauma-related external reminders manifests in the infrequency of visits to her father and his

apartment, which remind her both of chemotherapy (Plum-Ucci 173) and of her mother's decline into alcoholism (Plum-Ucci 181). Claire's negative alterations in mood result from her feelings of alienation from friends (Plum-Ucci 3), and her negative beliefs about herself ("I [am] a huge cow" [Plum-Ucci 24]) lead to anorexia. Her irritability, angry outbursts, and self-destructive behavior include excessive weight loss (Plum-Ucci 25) and hanging out of the window of a speeding car (Plum-Ucci 60). Like Lani, the duration Claire's of symptoms, clinically significant impairment in social functioning, and absence of substance or other medical condition all meet the criteria DSM for PTSD. However, Claire's trauma involves a life threatening illness; Lani's life is threatened, and finally taken, by the Fish Frat because of his gender ambiguity. Claire knows that as devastating and life-changing as her illness is, it is not a personal attack as is Lani's traumatization.

Lani Garver does not self-identify as gay or even as male (Plum-Ucci 20), although his friends on the mainland affectionately refer to him as a "faggot" (Plum-Ucci 96), and the Fish Frat tauntingly call him "Princess" (265) as they prepare to torture him. In 2002, when *What Happened to Lani Garver* was written, most YA readers and characters display a modicum of acceptance toward gay and lesbian characters, as long as they stay within culturally acceptable norms of gender identifiability (girls "look like girls," boys "look like boys") and social practice (girls act docile, boys do not engage in effeminate behaviors). The intimation by Lani's mother, Claire's mother, and the majority of Hackett Island's teens is that if Lani had said "he" was a boy and cut "his" hair to be identifiable as a boy, people would have overlooked "his" homosexuality. As Claire tells the story, the community consensus seems to have been that Lani's gender ambiguity, which resulted in the Hackett Island residents' inability to classify "him" within the gender binary, provided the reason for the Fish Frat to target and eventually kill "him."

Jade* and *Middlesex. Similar to their ambiguously gendered counterparts, androgynous and hermaphroditic YA characters are subjected to traumatic personal attacks because of their gender nonconformity. Jade, the sixteen-year-old who wears pants, fights with swords, and frees slaves in seventeenth-century Williamsburg, is subjected to physical punishments by her father and uncle to try to "break" her of her un-womanlike propensities. When Jade eventually escapes to become a pirate, she encounters two other females, Mark/Mary passing as a male, and the famous pirate, Anne Bonney. If displays of gender-defining appearance were to be placed on a male-female continuum, Mark would fall toward the male end of the scale, Anne toward the female, and Jade would stand somewhere in the middle. Although the behaviors of each of the three move along a gender continuum (as do the behaviors of the males, including Rory, Pierre, and Jack), the behaviors of the three female pirates would fall more in the ambiguous middle than would the behaviors of Jade's femininely behaving mother and sister and masculinely behaving father and brother.

While all the pirates in Watson's novel have experienced trauma-inducing events, this section focuses on androgynous YA character Jade, because Mark/Mary the other androgynous character, is not a young adult. Even in this deliberately feminist story, the genderqueer character Mark/Mary dies. Although she dies in prison, in part because of poor conditions, the story implies, and in part due to her psychological inability to survive while encaged, the fact remains that Mark/Mary represents yet another genderqueer character in YA literature whom its author consigns to death. Jade repeatedly experiences serious physical injury because of "unwomanly" behaviors, but neither beatings, scars, nor long-term physical effects persuade her to capitulate to the gender role into which she has been placed in the year 1719, when women are expected to be meek, docile, and understand that they are the inferior sex (Watson 7). Jade refuses, and her

father, uncle, and various slave ship captains afford her the (masculine) punishment of a beating. Such ongoing punishment, three centuries later, qualifies as exposure to serious injury that causes traumatic reactions. Additional traumas experienced by Jade include witnessing the savage beating of slaves, witnessing the deaths and serious injuries of companions, as well as witnessing her comrades' hangings and facing threats to be hanged herself.

Jade's nightmares about the deaths she has witnessed, her persistent refusal to return to Virginia, the place of her initial traumatization by her family, and her feelings of detachment from others appear on the pages of the novel even as she refuses to plunder ships for any reason except freeing of slaves. She realizes that "[t]here [is] no place in society for a girl like Jade" (Watson 225), who refuses to surrender to cultural expectations set for her by her society.

Jade evidences heightened symptoms of trauma reaction after the male pirates on her ship are hanged, displaying irritability, anger, and difficulty sleeping, trauma reactions that last for at least six months, and are not attributable to any substance. Her initial trauma, which is directly due to her androgyny, remains active until the end of the book, when she is finally accepted as a girl with boy ambitions and abilities. The subsequent traumas she experiences make her more determined to succeed, a positive example for YA readers. The novel's language clearly indicates that had Jade been a boy, society would have celebrated her dueling skills and her intellect and would have rewarded her abilities to defend herself both physically and verbally. The novel also indicates that if she had been a male, she would have been able to work to end slavery within the social bounds of the day. Both social conditions and her refusal to fit into the gender role dictated to her by society, the author leads readers to believe, cause Jade's initial trauma and foster the events that lead to the sequence of events that almost cause her to be hanged.

In *Middlesex*, Cal's initial trauma is an accident (exposure to threatened death) that is followed by a secondary, ongoing sexually violent trauma that Cal (as Calliope) experiences in Dr. Luce's clinic. The fact that the violence is perpetrated by the medical community makes it no less traumatic. Once Cal becomes an object of medical scrutiny, memories of clinical examinations invade Cal's dreams and these serve to reinforce his persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about himself: "*Monster, Monster*" (Eugenides 432). Once he and his parents arrive at the clinic, he does not sleep through the night, and, eventually, his irritable behavior culminates in an angry outburst prior to his flight: "Dr. Luce…is a big liar! I am not a girl. I'm a boy" (Eugenides 439, emphasis in original).

Eventually, Cal takes drastic measures to avoid the distressing memories of his experience at the clinic, fleeing to escape the entire situation. Running away qualifies as reckless behavior among psychologists, and it leads to a clinically significant impairment in several areas of Cal's social functioning, including school and personal relationships, which lasts into Cal's adulthood. Additional reckless behavior follows, with symptoms not attributable to the use of a substance or other medical condition.

While Jade's trauma reaction relates to her gender and her role in society as dictated by her gender, Cal's trauma responses relate directly to his sex and gender identity. Having been raised as a girl, despite his male chromosomal structure and anomalous physical appearance, Cal, like Jade, finds that there is no place for him in society. While Jade accepts her parental rejection as part of her fate, Cal fears his parents' rejection and acknowledges that acceptance of him as a male "would not have been easy" (Eugenides 512) for his father, who dies before seeing Calliope transformed into Cal. Jade resorts to living her life on the high seas, where she creates a community that accepts her; Cal similarly resorts to a life of wandering the world, working for

the State Department as a cultural attaché and avoiding personal connections that might reveal "what" (Eugenides 106) he is. Both the androgynous Jade and the hermaphroditic Cal experience traumatic events specifically that directly and specifically connect to an emotional or physical inability to conform to gender and social norms.

***The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill*.** The genderqueer characters in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill* are older than Cal, Jade, Lani, Harriet, Jaret, or Davy. *The Left Hand of Darkness* presents gender fluid aliens and is included here as a YA novel because most SF readers start as YA readers, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4.[78] *Nearly Roadkill*, which also presents adult characters who are gender fluid and who suffer for that gender fluidity, qualifies as a YA novel because the narrator and liaison between the adult gender-fluid characters is a thirteen-year-old.

To date, no YA characters who are as gender fluid as those in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill* appear in any non-SF or CF YA texts. However, the gender fluid characters in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Nearly Roadkill* experience trauma in ways that are similar to that experienced by the gender ambiguous characters discussed in this dissertation. No transgendered character appeared in YA literature prior to 2003-2004; consequently a pre/post-1985 comparison cannot be carried out within the format of this dissertation. The absence of gender fluid children in YA literature before 2003 seems to parallel the general paucity of research on sexuality and YA literature: both result from adult discomfort at thinking about children and youth within the context of sexuality (Paul, "Sex" 223*ff*). A second, and different, possibility aligns with the thesis of this dissertation, namely, that messages communicated to YA readers are intended to model YA behavior. The absence of any example of young adults who

[78] Pages 121-22.

fluidly change gender implies the message to YA readers that gender fluidity is so unthinkable as to be unpresentable.

Adults, assumed to be self-determinant in a way that children and youth are not, can be presented as gender fluid (within the futuristic context of SF and CF) because they are presumed to have the capacity to have determined their own fate; youth, it would seem, are still considered "works in progress." While this should make youth more easily depictable as gender fluid, it would appear that a youthful "work in progress" and gender fluidity are mutually exclusive. Gender is thus assigned to youthful characters. For example, the adult writer of *What Happened to Lani Garver* assigns (through another character, Claire) a gender to Lani. Because the story is written about Lani, not through Lani's eyes, readers do not know Lani's actual self-definition nor are they privy to any gender fluidity that "he" may personally perceive. The author's best description, that Lani "refuses to fit into any box" (41), is no description at all, yet Plum-Ucci describes Lani with male pronouns and places him in male situations throughout the book. For example, if he had been a female, he would have been raped by the Fish Frat, rather than tortured and killed.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the gender-fluid Estraven is also described by the Envoy with male pronouns, but Estraven's gender fluidity, and the discomfort that such fluidity causes the Envoy, contribute to the novel's forward-moving action. Should a reader forget that Estraven is not really "he," that reader is reminded by the disconcerting fact that in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, characters consider the Envoy from Earth a pervert because of his gender stasis.

The gender fluidity of genderqueer characters in *The Left Hand of Darkness* presents a set of issues distinct them those discussed so far, even though Estraven evidences trauma symptoms. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the gender fluid Estraven experiences a series of events that are

initially traumatic and, ultimately, deadly. The death of Estraven's brother/sibling stimulates long-lasting reactions that cannot be attributed to the effects of a substance or mental illness and that thus fulfill the criteria for a traumatizing event. Estraven has intrusive memories and dreams of the primary trauma, the death of his sibling, and the secondary trauma, the palace guard attempting to assassinate him. He avoids talking about the events, and he does not associate with the people who would stimulate memories of his sibling. Estraven also has continuous feelings of detachment from others, exhibits hypervigilance, and sleeps restlessly. These attributes, while not causing Estraven a clinically significant impairment in occupational functioning, do impair his social functioning, since he is manifestly unable to establish deep, personal relationships with anyone, including his kemmer-partner and the earthling Envoy with whom he makes a long and difficult journey.

Genly Ai, the Envoy, while not gender fluid, also exhibits symptoms of trauma on the planet Winter. These symptoms become apparent when other humans arrive. Prior to that, Genly's "perverted" status does not allow the reader to see the extent of his traumatic reaction. Genly, who nearly dies in the prison camp, realizes that he would have died had Estraven not rescued him. Genly has dissociative reactions, described as dreamlike states, after his escape from prison. He avoids reminders of the prison, and even months after his release, exhibits fear reactions toward anyone who resembles a prison guard. He has feelings of detachment from others (notably from other humans when they arrive), and his hypervigilance and restless sleep (which are present prior to Estraven's death) are heightened after witnessing Estraven's assassination. As with Estraven's symptoms, Genly's are not attributable to substance use, and they cause clinically significant impairment in all social functioning outside his job as Envoy.

Yet unlike the gender-fluid Estraven, gender-fixed Genly survives, a survival that provides the cautionary metamessage to YA readers. The gender-stable character, though labeled a pervert on a planet of gender-fluid aliens, lives on despite his trauma, while the gender-fluid character is assassinated. One may argue that the gender-fluid character is not killed due to his gender fluidity, yet the metamessage for YA readers warns that gender fluidity is truly not viable. Set in a futuristic otherworldly situation, the circumstances of an SF story blur the boundaries of the gender message. The outcome is irrefutable, however. Only one person dies in this story, and that person is gender fluid.

No character dies in *Nearly Roadkill*, although Scratch and Winc, who can change gender fluidly in cyberspace, face myriad challenges in non-virtual space, including (a) being accused of treason, an offense punishable by death, and (b) existing in physical bodies without the gender fluidity to which they are accustomed in cyberspace. The character best able to deal with Scratch and Winc's gender fluidity is the thirteen-year-old narrator, Toobe. Toobe, however, clearly self-identifies as male, although he is "cool" (Sullivan and Bornstein 1) with Scratch's and Winc's lack of gender specificity: he uses gender-neutral pronouns for them and is judgment-free about their fluidity. However, he does not use the same neutral pronouns for himself or anyone else except the queer characters, including Gwynyth and Jabbathehut, and he does not consider himself gender fluid. Thus, in terms of messages to YA readership, this YA character falls safely within the definition of heteronormativity.

The traitors in *Nearly Roadkill* are gender fluid. Their traumatic reactions, though not apparent while they are online,[79] become obvious as soon as when they enter physical reality. Both Scratch and Winc have exhibited symptoms of PTSD for longer than one month, their

[79] Although a clinician might argue that the adaptation of persona and the use of the internet chat room interfaces rather than personal interactions exemplifies ongoing dissociation.

symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social and personal modes of functioning, and the disturbance is not attributable to any condition other than the initial trauma which, for both of them, is exposure to serious injury in the form of sexual violence suffered precisely because of their gender fluidity. The secondary trauma that initiates the sequence of events in *Nearly Roadkill* is the requirement that the characters choose one of only two genders when completing mandatory internet user registration. Other secondary traumas that Scratch and Winc experience are also related to the gender binary: first and foremost, having to confront gender binarism in the non-virtual world retraumatizes each of them with respect to their original gender-based trauma. Also, because of that original trauma, face-to-face interactions in the non-virtual world (with others and with each other) distress them in the extreme. All of these circumstances lead back to the original traumatic event for each and the resultant rejection by society for both, which eventually includes facing a death sentence because they are considered traitors.

Both Scratch and Winc disclose their feelings of depersonalization and dissociation, which they use to good advantage during their cyber exploits, but which cause them much trouble in physical reality—including nearly getting caught by the police as they attempt to escape. Both characters adopt their many online identities as a way to avoid distressing memories of the traumatic events in their lives, and both exhibit persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs about themselves which they sublimate while in cyberspace by creating different characters for themselves. In addition, both exhibit reckless behavior and both have problems with concentration. This last symptom is in part due to their propensity to dissociate and also to their lack of practice in interacting with people anywhere but in cyberspace.

Winc, who is already more uncomfortable in physical reality than Scratch, suffers a police shooting. Both characters, along with Gwynyth (a former bearded lady at the old Coney Island) are traumatically affected by societal rejection in physical reality. Scratch's and Winc's cyber fame is an ironic counterpoint to their experiences in physical reality. The message by example that this novel affords to YA readers is much the same as the resolution for societal rejection offered to readers of *Jade* and *Middlesex*: survival requires the creation of a small, accepting community of individuals (whether aboard a ship, in the international art community, or (in the case of *Nearly Roadkill*) under the Coney Island rollercoaster) and living in relative isolation, but with total acceptance by a very few.

The idea of social isolation as presented by Cal, Jade, Scratch, Winc, and Lani is not generally an attractive option, especially to YA readers, who are in the process of defining themselves and individuating from family. For YA readers at the adolescent developmental juncture, confronting the idea of rejection by society is difficult and traumatic, thus the option to conform that *Harriet the Spy* offers is easier to accept. Depictions of the traumas experienced by genderqueer characters instruct YA readers, and the messages and metamessages of YA texts uniformly steer YA readers to avoid traumatic consequences by making choices that reinforce heteronormativity and the gender binary.

APPENDIX 1: BEM SEX-ROLE INVENTORY CHARACTERISTICS

Masculine	Feminine	Neutral
Acts as a leader	Affectionate	Adaptable
Assertive	Cheerful	Conceited
Aggressive- Dominant	Compassionate	Conscientious
Ambitious	Does not use harsh language	Conventional
Analytical	Eager to soothe hurt feelings	Friendly
Assertive	Expressiveness	Happy
Athletic	Flatterable	Helpful
Competitive	Gentle	Inefficient
Defends own beliefs	Loves children	Jealous
Forceful	Loyal	Likable
Has leadership abilities	Nurturing-interpersonal warmth	Moody
Independent	Sensitive to the needs of others	Reliable
Individualistic	Shy	Secretive
Instrumentality	Soft spoken	Sincere
Makes decisions easily	Sympathetic	Solemn
Self-reliant	Tender	Tactful
Self-sufficient	Understanding	Theatrical
Strong personality	Warm	Truthful
Willing to take a stand	Yielding	Unpredictable
Willing to take risks	[Feminine]	Unsystematic
[Masculine]	[Gullible]	
	[Childlike]	

Bem 1974. 156.

APPENDIX 2: GENDER AMBIGUITY AND ANDROGYNY IN COVER ART

Figure 1: *Harriet the Spy*, Original Cover Art by Louise Fitzhugh, 1964: ambiguity

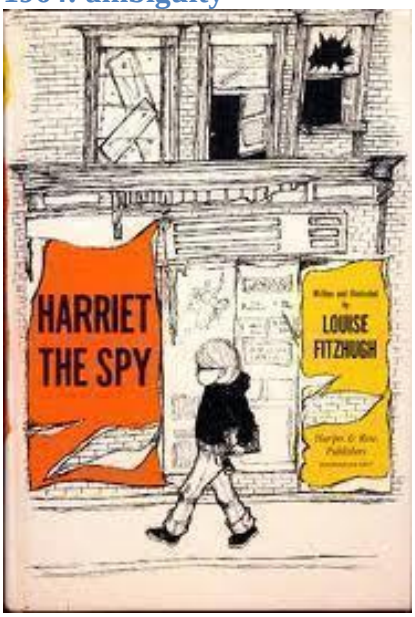

Figure 2: Detail of Cover Art for *Harriet the Spy*, Reissued Classic Edition 2001: ambiguity

Figure 3: *Hello I Lied*, M.E. Kerr, New York: Harper Trophy, 1997: ambiguity

Figure 4: Image drawn by L. Fitzhugh, Art for Section Divisions, Classic Ed.: ambiguity

Figure 5: Image drawn by L. Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*, Classic Ed. page 40: ambiguity

Figure 6: Cover Art for Lions Imprint, UK Ed. 1965: ambiguity

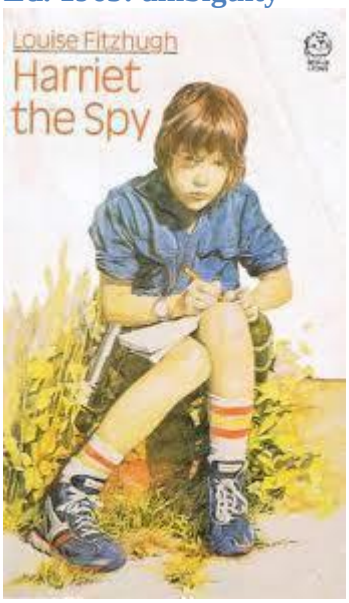

Figure 7: Lani Garver, 2004 Cover: ambiguity

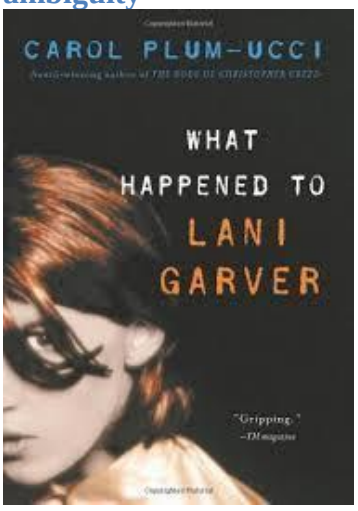

Figure 8: *Jade* Cover: androgyny

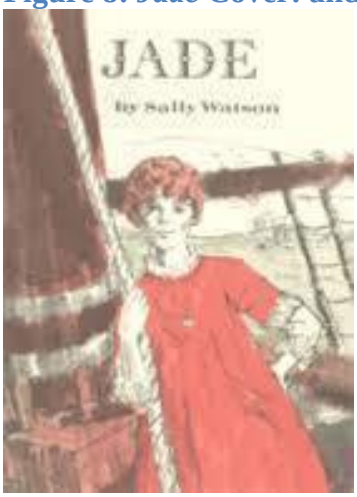

Figure 9: Tilda Swinton (left) as Orlando: androgyny

Figure 10: Barbra Streisand as Yentl: androgyny

Figure 11: Gender Binary--*Middlesex* Cover: androgyny

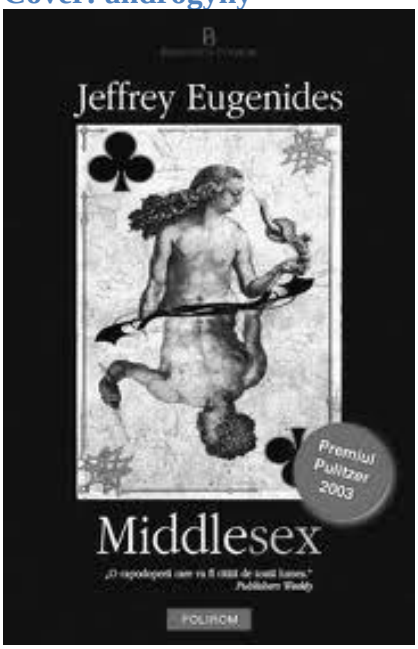

Figure 12: *Luna*: androgyny used for marketing purposes

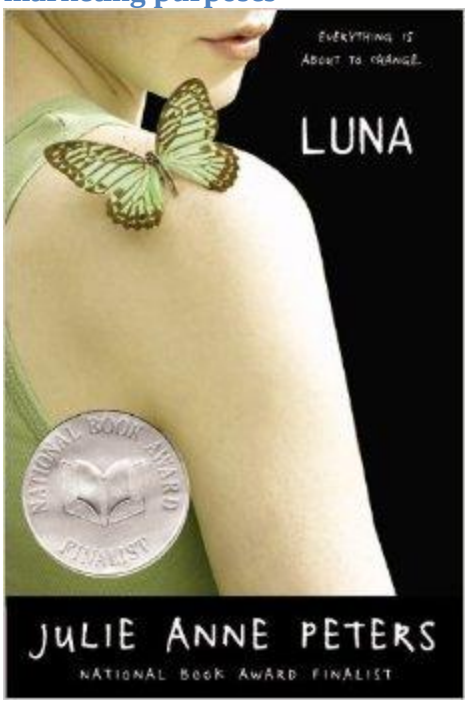

Figure 13: *Almost Perfect*: androgyny for marketing purposes

Glossary

Terms Used in this Dissertation:

Dominant Culture. "Dominant culture" refers to language, religion, race, beliefs, and hierarchy of a society and dictates the standards or norms for the society. In the U.S. and England, the dominant culture is characterized by white, English-speaking, Judeo-Christian, hetero-patriarchal society. This is the culture that I argue is being reinforced by YA texts in the period 1960-2010 since YA texts which do not depict a return to the hetero-patriarchal norm are either censured, banned, or simply not reprinted.

Gender. Traditionally "gender" as a noun refers to cultural and social differences between masculine and feminine. As cultural artifacts, YA novels are bound by the cultural and linguistic conventions of their time; however, this dissertation broadens the definition of gender to move it away from the strictures of the male-female binary. The conception of a two dimensional spectrum, which has at one extreme masculinity and at the other femininity, enforces the gender binary in a manner that curtails the definition of the word "gender" as intended in this dissertation. Rather than oppose masculinity and femininity, the definition I use here goes beyond the binary to consider gender as multifaceted and fluid. This conceptualization broadens the possibilities posited by the texts and embraces the self-identification of children and young adults for whom the strict binary does not apply. Thus, rather than conceiving gender using the metaphor of a two-dimensional, male-female spectrum that necessarily enforces a binary, I propose using as a metaphor a multidimensional, multilevel conceptualization of gender which includes possibilities other than simply masculine and feminine. Hateley observes that when "gender" is used in its verb form, it means "to come into being," rather than its currently common usage as a noun, the references to male and female, and their currently common

conflation with masculine and feminine, will dissolve into an understanding of "to gender" as meaning to come into humanness (92). Kimberly Reynolds notes that "the last three decades have seen a steady pressure to be inclusive, and, increasingly, to question the codes we use to think about childhood and adolescence in terms of sex and gender" (130) with the hope that YA readers of the next generation will be more flexible in the way they understand both sex and gender (Jones 74). Throughout this dissertation, acknowledging YA texts as cultural artifacts, in its noun form, "gender" references male and female, and their currently common conflation with masculine and feminine; "to gender" in the verb form denotes the broader and more flexible understanding.

Gender ambiguity. Commonly, gender ambiguous describes individuals not readily identifiable as either male or female. Most often gender ambiguity refers to a place between genders within a binary gender system and among genders in a multi-gender system. For example, androgynous individuals are considered to be ambiguously gendered, and this term falls under the broader umbrella term "transgender," defined below.

Gender binary. The gender binary refers to an assumption that two, and only two genders, male and female, exist. The two genders in the binary are often considered to be diametrically opposed, a polarization that creates assumptions that themselves limit possible outcomes. Concepts that challenge the strict male/female-masculine/feminine sex-gender binary are gender ambiguity, gender fluidity, and gender variants. In addition, individuals who identify as transgender or intersex also present a direct challenge to the gender binary. One of the problems posed by non-binary definitions of gender within a culture grounded in a binary system is that the possibility of more than two genders automatically results in a "transgendered" definition for binary-centered thinkers (Fausto-Sterling, Segal and Demos, Fairyington, Koker).

The problem with this is that it results in a label, "transgendered"—with its commonly understood meaning as a person whose biological sex does not fit his or her gender assignation—for people whose biology is not necessarily an issue for them.

The dominant culture within the U.S. and Europe has at its root a binary gender system, thus, the three definitions below (gender ambiguity, gender fluidity, gender variant) intend a wider meaning than the language of the gender binary allows. While intending and including a broader, multigendered perspective in these definitions, the following three definitions also acknowledge and include the dominant culture's gender binary perspective.

Gender fluidity. Gender fluid individuals move among genders in a multigendered culture and between genders in a binary gender system. While gender ambiguity refers predominantly to the ways in which others identify a person, gender fluidity primarily denotes a self-identification.

Gender variant. In psychiatry, psychology, and anthropology, this term refers to individuals whose gender expression does not conform to dominant gender norms. Synonyms include the terms gender variance, gender-atypical, and gender non-conformist, all of which terms are deeply rooted in cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity within the binary gender system.

Norms and Normativity. Norms are defined and enforced socially and culturally by various individual and collective means. Social norms refer to generally accepted standards of behavior dictated by cultural rules and codes of conduct. The *OED* defines normativity as the noun version of the adjective "normative" (that constitutes or serves as a norm or standard). Of relevance to the issue of indoctrination of YA readers through language, the 2010 Oxford American Dictionary does not include the noun "normativity," but defines the adjective

"normative" as "establishing, relating to, or deriving from a standard or norm, esp. of behavior: 'negative sanctions to enforce normative behavior.'" Thus the idea of heteronormativity, complete with the pertinent example from the Oxford American Dictionary, asserts that the dominant American culture considers heterosexuality the standard of sexuality, with the necessary implication that anyone outside the heterosexual standard is non-standard, not normal, and therefore "queer." With respect to YA literature, "normativity" additionally refers to adults' unexamined assumptions about a cultural ideal with the dominant culture considering deviation from the ideal an abnormality (Nodelman and Reimer 91), or "queerness." This dissertation focuses primarily on normative messages about sexuality, gender roles and gender rules, the reinforcement of the gender binary, and the conflation of sex and gender as male/female corresponding respectively with masculine/feminine.[80]

Problem Novel. Realistic YA novels that have appeared since the 1960s and that depict "adult themed" topics such as rape, death, and family breakdown (Reynolds 2) comprise the category "problem novels." Problem novels pose a challenge to idealized versions of YA readers as happy, devoid of sexuality, and innocent (Nodelman and Reimer 90-1), and presumably YA readers of these texts will have taken a step closer to adulthood by vicariously experiencing the events they present (Reynolds 2), thus reinforcing the notion that writers of texts for YA readers assume an instructive role.

Queer. Both a noun and a verb, "queer" refers to a spectrum of sociopolitical, linguistic, and gender connotations, with meanings that range from generally strange, unusual, eccentric, and non-normative to specifically non-heterosexual (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered,

[80] While advocacy groups, such as the Lambda Literary Foundation (which promotes LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) writers), promote writing which depicts queer YA readers' experience, including the experience of young adults whose identity does not conflate male with masculine and female with feminine, the texts that these groups promote are not yet generally considered "normative" though the objective of such advocacy is to mainstream queer experience.

transsexual, genderqueer) "and beyond (postqueer?)" (Abate and Kidd 14). Queer theorist Annamarie Jagose observes that recently the term queer has come to be used as a catch-all phrase for any individual who self-identifies sexually as culturally marginal; the term also refers to a new theoretical model which is a derivative or expansion of gay and lesbian studies (Jagose). Queer theory genealogist William Turner defines "queer" as "the failure to fit precisely within a category" (8); "genderqueer" is increasingly being used by sociology, social service, and cultural studies scholars to provide some definition to the possibilities for gender and sexual identity, when such identities are not ambiguous, with the deliberate intent of moving away from the male/female binary.

In Anglo-American English, the term "queer" has a range of associations, including the strange, the animal, and the aristocratic (Abate and Kidd 3), usually with a negative connotation (Mallan, "Queer" 186), such as "odd" or "vulgar." True to its meaning, the word defies definition, although scholars credit Theresa de Lauretis for the most widely accepted academic meaning: "another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual" (de Lauretis iv) that goes beyond any preexisting categories, such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, with the intent of destabilizing terms and conceptualizations considered to be stable. Queer theory focuses on mismatches between sex, gender, and desire considered to be stable under the (often unquestioned) assumption of heteronormativity. Like the word queer itself, queer theory is a contentious field of academic study, and, especially with respect to YA literary studies, one in constant formation (Mallan, "Queer" 186-7). For the purposes of this dissertation, queer will be used synonymously with both non-normative and non-heteronormative.

Sex. In general usage, "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably; also in general usage, "sex" and "sexuality" commonly refer to erotic activity. For the purposes of this

dissertation, "sex" denotes only biological sex, determined by X and Y chromosomes. While no definition of "sex" is exhaustive, the chromosomal definition in use here is intended to include even the 1.7-2.5% of the population that is intersex, according to Anne Fausto-Sterling. The definition and discussion of the term "sexuality" as used in this dissertation appear below.

Sexuality. This nineteenth-century neologism, which refers to different aspects and manifestations of an individual's erotic urges, encompasses the psycho-subjective and behavior-morphological components of desire that comprise the physical as well as the sociological components of an individual's experience (Fasinger and Arseneau 30). Within this framework, the understanding of "sexuality" evolves as definitions of sex and gender change. In addition, social experience and scientific and medical discourses, all of which are also culturally rooted, impact the meaning of "sexuality."

Sexuality determines a person's sexual orientation, "the constellation of affective, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics that constitute an individual's sense of self as a sexual and intimately relational being" (Fasinger and Arseneau 30), including sexual preference, which generally refers to the sex or gender of an individual's partner-choices. However, this conceptualization "moves beyond a partner's sex or gender to encompass myriad sexual and relational aspects of partner bonding" (Fasinger and Arseneau 30). Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick, referencing Foucault, observed that "modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, [and] it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know" (*Epistemology* 3). As definitions of sex and gender change, notions of sexuality, sexual orientation, and sexual preference become more fluid, and the dichotomous view of sexual orientation as gay/lesbian or

straight becomes destabilized (Fasinger and Arseneau 30-1), although the definition of sexuality as a manifestation of one's erotic urges remains relatively stable. Traditional conceptualizations of appropriate lessons for YA readers are not characterized by notions of sexual instability (although it would be a likely vehicle to promote self-acceptance for queer YA readers if it were available), and texts that depict instability in sexuality are generally considered inappropriate for YA readers.

Showalter observed that the "problematized space of the sex/gender system, [as well as] the whole package of physical and cultural distinctions between women and men, [fall] more simply under the rubric 'gender'" (29) and hypothesized that sex and gender are two distinct poles along a (binary) analytic axis in the heterocentrist Western discourse of the 20th century. Sexuality cannot be reducible to the gender of an individual's partners because, as Showalter states, "sexuality extends along so many dimensions that aren't well described in terms of the gender of object-choice" (35). Thus while gender and sexuality are often connected like two sides of the same binary coin, when gender is conceived of as fluid, gender and sexuality (as defined in terms of the gender binary) are not inextricably interconnected.

Transgender. This term, which applies to individuals who call into question normative (and heteronormative) gender roles and gender rules, refers to anyone who is post-operatively transsexual, who is in the process of transitioning, or who cross-dresses (Koker 115-8), among others, and can be contrasted with "cisgender." Cisgender, which uses "cis-" a Latin-derived prefix meaning "on the same side as," and which is the opposite of "trans," denotes those whose biological sex, culturally defined gender, and gender identification are all in alignment. According to cultural commentator Kate Bornstein, "not all transgendered people are lesbian and

gay, [but] all lesbians and gays are transgendered" (qtd. in Koker 116).[81] While Bornstein employs a radical conceptualization of "transgender" by which she means "'transgressively gendered'… [those who] break the rules, codes, and shackles of gender" (*Gender Outlaw* 135), and admits that this may not be agreeable to all gay and lesbian individuals, Bornstein's quotation in Koker's article exemplifies the broad understanding of transgender being used in this dissertation. In addition, "transsexual," a subset of transgender, refers to transgendered individuals who have had sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). Most of these individuals function within the assumptions posed by the gender binary, although some, like Bornstein, move between the two but feel like neither truly applies (Koker 111).

[81] The point Bornstein is making is that anyone who questions heteronormative gender roles and gender rules falls under the rubric "transgender" and by definition gay and lesbian individuals challenge heteronormative assumptions. At the same time, Bornstein is acknowledging that not all individuals who have transitioned or undergone SRS consider themselves lesbian or gay.

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