



Traces

—Mavis Reimer

Trace: *The track made by the passage of any person or thing.*

To follow Perry Nodelman as editor of a journal is at once a humbling and an exhilarating experience. Nodelman's influential presence in the criticism of young people's texts is well known: from his detailed demonstration of the varieties of ironic relations between words and pictures in picture books (*Words About Pictures*) to his evolving statements of the characteristics of children's literature as a genre (*The Pleasures of Children's Literature*) to his recent argument that children's literature simultaneously protects children from adult knowledge and works to teach it to them (*The Hidden Adult*), Nodelman has produced a body of important and compelling work, which any critic entering the field needs to take into account. The colloquial, conversational voice that he adopts in much of his academic writing has become a signature style, a style that encourages and,

indeed, often provokes, debate. It is a style that he also employed as editor of *CCL/LCJ* in the years since its arrival at the University of Winnipeg. Many of the scholars and critics who have published in the journal since 2004 have written to express their appreciation for his incisive and extensive commentary on early versions of their articles. Editors following Nodelman's tracks inevitably must ask themselves whether they are up to the mark.

But, because Nodelman's contributions have cleared the way to better scholarship in the field, it is also exciting to come after him. In his first *CCL/LCJ* editorial in Spring 2005, he adamantly refused any simple, nationalistic celebration of Canadian children's texts and he insisted that he, as well as other scholars, be willing to review, rethink, and, even, retract opinions in the light of new information. These are two of the impulses that have shaped the strategic revisioning of the journal as *Jeunesse: Young People,*



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Texts, Cultures. As incoming editors, we thank Perry for the work he has done in preparing the ground for this project and for his agreement to serve as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board as we grow into the mandate we're articulating.

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The next years will be an ongoing process of settling into a new skin. Readers will recognize many of the elements of our former identity in the issue before them. Indeed, editorial work with many of the articles and review essays published in this issue began with the *CCL/LCJ* editors.

We retain a commitment to publishing articles in both French and English, as the new title of the journal signals. The fact that the French component of the journal has become so important to our understanding of our work is due in large part to the persistent care and detailed attention given by Anne Rusnak to this scholarship during her five years as an Associate Editor of *CCL/LCJ*. We're pleased that she, too, has joined the Editorial Advisory Board of *Jeunesse*. Most of our reviews will continue to be essays that discuss a group of texts, with a focus on primary material from Canada and on major scholarly and theoretical work internationally in the fields of young people's texts and cultures. Forums collecting a group of essays, each of which discusses a significant question or keyword from a different perspective, will be featured from time to time, as will occasional articles on important library collections and other resources for researchers and scholars.

In many ways, the skin itself will not appear to be all that new. We've retained many of the design elements of our previous



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incarnation. The print publication continues to mimic the shape of a picture book for children, and the cover continues to feature objects associated with childhood and youth on a white background. The new *Jeunesse* logo contains traces of the former *CCL/LCJ* logo, most obviously in its coloration, but also, and more importantly in the view of the editors, in its broken form lines and its rearrangeable elements. Like the journal that it replaces, *Jeunesse* offers a venue for research and criticism that probes and questions, rather than consolidates, the location of young people's texts and cultures within political, economic, cultural, and artistic contexts.

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The new mandate we've taken for ourselves—to publish research on, and to provide a forum for discussion about, cultural productions for, by, and about young people—explicitly extends the range of the material that we would like to see studied, queried, and analyzed in *Jeunesse*. It is a sign of our origins that all of the members of the incoming editorial board at present are situated in language and literature departments, although the wide variety of our research and teaching interests mark some of the ways in which such study has shifted over the past few decades. Among us are scholars interested in fairy tales, narrative films, Internet fan fiction, MP3 blogs and music blogs, Aboriginal writing for young people, Victorian children's texts as an imperial archive, the political history of children's literature in Canada, the child as a concept that denotes temporality, the social and historical contexts of children's literature in French Canada, and the

uses of the figure of the child in postcolonial theoretical and cultural texts, among other things. But we also are committed to stretch ourselves to see beyond our areas of existing expertise and to seek out the work of researchers in communication, rhetoric, and media; film and performance; gaming and material culture; gender and sexualities; and youth cultures.

Texts produced *for* young people, we expect, will continue to be central to many of the discussions that we publish. At least since Jacqueline Rose's description of the "impossible" situation of enunciation of children's literature, the contradictory designs of adults speaking *to* young people, often *as* young people, have been decoded and debated. Texts of films and of material culture also are usefully read within the dynamics of a producer-consumer compact. But *Jeunesse* hopes, too, to be part of the ongoing conversations about the cultural productions and formations *of* young people and about the rhetoric of participatory culture being deployed at multiple sites of analysis.

A special focus of interest for the journal is the study of the cultural functions and representations of the figure of "the child"—and the many variations of that figure found in different times and places, such as "the girl," "the boy," "the teen," "the 'tween"—both in history and in contemporary cultures. Indeed, the assumption that "the child" is a cultural category is fundamental to the work in which we are engaging.

At the same time, we recognize that there are actual young people who bear the meanings assigned to them by cultural systems—and who contest, play with, complicate, and change those meanings.

Readers of *CCL/LCJ* will have seen many symptoms over the past five years of the perplexity of the editors about the question of what should constitute the Canadian content of the journal, one of the most explicit being Perry Nodelman's editorial in Spring 2006. Taking as his title "'Canadian'? 'Children's'? 'Literature'?" Nodelman lists various kinds of texts that might or might not be judged to be Canadian: texts published or produced in Canada, whatever the nationality of the authors or directors; texts co-published in the United States; texts authored by Canadians but published elsewhere; texts authored by recent immigrant or emigrant Canadians; texts about Canada regardless of their place of production (2). Describing the process of paradigm formation and change in science, Thomas Kuhn observes that the period before a shift is characterized by "frequent and deep debates over legitimate methods, problems, and standards of solution" (48) and the accumulation of anomalies that refuse "to be assimilated to existing paradigms" (97). In a smaller but similar process, not only our ability to define the Canadianness of texts, but also our confidence that this should be the central focus of our work, eventually collapsed under the weight of the codicils and exceptional instances

we had amassed. It is not that we have ceased to be interested in these conversations. Indeed, we look forward to reading and publishing thoughtful and passionate refutations of our decision to approach the question of Canada and Canadian content obliquely. We know, too, that mapping the territory of “young people, texts, cultures” will involve us in other definitional discussions; but it seems to us that, under the conditions of globalization in which we now live, the circulation of ideas and texts is changing in ways that make an a priori delimitation of our work by national provenance impossible.

In the triumphalist rhetoric of globalization deployed after the dismantling of the Berlin wall in 1989, it was taken as given that nations soon would or should be obsolete. Many critics of globalization did not dispute that assumption so much as mourn it, fearing, among other things, the homogenization of world cultures. The wide distribution of commercial media texts and the production of a global phenomenon such as Harry Potter might, in fact, be counted as evidence that an increasing sameness characterizes the texts and cultures of young people around the world. Put together with the comment by Hilary Clinton during Senate confirmation hearings for her appointment as US Secretary of State that “culture” was among “the full range of tools at [the] disposal” of a US foreign policy committed to “smart power” (qtd. in Koring A2), the double processes of

commercialization and globalization might be read as an ominous sign that the erosion of other national cultures by American imperialism is intentional and systematic. In another valence, however, national borders have been aggressively reasserted, particularly since the events in New York of September 11, 2001. Led by the US, but increasingly enjoined on other nations as well, the control functions of borders have been dispersed “into networks of information and surveillance” throughout national territories, as William Walters has noted (251). The urgent pressure to find sustainable ways of living in the face of the ecological crises produced by human civilization has resulted in a more positive emphasis on the responsibilities we have to our local places and economies. In yet another turn, various protectionist, nationalistic discourses are emerging in the current economic depression. In short, the categories of the national, the transnational, the intranational, the international, the global, the regional, and the local might become more important to the analysis of young people’s texts and cultures in coming years, but the terms of any such analysis themselves must be placed historically and theoretically, argued rather than assumed.

In this context, it seems important to say something about the particular location of *Jeunesse*. We are housed in the Centre for Research in Young People’s Texts and Cultures (CRYTC) at the University of Winnipeg, a small university in a mid-sized city



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in a province that is the geographical centre but an economic and cultural margin of Canada, an industrialized country that is a member of the G8, the Commonwealth, NATO, and NAFTA, and a signatory to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other international alliances and commitments. The most important fact about the geographical location of Canada at present is that it shares an 8,891-kilometre border with the United States. For many years celebrated as “the longest undefended border in the world,” that border has become the source of great anxiety in the era of what Walters calls “domopolitics.” But our place is also a location, like many in the world today, at which global currents cross and swirl. What we hope to cultivate is the “extroverted,” global sense of place that cultural geographer Doreen Massey has described as an imagining of places as “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself” (154). While we will always be asking ourselves what it looks like from here, we will also be moving out along the lines and the tracks that connect us to other communities of researchers and scholars in young people, texts, and cultures.

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We begin with this issue to make our way across the field we've begun to map. As an instance of our commitment to connectivity, the journal now is available both in print and online. If you subscribe to *Jeunesse*, you will not only receive your copy of the journal through the mail, but will also have access to the full-text version of the journal

online. Visit <<http://jeunessejournal.ca>> and log in as a subscriber to see the current issue. Also available on the website to subscribers is the digital archive of *CCL/LCJ* for issues published from 1975 to 2004.

The articles that appear in the first section of this issue engage many aspects of our mandate. Lisa Orr's exploration of contemporary princess culture takes as its text a range of toys and films, along with the marketing discourses that frame them and the responses of players and viewers to them. Ellen Singleton considers *The Girls of Central High*, a short series of girls' school stories published in the US in the early-twentieth century, to argue that sport is used to manage the representation of a potentially transgressive, physically active femininity for its target audience of girl readers. Comparing the works of several francophone children's authors from Canada and two francophone children's authors from Africa, Joseph Nnadi observes that there are significant commonalities in the gendered representations of the characters, with the female characters typically enlightened and the male characters typically flawed. Marc Ouellette reads the dominant North American discourse about sexually abused male children as it operates in texts about, rather than for, boys, and finds that this discourse serves to dissociate audiences from the abused characters. There is a shared interest in gendered constructions of children among these essays. This was not a planned focus for the issue, but its

emergence surely is not accidental. It seems clear that it is a widespread contemporary assumption that an important, perhaps *the* important, project of childhood and youth is to secure a successful gendered and sexual identity.

Gender also surfaces as an important category of analysis in many of the review essays in this issue, along with the nation, genre, marketing, and audience. The three reviews of one book of scholarly essays that appear here invert the pattern of the other review essays, all of which are written about groups of texts. This set of reviews was solicited by Benjamin Lefebvre, one of the two members of the *CCL/LCJ* editorial board who were not contributors to the collection, and their publication was overseen by members of the *Jeunesse* editorial board who were not involved in the *Home Words* project.

Into the traces, into regular work.

Jeunesse will be published twice yearly, in summer and in winter. As it is constituted at present, there are six members of the Editorial Board, an administrator, and a copy editor, all of us located in Winnipeg. We continue to experiment with the best ways of sharing and distributing the work of reviewing, producing, and marketing a journal that publishes in two modes and in two languages. That there is much to be done is clear to us, but we are enthusiastic about the prospects as we look out from here.

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