

“Nations of childhood” – call for papers

The emergence of modern nation-states can be seen as coinciding with the historical rise of children's literature. Similarly, stateless or diasporic nations, have frequently formulated their national consciousness and experience through children's literature. Nor is the connection between childhood and nation gratuitous. Children's literature is 'inherently educational' (Nodelman) and is – among other things – a vehicle for the instruction of children as future citizens. Conversely, ideas of childhood inform the discourse of nation and citizenship – something of which the etymology of the word 'nation' ('being born') already reminds us. Less susceptible to ironic or subversive readings, the child-subject may be considered the ideal apprentice in national devotions. These are perhaps reasons why certain children's literatures have 'stayed at home', and remained rooted in a national context. Others have been exported with empire. Against the national character of childhood literatures, recognized as such, today one pits the global reach of Disney's texts for children and various available export-versions of childhood.

The envisaged collection, *Nations of Childhood*, addresses both the question of how children's literature constructs and represents different national experiences, and the challenge presented to the 'nation-ness' of children's literature by the changing/diminishing role of nation-states. In what sense are childhoods national? To what extent does nation in the modern sense depend on the idea of – and the construction of – childhood/s?

The essays in the collection should focus on particular texts, historical or contemporary, on particular authors and their impacts on various national scenes. The volume should also include essays on periods, how childhood is represented in – and the way children are served by – particular children's texts (books, children's periodicals, plays, other media). A wide range of approaches to culture and text will be included. *Nations of Childhood* is an interdisciplinary and intercultural endeavour, transcending both academic and national borders.

Some themes to be canvassed for possible inclusion:

- The childhood of the nation (-state) as represented in children's literature
- Childhood classics and the classic childhood
- Print culture and childhood
- Childhood and citizenship education
- Individual and collective 'national' childhoods
- Crossover books and the death of children's literature
- International children's classics
- Translation and reception of children's books into new national contexts
- Diasporic nations in children's literature
- National constructions in aboriginal/native/first nations literature for children
- Postcolonial representations of childhood and nation
- The question of gender and national devotions in literature/culture for children
- Racist and exclusionary narratives directed at children as national subjects

The volume will be edited by Christopher Kelen (University of Macau) and Björn Sundmark (University of Malmö).

Proposals (roughly 300 word abstracts) are sought by the end of September 2009. Completed essays should be submitted by the end of January 2010.

Please send abstracts to both editors at

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