



Ten Goslings, Six Plus Four: Who Will Get the Highest Score?

—Heather Snell

Jeunesse doesn't have any goslings, but it is the journal's tenth anniversary. Goslings appear in the title only as an homage to the Winnipeg spring, when thousands of newly hatched goslings are let loose on the city. *Jeunesse* also enjoys its tenth anniversary at a time when not just high numbers of goslings, but numbers, period, have increasingly come to dominate knowledge mobilization. Journals are increasingly judged by impact measures and academics by the prestige capital of the journals in which they choose to publish, a high impact factor being correlated with superior quality. Should they appear in a children's counting book, the ten goslings competing for the highest score are no doubt involved in harmless play; for *Jeunesse*, however, the stakes of not having good impact measures are high. "Who will get the highest score?" is perhaps an even more anxiety-inducing question given the rapid growth of children's literary and cultural studies and the increasing focus on young people in fields that have hitherto tended to ignore

them. While *Jeunesse* is still pretty remarkable in its explicit focus on young people's texts and cultures and its willingness to publish interdisciplinary research, it is now one of many journals that publish scholarship on young people. Not only are other journals in the field publishing research on multifarious texts, but more and more journals focused on young people and young people's texts and cultures are also emerging. *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature (RDYL)*, hosted by St. Catherine University's Master of Library and Information Science Program and University Library, is a case in point. The mission of *RDYL* is "to publish scholarship attending to issues of diversity, equity, social justice, inclusion, and intersectionality in youth literature, culture, and media" (*RDYL*). *Jeunesse* has some impressive competition, a fact that makes maintaining a high impact factor extremely challenging.

Yet to think about *Jeunesse* as being in competition with other journals is, perhaps, to concede far too much to the cult of numbers that has come to

characterize neo-liberal capitalism in the twenty-first century. The editors at *Jeunesse* would prefer to think of the journal as one among many fine venues for scholars working in young people's texts and cultures. It is in this spirit that we celebrate our tenth anniversary at the same time as we remain conscious of the fact that *not* worrying about numbers manifests a certain degree of naiveté in a scholarly publishing industry that is more and more being driven by them. Despite our best efforts to be critical of how metrics are beginning to dominate scholarly publishing—a trend that mirrors an increasing orientation toward metrics in the larger society—our ability to publish work that contributes meaningfully to ongoing conversations around young people and the texts and cultures that emerge in their wake is at least in part shaped by metrics. A low journal impact factor (JIF), for example, may discourage scholars from submitting to *Jeunesse*. A low JIF may be particularly discouraging for early-career scholars whose chances of obtaining academic employment hinge increasingly on outstanding metrics. Mike Sosteric remarks that the development of Citation IQs could lead to a situation whereby “prestigious research institutions will feel most comfortable hiring someone who has demonstrated research potential—or whose ‘potential’ can be ‘predicted’ from early citation data” (805). At no other time has it been as important to think about one's score than in 2019. The pressure exerted on journals to be online and open access by government councils and

other funding bodies promises to make scoring even more important: once all articles are published online, the score can govern every aspect of academia, from hiring to the granting of research funding. No longer will hiring committees, university administrators, and other academic brokers have to take more traditional, printed scholarship into account in their assessments. Despite continued trepidation about publishing online at a time when predatory journals are making it difficult to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate research, there is a reluctance in many academic arenas to take printed research into account in decisions about who should be hired, who should be promoted, and who should be granted funding. It is simply impossible to quantify such research and much easier to make everything rely on one score. Scoring has already become all-encompassing in some fields, prompting many researchers to become obsessed with the number of citations their articles receive in journals and the impact factor of the journals in which they publish. This is especially true in the sciences, where New Public Management (NPM) has taken off, replacing an older model governed by “internal disciplinary acquisition of reputation” (Weingart 265). One's performance in the arena of citation is now one of the most powerful forms of currency in academia. To have a low score—or, worse, to not be scored at all—can be tantamount to being invisible, and invisibility is hardly an advantage in today's neoliberal world.



Of course,
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For those of you who are wondering, *Jeunesse* has an h-index factor of 10, a number we find it difficult to take for granted, given the challenge of getting into the indexes in which one can be scored in the first place. What does this number mean beyond its (completely coincidental) mirroring of our anniversary year? Well, it means that the journal has published ten papers that have each been cited ten times. It is important to note that a journal's h-index factor only means something in comparison to other journals that publish in the same or similar areas of research. Yet even when one considers the h-index factors of comparable journals, the impact score of a journal is hardly an indicator of a journal's value. Journal impact factors are notoriously flawed, not least because they rely on algorithms that merely count citations. These algorithms can distinguish neither between one scholar citing another and a scholar citing their own work nor good from bad citations. Any visibility is good visibility, according to today's academic numbers game. The problem is that as soon as metrics come to dominate one's ability to make a livelihood, gaming is inevitable. At its most basic, gaming in academia manifests itself in innocuous and ultimately productive activities such as making one's scholarship available online, embedding links to it via social media and other websites, engaging in online conversations with others, archiving one's scholarly contributions, and uploading work into institutional repositories (Jensen 119). Such activities might, ungenerously perhaps, be summed up as "competing in computability" (Jensen 119). At its worst, gaming manifests in forms of manipulation designed to deceive. Activities that fall into this category include using citations "to create the impression of authority and expertise and also to increase [one's]

¹ Cyril Labbé invented Ike Antkare, meaning “I can’t care,” to show how easy it is to cheat the citation game through manipulation of Google Scholar. Antkare became one of the most cited scientists, even beating Sigmund Freud with an impressive h-index of 94.

own and [one’s] friends’ visibility” (Sosteric 793); excessive self-citation; and outright manipulation of the algorithms that determine the score. In their study on manipulations of Google Scholar Citations and Metrics, Emilio Delgado López-Cózar, Nicolás Robinson-García, and Daniel Torres-Salinas conclude that “[i]t is so easy to manipulate GS Citations that anyone can emulate Ike Antkare [a fake researcher]¹ and become the most productive and influential researcher in its specialty” (366). In the event that GS Metrics is fully incorporated, editors too can “use unethical techniques to increase the impact of their journals” (Delgado López-Cózar et al.). Indeed, as the large number of articles devoted to gaming in academia suggest, there is no shortage of academics desperate to game the system in a bid to compete in a highly competitive and increasingly metrics-driven academic industry, and who can blame them? Ten citations, six plus four, who will get the highest score?

Of course, academia has never been immune to hierarchy. The grading system alone exemplifies the drive to hierarchize in academia. Universities have long been in the business of cultivating elites, and in this game European and European-descended white men have been overwhelmingly successful. Based as they are on numbers, which we generally tend to think of as being coldly objective, metrics may appear to promise fairness. As Julian Gill-Peterson recently pointed out during a keynote at the Youngsters 2 conference, however, this illusion of objectivity is precisely what allows disciplines such as science to get away with the

creation of sex and race-based hierarchies. The truth is, numbers *do* discriminate, and they will continue to do so as long as humans are behind the equations, not to mention the algorithms that have come to dominate so much of our everyday lives. Impact measures reproduce the hierarchies stoked by the traditional university because the human agents responsible for sublimating them exist at the apex. After all, who would encourage the use of such metrics if they themselves did not benefit from high impact scores? Those already winning the academic game are ensuring that metrics govern every aspect of academic life, to the detriment of minority scholars and scholars working in non-traditional fields of research or in institutions outside those countries with the most economic clout. In addition to the problem of engineering citation counts, Sosteric argues that Citation Analysis (CA) is “susceptible to larger structural and political influences” (793). He elaborates that “[a]t an international level, CA privileges North American and European scholarly discourse” (793). Henry Trotter, Catherine Kell, Michelle Willmers, Eve Gray, and Thomas King concur, arguing that CA “squeezes the massive African continent down to the size of a narrow peninsula . . .” (11). Scholars living and working in the global South are increasingly finding themselves out in the cold as metrics become the name of the academic game. It is difficult to compete when one is not writing in English or when one’s work is not cited by the “big names” in Europe and North America. The privileging

of academics in these regions is only compounded by the tendency of many academics in the South to cite scholars abroad more than local ones. This tendency arises not from a failure to place value on the voices of locals but as a direct result of a system that rewards those who cite scholars with the highest citation scores. Scholars with the highest scores tend to be employed in universities in Europe and North America, they are often men, they are almost always white, and they are overwhelmingly heterosexual. In their study of the politics of citation in the discipline of geography, Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne discuss the implications of using citation as a proxy for impact. CA is more often than not detrimental to feminist and anti-racist scholars not just outside North America and Europe but within these regions as well. Mott and Cockayne make the important point that citation amounts to a “performative technology of power” (969). Rethinking citation as a form of “conscientious engagement, rather than a metric of impact, excellence, or assumed authority” (966) can be one way of countering the divisiveness of impact factors. Ultimately, these factors not only prompt us to compete rather than cooperate, but also consign already marginalized populations to obscurity and, worse, accumulating disadvantage. When one dives deep into the numbers, things do not look so objective after all. The introduction of metrics does not level the playing field; on the contrary, they only obfuscate the hierarchies that continue to govern academia.

The effects of scoring in the academic industry have a profound effect on children, who already contend with metrics in their journey from kindergarten to university. With the ubiquity of social media and the plethora of self-publishing opportunities online, it is not hard to imagine that Citation IQs could be assigned earlier and earlier within education systems. Children could be measured by the impact of their blogs or YouTube channels, for example, facilitating the normalization of metrics at an early stage and, therefore, their widespread adoption later. The problem is that as metrics multiply, competition rises. In his book *The Metric Society*, Steffen Mau points out that

The act of comparison may be an anthropological constant inherent in social life—even children engage in all sorts of mutual comparisons—but there is a huge variance, both historically and culturally, in the intensity and practices of comparison. In the quantified society, numerical differences become more significant as data are generated and collected on an unprecedented scale, thus allowing the creation of new kinds of comparative relationships. Suddenly, data-based comparisons seem to be everywhere, and with them a sense of being in competition with others. (26-27)

The neoliberal injunction to make oneself heard in a busy marketplace of competing and now increasingly branded voices would only become more pressing in a world in which even children were measured by impact scores or one score that encompasses all of the available data on them. We need to be vigilant about how we define impact and who benefits in systems that reify it as the ultimate measure of success.



To be unscored is to
have literally no say.



Entertainment media designed for a predominantly adult audience are engaging the effects of metrics on society, the British science-fiction anthology TV show *Black Mirror* being one among many examples.² The YA industry is following suit, selling stories that engage critically with the metric society. Lauren McLaughlin's YA novel *Scored*, whose release coincided with the launch of Snapchat in 2011, is one example. Imani LeMonde, a young woman living in a poor town called Somerton that has recently become a testing ground for Score Corp, finds herself with a difficult choice to make: dump her best friend, whose association with an unscored means that mere association with her will probably reduce her own score, or collaborate with the unscored "creepers"—those who oppose creeping surveillance—to challenge the system. The environment that Score Corp creates in Somerton reflects the one in which the novel's target readers were already living: privacy has virtually disappeared; little cameras dubbed "eyeballs" hang everywhere, and anything one says or does can be used against them (platforms that promise ephemerality are, like Snapchat, merely illusions). Everyone's worth is manifested in their score, a high score denoting high worth, a low score little worth, and no score absolute illegitimacy. The only thing worse than being hyper-visible in the fictional world *Scored* establishes is being invisible. The unscored are rapidly viewed as the "waste" of society following the institutionalization of the score; accordingly, anything they say or do is regarded as being of little value. To be unscored is to have literally no say. Complicating this hierarchy is the

² Two episodes of *Black Mirror* engage metrics: "Fifteen Million Merits" (Season 1) and "Nosedive" (Season 3).

way in which class stratification crosses the score: many of the unscored are wealthy, as only those lacking privilege feel the need to hop onto the score bandwagon with the hope of mobilizing upward. The wealthy buy their way into elite colleges in *Scored*, just as they do in our own world. Imani initially embraces the score because it offers opportunities which, due to her status as a clamdigger, would not be available to her otherwise:

Imani knew the score existed to help people like her, that without it her prospects would be dim indeed. Jobs were scarce around Somerton, and her family's marina could barely keep them afloat. The score was "the great equalizer," and Imani knew that as a "highbie" she was poised to benefit at the highest level. (3)

Even as the score initially supplements and therefore cements existing hierarchies, it threatens to engulf everyone and, in so doing, fosters new forms of hierarchization:

She [Imani] knew such inequities [between rich and poor] existed, but she also knew that before long the score would be universal. That was what everyone was saying. When that happened, *if* that happened, it wouldn't matter how rich you were. If you didn't have a score, you wouldn't get anywhere in life. You'd be just as doomed as the other unscored, like Parker Gray and his ilk. (12)

The score's promise to turn society upside down, transforming the wealthy into the poor and vice versa, makes it a shimmering object of desire for many. The price of such transformation is nevertheless extremely high: the surveillance that one accepts when agreeing to be scored only becomes more intrusive as one climbs the merit scale. Another negative consequence of the score is that it furthers the tendency to associate with others one deems similar to oneself. If birds of a feather flocked together before Score Corp, they do so even more after the company's arrival, when the fear of one's score being reduced by association with low or unscored individuals leads to tribalism. In this way the score ensures that the humans it transforms into waste are ostracized and therefore neatly cordoned off from the rest of society.

The social-control function of metrics is evident also in Cecilia Ahern's *Flawed*. In this novel Celestine, the seventeen-year-old protagonist, has to choose between helping an old man on a bus and maintaining her privileged place in society, since helping the old man would mean accepting a life of constant surveillance and social ostracization. The reason for this consequence is that the old man has been dubbed Flawed by the Guild, a powerful government-sanctioned organization that forbids ethical citizens from helping those who have been deemed unethical (Celestine learns later that the old man, named Clayton Byrne, was declared ethically flawed after one of the risks he took as the CEO of a publishing company failed to pay off). While the fictional world the

novel establishes does not seem to be one dominated by metrics, it is clear that both Guild agents and one's own neighbours are always keeping score. The smallest infraction, such as helping a Flawed, facilitating euthanasia for a suffering loved one, or engaging in business deals perceived to be risky or corrupt, can provoke the dreaded sound of the siren that marks the coming of the Whistleblowers. The fact that all of these infractions can be lumped together points to the arbitrary nature of judgment in *Flawed's* world as well as the impossibility of ever recovering from mistakes. Just as it is almost impossible to climb back up the ranks once one's score has fallen in *Scored*, being judged lacking in morality and ethics means that one is forever branded in *Flawed*. As a guarantee of this, the Guild actually brands the letter "F" onto those parts of the body deemed to have been responsible for one's Flawed character: the temples (poor judgment), the tongue (lying), the breastbone (disloyalty to the Guild), the palm of the right hand (social theft), or the sole of the right foot (stepping out of line). For helping an old Flawed man who reminds her of her granddad, Celestine receives all five brands plus an extra one on her spine: Judge Bosco Crevan, the head of the Guild, secretly gives her this brand out of anger and spite to symbolize a lack of courage (she is also dating his son, Art). As Celestine gradually rises to become one of the leaders of a movement that resists the Guild, the irony of this additional and highly illegal brand becomes clear. In contrast to *Scored*, *Flawed* seems to be a response to the

2008 housing crash, in which greedy brokers, bankers, and investors led to the mass seizure of homes and therefore to the creation of newly homeless people. Since that time, the Occupy Movement and other forms of organized resistance have been calling out bad leadership on one side and corporate greed on the other. Celestine explains the reason for the development of the Guild early on in the novel:

Before I was born, there was a great recession in this country; banks folded, the government collapsed, the economy was ravaged, unemployment and emigration soared. People were blindsided by what happened, and the leaders were blamed. The leaders should have known; they should have seen it coming. It was their bad judgment, their bad decisions that led to the country's collapse. They were evil people; they had destroyed families and homes, and they were to suffer. They were the morally flawed people who had brought about our downfall.

As a result, anyone who made the smallest error in judgment was immediately punished. These people were publicly ridiculed, held up as examples of failure, and forced to resign. They were named and shamed. They weren't criminals, but they had made bad decisions. Society demanded leaders who would not learn from hindsight—leaders who would not make the mistakes in the first place. No second chances, no sympathy, no explanations allowed nor required.

Anybody who had made mistakes in the past couldn't take leadership roles in the future. And as hundreds of thousands of people marched on the government, it was decided that any person who made any error in judgment was to be rooted out of society entirely. Hindsight would be a thing of the past. Everybody would always—always—look ahead before it was too late, no mistakes made. (50-51)

A commitment to perfection and the accompanying lack of acceptance for any mistakes whatsoever is an extreme and highly misguided response to failures in government leadership and corporate greed. Yet *Flawed*, and its follow-up, *Perfect*, can also be seen as the consequence of a society dominated by metrics: once we begin to become obsessed with our numbers, the impulse to achieve a perfect score is virtually impossible to resist.³ This is especially true when one's score determines everything, from where one goes to school to the ability to have children. The irony that the numbers game has only become more ubiquitous in the wake of the 2008 crash that highlighted just how oppressive this game can be makes Ahern's dystopian series a relevant and clever critique of the present.

Cathy O'Neill, a former quant for a leading hedge fund, remarks that “[f]ollowing the housing crash, I woke up to the proliferation of WMDs [weapons of math destruction] in banking and to the danger they posed to our economy” (11). O'Neill defines WMDs as mathematical models that

³ Published in 2017, *Perfect* may also be a response to the election of Donald Trump in 2016.



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lead to algorithms that merely perpetuate existing hierarchies. She explains:

The math-powered applications powering the data economy were based on choices made by fallible human beings. Some of these choices were no doubt made with the best intentions. Nevertheless, many of these models encoded human prejudice, misunderstanding, and bias into the software systems that increasingly managed our lives. Like gods, these mathematical models were opaque, their workings invisible to all but the highest priests in their domain: mathematicians and computer scientists. Their verdicts, even when wrong or harmful, were beyond dispute or appeal. And they tended to punish the poor and the oppressed in our society, while making the rich richer. (3)

It is but a short leap from algorithms that embed human bias to new forms of social control, and unfortunately, control by numbers is extremely effective in societies that tend to think of mathematics and science as objective and, therefore, infallible. “Numbers don’t lie” is a common expression in North America. Even if, however, one could prove that numbers *do* lie—provided it were possible to access the data being fed into the algorithms—as long as we are held to them, we are controlled whether we want to be or not. Not having a high score may make one unemployable, socially ostracized, or worse. Taken together, McLaughlin’s *Scored* and Ahern’s *Flawed* series pose a challenge to the current dominance of Big Data and the way in which various scores have come to dominate our lives.

⁴ Otherwise known as “new public management” (NPM), the neo-liberal paradigm of New Managerialism emerged near the end of the 1990s and soon came to dominate science policy in many nations. Peter Weingart explains: “In this context, economic incentives were introduced in a social system to which they were foreign until then, perhaps with the exception of law, chemistry, medicine and the engineering sciences, which were closer to the economy or monetary remunerations, respectively. The larger part of the academic system, however, followed the logic of self-direction by

Tellingly, both use dated language to describe dominant forces, McLaughlin’s around class and Ahern’s around the Guild. In this way they resuscitate older structures in order to demonstrate their continuing dominance. Despite pretensions to newness, the very language employed in these novels highlights the fact that it is the same old hierarchies that are reproduced through the obsessive tracking of every move people make. Claims to fix flaws in the system, moreover, merely conceal the persistence of old models, thereby ensuring that an elite and wealthy minority maintains control over the majority. In other words, there is nothing “new” about the new algorithms and the New Managerialism;⁴ as with older formations of authority, their primary aim is to further consolidate power in the hands of those who already have it.

Having reacted in the same way as O’Neill to the ways in which numbers were manipulated to the detriment of many people prior to the crash of 2008, financial engineers Emanuel Derman and Paul Wilmott drew up a list of oaths for mathematicians to live by:

- I will remember that I didn’t make the world, and it doesn’t satisfy my equations.
- Though I will use models boldly to estimate value, I will not be overly impressed by mathematics.
- I will never sacrifice reality for elegance without explaining why I have done so.
- Nor will I give the people who use my model false comfort about its accuracy. Instead, I will make explicit

its assumptions and oversights.

– I understand that my work may have enormous effects on society and the economy, many of them beyond my comprehension. (O’Neill 205-206)

Such oaths are of course inadequate on their own. Just as academics are pressured to produce good citation scores— or else die a slow social death in the dreaded Desert of the Mundane—data scientists are pressured by their employers to produce algorithms that benefit the companies in which they work. As O’Neill points out,

To eliminate WMDs, we must advance beyond establishing best practices in our data guild. Our laws need to change, too. And to make that happen we must reevaluate our metric of success. (206)

Indeed, how we define success will determine how we are evaluated and thus how we count and how we are counted. As critical thinkers, academics should not simply accept Citation IQ as a measure of their impact, but rather, following Mott and Cockayne, embrace a conscientious engagement with the ideas of others.

Our tenth anniversary issue features a number of pieces that represent such engagement. Maria Kromidas’s “‘Agent of Revolutionary Thought’: Bambara and Black Girlhood for a Poetics of Being and Becoming Human” shows that deconstructing powerful and all-consuming structures is not enough; one needs to imagine new modes of being and

internal disciplinary acquisition of reputation. With the introduction of performance measures, policymakers hoped to gain control over a system which was inaccessible to most of them with respect to its operational logic” (265). In Roger Burrows’s view, performance measures began to take significant hold of academia in the early 2000s, although there had been “a slow accumulation of layer upon layer of data at various levels, scales and granularities since the mid-1980s . . .” (864-65). The transformations have created an academic world “in which relations between measure and value have become increasingly enacted via code, software and algorithmic forms of power; a world in which the role of number and numbers has come to take political precedence over the aesthetic, the affective and the hermeneutic; and a world in which structures of feeling have been, consequently, fundamentally altered” (Burrows 865-66).

Erik Swyngedouw refers to the adoption of “technologies of expert administration and management” as a symptom of the establishment of a post-political frame in which politics is reduced to “the sphere of governing and polic(y)ing through allegedly participatory deliberative procedures of Governance-beyond-the-State . . .” (272). Competitive performance benchmarking is a hallmark of technomanagerial governance (Swyngedouw 277).

relating to others in the wake of deconstruction if one is to truly liberate oneself from such structures. Through close engagement with the work of Sylvia Wynter and Avery Gordon, among others, Kromidas performs an analysis of Toni Cade Bambara’s “Gorilla, My Love” that simultaneously disrupts one-dimensional characterizations of Black girls and contributes to the ongoing critique of dominant narratives about the human. More often than not, what counts as human does not move beyond a paradigm that defines it as predominantly white, male, Western, and middle-class; what makes this paradigm so dangerous is that it in turn tends to condition thinking about children and childhood, not to mention peoples who live outside the rich economic hubs of Europe and North America. As the subtitle of Kromidas’s piece implies, a poetics of being and becoming supports a reimagining of the human through a reading of the figure of Hazel, Bambara’s Black girl protagonist.

In “Visualization and the Vivid Reading Experience,” Margaret Mackey takes issue with the dominant paradigm of reading as a form of visualization, arguing that not all readers make mental pictures in their minds when they read. The privileging of reading as visualization in educational discourse means that students who do not visualize may be dubbed “bad readers,” eliminating opportunities to—and here I echo Kromidas—see and think differently. For some, the pressure to visualize can actually disrupt their comprehension of a text, suggesting that it is as important to critique dominant reading paradigms as it is to critique dominant paradigms of the human. Complicating

things even further, not everyone means the same thing when they speak of “visualization,” which can connote anything from imagining the text as a movie to seeing through the eyes of characters. For some scholars, visualization involves senses other than sight. Moreover, visual detail may be scant in a text or simply not in the foreground of a reader’s interpretation. Mackey draws on interviews with twelve undergraduates and her own encounter with Philip Pullman’s *La Belle Sauvage* to posit new ways of thinking about reading.

Roxanne Harde’s “‘Are You Preparing for Another War?’: Un/Just War and the Hunger Games Trilogy” reads Suzanne Collins through the lens of just war theory. Rather than interpreting the triangular relationship between Katniss, Peeta, and Gale as a primarily romantic one, Harde makes an argument for it as a politically provocative one. She argues that Peeta and Gale represent disparate attitudes toward war, creating a narrative alignment that invites readers to parse out the difference between pacifism and revenge on the one hand and just and unjust wars on the other. Harde positions her reading in relation to an already impressive body of scholarship on Collins that takes up the Hunger Games’ engagement with the just war tradition, moral consciousness, military culture, child soldiering, and crisis economics. Building on these prior critiques, she offers a sense of how the trilogy offers productive ways of thinking through war and its consequences for the benefit of young readers. In the

conclusion, she suggests that the Hunger Games trilogy could be seen as a form of protest writing in its invitation to such readers to think critically about war. This article therefore represents yet another attempt to deconstruct reigning paradigms while also positing alternatives to them.

In “Writing with Impunity in a Space of Their Own: On Cultural Appropriation, Imaginative Play, and a New Ethics of Slash in Harry Potter Fan Fiction,” James Joshua Coleman takes issue with some slash fictions, arguing that despite the tendency of the authors of these fictions to engage man-on-man (m/m) sexual and/or romantic relationships in a way that is simultaneously playful and disruptive of heteronorms, slash fictions can be harmful to those who actually live m/m relationships. There is more at stake in slash for gay men than there is for many of its creators, for whom slash may represent merely a satisfying alternative to the heterosexual dynamics that govern mainstream media. At the same time, Coleman cautions against homogenizing creators, many of whom are women who may have as much trouble as gay men in seeing themselves reflected in mainstream media. As slash response to such media itself suggests, not all representations are equal. By the same token, slash representations are not necessarily positive. Stereotypes can abound in slash, with little to no check on such representations precisely because they tend to emerge in spaces that are often assumed to be going against the mainstream regime of media representation.

In “Girl-Animal Metamorphoses: Voice, Choice and (Material) Agency of the Transforming Female Body in Young Adult Literature,” Tharini Viswanath suggests that there is more than one way to read girl-animal transformations. On the one hand, such transformations manifest a desire on the part of adult authors of young adult novels to school readers about the dangers of sex and sexuality, a realm almost always defined as adult. On the other, girls’ transformation into animals enables forms of agency not available to them as humans. Through analyses of Justine Larbalestier’s *Liar* and Peter Dickinson’s *Eva*, Viswanath considers how girl-animal transformations create liminal spaces in which to rethink notions of embodied agency. Viswanath’s argument hinges on the ways in which these novels bring together the linguistic and the material, a confluence that is key to the protagonists’ successful negotiations of liminality. Girl-animal transformations can allow unique materialities that help to clear spaces not just for alternative models of agency but also for new modes of thinking about the problematic divide between humans and animals. Language, for example, is not solely the purview of humans. The section of our issue that is devoted to articles comes full circle with Viswanath’s argument, which echoes Kromidas’s in its wilful deconstruction of dominant paradigms of the human.

We usher in our tenth anniversary issue also with an important resource for those wanting to conduct research in Indigenous comics and graphic novels: an

annotated bibliography by Taylor Daigneault, Amy Mazowita, Candida Rifkind, and Camille Callison. The bibliography includes titles published up until March 2019 by creators who identify as Indigenous. While most titles were released in Canada and the United States, the bibliography includes some examples of Indigenous comics and graphic novels from other countries. This resource is published online only and will be updated once a year to reflect new additions to the field. Camille Callison and Candida Rifkind’s introduction appears in both the print and online versions of the issue.

Finally, we feature five reviews and one review essay in this issue. Overlapping thematically with Viswanath’s article is a review of a recently published anthology on embodiment is Caroline Hamilton-McKenna’s review of *The Embodied Child: Readings in Children’s Literature and Culture*, an anthology edited by Roxanne Harde and Lydia Kokkola. In “Connecting Generations, Connecting Disciplines: Intergenerational (Im)Possibilities in Popular Media,” Madeleine Hunter reviews *Connecting Childhood and Old Age in Popular Media*, an anthology edited by Vanessa Joosen. Entitled “Intermedial Borders and Global Fairy-Tale Cultures,” Michelle Anya Anjirbag’s review provides an assessment of *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures*, edited by Pauline Greenhill, Jill Terry Rudy, Naomi Hamer, and Lauren Bosc. Robert Bittner’s “Digging in to the Alphabet Soup: Exploring Trends and Embracing Change in LGBTQ+ YA Literature” reviews *Representing*

the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature: LGBTQ+ Content since 1969, an anthology edited by Christine A. Jenkins and Michael Cart. Jill E. Silvius reviews Katherine Capshaw and Anna Mae Duane's edited collection *Who Writes for Black Children?: African American Children's Literature before 1900*, and, last but not least, Michelle Jeffries reviews in a longer review essay three children's books whose protagonists challenge gender norms.

In summing up this issue it strikes me just how far children's literary and cultural studies have come since

I first entered the field in the early 2000s. Many artists, authors, scholars, editors, publishers, teachers, and librarians have not been content to submit to reigning paradigms. Rather, they have challenged them and in so doing have helped to change both what gets published and what gets said about what is published. A lot of the changes have been good ones; some of them have been downright radical. I will not quantify these changes, this being an anti-numbers editorial, but I do want to conclude by emphasizing that great things happen when we push back against oppressive structures.

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