



From the Editors

If you take a book with you on a journey . . . an odd thing happens. The book begins collecting your memories. And forever after you only have to open that book to be back where you first read it. It will all come into your mind with the very first words: the sights you saw in that place, what it smelled like, the ice cream you ate while you were reading it . . . yes, books are like flypaper—memories cling to the printed page better than anything else.

—Mo, *Inkheart* (Cornelia Funke, 2003)

This issue of the *The ALAN Review* coincides with the 100th anniversary of NCTE. Anniversary points like this often make us stop and think about the history of the organization or the journey that we have travelled as members of that organization. ALAN and *The ALAN Review*, like NCTE, have been integral aspects of many teachers' professional journeys by introducing them to new ideas, opening forums for sharing instructional choices, and developing personal and professional relationships. Last year in Orlando, I (Melanie) reconnected with a young woman who had been one of the student teachers I worked with years ago. She said, "I look forward to these conferences all year. I learn so much and go back to my school recharged." She followed that statement by saying, "I still remember my first NCTE and ALAN conferences. It was like coming home. I learned a ton of new things from people who were interested in me being successful."

Over the course of both conferences, I heard again and again how people made connections and built memories while at these conferences. These educators, media specialists, and authors pored over conference booklets and connected with presentations they'd seen, people they'd met, and authors they'd heard. The strength of both organizations and conferences is in the people who make up the membership.

Those of us working in the field of young adult literature celebrate anniversaries as well—the publication of *The Outsiders*, Harry Potter, or *Speak*, for example. We look back at particular books and remember the students with whom we read them. We open the first page of a novel and remember the student engagement or the young reader who consumed it and then begged for more. Many of the young adult novels carry with them memories of our teaching, our reading, and our moment-to-moment experiences with the texts that touched our students. One tenth-grade student wrote in her journal for her English class, "*Speak* was less than two hundred pages, but it seemed bigger than that because so much happened to me reading it. I reread sections for my paper, and it was strange because I could remember the discussions we had and what other people said." As a teacher, I have many books that are "bigger" than the number of their pages. Rylant's *Missing May* is one such book for me because I remember the reactions of my seventh graders as they connected with the main character's loss and her poverty. When I reread the book now, I hear their voices; the book is layered with my memories of reading it with them.

Jackie, Steve, and I are at a milestone with this issue as well; this is our seventh issue as editors, and there is so much growth that has happened for us in

our editorial journey. We have countless numbers of people we would like to take a moment to thank. Editors rely on the people who review manuscripts to provide thoughtful, detailed, and helpful critiques in a short amount of time. The reviewers who have read and commented on the manuscripts we have sent to them have been outstanding; they read and re-read challenging texts and provide feedback that is helpful to us as editors and to our authors. We appreciate our reviewers' willingness to contribute their time. They are a huge part of why *The ALAN Review* is a strong journal.

As the editor who works with the book reviews, I appreciate the readers who submit reviews on current young adult literature as well as the publishers who send review copies to us. Keeping current on what is being published in young adult literature is a challenge for all of us, and the reviews that our readers submit definitely help. The reviewers of *The ALAN Review* also deserve a thank-you; we appreciate your reading and responding to the articles we publish. As an organization, ALAN is incredibly supportive and helpful to us.

Wendy Glenn, president of ALAN, introduces this issue with a column that looks at both where young adult literature has been and where it is going. The theme of her column, Flash Back—Forge Ahead, dovetails nicely with this issue's theme on the role of young adult literature in schools and English Education. Glenn's address—The President's Connection—is also one of the two new features introduced in this issue of *The ALAN Review*.

In "An Investigation of Student Preferences of Text Format," Miriam G. Martinez and Janis Harmon examine which texts students might prefer to read. In a world that continually produces many texts with a range of formats (traditional, graphic novels, digital texts, interactive formats), this article raises an important question. Determining what kids prefer to read might lead us to understand what they will read or perhaps help us develop pedagogies that will reach more students more frequently.

In his article "The Verse Novel and the Question of Genre," Mike Cadden asks us to consider the verse novel in new ways. He recognizes that reading verse is often challenging for students, but explains that if student readers consider the various voices of the verse novel, the value of its white spaces, and

the ways in which verse novels are like dramas, then perhaps the novel might be less difficult to read.

Ruth Caillouet asks us to consider the models that the characters in the novels of both Wyeth and Woodson offer to young readers. She joins with other researchers and teachers who suggest that readers often find hope and rejuvenation through the vicarious lives of fictional characters. Her piece, "To Be Young, Gifted, Black, and Lesbian: Wyeth and Woodson, Models for Saving a Life," provides a discussion of the importance of hopeful characters for young readers.

In "Beyond a Good/Bad Binary: The Representation of Teachers in Contemporary YAL," Amy Cummins examines the representations of teachers in several young adult novels. She argues that it is not easy to characterize the contemporary teacher in these works as good or bad, as has often been the case; it is more helpful to discuss how teachers fall into a number of performative roles. Using a critical pedagogy framework, Cummins argues that educators can learn a lot about how to deal with students based on the representations of ourselves in their books.

René Saldaña, Jr., in "The Case of the Missing Mexican American Detective Stories: Mystery Solved?" explores the tradition of the detective novel featuring a young protagonist. He considers the small but growing number of novelists who are writing mystery novels and short stories featuring Mexican American protagonists and the importance of providing role models for readers that are more recent than the Nancy Drews and Encyclopedia Browns who have long dominated this genre.

After conducting a survey about their students' perceptions of people with mental disabilities, Bruce Menchetti, Gina Plattos, and Pamela Carroll recognized the potential role young adult literature could play in "exploring, and exploding, societal stereotypes about people who have disabilities." Their article offers a guide for identifying quality young adult literature that features characters with mental disabilities. It also provides suggestions for quality titles to use with students and ideas for how to incorporate this literature into teacher education programs.

In her article "YA Literature in Translation: A Batch of Batchelder Honorees," Kristana Miskin both reminds us about the Batchelder Awards and introduces us to many of its honorees. By including adolescent novels written in other languages but trans-

lated to English, our classrooms are enriched and our boundaries expanded. Jody N. Polleck's "Adolescent Literature Book Clubs: Cultivating Peer Relationships with Urban Adolescent Females" provides a vision of how book clubs can help students to analyze literature. The article also highlights how many students found more active voices in the safe places beyond the classroom.

In "The Worst Tomboy Ever," Jennifer Lynn Barnes, a young adult author of *Raised by Wolves* and *Trial by Fire*, talks about herself as a writer and how elements of her life experiences show up in her novels. The Author's Connection is the second of two new features in this issue; the intent behind The Author's Connection is to provide, in print, one of the great strengths of The ALAN Conference—the voice of the author giving the reader that secret tidbit that makes the novel that much more exciting to read. Like Meggie in *Inkheart*, many of our readers have never "before met anyone who wrote the words that filled a book's pages" (p. 250). This column hopes to bridge that gap. Jerry Weiss's The Publisher's Connection—"This Is My War!"—focuses on the battles that media

specialists and teachers are fighting to keep literacy essential in schools. He points out that budget cuts often target libraries and classroom books because these seem "non-essential." He argues that literacy is always essential.

This issue concludes with three stories about falling in love with books. In the first, Sarah Hahn recounts her first attendance at an ALAN Conference and how she carried that experience back to her students with a large box of books. In the second, Kimberly Powers reinforces the importance of choice in fostering a love of learning in her students. Virginia Pasley completes this trio with a personal tribute to the great author Brian Jacques and her special relationship to his books as a young reader. These stories from the field reinforce the magic of books and the "magic of the written word. Nothing is more powerful for good or evil" (Funke, p. 415).

References

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