
Women of ALA Youth Services and Professional Jurisdiction: Of Nightingales, Newberies, Realism, and the Right Books, 1937-1945

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ABSTRACT

YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANSHIP—work with young people in school and public libraries—has always been a female-intensive specialization. The organization of youth services librarians within the American Library Association (ALA) has been a powerful professional force since the turn of the century, with the evaluation and promotion of “the right book for the right child” holding a central position in their professional jurisdiction. However, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, this jurisdiction over the selection of the best books for young readers was strongly challenged on the basis of gender. An examination of these confrontations reveals consistent patterns in both the attacks and the defenses, as well as gender-based assumptions, that ALA youth services leaders confronted in their ultimately successful effort to defend their jurisdiction over the Newbery Medal (awarded yearly to “the most distinguished contribution to literature for children”), while at the same time broadening the profession’s criteria for “the right book” to include realistic fiction that dealt with contemporary social issues.

INTRODUCTION

Youth services librarianship, like teaching, social work, and public health nursing, was one of the child welfare professions that grew up in the United States during the Progressive Era. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization, the influx of enormous numbers of immigrants to the United States, and an economic depression stimulated a host of reform activities and

institutions. Publicly supported schools, libraries, and social welfare agencies were among the institutions established during this time, and social welfare professions grew up around these agencies. Due to a number of factors—including the growth of higher education for women, the increased social acceptance of middle-class women's waged work, and the Progressive Era promotion of service professions—large numbers of middle-class women moved into librarianship and other social welfare professions during this time (Wells, 1967; Simpson & Simpson, 1969; Epstein, 1970; Grimm, 1978; Garrison, 1979, pp. 173-80; Kessler-Harris, 1982, pp. 112-17). Not surprisingly, work involving the welfare of children was seen as particularly suitable for women (Garrison, 1972-73, pp. 166-69; Carvallo, 1981; Antler, 1987a; Muncy, 1991; Levine & Levine, 1992; Ladd-Taylor, 1994).

The movement of white middle-class women into librarianship—and particularly into library service to children—was supported by a prevailing middle-class Victorian notion of what Barbara Welter and other historians have called the Cult of True Womanhood. According to this ideology, the world was “naturally” divided into public and private spheres, with men ruling the former and women the latter. In ruling her home sphere, the ideal middle-class woman embodied the qualities of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter, 1966). By the late nineteenth century, however, alongside the Cult of True Womanhood's enshrinement of women inside the home was the growing reality of waged work for educated white middle-class women outside the home. Not surprisingly, the movement of these women into the workforce was accompanied by idealistic rhetoric about the particular fitness of occupations in which they could perform waged work in the public sphere and still remain True Women. Librarianship was promoted to a middle-class audience as an ideal feminine vocation, providing the opportunity for the True Woman to use her qualities of piety and purity (in selecting and distributing books that would be a good influence on readers), submissiveness (in serving the public), and domesticity (in maintaining a home-like environment in the library). Children's librarianship was viewed as particularly suited to women, a belief that (at its most sentimental) led to children's librarianship being framed as a uniquely feminine field for which one felt a calling not unlike the spiritual calling to a religious vocation. While the evidence of prescriptive literature does not indicate how thoroughly the audience took such messages to heart, the rhetoric was popular and the fact remains that children's librarianship became and remained a female domain.

Evidence of the nearly absolute equating of “children's librarian” with “woman” is plentiful. For example, at the 1900 ALA conference, William Howard Brett (1900), Cleveland Public librarian, stated: “The work for children in our libraries, like many other of our best things, is

woman's work. To them it owes its inception, its progress and present measure of success, and its future is in their hands" (p. 123). Nearly twenty years later, librarian Sophy H. Powell (1917) began her textbook's description of "The Children's Librarian and Her Training" by stating simply "all children's librarians are women" (p. 255). Twenty years later still, the absolute equating of children's librarian with woman was still being made in a debate within the pages of *Library Journal* regarding the comparative merits of male and female librarians when Florence R. Curtis (1938), director of the Hampton Institute Library School, stated: "I dislike to have a woman chosen for a position because she is a woman, except where that fact means that she can render more efficient service than a man. The examples are obvious, that of a children's librarian is a case in point" (p. 295). Despite the exceptional man who became active in ALA youth services librarianship, the study of youth services librarianship is essentially the study of women.

YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANS: WOMEN AND PROFESSIONAL JURISDICTION

As described by Andrew Abbott (1988) in *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*, a major aspect of professional identity may be found by locating the area over which a profession claims jurisdiction. Like other professions, each of the Progressive Era child welfare professions laid claim to a particular area of expertise that was its distinguishing attribute. In the case of the children's librarian, this area was the knowledge of children's books and children's reading, and it was around this hub that all other professional activities revolved. Many found youth services librarians' jurisdictional claim on the selection and evaluation of books for young readers to be entirely appropriate for a specialization comprised of women working on behalf of children. Others, however, were disturbed by the preponderance of women in general—and female youth services librarians in particular—in so many aspects of children's book creation, production, distribution, and promotion.

Among the most widely acknowledged leaders in youth services librarianship were those who were involved in the youth services divisions of the American Library Association (ALA). The authority of youth services librarians was most visible through their work in selecting and bestowing children's book awards and in compiling widely circulated bibliographies of the "best books" for children. As children's books received more general recognition, however, power struggles began to erupt as other interests sought to wrest some of the selection power away from the ALA youth services leaders whose selections, bibliographies, and reviews were such a strong influence in all the professional fields that dealt with children's books. Not surprisingly, among the perceived weaknesses of this group was their status as women. The rhetoric used in this battle

over authority in the late 1930s and its resolution in the early 1940s may be usefully examined to identify the ways in which gender stereotyping was used against female children's librarians and the strategies that librarians used in successfully refuting challenges to their authority over books for young readers.

An oft-quoted motto of children's librarianship popularized by Anne Carroll Moore, New York Public Library's first Superintendent of Work with Children and first chair of ALA's Children's Librarians' Section, described their work as that of placing "the right book into the hands of the right child at the right time." This reflected a dual emphasis on materials for, and service to, young library users. In the United States, children's librarians took an early lead in identifying and promoting what they considered to be books of the highest literary quality, and likewise discouraging the use of what they considered to be literature inappropriate for children (generally dime novels and mass market fiction). At a time when the average American child spent only five years in school, public librarians saw their role as promoting lifelong reading habits (Tyack, 1978, p. 61).

Technological advances in printing, the spread of compulsory education, and the consequent rise in literacy all contributed to the creation of a significant body of writing for American children by the end of the nineteenth century. Librarian-created bibliographies of recommended books began with Caroline Hewins's (1882) annotated list, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, and during the 1880s and 1890s, children's librarians began to establish standards for juvenile library books. These standards were institutionalized and promulgated by reference tools such as H. W. Wilson's *Children's Catalog* (established 1909), review journals such as *Booklist* (established 1905) and *Horn Book* (established 1924), and in annual awards to the children's books judged to be the most distinguished in terms of writing (the Newbery Medal, established in 1922) and of illustration (the Caldecott Medal, established in 1938).

The values of the profession were naturally expressed in their book selection standards, and books considered "good books for children" were those that met the basic criteria of having "literary quality," "child appeal," and "good values." A children's book of "literary quality" contained the same elements of character, plot, setting, dialogue, and theme that were valued in the canonical adult texts of the day. A book with "child appeal" was one that children were drawn to, read or listened to eagerly, and asked for repeatedly. A children's book with "good values" contained the messages regarding life conduct (speech, behavior, ethics, moral reasoning, choices of activity and companionship, and so on) that were respected and valued by educated middle-class women of the time. The books that were selected and well reviewed by youth services librarians had to meet all three standards.

The existence of specialized courses helped to legitimize the profession of youth services librarianship in the United States and to solidify its authority over children's literature. The first course in the training of children's librarians commenced at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 1898. In 1900, Frances Jenkins Olcott, director of children's work at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, began a two-year Training Class for Children's Librarians that expanded to a full-fledged Training School in 1901. New York Public Library's training course began in 1906, and Cleveland's Western Reserve University's course in children's librarianship opened in 1909 (Thomas, 1982, pp. 128-56).

YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANS AS A FEMALE CADRE WITHIN ALA

The American Library Association, founded in 1876, played a key role in shaping the culture and traditions of librarianship and in sustaining the collegial relationships that undergirded both continuity and change in the profession. Public children's librarians began creating a formalized national network at ALA meetings in the 1890s, organized informally as the Children's Library Club at the ALA Annual Conference in Montreal in 1900, and officially affiliated as ALA's Children's Service Section in 1901. An ALA committee devoted to the promotion of school library service was formed in 1894, but it was not until 1915 that school librarians themselves began meeting as ALA's School Libraries Section. In 1930, young people's librarians began meeting formally within ALA with the formation of the Young People's Reading Round Table. These three groups of youth services librarians—those specializing in public library service to children (approximately preschool to age 14), public library service to young people (approximately ages 12-18), and school library service (grades K-12)—are the organizational ancestors of the present youth services divisions within ALA: the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL).

School and public youth librarians were trained at ALA-accredited library schools, where they were taught from ALA-produced textbooks by instructors who were themselves involved in ALA. Once on the job, the ALA annual conferences and midwinter meetings provided further opportunities for strengthening the professional network of ALA youth services librarians. ALA conferences fostered participation in professional business on a national level, and served as occasions to renew friendships with library school classmates and former colleagues. Thus, active membership in ALA's youth services divisions became an essential element of the careers of most prominent youth services librarians.

The creation in 1935 of an ALA office devoted solely to youth services, the School and Children's Library Division, further encouraged networking on a nationwide basis. By the mid-1930s, the first generation

of children's librarians made way for a larger and somewhat more diverse second generation of youth services librarians as the earlier, more familial, network was replaced by a network of professional peers and mentors. Nonetheless, the bonds of collegiality and friendship were strong and contributed to individual librarians' sense of professional identity. As one traces the evolution of ALA's organizational structure, one comes to understand and appreciate how deeply the women in youth services librarianship cared about, and were sustained by, their collegial networks. Thus the professional identity and values that were formed in those early decades were transmitted to the next generation of youth services librarians, at least in part through their involvement in ALA.

Finally, a consideration of the demographic and philosophical commonalities of ALA youth services leaders reveals additional factors that knit the group together and helped to maintain its distinctive professional identity. This author's recent study of the activities of ALA youth services divisions from 1939 to 1955 confirms several assumptions about youth services librarians that have been made over time (Jenkins, 1995, pp. 21-29). Generally speaking, the 237 youth services librarians identified as ALA youth services leaders during that time were middle-class women—predominantly white and single—who were professionally educated career women. Most were librarians throughout their careers, although more than a few began their work lives as classroom teachers. Nearly all were trained in youth services librarianship at ALA-accredited library schools; many attended a core group of institutions—Columbia, Western Reserve, Carnegie Institute, and the University of Illinois—and thus were taught by the same instructors. When these women took on leadership positions in ALA youth services, they brought with them, on average, nearly twenty years of professional experience. In addition, well over half worked as library educators at some point in their careers. Coming from similar backgrounds, receiving similar schooling, and working together for years in the same national professional organization, they passed their knowledge along to others in the field, thus creating a continuity between the women who had educated them in the first decades of the century and the following generation of youth services librarians who received their professional education in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In this homogenous and interconnected group, a speech or article by an individual youth services leader was a reflection of years of shared professional values and “common wisdom.” While one youth services librarian could never speak for all, the knowledge of the multiple areas of professional commonality informs the present-day researcher's understanding of their work and their words as representations of both an individual and a group perspective.

“LOSE NOT THE NIGHTINGALE” THE QUESTION OF REALISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

During the 1920s, a controversy regarding children's book evaluation standards arose that pitted children's librarians against progressive educators. Librarians—as represented by the published views of New

York Public Library's Superintendent of Children's Work, Anne Carroll Moore—placed greater importance on the inner workings of the child's imaginative life, while teachers—as represented by the published views of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, head of New York City's Bank Street School—placed greater importance on the “here and now” of children's lived experiences (Antler, 1987b). Thus, public library children's rooms featured the telling and reading of traditional folklore and fairy tales, while progressive classrooms used books such as Mitchell's innovative *Here and Now Storybook* (Dutton, 1921). In time, each side softened its sometimes absolutist views and came to appreciate the value of using both approaches with children, but during the 1920s and 1930s, this issue was an important demarcation of professional identity and allegiance (Marcus, 1992, pp. 53-58).

Among those who were significant in this struggle was Frances Clarke Sayers, whose speech, “Lose Not the Nightingale,” became a widely quoted credo of youth services librarianship that embodied their belief in the power of imaginative literature for children. Sayers began her career as a children's librarian at New York Public Library under Anne Carroll Moore, then worked as an adult education specialist for ALA, followed by a position teaching children's literature at the University of California at Berkeley's library school. Her speech, delivered at the Newbery Award program at the 1937 ALA Annual Conference in New York City, brought her national recognition among ALA youth services librarians. The talk's title was a reference to Hans Christian Andersen's “The Nightingale,” which Sayers used as a metaphor for children's literature. In the story, the nightingale is “a small, unpretentious bird who sang, in the dark night, with a voice so beautiful that it brought tears to the eyes of the listener.” When its song becomes fashionable and popular among the members of the Chinese court, a bejeweled mechanical bird is brought in to take its place, and the real bird departs, only to return to revive the dying emperor with its healing song (Sayers, 1937, p. 222).

To Sayers, the real nightingale represented traditional imaginative literature for children, while the mechanical nightingale was the newer literature for children that had developed out of progressive education. This debate became incorporated into the ongoing discussion regarding the place of realism in books for children, in which some critics made the distinction between imaginative stories and idealized plots, characters, and settings on one side, and “here and now” stories and realistic story elements on the other side. As women interested in the welfare of children and as defenders of reading as aesthetic experience, children's librarians were assumed to favor imaginative writing and oppose realism. Sayers, however, made the claim that the passionate emotions inspired by tales of imagination were in fact more attuned to the larger reality of human existence than the limited sphere assumed for children by those who would confine young children's reading to settings, people, and events

that the child had personally experienced. Thus, Sayers likened imaginative literature to the wild song of the real nightingale, and "here and now" primers with their limited vocabularies and restricted scope to the mechanical song of the artificial nightingale. In short, she redefined "realism" to include not only physical reality but emotional reality as well.

While the metaphor no doubt ruffled the feathers of progressive educators (who might be understandably resentful at the characterization of "here and now" stories as artificial), it put librarians solidly behind Sayers's new definition of realism in books for children that included the physical reality of children's lives, plus characters, settings, and events that were beyond many children's actual experiences but spoke to the psychological or emotional reality of their lives. As Sayers put it in her 1937 speech, if educators were concerned with determining the level of a child's reading and mental and emotional development, then librarians should be concerned with challenging the child to a greater awareness and knowledge of the world, to "levels of feeling that stretch his sympathy, his understanding, his power to judge; levels of experience, beyond his own, which make him forever a part of all adventure, all disaster; all heroism, and all defeat." Sayers asked: "Of what are we afraid? Of words, of emotion, of experience? We are very tender, it seems to me, of the young, and tenderness is no preparation for a world half mad and savage." Here she quoted Anne Carroll Moore, who had said: "Tragedy lies, I think, not in knowing too much, but rather in not knowing enough to think things through" and added that children needed to "know enough to think it through as individuals, and as inheritors of a world both wise and foolish, both kind and cruel." It was librarians' work to provide all these realities in books for children and thus assure that the "real nightingale" would never be lost (p. 234).

Sayers's speech was immensely popular with youth services librarians. It was immediately published in the July-August 1937 issue of *Horn Book*, and the November-December 1937 issue of *Horn Book* advertised reprints of her talk, which had gone into its third printing. Three years later, *Horn Book* continued to advertise the "splendid article for which we had so many demands" ("Lose Not the Nightingale," 1937, p. 418; 1940, p. 476). The refrain of "lose not the nightingale" echoed through the literature of youth services librarians as they spoke and wrote in defense of children's imaginative literature. This phrase, however, meant different things to different people. Sayers had used her talk as an opportunity to make a case for imaginative literature that might be used to answer the critics—particularly in the field of education—who denounced children's literature that did not reflect children's lived experiences. To some educators, "lose not the nightingale" became an irritating reminder of public librarians' exaltation of choice reading over required reading, with the implication that there could be no enjoyment in school books or in classroom reading.

Some saw the “real nightingale” of children’s literature as the salvation of humanity in a soulless world of industry and war; to them the cry to “lose not the nightingale” spoke of their determination to hold onto spiritual values at a time of stress and dislocation. Others, however, questioned the wisdom of taking the time to listen to the real nightingale in a world that appeared to be rushing into another world war. Of what good was a real nightingale, however sweetly it sang, if it did not give children the information they needed about the all-too-real world of poverty, violence, and injustice that lay right outside their door? Directly and indirectly, these questions would continue to be raised and addressed in the years that followed.

THE SAYERS INSTITUTE—1939

In 1939, the argument was taken up at an ALA preconference, the Institute on Library Work with Children, which was sponsored by ALA’s Section on Library Work with Children (SLWC) and held on the campus of the University of California in Berkeley. Approximately 400 youth services librarians attended the institute, whose leader and moderator was Frances Clarke Sayers. Most of the sessions were devoted to children’s books, their creation, production, evaluation, and promotion.

The “Sayers Institute” was remembered for years by those who attended, and it became a standard by which other ALA youth services programs were measured. It was also a microcosm of nearly all the issues—devaluation of youth services librarianship as “women’s work,” challenges to broaden the scope of library collections to include more realistic books for the young, the ongoing jurisdictional tensions between school and public youth services librarians—that faced, and would continue to face, youth services librarians as women, as book selectors for the young, and as professionals working in school and public library settings.

The institute began with a challenging talk by Howard Pease, titled “Children’s Books’ Today: One Man’s View” (Pease, 1939). Pease was a prolific author whose books (primarily stories of pirate adventures and seafaring life featuring teenaged male protagonists) were very popular with both young people and youth services librarians. Pease began his speech before a group of some 400 female youth services librarians by characterizing the children’s book world as being “wholly and solely a woman’s world—a completely feminine world.” According to Pease, children’s books were being written, edited, reviewed, sold, selected, and promoted almost entirely by women, and the results of this female domination was uniformly negative. Women’s “tender-minded feminine control” of the field was responsible for the lack of male juvenile book authors. The identification of the field with women made it generally unattractive to men, plus the fact that a male breadwinner could not work for

the same depressed wages as an "amateur housewife writer." Furthermore, men were at a critical disadvantage as well, since, according to Pease, the Newbery Medal was usually awarded to female authors. (The Newbery, which was first awarded in 1922, had actually gone to eight men and ten women by 1939, but the most recent winners were all female. Pease's harshest criticisms were leveled at the books themselves:

It seems to me when I look over this whole field that our books for children are becoming more and more feminine, more and more ladylike, more and more divorced from reality. There is no attempt to come to grips with the world about us, no attempt to interpret the United States today, *here—now!* [emphasis added] Instead, our books are flights from reality—into the past, or across the seas, into a Never-Never Land of the tender-minded. All the models held up today are girls' books. All the qualities demanded of writers today are feminine qualities—the delicate, the fragile, the beautiful, the poetic, the whimsical, the quaint, the fairylike. . . . It is as though we attempted to feed our children nothing but cake and cookies, and none of us would ever say that cake and cookies should be the only items on a child's menu. (pp. 7, 9)

Pease felt that young readers were far better able to "face the problems of today" than female authors, editors, and librarians believed, and he bemoaned what he saw as an overemphasis in the children's book world on imaginative literature and foreign settings at the expense of realistic and contemporary stories set in the United States. "Our children know more about the children of Bali than of children right here in America. . . if we must give them stories about foreign children, they might at least be children living in the America of today" (Pease, 1939, pp. 5-20; Nolte, 1939, p. 588).

In evaluating Pease's talk as a historical document, one must first note that he himself was an author of children's books and thus among that beleaguered group of male writers who found their works edited, evaluated, and purchased (or not) by the very women he attacked in his speech. It is curious that Pease apparently felt so comfortable insulting the people he hoped would acquire and promote his books. What special grievance did he nurture? And why would he air this grievance before a large audience of female librarians and publishers, including May Masee, his own highly esteemed editor? His abrasive approach may have been a reflection of the defensiveness he felt as a male writer of children's books, thus a man identified with "women's work." He may also have resented the lack of deference accorded to him by librarians at a time when male authority generally went unquestioned. Clearly, it was galling to Pease that his livelihood depended on the reviews and purchasing decisions of women. His speech may have been an expression of the isolation and consequent resentment he felt as a man in a woman's field: "It often strikes me that men writers in this field, even the very best writers,

are merely tolerated. It is as though a barbed-wire fence were erected around our world of children's books and on it were signs saying: 'Women only—ladies preferred'" (p. 10).

It may also be that Pease had intended to focus on a more useful message but had simply gotten carried away into rhetorical excesses as he stood before an audience that so literally embodied the field from which he felt excluded. The problem he identified—the perceived absence of contemporary realistic fiction for young readers—was a real one. While he blamed librarians and publishers for that lack, he would certainly have been aware of the well-publicized censorship campaigns that were being waged at that time by conservative business groups against works of social realism, particularly those portraying discrimination and inequity in American life, such as *The Grapes of Wrath* and the social studies textbooks of Harold Rugg (Jenkins, 1995, pp. 149-54). Thus, the final words of Pease's talk sought a bond with his audience of like-minded adults who wanted children to have books that would help them understand *all* of their world. Stripped of their misogynistic posturing, Pease's words were those of a child advocate. Certainly many in his audience agreed with his final statements, made as they were less than three months before Hitler's invasion of Poland:

But all about us the world is in flames—and we hide our heads in the sand. When our children fail to join us, we attempt to draw over their heads a beautiful curtain of silk, a curtain thickly pasted with silver stars made of paper. But the children don't stay underneath. They go on. They know. Oh, let's catch up with our children, catch up with our schools, catch up with this world around us. Let's be leaders, not followers twenty years behind. And let's be leaders with courage. (p. 16)

Pease's conservative anti-woman rhetoric, however, obscured his progressive pro-child message, and his listeners greeted his speech with responses ranging from puzzlement to mockery and anger. As the conference moderator, Sayers commented immediately, addressing first the audience, and then Pease: "Mr. Pease is a very brave man. Mr. Pease, I have to admit that as an ardent feminist I rather enjoy this world that is so completely controlled by women" and then invited responses from those assembled (p. 16). Some audience members addressed the problems of feminine stereotypes faced by all in their field. No doubt they had all dealt with people who assumed that children's writers, editors, and reviewers held the ideas and attitudes associated with the negative side of the Cult of True Womanhood—i.e., a close-minded piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity—that precluded any interest or involvement in the rough and tumble world of public life. Librarians seconded Pease's call for more realistic books for children and for more men to enter the field, particularly male reviewers. Writing for children had admittedly

little prestige—too little for many men—and this was a problem. But his audience asserted that female authors wrote books that appealed to both boys and girls. Sayers stepped in at one point to identify a point of unity:

The point that is important is . . . the building of respect for our profession, respect for children and their books. I know that, in library school, students who know nothing about children's books come into my class to read children's books often with a little air of condescension. We must ourselves realize and convince others that books for children is a field which wants and demands and must demand the best efforts of creative artists and writers, men and women, whether they are writing for children or adults. It seems to me that the thing we can do is to build up respect for our profession and for the books we need. There must be a realization of the need for establishing the dignity and the importance of the material that we want. (p. 18)

Sayers stressed the positive aspects of Pease's presentation as she brought closure to his talk: "I am grateful to Mr. Pease for his clear and broad-minded point of view, for his plea for the vigorous in children's books. I think we owe him a debt and I think it is something we need to think about and act upon" (p. 20). Indeed, in her own writing and speaking, Sayers had made it clear that she agreed with Pease about the need for more realistic books for children. Here she was also playing the role of good hostess in this setting as she sought to alleviate an awkward situation with soothing words. Nonetheless, many in the audience felt personally attacked *as women* by Pease.

His speech, which was described as "an accusation" and an "onslaught" by two different reporters, was met by a "barrage of vehement defense" from the audience. Many challenged Pease's statements: one defended women reviewers' impartiality, another disputed his contention that librarians weren't acquiring realistic books, and several questioned his equation of female authorship with lack of appeal to male readers. May Masee, editor of juvenile books for Viking (and, incidentally, Pease's editor), tartly reminded those assembled that it was women who had "rescued [the field] from mediocrity . . . and not without a struggle" and added that it was editor Mary Mapes Dodge who had convinced Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, and other well-known authors to write for children. As the next speaker, Masee gave a talk on children's book production that ended with a further response to Pease's objection to books with foreign settings in which she emphasized such books' value in helping both native-born children understand children of other countries and immigrant children to value their own culture's traditions (Pease, 1939, pp. 16-20; Stephens, 1939, p. 60; Nolte, 1939, p. 589).

This contentious beginning was followed by two full days of speakers and discussions on various aspects of youth services librarianship. While

many had been disturbed by Pease's views, by all accounts the institute was a great success. Attendees described it as a time of intense professional and personal camaraderie and the Sayers Institute became a standard by which future youth services preconferences were measured. At the same time, the issues and contentions raised by speakers and discussants—including issues of gender and realism in children's literature—reverberated through ALA youth services (Hill, 1939, pp. 154-64; Nolte, 1939, p. 591).

During ALA's 1940 Annual Conference, for example, Frederic Melcher, the founder of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals, gave a brief talk on their history in which he noted—apparently in response to Pease's contention of female Newbery domination—that the Newbery Medal had been awarded to approximately an equal number of male and female writers (ALA Proceedings, 1940, p. P189). (It must also be noted that consciousness of the gender of authors was not unique to males. In 1930, when the Newbery Award went to Rachel Field's *Hitty, Her First Hundred Years*, Effie L. Power, chair of the Section of Library Work with Children, announced: "Incidentally, the award this year has some special features. In the first place, it is the first time that the prize has been given to a woman writer" [ALA Proceedings, 1930, pp. 359-60].)

The 1940 Newbery Medal was awarded to James Daugherty's *Daniel Boone*, a book that portrayed precisely the type of two-fisted, red-blooded American legendary figure that Pease had called for in 1939. Daugherty's acceptance speech, titled "Children's Literature in a Democracy," reflected a more complex understanding than Pease's of the tensions that existed between the producers and consumers of books for children. Where Pease had criticized American children's books for focusing too much on international settings, Daugherty praised them for making valuable contributions to world understanding. Pease asserted that there were too few American legends and frontier stories written for children, but Daugherty felt there were plenty, including his own books. Daugherty did agree, however, with Pease's call for more realistic children's books set in contemporary America. While acknowledging that some adults might be disturbed by the knowledge that children's reading tastes ran to *The Grapes of Wrath* and other works of social realism, Daugherty insisted that the political, economic, and social problems of the day touched children as well as adults: "[I]f this is too shocking for complacent oldsters satisfied with handing the rising generation a gas mask and a copy of *Alice in Wonderland* with which to tread the bomb-strewn path of childhood, are the children to be blamed?" Daugherty ended by expressing appreciation for all those—publishers, librarians, authors, illustrators—whose work supported democracy through the creation and promotion of children's books that embody the "art of joy and joy in art that is the certain inalienable right of free people" (Daugherty, 1940, pp. 232-34, 235, 237).

Later, at the Newbery-Caldecott banquet, Melcher gave another talk, titled "What's Ahead for Children's Books?" that appears to have been a further effort to modify and ameliorate the message of Pease and other critics regarding the effects of the female-intensive nature of the children's book world. Melcher's talk was an overview of the development of children's publishing, highlighting the "new impulse" in the 1920s that led to the establishment of Children's Book Week, juvenile divisions within publishing houses, and the founding of *Horn Book*. He credited women—as teachers, librarians, editors, critics, and booksellers—for their work in establishing the field and expressed his confidence that while some—i.e., Pease—had doubts as to whether women could know what books would appeal to "red-blooded boys," he himself was confident that women could recognize and provide such books, although he cautioned that there *was* a real need for such books and they should be *strongly* encouraged (ALA Proceedings, 1940, p. P190).

In the following months, the question of realism continued to simmer, with both sides taking points and neither side willing to call a truce. These tensions surfaced in discussions of imaginative literature versus realistic literature for children, of reading for pleasure versus reading with a purpose, of public versus school library service for children, and of the qualifications of public children's librarians to select books for children. At times, gender-based assumptions surfaced, and the females dominating children's librarianship were cast as "tender-minded" mother hens engaged in a fruitless effort to keep children from reading about their own lived experiences. This ongoing struggle became more visible as the critical judgment of ALA youth services librarians was again questioned, this time by another professional organization, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in their journal *Elementary English Review*.

THE NEWBERY MEDAL AS CONTESTED TERRITORY

The story of the Newbery Medal begins with publisher and editor Frederic G. Melcher. Melcher was the editor of *Publishers' Weekly* (and later president of R. R. Bowker Publishing) who, as the secretary of the American Booksellers Association, had become involved—with Franklin K. Mathews, librarian of the Boy Scouts, and Anne Carroll Moore—in the launching of Children's Book Week in 1919. In 1920, he began devoting special spring and fall issues of *Publishers' Weekly* to children's book publishing, and at the 1921 ALA Annual Conference announced his intention to establish an annual award to the author of "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." From the inception of the award, which Melcher named the John Newbery Medal after an early English bookseller, members of ALA's Children's Librarians' Section determined the annual winner (Smith, 1957, pp. 11-17, 35-41, 48-50). The winner and runners-up were chosen by popular vote of all section members for the first three years, after which time responsibility shifted to an annually constituted Newbery Committee. In 1937,

Frederic Melcher established the Caldecott Medal for "the artist of the most distinguished American Picture Book for Children" and the Newbery Committee became the Newbery-Caldecott Committee. From 1937 until 1978, the Newbery-Caldecott Committee was comprised of twenty-three members, all of whom had a history of active participation in the ALA youth services sections/division (Smith, 1957, pp. 51-53, 61-62; Peterson & Solt, 1982, pp. xxi-xxvii; Breed, 1942, p. 724; "ALA News," 1939, pp. 214-15).

At the 1939 Sayers Institute, as noted earlier, Howard Pease castigated youth services librarians for their Newbery Medal choices (Nolte, 1939, p. 588). While Pease's negative opinion of the "female autocracy" of children's literature and his stress on popularity over quality as award criteria were certainly not shared by his audience, his concern over the careful selection of children's book awards was most definitely an area of mutual interest. The Newbery and Caldecott Medals stood at the symbolic center of children's librarians' professional jurisdiction over the determination of "right book for the right child."

Five days after the close of the Sayers Institute, the 1939 Newbery Medal was awarded to Elizabeth Enright's *Thimble Summer*, a story written by a woman about a young female protagonist growing up on a Wisconsin farm. Although the committee's choice of this book was not a direct response to Pease's talk (the award decision had been made several months earlier), the title's female author and female protagonist made it a "girls' book" in the eyes of Pease and many other critics, and the choice spurred renewed criticism of children's librarians' professional judgment. This time, however, the criticism appeared not in library literature but in the pages of the *Elementary English Review*, a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English directed toward elementary school teachers. *Elementary English Review* was founded in 1924 by C. C. Certain, an influential English teacher, school library supervisor, and school library advocate who played a leadership role in the development of the "Certain Standards," the first standards for school libraries, which were published by ALA in 1920. Certain was a tireless advocate for school libraries, both in his professional work in ALA, NEA, and NCTE, and in the pages of *Elementary English Review*, which he edited from 1924 until his death in 1940. He was also an outspoken critic of the book selection criteria of children's librarians for many of the same reasons articulated by Pease.

Elementary English Review (later *Elementary English*, later *Language Arts*) reflected Certain's interest in libraries and literature for young readers through semi-annual reviews of new spring and fall lists of children's books, interviews with children's authors, and numerous articles on children's literature and children's reading. From the journal's earliest years, Certain had solicited ALA's Section on Library Work with Children (SLWC) to supply articles for his journal, and SLWC members had complied. Thus, although the primary audience of this NCTE journal was elementary

teachers, it was also read by school and public youth services librarians, and many of its articles were—not coincidentally—similar in content to articles in library publications. Each October issue was dedicated to children's books and libraries, timed to coincide with publishers' fall book announcements and Children's Book Week, which was celebrated in mid-November. Thus it must have been with some dismay that youth services librarians opened the October 1939 issue to read "What Are Little Boys Made Of?" C.C. Certain's signed editorial attacking the 1939 Newbery Medal winner.

Certain described *Thimble Summer* as possessing the "faded prettiness" of a "gossamer summer bouquet" but no appeal to "the average tousle-headed American boy." Here were the same complaints about the inherent inadequacy of women for the job of choosing books that might "quicken the pulse of young people, or awaken in them the spirit of adventure in reading." Certain located the problem in the conflicting viewpoints of teachers (who, he felt, were more likely to understand children's interests) versus librarians (who, he felt, preferred books "sweetly reminiscent of an adult's childhood"). With librarians responsible for selection, the result was the awarding of the Newbery Medal to books by female authors featuring female protagonists (he named Elizabeth Enright's *Thimble Summer*, Ruth Sawyer's *Roller Skates*, Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn*, and Elizabeth Coatsworth's *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*), all of which Certain charged with being "dear to the adult reader, but not to the child." Certain's (1939) recommended remedy was a committee comprised of—in addition to librarians—teachers and others who were "sympathetically interested in children's reading" (p. 247).

The following issue of *Elementary English Review* contained an editorial outlining further objections to the Newbery Medal winners, in which Certain questioned whether the medal was going to books that truly followed the ideals and enthusiasm of Frederic Melcher for children's reading. Again, he criticized the recent winners as "highly sentimental" and "almost forlornly reminiscent of the childhood of adults." The reading of them, he claimed, would most assuredly lead his tousle-headed American (male) child reader to regard all literature as "sissy," and either drive him to "ten-cent thrillers" or away from reading altogether. In addition to discouraging reading among children, Certain also felt that children's librarians' selections had a negative impact on children's authors by actively discouraging them from "vigor of thought" in their writing. The result was a "noticeable increase recently among children's books, of trivial subject-matter, linear narrative, and flat characters" (Certain, 1939, p. 283). Certain's words reveal him as a knowledgeable critic of children's librarians, since he scarcely could have chosen a more powerful accusation than that of discouraging children's reading. From the language of his complaint, particularly his reliance on negative gender stereotypes, it

appears likely that Certain was aware of Pease's criticisms and was consciously weighing in on Pease's side in this dispute.

Children's literature specialist and educator, May Hill Arbuthnot, stepped into the fray in *Elementary English Review's* January 1940 issue with an article, "Literature and Reading," on the importance of children's literature in school reading programs. Although not a librarian herself, she taught children's literature at Western Reserve University in Cleveland and was considered an authority in the field. In her article, she urged that all school children receive extensive exposure to the best books, which she defined as those having "distinction" and "vigor." Probably not coincidentally, the first quality echoed the literary excellence criterion of the Newbery Medal ("the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children"), while the second reflected Certain's call for "books of great vigor" (Arbuthnot, 1940, pp. 7-8; Smith, 1957, p. 49; Certain, 1939, pp. 247, 283). Arbuthnot's description of "best books" was in effect a call for a truce in which both sides could be right; there was no need to choose between these two qualities, since the very best books for children would certainly have both. Arbuthnot (1940) also asserted her belief that elementary school teachers and librarians were indeed quite capable of recognizing books that would appeal to all children—even boys—as she explained:

We are mostly women in the elementary school and we lean toward sweetness and light. Now I do not mean that our choice of literature should be bloody or horrible, although children go straight from our gentle story hours to turn on their favorite radio thriller full of revolver shots, piercing shrieks and blood-curdling suspense. There is no use pretending our babes are such delicate flowers they cannot stand a shiver up their spines. They positively dote on a good spinal chill. Our problem is to supply fine literature that is exciting rather than let them find excitement only in moving pictures or radio serials. (p. 8)

Arbuthnot ended by reminding readers that both older and more recent books could be equally appealing to children and cited *Mei Li* (1939 Caldecott winner) and *Caddie Woodlawn* (1936 Newbery winner) as examples of recent books with great child appeal (p. 8).

Arbuthnot's reasonable compromise, however, was not the last word on the subject. In his November 1939 editorial, Certain had asked readers to submit their own opinions of the Newbery Medal winners. Readers' replies appeared in the April 1940 issue in "Newbery Award: Open Forum," a three-page feature comprised primarily of complaints from school librarians and teachers about the award winners and their selectors. It also contained a response from Lesley Newton and Irene Smith, the chair and vice-chair, respectively, of ALA's Section for Library Work with Children and members of the 1940 Newbery Committee. Both

focused on Certain's complaint about the award winner's alleged lack of tousle-headed boy appeal. Lesley Newton wrote: "It is perhaps unfortunate that so many of the books chosen recently have been feminine in appeal, but we must not forget that there are little girl children, too, and the joy with which *Thimble Summer* has been read is fairly good proof of its appeal. Both *Caddie Woodlawn* and *Roller Skates* are constantly read by very modern and tomboyish girls while some of the earlier awards languish on our shelves" ("Newbery Award: Open Forum," 1940, p. 162). Irene Smith wrote:

We do not wish to have most of the awards go to the books which appeal mainly to girls, but if books of equal distinction are not written for boys, the committee has no choice. . . . *Roller Skates*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, and *Thimble Summer* are all loved by little girls of the age for which they were written. So you see how difficult it is for critics to agree on values in books for children. As I wrote Mr. Melcher, this year's committee will seek earnestly for *literary masculinity*, but whether or not we shall both find it and agree that we have found it remains to be seen. (p. 162)

Certain's accompanying editorial, titled "Adult Patterns Again," railed against what he saw as adult selectors' lack of concern for children's genuine reading interests. Adult standards were being imposed on children's reading, Certain (1940) insisted, and as a result, children's books were "pallid . . . unappetizing . . . milk-toast." By using their knowledge of children and of children's books, he called upon teachers to remedy this situation and "stop the retrogression to adult-imposed subject matter and namby-pamby literature" (p. 164).

Aside from Newton and Smith, who were probably responding in their official capacity as officers of the ALA Section for Library Work with Children, no other public children's librarians' words on this matter appeared in *Elementary English Review*. At this point, there may have seemed little point in responding further, as Certain's irate rhetoric showed no signs of abating, despite the lack of response from his chosen adversaries. Indeed, he was known to be quite contentious, with one observer reporting a 1929 NCTE board meeting at which Certain and the editor of *English Journal* nearly exchanged blows (Hook, 1979, pp. 86-88). Children's librarians' lack of response did not indicate their indifference to criticism but rather their chosen organizational strategy of nonconfrontational resistance. Generally speaking, it was not children's librarians' style to fight fire with fire. Instead, they tended to counter criticism of themselves or their work by building a positive case for their position—as Sayers's had countered the criticisms from advocates of the "here and now" approach in "Lose Not the Nightingale"—and then publicizing it through publications and conference proceedings. However, this particularly bitter phase of the conflict ended quite suddenly with the death

of Certain in December, after which time his wife, Julia L. Certain, took over the journal's editorship (Hatfield, 1942, p. 217).

With Julia L. Certain's ascendancy to the *Review's* editorship, the tone and content of the journal shifted almost immediately, with the May 1941 issue containing three pieces that affirmed the value of the librarian-teacher partnership in promoting children's reading and ended NCTE's jurisdictional challenge to children's librarians as Newbery Medal selectors. The issue's lead article (co-authored by a county librarian and an education professor) described the important role that county bookmobiles played in children's reading (Hampel & Cordts, 1941, pp. 163-66, 186). Next, an article (by another educator-librarian pair) on children's literature resources that included a favorable description of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals, their selectors, and winners (Karp & Abrams, 1941, pp. 172-74, 189). Finally, there were two rebuttals of the complaints lodged against the Newbery Committee over a year earlier. The first was from Betty Hamilton, a children's librarian at Atlanta's Carnegie Library, the second from Isabel C. McLelland, a teacher librarian (a classroom teacher with additional responsibility for the school library) in the Portland (Oregon) public schools. Hamilton began by asking: "Is the *Elementary English Review* trying to discredit librarians? Has it set out to take the selection of the Newbery Medal books from the hands of librarians? I gather from the statements presented in your pages in recent months that it is the opinion of teachers and the editor that they should be the ones to select the Newbery Medal winners" ("Newbery Award Again," 1941, p. 192). Hamilton challenged what she saw as the critics' over-emphasis on popularity and reading ease and dismissed the charges of the committee's sentimentality as "simply ridiculous." She also had harsh words for Newbery critics' indifference and/or hostility to the reading needs of girls: "[W]hy do the editor and others complain when a good book for girls wins the Medal? Why shouldn't a girl's book win? Don't girls read?" (p. 193).

In contrast, McLelland's letter focused solely on the question of the Newbery winners' popularity with children, using as examples some of the "girlish" titles (*Thimble Summer* and *Roller Skates*) attacked by Certain. McLelland also defended the existing division of professional expertise between teachers and librarians as a desirable one, for she, as a teacher, had no time to examine and evaluate children's books and thus was glad to assign the responsibility of choosing the "most distinguished contribution to children's literature" to children's librarians, adding "I am curious to know if Howard Pease was pleased this year with the virile quality of James Daugherty's book" (p. 195). However, there were no further responses on the subject from either side in *Elementary School Review*. Julia Certain left the journal at the end of 1942 (to take a position as head of the young people's department at the Lakewood [Ohio] Public Library),

but the librarian-teacher truce continued; the connection that Pease and other critics had made between children's librarians' inferiority as women and as children's book selectors had been effectively resisted within the pages of one of NCTE's professional journals.

REALISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: BOOKS FOR JANEY LARKIN

While much of the rhetoric employed was highly emotional and subjective, there were some genuine concerns that lay beneath the heat, and these were worth addressing in more reasoned tones. In what may be seen as a conciliatory gesture and a way of bringing together those who, after all, had children's interests at heart regardless of the setting in which they worked, ALA's Section for Library Work with Children, which had sponsored the 1939 Sayers Institute where Pease had spoken, commissioned a piece from their Book Evaluation Committee that might represent the definitive position of public youth services librarians on the subject of realism. Julia Sauer, long time head of children's services at the Rochester (New York) Public Library, took up the task in "Making the World Safe for the Janey Larkins," which the section placed in the January 15, 1941, issue of *Library Journal*.

Late in 1940, *Blue Willow*, by Doris Gates (Viking 1940), was published, and in 1941 it was designated a runner-up for the Newbery Medal. Gates was a children's librarian who had worked extensively with the children of migrant farmworkers in California's San Joaquin Valley, and the book was the story of ten-year-old Janey Larkin, a migrant child whose longing for a permanent home is embodied in her care for her most treasured possession, a blue willow plate. Children's librarians found in *Blue Willow* the "right book" combination of literary quality, child appeal, and positive values. In addition to these qualities, it was also one of the first children's books with a working class setting and so was viewed as a breakthrough book for its realistic portrayal of contemporary migrant life and for its fully developed portrayal of a Mexican American child in Janey's best friend, Lupe Romero.

For youth services librarians, Janey Larkin represented the many children facing poverty and other difficulties, and making the world safe for Janey Larkins was the task for which they had been trained. Not only were children like Janey in need of the free reading that libraries could provide, but they needed literature that could feed their imaginative lives just as the beautiful blue willow plate nourished Janey's dream of a permanent home. Thus, while the book was one of the most realistic of the time, it also reaffirmed the value of imagination; the publication and professional recognition accorded *Blue Willow* was an affirmation of the value of both imaginative and realistic literature for children.

Sauer did a masterful job of recasting Pease's arguments into terms that children's librarians could use to support their position as professional evaluators and selectors of children's materials. Sauer addressed every concern raised by Pease and other critics of children's librarians, and in doing so,

provided eloquent words for the children's librarians who might face similar criticism in their own communities. In basing her article on the words of Sayers's popular "Nightingale" speech, Sauer was also addressing children's librarians themselves as she made the point that children could not be protected, and perhaps *should* not be protected, from the reality of the world situation of the early 1940s. "Yes, we want to protect children, this is natural, but in wartime it is also selfish—why should our children be spared when others are not?" Sauer asked. She then reminded her readers that children might not thank their elders for their carefree childhoods, but instead, when faced with "tomorrow's chaos will ask simply, 'Why wasn't I told?'" This passage recalls Pease's image of adults' futile attempts to protect children from reality with a curtain papered with stars. Pease had put in a lengthy plea for more books set in present-day America, a wish seconded by Sauer, who asked that more books be published that would foster intergroup understanding (Sauer, 1941, p. 50).

Regarding "here and now" books, Sauer conceded their appeal and usefulness with preschool children, but criticized their settings and events as limited to the affluent world of the middle class child. Older children needed a broader range of character and setting to help them understand those living beyond their immediate ken. She speculated that the dearth of children's books about American minority cultures might be due in part to the fear that such books would be equated with leftist propaganda. Sauer, however, felt that honestly depicting hardship in America in books for young readers would give them the same "realistic pictures of their own lands as we are willing to show them of other lands" (p. 51).

Sauer also suggested a list of as-yet-unexplored subjects for realistic books that included mining town life, business and economic problems, racial and religious prejudice, and stories set among Negroes, immigrants, and/or people on relief. Such books could bring a positive remedy to "the petty processes of thinking that develop from the crippling prejudices foisted on children in the safety of their own homes." While international understanding was as critical a need as ever, in Sauer's opinion the need was even more urgent to build interracial and intercultural understanding among children living within the United States (p. 52).

The final paragraphs of Sauer's article addressed the dual audiences of Pease, Certain, and their supporters, and of youth services librarians. First, there were words that spoke directly to the gender-based complaints of Pease and others:

The need for modern realism does not negate the need for the classics and imaginative literature. Both are important; both have their place. Neither is it a question of imaginative and feminine authorship versus red-blooded realism and the masculine touch. Thus far the authors (Mr. Pease, who touched a question of national honor in *Highroad to Adventure* [Doubleday, Doran, 1939], is one of the few exceptions) who have dared to mention any subject of current social import, successfully or otherwise, have been women. The men have

been content to give us virile tales of danger at safe distances in place or time. To depict the far more dangerous present requires the courage of the commonplace. (p. 53)

Second, and finally, there were words that spoke directly to youth services librarians as authorities in the selection and promotion of the best books for young readers:

We need many more books about the Janey Larkins in our literature for children. And when we get them we will need the courage to give them to our children. Our taste, our choice of the literature upon which we would wish our children to grow is not changed. Our values may remain the same to the last grain. But the glass is reversed through no doing of ours. The sands are running the other way. And before a world can be made safe even for nightingales, it must be made safe for the Janey Larkins. (p. 53)

Sauer's words sum up ALA youth services leaders' position on selection criteria for children's and young adult literature and on the authority of youth services librarians as women in a female-intensive profession to determine those criteria. First, both imaginative and realistic literature were important; second, women authors were the ones who were currently writing stories of contemporary realism; and third, classic imaginative literature could provide a valuable escape from a hard reality, but for the time being, children needed more realistic books set in the present. This was a message from ALA youth services leadership that was directed not only at the critics of children's librarians but at children's librarians themselves.

THE NEWBERY MEDAL CONTROVERSY CONCLUDED

The following May, an article by Clara Breed, 1942 Newbery Committee chair, titled "The Newbery Medal: A Plea for Understanding," appeared in *Wilson Library Bulletin*. The piece begins: "Each year the name of the winner is greeted with keen disappointment by some, with astonishment by others, and with rejoicing by others. It would be a dull world if we were all agreed upon anything—the Roosevelt family or lemon juice before breakfast—but perhaps the Newbery Medal would not be criticized so much if it were really understood" (Breed, 1942, p. 724). Breed's tone is one of consummate reasonableness as she presents a step by step explanation of the medal's history, the Newbery Committee's composition, the selection procedure, and various criticisms of, and responses to, the medal winners, plus an enumeration of the professional qualifications and experience of those who determine the winner.

Certainly there is no group of people anywhere with so great an opportunity to observe children's tastes in reading as children's librarians—and not just the children of one grade level, or one family,

or one nationality, or one social strata; no group of people who read so many of the books published every year; no group that tries more earnestly to subtract prejudice from book evaluation. But librarians are human beings and fallible. (p. 725)

This passage is a succinct response to critics of youth services librarians as Newbery selectors. The description of their knowledge of children and children's books contradicts the picture of children's librarians as making "artificial and superficial" judgments at a great remove from children themselves, while the acknowledgment of human error contradicts the accusations of children's librarians as "pontifical" or "high hat." Breed ends with a request for help from her readers—she lists public librarians, school librarians, library staff associations, library school students, and booksellers—in the form of suggestions for Newbery award nominees. It is possible that teachers were not included in her list of nominators through a simple oversight. Possible perhaps, but not likely (Breed, 1942, pp. 724-25).

The struggle over the Newbery Committee and the Newbery Medal was a serious challenge to the professional authority of ALA children's librarians. Although the merits of each year's choices would continue to be discussed and debated among those interested in children's literature, this particular public challenge to the authority of children's librarians had been successfully defused through a combination of effective resistance strategies plus a small amount of coincidence in the change of editorship of *Elementary English Review*.

The Newbery-Caldecott Committee remained under the jurisdiction of the Section for Library Work with Children (later the Children's Library Association, later ALSC), and ALA children's librarians retained their authority as selectors of the best books for young readers. They affirmed the female nature of the profession, insisting that this was sometimes an asset, most times a neutral fact, but only rarely a detriment, and that only when others' unenlightened stereotypes about women's limitations made it so. Their generally low-key rhetorical style rested on the assumption that disagreements were merely misunderstandings that could be remedied through reason. On the whole, their published responses indicate that most picked their battles fairly carefully; they identified and addressed a few key points and chose not to comment on others. In matters of their professional jurisdiction over children's book selection, however, they insisted upon ownership, basing their claim on their knowledge of books, children, and the connections between the two. They viewed themselves not simply literature experts, but as experts in children—and children's reading—as well. They did not teach reading skills, but they knew what children would read, could read, and wanted to read, and they knew this better than classroom teachers. Despite the assumptions of Pease and Certain, children's librarians did not promote *Thimble*

Summer and *Roller Skates* as a protective hedge of gossamer summer bouquets to keep out the pulse-quickening thrill of sea stories or adventure tales. Rather, they based their selections on a firm knowledge of children's books and children's reading interests.

A SHIFT IN EVALUATION CRITERIA

The January-February 1945 issue of *Horn Book* magazine contained a final positive response to the criticism of the profession that was raised by Howard Pease at the 1939 Sayers Institute. Remarkably, the response appeared in an article by Pease himself, titled, "Without Evasion: Some Reflections After Reading Mrs. Means' 'The Moved-Outers.'" Pease (1945) opened his article with some of the same negative—and somewhat sarcastic—criticism he had made in 1939 regarding the lack of contemporary realism in children's books:

If you are a person who surveys children's books year after year, you are likely to be aware of a curious and disturbing fact. Only at infrequent intervals do you find a story intimately related to this modern world, a story that takes up a modern problem and thinks it through without evasion. Of our thousands of books, I can find scarcely half a dozen that merit places on this almost vacant shelf in our libraries; and of our hundreds of authors, I can name only three who are doing anything to fill this void in children's reading. These three authors—may someone present each of them with a laurel wreath—are Doris Gates, John R. Tunis, and Florence Crannell Means. (p. 9)

This time, however, instead of continuing in a negative vein, Pease took a leaf from the etiquette book of children's librarians, adopted a positive tone, and described the books of the three authors in glowing terms, focusing on Florence Crannell Means's *The Moved-Outers* (Houghton Mifflin, 1945).

The Moved-Outers was a ground-breaking novel for young readers about the experiences of Japanese Americans in U.S. wartime relocation camps and could, Pease declared, mark a turning point in publishing for young readers. "Possibly it is already late for us to decide that from now on we must be more forthright in our treatment of controversial subjects in our books for young people. Let us hope it is not too late. The reception accorded *The Moved-Outers* will be a test of our own intelligence and our own integrity" (p. 17). If the reception of *The Moved-Outers* was indeed a test of librarians' intelligence and integrity, ALA youth services leaders passed the test. The book was named a runner-up for the 1946 Newbery Medal, awarded by a committee comprised of women of the very profession that Pease had castigated in 1939 for sheltering children from "real life." Clearly, youth services librarians had embraced realistic fiction as appropriate reading for the young.

YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANSHIP AS A WOMAN'S PROFESSION: CHALLENGE AND AFFIRMATION

This research examines the words and actions of ALA youth services librarians during the 1930s and 1940s as they faced a series of challenges to their professional jurisdiction over the "right books" for young readers. First, the publication and promotion of "here and now" stories for children by Lucy Sprague Mitchell and other progressive educators challenged children's librarians' perceived lack of appreciation for realistic portrayals of children's lived experience. Frances Clarke Sayers's speech, "Lose Not the Nightingale," responded with a declaration of children's librarians' selection standards that redefined literary realism to include the emotional reality of imaginative literature alongside the experiential reality stressed by progressive educators. Next, librarians attending the Sayers Institute were condemned for being women and for tainting the world of children's books with female protagonists and "feminine values," thus challenging the female-intensive nature of the entire enterprise centered around children and books. The power of this "world of women" threatened Pease, but his challenge was defused through a combination of factual refutation, humor, and resistance to his characterization of women librarians' tastes as "a Never-Never Land of the tender-minded." Classroom teachers, as represented by C. C. Certain, likewise challenged children's librarians' Newbery Medal choices as "gossamer summer bouquets" that would drive boys to dime novels or illiteracy but, again, ALA children's librarians and their allies responded by shifting the question away from the acrimonious debate over the superiority of "boys books" over "girls books" and toward the identification of books that combined literary quality and child appeal to a wide range of ages and interests. Finally, Julia Sauer, representing ALA's Section of Library Work with Children, acknowledged the impact of world events on the lives of the young, and, in doing so, affirmed the commitment of youth services librarians to the selection and promotion of books that would reflect all children's realities, including those whose lives included hardship, prejudice, and injustice.

In a relatively short time, the "women's world" of ALA youth services leaders had reaffirmed their jurisdiction over the "right books" for young readers, reaffirmed the child appeal of Newbery Medal winners, and reaffirmed their identity as women in a traditionally female-intensive profession. ALA youth services librarians also withstood the attack on their qualifications to select the "right books" for young readers by, on the one hand, defending and affirming their gender status, and, on the other hand, becoming convinced by the times and the children they served (if not by Howard Pease) that social realism in books for young readers was both necessary and desirable.

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