

Majority Childhoods: Roundtable on Children's Literature and the Global South

Moderator: Lara Saguisag, CUNY-College of Staten Island

Presenters: Marilisa Jiménez García, Lehigh University
Anuja Madan, Kansas State University
Ngozi Onuora, Millikin University
Nithya Sivashankar, The Ohio State University
Lara Saguisag, CUNY-College of Staten Island

The majority of the world's children live in regions that are collectively referred to as the “global south”—the nations and spaces that have been ravaged by colonialism and whose peoples remain subjugated under global capitalism. Yet the experiences and priorities of this majority are typically overlooked in children's books and media that enjoy worldwide distribution. Moreover, efforts to internationalize children's literature studies seem determined by globalization's dynamics; children's literature scholars in the global north and the global south struggle to foster and maintain equitable, multilateral exchanges of knowledge. While children's literature and children's literature studies arguably help bridge the divide between young people in rich nations and young people in poor nations, they may also maintain or elide these inequities of childhood.

This roundtable highlights the necessity as well as the challenges of examining children's literature through the lens of scholarship on the global south and global childhoods. By considering texts and practices in both the global north and global south, the panelists will address questions such as: In what ways does children's literature represent or imagine childhoods in the global south? How do authors, readers, and scholars in the global south adapt, reinforce, and/or contest the global north's understandings of childhood, child agency, and children's literature? How does global capitalism shape children's publishing and children's literature studies? Do institutions of children's literature in the global south offer pathways to resisting globalization? In what ways does children's literature studies in the global south dialogue with anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, queer, and anti-ableist movements and frameworks that emerge in the global north?

In this roundtable, **Marilisa Jiménez García** explains how youth literature in Puerto Rico and the U.S. comment on the U.S. colonial relationship to the island and imagine youth as a site for social change; **Anuja Madan** discusses contemporary Indian English children's literature about marginalized children using influential concepts in Indian childhood studies, including that of “multiple childhoods”; this discussion explores the intersections between theoretical constructions of the child figure and the imaginative representations of children in popular Anglophone children's literature in India; **Ngozi Onuora** examines the ways in which Nigerian authors of young adult literature have used fantasy/science fiction as a subversive means to counter mainstream narratives about Africa and the paucity of African/African-American authors in the genre's publishing history; **Nithya Sivashankar** investigates the intersections of caste and class in the production and consumption of children's literature in India and reveals how Indian children's books complicate conversations about the need for diverse books and own voices that take place in some of the countries in the global north; and **Lara Saguisag** dissects current trends in Philippine children's literature studies, with the purpose of understanding how scholars' efforts to promote their research in international venues is both expression and contestation of coloniality.