

Race, Affect, and Militarization in Marie Lu's *Legend*

At the 2014 ChLA conference, keynote speaker Catherine Capshaw discussed the diversity gap in both publishing and scholarship on children's books. This paper extends this conversation about diversity in YA literature by examining how people of color have been represented within the "militarization narrative," a narrative form that has been gaining momentum within young adult publishing since the Vietnam Era.

In Sarah Ahmed's affect theories, she defines happiness as the result of a certain loyalty to national ideals. This paper examines how Ahmed's multicultural "promise of happiness" can be conceptualized as both a tool of manipulation in militarized societies as well as a means of resistance, as seen in Marie Lu's YA novel "Legend."

Like other militarization narratives—such as Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games*—Marie Lu's *Legend* outlines how the militarization narrative re-imagines coming-of-age as a process of militarization. First, these narratives show how subjects relate to the larger systems that militarize them; second, they show multiple ways that subjects are militarized; and finally they show how militarization leads to the reproduction of militarism and capitalism.

Set in a dystopian Los Angeles that appears to have integrated both American and Chinese culture, *Legend* is told through alternating viewpoints. June is a privileged girl groomed to serve the military government, and Day is an outcast fighting to survive in a militaristic society. Though the novel appears to be set in a post-racial Los Angeles that has integrated both Chinese and American culture, *Legend* exposes how race operates not only to structure a society, but to define the emotions and personal relationships individuals are allowed to have in such a society.