

### Apertures of Change: *Skim* and *This One Summer*

Water elements (rain, snow, ocean) “braid” (Groensteen) the iconotexts of *Skim* and *This One Summer* and advance “the expectation that readers need to be challenged to fill in interpretative gaps” (Abate and Tarbox introduction). The recurring images of water (often) not mentioned in the text train readers of these graphic novels to notice other unstated patterns that shape the storytelling about the focalizing characters’ engagement in the social scripts about women’s bodies that they witness. Jillian Tamaki keeps Rose and Skim outside the picture space to assert the difficulty, hesitation, or confusion they experience if adolescence means putting their female bodies into these heteronormative performances. While the iconotexts convey and suggest resolution to Skim’s depression, the closing pages of black-white-and grey art finally position her alone and walking toward a darkened arc of trees, a disconcerting image at best and far from a tidy developmental resolution. In *This One Summer*, the varying saturations of indigo not only depict Rose’s perplexities about the heterosexual relationships around her, but also carry undercurrents of homoeroticism in her suspended relationship with Windy.

Lack of closure muddies these two exemplars of the adolescent graphic novel. Their resistance to closure extends the necessary interpretative gap-filling required of the form itself. Skim heads to the woods, Rose heads home, and the reader heads into making meaning beyond the books’ concluding pages. Nikolajeva argues that “sooner or later, children’s literature will be integrated into the mainstream and disappear” (233), but might the apertures found in the Tamakis’ work suggest changes in the adolescent novel about girlhood? If the novel ends without concluding the developmental arc, then might the parameters of the adolescent novel itself be shifting?