Boys MUST Be Boys: Writing Masculinity into Adolescent and Young Adult Literature

MCC Undergraduate Research Scholar Program

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Research Objectives:

- Read fifteen novels and examined the ways adolescent boys' fiction predicates dogma by developing characters who reap textual fulfillment or rejection based on traditional, masculine gender performances.
- Drape the texts over a feminist, gender framework.
- Co-create a chronology to conclude about the genre's movement as a modern, culturally productive presentation of our American dogma – The Gender Spectrum

Theoretical Frameworks

- Gender performance
- Rites of Passage
- Patrilineage



Gender Performance

Hatchet, by Gary Paulsen

- ""Help! Somebody help me! I'm in this plane and don't know... don't know... don't know..." And he started crying with the screams, crying and slamming his hands against the wheel... But again, he heard nothing but the sound of his own sobs in the microphone, his own screams mocking him," (Paulsen 18).
- "He had never been fat, but he had been slightly heavy with a little extra weight just above his belt at the sides...
 But perhaps more than his body was the change in his mind, or in the way he was-was becoming" (Paulsen 99).



Rainbow Boys by Alex Sanchez

""Don't mouth off to me. You look queer. Take it off." "I'm not taking it off. Debra gave it to me."

His dad grabbed for the chain, and his arm knocked Jason's glass. It shattered to the floor" (Sanchez 27).

"Debra laughed. "I don't know why you guys are always so scared about gays. How about you, Corey? Would you go?"

"No way." He crumpled the burger wrapper in his fist. "You won't catch me in a room full of faggots" (Sanchez 30).



Looking for Alaska by John Green

- ""So far in our relationship, Pudge, I've seen your chicken legs entirely too often," the Colonel deadpanned. "So, Alaska. Sell us some cigarettes." (Green 15).
- "I walked back into the gym, and everyone seemed to be in various stages of disintegration. It was like something you see on TV, like a *National Geographic* special on funeral rituals. I saw Takumi standing over Lara, his hands on her shoulders. I saw Kevin with his crew cut, his head buried between his knees. A girl named Molly Tan, who'd studied with us for precalc, wailed, beating balled fists against her thighs. All of these people I sort of knew and sort of didn't, and all of then disintegrating, and then I saw the Colonel... The Colonel was screaming." (Green 140).



Rites of Passage & The Patrilineage

After the First Death by Robert Cormier

- "Miro's assignment was to kill the driver. Without hesitation. As soon as the bus arrived at the bridge." (Cormier 17).
- "But what about me?

We didn't anticipate that they would not release you. We didn't anticipate that Artkin would have time to shoot you.

I don't mean that.

What do you mean?

I mean: what about me? To find out that I not only betrayed my country, but had been expected to do it. To find out that I was expected to act as a coward, unable to take a little pain." (Cormier 226).



Mexican Whiteboy by Matt de la Pena

• "Uno holds out the baseball for Danny, drops it in his mitt. "You realize what that says about you already, D? He the best, right? If you think about it, man, you *already* won. This last strike just be gravy." (Pena 235).

"As a kid he used to have this crazy recurring dream: Some blur of a hooded black man was chasing him through a dark cemetary. No matter what kind of moves Uno put on or how fast he ran, the guy would always be gaining on him. Finally he'd leap at Uno's feet like a football player, drag him down by his ankles. Pinned to the ground, Uno would look up at where the guy's face should have been, but there *was* no face. There was only this huge scar, shaped just like Senior's," (Pena 32).



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The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

• "Brother Jacques stalked away. Archie and Leon watched him go. Archie smiled inside. But he masked his feelings. Leon was on his side. Beautiful. Leon and The Vigils and Archie. What a great year it was going to be." (Cormier 250).



Holes by Louis Sachar

• ""Not every Stanley Yelnats has been a failure," Stanley's mother often pointed out, whenever Stanley or his father became so discouraged that they actually started to believe in the curse." (Sachar 9).



