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Sylvia Kasey Marks. *Writing for the Rising Generation: British Fiction for Young People 1672–1839.* University of Victoria: English Literary Studies Monograph Series, no. 89, 2003. 172pp. CAN$23; US$23. ISBN 0-920604-85-4.

Literary historians generally identify the 1740s (specifically the work of John Newbery) as the point of origin for children's literature as we now know it, with its dual purpose of "instruction and delight." Arguably, the form developed in response to new concepts of childhood, child rearing, and pedagogy that were popularized by John Locke and widely disseminated among the growing literate middle ranks. As the translator of Arnaud Berquin's *The Children's Friend* wrote in 1793, "Though the task of writing to improve the minds of children may be less productive of literary fame than many other studies, yet in its real importance and utility, it yields to none, even of the sublimest speculations" (cited in Marks, 11). Sylvia Kasey Marks notes that many historians of children's literature, in spite of the contemporary significance of eighteenth-century writing for children, jump directly from Newbery in the 1740s to the Victorian period, ignoring a flourishing publishing industry between 1750 and 1839. Further, histories of children's literature, such as John Rowe Townsend's popular *Written for Children* (1965) and Harvey Darton's seminal *Children's Books in England* (1932), have tended to focus on writing for younger readers; literature for young adults (defined by Marks as ages fourteen to twenty) is notably absent from the discussion. Marks takes this gap as her starting point and, through meticulous research, attempts to "bring these works back to life" (16).

Writing for the Rising Generation does an excellent job of identifying a wide range of texts written for young people between 1672 and 1839. Marks's chronological boundaries are delineated at the beginning by James Janeway's *A Token for Children* and Henry Jessey and Abraham Chear's *A Looking-Glass for Children*, two collections of deathbed stories published in 1672. Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839), considered by Harvey Darton to indicate the "dawn of levity" in children's literature, and therefore a new direction for writers, marks the end of this study. Chapters in the book are structured around literary strategies and themes employed by children's authors of this long historical period. Chapter 1 provides a brief rationale for the discussion to follow, with a similarly brief overview of critical studies on the topic of eighteenth-century children's literature, which includes the main twentieth-century contributions. Missing here are broader studies that examine women's writing and didactic literature of the period, including Christine Krueger's *The Reader's Repentance* (1992), Gary Kelly's *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* (1989), and Eve Tavor Bannet's *The Domestic Revolution* (2000), all of which engage with writers and concepts that Marks examines.

Chapter 2 focuses on the audience for texts for young people, paying particular attention to age and class, as well as the genres considered appropriate

for juvenile readers. Chapter 3 engages with specific literary strategies, including the exemplary narrative, conversational and dramatic formats, emblems, fairy tales, and frame stories, habitually used by writers for youth. Chapter 4 deals with the novel form and identifies some of the central motifs in longer narratives for young readers, such as conversion and sensibility. Usefully, both chapters 3 and 4 trace later texts back to earlier "patterns," such as Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* (1765), which, Marks argues, "provides some of the bare outlines of one typical pattern of what might be found in some of the young adult novels of the period we are considering" (45).

According to Marks, "duty" is the one overarching concept that ties together texts of all genres from across the period of her study. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the particular components of duty as it was conceived of in relation to young readers. In chapter 5, the duties and responsibilities of children in the world, such as charity, obedience, and maintaining one's "place," are considered and copiously supported with textual evidence. The responsibility of "holy dying" is the subject of the final chapter. Marks notes that, significantly, the deathbed scene that is central to the earliest texts in her study remains a key motif in the latest novel, *Holiday House*, suggesting that, in spite of diminishing mortality rates, "attention to preparation for death remains undiminished in the fiction for youth throughout the period 1672–1839" (108).

Owing to its meticulous historical research and detailed index, this book now sits on my reference shelf for future use in my research and teaching in eighteenth-century children's literature. *Writing for the Rising Generation* remains primarily a descriptive study, however, and would benefit from further historical and critical contextualization. Marks observes that "while there was much political and social activity in the world at large during this period, the works we are considering retain a certain timelessness" (15); yet, recent feminist criticism in particular has demonstrated that a sense of "timelessness" is often a result of essentialization, and that the seemingly unchanging elements of quotidian life are often shaped by events and ideas from "the world at large." It would have been useful had the author engaged more extensively with critical works on her subject, positioning this study in relation to Lynn Vallone's examination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideologies of girlhood in *Disciplines of Virtue* (1995), for example. On a bibliographical level, I was surprised to find *The History of Ned Evans* (1797) definitively attributed to Jane West, when considerable evidence (both textual and historical) suggests that she is not its author.

Ultimately, *Writing for the Rising Generation* is a valuable contribution to research in children's literature, as well as eighteenth-century writing more generally, and provides a useful starting point for those wishing to further their understanding of this rich period in literary history.

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