

CFP: for MLA 2022 (Washington D.C.) Allied Organization Non-Guaranteed Panel

Deadline: March 1, 2021

Co-sponsored by ChLA (Children's Literature Association) and MSA (Modernist Studies Association)

Organizer: Kristin Bluemel, Monmouth University

Streetwise: Children's Literature and Culture in the Modern City

Over ten years ago Karin Westman bemoaned the “lack of discussion between the two terms *children's literature* and *modernism*” in her editor's introduction to a *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* special issue on “Children's Literature and Modernism: The Space Between” (283). Acknowledging the significance of Juliet Dusinberre's “landmark” contribution *Alice to the Lighthouse* (1987) and Kimberley Reynolds's *Radical Children's Literature* (2007), she maintained that “even when individual authors connected to children's literature read through a modernist critical lens, these contributions often get absorbed into existing critical conversations about children's literature or existing critical conversations about modernism” (284-85). Returning to this argument in 2013 in “Beyond Periodization: Children's Literature, Genre, and Remediating Literary History,” Westman cites the same exemplary models -- Dusinberre, Reynolds -- as she calls for “children's literature [to become] an organizing principle for literary history” (464). This proposed MLA ChLA-sponsored special session, co-sponsored by the Modernist Studies Association, assumes that opportunity, not defeat, lies in Westman's largely unanswered call. Navigating the streets of the modern city through children's literature and culture, it does indeed promise to reorganize modernist literary history. It seeks to inspire critical conversations about original research that draws from and contributes to the fields of children's literature and modernist studies; generate excitement about collaborative projects between ChLA scholars and scholars in the Modernist Studies Organization; provide session participants with a clearer sense of how our research on children's texts and urban spaces can enrich theorizations of modernism and modernity; and guide next steps towards institutionalizing our work.

This “Streetwise” special session engages with the following questions: How did children's literature of the late-nineteenth through early- to mid-twentieth centuries respond to and shape the modern city? How did the metropolitan materials and practices of adults – their books, places, and movements – shape the institutions, representations, and objects of childhood? The goal of this panel is to bring together scholars working at the intersection of children's literary/cultural studies and modernist studies in order to answer these questions and open up new subjects, methods, traditions, and affiliations for future research.

Proposals for papers that treat diverse writers and voices, both within and outside of the canons of modern children's and modernist literature, are especially encouraged. Possible topics for investigation include relations between the forces and forms of ideology (e.g., race, class, gender, region), space (e.g., pavements, playgrounds, parks), genre (e.g., jump rope rhymes, illustrated novels, picture books), period (e.g., pre-World War I, Depression era, wartime), aesthetics (e.g., middlebrow, avant-garde, commercial), literary history (e.g., of diverse nations, sexes, ethnic groups), media (e.g., print, radio, films), and institutions (e.g., urban schools, Theatre for Young Audiences, Girl Scouts) associated with or impinging upon children's literature and urban culture.

Please send 400-500 word abstracts by March 1, 2021 to Kristin Bluemel at kbluemel@monmouth.edu. Inquiries welcome.