

## Responding to Children and Art

What will the future of children's literature studies look like? Many scholars, including the ones on this panel, hope that our discipline is fluid enough to encompass the study of cultural artifacts that children themselves had a hand in creating. This idea is new enough that our ideas about what exactly we should be studying—and how—still have not solidified, but are instead evolving as part of a forward-flowing conversation. When children participate in the production of art, how do scholars acknowledge their agency without romanticizing it? What new methodologies are called for when we analyze not just how adults represent children, but also how children represent themselves?

In order to keep this conversation flowing, those of us who work on this subject began banding together to form panels in 2016. To avoid cliquishness, we always invite audience members at these sessions to join us the following year by giving their own talk on a new iteration of the "Children and Art" panel. Last year, so many scholars expressed interest in participating that this year we are proposing two panels, "Children and Art III" and "Children and Art IV." We are pleased that scholars at all career stages are represented here, from graduate students to senior scholars, and that we count among our ranks a creative writer and a high school English teacher. Next year, however, we will work to achieve other forms of diversity, too.

Across the two panels, the type of child-generated material that we analyze varies widely, encompassing multiple genres of literature as well as other forms of creative expression. On this panel, "Children and Art III," we will focus on Irish girls in the Magdalene laundries who used needlework as a form of creative resistance (and later wrote about that experience); American boys who participated in production of a nineteenth-century cookbook; and child artists whose errant lines can help us think through the methodological challenges of interpreting mistakes. Together, we will try to figure out ways of talking about creative children that accord them agency while at the same time acknowledging adult primacy and power.

Because the purpose of these panels is not just to do this kind of work but also to contemplate its rewards and difficulties, we have chosen a format that makes room for more meta-reflection: three 15-17 minute talks, followed by a brief (5-7 minute) response by the panel chair, who will analyze how these three talks relate both to each other and to larger questions about children's agency and the relationship between children's literature studies and childhood studies. We expect this brief response paper to jumpstart a lively question-and-answer period.