

**Slavery, Resistance, and White Saviors in Sharon Shinn's *Summers at Castle Auburn* and Gail Carson Levine's *The Lost Kingdom of Bamarre***

Depictions of slavery in children's literature have a long and complicated history perhaps because, as Paula T. Connolly argues, "retellings of slavery explore not merely what slavery *was* in American history but what slavery *is* (in the present tense) to American society" (210, emphasis in original). While scholars like Connolly have done extensive work on depictions of slavery in children's historical fiction, there has been little formal attention paid to slavery in other genres. Some critics have ventured into speculative fiction but mostly focus on diachronous and time-travel narratives constrained by historical reality. I argue that the alternate world settings of young adult fantasy novels *Summers at Castle Auburn* (2001) by Sharon Shinn and *The Lost Kingdom of Bamarre* (2017) by Gail Carson Levine allow them to escape constraints of historical accuracy and depict slavery in ways that emphasize both its historical significance and ongoing effects. Through the reconstitution of realist neoabolitionist narratives that "explore the role of free characters in a culture that allows slavery" (Connolly 174), both novels demonstrate the potential for medievalist fantasy to explore race and slavery with complexity and nuance, empowering readers to recognize and resist racial oppression.

Both novels feature female heroes mobilized by their liminality—Coriel is the illegitimate child of a noble who spends only her summers at court, and Peregrine, born an enslaved Bamarre, has been raised to unknowingly pass as a Lakti by her adoptive mother. Shinn and Levine position readers to learn along with Coriel and Peregrine to question the injustices that they gradually recognize as they grow up. The most significant difference between the two narratives is the positioning of the main characters: Coriel is not one of the enslaved faerie-like Aliora, but Peregrine was born an enslaved Bamarre. Levine's characterization of Peregrine as neither fully Lakti nor Bamarre allows her to better navigate troubling white savior tropes. Ultimately, though, both characters manage to overcome the "failure, even the inability, of individual intervention" (Connolly 175) often native to historical fiction, and thus both novels give readers more hope and motivation to resist racial inequality on an individual level.