

'Shaped by sea': Islands and identity in fiction for young people.

I have chosen to interpret this conference's theme of 'water' with reference to the sea, and more specifically, to the islands that exist within it. Children's literature has a long history of depictions of islands. Often beginning as spaces of sanctuary, this paper argues that islands in fiction for young people frequently become sites of imprisonment, surrounded as they are by the 'formidable' (Stevenson 1882) sea. Throughout my talk I will refer to classic nineteenth-century children's literature such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882) in which the titular island goes hand-in-hand with adventure. I will move on to examining twentieth-century novels like William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), as well as contemporary works such as Kevin Brooks' *Lucas* (2002) which examines the inherent insularity of 'the stranger' among island communities. We will see how water in these texts routinely acts as a gaoler - the possibility of emancipation existing alongside the reality of severance from the mainland. Indeed, the 'mainland' will become synonymous in my talk with the notion of the 'mainstream'. Islands, my primary texts will show, represent a divergence from normativity, and in this way; they become spaces of otherness - a site of, what Michel Foucault terms 'heterotopia' (1967). We will consider the binaries at work in this literature, specifically that existing between: Land and sea, freedom and containment, self and other, native and visitor. Ultimately, I will suggest that islands are routinely used by writers as a metaphor for adolescence itself - a period of life in which we often feeling unanchored and adrift, ready to be swept away by adulthood's rising tide.