

## Rereading and the Impact on Practice

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**Abstract:** *“I read Little House on the Prairie when I was a child and it didn’t make me racist”, “the kids love Indian in the Cupboard”, “it is our history we should include it and not censor”. These are all sentiments expressed in librarian groups. How much of this sentiment is based on our own nostalgia for the books of our youth? If we were to engage in rereading these books that are of the childhood canon would we be so certain that we should engage our youth in experiencing these titles? Would we be defensive of arguments that these books need to be carefully curated and introduced to students? Or not introduced at all? Censorship and the recent attempts in the United States as a backlash to diversity, equity and inclusion practices tend toward simple solutions of complex conversations. Rereading childhood favorites may complicate the answers and bring nuance to a complex conversation. This paper examines one person’s attempt to reckon with what the books of her youth taught her, while also opening discussion with practitioners about the impact of rereading on their own practice.*

**Keywords:** *literacy, school librarians, collection development, reading, childhood canon, children’s classics*

### Introduction

I am a lifelong reader. I have fond memories of reading as a child, hiding in a closet with a flashlight to read Nancy Drew, or begging my father to read Uncle Remus stories with the voices. I had the box set of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House books. I read *The Voyages of Dr. Doolittle* and wanted to travel the ocean in a great glass sea snail. I was convinced Peter Pan would enter my bedroom late one night. And I cried more than once with the Little Princess. I wanted to be Pippi Longstocking, or live in a boxcar like the Alden children or hide away in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Reading shaped my life.

In 2018 the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) board of directors voted to rename the Laura Ingalls Wilder award to the Children’s Literature Legacy award due to “inconsistency between Wilder’s legacy and the association’s core values of inclusiveness, integrity and respect, and responsiveness through an award that bears Wilder’s name” (Wilder’s Legacy, and the Award in Context). This specifically refers to the anti-indigenous, and anti-Black sentiment directly expressed in the texts. Immediately the backlash began, and it was not just in the library universe. While many librarians expressed dismay it also spilled into mainstream discussion. *The New York Times*, CNN, the *Guardian* among others carried stories on the name change and the *National Review*, *Vox*, and others carried opinion pieces debating whether or not the move was a good one. While this name change was to an award and made no commentary on whether or not the books should remain in libraries, many decried the censorship of ALSC. The same style of controversy erupted again with the Dr. Seuss Enterprises’ 2021 decision to take six books out of publication. And more recently backlash to an editing of Roald Dahl’s work, particularly *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. What is apparent in these debates is that emotions tend to run high when we engage our childhood favorites and that the arguments are consistent.

There are two particular genres of argument that emerge when classic children’s books are edited (bowdlerized) or deliberately removed from publication decriing the move. The first genre of argument is removal or editing is censorship, and/or that it is an attempt to rewrite history. The second genre of argument is more personalized based on a memory of personal enjoyment of a book and denial that it might have shaped personal ideology and/or that it might be harmful to other readers. In contrast those recommending editing or removal considers both the role of literature as a media that transmits ideologies and the harm certain ideologies perpetuate.

While ALSC never suggested removing the Little House series from the shelves of a library, the media treated the announcement of the name change as if they did. The arguments for their decision fell under expected genres of argument regarding children’s literature. Shortly after the announcement an opinion piece in the *National Review* argued that the decision “erases the fundamental role Wilder played in creating the genre of juvenile fiction” with a close read of *Little House on the Prairie* suggesting it had a more complex view of Native relationships on the plains and suggested that the name change “seek(s) to

destroy us all and re-make us in their own image” (Birzer, 2018). A somewhat overwrought response to changing the name of an award while at the same time explicitly stating “not a call for readers to change their personal relationship with or feelings about Wilder’s books, nor did ALSC “suggest that anyone stop reading Wilder’s books, talking about them, or making them available to children” (Wilder’s legacy, and the award in context). The idea that the move was “re-making us” was refuted by others who pointed out their own experience with the racism and colonialism of the text. Writing in *Vox* Carolyn Grady (2018) stated “For me, the Little House books were at their worst a teaching tool: They taught me about 19th-century bigotry and corporal punishment, and when their bigotry started to bother me I breezed past those sections”. But she also noted that for Native children this is not always the case. Noted scholar and children’s literature activist on this issue, Deb Reese, was quoted as saying “People are trying to use them and say, ‘Well, we can explain them,’ and I say: ‘O.K., you’re trying to explain racism to white people. Good for those white kids,’” she said. “But what about the Native and the black kids in the classroom who have to bear with the moment when they’re being denigrated for the benefit of the white kids?” (Choski, 2018).

This pattern was repeated in 2021 with the announcement that Dr. Seuss Enterprises would not continue publishing six books because “these books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong” (Suessville.com). In the ensuing day *Fox News* and *Fox Business* mentioned “canceling Dr. Seuss” more than 30 times before 9 a.m. ([Rupar, 2021](#)). Despite research that documented Orientalism, anti-Blackness and White supremacy (Ishizuka and Stephens\*, 2019) and a thoughtful review by the private company responsible for Seuss legacy the noisy response suggested that the “left” was censoring Dr. Seuss, all Dr. Seuss. The nostalgia connection in people’s response was more apparent in the discussions defending the books, or really the author, because when called upon to defend the titles people like Congressman Keven McCarthy read *Green Eggs and Ham* (Cohen, 2021) or discussed other popular titles such as *The Sneetches* or the *The Cat in the Hat* even though none of these were among the six titles (Bump, 2021). They were remembering their favorite Seuss.

These conversations are far from new, and seemingly ongoing. As recently as February 2023 rewriting Roald Dahl titles in a partnership with Inclusive Minds announced edited versions that would avoid terms like fat, ostensibly to tone down the mean edge Dahl

exhibits. This caused dismay in the library and literary world. (We have a name for this type of editing: bowdlerize). But historically these conversations have happened with titles such as *Babar*, *Little Black Sambo*, *Five Chinese Brothers*, and the Dr. Dolittle series. Dahl (Baker, 2023) , as well as Wilder (Reese, 2009) have made edits to subsequent editions to address inherent racism in their books.

My interest in the role our own reading histories play emerged with the vociferous debate of the ALSC decision related to renaming an award. I had been an avid Little House reader as a young person but had not returned to the story in many years, unlike books receiving similar criticism in the adolescent schooling realm. I recognized the defensiveness in my own response and questioned how that defensiveness manifested in practice in libraries. And so, began a journey to interrogate if rereading the children’s canon impacted our own arguments for how we manage the children’s canon, our own paracanon, and what professional practices might we employ in dealing with *If I Ran a Zoo*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, or *Little House on the Prairie*.

## **Literature Review**

The children’s canon can be difficult to define, indeed there is debate about the process and whether there is a children’s canon among youth literature scholars (Stevenson, D., 2019). This can be due to the national aspect of canonical literature, the shifting nature of children’s canon and literature as works are revisited, and/or as people sharing their remembered favorites with their own children sustaining the role of the text in the cultural memory while adding new texts. I choose canon here as a political term. Lundin (2004) points out the canon “while considered to be timeless and universal, [it] is quite unstable, with works moving in and out of repute according to the taste and theory of the time” (p. 15). This choice represents a belief that we should reconsider canon but there exist in the public mind books that might be considered “untouchable” that resists this revisiting. While canon may shift over time to children, there seems to be a corpus of titles the public considers canon and therefore untouchable. The concept of a youth literature canon is significant to librarianship because of the role we play in creating that canon. Lundin’s work argues that parallel fields of librarianship and the academic field are in a “blind partnership” (p. 13) in developing the

canon of youth literature. Identifying the canon requires close attention to what is taught in youth literature courses in academia, what books are used in primary and secondary education environments, and what books maintain popularity throughout time.

I do not think we can ignore the role of other adults in how the canon is determined as they are also responsible for sharing with children those books they remember – grandparents purchasing, parents reading aloud, teachers using in curriculum – have a role in sustaining and therefore creating what might be called a children’s canon. It is a third piece where adults’ relationships with texts that invoke memory matters. Waller (2019) argues that “childhood texts function as paracanonical rather than canonical texts” (p. 4) which may be why defense is “more primal, fierce, protective” (Lundin, 2004 p. 197). However there seem to be texts that are both paracanonical (important to the person) and canonical (established by culture) even with shifting and changing. In the United States these books might include *The Cat in the Hat*, *Curious George*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Outsiders*, *The Giver*, *Hatchet*, and *A Wrinkle in Time*. Books from the United Kingdom are also included such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and a recent addition – the Harry Potter series. Or Pippi Longstocking from Sweden. As contributors to the development of children’s canon and gatekeepers of youth literature librarians are necessarily engaged in revisiting titles when controversies arise.

For the past nine years have seen a renewed focus on creating inclusive collections (Altobelli & Lambert, 2022; Hughes-Hassell, 2020; Jorgenson & Burrell, 2020). While much of this focus has been on building inclusive collections through adding books by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQIA+ authors centering BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ characters, managing a collection requires maintenance through deselection (weeding). Deselection means we must grapple with resources that have outdated information and stereotypes (Hughes-Hassell, 2020). Often decisions to reassess books' role in curriculum and on the shelves is met with outrage. Despite how literary critics consistently highlight the stereotypes and problematic representation found in children’s literature (Nel 2017; Mendoza & Reese, 2001; Schwartz-DuPre, 2021) these books are still found on our shelves.

How we manage the problematic canon is particularly fraught. In the United States we are faced with increasing challenges to the books we have on our shelves specifically related to LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC identities. Aggressive language attacking teachers and librarians indicates a belief in the power of books to impact children's lives. In fact, that is probably something the field under attack and the attackers can agree upon. It is an acknowledgement of the power of story and its capacity to inform ourselves. It is this power Sims Bishop (1990) spoke of in her plea for inclusive stories that has become an important metaphor in supporting diverse collections. In a less inclusive approach G. Stanley Hall in his work *Adolescence*, published at the turn of the twentieth century argued that literature could either support or hinder proper development (Owen, 2020). Of course, Hall was more worried about the moral turpitude of youth and controlling their development than Bishop, who was arguing for empathy and learning about others. Engaging in conversation about the children's canon means engaging with problematic representations on our shelves, but it also means engaging with the feelings evoked from memories of the reading act rather than the text itself. In her examination of rereading practices Waller (2019) argues that there are risks and opportunities that come with rereading. She points out that "childhood books are artefacts against which memory can be tested" (p. 159) but there are "black holes"(p. 160) in the reading scene due to inaccuracies in memory. This has significance related to librarian practices with the children's literature canon, its role in our programs, classrooms and collections. Does confronting the black holes change our perspective on these titles?

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Operating on the belief that stories shape our own identities and introduce us to the world, that stories are indeed mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990) how did the children's canon shape our own understandings of the world? Can we revisit a text and explore the impact it might have had on how we engage with others or dominant narratives? And what might revisiting canonical texts mean for how we manage these texts in our collections?

This research seeks to examine what impact might rereading childhood favorites have on practices of youth serving librarians.

## Methodology

The initial approach for this research was to engage in a critical autoethnography during a rereading of my paracanonical books both within the childhood canon and those personal only to the researcher. Autoethnography has four characteristics that distinguish it from personal writing such as a reading memoir. They are:

Purposefully commenting on/critiquing of culture and cultural practices

- Making contributions to existing research
- Embracing vulnerability with purpose
- Creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response (Holman-Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 22).

Methods for data collection for my own reading journey engaged in critique of (my) culture through memory writing, a close textual read and journaling my own experiences in rereading paying close attention to ideas that may have impacted my own world views, and therefore embracing the vulnerability of not only disrupting fond memories of reading but also white supremacist beliefs enabled by texts particularly related to racism, feminism, and colonialism. This was done through prewriting memory, journaling throughout the rereading process, engaging in textual analysis through critical lenses, and finally engaging literary analysis from scholars in the analysis phase.

Simultaneously participants engaged in reading a childhood favorite of their choice. After answering questions related to demographics, they provided a short answer about their memories of the title before re-reading the text. They were asked to keep notes on the following:

- What emotions are you experiencing?
- What about the text jumps out at you and why do you think that is?
- What surprises you in your reread? Why?
- What happens that you didn't remember?

Unlike my experience participants were not directed to engage in critique and were asked only to engage in their own experiential reading. There was a post-survey that asked:

- If the book was still relevant in modern times,
- If children should read the book independently or need guidance,
- What concerns they might have had in shelving or teaching the book,

- What practices they will employ in mitigating the concerns.

Their notes were analyzed using in vivo coding practices by myself and a research assistant to identify similarities in my own processes and with one another to identify commonalities in rereading. The reading notes were compared to questionnaire results to note inconsistencies.

## **Preliminary Findings & Discussion**

### **Rereading Dolittle**

This paper focuses on my reread of the 1923 Newbery Award winner, *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle*. This was in my memory a favorite title growing up. I very much wanted to travel along the ocean floor in a Great Glass Sea Snail while chatting with sea life. By the time I began this research, the title had been edited (bowdlerized) by Lofting's son, made into several movies, the most recent with Robert Downey Jr., and underwent a reassessment in the 1970s for use with children due to its virulent racism and colonialism. In my first MLIS class I was shocked when my professor suggested it should not be on shelves due to its racism, I did not remember the racism she spoke of. Beginning this project though I knew some of this but I still had fond memories and a handy first edition.

Memory is a tricky thing. The Great Glass Sea Snail? It is four pages at the end of the book. And that is the least of what I did not remember. Rereading *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* was an exercise in surprise and no little amount of horror and shame. Even being prepared for the content of the book in terms of implicit philosophy imparted through the story I was surprised by how explicit it was, and how early it started. By page 36 I encountered not just the suggestion of racism but a clear statement. Polynesia the parrot has arrived from Africa, with gossip of the people met in the previous book. In my memory Polynesia was a bossy but helpful bird. But in reality, Polynesia, the African Gray Parrot, is a mouthpiece of racism and white supremacy that protects the character of the Doctor from displaying the worst rhetoric of white supremacy. In sharing news of Bumpo and the people of Jolliginki Polynesia shrugs off Bumpo's concerns of traveling to England with a sweeping generalization of ignorance applied to a whole race. Telling she also uses the n-word in doing so. "You know what those N-word are - that ignorant!" (p.36) she grumps. And while the words don't come out of the Doctor's mouth, he doesn't correct her either so the racist ethos remains unchallenged.



Polynesia's treatment of Bumpo, and his ongoing characterization, were not the only ideologies embedded in the text. *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* is the story of a young man, Stubbins, who meets the Doctor in his home village and subsequently joins him on a voyage across the ocean to meet Long Arrow, a native of unnamed tribal affiliation. During the journey they experience a bullfight, a great storm that strands them on a moving island, called Spidermonkey Island, inhabited by the Popsipetal and the Bag-jagderas, fight in a war, introduce fire to the natives, the Doctor is crowned King of Spidermonkey Island, and they finally escape the island in the shell of a Great Sea Snail so that they may return home. Throughout these adventures the Doctor educates Stubbins in colonial ideology that suggest white men are saviors of "uncivilized" peoples who need to learn the Doctor's ways.

While I was very much aware of problematic representations and the perpetuation of colonialism in other childhood favorites such as Peter Pan I was unprepared for the guiding philosophy of *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* to be firmly rooted in colonialist ideas. Much like the representation of the African tribe of Bumpo's people non-European natives are referred to early on as "Red Indians" (something that was edited in later versions to Native) and called "s\*v\*ges" (p.11). Like the changes in language in the first story, editing the slang and derogatory phrasing of Indigenous people and people of color, the Doctor's interaction with the Popsipetals as well as the characterization of Long Arrow cannot be edited to soften the colonialist mindset that drives the plot. Dolittle is imbued with the basic premise of white supremacy - white, western ways of knowing and doing are superior and those who are not white can aspire to be like him if they are "good" but they will fail, and those who do not aspire to white European ways of knowing are "bad". This is evident in everything from his participation in a bullfight (although Spain is Europe of course), to the bringing of fire to the Popsipetals, to his governing when he becomes King.

Early on in reference to previous adventures Polynesia sets the Doctor up as the kindly knowledgeable man, rather than a colonizing influence. While referencing her time in Africa she says of Chee-Chee, the chimpanzee " He missed the stories you used to tell us out of your animal books- and the chats we used to have sitting around the kitchen-fire" (p. 38). The image of the Doctor telling stories to the animals, as stand-ins for African peoples is pervasive throughout the text, evolving into his role in the Popsipetal culture. Isabel Suhl (Lanes, 1989) characterized this as the Doctor being represented as "the Great White Father

Nobly Bearing the White Man’s Burden”. The ‘kindly’ Doctor introduces fire to the Popsipetals, defends them against the aggression of the Bag-jagderags who are so impressed they declare everlasting peace, educated the people including in the “proper care of babies” all the while yearning to return to his own studies and home. He cannot leave behind the peoples of Spidermonkey Island for fear that they will “go back to their old habits and customs: wars, superstitions, devil-worship and what-not” (p. 325). Dr. Dolittle is storied to be their rescuer, and then given the burden of leadership as his responsibility as their savior. While later editions can remove words such as “r\*ds\*\*n” and “red man” the attitude towards the tribes of Spidermonkey Island underscores the principle of colonization – the white man is bringing civilization to an uneducated heathen.

There is no way to undo this sympathy for Dolittle and his exhaustion of obligation as a savior to the Popsipetals without a change in plot. This belief of the Doctor’s, of course, ignores the knowledge, the capacity, and the cultures that existed before his (as a stand in for western white civilization) arrival. Up until the Doctor suggests it there is no mention of religion for instance, until the Doctor sweepingly refers to it as devil worship. It downplays the damage that is done to these communities and cultures, the loss of their own beliefs and faith. And suggests a superiority of white ways of knowing and doing.

The colonialism and racism are why the book found itself in the middle of cultural conversation and controversy in 1960s and 70s. When *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* was revisited in the 1960s and 1970s many were critical of the text for the racism and colonialism inherent in the text. However others dismissed these concerns. In 1978 Jane Shackford detailed the debate in her article “Dealing with Dr. Dolittle: A New Approach to the “-isms””. Her argument develops upon now familiar lines. Those who wish to “protect children from a growing list of ‘isms’” (p. 180) are censors. She claims that the story is “basically a moral tale” with derogatory images (p. 180). Her answer is that an alternative to removing the book from the shelves is to use the book to “teach children to think critically about ideas and issues” (p. 186). I think, although cannot confirm, that Suhl (much like myself) might take issue with the framing of *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* as a moral tale.

It is the fact that memory is tricky that makes it difficult to unpack the impact of the ideology of the title on my own ideology growing up. I grew up on the land Mountain Maidu call home. When I was young and building forts in the forest and swimming in the river I

considered the land mine, inasmuch as anyone owned the land. I did not consider that the beaver ponds I walked to, or the mountains I hiked had been stolen from others who had made their home among the pine trees. The Maidu were the history of the county, not its present. I marveled at the intricate baskets in the museums and knew of a few elders still versed in the art of weaving. But the Maidu, very much a presence in the county of my youth, seemed very much in the past.

It was not until college that I began to understand the development and impact of colonialism. My early introduction was Latin American history, and the capitalist drive of imperialism and its violent outcomes. However it was a class with Louis Owens, on Native American Literature that introduced me to the violence of the linguistic and cultural representation of Native Americans in my own homeland. I was in his course the year *Dances with Wolves* came out in theaters and during office hours he schooled me in the centering of Whiteness and the stereotypical representations of Native Americans in that film. We talked about the versions of historical and current stereotypes of Natives, - the “good, and noble Indian” and the “violent Indian with foreign beliefs’ “. Had I remembered *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* I might have recognized that framing as that of the Popsipetals and the Bag-jagderags.

“‘Make no excuses for any man of the tribe of the Bag-jagderags,’ said Long Arrow, shaking his head. “They are an idle shiftless race. They do but see a chance to get corn without the labor of husbandry. If it were that they are a much bigger tribe and hope to defeat their neighbor by sheer force of numbers that would not have dared to make open war upon the brave Popsipetals” (p 276).

Using Long Arrow to categorize the Bagjagderag’s as lazy but warlike, like using Polynesia to characterize Africans as ignorant, protects the Doctor’s moral standing while still presenting the notion that the Doctor and white men are superior. And this fundamentally ties to notions I grew up with relating to the Maidu as peoples who assimilated through choice because of superior ways of living. (Oh, that is difficult to admit, no matter how much I recognize the fallacy now).

## Participants Rereading

Participants reread titles that were both canon such as *Little House on the Prairie* (Wilder), *Curious George* (Rey), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl), *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery), and *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (O'Dell) and titles that were paracanon. The findings included in this paper focus only on the canon titles. Similar to my own experience they found memory to be a tricky thing. For instance, the *Curious George* reader had forgotten that George had been stolen from Africa. A reader rereading *Little House on the Prairie* stated, “rereading this book from my childhood, I was really struck by the treatment of Native Americans in the text. The character of Pa is the only softening touch for this topic in this book. This is the most troubling aspect of this children’s novel. These negative ideas about Native Americans must have infiltrated my thoughts when I first read it at age ten or eleven”. While they read overall less critically than I did with less of an emphasis on exhuming their own ideological development they still tended towards surprise when encountering elements of the text that might be considered at best problematic as seen in the above quote. Also similar to my reading experience they found the reasons they remembered the text deemphasized in their rereading, “Originally, I wanted to reread this book because of the relationship between Karana and Rontu. I recently had to put down two animal companions and felt drawn to immerse myself in a story about a girl and her dog. But the text ended up being so much more.” Reading as an adult changed the way they read – some of it was the growing awareness of the underlying ideology in the text but also their attention was drawn to different elements of the text.

Ninety percent of participants were not aware if their text had been edited. This holds some significance as *Little House on the Prairie* has had both illustrations and language edited (Reese, 2009) and Dahl changed the color of the Oompa’s skin from black to orange himself in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Baker, 2023). Readers in these cases were likely reading more updated versions although I cannot confirm that. In contrast, I read the first edition as did the *Curious George* reader. As I identified above, bowdlerization may change the shock value but it does not change the overall message. Still, re-readers felt the books held up and could/should continue to be read independently. The exception to this was the original *Curious George* picture book – but mostly due to the smoking rather than the metaphor related to slavery/slave trade (and the mischievous, misbehaving monkey as a stand

in for Africans). If there were concerns regarding accessing the materials independently the participants overwhelmingly suggested that the title could be used as a teaching tool. Stating “I would have the hard conversations with students about the racist treatment of Native Americans in this novel” or “It is the perfect time to teach about respect and kindness toward others”.

I cannot say what the messages embedded in the text meant to me as a child reader. The conferring of the Newbery medal suggested the story was of high quality and should be shared and promoted to children. And it was. Katherine Applegate has cited *Dr. Dolittle* was one of her favorite books as a child. However the story was not without critique. Charlemae Rollins (Mabbott, 2019) called out the use of racial epithets in the 1940s. In 1968 Isabel Suhl did the same (Lanes, 1989). However, arguments such as the one represented by represented by Jane Shackford (1978) that the book could be used to teach children through dialogue to “deal with the moral dilemma provoked by racism and sexism” (p 183) as an alternative to censoring the title held sway. Nel (2017) makes a similar argument, although ultimately more nuanced, that the books (particularly unedited) can make the ideologies visible but that the intervention of a thoughtful adult will be vital” (p.99). These texts were encountered individually for both my participants and myself. And so we were not led through difficult conversations.

In distinguishing between the text and other messages of my youth I cannot disentangle the narratives of white supremacy, racism and colonialism that was part of my childhood and political awakening in the 1980s. My liberal parents<sup>1</sup> believed in the power of color blindness. The difficulty with this of course is that it ignores the systemic and institutional structures of American culture. Rooted in this sensibility was a message that if I worked hard, if anyone worked hard, we could achieve our dreams. It did not examine how privilege mattered within work ethic. The messages of my youth from my family may have been racist, but they did not reflect the bigotry of the *Dolittle* story. Still these messages ignored the implications of colonialism, even within my own county steeped in a history of colonialist capitalism. And these messages seeped in and had to be unlearned. Furthermore as

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the analysis of my rereading experience included unpacking my parents’ impact on my worldviews. Particularly my mother who had worked in head start and later with the unemployment office. There is not enough space to include this analysis or the stories that have significance but it informed my rereading experience.

a child of the 1980s I grew up with Regan's mythological welfare queen. Regan and his ilk's drawing of the welfare queen could very easily be Polynesia's scorn for Bumpo. The two images interact and inform one another. And constitute more necessary unlearning I had to engage in and still am.

The deep reading, autobiographical exhumation, and engaging scholarship on the topic left me in agreement with Rollins and Suhl, this is a title that should not be available on our shelves. If we insist on retaining the title it needs an intervention. Ideally, an intervention like Nel suggests can be used to "foster critical reading skills" that "acknowledge mixed feelings" (97) but this "requires guidance, critical questions, and emotional support" (p. 100). But in libraries this intervention is not always possible. Content warnings, annotations, and lists of critical readings might support readers when approaching a classic title that perpetuates harmful ideas and ideologies. But I am left thinking we need to do our own deep readings that allow us to acknowledge the role these texts might play in sustaining the status quo.

Unlike my position on *The Voyage of Dr. Doolittle*, my participants, despite their surprise and dismay at some of the ways the text engaged in harmful ideologies, still overwhelmingly planned to keep the title on the shelf. The only intervention they considered was teaching "about kindness and respect" to others. If this is the position of the field then we need to engage not only in rereading to ensure we know how a text is positioned, to remember the things we forgot or dismissed in our childhood but that we should also engage children's literature scholars. We need to read the critiques, particularly those by BIPOC scholars (and librarians like Rollins and Suhl). Our school librarian candidates might engage in a reading autobiography that engages not only rereading a favorite canon title, but also the scholarship of that title while also exhuming their own memories. At minimum we need to engage critical pedagogies about how to teach these texts.

School librarians contribute to the canon of their own geographical area. We are gatekeepers for young readers. If we are to take this role seriously we need to not just read, not just act on emotional memory but read critically ourselves.

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## Biography

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**Mary Ann Harlan** is an Associate Professor at the School of Information at SJSU. She teaches future school librarians. Her research centers on reading as an information practice.