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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

Like most magazines geared to mature readers, *The Iowa Review* has not given much thought to children's literature. Yet in an era when *His Dark Materials*, the Harry Potter series, *The Book Thief*, and other justly celebrated young adult (or YA) novels attract an ever-growing adult audience, neglecting a good portion of contemporary literature seems shortsighted, if not wrong. In this issue, we attempt to address this omission through a small but rich portfolio on the topic. Of the four pieces included in the section, two are personal essays on the creative process by acclaimed writers Jeanne Birdsall, famous for the National Book Award-winning *The Penderwicks*, and Shaun Tan, author of *The Lost Thing* and a recent Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award Laureate. Birdsall's "My Green Redoubt" meditates on how private space matters to imaginative work by way of a moving account of the author's youthful fascination with British novelist John Fowles. More revealingly still, Tan's "The Purposeful Daydream: Thoughts on Children's Literature" offers readers an intimate understanding of how growing up in multiracial Australia helped spark the writer's extraordinary achievements in both the visual and the literary arts. By contrast, Philip Nel's valuable piece, "A Manifesto for Children's Literature," offers skeptics and fans alike a compelling argument about why this literature matters. The final piece in the portfolio is a witty selection from Italo Calvino Award-winning novelist Kevin Brockmeier's forthcoming YA work, *I Met a Lovely Monster*. By rendering classic authors as whimsical characters—beware Green Graham and the three-headed Brontësaurus!—Brockmeier rewrites adult literary history as a delightfully irreverent children's tale. In inimitable ways, each of these contributions urges a reconsideration of writing once considered simplistic and predictable. That we've added a generous array of Tan's distinctive illustrations to Grimms' fairy tales, available for the first time in an Anglophone publication, makes the portfolio all the more noteworthy.

The unfettered fabulism of children's literature also informs many of this issue's other works. Several of the stories we've gathered revel in the wild reach of myth and fable. Consider, for example, Deborah Willis's "The Passage Bird," a wonderful tale of raptors and rearing, or Janet Ha's "The Reunion," a wise parable of frustrated intimacy and national division. Other fictions pursue the fantastic through alternate

generic means. In “Sudba 1,” Anna Kovatcheva offers readers a science fiction narrative in which memory loss and space travel mark the psycho-spatial borders of a dystopic future.

The poetry included proves no less sensitive to the magic of story, if somewhat more aware of narrative’s potential manipulation. In her brilliant “Victorious,” Alice Notley reminds us that “your stories were invented in dreams / Your eyes were full of unsubstantial legends you’d made up.” Johannes Göransson’s dangerous L.A. poems blast away at the same problem, even as they recognize the elective affinities of the dream factories: “Poetry has to destroy Los Angeles. / Poetry has to be Los Angeles,” writes Göransson in “The Law of the Image,” a title close to the heart of Shawn Wen’s powerful lyric essay “A Body Later On.” Where better to understand the art of the child and the childlike quality of art than in this stunning meditation on Marcel Marceau? Wen’s piece may stand outside of our portfolio proper, but there is little doubt that her experimental engagement with mime as play has much in common with the work of Birdsall, Brockmeier, and Tan. Indeed, the majority of writers in this issue remind us that adult literature and children’s literature speak in and through one another—that the gulf between the two worlds is in many ways a fiction. For all their differences, these artists teach us that literary writing functions recursively, questioning and circling back, calling the imagination to account.