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Curiouser: On The Queerness Of Children

Steven Bruhm

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Our culture has a dominant narrative about children: they are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, children are officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual. Curiouser is a book about this narrative and what happens when it takes an unexpected, or queer, turn—when the stories of childhood must confront a child whose play does not conform to the ideal of child (a)sexuality.

The contributors to Curiouser examine the ostensibly simple representations of children that circulate through visual images, life narrative, children's literature, film, and novels. At issue in these essays are the stories we tell to children, the stories we tell about children, and the stories we tell ourselves as children—stories that ultimately frame what is normative and what is queer. From the fiction of Horatio Alger, Henry James, Djuna Barnes, and Guy Davenport to the spectacles of Michael Jackson, Calvin Klein, and The Exorcist; from the narrative structure of pedophilia to evangelical Christianity; from punk tomboyism to queer girl-scouting: these scholars of childhood and sexuality scrutinize queer childhood energies in an impressive range of cultural forms.

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Lilian Anderson:

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