

Immigration Narratives

Brown, Joanne. 2011. *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press. 174 pp. ISBN 978-0-8108-7767-2

What struggles do children and teenagers experience when they relocate into the United States? How has literature published for a young adult (YA) readership depicted the immigrant experience? Joanne Brown examines these questions in her scholarly book *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders* (2011), a new publication in the well-respected Scarecrow Press series *Scarecrow Studies in Young Adult Literature*.

Joanne Brown, PhD, is professor emerita of the Department of English at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, USA, where she taught classes on YA literature, dramatic literature, and creative writing. Brown has served as editor for *The Iowa English Bulletin* and contributed articles to academic journals such as *The ALAN Review*. Her previous books with Scarecrow Press include co-authorship with Nancy St. Clair of *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature, 1990-2001* (2002) and *The Distant Mirror: Reflections on Young Adult Historical Fiction* (2005).

A significant strength of Brown's new book is weaving of historical contexts into analysis of the literature. This method is especially compelling in the consideration of books such as Patricia Reilly Giff's award-winning *Nory Ryan's Song* (2000) and *Maggie's Door* (2003), about Irish emigrants after the potato famine of the 1840s, and Ben Mikaelson's *Red Midnight* (2002), about a twelve-year-old boy fleeing the Guatemalan Civil War in 1981 with his four-year-old sister.

Another effective technique in Brown's book is noting when writers tell a story from personally lived experience or family experience. This basis in real life makes books even more meaningful for young adult readers who have migrated. Moreover, Brown analyzes literary depictions of different categories of immigrants: documented immigrants, undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, and exiles. The book is further enhanced by the annotated section "Suggestions for Further Reading" that describes additional YA texts on immigration.

The opening chapter, "The Golden Door," sets the stage for the study by covering selected immigration laws and nineteenth-century forerunners of contemporary YAL. Brown concisely points out the stereotypes in depictions of immigrants in 1860s novels featuring young adults and written by Louisa May Alcott, Horatio Alger, and Martha Finley. The first YA novel about immigrants, Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings* (1975), receives appropriate attention. The rest of Brown's study

focuses on interpretation of eighteen YA novels published between 1991 and 2009, with each chapter interpreting two to four texts about a particular component of the immigrant experience.

Chapter two, “The Beckoning Shores,” considers factors that make people leave their homelands. Chapter three, “The Journey,” analyzes books with immigration from China, Ireland, and Guatemala, as Brown considers how the physical trip “often intensified the process of questioning one’s identity, a frequent theme in YA literature” (45). Chapter four, “Strangers in a Strange Land,” focuses on the experience of newly arrived immigrants and offers a well written interpretation of Pam Muñoz Ryan’s *Esperanza Rising* (2000).

Chapter five, “Illustrated Immigration,” looks at how pictures convey the experience of immigrants in the wordless *The Arrival* (2006) by Shaun Tan and the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006) by Gene Luen Yang. Due to the increasing prominence of graphic narratives in English Language Arts classrooms, this is a particularly useful chapter for teachers. Brown offers clear explanations of Yang’s intertwined narratives and his allusions.

Chapter six, “Immigrant Children: Rebels with a Cause,” analyzes ways in which immigration causes stress in parent-child relationships, while family members sacrifice to help one another. Brown describes how children are able to “cross borders – linguistic, religious, social, cultural – with an ease that baffles the parents” (136). Families come to the United States from the Ukraine in Eve Tal’s *Cursing Columbus* (2009), the sequel to *Double Crossing* (2005), from Cuba in Ana Veciana-Suarez’s *Flight to Freedom* (2002), and from Korea in Young Ju’s *A Step from Heaven* (2001).

The conclusion, the seventh chapter, applies to the YAL a list of “traits that contribute to an immigrant’s success in America” (140). Brown demonstrates that two or more YA novels demonstrate characteristics such as “future orientation,” “ambition and initiative,” “verbal expressiveness,” and “intentionality” (141-144). However, the list of traits is based on Mary Pipher’s *The Middle of Everywhere* (2003), which is not a specialized work by an expert on immigration.

Having encapsulated what Brown does in *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature*, it is also important to note what she does not try to do. Brown does not identify or catalog all YA texts on a given topic, nor does she justify choices of texts as representative. In addition, the book is scholarly, not pedagogical, so it does not offer specific teaching methods or describe how students have responded to these books. And this is a work of literary analysis, not political science. Brown resists focusing on the most porous border for the United States, not addressing the urgent need for policy change about migrations between Mexico and the United States.

Literary critics still might fault Brown's text selection, arguing that different books or more numerous YA texts required analysis and that criteria for selecting texts should have been expressed. The conclusion should have been stronger. Chapter titles and subtitles could have been more analytical or descriptive. Nevertheless, Brown gets a serious scholarly conversation underway and leaves space for other critics to add to what is covered by the present book.

Recommended for purchase, Brown's book has much to offer. *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders* (2011) is essential reading for scholars who examine the migration experience for children and young adults in any nations. Librarians selecting materials for collections as well as teachers working on classroom approaches would benefit from this book. Activists can find books to read and recommend on this important topic. Brown recognizes immigrant narratives, fictional or fact-based, as a means for readers to comprehend and appreciate the immigrant experience.

Amy Cummins

Sustavna i kritička katalogizacija djela Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić

Još 18. travnja 2010., točno 136 godina nakon što je u Ogulinu rođena Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, iz tiska je izašao prvi svezak kritičkog izdanja njezinih Sabranih djela. Riječ je o velikom projektu Matice hrvatske (Ogranak Slavonski Brod), na čelu s urednikom Vinkom Brešićem, čiji je cilj sakupiti, ali i kritički sagledati cjelokupnu pisanu ostavštinu autorice čiji je književno-kulturni trag izniman u nacionalnim i izvannacionalnim okvirima, a čije pisanje i djelovanje još uvijek provocira najrazličitija znanstvena istraživanja i kritička preispitivanja.

Brešić, Vinko, ur. 2010. *Romani. Sabrana djela Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić.*

Kritičko izdanje. Slavonski Brod: Ogranak Matice hrvatske. 499 str. ISBN 978-953-6842-19-3, ISBN 978-953-6842-20-9

Navedeni svezak posvećen je romanima *Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića* i *Jaša Dalmatin: potkralj Gudžerata*. Osim izvornih tekstova romana, svezak sadrži i detaljne „Napomene uz kritičko izdanje“, odnosno popratne stručno-znanstvene tekstove, kao i „Priloge“ s ilustracijama, tablično-grafičkim prikazima razlika u rukopisnim i tiskanim verzijama romana o Hlapiću, te tekst „Drugi dan putovanja Hlapićevog: I. Hlapić i šareno tele“, koji je dio autoričine rukopisne verzije romana, ali ranije nije otisnut jer je bio izostavljen iz konačne verzije. Studiozan istraživačko-arhivski rad potreban za ovakvo izdanje, kao i priređivanje popratnih tekstova i priloga, u knjigu su ugradili **Berislav Majhut** i njegova suradnica **Sanja Lovrić**.