IJYAL INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE
Vol. 5, No. 1 · 2024 · ISSN 2634-5277
DOI: 10.24877/ijyal.143
Distributed under CC BY 4.0

Queer Transgressive Cultural Capital in *When the Moon Was Ours*

Summer Melody Pennell, Angel Daniel Matos, and Henry "Cody" Miller

ABSTRACT

In this article, we examine Anna-Marie McLemore's *When the Moon Was Ours* (2016) through the theory of Queer Transgressive Cultural Capital. In doing so, we argue that queer and trans characters subvert existing Westernized systems of care, which are frequently reified in existing queer and trans young adult literature. We first explore how McLemore's text uses magical realism to disrupt common trans narratives in Western contexts, in addition to exposing the norms that continue to haunt contemporary queer texts. Next, we draw from the history of trans medicine in Western contexts to examine how multiple characters in McLemore's novel use their cultural knowledge and practices to examine their identities,

Summer Melody Pennell is a Lecturer in Secondary Education at the University of Vermont. Her teaching and research focus on social justice and equity, particularly with intersectional queer populations. Her interests include English education, young adult literature, queer theory and pedagogy, and the experiences of academic mothers+. She is the author of *Queering Critical Literacy and Numeracy for Social Justice: Navigating the Course*.
Angel Daniel Matos is an Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Bowdoin College interested in young adult literature and media, queer studies, and screen cultures. His work has been published in journals such as *Children's Literature*, *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, *The ALAN Review*, and *QED: A Journal of GLBTQ Worldmaking*, in addition to a handful of edited volumes. He is the author of *The Reparative Impulse of Queer YA Literature* (Routledge 2024).
Henry "Cody" Miller is an Associate Professor of English education at SUNY Brockport. Prior to that role, he taught high school English in Florida for seven years. His research interest includes critical English education, young adult literature, and book banning policies.

think about their gender and sexuality outside of Western models of care and medicine, and challenge the normative ideals that threaten queer and trans lives, both real and fictional. Lastly, we consider *When the Moon Was Ours*' potential to challenge the norms of whiteness, medicine, and the body present in the larger corpus of YA literature. We end with a consideration of the implications of teaching *When the Moon Was Ours* and including trans narratives in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its capitalist and ideological baggage, Western medicine is often represented as crucial in the development and exploration of transgender[1] youth identity in contemporary young adult (YA) literature. Western trans medicine – which includes but is not limited to practices such as hormone therapies, surgeries, and psychological counseling – is oversaturated with dynamics of power that have dire effects on trans youth, in particular, who must depend on adult authority figures to be recognized socially and publicly as trans. Austin Johnson has spotlighted how the medical model of transitioning prevalent in Western contexts

> serves as an accountability structure that legitimizes gender-affirming medical intervention while simultaneously restricting access to those who conform to a narrow set of criteria, that builds transgender community while at the same time marginalizing members who do not conform. (809)

The medicalization of gender variance and the affordances it provides relies on a series of material realities that are not accessible to everyone, especially when it comes to time, finances, and intersectional embodiment.

The stakes of this matter become more apparent when thinking about the overlaps between medicine, healthcare, and trans youth from historical and literary perspectives. Several YA novels have problematically showcased transhood as a singular, normative path, particularly those written in the early 2000s, such as Julie Anne Peters' *Luna* (2004), Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* (2007), and Kirstin Cronn-Mills *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* (2012). It is important to note that all three of these authors are cisgender. Even with the fortunate rise of works published by trans YA authors that focus on diverse intersections of trans life since the mid-2010s (Corbett, "Transgender Books" 8), this narrative path reached a point of representative intensity in the mid-2010s with the publication of novels such as Meredith Russo's *If I Was Your Girl* (2016) and April Daniels' *Dreadnought* (2017), which celebrate the privileges of passing as cisgender and draw attention to the forms of oppression that often accompany medical and physical transitioning. Here, we see Anna-Marie McLemore's *When the Moon Was Ours* (2016) as a breakaway from these trends and celebrate its aspiration to transgress the norms of youth and trans representation in YA literature.

[1] Throughout this article, we will use the terms transgender and trans interchangeably to discuss how different forms of gender variance are expressed through identities, communities, practices, and bodies.

The history of trans medicine, particularly in the United States, invokes a history of cultural hurt that is intersectionally enmeshed with different forms of racial, gendered, sexual, and age-based oppression. Critics such as Jules Gill-Peterson have exposed how the experiences and bodies of trans children of color were appropriated for "the medicalization of sex and gender" and were used by the dominant culture at large to develop diverging understandings of gender variation (3). The intersections that trans children embodied not only played a role in how doctors treated them, but it even dictated the 'diagnosis' that these children would receive. Gill-Peterson's exploration of the early medical archive and a "racialized discourse of plasticity" (3) highlights how white trans children were considered more 'plastic' and physically malleable than their Black counterparts. Thus, Black trans children were instead labeled as mentally/physically unfit and did not receive the same treatment as white children (4). What do we make of the fact that Western models of trans medicine are biased and racist in their formation and constitution? Moreover, how does a broad understanding of trans medicine and history complicate our approaches toward contemporary trans YA literature, especially when these medical practices are deeply rooted in the hetero- and cisnormative promises often elevated in capitalist contexts? While we cannot deny the impact that advancements in Western medicine have had in the lives of trans people, past and present, we are also interested in complicating the narrative and determining whether a YA novel can transgress the cultural capital that Western medicine holds over the representation of trans youth and trans life.

There is no singular path to gender affirmation for transgender people. Countless YA novels focused on trans experience, however, would indicate otherwise. The normative narrative in Western literature includes an individual meeting with medical professionals to engage in talk therapy, hormone therapy, and sometimes surgical intervention to attain a physical body that meshes with their gender identity. Moreover, these texts elevate medical and physical forms of transitioning as key to trans livelihood and being. However, not all transgender people follow this path, especially as it is steeped in Western and white norms of medical intervention, capitalism, and binary gender identities. At its core, transitioning involves an ongoing and never-ending exploration of transition in different aspects of gendered life, whether sociocultural, physical, or legal. Critics such as Jaime Capuzza and Leland Spencer acknowledge that representations of trans life in popular culture often elevate one singular experience of being trans, often to make trans content "more palatable for mainstream audiences" and frequently at the expense of limiting the range of trans subjectivities that are represented (216). Similarly, Jennifer Putzi argues that early trans-YA titles such as Peters' *Luna* and Brian Katcher's *Almost Perfect* (2009) rely on "wrong-body discourse" and position gender reassignment surgery as "the solution to the problems of the transgender characters" (430). A critical eye for matters of Western medicine and its influence on trans narratives assists YA readerships in developing a greater sense of multiplicity for what it means to be trans and to live beyond the rigid gender binary.

Although published nearly a decade ago, McLemore's YA novel *When the Moon Was Ours*, written from the perspective of a Latinx, nonbinary author, provides its readers the opportunity to explore how queer and trans characters use their Queer Transgressive Cultural Capital (QTCC) (Pennell) to subvert existing Westernized systems of care, which have implications for teaching queer and trans YA. QTCC serves as a way to understand how LGBTQ+ people make community and life outside of and/or against the state's limits and restrictions. The novel emerged during the same time in which the normative path towards transness was solidified in YA representation – making McLemore's text both mold-breaking and somewhat radical in its refusal to glorify and elevate the ties between the body, the expectations of Western medicine, and personal success. In this sense, *When the Moon Was Ours* signals a change in representing trans characters that sought to narrate more expansive views of gender identity, gender expression, and care (Putzi). The novel follows Sam, a Pakistani and Italian transgender boy, and Miel, a cisgender Latina with a mysterious and traumatic past, as they figure out their own identities while falling in love. It also includes a transgender adult, Aracely (Miel's sister), and a queer parent, Sam's mom (who remains unnamed, though she is a strong presence in the narrative). By representing different accounts of how and why people transition through the use of magical realist conventions, in addition to critiquing the teleological ways in which trans and queer teen life is represented on the page, *When the Moon Was Ours* pushes us to rethink how we critique and teach queer and trans literature in the contemporary classroom, and to reassess the centrality of Western medicine in the representation of queer and trans selfhood. Drawing from a framework of QTCC, we highlight the possibilities that arise when YA novels focus on trans subjects who do not fit the criteria for the medical model toward gender variance, given their cultural and class attachments. Through this reassessment, we also highlight the value of speculative literature in interrogating the culturally disruptive and critical possibilities afforded through this inquiry.

We first explore how McLemore's text uses fantasy – and, specifically, magical realism – to disrupt the trans narratives common in Western contexts. After establishing this background, we draw from the history of trans medicine in Western contexts and develop an expanded model of QTCC to examine how multiple characters in McLemore's novel use their cultural knowledge and practices to examine their identities, think about their gender and sexuality outside of Western models of care and medicine, and challenge the normative ideals that threaten queer and trans lives, both real and fictional. We draw from McLemore's text to center narratives, embodiments, and practices that thrive outside of the context of the state's limitations, laws, expectations, and restrictions. Lastly, we seriously consider *When the Moon Was Ours'* capacity to challenge the norms of whiteness, medicine, and the body present in the larger corpus of YA literature. We want to highlight the advantages of thinking more expansively about the materiality of trans being and examining transness and care beyond the scope of our current context, using a lens of QTCC. In doing so, we continue to advocate for a queerer understanding of the futures and possibilities for queer and trans youth represented

on the page and open up more theoretical space to consider the role of the fantastic in mobilizing critiques, which can transform both our reading and teaching practices.

Before outlining our theoretical framework and discussing McLemore's novel in depth, we want to discuss normative transgender narratives as portrayed in YA. By normative, we mean texts that include the Western model of medical intervention as described above. In the case of Russo's *If I Was Your Girl,* the protagonist 'passes' as a cisgender girl until she is outed as transgender. In Russo's author's note, she writes that this outward appearance and embrace of normality was intentional:

> I have taken liberties with what I know reality to be. I have fictionalized things to make them work in my story. I have, in some ways, cleaved to stereotypes and even bent rules to make [the protagonist's] trans-ness as unchallenging to normative assumptions as possible. [The protagonist] knew from a very young age. She is exclusively attracted to boys. She is entirely feminine. She passes as a woman with little to no effort. She had surgery that her family should not have been able to afford, and she started hormones through legitimate channels before she probably could have in the real world. I did this because I wanted to have no possible barrier to understanding [the protagonist] as a teenage girl with a different medical history from most other girls. (Russo 275-76)

Here, we must consider that realistic fiction is just as constructed as fantastic fiction, and therefore, we cannot always count on realism as a barometer for truth and authenticity. Even Russo, as a trans author, acknowledges that the realism of her novel had to be twisted to cater to the sensibilities of a broad readership with potentially limited understandings of transness and gender variation. These narratives are important representations for trans youth in terms of visibility, but they are not the only story, especially when they offer teens a fantasy that caters to the demands and whims of normative attitudes and ideologies. As trans scholar Clarence Orsi (2019) wrote in a review of trans YA characters, Russo's novel can be considered a "first generation" trans YA novel. Orsi continued that he hoped to read books "where the cultural backdrop to the transition is not "neutral" (middle-class white), but [...] shows how the character's cultural/familial world shapes their transition options [...and] that talk about sexuality as it relates to gender identity, instead of forcing the two apart" (n.p.). McLemore's book does all these things and did so before Orsi's review was published. While *When the Moon Was Ours* was a Stonewall Honor Book in 2017, Russo's novel won a Stonewall Award in the same year, giving it more visibility and bolstering the presence of YA narratives that focus on Western medical approaches toward gender variance and transition and telling us much about the trans narratives that are elevated and celebrated in the YA literature circuit.

We want to clarify that 'normative' here does not mean 'bad', nor are we against contemporary trans publications focused on this narrative. In fact, in our current era – plagued by right-wing attacks on trans teens and LGBTQ+ book bans in the United States – the incorporation of any trans narratives in the classroom is a vital and potentially radical act. As cisgender people ourselves, we do not pretend to understand what transgender teens

experience and acknowledge that it is different from our experiences as a queer Latine person (Matos) and queer white people (Pennell and Miller). We intentionally recognize our identities as cisgender scholars as a limitation to our work, analysis, and teaching suggestions (Blackburn, 2021; martin, 2024). As scholars of YA literature and education, we want to emphasize the multiplicity of trans life while also being mindful of the historical and ideological baggage that accompanies all literary representations produced in capitalist contexts. Educators should not limit their teaching, critiques, and libraries to the typical Western narrative, lest we become complicit with the problematic invisibilization of trans experiences and practices within the archive.

MAGICAL REALISM AS A TRANSGRESSIVE RESPONSE TO NORMATIVITY

We posit that including novels that exist in the fantastic does not mean they will not be representative of real-life issues for trans youth. Some scholars and critics have argued that portraying trans characters as magical creatures is problematic in that it fetishizes trans people's real-life experiences (Jiménez). Others have pointed out that there is a disturbingly "prominent trope of dehumanizing transgender identity by associating it with monstrosity or otherworldliness" (Henderson), where transgender and nonbinary characters may be robots or other non-humans. *When the Moon Was Ours* does not fall under these troubling stereotypes, as the characters are real humans even though they may have magical qualities. Miel, for example, always has a single rose growing from her wrist in colors that represent her moods and emotions. Nonetheless, she also attends high school and worries about her crush on Sam, just like a real-world teenager might. Furthermore, it is important to realize that the magical elements present in the text serve to critique real-world dynamics and practices that are harmful to queer and trans youth, as is typical with texts that draw from magical realist traditions and aesthetics. Indeed, *When the Moon Was Ours* is part of an emerging collection of trans- authored YA literature that exists in the speculative and fantastical genres, ones that can potentially offer "alternative and imaginative ways of engaging with the same core issues that can be found both in realist texts and the known world for many transgender teens" (Corbett, *In Transition* 111).

Trans characters Sam and Aracely, and Sam's girlfriend Miel, are not monsters, and any fetishization by the townspeople of their practices and bodies is portrayed as a white supremacist reaction to queer and trans people of color. For example, as a counter to the affirming care and embracing of the fantastic found in the relationships between the characters of color, the novel's main antagonists, the white Bonner sisters, represent white supremacy, normalcy, and the violence of Westernized systems of medical care. The sisters are referred to by themselves and the townspeople as a unit, and their desire to all be the same becomes an obsession. This can be read through a queer lens, especially in counter to Sam and Miel's unique qualities, as a critique of heteronormativity and cisnormativity, systems that demand sameness and conformity (Britzman). They represent the Western model of medicine

in that they resort to violence, legal and medical documentation, and the control of other people's bodies to maintain this status quo. The practices of Western medicine are eerily mirrored by the Bonners' actions in the novel, such as altering and normalizing Miel's body by violently taking her roses against her will and threatening to make public Sam's birth certificate with his sex assigned at birth. Most notably, the sisters have a stained-glass coffin in the woods where they force each other, and later Miel, to physically bury themselves to make them emotionally bury their identities and feelings that are outside the white mainstream, or "whitestream" (Urrieta).

Don Latham argues that YA magical realist novels present the extraordinary alongside the ordinary and that they ultimately serve to "question and destabilize the values and assumptions of the dominant, i.e., adult, society" (60). Magical realism's penchant for disrupting and questioning the status quo in a given social context makes it apt for a queer YA novel, especially one focused on interrogating dominant understandings of gender, sexuality, and the body. *When the Moon Was Ours* exploits the constructed divide between the real and the fantastic to illuminate Sam and Miel's emotions as their (and those of other characters') feelings manifest regarding their bodies, their place in society, and their relation to one another. The use of magical realism to represent these concepts mirrors Gloria Anzaldúa's approach toward ambiguity and non-binary thinking, rooted in "animistic, shamanic beliefs which contend that all is unified and interconnected, that physical ailments can have a nonphysical source, and that words and images are just as material as sticks and stones" (Lopez 2). This places McLemore's work as part of the legacy of queer Latinx writers who use magic and spirituality to express real-life phenomena, further augmenting the countercultural contours of the novel's magical realist dimensions.

All the major characters in the novel have non-normative relationships with their bodies and identities, both through magical and realistic means. As previously mentioned, Miel's wrist sprouts flowers that change color depending on her moods and thoughts – and the normative characters assume the flowers have mystical or magical properties. Miel's sister, Aracely, undergoes a magical transition before the novel begins: when she first arrives in their small town after escaping her home, she emerges from the river covered in butterflies and inhabits a new body as an adult woman. Meaning, Aracely transitioned both in terms of gender and age. The butterflies serve as a magical symbol to hint to the reader that Aracely and Sam have a trans identity in common,[2] even though Aracely does not tell Sam about her trans identity until later in the novel. Miel's arrival in town also involved water, as she was found in the water tower as a young girl, and as she grows, the hem of her clothes always remains a little wet, tying her physically to her mystical origins. The real and magical exist together, perfectly exhibiting "that space, between the lives boys and girls are expected to inhabit…" (McLemore 272) and societal expectations that are attached to different ways of dwelling in the world.

[2] Butterflies are frequently used as symbols for transgender people and communities (Transgender Health and Wellness Center).

While Araceley's transition in the novel is magical, Sam's is rooted solely in the real world as he deals with binding his chest and concealing the fact that he menstruates. Through this juxtaposition of different embodiments and transitions, the novel demonstrates how transitioning can unfold in multiple ways, thus disrupting the common narrative found in Western YA literature. Aracely did not have an option to medically transition as a teen, given her lack of familial support for intervention. Sam attempts to replicate this magical river transformation – jumping into the rushing waters in hopes of a magical transition similar to what Aracely experienced – but is unsuccessful. In a way, Sam's inability to transition using the same method as Aracely can be approached as a critique of the monolithic ways in which transitioning is represented in YA. By uniting realist and fantastic discourses, the novel "highlights the material disadvantages that trans youth may face today, while not diminishing the political, aesthetic, and imaginative potentialities of the fantastic and speculative" (Matos, *The Reparative Impulse* 95). In the real world, there is no singular path for transitioning. Although Sam is in pain about his identity, he has the space and support to talk about it with his mom. Sam hides his identity from his classmates and neighbors to feel a sense of safety, and he also hides his identity from himself as he repeatedly thinks he must live as a woman when he grows up due to the expectations of the bacha posh cultural practice, which will be discussed in detail later.

In this way, both Sam and Aracely remain outside of the Western medical industrial complex, which has historically seen transgender people as deviant, and transgender children of color have especially faced discrimination and lack of access to gender-affirming care (Gill-Peterson 3). Both characters identify ways of flourishing as trans people without the use of the diagnostic and accountability models prevalent in Western medicine. Sam does not rely on therapy to identify or diagnose his transness, nor does he use hormones or go through surgeries to alter his body. By circumventing normative systems of care, the characters in this novel receive practical care from friends and family who accept them – in Sam's case, before he accepts himself. This strength from his community is an example of how Sam and other main characters use QTCC to contest the demands and expectations of gender and the body present in his world. How this care manifests is at the heart of our analysis and suggestions for teaching transgender YA literature.

TRANSGENDER HEALTHCARE AS QTCC

To understand how the characters in *When the Moon Was Ours* use their cultural knowledge and practices to examine their gender identities, we extrapolate from the aforementioned model of QTCC (Pennell). More specifically, we examine the experiences of Sam and Aracely, who transgress Western expectations of identity and care for trans people, and queer cisgender characters Miel and Sam's mom. By examining how these fictional characters engage in identity work and navigate relationships, we offer a framework for considering queer and transgender characters (especially queer and trans characters of color) more

broadly and their networks with other characters, and how they create a sense of meaning and selfhood outside of the Western medical model of gender variance.

QTCC draws from Tara Yosso's work on community cultural wealth, which draws from Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural capital. Fundamentally, the concept of cultural capital illuminates the cultural knowledge people possess from their communities and how they use it to understand, interpret, and navigate the world. Many applications of Bourdieu's work have focused on white communities, but scholars such as Yosso point out that all cultures have community cultural wealth or power that they use to their advantage. Pennell's earlier work, "Queer cultural capital: Implications for education", applies Yosso's concepts to intersectional queer communities and introduces another form of cultural capital: transgressive. Queer transgressive cultural capital is when queer people and queer communities "proactively challenge and move beyond boundaries that limit and bind them" (329). Sam, Miel, Aracely, and Sam's mom all demonstrate QTCC, and Sam and Aracely draw from their cultural and ethnic backgrounds and enact them as QTCC to create their own spaces within a cisnormative society structured by Western constructions of medicine and care.

Western trans medicine contributes to imbalances of power and authority that limit the lives of people who live beyond the gender binary, especially when it comes to the patient-doctor relationship. Many medical providers are known to believe that "sex is a binary biological phenomenon correlated with gender identity and sexuality", which is more worrisome because many "base their medical recommendations on what *they* believe a patient's gender identity to be" (Davis, Dewey, and Murphy 492). This tendency is concerning when recalling that many health professionals lack the language, knowledge, and "the appropriate culturally specific skills necessary to meet" trans patient's needs (Zeeman et al. 978). This lack of trans cultural knowledge is echoed in other forms of US public life, such as K-12 education, where teachers tend to be uninformed of trans topics and concerns (Markland, Sargeant, and Wright).

As suggested by stef m. shuster, tensions started to arise with the emergence of people who "do not desire to maintain a binary gender expression", thus challenging the assumption that people seek gender-related care to transition from one side of the binary to another (3). This is one of the many reasons why it is important to focus on how trans people have destabilized and questioned medical authority over trans bodies and lives, especially when we center on the normalizing tendencies that informed the development of medical practices. Sam's case in *When the Moon Was Ours* is especially relevant for this context, for the novel's ending implies that he will pursue a life outside of Western medicine's binary approach toward trans life. Towards the novel's conclusion, Sam removes his chest binding while still retaining assurance in his masculinity and his gender identity.

We must also bear in mind that trans youth have existed well before the rise of trans medical practices and that Western medicine is informed predominantly by white and middle-to-upper-class frameworks (Gill-Peterson 4-5). This is all the more reason to explore a book like *When the Moon Was Ours,* using a QTCC lens, where the characters counter these

perceptions and norms. In this way, the cultural differences between Sam and Aracely's lives, especially as they circumvent Western medical interventions, are seen as assets rather than deficits.

QTCC IN *WHEN THE MOON WAS OURS*

In our analysis, we explicitly examine the QTCC embodied by queer and transgender people of color in *When the Moon Was Ours.* We describe three elements of QTCC stemming from our textual analysis: (1) pushing the limits of cultural identity, (2) physical and mental/emotional space from the whitestream, and (3) using playfulness and creativity to subvert boundaries and care for each other. These elements overlap and often work together. Each element will be discussed in conversation with scholarship on and by transgender people and communities and textual analysis of the novel.

Pushing the limits of cultural identity

We define pushing the limits of cultural identity as (1) using home and ancestral cultural traditions that affirm race/ethnicity and gender, as well as (2) embracing other cultural traditions from queer and trans-chosen family members. In these ways, queer and transgender people can embrace cultural knowledge while simultaneously pushing the limit of how that cultural knowledge can be, or has been, applied to lived experiences. This relates to Michel Foucault's interrogation of transgression. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White discuss, for Foucault, "what is in question is the limit rather than the identity of a culture" (201). Pushing the limits works with Anzalduá's discussion of identity as being flexible rather than static (Arrizón), and it also echoes her goal of "generating new subversive metaphors, new systems of signification, and new realities" that destabilize hegemonic forces (Lopez 9). This element of QTCC is embodied primarily by Sam, the trans teen protagonist. Sam's identity is already liminal and flexible due to his positionality as a teen and is further complicated as he thinks through his gender and cultural identities.

In *When the Moon Was Ours,* Sam pushes the boundaries of the bacha posh identity. This term describes girls who are raised as boys in Pakistan and Afghanistan to be the "man of the house" when there are no men or boys in the household (McLemore 35-36). Although children who engage in the bacha posh practice experience the privileges of mobility and education that boys often experience, this identity is a temporary one, and they are expected to return to a feminine presentation and identity once they go through puberty (Corboz, Gibbs, and Jewkes). In Pakistani and Afghani patriarchal communities where this practice occurs, it may be for economic reasons as girls do not have opportunities to earn money for their families, but there also may be instances of "a girl expressing what is perceived to be more 'masculine' qualities as a child and wanting to be raised as a boy independently of any economic or family

pressures" (Corboz, Gibbs, and Jewkes 587). Sam adopts this identity as a way to affiliate with his Pakistani culture and gender before he is ready to come out as transgender.

Sam chooses to embody this identity as his cultural birthright, as he learned about the practice from his grandmother. Sam does not share in his internal monologue that anyone in his family followed this practice. This coincides with research, as there is no evidence that it is practiced by American immigrants from this region (Corboz, Gibbs, and Jewkes). Thus, his embrace of the bacha posh label is pushing the limits of cultural identity found in Western contexts in ways that allow him to feel comfortable (for a time) with his gender. It allows him to justify his desire to dress as a boy because of his cultural background, even as his family and friends encourage him to embrace it as a more permanent gender identity. It is also important to note that, unlike in many real-world contexts in which the cultural practice of bacha posh is imposed upon young people, Sam *chooses* to embody the identity of bacha posh.

Sam's self-imposed identity as a bacha posh also exists outside of Western medical intervention, as a cultural practice that he was able to lean into while figuring out his identity. Perhaps this is why Sam was not interested in Western medical intervention, because what would the average doctor in the US know about bacha posh? As shuster notes, "using guidelines for medical decision making related to a socially ascribed category becomes problematic as a standardized procedure because they cannot take into account the multiplicity of diversity in (gender) expression" (322). This is further complicated by the fact that different cultural contexts inflect this multiplicity and that fact that there is disagreement as to whether bacha posh should be approached as a category of trans subjectivity or a cultural practice driven by patriarchal values (Corboz, Gibbs, and Jewkes 587). While there are affirming resources for physicians and counselors about providing care for transgender people, such as those created by the Fenway Institute, these resources do not cover the great diversity of gender identities particular to specific non-Western cultures. Searching for "bacha posh" on the Fenway Institute's website, unsurprisingly, produces no results.

Another way the characters push the limits of culture is through the shared kinship between Sam's and Miel's families. While they come from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds – Sam is Pakistani and Italian, and Miel is Latine – they share the experience of being outsiders as people of color in their predominantly white, heteronormative, and cisnormative small town. This shared kinship includes sharing in cultural traditions, such as Sam helping Miel and Aracely with Aracely's curandera[3] work curing lovesickness in the townspeople. These lovesickness cures are also materially valuable to Sam in keeping his transness secret from the community. Ms. Owens, the school secretary, sidelines traditional treatments toward "love sickness", such as counseling and psychotherapy, and receives frequent treatments from Aracely in exchange for her keeping Sam's deadname (meaning the name Sam was given at birth before he identified as a boy) private (McLemore 89-90). These examples demonstrate how the characters circumvent Western medical norms to create and

[3] Curandera work, a practice from Latin America, combines folk medicine with magic and spiritualism.

maintain the life they want and desire. Sam and Aracely both transgress Western models of transgender identities that rely on medical intervention beyond the previous examples. As mentioned previously, at no time in the novel does Sam discuss taking hormones or having surgery with Aracely or his mom. The discussions that do arise are about the limiting role of the birth certificate, which lists Sam's deadname and gender assigned at birth, and his fear of that document exposing him.

Physical and mental/emotional space from the whitestream

While Pennell's original conception of QTCC included a discussion of boundaries and space, here we move further to discuss both physical and mental/emotional space from the whitestream (Urrieta) for queer and trans teens of color and how those intertwine. This theme explores how transgender teens need (1) physical space to be themselves and express their gender in public and private, as well as (2) mental/emotional space to think and feel about their gender identity and expression. For transgender people of color, these spaces allow them to contemplate their ethnicity as well, which is always tied to their gender. This intersectionality (Crenshaw) allows transgender people, particularly those of color, to draw from ancestral traditions and ways of being and flexibly adapt them to their own unique identities.

Sam gains the physical space to explore his gender identity (first as a bacha posh, then as a young man) in several ways, often with the help of his friends and family. Instead of taking regular gym class in high school, where he would have to change in front of others in the locker room, "he worked on the Bonners' farm. Their school let his work weeding the fields and cutting vines stand in for the PE requirement he'd put off since ninth grade" (McLemore 10). Miel passes him tampons in the hallway so he is not caught with them in his backpack. The most striking example of using physical space is that his mom moved to the town so he could live as himself, away from people who knew him as a girl. All these steps into trans life were made without medical intervention. Sam's mom did not get a doctor's or therapist's note for gym class. Instead, Sam worked out a way to subvert the boundary himself. While he is still bound to Western notions of gender given his fictive context, by not seeking medical treatment and having supportive kin and chosen family, he goes beyond its limitations. While we acknowledge that the novel could take place during a time in which medicine has not caught up with the needs of trans teens, there is still much to be said about how the text imagines a context void of the normative grasp of the medical model. Gill-Peterson found that "trans children, especially [...] trans children of color, have been forced to pay [...] the highest material price for the modern sex and gender binary" (203). *When the Moon Was Ours* counters this by having both Sam and Aracely exist and thrive outside of the medicalization of trans bodies, and thus undo some of the clout and power attributed to binary ways of thinking about gender identity.

Sam's identity as a bacha posh works with all the subthemes of QTCC, and here this identity served as a way for him to have the emotional space to process his feelings about his gender. Early in the novel, Sam insists to his mom that he is only presenting as male to protect her, despite her constant support and encouragement to live as his true self permanently. He muses that "when those [bacha posh] girls grew up, they became women [...] But whatever freedom they missed was not because they wanted to be boys again. It was because they wanted to be both women and unhindered" (McLemore 36). In their review of the literature on bacha posh, Julienne Corboz, Andrew Gibbs, and Rachel Jewkes found that some teens who engage in the practice continue to live as men into adulthood, and some also have relationships with girls, but it is difficult to know the prevalence of these behaviors (587). In Sam's case, it is not until the end of the novel that he admits to himself that he does not want to be a woman when he grows up. While he ultimately does not identify as a bacha posh by the conclusion, having this identity helped him safely perform his gender and masculinity until he was comfortable emotionally self-identifying as a man as well. Sam's cultural heritage was a strength to his transgender identity and journey, one that allowed him to transgress expectations and practices thrust upon him. Often, transgender kids and teens do not know the history of any transgender or gender-nonconforming people who they can look to as models. Denying trans kids their histories has "politically infantilizing consequences" as it deprives them of "a century's worth of precedent that might enfranchise them" (Gill-Person 195). Here, this history specific to Sam's Pakistani culture was an asset.

While not situated within the particularities of trans being, Miel's interactions with the Bonner sisters also highlight her embodiment of QTCC, especially as she gains the mental space to consider their threats and decides to stand up for herself. Near the end of the novel, Miel refuses to give the Bonners the flowers that consistently sprout out of her wrists, which the sisters demand in exchange for not exposing Sam's legal name and sex (228-229). Symbolically, through her rejection of the Bonners' demands, Miel rejects their white supremacist notion of superiority as well as the hetero- and cisnormativity they demand, as they try to shame Miel for dating Sam. As the Bonner sisters' attempt at sameness fades and they name their differences to each other (including queerness, teen motherhood, and disability), the coffin the sisters used to physically contain people and assure their alignment to normative practices magically breaks. This physically and symbolically breaks the hold white heteronormativity and supremacy have on the characters in the text. This powerful symbol illustrates that white supremacy hurts white people as well, as the Bonner sisters are unhappy with their masks of normality. The sisters' facade relies on Western medical norms and illustrates that "[m]edicalization restricts gender, sex, and sexuality by placing these categories within biomedical models of understanding, which has been found to pathologize difference, rather than treating diversity as part of natural variation" (Hsieh and shuster 319). This can also be read as supporting the need to queer pedagogy and queer readings, where sameness is purposefully resisted (Britzman).

Using playfulness and creativity to subvert boundaries

Scholarly expansions on transgression include its incorporation of playfulness as a counter to the mainstream culture (Stallybrass and White). We define using playfulness and creativity to subvert boundaries, a subset of QTCC, as queer and trans people engaging in playful activity to subvert the boundaries of their communities while caring for each other. This playfulness illustrates how, historically, many trans kids "found livable ways to grow up as trans children without needing a sexological category like transvestism or requiring any particular medical discourse to set the terms of their lives" (Gill-Peterson 92-93). Sam uses his creativity and play to live within a community that does not understand his ethnicity or gender identity but finds ways of living that show his value and place in the town while also transgressing Western expectations.

As described in the previous section, Sam plays with the Pakistani identity of bacha posh when he is figuring out his gender. Miel, when thinking about this identity, mused that "from what little his mother had been willing to say, this was something Sam thought he would grow out of. He didn't seem to realize he was growing into it" (McLemore 61). While we do not want to imply that bacha posh is not a true identity people hold, in Sam's case, it is portrayed as one he is playing with as he works through his feelings. Gill-Peterson notes that trans people, including trans children, do not need medical knowledge about themselves to "name or understand their lives" (18). McLemore's depiction of Sam's exploration illustrates this and serves as an example of how trans characters can devise creative ways using queer and transgender cultural knowledge and capital to understand their bodies and practices.

In addition to the bacha posh identity, Sam uses play and creativity to relate to – and communicate with – his community. He paints three-dimensional moons and hangs them around town. This creative act allows him to express himself freely and safely, as he hangs his moons at night when others cannot see him. Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez has highlighted how YA's representation of creative acts and practices functions as "an opportunity to challenge and transform existing epistemologies and the possibility to create new, more liberating ones" (11). Other critics, such as Tom Sandercock, have pointed out that creative expression often "facilitates the articulation of trans identity and experience" in ways that promote self-authorship and identity exploration (78). In this sense, they serve as a metaphor for Sam's gender expression, which he explores mostly on his own. These colorful moons provide comfort and care for children in the community in a way that traditional systems of healthcare, schooling, and childcare cannot. Sam also engages in playful demonstrations of desire with Miel. One of his jobs at the Bonner farm is to use a paintbrush to transfer pollen between the pumpkins. When he and Miel are flirting, he playfully brushes this paintbrush against her skin. He can use his body here in a way outside of gender expression to communicate his interest in her with a gentle touch.

Creativity in subverting boundaries is also demonstrated by Sam's mom, who challenged the Western biomedical industry to conceive Sam through a marriage of convenience. She wanted a child and her husband wanted a green card. Rather than

purchasing sperm and becoming pregnant through a doctor's intervention, she found her path through a marriage based on creative, caring transactions rather than romantic love. Marrying someone for a green card is illegal, but this was the best way for Sam's mom to gain the family she wanted. While her gossiping neighbors saw this as "cold" (McLemore 204), "she always considered [this decision as] proof of how much she loved Sam, how much she had wanted a child even if there was no man she wanted as her husband" (205). She and Sam's father cared for each other as people and helped each other subvert the system to get what each wanted. This plot point shows the novel's investment in challenging social, medical, and institutional norms. While purchasing donor sperm is an option for single women in the United States, it is expensive, with the costs in the thousands depending on how many vials of sperm and doctors' appointments can be needed for a successful pregnancy (American Pregnancy Association 2023). We only wish her character was named to subvert the cultural norm of mothers being identified only through their relationship with their children.

Sam's mom also uses play to engage with him, as in the beginning of the novel, she is more welcoming to his burgeoning transgender identity than he is. When Miel and Sam start dating and getting physical, she says, "I hope you were both safe [...] I'd hate for you to get that girl pregnant. Aracely would murder me" (McLemore 33). Sam, however, is not ready to engage in verbal play about his gender identity and thinks: "He was supposed to laugh. He knew he was supposed to laugh. But he couldn't force out the sound" (33). This failed playfulness can also remind the reader that cisgender allies, even family members, should always take their lead from transgender people about how much play, if any, is permissible for each trans individual.

Our analysis of McLemore's text suggests rich potential for classroom discussion and pedagogical opportunities. We turn to classroom implications and suggestions for incorporating trans YA texts, such as *When the Moon Was Ours,* and QTCC, in the following section.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING YA ABOUT QUEER AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH OF COLOR

Before we outline suggestions and implications for teaching *When the Moon Was Ours,* we want to note a few important prefaces. First, we believe all educators, especially cisgender ones like us, need to see trans-affirming and supportive pedagogy as existing inside and beyond the classroom walls. In other words, we advocate for educators to engage in public conversations and champion policies that support trans people, especially trans youth, access to healthcare. Both adolescent and adult transgender people's access to healthcare is currently being banned in multiple states in the United States (Burns) and is under attack in other Anglophonic countries such as Canada (Parsons) and the United Kingdom (Rigby, Respaut, and Terhune). Educators must do more than teach titles; educators must speak up and speak out in support

of their transgender students' access to services. We do not want to suggest that transgender people who use hormones are complicit in white supremacy or should be looked down upon by educators, especially cisgender educators who do not have that lived experience. As noted earlier, there is no monolithic view of transition among transgender people and communities. Therefore, it is vital that educators, especially cisgender ones, do not make blanket statements about transitioning and do not impose their pre-existing ideas about transition onto their transgender students. Criticality and care guide our teaching suggestions.

In developing a critical trans framework for education, Eli Kean noted three areas of inquiry educators should orient their work towards: attention to how gender operates on individual, institutional, and socio-cultural levels; understanding of genderism as a system of oppression that operates with other oppressive systemic forces; and centering of transgender people's lives, experiences, and knowledge in educational spaces. Previously, Harper Benjamin Keenan outlined how educators can challenge students to unpack and critically examine the gendered scripts they learn through society, school, and broader culture. In doing so, a critical trans pedagogy opens up questions about bodies, power, and social, educational, and political structures. A critical trans pedagogy recognizes that "school currently functions as a location to enforce state-defined gender", and intentional teacher practices could "provide possibilities for children to explore and experiment with how we might do things differently" (Keenan 550). Finally, Wayne Martino and Kenan Omercajic illustrate a trans pedagogy of refusal that intentionally rejects cisgenderism as aspirational, views "experiential accounts by trans people" as essential to knowledge production, and explicitly critiques the "racialised forces at play in the rendering of trans bodies as disposable and their erasure and appropriation under the banner of queer inclusivity" (685, 688). These pedagogical values align with the QTCC framework we have taken up throughout our analysis. Keenan's, Kean's, and Martino and Omercajic's works on trans pedagogies shape how we consider teaching trans titles, specifically *When the Moon Was Ours*.

We recommend that when teaching YA literature with transgender characters of color, teachers draw students' attention to how Western norms and values shape characters' experiences. For instance, ask questions such as: How are trans characters shaped by cultural, ethnic, and/or racial experiences and practices? How are transgender characters of color using QTCC to subvert and move around Western expectations? Additionally, remind students not to assume that all trans narratives include discussions of medical interventions, as those are not desired by all trans people and are steeped in Western norms regarding medical care. In doing so, educators should work to "counteract the consequences of normalization" (Kokozos and Gonzalez 159). Even more so, as Matos has pointed out in an exploration of teaching trans literature in the classroom, making sure to include narratives that focus on Western and non-Western forms of trans life is imperative in terms of comprehending "how culture inflects understandings of trans identity and how there is no singular truth when it comes to trans life" ("Subverting Normative Paradigms" 116).

martin draws attention to the "whiteness permeating the scholarship" of K-12 trans pedagogies in an overview of peer-reviewed journals focusing on trans topics in education,

before calling for scholars to "reckon with whiteness in their scholarship" (7). Our work to challenge Western norms of identity in our teaching is an attempt to reckon with this whiteness. The suggestions we outline for teaching *When the Moon Was Ours* seek to connect literary analysis to real issues facing trans teens of color. When writing about trans and gender non-conforming peoples, Ning Hsieh and stef m. shuster write that "barriers to care [exist] on the macro level (lack of insurance, transphobic laws, transphobic doctors, etc.) and on the patient level (not trusting medical institutions, thus not disclosing personal information)" (21). Black and Latinx trans students also face barriers in school, such as zero-tolerance policies that inevitably are harmful and a lack of trans-affirming policies in general (GLSEN). McLemore illustrates these issues for Sam at school. Sam was only out to Miel and, by necessity, the school secretary, Ms. Owens. His mistrust was founded when the Bonner sisters succeeded in persuading Ms. Owens to give them a copy of his birth certificate with his deadname and legal sex. This medical and state-sponsored document has the power to change Sam's life, as it shows his legal gender differs from his social presentation and lived experience. In this way, although Sam socially lives outside of Western norms of gender as much as possible, he cannot remove himself, as US school policies are based on white supremacist norms and cisnormative scripts (Keenan). As many transgender activists and scholars have declared, birth certificates should not be the definitive marker of gender for students (Kozokos and Gonzalez). As critical educators, we hope to position literary studies as a springboard into real action our students can take to combat transphobia and challenge cisnormativity in their own lives.

By using a QTCC model, teachers of trans YA and of trans students, in general, can view queer and trans characters and students through an asset-based lens. In the table below, we offer questions that can help shape class discussions or serve as writing prompts for queer and trans YA novels, both contemporary and fantastical. Educators can teach *When the Moon Was Ours* alongside a fictional realist trans narrative like Russo's *If I Was Your Girl* for generative discussions about normativity and identity. Similarly, educators can place *When the Moon Was Ours* in conversation with magical realist titles that do not include transgender characters to analyze how the genre takes up, critiques, and/or confirms dominant ideas of gender identity and expression. *When the Moon Was Ours* offers multiple curricular opportunities for educators across fields of literary studies.

Elements of QTCC	**Questions for discussion of queer and trans YA with BIPOC main characters**
Pushing the limits of cultural identity	How do queer and trans characters use aspects of their cultures to explore their identity?

	How do trans characters use aspects of their friends' and/or chosen families' cultures to explore their identity? What are the boundaries between cultural appreciation and appropriation in identity exploration? *If reading a magical realism or fantasy novel:* How do fantastical elements relate to the real-life cultures referenced in the book? How do fantastical elements give the reader information about the culture (including imagined cultures)?
Physical and mental/emotional space from the whitestream	Where do queer and trans characters go to express themselves fully? How do trans characters gain mental or emotional space to explore their gender identities and expressions? How are gender identities, or gender expressions, tied to characters' race, social class, or other identity markers? *If reading a magical realism or fantasy novel:* Are magical spaces included as a way for queer and trans characters to gain physical or mental/emotional space? What might fantastical spaces represent for queer and trans characters?
Using playfulness and creativity to subvert boundaries	How are queer and trans characters "playing" with their identity? Do queer and trans characters engage in play differently depending on what other characters they are around? Why or why not?

	If reading a magical realism or fantasy novel: How are fantastical elements used in play? What do these fantastical elements represent, either in a fantasy world or as a metaphor for the real world?

CONCLUSION

Teaching texts focused on trans life and experience involves more than simply including a trans-centered text in the classroom – it involves being open and honest with readers about the tensions that exist in the field and, even more so, how the normalizing tendencies of assimilation and socialization are looming in the YA oeuvre. While the Westernized medical model has been crucial in mobilizing the visibility of trans life on the page, we must be critical of the extent to which this model has had a normative grasp over how trans teen life has been represented. Even more so, we must be critical of the overall didactic and ideological bent of novels that embrace or reject the power of the medical model of transitioning: is the novel written to provide a more intimate and honest look at trans teen life, or it is simply written to make trans teen life seem less 'dangerous' and more palatable for culture at large? Is the novel meant to provoke systemic change, or is it designed to keep us complacent with the status quo? Does it teach us to acquiesce or resist?

Answers to many of these questions are addressed directly and indirectly in McLemore's novel. At the end of *When the Moon Was Ours,* Sam embraces his gender, body, and ethnicity. He notes that "he was calling himself Samir" (McLemore 262) instead of the Westernized nickname Sam. He decided that others "could still call him Sam. But when he said his name, he would be Samir, the sum of the blood his mother had given him and the man he was becoming. When he met a stranger and introduced himself, he would be Samir" (265). Now, his name will be a verbal marker of his ethnic pride. This pride in his full self continues when he and Miel share a romantic moment, and instead of wearing his binder as he usually did,

> [h]e [gave] his body, as it was, to the one girl who understood it was not the whole of him. That there was a story told not just in the contours of his chest and what he had or did not have pressing against the center seam of his jeans. The rest of him was in what he chose […]. His name. (265)

Samir has the confidence to show his body, as well as claim his name, as important parts of his identity. He is using his QTCC to push cultural boundaries (both Pakistani and American) to show his body when he wants to, introduce himself the way he wants to, and ultimately present himself as a trans Pakistani person. Even more importantly, Samir does not rely on the clout or power attributed to Western medicine to define, shape, or understand his body – and, in turn, goes on to dismantle the promises and assurances contained in trans literature

that approach trans life monolithically. Rather than foreclosing parameters for living a life outside of the staunch gender binary that haunts many Western contexts, Samir's narrative journey opens up different possibilities for trans being, futurity, and potentiality that are not reliant on adult power nor the values of normativity often elevated in YA novels. An awareness of the relationship between trans life, trans narrative, and the history of Western medicine pushes us to be more critical about how trans teen life is represented on the page and the various ways that intersectional thinking complicates how we read and teach these texts.

This analysis of McLemore's novel ultimately highlights what trans and queer historians and scholars have always known: trans people create their own identities and ways of knowing that extend beyond the limits of Western medicine and expectations of gender expression. Educators at the secondary and college levels can show support for trans youth of color in their classrooms, as well as queer youth of color, by teaching texts like *When the Moon Was Ours* that highlight alternatives to whitestream models of queerness and transness and show queer and trans youth reveling in their own queer transgressive cultural capital to create and thrive in lives of their own making.

REFERENCES

American Pregnancy Association. "Donor Insemination." https://americanpregnancy.org/getting-pregnant/donor-insemination/. Accessed 26 Oct. 2023.

Arrizón, Alicia. *Queering mestizaje: Transculturation and performance*. University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Blackburn, Mollie V. "Pedagogy and pleasure: Trans and gender transgressive students in an LGBTQ-themed literature class." *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2021, pp. 773-791.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital (1986)." *Cultural Theory: An Anthology,* vol. 1, no. 81-93, 2011, p. 949.

Britzman, Deborah P. "Is there a queer pedagogy? Or, stop reading straight." *Educational Theory*, vol. 45, pp. 151-165.

Burns, Katelyn. "The Republican Attack on Trans Kids' Health Care, Explained." *Vox*, 31 Mar. 2021. https://www.vox.com/22360030/trans-kids-health-care-arkansas-explained. Accessed 13 Jun. 2021.

Capuzza, Jaime C., and Leland G. Spencer. "Regressing, Progressing, or Transgressing on the Small Screen? Transgender Characters on U.S. Scripted Television Series." *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2017, pp. 214-230.

Corbett, Emily. *In Transition: Young Adult Literature and Transgender Representation.* University Press of Mississippi, 2024.

---. "Transgender Books in Transgender Packages: The Peritextual Materials of Young Adult Fiction." *The International Journal of Young Adult Literature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-25.

Corboz, Julienne, Andrew Gibbs, and Rachel Jewkes. "Bacha posh in Afghanistan: Factors Associated with Raising a Girl as a Boy." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2020, pp. 585-598.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Mapping the Margins.” *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, vol. 3, no. 15, 1995, pp. 357-383.

Cronn-Mills, Kirstin. *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*. North Star Editions, 2012.

Daniels, April. *Dreadnought*. Diversion Books, 2016.

Davis, Georgiann, Jodie Dewey, and Erin Murphy. “Giving sex: Deconstructing Intersex and Trans Medicalization Practices.” *Gender & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2016, pp. 490-514.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. *Histories of the Transgender Child*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

GLSEN. “What School Was Like for Black and Latinx Trans Adults – and How to Improve.” 2023. Accessed 2 Nov. 2023.

Henderson, Alex. “Otherworldly Bodies: Non-human Non-binary Characters in YA Fiction.” Presented at the Young Adult Studies Association online conference, Nov. 2022. Retrieved from: https://theafictionado.wordpress.com/2023/01/26/otherworldly-bodies-non-human-non-binary-characters-in-ya-fiction/. Accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

Hsieh, Ning, and stef m. shuster. “Health and health care of sexual and gender minorities.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2021, pp. 318-333.

Jiménez, Laura. “Trans People Aren’t Mythical Creatures.” *Booktoss,* 24 Sept. 2018, https://booktoss.org/2018/09/24/trans-people-arent-mythical-creatures/. Accessed 4 Nov. 2024.

Johnson, Austin H. “Normative Accountability: How the Medical Model Influences Transgender Identities and Experiences.” *Sociology Compass*, vol. 9, no. 9, 2015, pp. 803-813.

Katcher, Brian. *Almost Perfect*. Delacorte Press, 2009.

Keenan, Harper Benjamin. “Unscripting Curriculum: Toward a Critical Trans Pedagogy.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 87, no. 4, 2017, pp. 538-556.

Kean, Eli. “Advancing a Critical Trans Framework for Education.” *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2021, pp. 261-286.

Kokozos, Michael, and Maru Gonzalez. “Critical inclusion: Disrupting LGBTQ normative frameworks in school contexts.” *Equity & Excellence in Education*, vol. 53, nos. 1-2, 2020, pp. 151-164.

Latham, Don. “The Cultural Work of Magical Realism in Three Young Adult Novels.” *Children’s Literature in Education*, vol. 38, 2007, pp. 59-70.

Lopez, Estefany. “*Curando La Herida*: Shamanic Healing and Language in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*.” *Pathways: A Journal of Humanistic and Social Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-10.

Markland, Beckett, Cora Sargeant, and Sarah Wright. “Teachers’ Beliefs: How They Shape the Support Offered to Trans-spectrum Young People.” *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 124, 2023, pp. 1-12.

martin, shea w. (2024). “Who All Gon Be There?”: On Blackness, Transness, and K-12 Pedagogies for [Black] Trans Futures. *Journal of Queer and Trans Studies in Education,* vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-13.

Martino, Wayne and Kenan Omercajic. “A Trans Pedagogy of Refusal: Interrogating Cisgenderism, the Limits of Antinormativity and Trans necropolitics.” *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2021, pp. 679-694.

Matos, Angel Daniel. *The Reparative Impulse of Queer Young Adult Literature.* Routledge, 2024.

---. “Subverting Normative Paradigms: Teaching Representations of Gender and Queerness in Young Adult Literature.” *Teaching Young Adult Literature*, Eds. Mike Cadden, Karen Coats, and Roberta Seelinger Trites. Modern Language Association of America, 2020, pp. 109-119.

McLemore, Anna-Marie. *When the Moon Was Ours: A Novel*. Macmillan, 2016.

Orsi, Clarence Harlan. “Saying Something: Characters in YA Fiction.” *Los Angeles Review of Books,* 16 Jul. 2019. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/saying-something-trans-characters-in-ya-fiction/. Accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

Parsons, Paige. “Trans teens and youth say gender-affirming care is ‘life-changing.’ So why is it so hard to find in Canada?” *CBC.* 18 Sept. 2023. Accessed 3 Nov. 2023.

Pennell, Summer Melody. “Queer cultural capital: Implications for education.” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2016, pp. 324-338.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*. Hachette, 2004.

Putzi, Jennifer. “‘None of this ‘trapped-in-a-man’s-body’bullshit’: Transgender Girls and Wrong-Body Discourse in Young Adult Fiction.” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vo. 36, no. 2, 2017, pp. 423-448.

Rigby, Jennifer, Robin Respaut and Chad Terhune. “England’s trans teens, lost in limbo, face mounting barriers to care.” 15 Dec. 2022. https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/britain-transyouth/. Accessed 3 Nov. 2023.

Rodríguez, Sonia Alejandra. “Conocimiento Narratives: Creative Acts and Healing in Latinx Children’s and Young Adult Literature.” *Children’s Literature*, vol. 47, 2019, pp. 9-29.

Russo, Meredith. *If I Was Your Girl*. Macmillan, 2016.

Sandercock, Tom. *Youth Fiction and Trans Representation.* Routledge, 2023.

shuster, stef m. *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender*. New York University Press, 2021.

Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Cornell University Press, 1986.

Transgender Health and Wellness Center. “The Butterfly Society.” https://trans.health/butterfly-society-donate.

Urrieta, Luis. *Working from Within: Chicana and Chicano Activist Educators in Whitestream Schools*. University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. Simon & Schuster, 2007.

Yosso, Tara J. “Whose culture has capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth.” *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, vol. 8, no.1, 2005, pp. 69-91.

Zeeman, Laetitia, et al. “A Review of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) Health and Healthcare Inequalities.” *European Journal of Public Health*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2019, pp. 974-980.