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In *Queer Anxieties of Young Adult Literature and Culture*, Derritt Mason uses multiple forms of queer young adult (YA) media as a lens through which to examine the intersection of queerness, youth, and anxiety. Mason's compelling book is an evolutionary step in scholarship on queer young adult media, building on earlier works by Frances Hanckel and John Cunningham (1976) and Michael Cart and Christine Jenkins (2006) to deliver a fascinating deep dive into both the anxieties held by adults about queer youth, and the anxieties experienced by queer youth themselves. Mason asserts that the spectre of anxiety has always loomed large in queer YA, haunting even (especially) the first YA books featuring gay characters, beginning with John Donovan's *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* in 1969. Since then, the popularity and quantity of queer YA has skyrocketed and, Mason argues, anxiety has embedded itself in queer YA to produce a genre filled with multiple sites of 'intense anxiety' (6). These sites of anxiety are explored throughout Mason's book and include: 'queer visibility and sexual coherence'; 'adolescent risk-taking'; 'the promise that "It Gets Better" and the threat that it might not' and, inevitably, representations of HIV/AIDS (6). Mason's book comprises seven chapters that each explore a different work, be it novel (*I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* in Chapter One), computer game (*Caper in the Castro* in Chapter Three), television show (*Big Mouth* in Chapter Five), or fanfiction (*It Gets Better / Glee* in Chapter Seven). The potential for cross-disciplinary application is one of this well-argued text's resounding strengths and Mason masters the delicate balance of covering multiple disciplines (queer studies, YA studies, English literature, film and media studies) while delving into the specificities of each.

Chapter One, "Growing Sideways in *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip*," re-examines John's Donovan's pioneering queer YA novel more than fifty years after its original 1969 publication date. This chapter reviews existing scholarship surrounding *I'll Get There*, including work by Michael Cart and Christine Jenkins (2006), Thomas Crisp (2009), and

Corrine Wickens (2011). Mason highlights that much of this work shares a similar sentiment that warns of the potential dangers of 'problematic literary tropes that associate realism with homophobia' (29). Diverging from the scholarship that has come before, Mason goes on to dedicate the bulk of the chapter to navigating ground previously untrod, using Kathryn Bond Stockton's theory of growing sideways to assert that the novel is 'a lot queerer than it may initially appear' and earns its place in contemporary discussions of queerness in YA literature, five decades on (28).

In "Risk: The Queer Pedagogy of *The Man Without a Face*," Mason discusses the potential for queer YA to engage with risk in ways that may be pleasurable rather than violent, urging readers to consider what it means for 'queer youth to actively "risk" (as a verb) versus being labelled as "at-risk"' (46). While acknowledging the importance of highlighting the risks facing queer youth—particularly those pertaining to bullying and suicide—Mason echoes Eric Rofes' concerns that 'queer youth seem defined by their potential victimisation' (47). There is scope, according to Mason, for readers of queer YA to embrace 'queer uncertainty' through 'risky reading' (50). The text used as an example here is Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face* (1972), which Mason suggests both conforms to the conventions of the problem novel while offering the potential for an alternative reading. Mason's cogent alternative reading delves into the novel's anxiety about ambiguous queerness, alongside the pleasure of choosing to stay awhile, to 'dwell' in the risk of that queerness (62).

Chapter Three seamlessly shifts between two forms of media—a novel (David Levithan's *Two Boys Kissing* (2013)) and a video game (C. M. Ralph's *Caper in the Castro* (1989))—to discuss anxieties around HIV/AIDS and failure in queer YA. In *Caper in the Castro* players investigate a string of poisonings administered through spiked drinks in gay bars, unravelling the villainous Dullagan Straightman's plan to eradicate the city's queer community. Mason highlights the game's unmistakable parallel to the HIV/AIDS crisis and notes the associated anxieties players might experience while playing. However, in a departure from reality, the game offers the opportunity for infinite do-overs and allows players to try, try, and try again until they succeed in thwarting Straightman's nefarious plan and secure the safety of the queer community. *Caper in the Castro*, which was developed and released during the AIDS crisis, places players at the heart of a queer crisis, in contrast to the majority of contemporary queer YA, which Mason states does not assert HIV/AIDS as 'an ongoing part of young people's lives' (67). Mason ends the chapter by asking scholars to reflect on the questions: 'how do we reconcile the past of HIV/AIDS with its present and the future, why and where do we fail to do so, what does it feel like to fail, and what are the consequences of this failure?' (84).

Chapter Four uses Andrew Smith's *Grasshopper Jungle* (2014) to discuss anxieties surrounding queer sex and sexuality in YA and the pervading adult anxiety about YA dystopia as a whole. Mason cites Meghan Cox Gurdon's 2011 critique of YA dystopia as an example of adult unease about the 'darkness' of YA literature (91). The deepest fear is the thought that these themes of sex and kidnapping, of incest and violence, might be passed, 'virus-like, to young readers' (91). Sidestepping from adult responses to YA dystopia, in the latter half of the chapter Mason focuses his razor-sharp gaze on the anxieties of the teenage protagonist of *Grasshopper Jungle*, particularly those relating to queer sexuality. Drawing both threads of this engaging chapter together, Mason concludes that the 'unbearable darkness' of YA is a

‘potent source’ of anxiety, felt by the protagonists of YA novels, by young adult readers, and by the adults who care—or purport to care—about them (104).

Mason turns his attention to television in Chapter Five, examining Netflix’s *Big Mouth* (2017-). Mason notes *Big Mouth*’s use of bombastic fantastical characters like Hormone Monsters, the Shame Wizard, and Depression Kitty to explore the profound anxieties of puberty. At times, the show’s depiction of teenage years verges into over the top body horror, and Mason describes *Big Mouth*’s blend of horror and camp as integral to the show’s effectiveness at conveying the terror of growing up. Throughout this insightful, well-researched chapter, Mason brings in the work of Noah Fields, Dennis Dennisoff, and Steven Bruhm to explore *Big Mouth*’s use of horror, Gothic, and camp tropes to delve into anxieties about bodily control, shame, and childhood perversity that resonate with both adults and youth. As well as the anxieties present on screen, Mason highlights *Big Mouth*’s proclivity to poke fun at the anxieties that ‘swarm so feverishly around the sexuality of young people’ (132). Instead, Mason persuasively suggests, critics, parents, and anxious citizens alike should embrace the ‘pleasures and sociality of shame’, following *Big Mouth*’s crude, campy, queer lead (132).

In Chapter Six, Mason discusses the *It Gets Better* project, which saw thousands of queer adults share their stories of growing up from anxious youth into happy, ‘out and proud’ queers. While noting that the project was well-intentioned, Mason shares the view with critics who suggest that *It Gets Better* was as much about adults assuaging the hangover of their own youthful anxieties as it was easing the worries of queer—often closeted—youth. It is interesting to see how Mason classifies the *It Gets Better* project, which took the form of videos posted online, as a work of children’s literature. This broadening of the horizons of what constitutes children’s literature will likely be of value to many scholars working within the fields of YA or popular literature, and neatly illustrates that the boundaries of popular literature are—and should remain—in flux. Mason also discusses the *It Gets Better* project in Chapter Seven, though this time through the medium of queer *It Gets Better* / *Glee* fanfiction. Fanfiction has a long and storied history of providing a safe space for play for both queer readers and writers, and Mason treats this oftentimes undervalued playground with reverence throughout the chapter. Young, queer fanfiction authors ‘reappropriate’ *It Gets Better* in their *Glee*-inspired stories, Mason asserts, providing an opportunity for young people to ‘write back to the project’ themselves (154). This is just one example of ‘sideways growth’ between queer adults and youth that is explored in Mason’s book, which provides a framework for scholars working with YA media to identify other works that provide this link between generations (154).

Through this fascinating application of theoretical work from queer theorists such as Stockton and Sedgwick, Mason convincingly encourages researchers from undergraduate to specialist to engage in alternative readings of queer YA. Indeed, Mason’s invitation throughout the text is for us to play, to linger in the discomfort of anxiety, to revel in perversity, to queer queer YA. *Queer Anxieties of Young Adult Literature and Culture* is a valuable addition to the field of YA studies and Mason has succeeded in breaking new ground with his bold, unerringly queer analysis of young adult media that charts the genre’s genesis through to the contemporary moment.