

Introduction and Editor's Note

As *WOW Review* begins its sixth year of sharing insights into culturally significant global texts, the World of Words Review Committee wishes to thank the many reviewers who have contributed their time and expertise to its publication. Each review has offered personal response supported by a wealth of information to address authenticity of character and context. Readers also have found issues to contemplate and challenge and other books to extend the themes offered by the various titles reviewed. These features continue to characterize *WOW Review* in this issue. The submissions for this unthemed issue brought together twelve books from various genres and reflecting diverse parts of the global community. The themes represented here offer invitations for a variety of personal connections as well as intertextual connections with other books.

To identify one theme that weaves throughout all is rather challenging but in reading these reviews, a new respect is evident for the complexity of people, events, and beliefs that intersect in many ways to build identity and agency in the youth throughout the global community and across historical eras. While family is acknowledged as a primary resource in building one's identity in these titles, the specific ways that families support identity development is unique to each story shared. Families that are biracial and bilingual provide the context for the young protagonists in *Endangered*, *The Language Inside*, and *Wakame Gatherers*, all of whom encounter very different experiences when visiting or living within the two cultures that make up their identity.

The Milk of Birds tells of a young girl with learning disabilities whose mother encourages her involvement in a pen pal program resulting in a sense of agency as she connects to a young girl from Sudan. *Crazy Loco* shares family stories of Mexican American young people on the Texas/Mexico border as they deal with cultural challenges. Similarly, *Parrot in the Oven* describes the struggles of a young Mexican American boy dealing with family issues, however his hopes and dreams in light of facing challenges hold potential for shaping his identity and, thus, a sense of personal agency. *Kids of Kabul: Living Bravely through a Never Ending War* and *The Herd Boy* each reflect this hopefulness as well.

With characters impacted by historical and cultural events, *My Family for the War*, *Tsunami Quilt*, and *El Moto* each demonstrate the influence of political and social events on one's sense of identity. *Greedy Sparrow* does not focus on a family within the story, however, it is a traditional Armenian tale that has been handed down in the author's family to sustain a sense of Armenian cultural identity. Of course, each book reviewed offers multiple points of connection for readers. We welcome your response and insights as part of the WOW community.

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