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The Departed Girl

Amber Moore
University of British Columbia

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The Departed Girl

Abstract

This poem is inspired by a participant in Sunde-Peterson's (2014) case study that explored how a gifted youth faced adversity. The participant who inspired the subject of this poem faced much trauma; Sunde-Peterson was interested in how this impacted her development, while this poem attempts to imagine her escape beyond the data collection period. Like Sunde-Peterson, the speaker of this poem also posits that how gifted youth respond to trauma warrants more attention.

Amber Moore is a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia studying language and literacy education with the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include adolescent literacy, trauma literature, and exploring gender and sexualities issues in school. She also enjoys writing poetry and creative nonfiction.

Keywords

poem, girlhood, runaway, trauma, coming-of-age

Cover Page Footnote

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The departed girl

Amber Moore

University of British Columbia

She grew up without help in
a town too small for her. Everyone knew it.
Her eyes were wider than others'—
she could see farther than
the church and the school—both full of books
she read long ago, like *Matilda*,
who could never be satiated by the religiously curated words.

She became a real-life doll to the adults
who cared for her. She was their confidante,
keeper of secrets. She would listen and stare back
with those glass eyes and flattened hair from
too much time on her back, trying to quiet her
thinking self. She began to learn that
support would come for her “from
the outside.”

Her departure was distressing; the player rejects
the toy when it's ready, not
the other way around. She turned her glass eyes to
a stranger she spent time getting angry at
institutions with before leaving him for someone
who read as much as her and could also
cross borders.

Through moments of troubled autonomy
and after finally finding a focus, she burned her
possessions and became an advocate instead of
a poppet, inhabiting soft skin this time that
could be touched. She was a good fit
in this new environment of
confirmation, a sense-making process
analyzed and therefore,
valued.