**Souders Log, Ch. 5, *Rapunzel, The Paper Bag Princess, King and King***

***Rapunzel,* by Paul O. Zelinsky**

Zelinsky’s Rapunzel, has a twist from the original Rapunzel tale. Zelinsky’s heroine isn’t rescued by her prince. She actually is his salvation. Rapuzel is claimed by the sorceress as payment for a gift of the herb rapunzel , which Rapunzel’s Father needed to save Rapunzel’s mother. The rapunzel that the expectant mother needed to survive grew in the sorceress’s garden. The husband, weak and fearful for his wife’s life, agreed to the deal and gave up his daughter to the sorceress. Zelinsky’s illustration of the sorceress shows a domineering strong woman with outstretched arms leaning over Rapunzel’s father. He is on his knees looking up at her and very obviously in the subservient position.

As in the original Rapunzel story she is imprisoned in a castle and when she enters puberty she is imprisoned on the top floor. She grows the beautiful long hair and lets it down so the sorceress can climb to her room. The prince passing by hears the sorceress say “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair.” Wolf quotes a line from Anne Sexton’s *Transformations* and the line ends with this interesting metaphor ….”And as strong as a dog leash”, nothing is stronger than a dog’s leash as a metaphor for subservient.

The Prince attracted by Rapunzel’s beautiful voice waits in hiding and sees the sorceress call down the long hair and when the sorceress is gone he does the same. He mounts the tower by climbing up the long tresses and he and Rapunzel fall in love and take a marriage vow between each other. When the sorceress discovers that Rapunzel is with child she shears off her long hair and banishes her to the forest where she gives birth to twins. When the prince attempts to climb the tower to be with his beloved he arrives at the window and sees the sorceress. He is struck with grief when she tells him Rapunzel is gone.

The prince falls and the fall should have killed him but he survived. Crippled and blind he roams the forest looking for his lady love. Blind and in the woods conveys a mood of hopelessness and fear. He hears her voice and goes toward her. She sees him and takes him in her arms and saves him. Her tears of joy fall into his blinded eyes and he sees again. They return to his kingdom and they live a long happy life together.

This story depicts the captured lady awaiting rescue. I read the older version of this story to both of my older daughters and was not aware then, as I am now that I was instilling in them the belief that their life needed a man. I have two highly successful daughters both in their late thirties and I know that they still need to have a husband or boyfriend to feel complete. I know this because they have shared that knowledge with me.

***The Paper Bag Princess,* Story by Robert Munsch, Art by Michael Martchenko**

The illustrations in this story are incredibly entertaining. I read the book the first time by looking at the pictures only. I think reading it this way first allowed me to realize the prince was in the tower behind the bars. A complete shift of stereotypes brings humor and believability to this engaging story.

The story starts out when the dragon destroys the castle and steals the prince that the princess Elizabeth felt sure she was going to fall in love with and marry. Her beautiful clothes and everything else is consumed by the fire breathing dragon and Elizabeth finding she was naked makes a dress out of a paper bag. The illustration at this point in the story is wild and furious showing Elizabeth with her clothes burned away and the dragon carrying the prince by his shirt tail with a tennis racket in his hand and looking totally helpless and hopeless.

Now Elizabeth tracks the Dragon by following the trail of burnt forests and horses’ bones. This great metaphor of horses’ bones totally switches the old rules of the prince mounted on his powerful steed. Horses are nothing but food for this fire breathing dragon.

When Elizabeth encounters the dragon she engages him in a conversation by praising his skills of burning forests and high speed flying around the world until the dragon is so exhausted he falls asleep. To continue the role reversals she saves the prince and his ungrateful response creates a complete loss of love for the prince. Elizabeth berates him for his failure to realize that she saved him and gives him the boot.

I have read this story many times. I have read it to my daughter, to my granddaughters and to the neighbor girls. They all love the pictures, and the narration is just plain fun as I use different voices and body movements making this a special book even more special. Literature that lifts a girl up high and relates the message that being a girl is fun, exciting, challenging and most of all just perfect.

***King & King,* by Linda de Haan & Stern Mijland**

This breaking of normal social expectations story is written to give us a different look at marriage and the prince looking for the perfect princess. In this story with strange and sometime near grotesque illustrations we are presented with a queen who is tired of ruling. Her son is grown and the queen decides it is time for his to find his perfect princess. She sends all over the world for the princesses to come and present themselves to her son so that he may pick the future queen of his kingdom.

The search goes on for a very long time. Princess after princess is paraded in front of the king until he finally finds the one he loves. Low and behold his perfect mate is another prince. They marry and thus we have the title King and King.

This feeble attempt to break the standard culture of male and female marrying is actually a slight to the gay man. The illustrations show that gay men wear platform shoes and are effeminate talk about reinforcing a very old stereotypical presentation of gay men. There are many gay men who are trying to change this image of appearing to be what they are not. A gay man is not someone who wants to be feminine but a man who prefers another man as his life partner. The illustrations in this book devalue a gay mans mannerisms and his public persona.

The authors and illustrators of this book are not gay males. Wolf, on page 182, of our text states that *King and King,…*upends the typical portrayal of romance. I could not agree more, however, in upending traditional marriage I feel the presentation of the stereotypical example of what a gay male is does more harm than help in this particular story.

***And tango makes three,* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, illustrated by Henry Cole**

This pleasantly entertaining book based on real events lifts same sex relationships to a very high level. Compared to the image of same sex marriage in *King& King* we get a more full and quality image of same sex relationship.

The setting was perfect and the illustrations were all pleasant and uplifting. The illustrations conveyed the tone of friendship and respect.

In this story, we find two penguins boys who bonded with each other in their early life and for all intents and purposes became a pair. In the zoo where they lived they were viewed by Mr. Gramzay. He watched them and noticed how they did everything together. Bowed to each other, sang, swam, and walked together.

They constructed a nest as nice as the other pairs. But they never found an egg in it. One day Roy even put a rock in the nest. But still no baby penguin arrived. One day, Mr. Gramzay found an egg that needed care and he slipped it into the nest. Oh what a wonderful surprise the egg hatched and Tango a beautiful penguin girl found herself in procession of two daddies.

For me this was how a story of same sex relations should be conveyed to children. It is a description of an actual event and told in the chronological sequence of a successful relationship, meeting, becoming friends, enjoying things together, and having a child to complete the relationship.

***Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides**

*Middlesex,* a dramatic novel, covers three generations of one family. The lead protagonist and narrator of this story is Cal. In this Pulitzer Prize winning novel we see gender get turned upside down as our protagonist is born a girl and at age fourteen becomes a boy. Cal, a true hermaphrodite, uses time, place and early life to recall his girl years.

The how and why Cal was a genetic aberration is fleshed out in detail through visiting the thoughts and action of parents and grandparents. This journey through time includes flash backs and present time presentation.

The protagonist reveals the gender characterization in a slow methodical way that allows the reader to become interested in the hinted at change of gender. It handles this controversial subject with class and writing skill that reveals Eugenides caliber of writer as high velocity.

My interaction with this novel could be stated this way, I believed it and it changed my opinions concerning many social beliefs that I held previously. When literature can make the reader re-evaluate former beliefs and actually change those beliefs it is obviously powerful.

***Eloise,* by Kay Thompson, illustrated by Hilary Knight**

For my final book concerning gender I have chosen *Eloise.* This book written in 1955 could be one of the first books written that describes a girl as adventurous, upfront, challenging, undaunted, a princess not interested in boys, future relationships or seeking a pure feminine role.

Eloise seeks adventure where she is even if it is a grand hotel. Full of spunk and challenging everything that comes into her view we find her willing to confront problems and solves them with pizzazz.

In her dialog where she imitates her Nanny’s speech, we discover her creative and daring nature.

“Nanny says she would rather I didn’t talk talk talk all the time. She says everything 3 times like Eloise you cawn’t cawn’t cawn’t “. This dialog by Eloise catches the reader with its alliteration and the use of the number 3 which we find often in fairy tales.

Eloise is a new beginning for girls. Even though this book was actually written for an adult audience it has morphed into an inspiration for many children authors. I believe the reason Kay Thompson received no literary awards for the wonderful work is based on the fact of it being written in the fifties and how at first many mothers would not desire the behavior she shows in the book and in the free flowing and humorous illustrations by Hilary Knight.

The book is a stereotype breaker and a gender elevator. Great literature should bring great emotion and Eloise in her adventure through life brings unforgettable laughter with a positive outlook on the strength of girls and their ability to solve problems and solve them well. Eloise solves problems, reacts to situations, converses with skill, and has many insights, not as a boy would but as a strong girl can.