



OWWL LIBRARY SYSTEM

BOOK CHALLENGE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING: THE DAUGHTERS OF YS BY M.T. ANDERSON AND JO RIOUX

INTRODUCTION

Item Reviewed



Title: The Daughters of Ys

Author: M.T. Anderson

Illustrator: Jo Rioux

Publisher: First Second; Illustrated edition (August 11, 2020)

Copies Owned: Seven physical copies are available in the owwl.org catalog at member libraries.

Shelving Location(s): The physical copies of this title are available at member libraries in the “YA Graphic,” “Graphic,” “Nonfiction,” “YA Fiction,” and “Graphic Fiction” sections.

Book Description

"Ys, city of wealth and wonder, has a history of dark secrets. Queen Malgven used magic to raise the great walls that keep Ys safe from the tumultuous sea. But after the queen's inexplicable death, her daughters drift apart. Rozenn, the heir to the throne, spends her time on the moors communing with wild animals, while Dahut, the youngest, enjoys the splendors of royal life and is eager to take part in palace intrigue. When Rozenn and Dahut's bond is irrevocably changed, the fate of Ys is sealed, exposing the monsters that lurk in plain view. M. T. Anderson and Jo Rioux reimagine this classic Breton folktale of love, loss, and rebirth, revealing the secrets that lie beneath the surface."¹

¹ The Daughters of Ys (Graphic Novel) by M.T. Anderson, OWWL Library System Aspen Catalog, <https://search.owwl.org/Record/625094>

Reason for Review

This title was brought to the OWWL Library System Book Challenge Review Committee after a patron complaint at a member library. The patron is asking that the title be moved to the library's adult section because they feel “the depictions of orgies and beheadings are not suitable for the YA section.”

This library’s YA collection serves teens ages 12 to 18.

COMMITTEE REVIEW

Committee Charge

A six-member committee comprised of Member Library Directors, a System Staff member, a System Trustee, and the System Executive Director met on August 31, 2023 to discuss the book's content and identify any actions to respond to challenges for this title.

Committee Discussion

The committee views *The Daughters of Ys* by M.T. Anderson as a young adult adaptation of a Breton folktale.

Justifiably, after reading this book, the committee can understand how some of this graphic novel's depictions could be seen as upsetting for younger or sensitive readers. There is the suggestion of sexual intercourse in several scenes and magical beheadings in others.

The Daughters of Ys fits in with much of the mainstream fantasy media consumed by young adults and adults alike. The depictions align with the darker depictions of folklore and fairy tales and are not unlike Grimm-style fairytales in modern literature.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEWS²

Booklist June 5, 2020

“Based on an old Breton folktale, this graphic adaptation uses rich, warm hues and soft shapes to depict a haggard king; an enchanted, if sinister city; and the titular pair of sisters, who could not be more different. The day Dahut and Rozenn become aware of their father’s corruption, they start on different paths, and the passing of time is artfully depicted in a series of extra-wide, wordless panels. As adults, Rozenn prefers dwelling outdoors, far away from the lavish parties in the city, while Dahut is deeply embroiled in the enchantment keeping the sea from swallowing Ys. When an act of betrayal brings the city to account, the true cost of maintaining the enchantment is revealed and devastation rushes in. Anderson adds compelling depth to the story with just a few details beyond the

² All professional reviews were retrieved on August 31, 2023 from Syndetics Unbound, a catalog enrichment service connected to the OWWL.org online catalog, https://search.owwl.org/Record/625094#unbound_reviews

original tale, and Rioux's lush, dense artwork, full of dynamic figures, swirling lines, dramatic angles, and colors that seem to glow, cultivates a fantastic, magical folk-tale atmosphere. Water figures prominently, of course, and her deep teal waves and curly billows of foam roil menacingly across the pages. This is an old story, but Anderson and Rioux give it vivid new life, and fans of fairy tales will be utterly bewitched. Though this is not directly marketed to teens (likely thanks to some largely obscured nudity and sex), they're the ideal audience here."

From Booklist, Copyright © American Library Association.

Kirkus Reviews May 12, 2020

"An ancient Breton folktale finds new life as a graphic novel. King Gradlon won his wife's hand by murdering her first husband. Upon her mysterious death, their two daughters, Rozenn and Dahut, are sickened by their father's debauchery and consumed by grief. Several pages of wordless panels show the girls growing up and growing apart. Rozenn retreats to the countryside, meets Corentin, a "holy hermit," and falls in love with a fisherman. Dahut commits herself to learning her mother's magic, including seducing, murdering, and sacrificing a string of young men to protect the city. Dahut's ultimate betrayal of her sister brings about the deadly denouement. Anderson drew on multiple sources to retell this story of Ys, a "famed city of pleasures" stolen from the sea and doomed to destruction. Overtones of other tales, from the lost land of Lyonesse to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, echo through the pages of this morality tale. Blood and betrayal permeate the plot while natural sounding dialogue and perfect pacing draw readers along smoothly. Rioux's art adds a suitably Celtic feel, with swirling patterns, medieval costumes, and a red-haired sorceress at its center. While nudity and sexual activity both occur, as do beheadings and drowning, neither the text nor the pictures are particularly explicit. Main characters are white; clothing and textual references indicate contact with Near and Far Eastern nations. Intriguing and accessible, this thought-provoking tale will be new to many. (Graphic fantasy. 16-adult)."

Copyright © Kirkus Reviews.

Publishers Weekly April 20, 2020

"Drawing on Celtic folklore, this haunting graphic novel by Anderson (Feed) pays homage to an ancient Breton myth. Rozenn and Dahut, daughters of the fairy Queen Malgven, are left grieving with their father, King Gradlon, after their mother's death. The king falls into a deep depression, while the girls grow up following different paths: Rozenn avoids her responsibilities as heiress to the throne of the land of Ys, in favor of caring for wildlife (and a certain friendly commoner), whereas Dahut is tasked with keeping their kingdom prosperous through harnessing magic and—unbeknownst to others—the souls of royal suitors whom she lures into her bedroom. But when a mysterious merchant arrives and catches Dahut's eye, both she and Rozenn discover that magic always comes at a hefty price. Anderson's lyric version of the original lore marries different interpretations to focus on the complex relationship between the two sisters, and draws the reader into the eerie mystical world of Ys. Rioux's enchanting classical artwork employs rustic pencils in a romantic style that recalls Emily Carroll, and autumnal colors which harken back to Breton

culture. Readers keen on Celtic mythology will appreciate this whimsical tale with a dark turn, with crossover for Anderson's teen fans likely."
Copyright PWxyz, LLC.

APPROPRIATE AGE LEVEL

The recommended age sets *The Daughters of Ys* as a Young Adult title for ages 13 to 17. Other sources have the age range set to 18 and under³.

In an NPR review of the story, it says, "...this book is both accessible to a wide age range and rich with ideas that will intrigue adults. (Note, however, that due to dark themes, some gore and the fact that the characters have sex, it may be best kept away from immature readers⁴.)"

In the Kirkus review cited above, it suggests this is a title appropriate for ages "16-adult."

OWWL Library System does not offer a recommended age range or title restrictions. We encourage parents and guardians and their children to discuss their reading habits in the context of their goals to determine if this title is appropriate.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Item Location

The committee encourages member libraries to review their graphic novel collections to make sure they take appropriate age-level reading into account. Like any media, comics and graphic novels are written for a variety of audiences. Reviewing appropriate reading levels based on a careful review of publisher recommendations, professional reviews, and library-specific evaluation is critical for crafting an appropriate collection.

With that said, the committee does not feel *The Daughters of Ys* should be moved to an alternate shelving location from where it currently appears in the online catalog. So long as member libraries have a process of carefully considering the shelving location of titles similar to *The Daughters of Ys*, the committee has confidence in member libraries to follow their own shelving practices for selecting the best location for their materials.

Item Copies

OWWL Library System will purchase a copy of this title to be held in its circulating collection. The System will also purchase a copy for our shared OverDrive collection.

³ Reading Level retrieved from Syndetics Unbound,
https://search.owwl.org/Record/625094#unbound_readinglevel

⁴ NPR, Feeling Deluged By News? Let 'The Daughters Of Ys' Wash Over You,
<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/16/902632771/feeling-deluged-by-news-let-the-daughters-of-ys-wash-over-you>

Concerned Parent Actions

A minor's access to materials is the responsibility of that minor's parents or guardians. According to the American Library Association:

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize libraries and their governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As "Libraries: An American Value" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and library governing bodies should not use rating systems to inhibit a minor's access to materials.⁵

To aid parents and guardians in addressing title access in OWWL Library System's OverDrive collection, the default collection can be changed under account settings.

To accomplish this, log in to an OverDrive account at <https://owwl.overdrive.com/> > click on My Account > Settings > Content Preferences > Audience(s). An account can be limited to All Audiences, Juvenile, Young Adult, General Adult, and Mature Adult.

Physical collections cannot be changed to restrict a minor's access to materials. Instead, please follow the American Library Association's recommendation noted above.

CONCLUSION

Future Reconsideration Requests

This report shall appropriately respond to any challenge or request for reconsideration of *The Daughters of Ys* by M. T. Anderson until September 13, 2025. At that time, should a formal challenge or request for reconsideration be received by the OWWL Library System, the Executive Director shall once again form a committee to review the title and use this documentation and all other professional material as the foundation of that discussion.

System Policies and Resolutions

For additional information on the selection of System materials, please review the Selection and

⁵ Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>

Reconsideration of Materials Policy and the Resolution on the Freedom to Read by visiting <https://owwl.org/freedomtoread>.

Report Approval

OWWL Library System's Board of Trustees reviewed and approved this report on September 13, 2023.

Approved: September 13, 2023