Fruitcake Weather: Queer/Disabled Community in Truman Capote’s "A Christmas Memory"

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Abstract

This essay argues for a politically-inflected re-evaluation of Truman Capote’s classic holiday story “A Christmas Memory.” It proposes, in contrast to prevailing readings of the tale as a de-politicized, nostalgic children’s story, that the text makes a compelling case for politically engaged, resistant community building by its disabled and queer characters, an important action rooted in the shared political interests of queer and disabled people.

Keywords: intellectual disability, sexuality, community action, nostalgia, literary criticism

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Full Text:

HTML

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v34i1.3451

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Volume 1 through Volume 20, no. 3 of Disability Studies Quarterly is archived on the Knowledge Bank site; Volume 20, no. 4 through the present can be found on this site under Archives.
This essay argues for a politically-inflected re-evaluation of Truman Capote’s classic holiday story “A Christmas Memory.” It proposes, in contrast to prevailing readings of the tale as a de-politicized, nostalgic children’s story, that the text makes a compelling case for politically engaged, resistant community building by its disabled and queer characters, an important action rooted in the shared political interests of queer and disabled people. Keywords: intellectual disability, sexuality, community action, nostalgia, literary criticism. Keywords. intellectual disability; sexuality; commun... A Christmas Memory: Truman Capote This story, ‘A Christmas Memory,’ is a nonfiction re minence of one fond memory of Capotes’. A distant relative of Truman Capote’s, Sook Faulk, took care of him through his childhood. Sook dubbed Truman with the nickname ‘Buddy,’ after a former best friend. During one November morning, when Buddy was seven, Sook decided it was fruitcake weather. She called him to get their buggy and her hat to go pick pecans. Queenie, their terrier who has survived illness and snakebites, follows them on their errand. Capote’s A Christmas Memory, in the most true and precious of ways, touches us with a semi-autobiographical story of holiday traditions, Christmas giving, the true meaning of holiday spirit, and the memories that hold us together, even years after the loss of a dear friend. This story was originally published in Mademoiselle magazine in December, 1956, and was later published by Random House in stand alone form in 1966. Once you have it in hand, click here to read along while listening to Truman Capote himself read it on a recording of This American Life. So in this chilly November, while making preparations for the holidays, write a letter or call an old friend, open up photo albums of years past, or make a new Christmas memory to hold dear as the years pass by. Hark, hear ye: Twitter.