



Imaginary Friends (Shaping Clay)

Jr., Michael Scott Monje

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“The strange and terrible saga of Clay Dillon begins with the books *Nothing Is Right* and *Imaginary Friends*, and also includes *Defiant* (which takes place when Clay is 30 years old). The whole saga should be required reading for anyone who works in any capacity with the sort of young people who are often described as *gifted, disturbed, troubled, oppositional, defiant, or exceptional...*

In a way, Clay himself is an “imaginary friend” to the adults in his life, insofar as when they look at him they don’t see him but instead see an imaginary child, a product of their own misconceptions and projections who has no resemblance (except in the external physical sense) to the real Clay Dillon. Every adult in his life is consistently one hundred percent wrong, all of the time, about Clay’s motivations, needs, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions... They can imagine neither the extent and nature of his difficulties, nor the complexity and sophistication of his thinking.

In this respect, *Imaginary Friends* constitutes a warning to any adults – especially those in “helping” professions – who are so arrogant as to presume that they can truly understand the realities of their young charges.” – Nick Walker, from the Afterward to the book

"I started reading *Imaginary Friends* in the evening, big mistake. Dawn was just breaking when I finally finished, tears in my eyes, wanting more. A compelling and riveting story of a young boy trying to grow up different in a world that has no space, time, or words for such difference."

- Karen Nakamura, author of *A Disability of the Soul* and *Deaf in Japan*

“On the surface, it is a breathtaking pageant of misunderstanding turned violent with pain and frustration. But behind that process is a larger truth, leaving hints of identity in its spoor as it

claws through Clay, toward the frightening freedom of being openly known. Monje is creating more than a series of novels showing the inner experience of growing up different from others. This is a novel that inverts the stories of authority and centers Clay so firmly in his own narrative that it begins to loosen the knots of the lies we all grew up with. *Imaginary Friends* is a brickbat in an ongoing war fought just beneath the layers, just out of sight... for now."

- Sparrow Rose Jones, author of *No You Don't: Essays from an Unstrange Mind*

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