Fantasy Literature
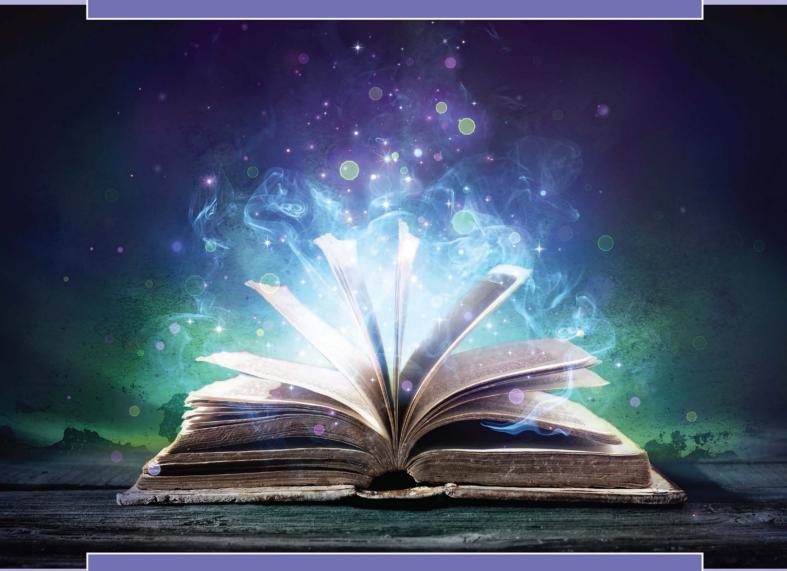
Challenging Genres

Mark A. Fabrizi (Ed.)

Fantasy Literature

CRITICAL LITERACY TEACHING SERIES:
CHALLENGING AUTHORS AND GENRES

Volume 8

This series explores in separate volumes major authors and genres through a critical literacy lens that seeks to offer students opportunities as readers and writers to embrace and act upon their own empowerment. Each volume will challenge authors (along with examining authors that are themselves challenging) and genres as well as challenging norms and assumptions associated with those authors' works and genres themselves. Further, each volume will confront teachers, students, and scholars by exploring all texts as politically charged mediums of communication. The work of critical educators and scholars will guide each volume, including concerns about silenced voices and texts, marginalized people and perspectives, and normalized ways of being and teaching that ultimately dehumanize students and educators.

Fantasy Literature

Challenging Genres

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MARK A. FABRIZI

INTRODUCTION

Challenging Fantasy Literature

Over the years, fantasy literature has attracted a body of scholarly criticism devoted to illuminating works of fantasy not unlike critical analyses of classic and canonical literary works. Critical analyses of fantasy are devoted to uncovering themes and patterns (Croft, 2009, 2010, 2011; Shippey 2002), narrative complexities (Bullard, 2011; Northrup, 2004; Swinfen, 1984), archetypal representations (Brown, 2006; Hiley, 2004; Rawls, 2008; Riga, 2008), sub-categories of the fantasy genre (Clute & Grant, 1997; Le Lievre, 2003; Stableford, 2005), cultural and linguistic commentary (Comoletti & Drout, 2001; Fredrick & McBride, 2007; Livingston, 2012; Shippey, 1977), and other philosophical inquires (Fife, 2006; Flieger, 2007, 2009; Hull, 1986) taken up by the authors of fantasy literature. As evidenced by the (growing) body of scholarly work in fantasy as well as the enormous and enduring commercial success of fantasy novels and films, it is clear that the genre of fantasy occupies a significant role in American culture. The purpose of this book is to demonstrate the value of using various works of fantasy in the classroom through discussions of the depth and complexity of various texts as well as their potential to elicit discussion and analysis among high school students through a critical literacy framework.

Fantasy has a great deal to offer the critical reader in terms of complexity and relevance. One of the most interesting aspects of fantasy literature is that it tends to ask the "big" questions of life, forcing students to consider such topics as the nature of good and evil, universal morality, the afterlife, heroism and the quality of one's character, the role of the individual in society, and the importance of cultural diversity. The fantasy novels discussed in this book address these issues and more in the context of rich, compelling narratives. Whether the text offers definitive answers or merely illustrates the complexity of the issues, students of fantasy can find numerous opportunities to engage with the text in writing—challenging the author, pondering the questions raised, acknowledging the author's viewpoint, or analyzing the diversity of views presented among several of the texts.

Additionally, works of fantasy provide an escape from our often prosaic existences. The concept of "escape" in literature, as discussed by J.R.R. Tolkien in his landmark essay "On Fairy-Stories" (1939), is often used in opposition to "interpret," where the former is meant to indicate superficiality, immaturity, vulgarity, and ignorance, and the latter refers to complexity, maturity, aesthetic refinement, and erudition. Tolkien attempted to divest from the term "escape" the disparagement and contempt which it endured (and still endures, to some extent,

today) in connection to literature, and reinvest the word with a connotation of respectful appreciation for describing the way a text can provide release from banality into the supernatural—a world of surprise and invention quite beyond our own.

This last point emphasizes the element of unfamiliarity inherent in many fantasy works. Not only is the *literary* landscape of the fantasy genre unusual, but the *fictional* landscape of the fantasy world of the novel is often unique and quite unlike our own. While this point may seem self-evident, it has interesting repercussions in the classroom, where students are learning to decode the complex literary conventions of canonical texts. Students reading William Golding's (1954) novel *Lord of the Flies*, for example, may have difficulty comprehending the symbolic interplay among the boys on the island, but this task is much easier given the fact that those boys interact in a world without magic, where the physics within the literary representation is understood and shared by the reader, where no trolls, witches, or dragons exist, where the land itself is not an active participant in the action, and where words have no power of themselves to change physical reality. In the world of fantasy, where all of the above elements may in fact have a basis in the reality of the text, students are forced to read the text more closely, participating more actively in the author-reader transaction (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) in order to understand this foreign world which may not conform to the literary or mundane conventions they have become used to. The students' expectations of their own reality, and of the literary reality they are just coming to understand, will not serve them in constructing meaning if they do not engage intellectually and reflectively with the text.

The literary depth of fantasy works, as mentioned briefly in the paragraphs above, represents the temperate conditions which allow a teacher to plant the seeds of critical literacy skills in the fertile fields of student minds with a reasonable hope that their efforts will bear fruit. Character complexity, thematic depth, personal relevance, stylistic excellence, and a compelling story are necessary elements that comprise high-quality literature. These chapters will explore the extent to which the works of fantasy discussed herein contain these important elements and address some of the key components of critical literacy that enable students to acquire the skills of the critically literate reader, thus making the texts appropriate for use in the classroom to engender critical literacy skills.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical literacy has been an important pedagogical practice for many years, having its origins in Louise Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) transactional theory of literary criticism which was developed in the late 1930s. Conceptions of critical literacy have expanded since its initial articulation by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970, 1976) in the 1970s. Some researchers view critical literacy as deriving from Marxist, feminist, and postmodern intellectual positions (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993), while others argue that no clear, identifiable position defines critical literacy (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). Still others (Comber, 1993; Donald, 1993; Grande,

2004) skirt the issue, identifying variations among critical literacy perspectives, differentiating them according to the types of questions that drive interpretation and analysis, instead of defining the theory itself (Green, 2001). However, despite one's definition (or not) of critical literacy, common ideas such as viewing literacy as a social and/or political practice, repositioning readers as active or even resistant readers, "problematizing" texts, and creating in readers an awareness of multiple perspectives from which to view texts help to clarify what is meant by the term (Green, 2001).

A central premise of Freire's (1970, 1976) theory of critical literacy is that education is not neutral, that the purpose of education is human liberation through what Freire termed a "dialogical approach," the goal of which is critical thinking, leading ultimately toward participants gaining an understanding of the social and political forces that impact their world, an understanding that would help them gain control over their lives (Wallerstein, 1986). According to Freire's theories, "true knowledge evolves from the interaction of reflection and action" (Wallerstein, 1986, p. 34). Freire termed this interaction *praxis*. This is particularly important in that research on reading and literacy suggests that marginalized adolescent readers tend to "give the text authority, expecting it to provide its meaning unequivocally and effortlessly, rather than engaging in an active, dialogic exchange with the text" (Freebody & Freiberg, 2011, p. 442), a tendency which resistant reading, such as that advocated through Freire's concept of praxis, may help overcome. Essentially, the concept of resistant reading is embodied in the following statements: "I am not going to buy into your position as a matter of course. Still, for a fair understanding and assessment of that position, I will try to get at your underlying assumptions by reading, questioning, and considering your text carefully." An immature reader may not even be aware that resistant reading is even a possibility, much less how it may be accomplished, but critical theory gives them explicit permission to do so. Thus, critical literacy is a literacy of empowerment.

At the most basic level, teachers of critical literacy are trying to create an awareness of the relationship among language, ideology, and power (Kempe, 1993). They question whose interests are served through their curricular and pedagogical decisions, and even attempt to challenge the hidden assumptions that are intended to assimilate students into the hegemonic culture through socialization (Moss, 2001). They address social oppression, especially in the areas of gender, class, race, and ethnicity (Grande, 2004). Finally, they challenge the "banking" model of education in which information is "deposited" in students who are expected to retain it indefinitely—or at least until the exam—and instead favor praxis which promotes the idea that knowledge and learning are social constructions that are best realized through critical interactions between teacher and student, neither of whom is recognized as the absolute authority in the classroom (Freire, 1970).

In its most political interpretation, critical literacy implies that the process of gaining literacy (i.e., learning to read and write) should be done as part of the process of becoming conscious of being in some ways "constructed" by the social and political hegemony represented in one's historical era (Anderson & Irvine,

1993). In other words, one's growing aptitude for literacy must be linked to one's understanding of the impact of specific contemporary power relations, and critical literacy involves analyzing and questioning the ways a text positions the reader within the social and political hegemony. If one accepts the underlying assumption of critical literacy—that the concepts of power and social/political hegemony drive the writer who consciously or unconsciously strives to either perpetuate or subvert the social hierarchy—then critical literacy removes "meaning" from the author and text and re-positions the student/reader more centrally in a meaning-making dialogue as they work to uncover the "hidden" agendas of texts, agendas that the authors may not even be aware exist. According to McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), "critical literacy involves the reader's understanding of the author's intent, bias, and purpose for writing" (p. 62) by "disrupting a common situation or understanding, … examining multiple viewpoints, … focusing on sociopolitical issues, … [and] taking action to promote social justice" (pp. 17-18) with the ultimate goal of readers becoming "critics of everyday life" (p. 23), reading the world with a critical edge, with an eye toward changing it by first recognizing, then questioning, extant political and social power structures.

It is important to note that critical literacy does not *necessitate* hegemonic subversion on the part of the reader just as feminism does not entail a requirement on the part of women to join the workforce, for example. Both offer only an informed and permissible choice. Some readers, while recognizing the political agenda of a particular text, may choose not to act any more than simply resisting the reading the author presents. Nor does critical literacy consider author bias inherently immoral. In fact, critical literacy presumes that all texts have bias to some degree and that bias is normal and unavoidable (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Critical literacy attempts to draw the attention of the reader to the idea of bias and help them uncover it in texts, requiring that the reader understand the power relationship between the author and the reader, not just decode the text.

Each of the following chapters in this book offers ways for readers to challenge fantasy texts, helping teachers develop critical literacy skills in their students through the genre of fantasy, building on the already-established popularity of fantasy to empower students through a skills-based curriculum. The texts discussed vary from children's literature to young adult to decidedly adult novels, and the approaches each scholar employs are similarly varied. Teachers seeking advice to bring fantasy into their classrooms at any level, from elementary through graduate school, will find a wealth of information and ideas in the following pages.

OVERVIEW

This collection begins with a discussion of two bookend fantasy texts for adults: Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*. High fantasy is an inherently conservative genre usually concerned with the restoration or preservation of a status quo in the form of patriarchal monarchy or autocracy. These works chronicle a struggle between a transformative force and those— usually male, white, and heterosexual—who oppose it. Women and ethnic or

sexual minorities may assist the heroes but rarely reform the power structures in which they have no place. Through two genre standards—*The Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*—the authors examine how racism, sexism, and heterosexism pervade modern fantasy and chart a possible evolution towards a more progressive future.

Chapter two explores ways the main character (Arha) of Ursula K. Le Guin's fantasy novel, *The Tombs of Atuan*, is an example of adolescent resistance to learning. Arha's tumultuous growth and radical transformation serves as an allegory for learning through self-awareness that reflects the ideas of the ancient philosopher Plato as well as those of the modern psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. By using these supplementary texts to decode Le Guin's allegory, students can compare the ideas of all three authors to their own learning experiences, building self-awareness of their own learning habits, developing empathy for the difficulties of students and teachers alike, and finding their own voices in their communities.

Chapter three connects J. K. Rowling's works with those of political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. Manipulation of a population through fear, preservation of hegemonic control through institutionalized oppression, and framing ethical choices through a long view that ignores small evils done along the way—these are concepts attributed to sixteenth century Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli, and they pervade the Harry Potter books, informing the decisions of Hogwarts students and professors as they fight against the specter of Voldemort's despotic rule. Through problematizing the text and questioning the decisions of the characters through the lens of Machiavelli's philosophical text, *The Prince*, a critical reader can explore issues of social justice similar to those impacting contemporary society.

Chapter four is unique among the essays included here in that it offers a fantasy literature syllabus resource from which teachers can draw to fit the needs of their course and their students. This chapter is an aid for teachers contemplating designing either a full course on the intersection of critical thinking, fantasy literature, and religious studies or at least material for one or two lessons along these lines in a course in religious studies or English. The chapter surveys eight topics that might be addressed, including (1) defining key terms, (2) colonialism, (3) capitalism, (4) perspectivism and pragmatism, (5) feminism and queer theory, (6) interrogating the self, (7) royal ideology and the monomyth, and (8) critical pedagogy and reflexivity.

Chapter five examines fairy tales using feminist criticism. Students often expect the women in these narratives to possess few choices, but this reductive mindset leads to students seeing the tales as mindless entertainment or as sinister sources of gender indoctrination. The chapter discusses an educational approach to fairy tales that reveals how notions of heteronormativity in the stories are produced by social codes and reader responses rather than inherent elements in the genre. Students learn to see fairy tales as cultural fantasies that continue to evolve as audience needs change.

In chapter six, the authors identify a growing trend of female protagonists who show strength and agency in the fantasy genre, particularly strong female

protagonists of color. In this chapter, they explain why *Fledgling* by Octavia Butler (2005) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1987) would be suitable for critical literacy discussions in high school classrooms. The authors acknowledge the perspectives of feminist poststructuralism, queer theory, and critical pedagogy and also discuss scholarship related to fantasy literature. Additionally, they discuss how television shows, parallel texts, and popular culture references can be used in conjunction with these novels to encourage critical literacy skills.

Chapter seven addresses the way Beatrix Potter's children's fantasy literature frequently enforces gender and class expectations and marginalizes various characters. From the standpoint of critical literacy, Potter's books are useful texts to study at the collegiate level, particularly because of their popularity and their intended audience. This chapter will approach *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck* (1908), *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* (1908), *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909), and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910) using Edward H. Behrman's categories of reading multiple texts and reading from a resistant perspective to critically analyze systems of power and the marginalization they produce.

In chapter eight, the author examines how social class is depicted in award-winning fantasy books for children and analyzes these depictions through a critical literacy lens. The analysis suggests that these books 1) position the lives of affluent people as more desirable and important than poor and working class lives, and 2) present class status as a function of an individual's virtues or shortcomings, arguing that such depictions reinforce dominant discourses about class in the contemporary United States and could be potentially damaging to children's class identities unless they read from a critical literacy stance.

In his notable lecture-turned-essay "On Fairy-Stories," J.R.R. Tolkien (1939) ruminates on the origins, audiences, purposes, and benefits of fantasy. Chapter nine reflects upon Tolkien's musings, then unites them with Marxist literary theory and a cherished young adult literature text in the context of the contemporary classroom. As a whole, this chapter asserts that students can use the Marxist critical perspective to identify, analyze, and evaluate the sources of and responses to the two central forms of institutionalized oppression in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Through these exercises in the wizarding world, students will be better equipped to question, scrutinize, and enact change in our world.

Chapter ten explores how Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson's epic fantasy series, The Wheel of Time, can be used in a social justice classroom to explore power and privilege in American society. This fantastical work dramatically portrays how identity markers provide individuals with social, political, and economic privilege that are neither earned nor inherited. Through its depiction of magic, The Wheel of Time books illuminate the inequities of power and privilege in American society. By exploring how society celebrates power, and denigrates and exploits the powerless, Jordan and Sanderson offer insight into the world in which our students live.

Chapter eleven describes how a critical literacy framework allowed a group of preservice English teachers to actively question and challenge educational

traditions as portrayed in the Harry Potter series. The authors discuss the experiences of one participant whose interest in the titular character of the series motivated her to explore research about at-risk students and then apply her findings in a familiar and meaningful context, resulting in a year-long inquiry into cultural capital, funds of knowledge, and deficit models of education. Fantasy literature of this kind can nurture the development of preservice teachers into "transformative intellectuals" who develop critical thinking habits that "unite the language of critique with the language of possibility" (Giroux, 2013, p. 196) as they prepare to be active agents of change in educational institutions.

Chapter twelve examines fantasy texts from three very different cultures. Despite the growing popularity of fantasy studies, little has been said about the roles of material objects in fantasy narratives which can be used to advance the plot, shape identities, and determine relationships among characters. Most importantly, they help generate communities, both within the text and in the consensus reality. This chapter addresses this knowledge gap with a comparative close reading of three popular fantasy novels: the British *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (J.K. Rowling), the German *Reckless* (Cornelia Funke), and the Russian *The Stranger* (Max Frei). An understanding of the reciprocally transformative relationship between objects and subjects in fantasy narratives adds to the development of critical consciousness among students and readers.

Chapter thirteen examines a well-loved children's book. Due to its vivid illustrations and short page count, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is often recommended as a children's book; however, a critical look from the perspectives of students in eighth grade reveals issues students themselves face as they embark upon the transition from middle to high school, exploring how and why people make new friends and the sacrifices often made in friendships. Through perspective sharing via focus groups, dramatization, poetry, and song lyrics in an inquiry learning environment, students explore viewpoints of different characters in a story or different people in a real-life situation.

Chapter fourteen closes this collection with a description of how the author uses a novella-length fanfiction work entitled *The Hollow Men* by author "Lettered" as a way to introduce college students to key service learning concepts such as reflection, reciprocity, and community engagement. The chapter includes a primer section introducing the genre of fanfiction, a close reading of the specific text, and a case study describing how the author used the piece in class to bring up complex themes that included race, culture, socioeconomic status, global politics, and gender, which helped ready students for their field service projects in a diverse community.

Taken together, these chapters present a broad view of the applications of fantasy literature to the classroom, challenging the genre and the visions of represented authors and exploring their value to contemporary students. We hope these selections provide a new perspective on fantasy and that they provoke further investigations into the use of fantasy texts in the classroom.

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PART ONE

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES

NEIL MCGARRY AND DANIEL RAVIPINTO

1. IN THE SHADOW OF THE STATUS QUO

The Forgotten in The Lord of the Rings *and* A Song of Ice and Fire

High fantasy is an inherently conservative genre, often revolving around the preservation or restoration of a status quo, usually in the form of a patriarchal monarchy or autocracy, or what author Charlie Stross (2010) once described as a 'benign tyranny':

> [T]he traditional format of a high fantasy novel is that some source of disruption threatens to destabilize the land; it is up to the hero (usually it is a 'he') to set things right and restore the order of benign tyranny to the world. Fantasy, in short, is frequently consolatory, and I don't get on with it. (para. 12)

Fantasy fiction is based on an assumption that the old ways are inherently good, and that the power structures that are to be protected or restored are ultimately best for all people. Many seminal works of fantasy are suffused with a romantic vision of earlier ages, a melancholy longing for better days, and the certain knowledge that the current generation is but a pale shadow of greater forefathers. Those that came before simply knew better, and the restoration of their ways is something to be celebrated. The future will be at its best when it is most like the past. As Stross notes, such works are indeed frequently consolatory—they encourage the comforting embrace of tradition and the preservation of the known.

High fantasy frequently chronicles the struggle between a transformative, conquering force understood to be evil and the heroes who stand against it. These saviors embody privilege; they are almost always white, heterosexual, and (as Stross notes) male. Women and ethnic or sexual minorities may end up assisting the heroes, but those that do rarely question the societal structures they fight to preserve or restore, nor do they attempt to change those structures for their benefit or for the benefit of those like them. Such people are the forgotten of modern fantasy, lost in the shadow of the status quo, made powerless and invisible by the very society they strive to protect.

These themes can be found in countless works of high fantasy, but we have chosen to limit our examination to two works that bookend the genre: J.R.R. Tolkien's (1954, 1955) *The Lord of the Rings* and George R.R. Martin's (1996) *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. Tolkien's seminal work paved the way for high fantasy in popular fiction. Many notable authors including Dennis McKiernan, Terry Brooks, and Martin himself point to *The Lord of the Rings* as a major influence that, through its impact on both the publishing industry and the reading public, made their own works possible (Hajela, 2001). In many ways, *A Song of Ice and*

Fire is something of a response to *The Lord of the Rings*. For example, while both series deal with issues of power and leadership, Martin is of the opinion that Tolkien might have gone further:

> "You see that at the end of the ['Lord of the Rings'] books, when Sauron has been defeated and Aragorn is king," Martin told the Advance. "It's easy to type, 'he ruled wisely and well,' but what does that constitute?
>
> "What was his tax policy? How did the economy function? What about the class system?" (Steussey, 2015, para. 6-7)

While both of these excellent works deserve their place in literary history, the evolution from Tolkien to Martin might be taken further, resulting in a truly progressive fantasy where the normally marginalized—women, homosexuals, people of color—may step out from the shadow of traditional heroes and become heroes themselves.

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The hero of high fantasy is traditionally male and usually begins the story as a young man. The story then follows his development as he comes into his power—a *bildungsroman*, a coming of age. The hero may be of questionable parentage, an orphan who does not know his origins, but he is almost never a member of a persecuted minority in terms of race or sexuality. In many cases, the hero is later revealed to be of noble or even royal lineage; thus, he is often *more* privileged than even he himself knew. Examples are easy to come by: Rand al'Thor of *The Eye of the World* (Jordan, 1990) is Ta'veren and the Dragon Reborn; Shea Ohmsford of *The Sword of Shannara* (Brooks, 1977) is a descendant of the King of the Elves; Harry Potter of the eponymous series by J. K. Rowling (1997) is not only the child of famous parents but unknowingly becomes a hero while still a baby; Garion of *The Belgariad* (Eddings, 1982) was a scion of the first King of Riva. Counterexamples exist—the dark-skinned Ged of Ursula Le Guin's (1968) *Earthsea* or the heroines of Marion Zimmer Bradley's (1982) *The Mists of Avalon*—but they are exceptions that prove the rule.

The hero begins his journey with the peace of his normal existence shaken—the status quo disturbed. He must flee the idyllic, protected home he has known and journey through danger towards an unknown future. He is not alone on his journey. He may have a guide, often in the form of a protective elder such as Tolkien's Gandalf (Campbell, 1949). Other fantasy works have echoed the elder-mentor represented in Gandalf, such as Allanon in the *Shannara* series, or Moiraine Damodred and al'Lan Mandragoran in *The Wheel of Time* (Jordan, 1990). The hero may also have other companions, though these secondary characters are often defined in relation to him—a friend, a lover, a rival—and they are often not beneficiaries of the land's power structures to the same extent as he himself.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo finds himself the unlikely bearer of a dark legacy, the One Ring. Danger comes to his home in the Shire in the form of the Nazgûl, and Frodo must flee before he is discovered by Sauron's minions. He is

led on this journey by the wizard Gandalf, and is accompanied by Pippin, Merry and, of course, the redoubtable Samwise Gamgee. Frodo himself is essentially landed gentry, comfortable in the inheritance left to him by his uncle, and the master of Bag End. Merry and Pippin, second-cousins to Frodo, are hobbits of good parentage, though not quite as good as Frodo himself. Samwise, meanwhile, is Frodo's gardener, most definitely not as wealthy or as well born as Frodo. All four are good, simple, salt-of-the-earth folk who love nothing more than food, family, and a good drink.

All four characters—whether well-born or common—are invested in the status quo, their quest an attempt to preserve the idyllic lifestyle of the Shire. They have nothing to gain from the victory of the West but everything to lose in its defeat. This is depicted in the Scouring of the Shire (Tolkien, 1955, pp. 300-327), in which an industrial world, ushered in by the defeated Saruman, invades and transforms the hobbits' home. The true victory of these heroes is the restoration of the world they left behind.

A Song of Ice and Fire, meanwhile, subverts but still reinforces many of these tropes. Jon Snow, in particular, embodies several elements of the classic high-fantasy hero. He is, ostensibly, a bastard, brought home by his putative father, Lord Eddard Stark. Lord Stark refuses to provide details about the identity of Jon's mother, and it is widely believed that Jon's heredity might be even higher than a son of Winterfell (Haglund, 2014). He may, in fact, be the secret child of Rhaegar Targaryen and Eddard's sister, Lyanna Stark. If this is true, Jon is not only of noble lineage (guaranteed by his Stark blood) but is secret royalty.

Jon eventually goes to the Wall, following the footsteps of his uncle Benjen by joining the Night's Watch, which guards the realm from the dangers—both mundane and supernatural—of the north. In doing so, he becomes a comrade to the thieves, rapists, and murderers who have been conscripted by the Night's Watch as punishment for their crimes. All are obviously lesser than the nobly born Jon, even given his nominal bastard heritage. Even those whose offenses are minor, like Satin (whose crime was working as a prostitute) or Sam (a nobleman exiled by his disapproving father), are presented as less heroic than Jon. Sam is fat and inept at weaponry, and Satin is tainted with possible homosexuality. Thus, from the beginning, Jon Snow is already better than the men he accepts as his brothers. The other men of the Watch accept this without real objection, and the Watch commander quickly becomes a mentor and father-figure to Jon, grooming him for command and even giving him the sword that was meant for his own son.

Facing such heroes are the enemies of the status quo, represented as evil and transformative forces. In *The Lord of the Rings*, these forces are led by Sauron, Lord of Barad-dûr and master of the One Ring that is the very symbol of doom. In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the evil manifests as the Others, demons of ice and snow who use the dead as their soldiers and who threaten to bring endless winter to the southern lands protected by the Wall. These forces are obviously not merely destructive; they do not leave a void in their wake. Instead they transform all they touch, a process that is presented respectively by Tolkien and Martin as both perverse and disturbing.

In *The Lord of the Rings,* Gandalf tells Frodo about what will happen if Sauron should triumph: "'The Enemy still lacks one thing to give him strength and knowledge to beat down all resistance, break down the last defenses, and cover all the lands in a second darkness. He lacks the One Ring'" (Tolkien, 1954a, p. 56). The first darkness to which Gandalf obliquely refers was dispelled by the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, and the name of that coalition itself gives away the nostalgia for a lost world that suffuses Tolkien's work.

In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the consequences of a victory by the Others is described to Brandon Stark: "'They swept over holdfasts and cities and kingdoms, felled heroes and armies by the score, riding their pale horses and leading armies of the slain. All the swords of men could not stay their advance, and even maidens and suckling babes found no pity in them'" (Martin, 1996, p. 213). In the wake of this inexorable tide of transformation lies a changed world, one covered in darkness (in Tolkien) and cold (in Martin). This perversion of the known must therefore be fought with all of the forces that can be mustered on the side of good and light.

The respective forces of evil are, interestingly, also led by figures that are only *nominally* male, who claim manhood but are no longer masculine in any substantial way. Sauron no longer has a body, having lost his in the Fall of Númenor, and appears only as a giant, disembodied eye:

> Sauron was not of mortal flesh, and though he was robbed now of that shape in which had wrought so great an evil, so that he could never again appear fair to the eyes of Men, yet his spirit arose out of the deep and passed as a shadow and a black wind over the sea, and came back to Middle-earth and to Mordor that was his home. There he took up again his great Ring in Barad-dûr, and dwelt there, dark and silent, until he wrought himself a new guise, an image of malice and hatred made visible; and the Eye of Sauron the Terrible few could endure. (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 336-337)

The Others are clearly sentient creatures, but are most assuredly not human. They increase their numbers through the sacrifice of male children by wildlings (lesser men who live in the frozen north), as we learn after the death of Craster, a wildling who "gives his sons to the wood":

> "I'll be your wife, like I was Craster's. Please, ser crow. He's a boy, just like Nella said he'd be. If you don't take him, they will."
> "They?" said Sam.
> "The boy's brothers," said the old woman on the left. "Craster's son. The white cold's rising out there, crow. I can feel it in my bones. These poor old bones don't lie. They'll be here soon, the sons." (Martin, 2000, p. 380)

Both Sauron and the Others are ostensibly male, but they do not desire women nor father children, and are essentially emasculated and thus transformed, as are the evils they birth. Such metamorphoses gain an almost talismanic quality in both works, perversions of the right and known. They are embodiments of time, of transfiguration, of inevitability and thus to be feared.

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The heroes, in contrast, embody all that men should be. Aragorn is promised the hand of Arwen Evenstar if he should regain his rightful kingdom, and Jon Snow is required to start a sexual relationship with the wildling Ygritte in order to deceive his enemies and protect the Wall. We see that heroes embrace a heteronormative model of male sexuality from which the villains are excluded.

When evil is defeated and the hero's journey is complete, there is no question what they must then do: restore the world to older, and thus better, ways. In Middle-earth this means the return of the Reunited Kingdom under Aragorn's rule. In Westeros it will presumably be the restoration of the Targaryen dynasty. These triumphs will bring almost nothing to those who have journeyed with and fought for the hero. After the fall of Sauron the hobbits return to the Shire and take up their previous lives, their own lots hardly improved. Ultimately, they are faced with the hero's struggle in miniature, and the restoration of yet another status quo in the Scouring of the Shire. If the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros are ultimately saved, Jon's fellows on the Wall will still be criminals and outcasts. No better future awaits them.

The best the hero's companions can hope for is a return to where they began. The new order ultimately offers them nothing.

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The worlds of both Tolkien and Martin are crafted with care and detail, each with a long, storied history. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the most ancient days of Middle-earth are bathed in the light of the Trees, when the Children of Ilúvatar awoke; the roots of Westeros in *A Song of Ice and Fire* are deep in the Age of Heroes, when Lann the Clever stole gold from the sun to brighten his hair, and Bran the Builder constructed the great castle Winterfell.

Each of these worlds also contains a once-great civilization now lost to fire and water. For Tolkien, this is Númenor, greatest of the realms of men, a gift from the gods themselves in return for service against evil. The Númenoreans were the pinnacle of humanity: taller, wiser, longer-lived, and stronger of body. In the end they were seduced by Sauron into betraying the gods, who responded by destroying their island home and sending them into exile. For Martin, the lost homeland is Valyria, a grand and ancient empire ruled by sorcerous dragonlords with purple eyes and gold and silver hair. They crafted items of unmatched strength and beauty—until the Doom came, leaving nothing of Valyria but a smoking ruin, its people dead or scattered.

Both Middle-earth and Westeros resonate to the loss of these lands. The Númenoreans did not all perish and those who escaped the Fall founded the great kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor, and their descendants—Faramir, Denethor, and Aragorn among them—are prominent in *The Lord of the Rings*. In *A Song of Ice and Fire,* Aegon the Conqueror and his descendants survived the Doom to found the mighty Targaryen dynasty, which would rule Westeros for centuries. In both works, the survivors of the lost empires are greater than their lesser descendants who are themselves greater than the people they come to dominate. The

Númenoreans are depicted as almost being comparable to the Maiar, as Sam notes of Faramir, "'You have an air, sir, that reminds me of, of—well, wizards, of Gandalf …'" to which Faramir replies, "'Maybe you discern from far away the air of Númenor'" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 327).

The Freehold of Valyria is also presented as a place that produced wonders, some of which still exist in the present day, such as the family sword of House Stark: "It had been forged in Valyria, before the Doom had come to the Freehold, when the ironsmiths had worked their metal with spells as well as hammers. Four hundred years old it was, and as sharp as the day it was forged" (Martin, 1996, p. 21).

These tales of lost homelands and of a great people now diminished suffuse both *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* with a sense of melancholic romance. Both worlds are clearly in decline, now in twilight, long after the dawn of greater ages. Because of this, the men of the past are undeniably greater than their poor descendants, both in their achievements and as individuals. These world-building elements reinforce the notion of restoring the past as something good and proper and a future of change as frightening and evil.

The Return of the King, the third part of *The Lord of the Rings*, chronicles the return of the united kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor under the leadership of Aragorn, heir to Númenor. No one—human, elf, or dwarf— questions whether or not this restoration is proper, necessary, or just. The only character to object is Denethor, Steward of Gondor, whose line has reigned for centuries. Since he is portrayed as clearly mad (he burns himself alive not long after), his objections are ignored. As George R.R. Martin himself notes, "He ruled wisely and well" is a glossing-over of what will most likely be a challenging transition, but Aragorn is never shown as less than a noble man who both does well and does good. In this way Gandalf, who orchestrates Aragorn's rise to power, is much more a reactionary than a reformer. The hobbits, the linchpin of the plan to defeat Sauron, are honored after the fall of Mordor, but their "common man" status remains unchanged and they look forward to returning to their middle-class lives in the Shire; indeed, no better option is presented to them.

Why do such characters seem to accept this blatant inequality? The simplest explanation is that, within the context of the story, Aragorn, like all descendants of Númenor, is simply made of better stuff (Shippey, 2000). These folk are superior to their allies the Rohirrim, and most certainly to the Easterlings and the Haradrim, who openly serve Sauron. Faramir describes this hierarchy to Frodo and Sam:

> "For so we reckon Men in our lore, calling them the High, or Men of the West, which were Númenoreans; and the Middle Peoples, Men of the Twilight, such as are the Rohirrim and their kin that dwell still far in the North, and the Wild, the Men of Darkness." (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 323)

This hierarchy is not something Faramir feels in the least self-conscious about, which is unsurprising since he, like all men of Gondor, is one of the "Men of the West." This description of "Men of Darkness" is particularly striking because the

Haradrim are described as brown and swarthy; in other words, not even white, as are the Rohirrim and Númenoreans.

It is interesting to note that this sort of racial stratification is not restricted only to humans. The elves were divided into the *Eldar*, who had answered the call of the Valar, and the *Avari*, who had not. The Eldar themselves are further subdivided: the *Vanyar*, who responded most swiftly to the summons of the gods, and who were the least numerous; the *Noldor*, who came second; and the *Teleri*, who tarried most along the way. Human beings were similarly subdivided, between the House of Beor, the House of Halath, and the House of Hadar. Hobbits were also stratified, split into the Fallohides, the Harfoots, and the Stoors. The Fallohides most resembled the elves in appearance and the most important hobbit families—Baggins, Took, and Brandybuck—were all of this sub-race. Naturally, the Vanyar are the fairest of the elves—the most blond-haired and blue-eyed—just as the Fallohides were the fairest of the hobbits and the House of Hador were the fairest of the humans. Clearly, the "best" of each race is that which most possesses an Aryan look, a troubling observation.

In *A Song of Ice and Fire* the hierarchy is not so clear-cut, but is real nonetheless. Daenerys is the last of the blood of Old Valyria, the sole living descendant of Aerys Targaryen, the Mad King. Daenerys's father was thrown down in Robert's Rebellion, and she and her brother were spirited away before they could be killed along with him. She grew up in the land of Essos, far from Westeros, with nothing left of her heritage but scattered memories and the color of her eyes and hair. Yet by hatching dragons from stone she restored to the world a fire and magic that had not been seen in an age. Like Aragorn, she too is an echo of a romanticized past.

As she gains power and influence, she forces upon Essos the cultural standards of Westeros—or those that she has read about, for ultimately she is a pretender to the culture she champions. She breaks the slave trade, throws down tyrants, ends bloodsport in the form of the fighting pits because the Westerosi consider these things wrong, but despite these reforms it never occurs to her to improve upon the customs of a homeland she does not even remember.

The ultimate rightness of her given tradition is never questioned, which makes even her most well-intentioned efforts look colonial, and worse for the fact that she is white and the denizens of Essos are most definitely not. For all her reformist zeal, Daenerys never attempts to improve the lot of women, ultimately content to leave them as the virtual property of their fathers or husbands, nor of racial minorities such the folk of the Summer Islands, who are described as "black as pitch." She does not listen to the voice of these forgotten folk, nor does she further their cause.

Both Aragorn and Daenerys are given the choice between restoration and transformation, between conservatism and progressivism, between the past and the future and both, in the end, make the same choice.

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There are many ways in which sexual minorities are marginalized in fantasy fiction. In *The Lord of the Rings*, this is accomplished simply by ignoring their existence. As far as we can tell, every biological resident of Middle-Earth—human, elf, or orc—is cis-gendered and heterosexual. The transformative and evil forces—in this case, Sauron—may be once-men, but the sexuality of all "normal" beings of the world is much more clearly defined. Men love women, women love men, and there is no suggestion that things have ever been otherwise. Obviously, some of this is due to the time in which the series was written—a more progressive approach might have gained Tolkien censorship or even charges of indecency—but it still set a troubling precedent that extends even to a more progressive era.

This presents an interesting problem to modern readers of Tolkien's work, as much of the series concerns only the relationships between male characters. Women are prizes to be won or treasures to be protected (this is most particularly true of Aragorn's fiancé, Arwen), and are almost always kept "off-screen." It is therefore not surprising that modern readers see homoeroticism in the close friendship of Frodo and Samwise (Goodreads, 2010-2015). Samwise occasionally pines over Rosie Cotton, back in the Shire, but it is his love for Frodo that keeps him on the quest of Mount Doom, and that saves him from the Ring's corrupting influence. Since overt homosexuality does not exist in Tolkien's world, the deep connection between the hobbits seems even more sexual in nature.

In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Martin again goes far beyond Tolkien and includes several characters who are gay or bisexual, even if not openly. Renly Baratheon is clearly involved in a relationship with the commander of his personal guard, Loras Tyrell, also known as the Knight of Flowers. Loras, favorite son of a powerful House, is indulged in his indiscretions, while Renly's homosexuality is used by the Tyrells as a political tool. Renly's love for Loras binds him to the Tyrell family as tightly as his marriage to Loras' sister Margaery. This affair is well known amongst the nobility, if not openly acknowledged except in mockery. Jamie Lannister refers to this relationship in his attempts to take Loras down a peg: "'Now sheathe that bloody sword, or I'll take it from you and shove it up some place even Renly never found'" (Martin, 2000, p. 698). Prince Oberyn Martell also makes a snide reference, during a conversation with Tyrion Lannister: "'There are those who say Ser Loras is better than Leo Longthorn ever was,' said Tyrion. 'Renly's little rose? I doubt that'" (Martin, 2000, p. 437).

Even the Tyrells are unwilling to speak frankly about the sexuality of their favorite son, as Loras' own brother Garlan says to the girl who pines after him: "'My lady, I have seen how you look at my brother. Loras is valiant and handsome, and we all love him dearly … but your Imp will make a better husband'" (Martin, 2000, p. 322).

Among the gay characters of the series is Jon Connington, an exiled lord bent on restoring to power the son of a prince he once loved, and several minor characters like Kem, servant of the mercenary group the Second Sons. Even characters who are essentially heterosexual have same-sex encounters: Daenerys with her handmaid Irri, and Cersei with her lady-in-waiting Taena Merryweather.

Although Martin outshines Tolkien in the presentation of homosexuality, *A Song of Ice and Fire* still remains problematic. Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targaryen—both important, "point of view" characters—experience same-sex encounters, and these are so explicitly detailed that they qualify the books in which they appear as inappropriate reading for children. The romantic relationship between male characters, however, is never spelled out with such specificity; indeed, many readers remain unaware that Renly and Loras were sexually involved, or that Jon Connington's feelings for Prince Rhaegar were more than platonic. Even Kem offers only hints of his feelings for the "boy he knew once." In fact, when Loras' and Renly's relationship was explicitly laid out in the television series, many viewers complained that that element had been "added in" for no reason (Goodreads, 2012).

This imbalance in presentation sends a clear message: female homosexuality can be safely presented as titillation for the presumed mostly male audience, while male homosexuality may be hinted at but must never be confirmed. This practice has in recent years come to be known as "queerbaiting," adding homoerotic tension between characters to attract attention without ever making that tension more than subtext (Mai, 2015). Examples of queerbaiting can be found anywhere, but the television series "Supernatural" is a good example of the way a storyteller can strongly imply the presence of homosexuality while retaining the ability to deny its reality.

Queerbaiting is often used in relation to male homosexuality, as such feelings between women are assumed to be more palatable to a mass audience (AP, 2013). This is particularly toxic when the creators/actors choose to deny that the tension exists anywhere but in the imagination of the readers (Bridges, 2013; Westeros.org, 2011). To his credit, Martin has been willing to acknowledge the homosexuality of certain of his characters, but since the implications are so vague, the possibility of retraction always exists. Part of marginalizing a minority is the insistence that its concerns and even its perceptions are purely imaginary (Gennis, 2014), and it is disturbing to find the groundwork so neatly laid in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

This distinction plays into the perception that same sex relationships are either titillating (when the participants are female) or deviant (when the participants are male), but in no case do they deserve the same respect afforded to heterosexual pairings. Thus, the heteronormative model of love is justified and reinforced, closing the door to any true consideration of alternate sexual orientations.

The heroes may indulge in same-sex relationships—Cersei and Daenerys may sleep with women, Frodo and Sam may be "very close"—but ultimately these relationships are always relegated to the margins. Renly is a schemer and not a reformer, and expresses no intention to challenge the mores of the very culture that marginalizes him. Daenerys, fair-minded in so many ways, considers her dalliances with her bed maid an illicit pleasure, and never seeks to expand the privilege she enjoys to those for whom it is forbidden. These characters, personally and politically powerful, never work towards the betterment of people like them, and sometimes even hold them in contempt. Cersei even thinks about the deleterious effect Ser Loras may be having on her royal son: "She did not want Tommen

growing close to Loras Tyrell. The Knight of Flowers was no sort of man for any boy to emulate" (Martin, 2005, p. 350). If the very characters who engage in homosexual behavior will not validate it, who will?

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The marginalization of minorities—both racial and sexual—extends also to women. It is no surprise that women are sidelined in fantasy, which deals primarily with patriarchal models (Kuznets, 1985). There are nearly *no* women of importance in the *The Lord of the Rings* and those few that exist serve primarily as prizes or caretakers. In Middle-earth, it is men who fight the battles, men who solve the problems, and men who change the world. Whatever small role Tolkien's few women—Galadriel, Arwen, and Eowyn—may play in saving Middle-Earth from Sauron, ultimately the story of the War of the Ring is not theirs.

At the time of the final confrontation with Sauron, Galadriel is arguably the oldest humanoid left in Middle-Earth. Born in Valinor during the time of the Trees, by the Third Age (in which *The Lord of the Rings* is set), she is thousands and thousands of years old; in fact, since she predates the sun, there is no sure way to know just how long she has lived. Her grandfather, one uncle, and two of her cousins all once held the title High King of the Noldor, a title she could herself have claimed upon the death of Gil-galad in the Second Age. She also bears Nenya, one of the Three Rings. Yet for all this lineage and distinction, Galadriel plays a very small role in the War of the Ring. She welcomes the Fellowship to her home in Lothlórien, lades them with gifts, and provides Frodo with cryptic advice. It is mentioned in *The Return of the King* (Tolkien, 1955) that while Aragorn battled Sauron, Galadriel participated in an attack on the forces of Dol Guldur, but this struggle goes on "off-screen" and is by implication relatively unimportant.

There is little to say about Arwen Evenstar, who in the entire series sews a banner and marries Aragorn, two traditionally female roles that have little impact on the struggle against Sauron. Indeed, her primary story purpose is as a motivation for Aragorn, who has been promised her hand if he should prevail against the Dark Lord.

Eowyn's place in the series is more complicated. In *The Two Towers* (Tolkien, 1954b), Eowyn complains bitterly to Aragorn about the unfairness of the role she is expected to play, complaints that would not have been out of place in the 20th-century:

> "All your words are but to say: you are a woman, and your part is in the house. But when the men have died in battle and honour, you have leave to be burned in the house, for the men will need it no more. But I am of the House of Eorl and not a serving-woman. I can ride and wield blade, and I do not fear either pain or death." (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 47)

These encouraging words are reinforced when Eowyn disguises herself as a man so as to ride to war with her people, and even more so when she avenges the death of her king by slaying the Lord of the Nazgûl in single combat. In this, however,

Eowyn's gender is ultimately revealed to be more a plot device than an upsetting of gender roles. In Tolkien's subversion of *Macbeth*, the marching of Birnam Wood becomes the walking and speaking Ents, and Macbeth's own prophecy becomes the instrument of the demise of the Witch King, about whom it was prophesied, "Not by the hand of man shall he fall" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 363). Instead of using Shakespeare's "cesarean loophole," Tolkien instead has the King fall at the hands of Eowyn.

Yet even this small victory is soon taken from Eowyn, for shortly after Sauron's fall, she quickly repents her martial ways in favor of the more marital, as she indicates when accepting Faramir's proposal: "'I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren.'" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 262). Thus a character who began by railing against the restrictions under which women labor retreats swiftly to the role of wife, nurturer and, by implication of her engagement to Faramir, mother.

The women of Martin's world receive better treatment than those of Tolkien, playing more prominent and significant roles in the struggles that threaten to consume the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. They are more than simply healers and helpers; they are leaders, schemers and, occasionally, warriors. Daenerys goes from the arranged bride of a Dothraki clan leader to a dragonlord and ruler in her own right. Cersei Lannister reigns over the Seven Kingdoms as Queen Dowager. Brienne of Tarth cleaves her way through enemies mean and mighty on her quest to fulfill an oath. Arya Stark follows a darker path by apprenticing herself to a guild of mystical assassins. Each of these is a far cry from Arwen Evenstar, inviting but impotent.

Yet even in *A Song of Ice and Fire* there are problems. Both Cersei and Daenerys derive their power initially from their respective husbands. Daenerys comes into her own by becoming the Mother of Dragons, and the slaves she later frees call her *mysa*, which in Ghiscari means "mother," thus playing neatly into the traditional female role of nurturer/caretaker. And for all her advancement, Daenerys surrounds herself almost entirely with male advisers and never wonders if things might be otherwise. Cersei Lannister is keenly aware of the disadvantages of her sex, and, like Antigone, grumbles repeatedly about her misfortune in not being born a man: "She had a warrior's heart, but the gods in their blind malice had given her the feeble body of a woman" (Martin, 2011, p. 719). Instead of attempting to broaden the opportunities for her fellow women, Cersei instead wishes they were all more like men.

Interestingly, it seems that, even on a primal, mystical level, the world is not ready for the likes of them. Several times prophecy is mentioned in relation to Daenerys Stormborn. When brought before the *dosh khaleen*, the high widows of the Dothraki, Daenerys is told that she will bear the Stallion Who Mounts the World. This image gives away a great deal of the Dothraki worldview: conquest shown as a male horse engaging in an act of masculine dominance. The figure of their visions will not work with nor persuade others, but will rather crush and humiliate in the most emasculating way possible. Ultimately, Daenerys loses her

child along with her husband and so the prophecy itself comes into question. Is it possible that the vision given to the *dosh khaleen* was one they could not understand—a *mare* which would rule the world?

We see the same in the image of the Prince That Was Promised. Several characters, including Stannis Baratheon, consider themselves the fulfillment of the prophecy of Azor Ahai, the conquering hero who once stood against the Others. As Maester Aemon points out, it is possible that the prophecies are confused, for dragons do not have gender: "'It was a prince that was promised, not a princess…dragons are neither male nor female. Barth saw the truth of that, but now one and then the other'" (Martin, 2005, p. 520).

Even those women that attempt to gain power by becoming more like men are judged for it. Brienne of Tarth's greatest barrier is not any internal vice, but her putative physical unattractiveness, which is remarked upon by everyone she encounters. Martin's male characters sport all manner of physical deformities— dwarfs with malformed heads, knights with faces scarred by fire, and even an executioner with no tongue—yet none of them draw the same level of scrutiny. Brienne's most noteworthy feature is not her martial prowess but her appearance, which is judged unacceptable. In fact, Martin is careful to note all of the physical imperfections of the female warriors: Asha Greyjoy has a prominent nose, Dacey Mormont a plain, long face, etc. The male knights and soldiers are sometimes barely described in a physical sense, yet the reader knows in excruciating detail the various physical shortcomings of Brienne of Tarth. Women like Catelyn Stark and Margaery Tyrell, who play more traditional roles, are afflicted with no such physical flaws. Although there is room in *A Song of Ice and Fire* for women who break from tradition, only those who know their place seem rewarded with acclamations of beauty.

As with all of the forgotten, there seems no hope of better days ahead for these women. Redemption as restoration provides no chance of a social transformation which would allow them power while remaining wholly women.

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From *The Lord of the Rings* to *A Song of Ice and Fire* we can trace an evolution from Tolkien's straightforward, epic Middle-earth to Martin's more morally nuanced and grittily realistic Westeros. In a real sense, Martin is trying to answer the question of what happens if we do not accept at face value that a conquering hero "ruled wisely and well," and in that he has undoubtedly been successful. His characters are more complex, come from a wider variety of backgrounds and grapple with shades of gray rather than the often less complex black-and-white conflict of Tolkien's War of the Ring.

That said, the arc of that evolution can obviously extend much further, and in some cases, already has. Yeine Darr of *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms* (Jemisin, 2010), both a woman and a person of color, certainly represents a bold move towards a more inclusive style of fantasy fiction, as does the openly gay Seregil of *The Nightrunner* series (Flewelling & Ruddell, 1996). However, in both the works

of Tolkien and those of Martin, the forgotten of modern fantasy—women, and ethnic and sexual minorities—are still left largely on the sidelines, and the story centers on the restoration of a better past, rather than the hope of transformation in the future. The next step after Martin would be a truly progressive fantasy in which minorities not empowered by the status quo would be able to tell the tale of their struggles, and would be equal partners in the stewardship of order, fellow protectors and, ultimately, reformers. Such characters would be people unto themselves, rather than being defined in relationship to a hero who is largely unlike them. They would be deep, complex, flawed, and ultimately real. They would stand up not only against evil, but against the restoration of an old order that never benefited them and never will. Women would seek status of their own, separate from the men around them; homosexuals would be free to proclaim their own truth, both in the sanctity of their own minds and in their relationships with others; ethnic minorities would be unencumbered by a system in which men are born of light or of darkness.

In reality, the true status quo is not homogeneity, but diversity. Progressive ideas are not an invading, transformative addition to the genre, but rather an acknowledgement of how things truly are, the dispelling of the illusion that all heroes are straight white men who carry the burden of restoring the glories of the past. High fantasy that does this becomes more welcoming to readers by saying that people who look like them can stand up and do great things. To do otherwise is to be relegated to the history that most of the genre celebrates.

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2. THE WIZARDS BENEATH

Finding Plato and Freud in Ursula K. Le Guin's The Tombs of Atuan

My high school seniors are immersed in a maelstrom of emotional growth with the far too bland title of adolescence. They are trying to evolve into adults with individuality while also meeting the expectations of powerful voices of authority in their lives—family, friends, teachers, and cultural media. Often, they get this balance between being an individual and meeting expectations wrong. They rebel needlessly against healthy advice, or they repress their individuality and become pleasers, grade grubbers, or social followers. They need a stronger sense of self-awareness when navigating these choices, yet more self awareness means examining unflattering behaviors in themselves or their communities. A method for eroding this natural resistance is to use a text whose adolescent protagonist is an indirect mirror for students. In Ursula K. Le Guin's (1970) *Tombs of Atuan*, the critical process of self-examination is encoded in a thrilling fantasy tale of religious cults, thieving wizards, and a mysterious subterranean world.

Le Guin's protagonist, Arha, is an extreme example of an adolescent who obeys the wrong kind of teachings and is resistant to true learning. Arha's transformation into the free-thinker "Tenar" is an allegory for self-awareness and learning that reflects the basic teachings of the ancient philosopher Plato as well as the twentieth-century psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. By using Plato's and Freud's ideas about awareness and learning to decode Le Guin's allegory, students can interpret and challenge Le Guin's text. Furthermore, when students wrestle to apply and debate all three authors' ideas, they are forced to critique their own learning process and develop a more insightful analysis of how they are taught and how they learn.

UNCONSCIOUS LEARNING TODAY

Like many teachers today, I am dispirited by the test-taking culture of modern academics which encourages students to see education as rote-learning that only helps them achieve the next level of advancement to another grade, a selective college, and a comfortable paycheck. This over-emphasis on quantifiable results does not encourage students to think critically about voices in their communities, to understand themselves better as individuals, or to create a more loving, thoughtful world. In recent years, even the test-taking establishment recognizes this problem, and they are scrambling to make standardized tests reflect more meaningful learning. Recent changes to the SAT, as described in the New York Times, are supposed to encourage students to understand the "meaning of widely

used words based on context … [and] instead of recalling a definition from vocabulary flash cards, they'll have to read prose passages carefully to choose an answer" (Hoover, 2015, para. 8). Additionally, Advanced Placement courses are under fire for not teaching critical thinking but instead "overwhelming students with facts to memorize and then rushing through important topics" (Drew, 2011, para. 4). New versions aim to "slash the amount of material students need to know" and "clear students' minds to focus on bigger concepts and more analytic thinking" (Drew, 2011, para. 7). Yet, some educators raise a greater alarm, demanding more transformative changes than just tweaking tests.

For instance, Peter McLaren (2016) writes that

> because of our modern need to measure competencies, modern education emphasizes only that which is measurable. Standardized testing thrives in a world where the humanity of students is enslaved to a particular analytic structure combining instrumental reason, positivism, and one-dimensional objectivity …. Students are turned into objects of unbeing …. (p. 3)

McLaren argues for a much more "revolutionary" change in the way we teach. Ursula K. Le Guin's story of a young priestess growing up enslaved to a cult that demands rote learning at the price of her humanity is an apt allegory for the dystopia McLaren describes. I propose to use Le Guin's text, along with Plato and Freud, to foster self-awareness in students—a revolutionary, unquantifiable, valuable skill often missing in student learning.

Critical literacy encourages students to "study language to analyze how it shapes identity, constructs cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). This pedagogical goal engages critical thinking. Critical literacy can help students filter out the positive from the negative lessons fed to them by technology, media, school, friends, and family by "paying attention to and seeking out the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized" and "challenging the unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships by studying the relationship between language and power" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). Le Guin's *The Tombs of Atuan* merges these goals well. Her protagonist is a stubborn adolescent priestess struggling to free herself from a powerful religious cult that sacrifices her name—the most elemental expression of her voice—to subterranean gods. As students read, they can compare their own learning experiences to the position of the ignorant priestess "Arha" as she transforms into the enlightened "Tenar."

Critical literacy also endorses the use of supplementary texts as a lens to confront social issues, to critique the position of the author, and to "explore how the same reader might approach a text from different identities" (Berhman, 2006, p. 493). These resistant reading techniques are often used to unmask power structures and authorial bias. Le Guin's allegory actually encourages its readers to question power and authority by puzzling over the symbolism of the mysterious religious traditions and initiations in *The Tombs of Atuan*. Readers are encouraged to debate and critique these traditions. Additionally, supplementary texts supplied by Freud and Plato help students critique the educational methods described in the

novel. By reading selections from these two supplementary authors, students have two other viewpoints on learning for comparison. Using resistant reading and supplementary texts, students can form "counter narratives" (Berhman, 2006, p. 494), another approach of critical literacy, to form their own perspective on learning. My students do this by journaling about teachers, students, and learning experiences from their lives. They examine those recollections in comparison to the examples found in Le Guin, Freud, and Plato, and then write personal essays that define what true learning is for them.

TABLEAUS OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

The novel depicts a medieval-like society typical of fantasy novels. A powerful religious cult takes a young girl from her mother and father to be raised as their new priestess. The first chapter, "The Eaten One," describes a spooky initiation ritual which shows the cult's oppressive form of teaching. In a mock-execution, the young girl kneels before a masked man in white holding a sword. The passage is full of contrasts in light and dark, and these phrases help us puzzle through the purposes of the execution ritual. The young girl's death is prevented by another actor in the pageant, who suddenly appears dressed in black. He prevents the figure in white from executing the young girl: "they balanced for a moment, the white figure and the black, both faceless, dancer-like above the motionless child whose white neck was bared by the parting of the black hair" (Le Guin, 1970, p. 6).

The young priestess's life balances the forces of black and white. Yet, even though her life is saved, it is clear that these two forces have reached a détente by sharing the sacrifice of the girl's identity. The other priestesses chant,

> "O let the Nameless Ones behold the girl given to them, who is verily the one born ever nameless. Let them accept her life and the years of her life until her death, this is also theirs. Let them find her acceptable. Let her be eaten!" (p. 7).

She is now Arha, which is not a name at all but a designation meaning, "the eaten one" replacing "Tenar," the name her mother gave her.

This mysterious scene prompts several questions: Who are the Nameless Ones? Why does Tenar have to lose her name in order to become the head priestess? Why is a mock-execution the ritual for removing her name? What does it mean to be 'eaten'? Le Guin's allegorical code forces students to resist simple answers and instead dig deeply into symbol and language. Luckily, this complex deciphering can be eased using the tools of the great psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud.

A DIVIDED MIND

Freud's structure of the unconscious encourages us to analyze the effect of our unconscious desires upon our conscious behaviors. Modern students live in a world of temptation and instant gratification. Decisions with grave consequences can be made too quickly with the tap of the "send" button on a smartphone. They often

pursue rebellion, obedience, ambition, or pleasure unconsciously. They should learn to make these choices more consciously through examination of their unconscious desires and ambitions. Misch (2003) acknowledges that while many of Freud's theories are controversial or outdated, his "concepts of the unconscious, psychic and historical determinism, making the unconscious conscious—all these have more than withstood the test of time and proven themselves of enormous heuristic value" (p. 3). Making the unconscious conscious, or the "invisible visible" (Misch, 2003, p. 14) pushes students to ask themselves whether they are making conscious or unconscious choices. This examination is a transformative education. Britzman (2015) points out that the process of psychoanalysis is a learning process, "The human fact of education is at the heart of Freud's psychoanalytic theories" (p. 83) and "psychoanalysis, Freud insists, must welcome slow learners and tolerate both frustrations and non-interference" (p. 89). Adolescents are full of frustrations and resistance when confronted with difficult learning, and Freud's concept of a divided psyche helps them understand this emotional conflict.

As students read selections from Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psychological Analysis* (Freud, 1933/1965), I also explain the commonly used "Iceberg" analogy to illustrate Freud's idea that the unconscious mind makes up the majority of our mental world, or psyche. Additionally, according to Freud, our psyche is divided between the *ego*, *id*, and *superego*. Freud's defines the id as knowing "no judgment of value, no good and evil, no morality," (p. 93). He contrasts id with ego by saying, "the ego stands for reason and good sense, while the id stands for the untamed passions" (p. 95). The id pursues pleasure without regard to conscience or "morality" and it is in conflict with the ego, which uses "reason and good sense" to judge whether those pleasures are worthwhile.

The last character in this mind-play, the superego, tortures the ego just as much as the id. The ego and id are constantly judged "by the strict super-ego, which lays down definite standards for its conduct…and which, if those standards are not obeyed, punishes it with tense feelings of inferiority and guilt" (Freud, 1933/1965, p. 97). These "standards" are societal rules, community expectations, moral codes, and other ways the world encourages us to improve ourselves by restraining our desires: "the superego applies the strictest moral standard to the helpless ego which is at its mercy; in general it represents the claims of morality … which is supposed to be given us by God …" (p. 76). The superego voice is the one that pushes us to be better, but it can also be a negative voice, constantly criticizing. Freud pities the ego's responsibility of managing the desires of the id and the superego:

> The poor ego has things even worse: it serves three masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These claims are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails in its task. Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the superego and the id. (Freud, 1933/1965, p. 97)

Students should understand that the two extreme unconscious voices in the psyche are the id and superego. The ego is supposed to restrain these extreme desires and

negotiate a healthy middle ground by using reason-oriented logic, not by acting on impulsive yearnings or unreasonable guilt.

Now, students have some key concepts of psychoanalysis to decode Le Guin's mock-execution scene. The "Nameless Ones," represented by the white and black figures, are the id and superego. These terrible gods represent both unconscious desire as well as unconscious guilt. The figure in white is full of blood lust, and the figure in black exercises restraint. Even though the superego is the hero here, saving Arha from the sword, its black costume shows that it is threatening and repressive, and its détente with the id-like figure in white shows that the two conspire to consume the sacrifice of the young girl's identity—her name.

The sad scene at the end of the chapter where the young protagonist must sleep alone in the dark head-priestess's room, elicits the same kind of pathos that Freud feels for his ego character. She is alone, a powerless child whose new responsibilities as head priestess actually enslave her to the demands of a repressive and violent religious cult. Tenar's name—her individuality—is sacrificed to these unconscious, "Nameless" gods in the same way that the ego has to serve the unconscious, "tyrannical masters" of the id and superego.

LEARNING WITHOUT LIGHT

As Arha grows up in the temple community, her role as priestess—supposedly a position of power and privilege—turns out to actually enslave her. This contradiction can be understood by using Freudian logic to analyze how the social institution of the temple manipulates her id and superego in order to disenfranchise her ego. For instance, when caught breaking rules and playing with another young girl, the other child is beaten but Arha is left unpunished.

Escaping punishment should provide any normal child with a sense of relief; yet Arha's role as priestess is not a privilege but a doom. Even though she goes unpunished, she retreats untouched alone to her "dark house" (Le Guin, 1970, p. 32). The demands of the superego are shown in the lecture Arha receives from her stern teacher, "'It is not fitting that you be seen climbing and running with other girls … It is better that you only do what is needful for you to do'" (p. 30). The word "needful" is especially fitting, communicating to Arha that the pleasures of childhood—the pleasures of the id—do not contribute to her role as priestess. That role is all-consuming: "'*You are Arha.* There is nothing left. It was all eaten'" (p. 30). Arha's ego, her independent ability to balance the demands of id and superego, has been subsumed, and she must live a strict life devoid of childhood pleasure in order to contain the subconscious gods in the tombs, the nameless gods of the unknown.

In these chapters, she is taught by the older women to navigate the "Undertomb," a labyrinth of holy subterranean passages underneath the temple where her gods reside. The Undertomb is a natural cavern, "immense, high and broad, yet not empty: something in its darkness, surfaces of invisible objects or partitions, broke the echo into a thousand fragments" (p. 44). It is clearly an analogy for the unconscious mind, a place that has power and controls her life but

is frightening to study directly. No light is allowed in the Undertomb: "This was the very home of darkness, the inmost center of the night." Arha learns to navigate "by touch and number, instead of by sight and common sense" (p. 62). This meaningful phrase captures the allegorical conflict at the heart of Arha's growth in these chapters: On the one hand, her learning is impressive, and she adapts to difficult, frightening challenges as an adolescent head priestess. On the other hand, her learning is instinctive, unthinking, and unconscious groping. It does not use logic, analysis, or "common sense."

Arha expresses admirable courage as she learns in the dark: "'This is my place, I belong here, I will not be afraid!'" (p. 43). However, she is also learning to kill. On her first trip to the Undertomb, she is tasked with deciding the method of execution for several chained prisoners. Here, her id, or animalistic side, is trained to express itself in violence and blood lust, not the playfulness of a child. She fantasizes and plans executions to be particularly cruel, "more elaborate, better suited to the rituals of the Empty Throne" (p. 53). Her repressed id is surfacing in her rage and violence.

Arha's learning is difficult, and it involves hard work and sacrifice, but it is only based on memorization, submission, and obedience. She must follow the directions of her teachers to the letter or risk being lost forever in the darkness. She is taught to submit to her fears and channel them by practicing death and violence, but she is not encouraged to analyze or question where these "nameless" fears come from or whether her violent role is justified. While she is learning to be a leader in her community, she is not learning how to question the validity of her community's values, only how to reinforce its rule. She is learning the way many modern students do: through unthinking obedience and memorization. She is learning without light.

<center>THE SOURCE OF SHADOWS</center>

More than two thousand years before Freud, Plato also showed that education was a process of challenging one's inner self in order to be able to learn external truths. Boyum (2010) calls this education, a "philosophical education" defined by internal awareness "coming to speak oneself, with one's own voice" as well as an understanding of one's world, "coming to see the true meaning of our words" (p. 549). With a philosophical education, "one is not only different or happier or better, but one *sees* or *knows* or *realizes* something that one did not before—it is, that is to say, a process of enlightenment" (p. 556). He also points out that the purpose of this kind of education shows us new intellectual ideas, but also transforms the "the stance, the attitude, or the character of the individual going through it" (p. 557). Plato's "Allegory of the Den" (Plato, 2001 version) argues that to find truth, one must first analyze the learning process itself: how we are taught to accept easy illusions, and how we resist teachings that challenge us with difficult truths. Powerful lessons can be provocative, even disturbing. Plato's allegory assures learners that this is exactly as it should be; we should find learning uncomfortable. Plato assures us that at the end of this transformative struggle is a

worthwhile victory. In fact, he argues, it is the most worthwhile struggle we can undertake.

To understand the difference between rote, obedient learning and conscious critical thinking, students can use Plato's "Allegory of the Den" to analyze Arha's learning in the same way that they used Freud's ego-id-superego structure to decipher her psyche. Plato posits that the initial state of all unaware learners is one of ignorance. In his allegory, ignorant learners are like slaves chained facing backwards in a cave. The light of the outside world, which represents truth, filters in from behind them, creating shadows on the cave wall. Since they have been chained in this position since birth, they think the shadows are reality, "to them…the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images" (Plato, 2001 version, p. 6). This is parallel to Arha's education at the isolated temple where she has learned to submit to the feared "Nameless Ones." Arha is the ultimate slave to ignorance, worshipping gods who live in a massive cave and who cannot be studied, named, or seen in the light.

Even though he lives a life of wretched falsehood, if the slave is freed, he ironically resists and resents true education. Plato describes a slave's first exposure to real light: "when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him…" (p. 6). Therefore, since light symbolizes truth, discovery of truth is not pleasurable but painful. In fact, an "instructor" must "compel" the freed slave to look at the light (p. 6). When this instructor names objects as they appear in reality, the slave rejects his teaching, pointing back to the shadows on the cave wall, insisting that those shadows are the objects being named, "Will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?" (p. 6). This commentary on truth is important to understand and apply to Le Guin's text: discovery of truth can be so painful, so disturbing, that many would rather look away and live in a state of comfortable ignorance. The first technique of Plato's instructor is to name the objects producing the shadows, contrasting the nameless gods Arha worships.

After the slave's denial of the instructor's first lesson, the instructor forces him to climb a nearby mountain to examine light generated by the sun. The key point here is the antagonistic relationship between the instructor and the student. Because truth is painful to see, students resist its teaching. Therefore, teachers must "drag" students up "a steep and rugged" cliff, teaching them to name and understand variations of light—stars, the moon, reflections, and the sun (Plato, 2001 version, p. 7). At last, the slave is able to use his own "reason" without the help of his instructor to determine the true relationship of the sun to the seasons as the source of life (p. 7). Significantly, "reason" is the same quality that Freud claimed the ego must use in order to control the unconscious forces of id and superego (Freud, 1933/1965, p. 95). Plato is saying that reason is what helps learners discover truth, but only after a difficult battle with a teacher. Learning truths is tough, and teachers often need to be dogged in order to force students from the comforts of their caves. We see the powerful effects of this battle on Arha

when her own cave—the Undertomb—is invaded by a remarkable teacher, thief, and wizard, Sparrowhawk.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

When Arha learns about wizards from Thar, the older priestess explains that the power of wizards is not in their magical staff, but in their "words" (Le Guin, 1970, p. 74). Their power with language, particularly naming the world around them, is in direct contrast to the power of Arha's nameless gods, and it reflects the logic and reasoning of Plato's "instructor" and Freud's "ego" characters. Arha's first, dramatic encounter with the wizard's light is important to explicate. Wandering around the still, unchanging darkness of the Undertomb, Arha is shocked to see the pale light of the trespassing wizard's staff illuminating the vast, never-seen cavern: "immense, with glittering roof and walls, sparkling, delicate, intricate, a palace of diamonds, a house of amethyst and crystal, from which the ancient darkness had been driven out by glory" (p. 84). The Undertomb is symbolic of Arha's repressed consciousness and her potential power. The "glory" of the wizard's light has shown Arha the true beauty of a place she thought she knew well. This is like a psychoanalyst who helps a patient harness the power of their unconscious mind, or an instructor who helps a student see that their beloved shadows are but facades of true beauty. Whereas once Arha worshipped the fearful darkness of the Undertomb, Sparrowhawk's light shows her the inspirational beauty of the holy chamber.

Yet, this discovery also presents a disturbing challenge to Arha's faith. The thrilling vision is quickly replaced with uncomfortable questioning, "He had made light where light was forbidden, where it had never been since world's beginning. Why did the Nameless Ones not strike him down?" (p. 85). Immediately, his light casts doubt upon the power that she has sacrificed so much to serve. In anger, she traps him behind an iron door in the labyrinth and watches him from secret peepholes above for days, taking pleasure in his starvation and thirst. Like Plato's freed slave, she rejects her first view of light.

While Arha is similar to Plato's freed slave, her role as the "student" in the encounters that follow is much more powerful than the freed slave in Plato's allegory. In many ways, the relationship between student and teacher in Le Guin's book shows that the student holds the teacher captive until the teacher convinces the student to see another perspective. There is no detachment of the wise instructor who, in Plato's allegory, has the power to drag the reluctant student up the mountain. It is a desperate, emotional captivity in which the teacher has risked just as much as the student, and until the student rejects the powers of ignorance— the worship of "The Nameless Ones"—the teacher suffers. Le Guin's student has power over the instructor, but this power is also self-destructive. Arha can no longer enter the Undertomb without confronting the wizard, "She was afraid of his power, the arts he had used to enter the Undertomb, the sorcery that kept the light burning" (p. 103). While the teacher is trapped and suffers, waiting on the student

to drop their antagonism, the student is also stunted from self-discovery until they open themselves up to uncomfortable ideas.

The wizard is eventually weak enough for Arha to engage directly in conversation. Arha asks Sparrowhawk to show her a wizardly illusion. He warns her that illusions are tricky, and "'if you believe them, they'll frighten you, and you may wish to kill me if fear makes you angry. And if you disbelieve them, you'll see them as only lies and foolery … and so I forfeit my life again'" (p. 125). Instead of presenting his teachings as fact to be obeyed, as her religious teachers have done, Sparrowhawk encourages her to be a critical learner. He admits that his teachings will be an illusion, but proposes that they might also convey truths. If Arha does not analyze the illusion and the truth with an open mind, she might reject the teaching with disastrous results.

While Sparrowhawk's admission shows he is humble, the illusion he creates is meant to shock Arha. In this way, he is like the antagonistic instructor seen in Plato's allegory. He chants a spell that seemingly replaces Arha's "heavy black" robe with a gown "of turquoise colored silk, bright and soft as the evening sky" (p. 127). The robe is bejeweled and "embroidered with thin silver threads and seed pearls and tiny crumbs of crystal, so that it glittered softly, like rain in April" (p. 127). In this scene, the student has no input on how they want to be viewed; their role is chosen by the teacher. It is a kind of violation, and it is meant to be shocking even though it is also meant to show the student a positive side of themselves. She is being dragged up Plato's mountain of enlightenment. Here, the teacher puts a garment upon the student that shows how the teacher views the student's potential to live a life of expression and beauty instead of negativity and cruelty. Compared to the "heavy" priestess garments, the gown is "soft," showing Arha that her teacher thinks she can be gentle, kind, and merciful instead of her role as a cruel priestess enforcing draconian rules. The gown's majestic appearance mirrors the language Le Guin uses to describe the Undertomb when Sparrowhawk first enlightened it. These enlightening images are meant to shock Arha out of her grim devotion to a death cult into a more positive, optimistic life.

In this ironic twist, the illusion is actually Arha's true self, her capacity for love instead of violence: "'You told me to show you something worth seeing. I show you yourself,'" he tells her (p. 127). However, she has to let go of her fear of the unknown, the "Nameless," in order to reach this goal. The student must be willing to imagine that they can be better, but first they must let go of defeatist thinking that resists change. "'Make it go away,'" is Arha's first shocked response to the vision (p. 127). Like Plato's student, Arha is afraid and resistant to the true power within her.

Yet, amidst her despair, Arha has discovered a new purpose in her life, a purpose that she is willing to risk her life for: Sparrowhawk's friendship. "'I'll bring food and water when I can…I will come. I promise. Here's the flask. Hoard it, I can't come back soon. But I will come back,'" she tells him (p. 137). In contrast to her actions as priestess when she starved the prisoners to death, she decides to save life, to become a nurturer instead of a destroyer. In the darkness of a vast, lifeless cave devoted to an ancient, unchanging religious tradition, she has

decided to preserve life. This is the transformative moment that the teacher's shocking lessons have been building toward. In this climactic scene, Sparrowhawk recognizes her empathy and her risk. He returns the favor, calls her by her real name, the one her mother gave her, and completes the destruction of her priestess role: "'Take care, Tenar'" (p. 137). Later that night, Tenar dreams of her golden-haired mother, and she wakes with "terror, and exultation, there under the sun-washed sky 'I have my name back. I am Tenar!'" (p. 140).

Images of light abound in Tenar's new life, but her upbeat mood is quickly halted by Kossil, the suspicious priestess who wants the wizard killed. Tenar says that she has ordered Sparrowhawk buried alive in the Undertomb, but Kossil suspects Tenar is lying and threatens her with death. Fearfully, Tenar sleeps in the caves that night, but discovers Kossil with a lantern digging in the Undertomb for the coffin that supposedly contains the body of the dead wizard. This flagrant blasphemy is the final break for Tenar's faith; the Nameless Ones do not punish Kossil for her crime of bringing light into this holy place. She rushes to Sparrowhawk, disconsolate: "'The Nameless Ones did nothing. They didn't kill her or drive her mad. They are old, as she said. They are dead. They are all gone. I am not a priestess anymore'" (p. 151).

According to most readings of Plato's "Allegory of the Den," this should be a victorious moment where the student rejects the shadows on the back of the cave wall as falsehoods and the instructor celebrates their enlightenment. However, Sparrowhawk takes a different tack. Instead, he assures her that the "Nameless Ones" do exist:

> They do not die. They are dark and undying, and they hate the light: the brief, bright light of our mortality. They are immortal, but they are not gods…The Earth is beautiful, and bright, and kindly, but that is not all. The Earth is also terrible, and dark, and cruel….And where men worship these things and abase themselves before them, there evil breeds; there places are made in the world where darkness gathers, places given over wholly to the Ones whom we call Nameless, the ancient and holy Powers of the Earth before the light, the powers of dark, of ruin, of madness. (Le Guin, 1970, p. 153)

This "madness" is caused by only seeing the negative forces of existence, the randomness of death "'the rabbit shrieks dying,'" the hidden and destructive power of nature "'mountains … full of the hidden fire,'" and the predatory nature of our animalistic sides "'sharks in the sea'" (p. 153). The "Nameless Ones" are human tendencies toward pessimism and despair. When we notice the persistent threats in nature and the seemingly unstoppable greed of men, we assume that these are the true powers that drive existence. Instead, we need a healthy, powerful ego that recognizes the dangers in life but balances that awareness with observations of beauty and hope.

Tenar's simple act of kindness toward the wizard defeats these pessimistic powers. Sparrowhawk points out that, "'This is a most terrible place. One man alone has not hope, here. I was dying of thirst when you gave me water, yet it was not the water alone that saved me. It was the strength of the hands that gave

it'" (p. 152). The "Nameless Ones" are the fear, cruelty, and loneliness created by ignorance, the resistance to exploring the unknown outside of our comfortable caves. These powers are defeated by Tenar's friendship, which creates the hope that a better future exists by exploring those unknowns. Teachers need students to have the "strength" to engage with difficult learning, even if that means taking risks. Students need teachers to show us better versions of ourselves, even if they have to shock us in order to do so. When teachers and students understand and embrace these roles, friendship and hope defeat ignorance and despair.

This friendship is the true enlightenment that Le Guin offers, the hard-won friendship between a teacher and a student. Sparrowhawk ends his lesson by equalizing his relationship with Tenar: "'I came here a thief, an enemy, armed against you; and you showed me mercy, and trusted me … You have proved your trust in me. I have made no return. I will give you what I have to give. My true name is Ged. And this is yours to keep'" (p. 165). In Le Guin's allegory of learning, similar to Plato's premise, the instructor must begin with an antagonistic relationship with the student. However, Le Guin alters and adds to Plato's allegory, showing that the teacher and the student both takes risks by trusting each other. That sense of mutual vulnerability eventually leads to an intimate bond of trust.

CHOOSING THE LIGHT

In a thrilling scene, Ged and Tenar cooperate to escape the temple, destroying it in the process. Yet, in the subtle passage that opens the next chapter, Le Guin's coded language shows that even now, enlightened learning is still fraught with risk. After their escape from the tombs, Tenar and Ged flee to the wilderness and collapse in exhaustion. Tenar is the first to wake, and her time alone shows both the promise and the challenge of her new situation. She "opened her eyes to a golden light" of the evening sun that "filled all earth and sky: a vast, clear, wintry sky, a vast, barren, golden land of mountains and wide valleys" (p. 181). Tenar's new situation presents challenges. The landscape is "vast" which means her path forward is full of unknowns, some of which may prove threatening as symbolized in the "wintry sky" and the "barren" land. However, the light is repeatedly referred to as "golden," and the choices Tenar has in front of her, while so numerous as to be overwhelming, are also "clear" and running through "wide" valleys. Likewise, Ged's sleeping body shows both the power and the fragility of this master of knowledge who destroyed the tombs, "his left hand lay relaxed on the dirt, beside a small thistle that still bore its ragged cloak of grey fluff and its tiny defense of spikes and spines" (p. 182). The process of learning is exhausting, and the product is fragile and delicate, but beautiful and courageous too. Tenar sees both results, and can decide which attitude to take. Significantly, she chooses to make a fire for warmth, gathering fuel and using her skills with flint and steel. Instead of despairing at the fragility of their refugee status by giving into the fear of the unknown—a fear governed by the Nameless Ones who "'have no power of making … all their power is to darken and destroy'" (p. 153)—she creates light to warm herself and her friend.

Tenar and Ged make their way back to his boat, and on their seaward journey, Ged gives her the choice of living in the cosmopolitan city of Havnor, or residing on the quiet island of Gont with Ged's former teacher, Ogion. Tenar is still wracked by guilt over the executions she administered as priestess, "'Find some isle where no one comes and put me there, and leave me. The evil must be paid for. I am *not* free'" (p. 210). During this intense debate, where Tenar is tempted to become the embittered, despairing Arha again, Ged counsels her to be patiently hopeful: "'You come escaping evil; seeking freedom; seeking silence for a while until you find your own way'" (p. 211). Tenar has a lot of emotional guilt to work through before she can truly understand herself or choose a community to join. By retiring to Gont, she is pursuing the hard work of introspection, like Freud's patients confronting the hard truths of psychoanalysis. This shows she wants to learn, and most importantly, that she has learned to trust her friend, Ged. She knows she can face new, hard truths by trusting others.

The final image of the novel endorses this interpretation as she and Ged disembark from their boat on the docks of the great city of Havnor. "'Come!' he said smiling, and she rose, and came. Gravely she walked beside him up the white streets of Havnor, holding his hand, like a child coming home" (p. 212). This description of her as a "child" implies that her childhood has been returned to her but also that her learning experience is just beginning. This can be an overwhelming sensation, and perhaps that is why Tenar is still described as walking "gravely" into Havnor. Learning is never finished, and most enlightening transformations lead us to truths but also show us how much more there is to learn. Le Guin captures this essential lesson best:

> What she had begun to learn was the weight of liberty. Freedom is a heavy load, a great and strange burden for the spirit to undertake. It is not easy. It is not a gift given, but a choice made, and the choice may be a hard one. The road goes upward to the light; but the laden traveler may never reach the end of it. (p. 204)

CONCLUSION

By studying the allegorical structures in the essays of Freud and Plato, students learn to follow the extended metaphors of Le Guin's allegory through close textual analysis or explication. This is the primary reading comprehension and analytical writing objective of the lesson. I assess their reading comprehension through class discussions and activities, and I test their close reading and analytical writing skills with timed explication essays. Additionally, students complete a personal journal entry for each reading assignment. Journal entries prompt them to examine learning experiences from their own life in comparison to the perspectives of Freud, Plato, and Le Guin. After we have finished the novel, they then use these entries as fuel for a narrative personal essay that analyzes their own learning experiences. The objective of this assignment is to build descriptive, narrative writing skills and to compose an introspective thesis. For my seniors, these

personal essays about learning can be used as college essays, or even better, as motivation to focus on learning in life beyond their senior year.

While critical pedagogy does not often explicitly reference Freud or Plato, the transformative, revolutionary goal of education is similar. Paulo Freire points out in an interview with Donaldo Macedo (Freire & Macedo, 2003) that transformative education needs a loving but challenging educator because "in many cases, individuals have not yet perceived themselves as conditioned; the contrary, they passionately speak of their freedom" (p. 355). Like Plato's slaves, they would rather cling to their illusions than investigate the real meaning of "freedom." Like Freud and Plato, Freire argues that in order to be educated about truths in the world around us, we must learn about our inner selves as well:

> When challenged by a critical educator, students begin to understand that the *more profound dimension of their freedom lies exactly in the recognition of constraints that can be overcome.* Then they discover for themselves in the process of becoming more critical that *it is impossible to deny the constitutive power of their consciousness in the social practice in which they participate.* (p. 355)

In order to teach our students to change the world for the better and to alter the communities around them, they need to understand their own consciousness, their subjectivity in relation to their world—a self awareness also at the heart of Freudian psychoanalysis. Like Plato, Freire also advocates that educators sow doubt and uncertainty in their students, not comfort: "Educators should stimulate risk taking, without which there is no creativity. Instead of reinforcing the purely mechanical repetitions of phrases and lists, educators should stimulate students to doubt" (p. 361). Only these self-aware learners who have embraced education as a struggle can achieve true empathy and understanding of others. To Freire, education is not just about perfecting reason but "education is radically about love" (as cited in Wink, 2005, p. 2).

Le Guin's book depicts this radical transformation as her protagonist struggles to become more consciously self aware, encounters and resists a challenging teacher, and then finally frees herself from her chains of conditioning through an act of love. Students relate to Arha's adolescent stubbornness but also root for her heroic teacher Ged to free her. The novel helps them empathize with the struggles of both students and teachers. Students must understand that the learning process is difficult, uncomfortable, and sometimes even scary. Yet, all three authors encourage us to embrace those difficulties and turn our backs on the comforts of ignorance in order to achieve enlightened knowledge of ourselves—to learn our true names.

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3. YOU'RE A PRINCE, HARRY

The Politics of Oppression and Self-Interest in
J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series

Due to its incredible popularity, particularly among young people, the Harry Potter series can be an excellent teaching tool for secondary teachers: The novels provide academic motivation for many students who enjoyed the book as children, they help enrich the imaginations of readers by immersing them in what J.R.R. Tolkien (1939/1983) calls a "Secondary World," and they open up new avenues of analysis and literary discussion. Using Harry Potter in school also validates a much-loved childhood novel through its incorporation in a teacher's curriculum, and its academic study helps students understand that there is more literary depth and complexity to the novel than a cursory reading might yield, despite its designation as a young adult novel. Indeed, a great deal of recent scholarship has been devoted to Harry Potter as a literary work (e.g., Hallett, 2005; Hallett & Huey, 2012; Prinzi, 2009), as a tool for educators (e.g., Cherland, 2008; Frankel, 2013; Ruwe, 2013), and as a vehicle to explore social, political, and philosophical topics (e.g., Baggett & Klein, 2004; Patterson, 2009; Thomas & Snyder, 2010). Teachers can readily take advantage of Harry Potter's popularity to help students learn to be active, conscious, critical consumers of media. Having used *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) for five years when I taught a course in fantasy literature as a high school English teacher, I can speak to its value as an educational tool.

The purpose of this chapter is to present an interdisciplinary approach to teaching English language arts skills by exploring connections among Machiavelli's (1532/1977) seminal text *The Prince*, the work of contemporary author J.K. Rowling, and other fiction and nonfiction texts. Tisha Beaton (2006) discusses such an approach through using *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) to support mathematics and science instruction within a larger thematic unit, and her suggestion can easily be extended to incorporate other disciplines as well. Scholar Peter Smagorinsky (2008) promotes the development of interdisciplinary conceptual units of instruction which involve "students in a conversation that deepens as they progress through the texts, activities, and discussions" (p. 112). Furthermore, using *The Prince* as a lens through which to view the Harry Potter books can encourage students to read Rowling's books from an ethical perspective, and when teachers frame characters' choices as ethical dilemmas, as Friedman (2000) suggests in her essay on literature-based inquiry, they provide opportunities for students to engage with larger issues of the text, helping to make the text more significant to students and applicable to their lives.

Most pre-teen readers, on first coming to Harry Potter, will probably never have heard of Machiavelli, much less grappled with his ideas on politics and government, and though the prose is dense and his ideas both complex and foreign, approaching *The Prince* through the context of Harry Potter can make the task more manageable. Stover (2003) and Bright (2011) both suggest using accessible contemporary fiction as ways to bridge the gap between the world of the students and the world of the text—an intertextual approach. Using a familiar, undemanding narrative such as the Harry Potter series can provide a ready context for teaching the complex philosophical concepts posited by a sixteenth-century philosopher; conversely, the latter can suggest surprising depth in Harry Potter, thus helping the students understand both texts in terms of each other. Ford (2012) identifies additional benefits to using fantasy works such as the Harry Potter novels, noting that 1) they appeal to a variety of readers, 2) many students will already have experienced the books in a non-academic setting, 3) the seven novels offer a variety of lengths and reading difficulties, and 4) the books do not feel like literature to the students and are thus not intimidating to them.

Furthermore, reading literary text in terms of philosophical treatises such as Machiavelli's (1532/1977) *The Prince* can help students make connections among various time periods, position the novels in historical context, and see that there is a larger conversation that occurs beyond the confines of the page. Such guided interdisciplinary and intertextual readings that experienced readers (i.e., teachers) provide in classrooms can further encourage students to find their own connections among texts, thus enlarging their understanding of the literary world and their purpose for reading. Therefore, teachers promoting an interdisciplinary approach among their students, as opposed to a traditional "'banking' concept of education" (Freire, 2000, p. 72), help create an academic environment that enables students "to examine larger aspects of human interpersonal, and lived-world questions shaping [ELA instruction]" (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2016, p. 5).

However beneficial and appropriate an interdisciplinary approach might be, such a method must incorporate a critical perspective as well so that teachers encourage students to read resistantly, problematizing the text in a thoughtful way that leads to a deeper understanding of both the author's position and the reader's reaction to it. In this way, teachers support a reading of the novel that can "disrupt the commonplace" (Lewison, Flint, Van Sluys, & Henkin, 2002, p. 383) understanding of the novel that many students already possess and enhance classroom discussions surrounding any ethical issues presented in the text. Therefore, a pedagogy informed by the tenets of critical literacy as articulated by scholars such as Lankshear and McLaren (1993), Lewison et al. (2002), McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), and Freire (2000), as well as elsewhere in this book, is essential for teachers to embrace.

The political advice contained in Machiavelli's (1532/1977) *The Prince* is complex, nuanced, and sometimes brutal, and a thorough analysis and application of his philosophy is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will therefore confine myself to discussing two of his best-known precepts: his belief that the result of one's actions determines their moral value (i.e., the ends justify the means); and

that a leader, when a choice must be made, should prefer that the populace fear rather than love him or her in order that the leader retain authority (i.e., it is safer to be feared than loved). I will also draw most heavily from the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997), since that is read more frequently in secondary schools than the other six books.

THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS

The first order of business for Harry Potter and the other first-year students as they enter Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in J. K. Rowling's (1997) *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is participation in the Sorting ceremony in which students are placed into one of four Houses according to their innate abilities and personality traits. The Sorting Hat itself begins the ceremony with an expository poem to explain the process and briefly outline each of the four Houses. When Harry's turn comes, the Hat takes a long time to make its decision, debating about an appropriate placement for the young wizard. Although it seems to want to put him into Slytherin House ("'Not Slytherin, eh?' said the [Sorting Hat's] small voice. 'Are you sure?'" [Rowling, 1997, p. 121]), Harry's desire to be placed elsewhere ends the debate, and the Hat finally shouts, "'GRYFFINDOR!'" (p. 121), much to Harry's relief.

The initial Sorting Ceremony is a key moment for Harry, as the House in which students are placed has a profound impact on them. And the selection is not random: The Hat itself says that it can identify to each student "where you ought to be" (Rowling, 1997, p. 117) and "tell where you belong" (Rowling, 2000, p. 177). The Sorting Hat's deliberation about Harry's placement—Slytherin or Gryffindor—is significant since a student's placement is determined by their dominant trait: students with bravery, daring, nerve, and chivalry in the case of Gryffindor; and ambitious, "cunning folk [who] use any means / to achieve their ends" (Rowling, 1997, p. 118) in the case of Slytherin. Which is Harry's dominant virtue: Bravery or ambition? The Hat identifies both characteristics[1] and cannot decide between them, so Harry tips the scales toward Gryffindor.

This seems both a correct decision, since Harry proves himself brave and daring on numerous occasions, and a satisfying one, since Rowling positions Gryffindor as a desirable House by associating it with positive qualities such as courage and selflessness and by making it seem appealing to sympathetic characters (e.g., Ron, Hermione, and Harry himself). But this decision can be problematized since Harry also demonstrates cunning and a willingness to use any means to achieve his ends. It is this latter idea which is one of the most memorable concepts presented by Niccolò Machiavelli (1532/1977) in his sixteenth century treatise *The Prince*, is explicitly associated with Slytherin House, and is displayed by Harry throughout the seven-book series. Indeed, the entire series can be viewed as a struggle between bravery and cunning, between the heirs of Gryffindor (embodied by Professor Dumbledore) and of Slytherin (embodied by Lord Voldemort)—though Dumbledore often shows himself just as cunning (and nearly as ruthless) as Voldemort. Harry, though officially a member of House Gryffindor and strongly

allied with Dumbledore, often straddles the line between the two ideologies, displaying great courage at times but also revealing a tendency to overlook inconvenient rules and laws when he believes that his ends justify illicit means.

According to Machiavelli (1532/1977, p. 43), virtue and vice should be considered as means to an end, not as concepts possessing intrinsic moral value. They are merely tools, as he conceives them, used by rulers to achieve their goals. Rules, moral precepts, and social expectations should not impact the actions of a ruler, according to Machiavelli, for s/he is necessarily above such considerations as s/he attempts to maintain the state—in this case, Hogwarts. Does Harry break rules, ignore moral principles, and in other ways, act as he sees fit, regardless of the impact on others? Yes, he does—as do other characters, both "good" and "evil"—numerous times throughout the series.

While Harry's actions have been seen as "based on Thomas Hobbes's concept of *summum malum* (greatest evil) which must be avoided" (Ionoaia, 2009, p. 49) and that "Harry Potter and his friends know what is good and choose to act morally due to their firm disposition to act in such ways" (p. 56), such an assessment is rather generous, as the motivations of Harry and Friends are often ambiguous, straddling the line between selfless and honorable, and self-serving and short-sighted. For example, Harry and Ron (with Hermione and Neville in tow) sneak out of the Gryffindor dormitory after hours so that Harry can take part in a midnight duel with Draco Malfoy, risking a loss of house points to Gryffindor in order to satisfy his own pride (Rowling, 1997, pp. 155-156), not for any high-minded purpose. Harry and Hermione also use Harry's invisibility cloak to sneak Hagrid's illegally-obtained dragon through the halls of Hogwarts in order to release it, instead of either alerting Dumbledore or simply arranging for the dragon's release in the relative convenience and seclusion of the forest near Hagrid's hut (pp. 239-241). In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Rowling, 1999), Harry is given the Marauder's Map by Fred and George Weasley which he uses to sneak off to Hogsmeade, the local town, in order to join his friends on a pleasurable outing (pp. 194-196). (Harry, who had not obtained permission from his guardians, was not allowed to leave the campus.) Later in the same book, Harry again sneaks off to Hogsmeade, this time using the invisibility cloak to play tricks on his nemeses from Slytherin House (pp. 279-281). While his actions are not necessarily evil or immoral, neither are they high-minded nor courageous. His rule-breaking in each of these instances serve interests that are largely selfish, dishonest, and superficial.

One of Harry's early acts of insubordination at Hogwarts occurs when the Gryffindor and Slytherin students are receiving flying lessons with Madame Hooch who, escorting Neville to the hospital wing, gives the students explicit instructions to leave their broomsticks alone or they would "be out of Hogwarts before you can say 'Quidditch'" (Rowling, 1997, p. 147). Draco Malfoy, ever the trouble-maker, steals Neville's Remembrall, flying away with it and taunting Harry. Rather than wait for Malfoy to become bored or get caught flying without permission, Harry chases after him, barely catching the thrown Remembrall before it hits the ground. Of course, Harry is caught by Professor McGonagall, but rather than punishing

him for his disobedience, the professor rewards him with the coveted role of Seeker on the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

While Harry has a strong argument to explain his noncompliance—namely, to stand up to a bully and defend his friend—Professor McGonagall has a far less honorable reason to explain herself: The Gryffindor House Quidditch Team needs a seeker, and as House Leader, the team's performance is a reflection on her. Harry's flying is impressive enough for her to overlook Harry's disobedience, interrupt Professor Flitwick's class to pull out another student, and give Harry a brand-new, state-of-the-art broomstick (Rowling, 1997), despite the fact that first-year students are not allowed to have their own broomstick.[2] Furthermore, she even recognizes the impropriety of her gift and enlists Harry's cooperation in keeping the secret (p. 164). In this scene, Harry and Professor McGonagall, two "good" characters with whom the reader is positioned to identify, set aside rules that are inconvenient for reasons that are noble and self-serving, respectively. While it could be argued that, in standing up to a bully and supporting Neville, Harry is acting courageously, especially given the consequences he would face if he were caught; in point of fact, Neville was not present to witness Harry's support of him and Malfoy would certainly have been punished if he were caught stealing and flying without permission. Consider also how another Hogwarts student might view the scene: Harry Potter breaks the rules yet is not punished for it—where is the fairness in that? Don't the rules apply to him, or is he special? Nevertheless, Harry risks his life to retrieve the Remembrall rather than let justice take its course. Machiavelli, who would perhaps applaud Harry's actions, exhorts leaders to view virtue and vice subjectively, judging their own actions in terms of how their ends are served rather than from an objective moral standpoint.

This sort of moral relativism continues throughout the first book, particularly with Harry. Sometimes he is acting in support of his friends, as when he and Ron ignore explicit instructions by Professor Dumbledore to return to their dorms when a troll is discovered in the school in order that they may warn Hermione of the danger (Rowling, 1997, pp. 173-174). At other times, Harry disobeys the rules to serve his own interest, as when he sneaks out of his dorm at midnight to meet Draco Malfoy in a wizard's duel (pp. 155-156). And still other times Harry seems to have the best interest of the school in mind, as when he and Ron hide beneath Harry's invisibility cloak to access the "Restricted" section of the library as they research the identity of Nicholas Flamel; and when Hermione petrifies Neville when he tries to stop her, Ron, and Harry from leaving the Gryffindor common room in order to protect the sorcerer's stone from Professor Snape whom they believe is trying to steal it. Although Harry and his two eleven-year-old friends believe they are acting in the best interest of the school, their actions are insubordinate and they flout rules put in place to protect them from inadvertently harming or even killing themselves and others. In fact, Harry is actually wrong in his belief that Professor Snape is attempting to steal the sorcerer's stone, a fact he discovers when Voldemort reveals himself near the end of the book (p. 293). Harry's actions needlessly put Hogwarts at risk by jeopardizing the safety of the stone which Voldemort nearly steals from him (p. 295).

These scenes illustrate a moral ambiguity that can engage students by first articulating the ethical dilemma, then identifying the complexities of the situation and determining whether the character(s) acted appropriately, and finally considering how they themselves might have behaved in similar circumstances. Additionally, teachers can pose provocative dilemmas to students to begin conversations about morality. For example, should a student be punished if they provoke a fistfight while defending their friend from a bully, or should negative consequences be disregarded and the student rewarded with a coveted spot on the school's wrestling team? Is it appropriate for a teacher to break rules to give special privileges to a student, then ask him or her to keep those privileges secret from other students and administrators?

Examples from the first book in the series range in severity from the selfish and shortsighted to the noble and courageous, corresponding to the extent to which we can forgive eleven-year-old Harry.[3] More troubling are the choices of Professor Dumbledore, though his actions extend throughout the series. In the first book, Dumbledore admits to providing young Harry with his father's invisibility cloak "[j]ust in case" (Rowling, 1997, p. 261) he finds it "useful" and because Harry "might like it" (p. 299). In fact, Harry actually receives the cloak twice: once as a Christmas gift (pp. 201-202), and again after Harry had lost it while breaking the rules to help remove Hagrid's dragon from campus. Providing a powerful magical item—it is in fact one of the legendary Deathly Hallows sought after by Voldemort among others (Rowling, 2007)—to such a young child (who has lost the cloak once already) might itself illustrate questionable judgment, though arguably it is Harry's inheritance and therefore it should be given to him, whether or not he is old enough to use it responsibly. (Notably, Dumbledore does not list this among his reasons for bestowing the cloak on Harry.)

While Dumbledore may be earnest in his reasons for returning the cloak to Harry, one cannot help but think that such an object was given to Harry to facilitate his "extra-curricular" investigations around Hogwarts and beyond in this and succeeding novels. This interpretation is not so implausible when one considers that Dumbledore exhibits a consistent pattern of duplicity, reticence, and moral ambiguity as he manipulates Harry, Snape, and others throughout the series (Willson-Metzger, 2009). Given that Dumbledore is such an important person in Harry's life and has even been identified as a father figure to the young wizard (Carmeli, 2009), his actions would indeed have a significant impact on Harry, particularly during his formative pre-teen and teenage years.

To Harry and many others, Dumbledore displayed admirable traits: honor, generosity, selflessness, and courage; as such, he was a figure of respect, one whom Harry emulated (Carmeli, 2009), especially since Dumbledore took Harry under his wing and treated him with particular attention and kindness which, Machiavelli might argue, creates a sense of obligation in Harry. This sense of obligation is renewed near the end of the final book in the series: Dumbledore has revealed his former motivations to unite the Deathly Hallows and avoid death himself, and many of his machinations had previously come to light (e.g., his manipulation of both Harry and Snape), yet nonetheless Harry finds forgiveness

for the old man (Rowling, 2007, p. 720). Through his self-serving and misleading actions, Dumbledore illustrates a controversial assertion from Machiavelli; that is, a leader "should *seem* [emphasis added] to have admirable qualities," (Machiavelli, 1532/1977, p. 48), though he does not need to possess them in reality in order to ensure the loyalty of others, even those whom he has manipulated and betrayed.

In the climactic sequence in the first novel, Harry, Ron, and Hermione collaborate to overcome the magical barriers placed before the Sorcerer's Stone, and Harry ultimately thwarts Voldemort's attempt to retrieve the precious Stone—though at the time the three of them believed they were foiling Professor Snape. To accomplish this task, the children break several rules: 1) They sneak out of the dorm after hours; 2) Hermione attacks Neville who was trying to save them from themselves and prevent them from costing Gryffindor more points toward the house cup; 3) They make their way to the third-floor corridor which is "out of bounds," (Rowling, 1997, p. 127) according to Professor Dumbledore, and all three are nearly killed several times by the traps that bar their way; and 4) Harry endangers himself, the school, and the rest of the wizarding community by successfully retrieving the Sorcerer's Stone and placing it within reach of Voldemort's minion Professor Quirrell, barely avoiding his own death and the loss of the Stone by the merest of chances. Rather than expel them for their nocturnal mischief, Professor Dumbledore awards them a total of one hundred sixty house points. With the addition of Neville's relatively minor ten-point award—for bravery (the primary attribute of House Gryffindor) in standing up to his friends and trying to prevent their chicanery, arguably the most noble and commendable action taken by any of the four students that night—Gryffindor wins the House Cup.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Rowling, 1997) offers numerous opportunities to evaluate the actions of the characters with respect to Machiavelli's philosophy of leadership. The penultimate scene of the novel gives students a chance to examine and evaluate the behavior of the students and the reward each receives through the framework of Machiavelli's ideas: The Sorcerer's Stone is safe from Voldemort, though the goal was accomplished through significant rule-breaking and other questionable behaviors. Other characters certainly exhibit dubious traits on occasion—Draco Malfoy lies and bullies others, and Professor Quirrell is duplicitous throughout the novel and even endangers the school by bringing a mountain troll on campus—but examining the actions of the "good" characters, the ones with whom the reader is positioned to identify and therefore emulate (e.g., Harry, Dumbledore, McGonagall, etc.), is more productive since they presumably embody the perspective the reader is expected to embrace. If we want students to be critical readers and thinkers, it is important that they are able to problematize the actions of the protagonists and evaluate them through an external framework such as Machiavelli's philosophy of leadership.

The next section will explore fictional manifestations of Machiavelli's belief that it is safer to be feared than loved, identifying opportunities for students to see the tenet through the actions of various characters whose behaviors can then be evaluated. In addition to examples from Book I in the series, I will draw from

scenes in Book V: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Rowling, 2003) as it offers strongly contrasting approaches to leadership, though it is undoubtedly a darker (and much longer) text than Book I. I will also offer additional nonfiction texts with which to pair with the novels to offer alternate perspectives for students to consider.

IT IS SAFER TO BE FEARED THAN LOVED

When Harry Potter, the titular character of the book series, is introduced to the reader, he is a marginalized boy of nearly eleven years whose voice is silenced by his oppressive and often antagonistic adoptive Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia Dursley and by his abusive bully of a cousin, Dudley. His role as orphan in the home of abusive relatives bequeaths the position of underdog, a position with which the audience immediately sympathizes. Throughout the early stages of J. K. Rowling's (1997) *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry's life with the Dursleys is illuminated, and the reader's frustrations at the extremity of abuse Harry suffers throughout the early chapters of the novel help position the reader to accept and validate Harry's perspective as he enacts his revenge. For example, while visiting the zoo, Harry magically causes the safety glass separating Dudley from a large boa constrictor to disappear, terrifying Dudley and his friend Piers as the snake glides past them. While this action clearly seems inadvertent at the time, Harry later ponders whether he had subconsciously "got his revenge … [by setting] a boa constrictor on [Dudley]" (p. 58), a fact which strikes Harry as curious more than regrettable and hints at his less-forgiving nature. Vengeance, cruelty, and a willingness to use violence and fear tactics to assert oneself are all hallmarks of Machiavelli's philosophy of leadership, and Harry demonstrates shades of each in this brief scene, even if inadvertently. Students can be asked to consider whether Harry really intended to get "revenge" on Dudley as well as to examine the final quote in the novel, when Harry reveals his intentions to manipulate his cousin Dudley using fear and intimidation in a much more deliberate way:

> 'Oh, I will [have a good holiday],' said Harry, and [Ron and Hermione] were surprised at the grin that was spreading over his face. '*They* [the Dursleys] don't know we're not allowed to use magic at home. I'm going to have a lot of fun with Dudley this summer ….' (p. 309)

Given the extremity of the abuse Harry has suffered at the hands of the Dursleys, his perspective is understandable, especially since the reader discovers later that Harry uses the specter of magic only as a threat to spare himself from being targeted for further cruelty.

Soon after the incident at the zoo, Harry begins to receive letters of invitation from Hogwarts, letters which Uncle Vernon callously prevents Harry from opening, even going so far as to escape to an island in an attempt to avoid the arrival of yet more letters. The frustrations the reader feels at this unfair treatment and young Harry's impotence at preventing it, combined with our sympathies at the abuse he has thus far suffered in the novel, cause the reader to smile

triumphantly when the half-giant Hagrid, in a fit of rage, magically causes a pig's tail to grow on Dudley's ample bottom. Rowling makes it easy to cheer when Dudley gets his comeuppance, but vigilante justice—even if apparently justified—is rarely approved in society, and such vengeance is in fact argued against by Simone de Beauvoir in her essay "An Eye for an Eye" (de Beauvoir, 2004). In the case of Hagrid and Dudley, she might argue that while Hagrid's motivations ostensibly originate from his desire to support Harry by tipping the scales in the boy's favor, his reaction may instead have come from a desire to assert himself over the muggles, dominating them through magic, a resource integral to his identity as a wizard. Rowling's attempt to position Hagrid's actions as supportive of Harry can be seen in his choice of target: He identifies Dudley as victim (though he is an innocent in this particular instance, if not in his overall treatment of Harry) instead of Uncle Vernon who is the actual cause of Hagrid's ire through his insensitive comments regarding Dumbledore.

Furthermore, Hagrid's reprisal is ultimately unhelpful in preventing future abuse and can even escalate bullying episodes in the future (CASEL, 2009). The text does not invite the reader (e.g., through Harry's voiced opposition) to challenge Hagrid's actions, thus validating the vengeance. Hagrid allows his emotions to cloud his judgment, maiming eleven-year-old Dudley and defying a punishment inflicted upon him by his own wizard community (Hagrid admits that his wand was broken by the authorities after he was expelled from Hogwarts and that he is not supposed to work magic)—and he even invites young Harry as an accomplice in the subterfuge, much like Professor McGonagall does when gifting Harry with a broomstick. Does the punishment Hagrid inflicts on Dudley fit the crime, and will it end the oppression Harry endures at the hands of his relatives? The answer to both questions is no. Hagrid's anger at that moment was directed toward Mr. Dursley, not Dudley who must now have the tail surgically removed; and when Harry returns to the Dursley's home the following summer, he continues to endure torment at their hands, albeit it is mitigated by the fact that they now fear Harry and his wizardly powers.

Still, Hagrid has effectively cowed the Dursleys for the moment and endeared himself to Harry, allowing him to spirit the boy away to Hogwarts at last. In this way, Hagrid's actions illustrate a manifestation of the Machiavellian tenet that "to be feared is much safer than to be loved" (Machiavelli, 1532/1977, p. 46). In provoking fear in the Dursleys, Hagrid has secured their cooperation in his endeavor and has engendered in Harry a sense of obligation for providing support. Students can be invited to engage with this scene, balancing Hagrid's actions against de Beauvoir's argument and with contemporary research on bullying, questioning his motivations and tactics, and offering alternatives to reconcile the characters. Some students may feel that, in taking up Harry's part, Hagrid acted appropriately in that situation, and the diverse interpretations students have of this scene speaks to its moral ambiguity, especially in the eyes of young readers.

Machiavelli may encourage leaders to provoke fear among their followers, but he certainly exhorts them to avoid being hated by those they lead. Hagrid follows this advice and stops short of cruelty toward the Dursleys; not so for Professor

Dolores Umbridge who engenders not only the fear of the students of Hogwarts when she appears as the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Rowling, 2003), but also their hatred as well. For much of the year, Umbridge keeps the students and teachers in check with her sweetly-veiled threats and especially through her acts of malice implemented under the authority of her newly-minted position as "Hogwarts High Inquisitor" (Rowling, 2003, p. 306), and her behavior offers a stark contrast to Harry.

Umbridge oppresses the students and faculty through the implementation of "Educational Decrees" which limit the freedoms of residents through such proposals as eliminating all student organizations and clubs (Rowling, 2003, pp. 351-2), giving herself authority to adjudicate all punishments (p. 416), and preventing teachers from discussing with the students anything "that is not strictly related to the subjects they are paid to teach" (p. 551). Through the limitations of these and other freedoms—and the threat of more strictures to come—Umbridge has secured the fear *and* hatred of nearly all inhabitants of Hogwarts, putting her position of authority at Hogwarts on rather shaky ground since she might drive her subjects to revolt, as Machiavelli might argue. Students can be encouraged to identify manifestations of Machiavellian ideology in Umbridge's leadership style, especially when she oversteps her authority and indulges in malicious behavior.

Perhaps if Umbridge had not escalated her behavior to the level of viciousness and wanton cruelty—by firing Professor Trelawney, disenfranchising the students by refusing to teach them any real defensive magic, and physically punishing Harry by scarring his hand during detentions—she could have cowed the population without encouraging revolution. But the students nevertheless do rebel against her, forming Dumbledore's Army, an informal group of students who meet to learn magic under the tutelage of Harry Potter who teaches them defensive spells to help arm them against dark magic, advice that Machiavelli would certainly have given the young wizard since he believed that arming one's subjects tends to make them more loyal (Machiavelli, 1532/1977, p. 57). Umbridge's oppressive methods help to realize Machiavelli's warning against engendering the hatred of the population: Umbridge is ultimately ousted from her teaching position at Hogwarts.

Harry Potter is himself later ostracized, this time by a combination of yellow journalism (courtesy of Rita Skeeter, writer for the *Daily Prophet*) (Rowling, 2000) and Ministry of Magic scare tactics (Rowling, 2007), the sum of which, enacted upon a largely ignorant and/or jealous wizard population, ultimately results in Harry being forced to flee Hogwarts. Through Skeeter, Rowling seems to be exploring the public's general obsession with the media as well as their willingness to believe the most outrageous nonsense, even when they know—or should know—better. This is certainly the case with Ron's mother Molly Weasley who, upon reading the fabrications of Skeeter (Rowling, 2000), turns cold toward Hermione Granger of whom Skeeter had accused Harry of being enamored.

Hermione was finally able to stop Skeeter from continuing to publish lies and half-truths about Harry and his friends after she captured Rita, who had transformed into a beetle, and sealed her in a jar. Hermione continued to hold

Skeeter, an unregistered animagus who could turn into a beetle at will, in the jar, preventing her from transforming into her human self. She also blackmailed Skeeter—hardly a noble, courageous, or morally laudable thing to do—, threatening to turn her in to the Ministry of Magic and forcing her to quit writing "for a whole year" (Rowling, 2000, p. 728). Despite Hermione's efforts, the Ministry of Magic used Skeeter's influential articles to position Harry as misguided in his perceptions about the return of Voldemort. In this way, the Ministry was able to quell a general panic within the wizard community at the return of such a monstrous threat to their safety.

Why would the public believe these fabrications? Why would the Ministry want to mislead the population into thinking that Voldemort was dead and gone? Machiavelli might reason that since Harry is neither feared nor loved by the general populace and is only a spoiled celebrity in their eyes, he is virtually defenseless against the vilification he faces. According to Machiavelli, people "are ungrateful, fickle, … fearful of danger and greedy for gain" (Machiavelli, 1532/1977, p. 46). Their fear of Voldemort is strong and believing in his re-emergence would have terrifying consequences for them; disbelieving Harry and finding comfort in ignorance is, for many of them, preferable to the terror and uncertainty they would feel if He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named returned to power. As long as Voldemort remains a figure of the past, they need not be faced with the choice of whether to oppose him: Their fear of Voldemort is greater than their hatred of him at this point.

Furthermore, their inaction is not without precedent, considering the rise of Hitler in pre-World War II Germany and the attendant *laissez-faire* attitude of German intellectuals at that time, an attitude which gave rise to the untitled mid-1940s poem written by Pastor Martin Niemöller (1946):

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

Given the fear Voldemort generates among the population of wizards and the terror he created during his earlier campaign, such an attitude is easy to imagine. People might wish to punish Harry for troubling them by stirring the bitter cup many of them had drunk only a decade-and-a-half earlier, allowing Harry to hang high as a lonely scapegoat rather than join him and risk ostracism—or worse—by calling attention to themselves. Better to bury one's head in the sand rather than risk getting it cut off.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding Machiavelli and the connections between his theories and the Harry Potter novels can help a reader become more aware of a subtle moral framework underlying the text and thus resist naturalizing that morality, whether it is embodied by "good" or "evil" characters. Umbridge does not work within the boundaries prescribed for her, using her authority and power to modify the rules or implement new ones, as with the many arbitrary "Educational Decrees" she implements as Hogwarts High Inquisitor which help her maintain control over the students and faculty. Harry, too, works outside established boundaries (e.g., by initiating Dumbledore's Army), uses deception and duplicity (e.g., polyjuice potion, his invisibility cloak, etc.) to uncover information, and ignores inconvenient rules (e.g., sneaking into the Restricted Section of the library, breaking into Gringott's Bank, obtaining teachers' assistance when competing in the Triwizard Tournament, etc.) in order to get his own way. Harry's role as abused outsider-underdog enables Rowling to position the reader to validate his motives and endorse his methods, leading her adolescent readers to accept and naturalize those choices.

Of course, the majority of examples discussed above measure Harry's behaviors in terms of the established rules of Hogwarts, rules which go largely unchallenged by the inhabitants of the wizarding world, except (ironically) by Dolores Umbridge (Rowling, 2003) and (justifiably) by Hermione Granger in her attempt to liberate the house elves (Rowling, 2000). Might the novels be in part an attempt to challenge the appropriateness of such rules? Could Harry's rule-breaking and subversive actions be interpreted as an effort to question Hogwarts rules as a moral axis? Possibly, though the novels do not invite such a critique, and Harry and others accept those rules unquestioningly. Umbridge's attempt to subvert the rules of Hogwarts for her own purpose is clearly positioned as selfish, unethical, and objectionable to faculty and students alike. Hermione's attempt to rescue the house elves from enslavement ends rather ineffectually (and unsuccessfully). The reader is not invited to question Harry's moral universe as defined by Hogwarts rules; therefore, Harry's actions must be judged within those parameters. In addition to engaging students to evaluate Harry's actions through a Machiavellian lens, students can be encouraged to question the very rules by which Harry and the other students are required to operate at Hogwarts and the laws by which the adult witches and wizards of Harry's world live.

As noted above, it has been argued that the Harry Potter novels are founded in a Hobbesean ethics of avoidance of the greatest evil and that the "novels provide a consistent, yet adjustable, ethical code whose role is to encourage young people to distinguish between right and wrong and act accordingly" (Ionoaia, 2009, p. 54). Yet in many instances, Harry's behavior does not suggest adherence to a universal morality, and his choices are too often a matter of expedience—hardly an "ethical code" children should follow. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Rowling, 1998), Harry and Ron are magically prevented from accessing Platform 9¾. Rather than alert Ron's parents or send an owl to Professor

Dumbledore, Harry and Ron take it upon themselves to drive Ron's father's flying car to Hogwarts where it is nearly destroyed by the Whomping Willow, Harry and Ron are almost killed, and Ron's father is almost fired from the Ministry of Magic for possession of a contraband item. While this scene does not suggest an immoral decision, it does illustrate Harry's decision-making process which does not always consider the implications of his actions. Many of these examples suggest that Harry and his friends assume that they know better than those in authority. He does not make his decisions based on any moral foundation; he does so on the basis of his own assumptions that no one really knows what is going on except for him— and, based upon his successes, the moral universe of the novel seems to agree with him.

In addition to applying Machiavelli's ideas as a lens to examine the choices characters make in Rowling's books, the characters' choices can be viewed through a framework of moral development. Whited and Grimes (2002) consider the first four books of the series through the lens of Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of moral development, measuring character actions against his six-stage model of moral reasoning. This view considers character growth as measured through a developmental structure of morality, rather than asking students to make an implicit value judgment on character actions by applying Machiavelli's ideas.

The abundance and variety of characters who lead others in the Harry Potter novels (e.g., Harry, Dumbledore, Voldemort, Snape, Umbridge, Fudge, etc.), and whether they are positioned as "positive" or "negative" role models by the author (i.e., "good" or "evil"), provide numerous opportunities for students to demonstrate both their conceptual and their practical understandings of morality. Students might be assigned to determine the relative influence of Machiavelli's theories on a particular character's leadership style, for example, evaluating why each may have failed or succeeded in their attempts to motivate their followers or lead groups effectively, or they might be asked to identify which of Kohlberg's stages of moral development a character seems to work within based upon their responses to various scenarios.

A critical examination of the Harry Potter novels through a moral lens as provided by Machiavelli, de Beauvoir, Kohlberg, and others can help readers develop critical literacy skills that license them to question other texts and the messages they convey, leading to richer, more fulfilling reading experiences. The Harry Potter series is incredibly popular, but reading the novels simply to enjoy the plot and character development and refraining from a deeper engagement with the moral choices present in the novel, limits the interactions readers have with the text. Fantasy connects with our lives today as well as the ideas of the past, and readers inquiring into Harry's morality and questioning his choices enrich their reading experience with the series, particularly when that reading is informed by Machiavelli's sixteenth century treatise on leadership.

NOTES

[1] While the Hat notes that Harry has "Not a bad mind" (Rowling, 1997, p. 121), his subsequent middling record as a student and the Hat's half-hearted intellectual assessment would preclude his placement in Ravenclaw, a House for those "of *sharpest* [emphasis added] mind" (Rowling, 2003, p. 205).

[2] In fact, her favoritism toward Harry, a budding Quidditch star, is reminiscent of the way many young athletes are indulged in American society, especially in secondary school and higher education.

[3] Perhaps Professor McGonagall's behavior is less forgivable since she is an adult and (presumably) knows better, even if her goal to win the Quidditch Cup was relatively innocuous.

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4. DESIGNING A COURSE INTEGRATING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, FANTASY LITERATURE, AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

This chapter is intended as an aid for designing either a full course on the intersection of critical pedagogy, fantasy literature, and religious studies or at least material for one or two lessons along these lines in a course in religious studies or English, based on the conviction that teachers of both literature and religion may benefit from each other's critical insights and material. Furthermore, this chapter's proposals will hopefully be flexible enough to aid course development for high school, undergraduate, or graduate levels.

Thus, this chapter is structured thematically, moving through a variety of topics that might be discussed in such settings. Under each topic, a bibliography of potential texts is provided, stratified by grade level. It is presumed that at the high school level the students would only read the fantasy texts themselves and that other information would be delivered through lectures and classroom discussions. Perhaps advanced high school students might be asked to read some of the readings in the higher-level strata. The necessarily abbreviated discussion offered here under each topical heading should give a sense of how lectures might be structured and what sources one might use. The topics are as follows: (1) defining key terms, (2) colonialism, (3) capitalism, (4) perspectivism and pragmatism, (5) feminism and queer theory, (6) interrogating the self, (7) royal ideology and the monomyth, and (8) critical pedagogy and reflexivity. These topics are intended to link together, producing a course that makes a larger coherent argument, but since they are subdivided, they may be used in isolation or even spread out into a two-semester undergraduate course.

Other details of course design have been omitted since they will vary depending on the type and level of course being offered, as well as individual instructor preference and personality. To turn this chapter's suggestions into a full course, an instructor would need to decide on course objectives and the concrete measures of their achievement (e.g., traditional papers, quizzes, and exams or alternatives like composing a critically literate fantasy story or making a website or blog for fantasy critique), classroom policies and expectations, modes or platforms of access to materials and assignments (e.g., in person or online), and so on.

RATIONALE

Using fiction to motivate action and promote critical thinking is a familiar feature of evidence-based syllabus design, and, following McCutcheon (2001) and others,

religious studies may be regarded as a *critical* field that should welcome the use of fantasy literature both as datum for study and subject for pedagogy, given fantasy's capacity to promote alternative perspective-taking. Likewise, critically literate students will benefit from knowledge of religious studies.

Fundamental to the study of religion is the realization that "religion" itself is a power-laden term. Critical analyses of religion have traced its development and contestation (e.g., Asad, 1993, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2000, 2007a, 2007b; Masuzawa, 2005; McCutcheon, 1997, 2001; Nongbri, 2013; Styers, 2004). One of religion's primary conceptual opposites is "magic"—a term often used, especially in some of the foundational theories of religion, to describe the practices and beliefs of the so-called "primitive" or "superstitious" peoples of the world. Relative to a normative Protestantism, Catholicism was for some theorists the model of magical superstition, unconsciously mirroring early and proto-orthodox Christian critiques of so-called pagans. However, magic and religion are not so easily distinguished. For example, in the cultural life of many African Americans, it is not reasonable to attempt to make a sharp divide between religion and magic (Chireau, 2003). Hence, the utility of looking at fantasy literature to think critically about religion: fantasy literature tends to favor the sort of medieval (Catholic) or pagan worlds against which "religion" tends to be understood.

Fantasy literature, in which magic is ontologically affirmed—often together with the affirmation of medieval, ancient, or alternative forms of social and economic organization, provides a unique space in which and with which to think through classical theorists of religion critically. Indeed, although sometimes framed as a reason for reluctance to include in a curriculum (Dickerson & O'Hara, 2006), the prominence of religious elements in fantasy is a positive reason for its use in the religious studies classroom. Furthermore, since the genre often contains fictional races, such as dwarves and orcs, who have essentialized moral and intellectual properties linked to bodily traits (cf. Omi & Winant, 1994), fantasy literature provides a useful, relatively detached space for critical thought regarding the representation of marginalized and stigmatized people.

Although the genre contains many examples of sexism, contemporary fantasy authors have been some of the most adventurous and experimental in pushing the boundaries of categories like gender, sexuality, and even the bounds of human nature, again giving a voice to the silenced and representations of empowerment to the oppressed. Some have argued that "estranged" literatures are inherently more critical and generative of social change than mimetic literature, though emphasis is usually placed on science fiction (e.g., Easton & Schroeder, 2008). This may or may not be the case. Some of the potential topics and texts discussed in this chapter provide opportunities for students to read suspiciously because they illustrate things like misogyny or racism, but other texts chosen for this course are resistant writings, expressions of critically literate authors. This variety should help cultivate the recursive or reflexive attitude that is one of the primary characteristics of critical literacy.

Fiction allows one to approach the perspective of the other both in safety and yet with vulnerability. One of the primary objectives of this course is

conscientização, "conscientization," which is to say, both critical consciousness and consciousness-raising. The students and the teacher should be transformed, and this should include transformed, enlarged behavior, not merely some new vocabulary words or memorized facts. As an intervention in society, the course seeks to use the educational system and popular fantasy works, which often function to socialize people into mystified complicity in the naturalized existing order (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 471; cf. Berger, 1967; Barthes, 2012), instead to, in Elkins and Suvin's words (1979, p. 269), "be the advocate of an ideal non-alienated and libertarian reader who has the right to receive all the evidence of how, why, and in whose interest the text has interpreted our common universe."

1. DEFINING "RELIGION," "MAGIC," AND "FANTASY"

This topic sets the groundwork for the rest of the course. As discussed briefly above, "religion" and "magic" are problematic terms. One might base an overview of the meanings of "religion" on J. Z. Smith's (1998) essay "Religion, Religions, Religious."

Moving on to the topic of "magic," one might begin discussion with a question such as, "Why might thinkers influenced by Protestant thought see a similarity between Catholicism and magic?" This way of framing the question makes explicit the fact that magic is defined from a particular perspective, and that definition serves specific interests. If there are any Catholics in the class, perhaps they might be called on to explain what the sacraments are, and the instructor could then explain the concept of sacramentality. This may provide a more sympathetic basis for a Smith-like historical overview of "magic" that draws on Otto and Stausberg's (2013) introductory sections in *Defining Magic: A Reader* (pp. 1-18, 68-70, 126-128, 194-196).

What is meant by "fantasy" may also be introduced. At higher levels, excerpts from texts like James and Mendlesohn (2012), Mass and Levine (2002), Mendlesohn (2008), and Mendlesohn and James (2012) might be assigned. For high school and lower undergraduate levels, however, it may be sufficient to brainstorm together a list of the stereotypical features of the fantasy genre. Once the students are helped to realize that there are entertainment industries reinforcing these conventions, that these are *conventions* and thus could be otherwise, and that some of these conventions may be problematic (e.g., racist, misogynist, etc.), they should have a good foundation for the rest of the course.

Bibliography 1

Fictional texts (high school):
Rowling, J. K., & GrandPré, M. (2000). *Harry Potter and the goblet of fire*.
– One might use the Harry Potter series because of its familiarity and likely connection to the backgrounds and interests of the students. As Dewey (1916) notes, effective pedagogy requires such connections. Furthermore, an unusual number of useful critical resources have been written on Harry Potter. I

specifically suggest *Goblet of Fire* because of its focus on the global wizarding culture as represented by education and by athletic and academic contest. This supplies material for discussion of issues like colonialism and globalization.

Stroud, J. (2006). *Ptolemy's gate*. New York: Miramax Books/Hyperion Books for Children.

– This may be a less familiar series, and students might be encouraged to read plot summaries of the first two books before reading this one. This volume explores the cyclical nature of the storyworld's history of domination and rebellion, which can inform a discussion of Marx's way of reading history. This storyworld should pair nicely with discussions of the colonialist formation of concepts like "religion" and "magic" and, later, the critique of the monomyth.

Clarke, S. (2006). *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. New York: Tor.

– Clarke's work is long and would take a few weeks to complete, but it is a rich source of material for classroom discussion. Her narrative structure is playful and self-subverting in a way that promotes critical engagement, and her narrative itself picks up on important themes in the course: for example, her depiction of empire and magic, her theory of history, her heroes, her female characters, and her psychology and treatment of madness.

Undergraduate:

Martin, C. (2012). *A critical introduction to the study of religion*. Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

– One might focus on the introductory chapter, "Studying Religion: Laying the Groundwork."

Otto, B. C., & Stausberg, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Defining magic: A reader*. Sheffield; Bristol, CT: Equinox.

Smith, J. Z. (1998). Religion, religions, religious. In M. C. Taylor (Ed.), *Critical terms for religious studies* (269-284). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

– What are some of the stages in the development of the meaning of the words "religion," "religions," and "religious," and how do these relate to historical developments in who had the power to decide what counted as normative? What do you think "religion" means, and what challenges to defining it can you see as you try?

Graduate:

Bush, S. S. (2014). *Visions of religion: Experience, meaning, and power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

– In particular, one might assign the chapter, "From Meaning to Power."

James, E., & Mendlesohn, F. (Eds.). (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mass, W., & Levine, S. P. (Eds.). (2002). *Fantasy*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.

Mendlesohn, F. (2008). *Rhetorics of fantasy*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

Mendlesohn, F., & James, E. (2012). *A Short History of Fantasy*. Chicago: Libri Publishing.

Styers, R. (2004). *Making magic: Religion, magic, and science in the modern world*. New York: Oxford University Press.

2. COLONIALISM

This topic may pick up on the previous topic of "religion" versus "magic" by beginning with the notion of "othering" (cf. Rana, 2009). After students are helped to appreciate the necessity of others for the formation of a sense of self, they may be helped to realize how a Western, "civilized," Protestant, scientific, rational discourse of religion needed to define itself against an "Oriental," primitive, Catholic other—namely, magic. Pals's (2006) chapter on Tylor (1889) and Frazer (1998) might be read with this in mind. Drawing again on Smith (1998), one may point out the historical link between contact with and colonization of other peoples and the project of categorization, the Orientalist project of mastery through the representation of the other (cf. Said, 1978). At the graduate level, one might consider Masuzawa's (2005) discussion of Buddhism, Islam, and the World's Parliament of Religions. Tylor's and Frazer's (cf. Pals, 2006) developmental schemas of cultural evolution—in which magic begins as psychological error and social manipulation, turns into religion, and culminates in Protestant Christianity and science (cf. Pals, 2006)—may be discussed relative to the colonialist and modern (and racist) project of maintaining hegemony through conceptual hierarchy (cf. Lincoln, 1989; West, 1982, pp. 47-65).

Again drawing on Smith (1998), the instructor might note that one of the oldest forms of comparative religion is the heresiological model, giving an account of the "false" forms of religion. The orthodox and true comes to know itself in part through the definition of the false other. At the college level, this may lead to a discussion of contemporary Christian opposition to the Harry Potter books informed by McAvan (2012) using Albanese's (2007) work on Metaphysical religion in the United States to explain further the class division in American culture between (Neoplatonic) high and (African, native, and European) folk magic. Again, following McAvan, one can observe that certain Christians' anxieties are provoked by Harry Potter because it contains features that embody a conceptual opposite, an "other," against which they know themselves.

One might use the Lamb (2015) chapter to discuss how fantasy texts often reflect the colonialist project. Lamb notes that Rowling in some ways undermines her decolonizing project through unconscious adoption of a British nostalgia for a colonial and imperial past—a past depicted even more explicitly in *Ptolemy's Gate*. Furthermore, the touristic appeal of fantasy worlds and quests resembles in some respects the exoticized spectacles colonizers enjoyed turning the colonized into. On the other hand, by treating pre-modern worlds as desirable and worthy of imaginative touristic exploration, perhaps well-made fantasy texts help dethrone the modern worldview from its privileged status.

Bibliography 2

Undergraduate:

Lamb, H. (2015). The wizard, the muggle, and the other: (Post) colonialism in Harry Potter. In C. K Farr (Ed.), *Wizard of their age: Critical essays from the Harry Potter generation*. Albany: SUNY Press.

McAvan, E. (2012). Harry Potter and the origins of the Occult. In C. J. Hallett & P. J. Huey (Eds.), *J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rana, M. (2009). *Creating magical worlds: Otherness and othering in Harry Potter*. Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang.

– The two most useful chapters are "The Process of Othering" and "The Presentation of Otherness in the *Harry Potter*- Novels."

Graduate:

Albanese, C. L. (2007). *A republic of mind and spirit: A cultural history of American metaphysical religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Barratt, B. (2012). *The politics of Harry Potter*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

– Consider in particular "Purebloods and Mudbloods: Race, Species, and Power" and "Death Eaters and Dark Wizards: Terror and Counterterror."

Frazer, J. G., & Frazer, R. (1998). *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, B. (1989). *Discourse and the construction of society: Comparative studies of myth, ritual, and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Masuzawa, T. (2005). *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pals, D. L. (2006). *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Tylor, E. B. (1889). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art, and custom*. New York: Holt.

West, C. (1982). *Prophesy deliverance!: An Afro-American revolutionary Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

3. CAPITALISM

One might begin by telling the story of capitalism along Weberian lines. The goal should be to help students realize the ways the secular economy depends on the sacred in order to be intelligible. Weber's (1905/1958) argument is that the Protestant ethic, as a universalized form of Catholic monasticism, generated the spirit of capitalism by turning the whole world itself—the secular—into the field of ascetic, disenchanted, rationalized labor (cf. Pals, 2006). It transformed the Catholic sacramental economy of grace (e.g., Southern, 1970, pp. 100-169) into the secular economy of capital. Thus, capitalism finds part of its origin in religious motives and logics. This story may be complicated and linked to the previous

theme of colonization by pointing out that Europe's massive expansion as an economic power also coincided with its colonialist conquests in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, which not only expanded its markets but also reduced its slave laborers to interchangeable, industrialized components of an increasingly global apparatus. Christian theological notions of blood as emblematic of difference and superiority (Anidjar, 2014) as well as royal sovereignty and calling to evangelize all were used to justify colonial economic domination and transfer of wealth. Finally, the religion of capital, which threatens to reduce all—especially those not of European "blood"—to capital, is softened by a doctrine of common humanity and innate human rights. This, too, may be linked to Reformed Protestant understandings of human equality before God, covenant, and conscience (cf. Lewis, 1954, pp. 39-41; Witte, 2007), as well as Christian humanism and Enlightenment critiques that defined themselves against religious "superstition."

Capitalism's opposite tends to be presented, not as religion, to which as we have seen it is closely tied, but as Marxism. It has often been noted (e.g., Pals, 2006; Russell, 1945) that Marxism itself may be aptly compared to a religion and that its way of reading and critiquing history is in some respects "religious." It is a transformed, materialist system that retains much of its Hegelian logic. Hegel's logic, in turn, is fundamentally Christian, and Marxism offers a similarly totalizing way of understanding history's progress, as well as a messianic figure, Marx, who possesses the key to reading it and its apocalyptic consummation. Indeed, although continuing the Enlightenment critique of the Christian order, Marx and Engels found in early Christianity, the Peasant War, and the figure of Münzer an anticipation of the coming revolution and its ideal of a classless society (cf. Badiou, 2009).

When one thinks about these two economic systems relative to fantasy literature, some interesting possible lines of class discussion open up. For example, one of the foremost theorists of science fiction, Darko Suvin, who was also heavily influenced by Marxist thought, expressed skepticism regarding whether fantasy might evoke critical thinking. Suvin (1979) understands fantasy as another mystificatory expression of the superstructure that alienates people from re-presenting reality to themselves in a "cognitive" mode. Why might he have this attitude? Is it not likely that it is because fantasy tends to take readers into pre-modern worlds? However, rather than viewing this as an obstacle to critical analysis of the globalized, capitalist order, might it not be an opportunity to see the world in a different way? Students should be encouraged to criticize how the genre of fantasy is constrained and determined by market forces, which sometimes promote formulaic writing, but they should also think about how such forces incentivize creativity.

Bibliography 3

Fictional text:
Goodkind, T. (2000). *Faith of the fallen*. New York: Tor.

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– Again, students may want to read plot summaries of the preceding books before reading this one. *Faith of the Fallen* may be used to think about what is "religion"-like in contemporary neoliberal Capitalism and Libertarianism. Ask: "What do we think of Goodkind's critique of a socialist society?" According to Guilfoy (2014), Terry Pratchett's fantasy series reflects Libertarian ideology, and it is in this respect comparable to Goodkind's. In what ways may Goodkind's narrative be designed to naturalize and support a particular ideology? What values and ideals does he stress, and to what ideals is he indifferent and antagonistic?

Undergraduate:

Barratt, B. (2012). *The politics of Harry Potter*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
– The most relevant chapter is "Grunnings and Galleons: Materialism in the Wizarding and Muggle Worlds."
Guilfoy, K. (2014). Capitalism, socialism, and democracy on the Diskworld. In J. M. Held & J. B. South (Eds.), *Philosophy and Terry Pratchett*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY : Palgrave Macmillan.
Pals, D. L. (2006). *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
– Students might read the chapter, "A Source of Social Action: Max Weber."

Graduate:

Anidjar, G. (2014). *Blood: a critique of Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Badiou, A. (2009). St. Paul, founder of the universal subject. In J. D. Caputo & L. Alcoff (Eds.), *St. Paul among the philosophers*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Lewis, C. S. (1954). *English literature in the sixteenth century, excluding drama*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Russell, B. (1945). *A history of western philosophy, and its connection with political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Southern, R. W. (1970). *Western society and the Church in the Middle Ages*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
Suvin, D. (1979). *Metamorphoses of science fiction: On the poetics and history of a literary genre*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Scribner.
Witte, J. (2007). *The reformation of rights: law, religion, and human rights in early modern Calvinism*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

4. PERSPECTIVISM AND PRAGMATISM

Rather than treating the contemporary, secular perspective as natural, as if it were the only objective, rational point of view, the previous topic should have helped students to realize that its fundamental values have a history and are contingent on

a vast network of constitutive factors. This leads quite smoothly into the next topic: perspectivism and pragmatism.

Like Marx and Weber in the previous topic, Nietzsche is one of the seminal critical figures who forever altered the way the contemporary world thinks. Like everyone else, his way of thinking is in part defined against and in relation to received ways of thinking. As with Marx and the Protestants who reformed the Western world, it may be useful to think about how Nietzsche was engaged in creating a "religion." What are his distinctive values and ideals, his myth? How are they meant, like Christian denunciations of heresy, both as refutations of contradictory values and ideals and as ways of creating a new way of being, a new kind of identity?

At one point or another, Nietzsche turns his critical, "despising" gaze on most of his contemporary influences, including Schopenhauer, Wagner and the völkisch movement, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, socialism, democracy, and capitalism. Instructors might focus on the critical Nietzschean postures they feel most comfortable helping students understand. It may be more important, however, to explain the positive, "yes-saying" aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy: the manner in which he celebrated values that he felt had been lost in the modern, Christian world (see Benson, 2008; Roberts, 1998; Young, 2006).

Nietzsche's philosophical and artistic project attempted to represent an alternative constellation of "pagan" values: his Overman is faithful to the earth, tied to his people, rejects lifeless abstractions, has an aristocratic and manly self-confidence, and willingly squanders himself in the creative act. By representing a robust alternative to the values of his contemporaries, Nietzsche enacted the perspectivism at the heart of his philosophy. He illustrated the manner in which perspective, motivated by the will-to-power that defines all life, generates values that serve its interests, including the sexist, anti-democratic, iconoclastic consequences of his ideals. But unlike Marx, who has a similar critical insight regarding the way the values celebrated by the superstructure serve the modes of production of the material base, Nietzsche maintains an attitude of ironic humor regarding even his own project.

After outlining Nietzsche's critical project, an instructor might return to Weber and explain how he, influenced by Nietzsche, predicted that the secularized world would be characterized by a new polytheism and a movement to re-enchant the world. Students might then be encouraged to think about how fantasy authors celebrate and promote new and different values or "gods." They might be asked to brainstorm a list of fantasy subgenres and their characteristics. Each of these reflects the desires and interests of scattered communities in the contemporary world. Likewise, perhaps the growing popularity of fantasy worlds in the entertainment industries and even the development of real religions based on them are manifestations of or methods for re-enchantment (e.g., Cusack, 2010; Kirby, 2013).

An instructor might point out the parallels between perspectivism and pragmatism in philosophy of science[1]. That is, just as Nietzsche's perspectivism critiques a Christian worldview that claims to know the one truth, the total

narrative of the world, and the one ultimate essence of humanity, so too pragmatism rejects a realist interpretation of science. Rather than claiming, as realism does, that science describes the ultimately true, fundamental constituents of the world in the pure language of mathematics, pragmatism treats the models supplied and constantly refined by scientists as useful or instrumental insofar as they seem to be warranted by their accurate predictions of phenomena at different levels. But they remain *models*, abstractions that are actually less real than the phenomena from which they are derived and to which they refer[2].

Turning to fantasy literature, students may be encouraged to reflect on how reading fantasy allows them to shift out of this world into a variety of other worlds and how, within those worlds, readers are permitted to shift among the perspectives of different characters. They should be developing a growing awareness of how and why fantasy is a genre that invites critical thinking.

Bibliography 4

Fictional texts:
Pullman, P. (2000). *The amber spyglass*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
– Again, students may wish to read plot summaries of the previous books. Some Christians condemned Pullman's work for describing the "death of God." Since the death of the incarnate God is central to many forms of Christianity, one might ask students why placing emphasis on the death of God would be so controversial. How is Pullman engaged in a similar critique to Nietzsche's? For those students familiar with C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, how is Pullman trying to challenge their narratives (see Hatlen [2005])?
Grossman, L. (2010). *The magicians: A novel*. New York: Penguin Books.
– Questions for students: How does the novel seem to relate critically to other famous fantasy stories like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Harry Potter*-series? How do its characters reflect contemporary consciousness as influenced by Nietzsche? What do you think of Quentin's nostalgia and his locating "real meaning" in Fillory? What went wrong in the case of Martin? How, then, is Grossman's narrative critical of its protagonists and its own tradition?

Undergraduate:
Blount, D. (2003). Überhobbits: Tolkien, Nietzsche, and the will to power. In G. Bassham & E. Bronson (Eds.), *The Lord of the rings and philosophy: One book to rule them all*. Chicago; [Berkeley, Calif.]: Open Court ; Distributed by Publishers Group West.
Hatlen, B. (2005). Pullman's His dark materials: A challenge to the fantasies of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, with an epilogue on Pullman's neo-romantic reading of Paradise lost. In M. Lenz & C. Scott (Eds.), *His dark materials illuminated: Critical essays on Philip Pullman's trilogy*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Mayock, R. (2010). Perspectivism and tragedy: A Nietzschean interpretation of Alice's adventure. In R. B. Davis (Ed.), *Alice in Wonderland and philosophy: Curiouser and curiouser*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.

Graduate:

Albertson, D. (2014). *Mathematical theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the legacy of Thierry of Chartres*. New York City: Oxford University Press.

Benson, B. E. (2008). *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian faith*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cusack, C. M. (2010). *Invented religions: Imagination, fiction and faith*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Dewey, J. (1934). *A common faith*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press.

Kirby, D. (2013). *Fantasy and belief: Alternative religions, popular narratives and digital cultures*. Bristol, CT: Equinox.

Roberts, T. T. (1998). *Contesting spirit: Nietzsche, affirmation, religion*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Yates, F. (1964). *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. London: Routledge.

Yates, F. (1972). *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. London: Routledge.

Yates, F. (1979). *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*. London: Routledge.

Young, J. (2006). *Nietzsche's philosophy of religion*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

5. FEMINISM AND QUEER THEORY

The previous theme's focus on Nietzsche naturally invites a critique of his sexism, which leads smoothly into the topic of feminism. What happens when one privileges the perspective of those who have been historically silenced, marginalized, and stigmatized? Nietzsche chose to select as his ideal the figure of an aristocratic male pagan, but feminism invites us to hear new voices.

One might begin with a brief history of first-, second-, and third-wave feminism in the United States, from the initial struggle for suffrage and freedom from coverture, to the struggle against domestic abuse and sexual exploitation and for reproductive and employment rights, to the deeper poststructural critique of previous feminist essentialism. In the context of a class like this, one might make a point to discuss examples of feminist myth- and history-making, which illustrate the fact that religious myths advance particular interests (e.g., goddess religions meant to celebrate the female, Nation of Islam's pro-black mythic history, Christian Identity, etc.) and that histories are narratives (cf. Nietzsche, 2007), constructed through omission as much as through citation. Indeed, "womanism," usually treated as a feature of third-wave feminism, may be used to point out the constructedness or fictionality of history (cf. Hemmings, 2011). That is, women of color, working-class and lower-class women, and lesbian women were all active in feminism even before the so-called "third wave."

Depending on the fantasy texts one has read in the class so far, the discussion of feminism relative to fantasy may go in two main directions. The text or texts the instructor chooses to highlight may be critically literate; they may explicitly depict female characters with empowered subjectivities who break free from or intentionally inhabit what would normally be regarded as essentialized female qualities, roles, or stereotypes. On the other hand, the text or texts may be useful in a more negative sense, as examples or opportunities for criticism precisely because they represent women in traditionally essentialist ways.

Moving on to queer theory, the instructor might use third-wave feminism as a starting point. Just as women may not be encompassed by a single perspective—they are of many religions and none, of all classes, cultures, and backgrounds, and so on—human sexuality is fantastically diverse. For the purpose of a class like this, it is worth reflecting on how sexual and romantic identity, like other aspects of identity, may take a narrative form. Indeed, in some kinds of sexual expression, people intentionally adopt specific roles and scripts, sometimes supplied by fantasy stories. More generally, gender and sexuality are performed in accord with regulative discourses and disciplinary regimes that we learn by being socialized into the norms of a society that tends to assume or imply a binary body and a compulsory heterosexuality, neither of which reflect the actual complexity of the world. This has historically led to oppression and violence against sexual minorities.

"Queer theory" resists essentialism in the realm of gender and sexuality, asserting that there are people who fall outside the normative categories. Indeed, queer as a category that denies categorization even resists "gay" and "lesbian" as identities with, again, presumed roles, scripts, and other essentialized traits. On the other hand, transgender individuals explicitly affirm and desire to enact relatively conventional gender roles. Students might be encouraged to think critically about all of this by adopting different perspectives. Why would a transgender person find queer theory unhelpful? How might a Marxist critique the identity politics of a gay rights activist? Given past discussions of otherness and how identity is formed, might that help one understand why some people feel that speech, stories, and laws that support LGBT people are attacks? How may telling stories be a form of activism?

Students may be encouraged to think about whether a gay student would be able to find a positive representation of himself in the stories the course has considered so far. With whom might a lesbian student identify in this course's fantasy stories? Students might even be asked how a queer or kinky reader might reinterpret one of the course's stories.

Bibliography 5

Fictional texts:
Bradley, M. Z. (1982). *The mists of Avalon*. New York: Knopf.
Butler, O. E. (1988). *Wild seed*. New York: Popular Library.

– Butler's narrative stands out as exceptional for its time. As a critically literate text, it offers many opportunities to think about the intersection and negotiation of issues like race, gender, subjectivity, and power.

James, E. L. (2012). *Fifty shades of Grey*. New York: Vintage Books.

Meyer, S. (2008). *Twilight*. New York: Little, Brown and Co.

– If this novel is selected, the instructor may find it useful to spend some time explaining the connections between Mormon deification and marriage, including such concepts as celestial marriage and sealing, plural marriage and the godhead, and Heavenly Mother. Possible questions for students include the following: In what ways does Bella express her own character, resist conformity to expectations, and demonstrate her incompatibility with female stereotypes? In what ways might Bella disappoint as a feminist hero? For those of you who have watched *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *True Blood* or who have read Anne Rice novels, how does *Twilight* compare to other popular contemporary representatives of the vampire genre? Who is marginalized or silenced in *Twilight*? How might someone interpret (either negatively or positively) *Twilight* through a gay or kinky lens (cf. *Fifty Shades of Grey* [James, 2011], which is itself worthy of critique)?

Undergraduate:

Gendler, T. S. (2010). Is Dumbledore gay?: Who's to say? In G. Bassham (Ed.), *The ultimate Harry Potter and philosophy: Hogwarts for Muggles*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

McClimans, L. & Wisnewski, J. (2009). Undead patriarchy and the possibility of love. In R. Housel & J. Wisnewski (Eds.), *Twilight and philosophy: Vampires, vegetarians, and the pursuit of immortality*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.

Myers, A. E. (2009). Edward Cullen and Bella Swan: Byronic and feminist heroes... or not. In R. Housel & J. Wisnewski (Eds.), *Twilight and philosophy: Vampires, vegetarians, and the pursuit of immortality*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.

Rhonda, N. (2011). "When you kiss me, I want to die": Arrested feminism in Buffy the vampire slayer and the Twilight series. In G. L. Anatol & M. Kramar (Eds.), *Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graduate:

Hemmings, C. (2011). *Why stories matter: The political grammar of feminist theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Melzer, P. (2006). *Alien constructions: Science fiction and feminist thought*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

– Consider the chapter, "Beyond Binary Gender: Genderqueer Identities and Intersexed Bodies in Octavia E. Butler's *Wild Seed* and *Imago* and Melissa Scott's *Shadow Man*."

Nietzsche, F. W. (2007). On the uses and disadvantages of history for life. In P. Fritzsche (Ed.), *Nietzsche and the death of God: Selected writings* (pp. 51-65).

(P. Fritzsche, Trans.) Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin. (Original work published 1874)

Sedgwick, E. K. (1997). *Novel gazing: Queer readings in fiction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

– Students might focus on the Introduction.

6. INTERROGATING THE SELF

Previous topics have primarily criticized the social; this topic turns to the individual. Since gender and sexuality are important aspects of the human psyche, however, this topic connects with the developing argument of the course.

One way of understanding the "postmodern" world is, as Lyotard (1984) states, that it is characterized by skepticism regarding meta-narratives, totalizing accounts of everything. Certainly, we saw this in our discussion of perspectivism and pragmatism. However, the postmodern may also be understood in terms of a transformed understanding of the self, and Freud was one of the seminal thinkers who brought about this new, critical stance.

The instructor might begin with a guided class discussion of Freud's vocabulary (cf. Pals, 2006). Do students know what terms like "psychoanalysis," "unconscious," "ego," "superego," "id," "repression" and "wish fulfillment" mean? Students tend to want to focus on the apparent absurdity of Freud's fixation on sexual motives, but they should be encouraged to appreciate how dramatically he changed the way people think about the self. Instead of a cohesive, conscious, rational agent, we now often think of ourselves as a bundle of conflicting drives and functions. This is significant. If the "self" is composed of dynamic components, is it also, in a sense, fictional? If the moderns thought that a rational human self would be able to represent itself and its world to itself with a perfect clarity leading to mastery, we tend not to be as confident. We tend to think that human motives are less clear, even to the actors themselves, and that our powers are more finite and frail.

Novels let us have direct access to the minds of characters, and we guess even more based on what they say and do. However, one might ask one's students, "How may this Freudian, psychoanalytic perspective make readers more suspicious of human motives and behaviors that they otherwise might accept at face value because the novel seems to let them see 'directly' into the minds of characters? What might some of the consequences be if one were to read a sacred text in a psychological register?[3]"

Bettelheim (1976) has argued that fairy tales have a therapeutic structure that helps account for their popularity. Similarly, Campbell (2004) drew on the Jungian perspective (cf. Cech, 1992) to argue that myths and legends help integrate the self, putting the conscious mind in touch with its unconscious forces as identified by Jung. Students might be asked whether they think reading has a therapeutic value and if so, why that might be the case.

The instructor might also encourage the class to think critically about theories like Freud's and Jung's. Yes, they encourage a critical view of the self. The mind

is not just "given," and it certainly is not unitary or purely rational. However, these theories also claim to know what human nature is. Some of its components are unconscious, but they may still be discovered and named through analysis of things like dreams and stories. What if the self, especially insofar as it is technical and creative, is never finished or complete? What if individual human cognition is actually distributed and extended among its social, built, and natural environments? Realizing that we are intimately linked to our world may help us be critical of policies and practices that are harmful to it[4]. Might fantasy literature be used to help people understand challenging concepts like vast, geological timescales?

As with the weeks before, the fantasy text or texts selected may facilitate interrogation of the self in either a positive or a negative way. They may uncritically assume a stable, rational self that is the master of the natural world and that uses the other living things and natural materials to advance its interests. Or they may be critically literate and directly interrogate the self.

Bibliography 6

Fictional texts:

Le Guin, U. K. (1968). *A wizard of earthsea*. Berkeley: Parnassus Press.
– Students might be asked, "Why was it necessary for Ged to accept and integrate with his shadow? How is this consistent with the religious or magical system in the novel? How might one interpret this psychologically?" Other texts already suggested, such as *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* and *The Magicians*, also have robust psychological components.
Hobb, R. (2005). *Shaman's crossing*. New York: EOS.
– The devastation of the natural world inevitably has a stronger and more immediate impact on the lives of those who live in more intimate relation to it, with less of a technological buffer and with less reserved resources. Hobb links various themes we have discussed so far—anti-imperialism/colonialism, posthumanism, and environmentalism. Students might evaluate and critique her narrative's success relative to these aims.

Undergraduate:

Gooding, R. (2011). Clockwork: Philip Pullman's posthuman fairy tale. *Children's Literature in Education*, *42*(4), 308–324.
Light, A. (2003). Tolkien's green time: Environmental themes in The lord of the rings. In G. Bassham & E. Bronson (Eds.), *The lord of the rings and philosophy: One book to rule them all*. Berkeley, California: Open Court.
Pals, D. L. (2006). *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
– They might read "Religion and Personality: Sigmund Freud."

Graduate:

Bettelheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales*. New York: Random House.

Campbell, J. (2004). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Cech, J. (1992). Shadows in the classroom: Teaching children's literature from a Jungian perspective. In G. E. Sadler (Ed.), *Teaching children's literature: Issues, pedagogy, resources*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Hollywood, A. M. (2002). *Sensible ecstasy: Mysticism, sexual difference, and the demands of history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lyotard, J.-F., Bennington, G., & Massumi, B. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rieff, P. (1987). *The triumph of the therapeutic: Uses of faith after Freud*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wood, R. C. (2015). Tolkien and postmodernism. In R. C. Wood (Ed.), *Tolkien among the moderns*. Notre Dame, Indiana : University of Notre Dame Press.

7. ROYAL IDEOLOGY AND THE MONOMYTH

The previous theme introduced Campbell's (2004) thought, although the monomyth itself was not explicitly discussed. This theme is quite specific to fantasy literature, which is heavily determined by royal ideology. Students should be helped to realize how theological ideas embedded in story structure may help maintain political and social structures.

After outlining at least some of Campbell's 17 stages of the monomyth, students might be invited to think of films and texts that seem to fit the monomyth structure. They might further be asked to group them into stories they enjoy and stories they do not. What makes a version of the monomyth satisfying? What makes a story feel cliché?

The instructor may point out how many traditional stories fit the monomyth (e.g., Gilgamesh and Enkidu, David and Jonathan, Odysseus, Aeneas, Jesus). Then, ask students what political structure these stories help to naturalize. Once they realize that the stories justify kingship, the divine nature of that kingship should be explained: the king deserves to rule because of divine choice, making his victory and rule both hard-won and inevitable; as the earthly embodiment of divine rule, a king establishes and sustains the natural and social (i.e., legal) order and is the primal enemy of chaos and lawlessness.

Students should be helped to consider how this way of telling stories is conventional—it could be otherwise. Yet, it is so persistent and ubiquitous, it shapes the way we tell history in terms of "great men" and the way we still tend to tell stories. As an example, the instructor might help the students think through some of the royal ideology in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In fact, the instructor might point out, people are encouraged to tell stories this way if they want to be financially successful. Whether the story is treated as reflective of innate psychological aspects of the human mind (Campbell, 1949) or as a formula for storytelling sanctified by its success in the marketplace (cf. Vogler, 2007), both

interpretations naturalize an ideology intended to support a political order (cf. Jewett & Lawrence, 1977).

The monomyth can be viewed as possessing an initiatory structure, a "therapeutic" (cf. Bettleheim, 1976) initiation into an integrated subjectivity that identifies with the royal self. Indeed, as the self-sufficient source of law and the master of its world, the modern subject that we previously criticized in contrast to the postmodern self is characterized by these royal or sovereign qualities. Through a form of wish fulfillment, one fantasizes living a sovereign life, the "American dream" of a nation of kings or Christ figures, but this fantasy may in fact help sustain the actual oppression of ourselves and others.

The royal figure that tends to be the focus of fantasy stories naturally calls forth a host of subservient others. Students may notice how our critical perspective taking—seeing the story from the perspectives of marginalized races, the poor and powerless, sexual minorities, "lower" animals, and so on—tends to dethrone the sovereign around whom many fantasy stories are structured, and in this way we may find ourselves agreeing with aspects of Suvin's critique of fantasy as mystificatory.

Bibliography 7

Fictional text:
Eddings, D. (1984). *Enchanters' end game*. New York: Ballantine Books.
– This is a fine example of a standard popular fantasy work that exhibits the royal ideological character of the monomyth.

Undergraduate:
Campbell, J. (2004). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Graduate:
Bettelheim, B. (1976). *The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales*. New York: Random House.
Jewett, R. & Lawrence, J. S. (1977). *The American monomyth*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press.
Vogler, C. (2007). *The writer's journey: Mythic structure for writers*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

8. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND REFLEXIVITY

This final theme is the most optional and potentially the most uncomfortable for instructors. It offers an opportunity for students to critique critical pedagogy and the instructor's implementation of it, to think about the goals of the class and the methods used to achieve and measure them. As mentioned above, this chapter does not define the specific course objectives and measures individual instructors might select, but it is probably the case that every course may be improved. And this

theme may be one of the only occasions in the students' academic lives in which they are helped to realize that their educational system may, in addition to liberating and empowering them, also be hampering such goals through some of its conventional and routinized features.

The instructor might explain Freire's (2000) notion of the "banking approach" to education and how features of the course—probably those most required by the educational institution itself—have been designed to habituate students with memorized information and prove whether and to what degree they have done so. Likewise, one might point out how students have been introduced to critical thinkers and their vocabulary and have been taught to read texts in terms of those perspectives and concepts. This, one may note, will give them social capital; they may now use some impressive concepts to show that they are part of an elite, critically literate group.

However, as Dewey (1916) would say, education should be part of a progressive project that helps reform and transform democracy, extending its goods and enlarging its participants. Through social, interactive experience, the students' educative environment should have raised their consciousness and expanded their powers for activity in the world. Let students evaluate to what degree and in what ways this has or has not been true.

For some, this course might have caused distress. Each theme has asked one to question something foundational, sometimes the very assumptions and perspectives of the weeks before. The students may have asked themselves, "Is nothing certain?" Dewey (1934) offers an alternative ideal, at the heart of both art and science, instead of certainty: namely, what Keats (1899, p. 277) called "negative capability," the ability to live and act outside the bounds of a predetermined or certain world (cf. Jeffcoat, 2014).

Many of the concepts we have discussed are very abstract. Students might be asked how they can be used to help ordinary people. How can they be converted into action? Can fantasy literature help in this process, and, if so, how? Is there a kind of magic or enchantment in making people desire and dream? This may lead into a discussion of the students' papers or projects.

Bibliography 8

Fictional text:
Dahl, R. (1988). *Matilda*. New York, N.Y.: Viking Kestrel.

Undergraduate:
Jeffcoat, T. (2014). Dewey's marvelous medicine: Negative capability and the wonder of Roald Dahl. In J. M. Held (Ed.), *Roald Dahl and philosophy: A little nonsense now and then*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield
Karavitis, J. V. (2014). Matilda and the philosophy of education: Or, what's an education for? In J. M. Held (Ed.), *Roald Dahl and philosophy: A little nonsense now and then*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

Graduate:

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Minton, Balch & Company.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Keats, J. (1899). *The complete poetical works and letters of John Keats, Cambridge edition*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

NOTES

[1] And at the graduate level, Nietzsche's invented philosophical religion might be compared to Dewey's (1934) proposal of a democratic, scientific "common faith."

[2] Advanced students might be encouraged to wrestle with Heidegger's critique of this theme. Heidegger regarded Nietzsche's positing of new values that are expressions of one's will-to-power as yet another form of the nihilism Nietzsche himself diagnosed. That is, any active, assertive, willed expression of values is nihilistic because it closes one off from the disclosure of Being. Because Heidegger was so influenced by mystical and especially apophatic thought, he felt that the positing of values and models that are characteristic of, for example, the perspectivism and pragmatism discussed above, are new forms of the hubristic, anthropocentric metaphysics that has controlled Western thought. Heidegger's own critique of "calculative" thinking may be criticized in turn by reflecting on the manner in which he is engaged in a metaphysical project that attempts to define and naturalize a particular conception of the human essence rooted in a romanticized, sexist, ethnocentric ideal. But the puzzle runs deeper. If students are encouraged to think about the magical/mystical (i.e., Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Pythagorean) origins of modern scientific thought, especially in its mathematical form (e.g., Yates, 1964, 1972, 1979; cf. Albertson, 2014), not only will they come to further appreciate the magico-religious genealogy of contemporary thought, but Heidegger's own mysticism proves to entangle him in its own "calculative" elements.

[3] Picking up on footnote 2, advanced students might be encouraged to critique the therapeutic focus on the self. Rieff (1966) has argued that a primary feature of the contemporary, secularized world is the "triumph of the therapeutic." Students might be encouraged to ask, Is our culture deeply interested in acquiring happiness and self-realization at the expense of self-sacrifice for greater goods? Is it abandoning the communal claims of traditional religions for an individualistic gospel of self-discovery and self-advancement? Note how this resembles Heidegger's argument.

[4] Continuing the critical perspective in footnotes 2 and 3, the topic of the environment brings up another significant critical challenge. We have seen how the categories we use to think come from historically contingent social arrangements and particular organizations of material goods and services. We have also seen how the human mind has vast and complicated processes going on below the threshold of consciousness. Both of these levels of analysis make it hard to believe comfortably in a self-determining, self-aware rational agent, defined against the animal world and the colonized "lower" races. Advanced students may be encouraged to consider the ways our lives and selves are linked to our environments. A number of our critical ways of thinking have stressed human comfort, even framing human flourishing in terms of "rights." If we shift our perspective to the environment, making the earth's resources and biodiversity our highest value, how might that come into conflict with other, anthropocentric ideals and political projects the course has considered? In what ways may such a perspective be counterintuitive and difficult? This is another place in the course where students can be helped to realize that the different critical perspectives being explored are not necessarily consistent with each other. One may note, too, how the post-modern may appeal to pre-modern (i.e., "fantastic") subjectivities (cf., e.g., Hollywood, 2002).

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Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Barthes, R. (2012). *Mythologies*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

Berger, P. L. (1967). *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Chireau, Y. P. (2003). *Black magic: Religion and the African American conjuring tradition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dickerson, M., & O'Hara, D. (2006) *From Homer to Harry Potter: A handbook on myth and fantasy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Easton, L., & Schroeder, R. (2008). *The influence of imagination: Essays on science fiction and fantasy as agents of social change*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.

Elkins, C., & Suvin, D. (1979). Preliminary Reflections on Teaching Science Fiction Critically. *Science-Fiction Studies, 6*, 263–70.

Fitzgerald, T. (2000). *The ideology of religious studies*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fitzgerald, T. (2007a). *Discourse on civility and barbarity: A critical history of religion and related categories*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fitzgerald, T. (2007b). *Religion and the secular: Historical and colonial formations*. London; Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub.

Masuzawa, T. (2005). *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McCutcheon, R. T. (1997). *Manufacturing religion: The discourse on sui generis religion and the politics of nostalgia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McCutcheon, R. T. (2001). *Critics not caretakers: Redescribing the public study of religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Nongbri, B. (2013). *Before religion: A history of a modern concept*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Styers, R. (2004). *Making magic: Religion, magic, and science in the modern world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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PART TWO

GENDER, CLASS, AND PRIVILEGE

MARTHA M. JOHNSON-OLIN

5. STRONG WOMEN IN FAIRY TALES EXISTED LONG BEFORE *FROZEN*

Teaching Gender Studies via Folklore

Fairy tales represent one of the richest genres to teach. The stories are short, students tend to enjoy the material, and a wealth of resources exists in the public domain. These stories can be used to teach narrative comparison, literary diversity, tale transmission, and the influence of popular culture.[1] Yet, as we teach and discuss fairy tales, instructors must take care to avoid indoctrinating students in common misconceptions of the genre. These misunderstandings can take several forms: (a) claiming older tales are too violent for even high school and college students to understand, (b) suggesting that all fairy tales exist to subjugate women, (c) implying that men never lack power in these tales, or (d) implying that only psychological readings of fairy tales are relevant ways to examine the stories.

Just as many children are now raised alongside images of the Disney Princesses and taught to imagine themselves as Cinderella, Jasmine, or Ariel, we, as scholars and teachers, have to examine how fairy tales offer fantasies of a culture alongside the plot. Orenstein (2011) strives to understand the possible indoctrination of children, particularly young girls, via princess culture and the marketing that surrounds fairy tale films. The recent success of *Frozen* (2013), an adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's "The Snow Queen" that removes most of the original story to focus on the bond between two sisters, alludes to a welcome reception for fairy tales containing heroines who do more than sing with animals and await rescue. Fairy tales, especially when recorded in literature and film, can become cultural touchstones that capture social ideologies or social fantasies. "Let It Go" can become a mantra for women because it speaks to the women of today rather than reflecting the historical realities of Anderson's world. Neither the source tale nor the film match the cultures that produced them perfectly, nor should they. Yet, when teaching students about this genre and how women, in particular, are portrayed, educators must take care to avoid adding another layer of fantasy to an already complex genre.

In my college classes on fairy tales, I frequently see two patterns in the knowledge my students bring with them to class. Most students arrive thinking fairy tales were created exclusively by Disney. They are shocked to discover that tales long predated animated films, and in composition sections, I have had to repeatedly remind students that Charles Perrault did not borrow from Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) to create his "Cendrillon." This type of logic error suggests that students enter the classroom with a notion of fairy tales that is shaped by their natal exposure and elements of popular culture. They already possess a fantasy of the

fairy tale. Since most fairy tale renditions in America are produced by Disney, students begin to assume that one company authors and generates all such stories. This assumption is furthered when alternate retellings, such as Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* (2014) are produced and promoted by the same corporation, further leading students to provide the company with more than its fair share of credit.

The second group of students has been taught that all fairy tales subjugate women: each tale exists to teach domesticity and force women to be content with their roles as wives and mothers. For example, Beauty and the Beast variants are merely models of Stockholm syndrome. Where students in the first group have trouble comprehending that Cinderella stories span the globe, students in the second category insist that all stories, regardless of origin, demean women. The second group means well. They are aware of gendered assumptions and political contexts for literature, but in arriving with such strong preconceived notions, they often fail to read the tales closely, seeing patriarchy in each story and little else. This second group can also be dangerous because in their ignorance, they assume that novels like *Ella Enchanted* and films like *Frozen* with "stronger" (i.e., more active) fairy tale heroines are new inventions created by feminist authors or filmmakers to save or reinvent a flawed genre. These students also possess a fantasy of the fairy tale. While tales with lessons of subjugation exist, empowering tales also occur. Yet, too often, the second group has been taught that tales are out to indoctrinate rather than to surround audiences with a plethora of ideas and options through storytelling.

In the classroom, we have to be careful. Every time we describe a tale as "old-fashioned" or sexist for its depiction of gender norms, we reinforce these binaries that students often bring to our classrooms. Most of the time, we mean well when we decide to remove a story from a class or skip a version in an anthology because of themes of violence against women, level of gore, or archaic gender norms, yet we risk reshaping the fairy tale genre for our students.

Because both groups of students possess a limited view of the fairy tale, they fail to recognize the genre's potential for change. Lüthi (1992) defines the genre as all-encompassing; it absorbs the world and reflects what it sees, and Zipes (2002) remarks that fairy tales' "real 'enchantment' emanates from these dramatic conflicts whose resolutions allow us to glean the possibility of making the world, this is shaping the world in accord with our needs and desires" (p. 23). Fairy tales act as sites of cultural fantasy while also serving as stages for authors and filmmakers to reimagine how our culture operates. The tales indoctrinate as much as they liberate. Some are designed to highlight women's roles in the home, but others exist to praise a woman who defies authority. The challenge for instructors becomes how to help students see the relevance of the fairy tale in part for its history and in part for its potential to alter perspectives.

THE RICH SCHOLARLY TRADITION ACCOMPANYING FAIRY TALES

Much has been written on gender and fairy tales. Bettelheim (2010) claims that children identify with a tale's protagonist, regardless of gender, because of the

genre's messages of selfhood, but this message can be difficult to process given the gendered marketing we see today. Zipes (2012) gathers together a useful sampling of earlier work by Rowe, Gilbert and Gubar, and Lieberman to explore how women and fairy tales are discussed. The collection presents a useful starting point to teachers looking to see how critics have explored gender and fairy tales, and also includes a sampling of fairy tale revisions. Stone (1975, 1980, 1985, 1986) examines how Disney adapts fairy tales and contributes to messages of true love rather than active female characters, and her work allows researchers to see the inherent contradiction in folklore study between what the stories, readers, and filmmakers say. Haase (2000) provides an overview of feminist fairy tale scholarship, and Rettl (2001) advocates the study of feminist fairy tale revisions because of the way in which versions reclaim space for women and encourage an expansion of the genre itself. The research on women in the tales, how female authors speak through the narratives, and how female readers can find themselves via the stories is vast.

It would be impossible to recount every powerful article and overview discussing women's roles in fairy tales, so for the sake of brevity, I will focus instead on the intersections of feminist readings of fairy tales and the questions that feminist criticism offers students and teachers when approaching a genre as simultaneously diverse and indeterminate as the fairy tale. Fisher and Silber (2000) consider the need for feminist approaches to fairy tales because of the extreme influence the genre exerts on cultural imagination: "Many parents, educators, and literary critics know that it remains impossible to read these charming tales and ignore their capacity for reinforcing limiting sex role stereotypes and conservative ways of thinking about family that act upon children when they are most impressionable" (p. 121). This approach to questioning authorial and narrative assumptions provides a useful platform to teach students to engage primary sources critically, but the method is not without its own assumptions.

When read for examples of feminine agency, many fairy tales can seem to offer few roles for women besides that of wife, mother, or object to be won, leading to scholars claiming the genre offers little place for women. Fisher and Silber (2000) continue:

> Offering only blissful fantasies of feminine helplessness, the best-known fairy tales stir readers to anticipate and even welcome miraculous masculine rescue. Once rescued, the young woman will be elevated by the prince's choosing of her as a bride. In marriage she will remain dependent on her husband's will, as was her 'good mother' before her. (p. 126)

This idea of reader anticipation suggests a unity to the folktale and its tropes that is not consistent with the genre. This approach can work if applied to many of the stories from Western Europe, but even while analyzing variants of a single tale or versions from diverse regions, differences occur. For example, Gilbert and Gubar (1979) have famously analyzed the relationship dynamics between Snow White and her stepmother, suggesting that all women will become the wicked queen in time because of how competition among women is encouraged, but their reading,

while insightful and useful, falls apart when applied to Snow White variants like "Gold Tree, Silver Tree" and "Lasair Gheug, the King of Ireland's Daughter." Both stories were published in the nineteenth century, but may be far older.

Fisher and Silber (2000) suggest the ending of the fairy tale implies that everything in a story is finished as the original social structure is rebuilt:

> Happy endings also seal behind their thin facade ineffable female anger, aggression, fear of powerlessness, fear of men not pronouncing them sexually desirable, and, most of all, women's fears of being condemned for having spoken authentically of their uncomfortable feelings and experiences. The Good and True Princess has learned to maintain silence, for she comes to see her truths would be punished as disruptive. (p. 129)

Yet, several older variants like to leave complicated endings that fail to reflect this pattern in its entirety. In "Gold Tree, Silver Tree," an Irish retelling of the Snow White story, the king's second wife saves the protagonist after the main character's mother attempts to kill her. At the tale's resolution, the king has two wives with their story still ending "happily" resolved. The women do not compete for their husband's affection, and it is difficult to read the tale as anything other than a cultural fantasy with the implied polyamorous relationship at the end of the story.

In "Lasair Gheug," a Scottish retelling of Snow White, the heroine is trapped by an oath of silence so that she cannot reveal her stepmother's actions before being placed in the usual death-like sleep. The new stepmother to the protagonist's children realizes that her slumber is unnatural. Her subsequent actions directly contribute to the tale's resolution so that the heroine can overcome the vow of silence. While the competition that Gilbert and Gubar (1979) famously analyze exists, it does not manifest as neatly as it does in the Grimm variant they discuss, and this version offers an example of women helping women that is also an essential part of feminist criticism.

It is important to highlight fairy tales that reflect feminist themes accurately. Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" is a lush retelling of Perrault's "Bluebeard," and Carter's use of the mother as rescuer serves as an important feminist image. Yet, it would be easy for students to see Carter's change as the first time a woman assisted another woman in folklore if they accept Gilbert and Gubar's discussion of competition as pervasive and inherent to the folktale. As instructors, we have to make sure to convey that Carter's change, while important, is not the first time that women are shown helping other women in folklore. Failing to do so creates another layer of fantasy between the tales and our students. In the genre, women can be heroic rather than merely objectified; their positions may change from the role of male helpmate that Fisher and Silber see.

Works like Fisher and Silber (2000) offer a way to react to a larger tradition of criticism that requires women to have limited roles within the fairy tale genre. The authors answer back to the psychological approach to the genre typified by Bettelheim (2010). Too often, Bettelheim sees mothers and women in general as part of the problem in the stories. Feminist criticism usefully teaches students and

scholars to question literary texts above all. Bacchilega (1997) explores twentieth-century fairy tales for their depiction of women, and her work reminds scholars that fairy tales were and remain an unstable genre. The narratives continuously change, thereby making them a useful way to assess cultural understanding. Bacchilega (2008) highlights the value of feminist criticism in particular when approaching the fairy tale because this critical approach can move past an older idea of exclusively psychoanalytic readings by recognizing that the labeling of desire within the genre remains a political act based in contemporary cultural norms. Like the stories themselves, the role of women will change depending on a variety of contexts. Psychoanalytic readings have important uses, but they are not the only way to approach fairy tales. For Bacchilega, Angela Carter's work, among others, recognizes the "transformative potential for the reader/viewer/listener," suggesting the ongoing importance of the genre (p. 17). We have to work to show students how they fit into this role as "reader/viewer/listener."

Feminist criticism offers students and teachers a chance to study the fairy tale and simultaneously recognize, reject, and embrace its subversive and oppressive potential:

> … It has become possible, rather than rejecting or endorsing the fairy tale wholesale, to study these narratives as sites of competing, historically and socially framed, desires, narratives which continue to play a privileged function in the reproduction of various social constructs, including gender and narrative. (Bacchilega, 1993, p. 11)

As instructors we need to accept and demonstrate the fluidity Bacchilega references. We cannot teach students that fairy tales are merely older models of society without producing a false heteronormative lens for our students. To do so reinforces the perspective that all fairy tales exist to indoctrinate women or to merely entertain with socially permissible messages. Fairy tales have not always been as sanitized or "safe" as they are now, so it is our role to help students see how a common and familiar genre can carry a multitude of powerful messages.

ASKING QUESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

Using feminist criticism to teach students can be helpful, but another challenge comes from the material itself. At the college level, most first- and second-year students will struggle if presented with Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) work, so instead of providing the research as texts to read alongside fairy tales, it is better to embed the goals of feminist criticism: to explore the themes, labels, desires, and roles within each tale.

Since part of the struggle of teaching the genre is representation, we must have students read the primary sources. Students need to encounter the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, and even Disney while being encouraged to ask the critical questions spelled out in feminist criticism. If students learn to ask how Wilhelm Grimm's editing of the stories to add moralistic components contributes to ideas of indoctrination, then students gain the ability to see the fairy tale for what it is, a

tool to explore, rather than limit, the world. One way to encourage students to read primary sources closely is to provide them with stories that are unfamiliar. Students often feel they know how to respond to "The Little Mermaid," but since their responses can be influenced by everything from marketing to nostalgia, it can be useful to challenge their view of the fairy tale by introducing them to stories that do not resemble tales that are popular today. Stories from the Brothers Grimm work well as a starting point since students rarely even know popular variants, like the Grimm Cinderella, and are not accustomed to stories like "The Three Spinners," "The Fisherman and His Wife," and "The Six Swans."

Stories like "The Three Spinners" require that students reevaluate what they expect from a fairy tale. Because of the popular stories often retold by Disney, students tend to see the genre as a medium for positive, upbeat events where characters are rewarded for virtuous behavior. In this story, which shares elements with Rumpelstiltskin narratives, a lazy heroine who hates to spin manages to make a deal with three other women who all bear physical markers of the price of their manual labor. By keeping a simple promise, the heroine manages to avoid a life of hard work as her husband, who sees the other women and is horrified by the changes to their bodies, proclaims that she will not lose her beauty to a life of labor.

My students often find this story unsatisfying, even after reading versions of Cinderella where they once commented about that tale's use of housework. I suggest to them that part of their rejection of the story comes from how they have been taught to understand the genre through larger cultural influence. The students have been trained to look for clearly labeled female protagonists, nice girls who are obedient, and obvious antagonists, wicked witches who reject social hierarchies. The students find a tale like "The Three Spinners" odd because they have been taught to see only roles for women by a common fantasy of the tales themselves: "Trained to regard other women as adversaries, female protagonists in the tales never find contentment in the company of compassionate mothers, other female relations, or friends" (Fisher & Silber, 2000, p. 130). The students often protest that they are responding to the obvious vice in the protagonist, but the students have to articulate what they feel about the story. When I point out that the tale shows a woman doing something other than housework, involves women helping women, and breaks patterns of stories dependent on female obedience, students frequently give the story another examination. It becomes popular for essay and exam topics as the students need to think about the narrative and from where their initial rejections originated.

Once students start to consider the many elements shaping their views of the fairy tales, it becomes possible to expose them to less familiar narratives and have them see the conflicting messages as a positive force that reflects the creative potential of the genre. Students tend to quickly judge the female spouse in "The Fisherman and His Wife" quite harshly as the narrative encourages. Her greed and nagging drive the plot, but they soon also begin to comment on her weak husband who concedes to her grandiose requests. They stop seeing the tale as a commentary on women and nagging and instead see the tale's larger point, a discussion of

contentment and valuing what one has. The students can move beyond a surface level reading that only sees a focus on gender, and they begin to understand that the spouses' roles could be flipped without transforming the point of the tale. The story is not a message about gender roles; it seeks to offer a lesson on ownership and property that can play out in every home.

When the students possess the ability to see a more nuanced tale for its merits, they can begin to handle a more advanced story like "The Six Swans." In this tale, a heroine must remain silent for years while spinning shirts made of star flowers or thistles to free her brothers from a curse. When I teach this story, I mention how critics tend to see fairy tales encouraging women to silence themselves: "In the fairy tales even relatively strong female characters cannot escape entirely the injunction to remain silent" (Fisher & Silber, 2000, p. 127). I ask the students to explain what silence means in a tale type like Cinderella, where the heroine will usually cry quietly and not complain about the abuse she endures, when compared to a story like "The Six Swans," where the heroine intentionally remains silent in order to save her siblings. We discuss how silence can move from a sign of limitation to a signal of strength. A heroine who sews shirts from flowers that sting her hands, who must give birth without crying out, and who nearly burns at the stake at the tale's conclusion does not lack strength, and the structure of the story suggests that the composer also wanted the audience to see the sheer willpower of a woman who could remain silent in the face of such adversity. By having the students see ambition in a silent heroine rather than in the witch the protagonist thwarts, they begin to see how the stories contain useful messages even when produced inside patriarchal systems. They learn that problems with the tales are often more about issues of understanding and perception rather than the narratives themselves.

In addition to teaching students how to read the tales closely, we need to model how to discuss and consider parts of larger story telling traditions and tale types. Most of our students do not realize the science behind folklore studies. They often cannot name more than three or four tale types, and most cannot list more than a few key fairy tale authors and editors. Even if they are aware of fairy tale authors other than Disney, they often assume that tales circulated in a logical transmission process with Perrault naturally giving way to Grimm, so one method to help students move past their original views of the genre involves helping them negotiate the legacy of the fairy tale by focusing in-depth on one older tale.

Cinderella works well for this type of analysis. Because of its long history, this tale type occurs all over the world, and its stories contain both male and female protagonists. When students see that Cinderella heroines can also be Irish cinder lads, they can begin to move past messages of female indoctrination. Male Cinderellas also spend time at the hearth and wear ashes, and they encounter just as much starvation, abuse, and isolation as their female counterparts. To say that Cinderella variants attempt to subjugate women is to overlook the larger themes of triumph inherent in the tale.

Once students understand the base plot is not inherently sexist, nor does it require a character of a particular gender, it becomes easier to discuss ways in

which elements are added to the narrative that lead to the themes others see in the stories. Male protagonists of Cinderella versions do not tend to meet their significant other at a bride-finding ball, and while similar transformations and token exchanges occur, his story does not contain as much of a fetishism of the small, feminine foot. By showing students variants where the slipper is exchanged for nose rings, hair, and other objects, instructors reveal how the stories are transformed by various authors for a variety of audiences. There is no doubt that some tales were altered to highlight or limit feminine behavior, but it is possible to show students how such alterations occur even within a single tale type.

By having students learn the basic components of a tale, we can have them explore how a tale was altered. The German Cinderella, "Ashenputtle," did not contain the famous ending where birds descend and blind the stepsisters for their aggressive treatment of the tale's heroine in the first edition, but if we as teachers help our students to see how the themes of piety were inserted by Wilhelm Grimm in later editions (Grimm & Grimm, 2014), then we show them how the stories have changed and continue to do so. The tales themselves are not pious, sexist, focused on romance, or limiting. We, as audience, are the ones who read themes from one variant onto other versions.

Such encouragement of critical thinking about the tales also allows students to see how modern perceptions of the stories are shaped more by marketing than narrative structure. Teachers can introduce Bettelheim's claims and help students consider his views alongside the presence of the Disney Princesses without a corresponding club for Disney Princes, or just Disney characters. This process creates a space for instructors to ask students about the influence of fairy tale films and other merchandise and how these elements have transformed the genre. How might marketing alter a collection of stories to serve as a model of female behavior not consistently built into the tales? This process of using feminist criticism to ask key questions provides students with a way to take ownership of their understanding of the tales. The stories become living works for them to explore.

It is important for students to work with primary narratives to see how stories have been transformed to include a variety of different voices. One way to look at gender and story structure is to examine Beauty and the Beast variants. Most students know the Disney version, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), which is heavily based on the retelling by Madame Jean-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont. Showing them the earlier version by Madame Gabrielle-Susanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve is helpful, and it becomes possible to discuss the gendered elements of the tale by looking at other sub-variants of this tale type, including the Frog Prince, the Frog Princess, and Little Red Riding Hood. These alternate beast stories highlight narrative aspects that can relate to gender but that may not be as limiting as first assumed. For example, students often cite the time Beauty spends at the Beast's castle as imprisonment, suggesting the fairy tale encourages Stockholm syndrome and models domestic abuse. Without literary context and access to older tales, students forget to consider how women may have composed versions to discuss the social codes for women. By showing them the versions by Villeneuve and Beaumont, it becomes possible to ask students why women might include such

themes in stories meant for other women. The tales can move from limiting to liberating if ideas of social constraint, arranged marriage, and transformation take on a human element. With the information about authorship, students can see how any fairy tale can be manipulated to carry multiple and even conflicting messages.

Teachers can remind students about early marriage structures and kinship systems before exploring how the tales themselves can be quite subversive (Zipes, 2006). Even within more traditional Beauty and the Beast narratives, the heroine speaks her mind. Whether choosing to go to the Beast's castle or having to verbalize her love for a monster to signal the pinnacle transformation, the plot of the tale revolves around what a woman says. We can show students the many forms agency can take if we look at story elements carefully. Once students see the diverse range of action in the fairy tale, it becomes possible to make them aware of the historical connections between women and storytelling (Rowe, 1986). For students, the realization that women can speak to other women via "Beauty and the Beast" (and other stories) begins to transform their notions of gender and genre. They begin to grasp how both concepts are more fluid than previously thought, and with exposure to additional variants, students soon relinquish more rigid notions of how a fairy tale operates.

Primary sources represent the best way to challenge students. As they encounter stories that look increasingly less like televised fairy tales, they begin to see how fluidly the fairy tale operates as a genre. Giovanni Strapola's "The Pig King" becomes one way to encourage students to see linguistic agency in fairy tale heroines. Students begin to reassess their understanding of Beauty and the Beast after reading a story that includes a heroine actively talking back to her mother-in-law and a discussion of female sexual pleasure. The students soon realize that the tale type does not have to represent imprisonment. While some versions include a captive woman trapped by circumstances who falls in love with a figure many would label abusive, the same tale type can create opportunities to examine freedoms for all sexes being offered via cultural fantasy if read closely. The fact that this tale type circles the globe suggests that elements of the larger narrative appeal to a wide variety of cultures, and students begin to explore what it means that elements like captivity do not remain consistent. Similarly, students learn from stories where men are the beauty figure, such as "Urashima the Fisherman." When students encounter traditional Beauty and the Beast narratives alongside tales like Alexander Afanasyev's "The Frog Princess," students quickly realize that their notions of the standard fairy tale need expansion.

This exposure to a wide variety of international narratives also helps students to see how cultural fantasies vary. While the German "Rapunzel" shows a heroine who lives in isolation and sings to pass the time until her prince arrives, Giambattista Basile's "Petrosinella" contains a main character who drugs the ogress guarding her so that the protagonist may copulate with the prince. While we must recognize the different audiences and purposes between Basile's bawdier tales and the moralizing of Wilhelm Grimm, we can show students how these stories are actively manipulated by authors to create images of strong or submissive women and men that serve authorial and political purposes.

SEEING STORIES AS PART OF AN ONGOING CONVERSATION

Once students have a grasp of how tales manipulate readers and are manipulated by authors, editors, and filmmakers, it becomes possible for them to see how stories can exist in conversation with each other as much as with the audience. In class, I demonstrate this process by showing how a story may change between editions or how a tale becomes lost over time, thereby changing the conversation about a tale.

One example of the conversation between stories occurs with Catskin Cinderella narratives. This variant on Cinderella shares festivals, gowns, and sometimes fairy godmothers with its more traditional counterpart, but due to the trope of incestuous parental desire, this tale does not appear in as many edited collections. It includes useful themes of fleeing an unsafe home, enduring hardship, and controlling the pace of the relationship, and yet it is no longer commonly read. One needs only open a current fairy tale anthology to see traditional Cinderellas, heavily edited Sleeping Beauties, and even Rapunzels without the twins often conceived during the plot. The omission by itself is telling since Sleeping Beauty narratives possess a far darker history of ravishment and yet remain in current collections while a story of a young woman fleeing an abusive home becomes expunged.

Most students reject Catskin stories initially because they lack familiarity with this plot. They react with revulsion and disgust in part due to the dark themes the narrative contains and in part because they are not used to this type of message within a fairy tale, but this tale type lends itself to analysis via questions common to feminist criticism. This storyline, although less popular, contains the stronger heroine when she is compared with her traditional Cinderella counterpart. Where Cinderella stays home awaiting salvation via the fairy godmother or via the correct time to attend the ball, the Catskin heroine leaves home to avoid incestuous desire. While she sometimes has the guidance of a fairy godmother, she often does not. Even more interesting is the lack of male Catskin figures fleeing horrific maternal lust. While these protagonists may exist, they are far rarer. As instructors, we can use this lack to teach students about cultural fantasies and the role of folklore. While audiences want to imagine a man or a woman surviving abuse and marrying well, only women appear to encounter paternal abuse in the natal home in these early stories. While it does not suggest men do not encounter abusive or at least neglectful fathers, for they occur in many tales, the lack of gender parity suggests the Catskin storyline exists to do more than comment on persecuted women. While the tale can operate as a cultural fantasy of a woman in peril or as a recounting of a woman's strength (Nicolaisen, 1993), the tale can also operate in concert with other stories that we no longer tell as often.

During the last five years, I have been encountering increasing numbers of students unfamiliar with Bluebeard variants, and it is not just the Brothers Grimm "Fitcher's Bird" or Joseph Jacob's "Mr. Fox" receiving less attention. Even the traditional French retelling remains unknown with students similarly disgusted by the tale when they realize that fairy tales can also include serial killers. These gaps in knowledge can translate into larger problems when students do not understand

foundational sources referenced heavily in later literature (Yolen, 2000), but more importantly, the loss of fairy tales from an informal "canon" of well-known stories suggests how students enter our classrooms failing to see how oral stories functioned as a type of ongoing conversation.

This role of tales creating a composite message can be replicated when looking at collections by the Brothers Grimm, Italo Calvino, etc., if we teach students to explore the themes in a wider variety of stories. The Catskin Cinderella tale type transforms from a "creepy" Cinderella story to a more profound discussion of what a young woman might do if her natal home becomes unsafe. While no one expects an actual woman to ask for a dress of the sun, moon, and stars, the process of stalling for time, fleeing home, and rebuilding one's life easily explains the tale's popularity before fairy tales became "children's literature." The desperate heroine in Bluebeard stalling her aggressive husband by saying her prayers begins to offer a model of hindering an abusive spouse, sending for help, and seeking to escape a new home if it is unsafe. While neither tale should be read as only discussing the dangers of the natal or marital home, these themes, commonly explored in modern revisions of both tale types, help students to see why even these darker stories matter in a genre now associated with dolls, princess outfits, and other memorabilia.

As students begin to comprehend how these tales have been excised, manipulated, and transformed with time, medium, and political agenda, they understand how all fairy tales are examples of cultural fantasies. *Cinderella* (2015) is no less a fantasy of a fairy tale heroine than Perrault's warnings for young women in his "Little Red Riding Hood." Each author does not merely retell a story. As tropes are stressed, deemphasized, or transformed, the story contains new messages for audiences. As editors sanitize a Brothers Grimm retelling, they paraphrase a tale, and when they remove a story like "Allerleirauh," a German Catskin retelling, they leave readers with only half of a conversation. When both a Catskin variant and a Bluebeard story are removed, students begin to receive a distorted view of the many messages that worked in tandem. This exclusion limits the genre and distances audiences from the tales.

Instead, if students start to see the tales as ongoing voices in a larger discussion, they begin to imagine a response for themselves within the stories. The students become quite interested in which stories survive and which do not. Students can then begin to speculate and decide for themselves why a story like Cinderella becomes gendered to the point that students were once surprised by the male versions and why stories like "The Golden Goose" are not as frequently retold.

I take this process of exploration one step further by assigning a paper on agency in fairy tales. I ask that the students define action for themselves and choose the stories they wish to examine from those provided on the course reading list. Early in the semester, I often receive papers on how fairy tales subjugate women when initially asking for a comparison of tales, but the students often produce well-considered essays about fairy tales after reading a variety of tale types and looking at the narratives as pliable for this second assignment. More importantly, the students move beyond binaries of active and passive. I receive

papers about masculinity expressed through non-conformity from sophomores, and the first-year students write about how the protagonists of Rapunzel stories may be more capable than first assumed. The arguments about fairy tales constraining people are gone, replaced by discussions of what the genre has to offer its many audiences. The assignment works because the students have to take ownership of understanding the stories for themselves, and students transcend current cultural debates to look at how fairy tales speak to readers.

<div align="center">TALES SPEAKING THE CHANGES A SOCIETY MAY NEED</div>

When students work with these primary sources, the process removes the "innocence" students may attribute to the fairy tale, but it also prepares them to see the genre as alive and ever-changing. They realize the majesty of the fairy tale over time, and suddenly, the themes of women helping women in "Gold Tree, Silver Tree" are not new. Women helped women in fairy tales long before *Frozen*, and heroines decidedly travelled long before Merida picked up her bow in *Brave*. Fairy tales with "new messages" have always existed because of how the genre works and because some of these messages have remained important for hundreds of years.

Once my students know several classic tale types, I introduce current revisions, and we discuss how the stories continue to evolve. Students often gravitate to feminist revisions the most. The works of Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, and Emma Donoghue resonate with the students because they see authors transforming stories in the same ways they might desire. I find that once students see how flexible the tales can be, they stop offering pronouncements about Stockholm syndrome or gender exclusivity. Students also begin to see that the heteronormativity inherent to the early fairy tale is about older social codes, power, and authorial choice. They accept and welcome a lesbian retelling like Donoghue's "Tale of the Shoe" because the revision confirms their hopes that fairy tales remain relevant and that everyone deserves a place in a cultural fantasy that includes them. A story that can be adapted reveals itself as still alive and teaching us hundreds of years after a particular variant became part of our public consciousness.

Neil Gaiman's success adapting Sleeping Beauty in *The Sleeper and the Spindle* does not suggest that our society values the story of a victimized, unconscious woman as occurs in many of the classic retellings; instead, the revision acknowledges that misfortune occurs when people focus on selfish desires, essentially forcing others to sleep to support someone else's power. Students respect the single mother rescuing her daughter in Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" and the ironic tone in Sexton's "Cinderella" because they see single parents and sarcastic responses to winning the lottery in their everyday lives.

By teaching the questions we gain through studying feminist criticism and fairy tales, we teach students to develop the agency of fairy tale characters for themselves. With each retelling, students find a place for themselves within the stories. They might not make a silent princess laugh with the antics of a golden goose, but they now see that causing the laughter is the heroic part, not being the

stereotypical hero or heroine of a given tale. Students can leave our classes realizing how their lives are the stories that are unfolding. They shape and can control them as much as any author. They will become the Cinderellas, princes, and fairy godmothers of each other's narratives if they only see how their own story is just as important as the tales they encounter.

NOTE

[1] While stories from the oral tradition, the French *contes de fees*, the German *Märchen*, etc. are not synonymous and interchangeable when studying a particular tale type or setting, I merge them here because students are not aware of these distinctions when approaching the genre. I use the term fairy tale to include both oral and literary fairy tales to consider the larger pedagogical values of the genre itself rather than any one aspect of it.

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6. FROM *FLEDGLING* TO *BUFFY*

Critical Literacy, Fantasy, and Engagement in Secondary ELA Classrooms

> *I like being in space because there are better
> parts for women in space…I don't have to
> subject myself to just being the love interest or
> playing a character that doesn't feel relevant
> to the story or playing a woman that doesn't
> feel like an actual depiction of a real woman.*
> —Actress Zoe Saldana (Rich, 2014)

It is with Saldana's words—paired with our love of speculative fiction—that the idea for this chapter began. Why is it that we see more strong female leads in speculative fiction, especially those from marginalized ethnic backgrounds? Why do we have to travel through time and space, through worlds and magical kingdoms, to see a woman's potential, to see ourselves as strong female leads in our own worlds outside the ones we read about? While these questions are for a different project altogether, we begin grappling with them in this piece, understanding that there are spaces for women in texts and in classrooms that cannot and should not be overlooked. These questions drive us to be critical of ourselves as teachers and researchers, a practice necessary when situating oneself within critical literacy.

Through our scholarship and reading, we have noticed a growing trend in female protagonists who show strength and agency in the fantasy genre, particularly strong female protagonists of color. Specifically, in this chapter, we will explain why *Fledgling* by Octavia Butler (2005) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1987) would be suitable for critical literacy discussions in high school classrooms, especially with older students in their junior and senior years. These novels address issues of marginalized voices, social justice, and gender. We will acknowledge the perspectives of feminism and critical pedagogy and also bring in scholarship related to fantasy literature. Additionally, we will discuss how scenes from the hit TV show and comic *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1997)—among other popular culture references—can be used in conjunction with these novels to encourage critical media literacy skills. Our chapter will include a critical literary analysis of each novel, lesson plan ideas, and an explanation of how to include the parallel texts in a classroom setting while teaching critical literacy skills and required state-mandated standards.

OVERVIEW OF FANTASY LITERATURE AND SPECULATIVE FICTION

Although research on the speculative fiction realm is still emerging, scholars have differing definitions of fantasy versus science fiction. William L. Godshalk (1975) contends that science fiction is a sub-genre of fantasy and falls under the umbrella of "realistic fantasy," and that the other umbrellas include pure fantasy, philosophic fantasy, and critical fantasy. However, Amy Goldschlager and Avon Eos (1997) distinguish science fiction and fantasy by stating that fantasy is, "A genre not based in reality presupposing that magic and mythical/supernatural creatures exist," whereas science fiction is "a genre that extrapolates from current scientific trends" and that tends to predict the future. Goldschlager and Eos (1997) note several subgenres within this realm, such as urban fantasy, hard science fiction, and historical fantasy, yet they consider speculative fiction to be the "catchall term for science fiction and fantasy." Concurrently, in the chapter of the anthology *Octavia's Brood* entitled "The Only Lasting Truth: The Theme of Change in the Works of Octavia E. Butler," Due (2015) notes that the speculative fiction umbrella term "refers to science fiction, fantasy, and horror—the fiction of fantastic scenarios and world-building" (p. 260). The novels we discuss are most closely defined as fantasy, yet due to the blurring of genres and their references to alien life, they could also be considered speculative fiction.

We have noticed a recent increase of work by females and authors of color related to speculative fiction and social issues. For instance, the anthology *Octavia's Brood* (2015) is named after Octavia Butler because she "explored the intersections of identity and imagination, the gray areas of race, class, gender, sexuality, love, militarism, inequality, oppression, resistance, and—most important—hope" (p. 3). Therefore, Imarisha (2015b) and her co-editor A.M. Brown desire to coin a new term called "visionary fiction," which "encompasses all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending toward justice" (p. 4) because they believe the following:

> This space is vital for any process of decolonization, because the decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is: for it is where all other forms of decolonization are born. Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless. (p. 4)

Fiction, especially speculative fiction, can be an avenue to explore a more fair and just world. Therefore, Octavia Butler's and Ursula K. Le Guin's works, along with the works of the aforementioned anthology, are appropriate to study from a critical literacy lens, which allows educators to advocate for social justice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories that guide the analysis of our work are feminist poststructuralism, critical literacy, and queer theory, all of which are influenced by postmodern ideas. Since the central characters of our novels push boundaries of gender, race, and sexuality, feminist poststructuralism and queer theory are pertinent theoretical

perspectives. Many of our classroom activities and parallel texts are influenced by ideas of critical pedagogy and critical literacy. We want students to analyze the texts to see how they challenge the status quo and provide visions for a better world, opportunities that speculative fiction and fantasy fiction tend to afford. Additionally, through class activities, students can discuss how they can interact with both the texts and the outer community to change behavior and perceptions in a positive way.

Feminist Poststructuralism

Feminist poststructuralism is one of the lenses we use to analyze the texts discussed in this chapter. Bothelo and Rudman (2009) stated, "Poststructuralists and cultural theorists maintain that we can only make sense of reality through language. Feminist poststructural theories demonstrate how language constructs subjectivity" (p. 101). Language, power, meaning-making, and gender equity issues are all major components of feminist poststructural theory. As St. Pierre (2000) noted, "poststructural feminists…serve as eloquent models…who, having duly struggled with the schizophrenia of language, move resolutely toward faint intelligibilities they hope will enhance the lives of women" (p. 479). Feminist poststructuralism draws on both women's rights and the nuances of language, as described in Foucault's theory of discourse and Derrida's ideas on deconstruction (St. Pierre, 2000). Weedon (1997) wrote, "feminist poststructuralism makes the primary assumption that it is language which enables us to think, speak and give meaning to the world around us. Meaning and consciousness do not exist outside language" (p. 31). Therefore, language plays a crucial role in the formation of our worldviews and our ability to give voice to our own meaning making. Also pertinent to feminist poststructuralism is the idea of intersectionality, as our gender identity intersects with race, class, and other elements of identity to shape our worldviews and our interactions with others (Butler, 2007; Weedon, 1997).

Particularly pertinent to science fiction and fantasy literature are the feminist poststructuralist theories of Donna Haraway. In her 1991 essay "Situated Knowledges," Haraway expressed her belief that feminism and science were alike in their re-envisioning of the future. She noted that feminism was appearing in speculative fiction stories and that embodiment, objectivity, and situated knowledges were the points "where science, science fantasy, and science fiction converge" (p. 596). Haraway (1991) stated the following about the relationship among feminism, science, and speculative fiction: "Perhaps our hopes for accountability, for politics, for ecofeminism, turn on re-visioning the world as coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse" (p. 596). Speculative fiction, like feminism, envisions a better world.

Haraway's (2000) essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" explained in more detail how science fiction and fantasy connect to feminism. Haraway (2000) pointed out that a cyborg is "a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness through the final appropriation of all of the powers of the parts into a higher unity"

(p. 292). The cyborg, like many speculative fiction figures such as those discussed in Le Guin's (1987) *The Left Hand of Darkness*, defies traditional gender expectations, as many cyborg figures are androgynous. Therefore, speculative fiction stories explore and question gender binaries from a poststructural perspective, as many cyborg females are figures of great power in the superhero and speculative fiction novels.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is pertinent to texts that can be studied from a feminist poststructuralist and/or queer theory lens. Critical literacies "involve people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in school and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice" (Comber, 2001, p. 1). The added step to critical literacy is praxis, or action, to improve the surrounding community (Comber, 2001; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002). Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002) noted that critical literacy has four main components: "Disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking a stand and promoting social justice" (p. 382). To be engaged fully in the process, students need to participate in all four components, yet some teachers may choose to implement only some elements in their classrooms.

Queer Theory

The core of queer theory is to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Spiegel, 2008). We argue, then, that speculative fiction provides queer spaces for non-dominant narratives to exist. In other words, these novels offer readers characters, worlds, and spaces that challenge our everyday thinking. Moreover, queer theory asks us to challenge what it means to be "normal." Judith Butler (2007) wrote, "If gender is something that one becomes—but can never be—then gender itself is a kind of becoming or activity"; it should not be understood "as a noun or substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort" (p. 152). By fostering spaces in our classrooms that allow students to challenge—or queer—normativity, we encourage critical literacy.

Ryan and Hermann-Willmarth (2013) noted that queer theory is "a theory that highlights strangeness, especially around the constructed classifications of genders, sexualities, bodies, and desires" (p. 146). Some people think that queer theory only relates to LGBTQ issues. However, in reality, it questions and deconstructs normativity as related to "gender, sexualities, bodies, and desire" (Ryan & Hermann-Willmarth, 2013, p. 142). Queer literary theory, then, is a disruption of what is considered normal and troubles conventional ideas of the status quo (Ryan & Hermann-Willmarth, 2013). Therefore, we feel that queer theory provides an appropriate theoretical backbone for this piece, as speculative fiction does just that: troubles our world and what it means to be and exist within it.

ANALYSIS OF *FLEDGLING* AND PARALLEL TEXTS

Fledgling (2005) is a work that blurs the boundaries of science fiction and fantasy, as it is about a special race of vampires who some speculate were originally from another planet. The protagonist and her family, comprised of both chosen humans and vampires, must escape another race of vampires who are out to destroy them. The novel raises important questions about race, class, gender, sexuality, and power, and it is therefore an appropriate text to analyze with the perspective of feminist poststructuralism using critical pedagogy and critical literacy strategies. The central character, Shori Matthews, is a vampire who does not fit all of society's definitions of physical appeal: she is Black, short, and older than her physical appearance makes her seem. Yet, she is still able to seduce humans to be her "symbionts," or blood suppliers, and to achieve a position of power in her tribe because of her charm and intelligence. In a classroom setting, students could compare and contrast her to Buffy the Vampire Slayer and to other, more traditional vampire narrative figures.

One aspect of this book that some scholars have explored is Shori's non-traditional relationships. Early in the book, Shori, who is Black due to genetic engineering and from a special race of normally-light vampires who could be from another planet, meets a male human named Wright, who is described early on as being tall and physically domineering. The initial circumstances of Wright's and Shori's meeting appear to be from a more traditional narrative; Shori, found naked and injured, is rescued by Wright, who is in the more powerful position and therefore could physically dominate Shori (Loeffler, 2015).

However, the reader learns very quickly that Shori's and Wright's story will not be a traditional romance. First of all, Wright seems reluctant to take Shori into his home, in part because he is concerned about the assumptions people will make about him as a grown young man who is interacting with a female who appears to be a child. Secondly, Shori sexually seduces Wright initially, rather than the more typical reverse, and we learn that she is actually fifty-three years old, but looks younger because her race ages slowly (Loeffler, 2015). Therefore, the initial sexual encounter between Wright and Shori raises a critical question about sexuality and age appropriateness, as Shori appears to be a child of about ten years old by human standards, but is actually a mature adult through chronological age and lived experiences. Arguably, age is a social construction. Although the questions raised by this book may spark interesting debate, *Fledgling* (2005) does not advocate for child sexuality—it merely asks the question: Who gets to decide the appropriate age for sexual maturity? This question, as well as other ideas, is an interesting point to raise among high school students.

Over time, Wright becomes much more emotionally dependent on Shori than the reverse, as Shori seems more concerned with the pragmatic aspects of the relationship, such as the feeding (Loeffler, 2015). When Shori asks Wright if he intends to leave her when the situation with the vampires becomes more dangerous, he responds, "I can't leave you, I can't even really want to leave you" (Butler, 2005, p. 84). Therefore, through the feedings and their sexual encounters,

which usually go hand in hand, Wright has become very attached to Shori. This portrayal is a contrast to many traditional vampire narratives, where the male is the subject figure and the female is depicted as the object; Butler's tale, then, is a postmodern vampire narrative (Loeffler, 2015).

As congruent with other vampires of her race, Shori takes on other "symbionts" into her family, both male and female. More polygamous practices are considered acceptable within the community. Therefore, Shori's family transcends typical boundaries of both race and gender. Wright is White, and Shori is Black, yet Shori is the more powerful partner of that relationship, which is contrary to typical narratives. Also, Shori has androgynous qualities and seems to be polysexual, which could drive critical conversations with students about what it means to be a sexual being versus a sexualized one, a topic relevant to feminist poststructuralism and queer theory alike.

Shori has parallels with Buffy the Vampire Slayer of the hit cult classic television series (Whedon, 1997) and the follow-up comic series. Like Buffy, Shori pushes boundaries of gender and has roles of power typically assigned to men, such as being the primary fighter and caretaker of her family and/or social group. Unlike Buffy, though, Shori is not described as Aryan or conventionally attractive, yet still is very powerful. Through making comparisons with the Buffy television show and comic sections, students can discuss how the portrayal of females in vampire narratives has changed over time.

As a parallel text to *Fledgling*, the anthology *Octavia's Brood* (2015) includes several short stories that could be important to studying superheroes and strong female protagonists of color. "The Token Superhero" by David F. Walker (2015) describes a young man who hesitates to remain the tokenized African-American superhero until he realizes that his work can help the disadvantaged youth of his city. Alonzo, the main character, notes that his superhero training "meant that he'd be trained to use his powers to fight for truth, justice, and all that other stuff they talked about in the comic books, movies, and television shows that recounted the adventures of superheroes and crime fighters" (p. 16). "Black Angel" by Walidah Imarisha (2015a) describes an Angel fallen from heaven who defies God in order to help the struggling people of the world, particularly in Harlem, with the result of being kicked out of the kingdom. "the river" by Adrienne Maree Brown (2015) is a poetic piece about the effects of gentrification on the economically struggling city of Detroit. "Evidence" by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2015) includes past and present excerpts of journals and letters about a queer girl who has found a happier society in the future. Much like *Fledgling* (2005), these stories question binaries of race and gender and could be studied with high school students using lenses of feminism, critical literacy, and queer theory.

ANALYSIS OF *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* AND RELATED TOPICS

The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin (1987) is the one of her many works written within the Hainish Cycle, a series of books set in the fictional Hainish universe that offers readers a critique on gender issues—specifically, what

it means to perform gender and/or embody gender roles. This novel examines sexuality and androgyny, which could spark thoughtful discussions during secondary-level class readings regarding social justice issues, such as gender, sexuality, and gender expression, especially when paired with dominant representations of similar topics. In the novel, Genly Ai, the protagonist, comes to the planet Winter—or "Gethen" in its own language—in order to recruit its citizens to join the Ekumen, a governmental system containing 83 planets. He lives there for two years in order to complete his mission, during which time he befriends Estraven, the prime minister.

After Estraven, Ai's most significant supporter, is accused of traitorous acts and therefore banished from Karhide, a country within Gethen, King Argaven tells Ai that Karhide will not join the Ekumen. Ai, feeling as if he must start over, travels to Orgoreyn, another country found on Gethen that happens to be in dispute with Karhide, in order to recruit their vote. At first, he feels positive about the visit because their governmental leaders—The Orgoreyn Commensals—treat him with more respect than King Argaven. Estraven, who traveled to Orgoreyn after being banished, warns Ai not to trust them, but he fails to listen, growing tired of Estraven's secrecy. The Orgoreyn Commensals' true intentions were revealed when Ai is kidnapped during the night and taken to a Volunteer Farm, similar to a concentration camp, where he almost dies until rescued by Estraven. It is in their escape and travels thereafter where their relationship grows into something powerful, as they have failed to understand each other until this time. Although *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1987) offers much in the form of literary and political analysis, it is in Ai's and Estraven's complicated relationship where classroom conversations founded in critical literacy have the most potential.

Specifically, the characters in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1987) share the typical identifiers of both men and women, but citizens of Gethen have the choice to choose one's sex at certain times in the year. A thoughtful project to do with students when these topics arise would be to examine words and ideas that students typically associate with men versus women, and then disrupt those ideas when the first gender-fluid characters in the Hainish universe are introduced. Teachers might ask students how these characters exhibit concepts identified as traditionally male and/or female, and what we might call these characters, since they do not always identify as a man or woman. Teachers can introduce a critical discussion of gender pronouns, as shown in Figure 1.

This graphic demonstrates a few appropriate pronouns to use when discussing the diversity and complexity of gender roles with students. When paired with *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the graphic can spark a thoughtful discussion of what it means to be a man, woman, or gender fluid/queer.

According to Michael Warner (1999), "Identity, like stigma, tars us all with the same brush, but it also allows us to distance ourselves from any actual manifestation of queerness" (p. 31). Moreover, he wrote, "Everyone deviates from the norm in some context or other, and that the statistical norm has no moral value" (p. 70). Both of these ideologies are addressed in Le Guin's work through her

Figure 1. Gender pronouns.
(Source: Trans Student Educational Resources, www.transstudent.org/graphics)

portrayal of kemmer. During kemmer—Gethenians' oestrus period—the individual begins by remaining completely androgynous. It is not until the individual is stimulated through sexual impulse and interaction with a partner when that being's sexual parts morph into what both partners need. Kemmer offers readers a contrary portrayal of sexuality—without being too "graphic" for a secondary setting—in comparison to typical narratives. Through a critical reading of this text, students can analyze the role of kemmer in order to begin an understanding of non-normative portrayals of gender and sexuality—not only inside the novel itself, but also by transferring that knowledge to their own society.

In addition to discussions of gender and sexuality, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1987) also invokes thoughts in relation to power, politics, and social justice. The planet of Gethen has never had a war, but does not shy away from harsh punishments through exile and violence. Considering the platform topics discussed during the United States' 2016 presidential campaign, including torture and accommodating refugees, students could relate many current, political ideas to the issues raised in the novel. Moreover, language plays a key role in Le Guin's work. Ai, and most people of the Ekumen, can "mindspeak," which is similar to telepathy but is different in that it allows people to communicate with one another despite what language they speak. However, the people of Gethen cannot mindspeak, so miscommunications arise, much like the ones we see or hear about in our

classrooms when teaching students who do not speak English as their first language. Finally, the feminist, queer, and critical issues raised in the novel can help teachers translate complicated theory into manageable examples for students. Teachers can pick and choose topics to discuss depending on what they are most familiar and comfortable with—and what they deem appropriate for their audience. We understand that certain classroom climates and/or work places make it difficult to discuss controversial topics, such as sexuality and gender queerness, but we want to encourage teachers to find spaces for these conversations whenever they can.

APPLICATION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Most teachers in a K-12 setting are expected to teach according to various state-mandated standards. The advantage of these standardized rules is that they are usually fairly vague and open to interpretation. The disadvantage, however, is that their high-stakes presence can discourage teachers and/or curriculum developers from straying too far from the norm when it comes to lesson plans, mentor texts, and forms of assessment. We argue that these books, while definitely not "typical" choices for a high school English/Language Arts classroom, fulfill the requirements laid out for teachers by state-mandated standards while also challenging the normativity too often found in high school curriculum in order to build critical literacy skills with students. In this section, we will discuss some general and specific activities teachers can do while using *Fledgling* and *The Left Hand of Darkness* as mentor texts.

The Genderbread Person

Arguably, the most difficult—or controversial—topics that these novels raise are in reference to gender, gender roles, and sexual identity. According to Warner (1999), "American culture presents a paradox. Of all nations, it is the most obsessed with sex, and of all nations, it is the most easily scandalized. The United States is the land of sexual shame" (p. 21). It is in this context where we see the difficulty of discussing sex and sexual identity in a high school classroom. However, there are incredible resources to help teachers approach these topics in interesting and unique ways, such as through The Genderbread Person activity.

The Genderbread Person Activity

This activity can spark critical conversations with high school students and can accompany both texts, as they both address gender identity. Specifically, teachers could introduce this activity before beginning either text in order to have students consider the complexity of gender and gender identity before being immersed in the texts themselves. By doing so, teachers encourage preliminary discussion that may help prepare students for critical conversations before they happen

organically, instead of having to backtrack once a debate or controversial discussion topic came up in class.

Figure 2. The genderbread person.
(Source: http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2015/03/the-genderbread-person-v3/)

   In addition to discussing the graphic to explain that gender and sexuality exist on a spectrum rather than as set binaries, teachers might want to have students either draw a dot on the arrows to represent where they think they fall on the spectrums or write a reflection of where they think they are on these continuums. Rather than asking the students to turn these charts in, it might be best to open up the floor for discussion and ask questions such as, "Which of these prompts were easy for you to identify yourself as, and which were harder? Why? Would you have placed yourself on different continuums at different times in your life?" For instance, some girls are "tomboys"—a problematic term in itself—at a young age, but as they get older, they might wear makeup and dresses to perform a more "feminine" gender role. Conversely, some men might be interested in music, theater, or other artistic fields, but not pursue them because they feel society is encouraging them to make money in a more "typically-male" field. These conversations can help students to realize that gender and sexuality are not always as binary as they seem. Parallel to the The Genderbread Person is the Gender Unicorn, which is very similar, except that it separates romantic attraction and sexual attraction. If the two graphics were compared and contrasted to each other, students could discuss what, if any, differentiation exists between romantic and sexual attraction and if they would identify themselves differently on the two spectrums.

Buffy Characters vs. Shori

As previously stated, Buffy the Vampire Slayer would be an intriguing character to compare and contrast with Shori from *Fledgling* (2005). Although Buffy is not a vampire, she does have superhero-like qualities, and like Shori, she physically asserts herself over both humans and supernatural beings. Buffy is very attractive by society's standards: she is slender and petite with blond hair and light eyes and skin, although some of the comics show her figure as more voluptuous than in the television show. Buffy's physical strength gives her power, as does her sexual appeal. Shori has dark skin, is very short, and does not typify society's definition of attractive, yet she has other ways of seducing people and gaining the power she needs. To have a visual representation of the similarities and differences between Buffy and Shori, students could fill out the Venn diagram graphic organizer below. If teachers wanted to focus on comparing and contrasting vampire figures, they could compare Shori to Angel or Spike from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) or other vampire figures from literature and/or pop culture. Students could even turn this graphic organizer into an expository compare and contrast essay of two characters. In terms of critical literacy skills, it would be important to discuss how Shori and the character of comparison (Spike, Angel, Buffy, or another vampire/superhero figure) either typifies the status quo's perception of a powerful figure, or trouble people's perceptions of who should be in charge and why.

Compare and Contrast Venn Diagram

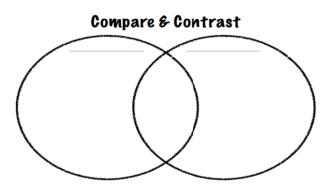*Figure 3. Compare and contrast Venn diagram.*
(Source: http://crazyspeechworld.com/2013/04/spring-into-speech-blog-hop.html)

Popular Culture and Gender Expression

While we obviously love *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, there are many television shows, recent young adult (YA) novels, and popular culture references that tie into our mentor texts as well as some of the activities already mentioned in this chapter.

Because many state-mandated standards, including the Common Core State Standards (http://www.corestandards.org), ask that students compare texts from various multimedia platforms, we believe bringing in references to popular culture will not only fulfill these standards, but will also engage students in the work.

Critically responding to diverse television shows. There are many television shows currently running that consider gender and sexuality in a critical way. *The Fosters* (2013) is an ABC Family television show that features an interracial lesbian couple and their children. Episodes deal with sexuality, gender expression, (dis)ability, race, class, and more, and could make for topical discussions when paired with one or both of our mentor texts, *Fledgling* (2005) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1987). Additionally, other shows like *Transparent* (2014), an Amazon.com original and *I Am Jazz* (2015), aired on TLC, deal directly with transgender identity and gender expression. These episodes would pair well with the gender pronoun activity mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Pairing YA novels with mentor texts. There are several young adult literature novels that would be good pairings with the primary texts and secondary popular culture sources we have mentioned because they, too, can be analyzed from feminist poststructuralist and queer theory perspectives. David Levithan's (2012) novel, *Every Day,* features A, a soul who wakes up in a different body every morning and who must perform the roles of that person for a day. No matter which body A wakes up in, A is in love with the same person, Rhiannon. In the follow-up novel, *Another Day,* also by David Levithan (2015), the reader gets to experience A and Rhiannon's love story from Rhiannon's perspective. The novels raise important questions about how gender, identity, and embodiment affect people's identity construction and other people's perceptions of those views. In either a literature circles activity or a text-pairing scenario, these novels would be excellent in conjunction with *Fledgling* (2005) and/or *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1987). Because both novels discuss controversial topics using academic language, we believe incorporating YA literature into the curriculum will build students' understanding of these difficult topics while increasing their engagement with both novels.

Also pertinent to gender identity and feminist issues are YA romances that present characters who perform gender in non-traditional ways. Rainbow Rowell's (2013) award-winning novel, *Eleanor and Park,* presents a female character who intentionally defies clothing expectations for women in order to express her individually and who overcomes struggles with her inner strength. Park, the primary male protagonist, feels comfortable wearing makeup to express his identity and grows to love Eleanor for being herself. Eleanor and Park are both unconventional characters that disrupt traditional gender roles and who grapple with intersectionality issues. Eleanor faces challenges because of her weight, her socioeconomic status, and her abusive stepfather; Park faces challenges of being a more effeminate half-Asian male. Yet, Eleanor and Park genuinely love each other and are willing to stand up to others in order to preserve their relationship and each

other's dignity. Although *Eleanor and Park* is marketed as a realistic fiction book, its 1980s pop culture references, unconventional characters, and exploration of gender roles make it a strong addition to this literary unit. Other realistic YA romance novels that explore and trouble traditional gender roles include *Isla and the Happily Ever After* by Stephanie Perkins (2015), *If I Stay* by Gail Foreman (2010), and its companion novel *Where She Went* by Gail Foreman (2012).

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Thinking back to Saldana's quote, we see the affordances speculative fiction offers readers, but also some of its drawbacks. Because it is speculative—fantasy, science fiction, comics/graphica, etc.—these incredible women are not always *realistic*. However, we notice a growing trend in literature, television shows, and movies alike to feature female protagonists who show a great deal of agency, and we believe it is in these genres where those doors may have been opened. Moreover, as explained in this chapter using *Fledgling* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*, speculative fiction—especially when taught in a critical classroom setting—encourages analytical reading both of texts and of our world. By becoming critical of ourselves and of the books we read, we encourage the same practice of critical literacy in our students. This practice pushes back against dominant discourses and breaks down the power structures in our classrooms to create a democratic educational process sorely missing from the standards-based models enveloping our schools. Moreover, it is fun to critique the words of a novel and relate that critique to our worlds. Paulo Freire (2000) wrote,

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 34)

We believe wholeheartedly in the second half of Freire's words—education is powerful and can change lives; using a foundation of critical literacy in our classes will help our students consider ideas—such as gender and sexuality—and disrupt normative beliefs about them.

There are many possibilities for the secondary English/Language Arts classroom. Most K-12 educators work in a setting ruled by vague standards, seemingly impossible top-down mandates, and stressful high-stakes testing. It is our hope that this chapter addresses the parts in all of us that led us to be teachers in the first place: a love of literature, a love of students, and a love of language. It is in those parts where we find ourselves most happy and passionate about our jobs, and where we see students light up with a passion of their own. *Fledgling* by Octavia Butler (2005) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1987) contain narratives that foster those spaces. We encourage teachers to incorporate fantasy and other speculative fiction in their lessons—these texts give

us more room to see what our world could be instead of the dominant discourses that tell us what it is.

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7. GENDER, CLASS, AND MARGINALIZATION IN BEATRIX POTTER

Examining the ways in which Beatrix Potter's children's fantasy literature frequently enforces gender and class expectations and marginalizes various characters offers a useful way to teach students the value of using critical literacy frameworks of reading multiple texts and reading from a resistant perspective. Apart from the continued popularity of her children's books, Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) herself has proven to be a captivating figure long after her death: adult and juvenile biographies, a movie, and a series of mystery novels in which a fictionalized Potter plays detective attest to sustained interest in her life.[1] Consequently, juxtaposing Potter's own experiences with the adverse limitations of gender and class against her depictions of these two aspects in her picture books is a constructive way to analyze gender roles and class privileges and expectations in her work. Often gender or class status leads to a character's marginalization. Students quickly realize that despite difficult circumstances, Potter successfully circumvented the boundaries imposed by gender and class in her own life. She, however, does not fully extend these privileges to the characters in her books. Accordingly, Edward H. Behrman's (2006) observations on the need to "introduce students to the subjectivity of authorship" (p. 492) through reading multiple texts and to cultivate a "conscious awareness of the influences upon text interpretation" (p. 493) by developing a position resistant to the author's worldview become productive means of interpreting Potter's works and situating them in the contexts of her life and time period. Such readings demonstrate the repeated silencing, placation, or marginalization of certain characters through gender and class.

Using critical literacy to analyze Potter's works helps students understand what Elizabeth Bishop (2014) defines as the "politics of daily life within contemporary society" (p. 52). Bishop observes that critical literacy (with all its various approaches) offers students a way "to locate and actively seek out contradictions within modes of life, theories, and substantive intellectual positions" (p. 52). The methods of reading multiple texts and reading from a resistant perspective help to locate discrepancies which lie beneath the veneer of daily life. In his discussion of this type of reading, Behrman (2006) demonstrates the value of looking at multiple narratives; he argues: "By experiencing different treatments of the same topic or event, students begin to recognize that text is not 'true' in any absolute sense but a rendering as portrayed by an author" (p. 493). Reading from a resistant perspective complements the disruption of hegemonic narratives by allowing students to actively analyze the perspectives of characters on the margins of the narrative or to question what elements are included or excluded in a narrative (Behrman, 2006, pp. 493-494). In the context of Bishop's and Behrman's ideas on critical literacy,

Potter's narratives are particularly useful in that they seem to portray ordinary life devoid of political stances, but students come to understand what passes as normal in the text has ties to larger social, economic, and political structures. Students realize that the intended audience for Potter's works, young children, may not see such connections and consequently understand the need and practical implications for critical literacy.

In addition to these methods of reading and in order to better understand Potter's work, students need to appreciate the special opportunities of fantasy literature. Rosemary Jackson (1981) provides a helpful framework when she argues that fantasy literature is essentially a "literature of desire" (p. 3) which negotiates or reworks societal restraints, opening up subversive socio-political spaces in the process (pp. 3-5). Jackson (1981) uses the terms "lack," "absence," and "loss" to explain the "desire" such literature expresses (p. 3). Maria Nikolajeva (2012), in her study of children's fantasy literature, discusses the central importance that power takes in various works. With these frameworks and concepts, students have a concrete starting point for textual analysis. What desire, for instance, does Peter Rabbit (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, 1901) express in disobeying his mother and heading off to Mr. McGregor's garden? Who has the most power in the text? Neither Peter nor McGregor masters the other in the encounter in the garden. While Peter's mother is proven right in her warnings about McGregor's garden, she does not know about Peter's escapade. Such ambivalence in the text invites further analysis.

Equally important is the need to situate Potter's work within the canon of children's literature. Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863) is often seen as the first major work for children that moved away from pure didacticism. Fittingly, *The Water-Babies* is a fantasy novel in which the protagonist Tom, a chimney sweep, desires to be physically and morally clean and begins a fantastical journey in the natural world to do so, with moral choices giving him great agency. Other children's fantasy literature quickly followed the publication of *The Water-Babies* with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), *The Princess and Curdie* (1883) and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). Through their fantastical worlds, these authors offer biting social critique while also being lighthearted. In joining this tradition of fantasy literature, Potter combines social satire with humor; her warm pictures of animals and the English countryside blunt the violence and harshness of this world.

Potter's range of picture books provides many choices for a variety of courses. Potter's works would fit in well with courses on Victorian or Edwardian literature, gender studies, popular culture, and of course children's literature. While I have used various combinations of her books, I would like to bring attention to four texts that for the purposes of critical literacy have several elements of interest: *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* (1908), *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909), and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910). While *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* mentioned earlier addresses issues of property and

community, the interplay between Peter and his mother, and between Peter and McGregor, depicts a child's typical testing of boundaries and facing danger.[2] In *Samuel Whiskers*, on the other hand, Tom Kitten (a child) is nearly murdered, and the precious eggs of Jemima Puddle-Duck (an aspiring but careless mother) are eaten by some puppies. Although elements of community occur in *Jemima Puddle-Duck* and *Samuel Whiskers*, the importance of a correctly structured community becomes much more pronounced in *Ginger and Pickles* and *Mrs. Tittlemouse*. The proprietors of a popular village shop, Ginger (a cat) and Pickles (a dog) fail the community by not making wise business choices resulting in the closing of their store. Community is again of central importance in *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, particularly the *right* type of community which in this case means no creatures with "dirty little feet" (Potter, 1910/1938, p. 18). Significantly, the marginalization of certain individuals within a community becomes vitally important in the resolutions of these texts. Using Behrman's categories of reading multiple texts and reading from a resistant perspective, I will examine these four books of Potter and demonstrate the systems of power and the marginalization these narratives produce, particularly in terms of gender and class. I will first take a brief look at Potter's life to help situate her works.

BEATRIX POTTER

Linda Lear (2007) begins her biography of Potter with the loss of a ring given to her by Norman Warne and the purchase of Potter's much loved property in the Lake District, Hill Top Farm. With the mention of Warne, Hill Top Farm, and the fact that at the time of the loss of the ring Potter is happily married to William Heelis, Lear adeptly pinpoints defining moments in Potter's life. At the beginning of her career as an author, Potter met Norman Warne, the editor assigned to her from the publishing house Frederick Warne & Company. This professional relationship developed into friendship and then romance, and Warne proposed to Potter in July of 1905. Potter's parents immediately opposed the engagement because they saw Warne as a social inferior, and Potter and Warne made no public announcement of their engagement. Tragically, Warne died in August of 1905. Potter continued to have close ties with the family, and Fredrick Warne and Company continued to be her publishers. As her career flourished, Potter, a savvy businesswoman, created toys, board games, and wallpaper which capitalized on her characters. Sales from her books and other merchandise helped Potter buy her first property, Hill Top Farm, and she continued to acquire more land. Potter's biographers note the importance of this purchase as it provided Potter independence from her parents; Ruth MacDonald (1986) writes of Hill Top "[…] the purchase of the house gave her the ideal, personal space, the cozy, simple home life that she had longed for since her teens" (p. 18). Heelis, a lawyer, helped Potter with these subsequent purchases, and in October 1913, Potter and Heelis married. Although her parents once again objected to the match because of social inferiority, they did attend the wedding.

Coupled with these key moments in which class expectations conflicted with personal happiness and fulfillment, Potter also experienced the limitations of gender. During her childhood, Potter developed a love for nature which she expressed through art. From 1892 to 1897, Potter studied and drew fungi, and she also conducted research on spore dissemination. When Potter tried to present her research to the scientific community, she received indifference to her work, mainly because she was a woman and not taken seriously. After Potter had to withdraw a paper that she presented to the Linnean Society, she shifted the focus of her drawings to stories and began her career as author and illustrator. Potter's interest in the natural world, however, never abated, and after her death, her substantial estate was bequeathed to the National Trust. Potter's later financial independence and her love for a simple farming life instead of fashionable society made her seem odd in the context of Victorian/Edwardian ideals of womanhood, but these societal expectations did not adversely affect Potter who was now wealthy and well established. Although Potter was interested in political affairs, particularly trade agreements and copyright laws, Lear (2007) notes that Potter was against women's suffrage (pp. 232-233). Ultimately, Potter displays an interesting mix of breaking the bounds of class and gender in her life, but also enjoying the privileges of class through her parents' wealth and her fame and separate income from her books and merchandise.

THE TALE OF JEMIMA PUDDLEDUCK

When first reading the story of the ill-fated Jemima, students quickly realize that the narrative centers on thwarted maternal desire. Jemima, a duck on a farm, has her eggs routinely taken away so that they can be hatched by a (more responsible) hen. Jemima, however, yearns to hatch her own eggs, and so the duck leaves the farm to find a place to nest in some woods. The exceedingly naïve Jemima meets a fox who offers the use of his house (filled with feathers) for Jemima to make her nest. After Jemima lays her eggs, the fox sends her back to the farm for one last trip: Jemima is to bring back the ingredients for stuffing a duck. The fox's plans, however, are foiled by Kep, the farm collie, who with the help of two foxhound puppies protects Jemima from the fox. Unfortunately for Jemima, during this rescue, the hounds eat her eggs. The next time Jemima lays eggs, she is allowed to hatch them, but because she is a "bad sitter" (Potter, 1908/1984, p. 59), only four hatch. While Jemima achieves motherhood, the narrative consistently questions her fitness to be a mother.

Students, at this point, need to become familiar with the Victorian understanding of domestic ideology, separate spheres, and the idealization of women as wives and mothers. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (2007) note that the separation of the workplace from the household during the early part of the Victorian era emphasized the man's role in the public sphere and the women's in the domestic (p. 309). Davidoff and Hall observe that female writers such as Sara Stickney Ellis and Harriet Martineau tried to gain agency and personal fulfillment for women through the importance of their moral role in the domestic sphere:

women nurtured husbands and children, providing societal stability and raising the next generation of the empire's citizens. With respect to mothers in particular, Susie Steinbach states: "Unlike upper-class or working-class children, middle-class children often enjoyed long hours with and attention from their mothers, who saw the rearing of their children as their vocation" (p. 141). Claudia Nelson (2007) argues that "…Victorian narratives about mothers frequently indicate concern about women's ability to live up to the standards associated with ideal maternity" (p. 71). With this context, when students begin to analyze the text more deeply, they see ambivalence in the text about Jemima's maternal longings. Initially, the absence or lack to which this narrative points seems to be Jemima's inability to be a mother, yet the farmer's wife and Jemima's sister-in-law's assessments of Jemima as an inept mother come true. Likewise, the narrative cannot be about the lack of good mothers because the hens perform admirably on the farm; Potter's first illustration depicts a hen surrounded by several ducklings. Jemima's place in the domestic sphere is a very strange one.

A different form of desire enters the narrative when Jemima encounters the fox: along with motherhood comes the problem of female sexuality. From the outset, Potter (1908/1984) depicts Jemima being fascinated by the fox, finding him "mighty civil and handsome" (p. 25). Potter's description of the fox—his clothes, his manners, and his deceptive appearance—if applied to a human counterpart, would be the handsome male with predatory and dishonorable sexual intentions toward a woman. Jemima, then, could represent the foolish young woman mislead by appearances, the purity of motherhood being put in danger by an illicit dalliance. In this reading, it is her lack of sense which needs correction. Yet Jemima does not demonstrate any growth in character or new-found wisdom at the end of the tale, and it is not the fox that destroys her eggs, but the solid citizens of farm and village. Potter's fantasy instead expels Jemima's desire for a different female identity as unproductive; her foray into the forest endangers her life. Jemima might remain dull and naïve at the narrative's end, but if she keeps within the proper bounds, if she remains in her place, she can at least remain alive.

Trying to locate agency in *Jemima Puddle-Duck* in the midst of the ambivalence of her female identity demonstrates that despite her limited intelligence and abilities, Jemima does have certain qualities that other characters desire. The farmer's wife, the fox, and the hounds all desire Jemima's eggs. Jemima's body itself holds this same value: the fox wishes to eat her, and the farm's garden has all the ingredients necessary to prepare roast duck. Jemima has the agency of a desirable commodity; this agency grants her a protected status on the farm, but will be her ultimate undoing.

Characters from Potter's other books have this same type of desirability: McGregor would love to make Peter and the Flopsy bunnies into pie, and other animals try to eat squirrel Nutkin and the frog Jeremy Fisher. Again it is the narrative's discourse on motherhood that complicates Jemima's character and makes the duck different from rabbit, squirrel, and frog: As a domesticated duck Jemima has more value for the farm when alive and producing eggs which hatch into ducklings. The mother under threat should strike at the heart of the family, but

because of Jemima's strange positioning as an inadequate mother, the narrative instead shifts the focus to the farm where Jemima is of some consequence. The ordered civilized society of the farm, consequently, has tremendous agency in the story. In the structured life of the farm, the farmer's wife and Kep have the most power: The farmer's wife can decide Jemima's fate, and Kep can master the woods and defeat the threat of the fox. *Jemima Puddle-Duck* indicates a subtle shift from the Victorian ideal of motherhood to a different value of mothers and the family.

Reading multiple texts proves useful at this point to engage with the text's depiction of motherhood. Students can fruitfully compare Jemima to mothers that appear in Potter's other books: Peter's mother, Hunca Munca (*The Tale of Two Bad Mice*, 1904), Tabitha Twitchit (*The Tale of Tom Kitten*, 1907; *Samuel Whiskers*, 1908; *Ginger and Pickles*, 1909), and Pigling Bland's mother (*The Tale of Pigling Bland*, 1913). Peter's mother is protective, and Hunca Munca, a mouse, nurtures her children well. As a mother, the cat Tabitha tends to uphold societal expectations of herself and her children and needs help from a terrier to save her son Tom. Pigling Bland's mother, a sow with eight children, seems somewhat heartless when she sends her children off to find their fortunes because of their bad behavior and hearty appetites, but Pigling Bland finds freedom and love on his journey to adulthood. None of these mothers, however, are as inept as Jemima, nor as naïve and undiscerning. Reading several of Potter's works demonstrates Jemima's singularity.

Looking at other portrayals of mothers in children's fantasy literature also proves productive since mothers, whether exemplary or cautionary, frequently appear in these narratives. In *The Water-Babies*, Kingsley presents the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the form of three powerful maternal figures: one warm and nurturing, another punitive, while the third, Mother Carey, sits and stares at the ocean and her powerful gaze creates creatures. MacDonald also portrays the Godhead as a positive form of a mother. The grandmother in both *The Princess and the Goblin*s and *The Princess and Curdie* offers guidance and help to the child protagonists. In contrast, Carroll provides negative images of the mother in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* both in the Duchess whose baby turns into a pig and the Queen of Hearts who threatens all her subjects. While these texts display a range of positions on the agency and value of mothers, they demonstrate a significant difference from Potter's depictions of mothers, particularly the portrayal of Jemima.

Kingsley, MacDonald, and Carroll closely integrate the family with the well-being of society. The mother figures they create represent maternal nurturing (or the lack of it with the Queen of Hearts) of society, the nation, and the world at large. The duties of a mother were one component of the Victorian idea of societal responsibility, and domestic ideology clearly detailed a mother's moral worth. Potter's mothers move away from this societal stage to individuals who do not have this responsibility. Significantly, the health of the family/nation does not depend on these mothers. In Jemima's case, for instance, a surrogate mother can easily replace the biological mother, while in the case of Pigling Bland, his happiness is not affected by his mother's expulsion of him from the family home.

Importantly, this move away from duties and responsibilities does not necessarily mean freedom for the mother. To survive as an individual, Jemima needs to stay within the bounds of the farm; she needs to stay in place.

MacDonald (1986) observes that Potter saw *Jemima Puddle-Duck* as a "revision of the fairy tale 'Little Red-Riding Hood' [...]" (p. 111). When reading from a resistant perspective, what exactly is revised comes into question. Jemima, like Little Red Riding Hood, is trusting and naïve, and needs the protection of a strong male. Unlike Little Red Riding Hood the child, however, Jemima represents a foolish adult woman lured by an attractive male; only her body—whether it is to be eaten or to produce eggs—is of value. While Potter does portray strong female characters (especially in *Ginger and Pickles*), her revision of the fairytale stereotypes and marginalizes this particular type of female subject. Finding a resistant perspective on behalf of Jemima as she is presented in the text sometimes becomes a daunting task for students, but this difficulty can become a platform for discussion. Students realize that the narrative presents Jemima as an endearing character while consistently poking fun at her dimwitted behavior: her stupidity makes her appealing. Analyzing this appeal and finding ways to resist its lure make for fruitful discussion.

THE TALE OF SAMUEL WHISKERS

Potter's next tale again depicts a mother, but Tabitha Twitchit is very different than Jemima. Potter (1908/1984) describes Tabitha as an "anxious parent" (p. 34), and even though Tabitha spends much time in the narrative searching for her kittens and needs the help of a terrier to rescue Tom, she is not an ineffective parent. However, while the majority of the narrative is based on a parent/child relationship, unlike *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck*, desire takes many forms in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*. Tabitha's desire for an orderly house is tested by her kittens and the rats which infest the walls. The rats Anna Maria and Samuel Whiskers, on the other hand, desire to live off of other's property; they steal food and other items from Tabitha and her neighbors. The kittens desire to escape their mother's expectations of order and good behavior from them. This desire to escape leads Tom to climb up the chimney, but instead of reaching the roof, Tom takes a wrong turn and stumbles into the home of the rats. The rats promptly tie Tom up and plan to make a meat pudding out of him, and they steal dough, butter, and a rolling pin to make their kitten pastry. While Tom's desire to escape Tabitha is not terribly wrong, his actions lead to severe consequences: Tom listens to Anna Maria and Samuels Whiskers plotting to eat him and develops a lifelong fear of rats. The rats' murderous intent, on the other hand, while foiled, only leads to their removal from Tabitha's house and relocation to a nearby farm where they flourish with many descendents. Although Moppet and Mittens (Tom's sisters) hire themselves out to kill the rats and run a very successful business, the narrative does not indicate that their actions hinder the rats from increasing in number.

The narrative's resolution may make agency difficult to locate. While Tabitha, Moppet, Mittens, and the terrier can kill the rats, the rats continue to thrive; the text

seems to have sympathy for both positions. Reading multiple texts helps students better understand the type of agency being portrayed. I find looking at Potter's (1904) *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* where another "home invasion" occurs and Suzanne Rahn's (1984) article "Tailpiece: *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*" useful in helping students locate agency and examine class structure.[3] In this story, two mice—Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb—break into a luxurious dollhouse, and when they realize that the food is not real, the mice begin to destroy the dollhouse until Hunca Munca realizes that they can use some of the items in their home. The mice steal furniture, and although the nurse sets a mousetrap for the mice, Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb continue to have access to the house albeit only when the dolls and their human owner are asleep. Rahn (1984) makes an excellent reading of the text, tying in Potter's sympathy for contemporary working class political movements and her own romantic interest in Warne to sympathy for the working class mice.

However, despite the text's obvious sympathy toward the mice, they are not given full run of the dollhouse or the rest of the house: they have access to middle class privileges, but continue to remain firmly situated in their own class. Like Jemima, Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb need to stay within their proper sphere; when they do so, they have some middle class privileges extended to them. Reexamining *Samuel Whiskers* in this context brings different elements of the text to the forefront. While both the mice and the rats steal, the rats are much more dangerous to the middle-class inhabitants of the house. The rats need to move out of the middle-class home to the less preferred space of a barn to flourish. Likewise, the homes of the mice and the rats differ. Although both the mice and rats live within the walls of their respective houses, pictures of the mice's home depict it as warm and inviting, whereas both the text and pictures show the rats' home as dirty and cluttered. Anna Maria and Samuel Whiskers are the lowest of the working class and come much closer to vagrants who need to be expelled from middle class society. Despite much of the humor of the narrative arising from the rats' conversations on the best way to cook Tom, the rats cannot remain within proper society.[4]

Juxtaposing *Samuel Whiskers* with *The Water-Babies* brings in a differing viewpoint about class mobility. As mentioned earlier, the protagonist of *The Water-Babies* is a chimney sweep named Tom, and the book is Kingsley's response to Charles Darwin's (1859) *The Origin of Species*. An Anglican priest, Kingsley admired Darwin but firmly grounds physical evolution within a divine framework. As a result, when the human Tom (like the kitten Tom) has a misadventure in a chimney and enters the wrong room of a spacious, wealthy home, Tom recognizes his own physical and moral impurity and begins his evolutionary journey toward moral rejuvenation. After Tom evolves into a moral human being, he also experiences a change in circumstance in the physical world. Instead of remaining a chimney sweep, Tom becomes an engineer; he moves from one of the lowliest members of the working class to a secure position within the middle class. Moreover, Kingsley's idea of evolutionary moral restoration becomes a paradigm for subject formation in the text and allows for upward class mobility.

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Tom Kitten's chimney adventure, on the other hand, reinforces class rigidity. Tom Kitten's furry little body collects as much soot as a chimney sweep's would; the narrator brings this to the reader's attention by stating, "He was like a little sweep himself" (Potter, 1908/1984, p. 41). But when Tom Kitten tumbles out from the chimney into Samuel Whiskers' abode, Tom Kitten distances himself from the image of sweep by telling the rat that "[…] the chimney wants sweeping" (Potter, 1908/1984, p. 43) indicating that it is someone else's job, and he merely happens to be an unfortunate victim. After Tom Kitten is rescued, a hot bath, however unpleasant, transforms him from sweep to kitten and restores him back to his middle class state. The rats meanwhile have fled the house, and stability returns to the cats' household. Instead of Kingsley's wide, vast world which is constantly moving forward, Potter offers a clearly demarcated world in which characters are happiest when they remain in their appropriate spheres. As much as she was interested in the natural world, Potter did not imagine an evolutionary model for class structure.

Students can immediately see that reading from a resistant perspective needs to challenge this demarcation of society. While no one condones the rats' position of wishing to eat Tom, examining the characteristics of why the rats are seen as "other" proves helpful. In a reading of *Samuel Whiskers*, Heather Evans (2008) discusses different examples of female agency by situating the text in Victorian discourses about food. Evans (2008) links Tom's impending doom into being turned into a pudding to both British society's fascination with cannibalism in the colonies and to their own gastronomical disputes about food (p. 605). Usually, my students have already read introductory material concerning postcolonialism, so they understand the colonial trope of seeing the Other as savage, uncivilized, and needing to be controlled as a means of justifying the colonial enterprise and other forms of exploitation. Since the rats represent both the exotic and the British, they demonstrate how marginalization can occur at home and abroad. The rats' preference to pilfer complicates this discourse of the other; some of their choices isolate them from mainstream society. Students often discuss inclusion and rehabilitation and who has the authority to create parameters for each. The text speaks to different power structures and the ease with which marginalization can occur.

THE TALE OF GINGER AND PICKLES

In her next book, Potter moves away from the intimacy of domestic travails to the difficulties a community faces when the village store closes. Ginger and Pickles offer their customers unlimited credit, and their customers take advantage of this situation and never pay their bills. Although Ginger and Pickles try to collect by resending the bills, they never receive any of their money, so they eat their stock and are unable to renew Pickles' dog license or pay taxes. When the dog and cat close their store, the narrator immediately points out the discomfort that it causes to their customers. Tabitha Twitchit owns the only other store in the village; she never offers credit, and as soon as Ginger and Pickles go out of business, Tabitha

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raises her prices. The narrator goes on to explain the other options the customers have, and each option has its shortcomings. Finally, Henny Penny decides to reopen the store, and while she does not extend credit to her customers, she offers bargain prices.

Desire plays a significant role in the narrative; shopkeepers desire customers, and customers desire quality goods at the cheapest price. At first glance, the narrative's resolution seems to satisfy both shopkeeper and customer. Yet a closer look shows that while Ginger and Pickles are censured for their lack of business sense, the customers' greed (which essentially forces the cat and the dog out of business) is never seen as problematic in the text. Even more troubling is the fact that Ginger and Pickles successfully control their predatory inclinations toward their customers, but when the two leave the business world, they take on more aggressive professions. One picture depicts Ginger setting traps by a rabbit warren while another depicts Pickles, now a gamekeeper, pointing his gun toward some rabbits. The uncontested removal of characters from civil business and behavior to more violent forms of survival creates a complicated form of marginalization in the text.

Students quickly locate agency lying with consumers and their desire for a variety of products and bargain prices. Potter's other works do not address this particular issue, but a variety of texts from the Victorian and Edwardian eras can offer different perspectives on consumerism. In Maria Edgeworth's (1801) cautionary short story, "The Purple Jar," a young girl learns the deceptiveness of a store's window display when she buys an attractive purple jar, forgoing a much-needed pair of shoes. When she realizes the color of the jar is merely a clever trick, she learns a bitter lesson. MacDonald (1883) in *The Princess and Curdie* denounces greed and sharp business practices. Edith Nesbit in *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) censures capitalism and business practices carried on in London. These texts reflect the unease consumerism created: With the advent of department stores in Britain and their elaborate, inviting window displays, Victorians began to express anxiety over a new consumer culture particularly with respect to female shoppers. Kelley Graham (2008) notes the real life dangers of a Victorian marketplace in the form of thieves and pickpockets (p. 8). Steinbach (2012) observes that the rhetoric on consumerism frequently shifted; women were often seen as "irrational" shoppers (p. 111), but shopping was also seen as an enjoyable "national pastime" (pp. 110-111). These differing perspectives help students situate the type of consumerism that Potter delineates in the text. Potter does not share the concern that some of her contemporaries held that shopping could have an adverse moral effect on human character: for the inhabitants of the village, shopping is a pleasurable activity which crosses both gender and class. On the other hand, the narrative does pass moral judgment on Ginger and Pickles for failing to keep the shop open. The text's emphasis on balancing the needs of the shopkeeper and the customer perhaps reflects Potter's own successful form of business.

Students find that *Ginger and Pickles* offers different vantage points for reading from a resistant perspective. While female shopkeepers were fewer in number than their male counterparts, women did run their own businesses during this time

period, so Tabitha Twitchit and Henny Penny are not out of the norm. Potter's depiction of them as both mothers and savvy businesswomen, however, does resist domestic ideology in which women stay out of the public sphere. Likewise, because the two female shopkeepers keep their businesses solvent, they demonstrate more integrity than the male shopkeepers. Whereas Potter moves away from the idea of the duties and moral responsibilities of a mother toward society with the character of Jemima, Henny Penny nurtures her customers like a good mother would.

This female agency, however, comes at the expense of marginalizing the male characters and accepting unchecked consumerism as an ideal societal norm. When discussing the male characters, students find it interesting to explore what the successful male subject would look like when resisting a traditional business model. Clearly, being non-aggressive and non-competitive does not work in the narrative, particularly when Ginger and Pickles cannot regulate the business practices of others or the morals of their customers. At times, when students have already read Virginia Woolf's "Professions for Women" (1931) and "Thoughts on Peace during an Air Raid" (1940) earlier in the course, I will revisit Woolf's ideas about freeing the female and male subject. With respect to consumerism, students try to imagine and flesh out the resistant customer. Whether it takes the form of classroom discussion or an assignment, students often note that finding these resistant positions are still relevant today, even when resistance may be difficult to achieve.

THE TALE OF MRS. TITTLEMOUSE

Mrs. Tittlemouse moves away from the center of village life to a bank under a hedge in which Thomasina Tittlemouse has a spacious home. The mouse's desire for complete control over her home becomes quickly evident as she expels various uninvited guests from different rooms of her house. When the mouse comes across some bees that have lodged in one of her storerooms, however, she knows that she cannot remove the creatures from her house without some help. She initially thinks of a toad (Mr. Jackson), but then dismisses this idea because of his dirty feet. Lured by the smell of the bees' honey, the toad, however, has already arrived in the mouse's house. Mr. Jackson searches the house for honey (discovering even more uninvited guests), eventually removes the bees, and leaves. Mrs. Tittlemouse immediately fixes her door so that the toad cannot gain entry into her house and then cleans her house for a fortnight. The narrative ends with the mouse hosting a party at her home for five other mice. Mr. Jackson tries to gatecrash the party, but the altered door proves too strong for him. The mice hand him honeydew through the window, and the narrator states: "[…] he was not at all offended" (Potter, 1910/1938, p. 59). The idea of homes being invaded is a familiar one in Potter's works, and one can sympathize with the mouse's desire to keep her property to herself. Likewise, Mrs. Tittlemouse has enough intelligence to prevent Mr. Jackson from reentering her house. However, the narrative's constant repetition of the word "dirty" is a troubling element in the text. In this nonstop reference to cleanliness,

the text goes beyond issues of property: the guests' uncleanliness justifies their unwelcome status. Several creatures fall into this category of having dirty feet except for the other mice whom Mrs. Tittlemouse invites to her house. A desire to only associate with the right type of people clearly emerges in the text.

Unlike the rampant consumerism seen in *Ginger and Pickles* which weighted all consumers equally, genteel society in *Mrs. Tittlemouse* maintains proper relations between neighbors. In several tales, Potter critiques middle class social norms such as the formal manners displayed by a cat and a dog having dinner together (*The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Pan*, 1905). Although Potter (1910/1938) describes Mrs. Tittlemouse as "[…] a most terribly tidy particular mouse" (p. 14), the narrator never pokes fun at Mrs. Tittlemouse's obsession to clean her house, even when it lasts for several days. And even though Mr. Jackson lives in a drain and possesses dirty feet, the narrative does not place him on the same level as Anna Maria and Samuel Whiskers: the toad and mouse are very polite to each other.

In this context of maintaining proper and courteous class relations, Grahame's (1908) *Wind in the Willows* helps in understanding Potter's community living by the hedge. Grahame does portray class insurrection when the ferrets and stoats take over Toad Hall, and this type of insubordination has a violent end as the usurpers are routed and forced to serve the master class: Toad, Badger, Rat, and Mole. More subtle, however, is Grahame's portrayal of idyllic scenes when the upper classes benevolently take care of the lower classes, and the lower classes serve with contented bliss. *Mrs. Tittlemouse* does not invoke this paradigm in the manner in which Grahame does with his Dickensian scenes, but *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, nevertheless, does have this model as its basis. To preserve this model, the text seems to prescribe a mixture of intelligence, cleanliness, and polite manners. This societal model in turn meets the needs of all the inhabitants of the hedge from the clean mice to the dirty toad.

In examining the world of *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, students realize that Mr. Jackson represents a resistance to this model which is hard for the mouse/middle class to contain. Physically the mouse is no match for the toad. She cannot expel him from her home like she does a spider or beetle; instead, Mrs. Tittlemouse has to wait until Mr. Jackson chooses to leave. Significantly, Mr. Jackson cannot be bought over like Hunca Munca and Tom Thumb. He will not play by middle class rules to receive limited middle class privileges. Even more tellingly, unlike Anna Maria and Samuel Whiskers who are pariahs within the middle class home, Mr. Jackson is treated with courtesy and offered a meal by the mouse. Once inside Mrs. Tittlemouse's home, the toad exerts his will and goes wherever he pleases with the mouse following meekly behind. Mr. Jackson is not completely shunned because he cannot be stopped, only restrained. Mr. Jackson represents a power that the middle class cannot wholly hold at bay, and therefore, he is included into polite society. Although this inclusion is masked under courtesy and propriety, there is an element of unease. Students find this position of resistance easy to develop. The toad, after all, has abilities to offer to society; he is impervious to the stinging bees and can remove them from Mrs. Tittlemouse's house.

To help students analyze this position of resistance more deeply, I encourage them to think of how the toad gained this agency. Some of his power occurs through "natural" talents such as his size and strength. Yet much of his power also arises from his disregard of societal rules and norms, his ability to question authority. While this questioning of authority is contained at the narrative's end, and the toad seems to uphold the rule of Mrs. Tittlemouse by drinking to her health, this resolution only occurs because the toad chooses to accept this authority for the moment and for *his* benefit. The toad is his own master and points to an alternative form of power.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, *Jemima Puddle-Duck, Samuel Whiskers, Ginger and Pickles*, and *Mrs. Tittlemouse* demonstrate Potter's interest in the proper structuring of society and an individual's place within this social order. The singular figure of Jemima portrays the (life saving) value of knowing one's place in society. *Samuel Whiskers, Ginger and Pickles*, and *Mrs. Tittlemouse* depict limited forms of female and/or class agency, but also see the rigidity of class as unproblematic. Additionally, *Ginger and Pickles* celebrates consumerism and promotes a balance between the customer's and shopkeeper's monetary needs. Reading multiple texts and from a resistant perspective helps students understand some of the troubling moral judgments that these narratives convey. Since Potter's books are picture books intended for a young audience, their warm and attractive pictures can mask some of these values. Students understand the danger of unquestioningly internalizing these views, and Potter's works are very useful for the purposes of critical literacy.

NOTES

[1] The movie *Miss Potter* was released December 2006. Among fictional works inspired by Beatrix Potter's life are Susan Albert Wittig's mystery series *The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter* (2004-2011) and Deborah Hopkinson's picture book *Beatrix Potter and the Unfortunate Tale of a Borrowed Guinea Pig* (2016). Juvenile biographies include Susan Denyer's *At Home with Beatrix Potter: The Creator of Peter Rabbit* (2000), Jeannette Winter's *Beatrix: Various Episodes from the Life of Beatrix Potter* (2003), and David McPhail's *Beatrix and Her Paint Box* (2015).

[2] Scott Pollard and Kara Keeling (2002) convincingly read Peter's rebellion as reliving his father's journey (Peter's father comes to a dismal end at McGregor's garden and is made into rabbit pie) and exploring the tensions between civilizing behavior within a community and rebelling against it.

[3] Ruth MacDonald (1986) also provides excellent material on this particular story in her study of Potter.

[4] Samuel Whiskers fears that the string tying up Tom will prove to be "indigestible" (Potter, 1908/1984, p. 42).

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8. DEPICTIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS IN NEWBERY-WINNING FANTASIES

A Critical Literacy Approach

Children's literature is a reflection of what society values and what knowledge and beliefs should be passed along to future generations. Books are often considered means of socializing and educating children (Apol, 1998), and this is particularly true for works of fantasy. Gates, Steffel, and Molson (2003) contend "fantasy literature represents our personal need and the universal quest for deeper realities and universal truth" (p. 2), while Tunnell and Jacobs (2008) argue fantasy "clarifies the human condition and captures the essence of our deepest emotions, dreams, hopes, and fears" (p. 121). Indeed, the values and beliefs evident in fantasy books may be considered the ones most deeply cherished in a society.

The values, beliefs, ideologies, and cultural knowledge conveyed in children's literature, which I will collectively refer to as "discourses" here, can be deconstructed by reading through a critical literacy lens. Reading from a critical literacy stance means questioning what is presented as "normal" in a text (Jones, 2006; Luke, 2012), considering perspectives in a text from multiple viewpoints, and paying attention to social and political issues raised in the text (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Critically literate readers assume that all texts convey ideology, position some people or groups as important and others as unimportant, and generate power for particular people or groups (Jones, 2006, 2008). Critically literate readers understand that no text is ever neutral and the discourses in texts can become normative unless they are actively critiqued.

In this chapter, I employ a critical literacy lens to deconstruct how social class is portrayed in ten fantasy books winning the Newbery Medal or Honor between 2004 and 2013. The Newbery is among the most prestigious (Kidd, 2007) and influential (Horning, 2010) of children's book awards, and the years 2004 to 2013 are especially salient ones for unpacking depictions of social class. If children's literature is regarded as a reflection of society's attitudes and a product of the social, political, and cultural climate (Taxel, 1997), then this ten-year time period offers a rich landscape for exploring class in literature: In the United States, economic prosperity marked the years between 2004 and 2007, a recession devastated the economy from late 2007 through mid-2009, and a recovering economy characterized the period starting in mid-2009 (Seefeldt et al., 2012).

Several reasons guide my interest in deconstructing how social class is depicted in books for youth. Young people deserve literature validating their social and cultural identities. Class is a significant aspect of an individual's identity (hooks,

2000), yet the construct of class has not been widely examined in children's literature (Forest, 2014a, 2014b; Forest, Garrison, & Kimmel, 2015; Sano, 2009). Without critical analyses of class in children's literature, educators may unwittingly place books that disparage, rather than affirm, class identities in the hands of young people. Negative discourses about social class in children's literature could potentially be damaging to young people's sense of self-worth unless they know how to read books from a critical literacy stance. Further, I am interested in advancing discussion about class in a broader sense. Many Americans believe they live in a classless society (hooks, 2000; Jones, 2006), a dangerous belief in a nation where class inequalities are widening (Comber, 2015). This chapter calls attention to the discourses about class present in the United States as they manifest in award-winning children's literature. In the following sections, I explain what I mean by "social class," describe common discourses about class, address depictions of class groups in Newbery titles, and deconstruct these depictions through a critical literacy lens.

DEFINING SOCIAL CLASS AND DISCOURSES ABOUT CLASS

Social scientists do not agree on how class and class groups should be defined or categorized. However, some scholars agree that educational attainment, income, and occupation are indicators of a person's class (Abramowitz & Texeira, 2009; Anyon, 1981; Gilbert, 2015; Hill, 2012). In defining "social class," I draw upon Gilbert's (2015) notion of a class as a group of people sharing similarities along these indicators. For the purposes here I conceptualize class into four groups: the poor, the working class, the middle class, and the affluent. The poor include those who frequently experience financial hardship. They may be unemployed or work in low-wage jobs (Gilbert, 2015), have limited educational attainment (Seefeldt et al., 2012), and live in neighborhoods with under-resourced public schools (Lott, 2012). The working class consists of white and blue collar workers without specialized training as well as pink collar workers (Anyon, 1981; Gilbert, 2015; Lott, 2012). Clerical and retail workers and manual laborers belong to this class (Abramowitz & Texeira, 2009). Those in the middle class have a high school or college education, and they include teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters, lower-level managers, and specialized blue collar workers like electricians (Gilbert, 2015; Hill, 2012). The affluent are people with highly specialized and well-paying jobs (e.g., doctors, lawyers, executives) as well as people who live off investments or family money (Gilbert, 2015; Hill, 2012). My intention for describing these class groups is not to construct monolithic images of them; rather, it is to give a general sense of what I mean when I address these class groups later.

While social scientists disagree on how to define class, many agree an individual's social class shapes his/her life experiences as well as social, cultural, and political interactions. Class influences where a person shops, eats, goes to school, and works (Langston, 1988) and how a person perceives expectations for him/herself and others (Brown, 1974). Given the salience of class to individual lives, it is unsurprising that a number of discourses about class are prevalent in the

United States. For example, class is often regarded as "taboo," an impolite topic (hooks, 2000) more suitable to private discussion in the home than public discourse (Jones, 2006). In fact, some Americans believe they live in a classless society (hooks, 2000; Jones, 2006) or largely middle class society (Van Galen, 2007), beliefs likely perpetuated by residential segregation (Gilbert, 2015), de facto class-based segregation in the public schools, and the overwhelming depiction of the middle class in mass media (hooks, 2000).

Moreover, many Americans ascribe to the American dream myth. According to traditional notions of this myth, opportunities for achieving success are accessible to all, the expectation of success is reasonable, and success is attributable to individual virtue and failure to individual shortcomings (Hochschild, 2002). Virtues like "dutiful industry" as well as "self-reliance, hard work, and frugality" are celebrated within this discourse (Beach, 2007, p. 151). Though the myth has been critiqued for assuring the poor of inevitable financial success (Brown, 1974) and blaming failure on individual shortcomings rather than systemic inequalities (Hochschild, 2002), it has persisted for decades. Other discourses about class include the beliefs that class membership is a personal choice (Hill, 2012), poverty is a function of bad luck or laziness (Langston, 1988), and the equation of class status with "worth and ability" (Van Galen, 2007, p. 158). Such discourses herald the wealthy for their attainment of success and vilify the poor for their "failure" to do so.

DEPICTIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS IN NEWBERY FANTASIES

Summaries of the ten Newbery titles discussed here are shown in Table 1. These depictions of class are drawn from a dissertation study that included all 42 Newbery Medal and Honor titles from 2004 to 2013 (see Forest, 2014b). In this dissertation study, I utilized a flexible design to qualitative content analysis that included both deductive and inductive analyses of how social class was portrayed

Table 1. Fantasy Genre Newbery Medal and Honor Books, 2004-2013

Title	Award Year	Summary
The One and Only Ivan	2013	Facing a lifetime in captivity at a troubled mall zoo, Ivan, a gorilla, uses his artistic abilities to free himself and his friends.
Splendors and Glooms	2013	Parsefall and Lizzie Rose, the orphaned assistants to Professor Grisini's puppet show, learn their new friend Clara, a wealthy doctor's daughter, has been turned in to a puppet by their master. Meanwhile, Cassandra Sagredo, a witch and an old friend of Professor Grisini's, lures the orphans to her estate to rid herself of a cursed gemstone.
When You	2010	As her mother is poised to win $10,000 on a game show,

Reach Me		Miranda makes connections between the strange events that have occurred over the last several months: mysterious messages predicting the future appear in her personal belongings, her best friend Sal is punched by a strange kid, her spare key goes missing, a shoe is stolen from her apartment, and a crazy man yells at her from a street corner.
Where the Mountain Meets the Moon	2010	Saddened by her family's poor fortune and her mother's constant laments, Minli leaves her village to seek out the Old Man in the Moon, a powerful person capable of changing the family's fate. Along the way, Minli befriends a dragon who cannot fly and a kindly king among others.
The Graveyard Book	2009	After his family is viciously murdered, Nobody "Bod" Owens makes his way to a graveyard and is raised and protected by the ghosts residing there. Yet if Bod ever leaves, he runs the risk of discovery by his family's murderer.
The Underneath	2009	A family of two young kittens and an old hound living underneath an evil trapper's house face impending danger. At the same time, a serpent who has lived in a jar for one thousand years awaits her freedom.
Savvy	2009	When Mibs gains her "savvy," or special power, on her 13th birthday, she hopes to use it to help her father heal from a car accident. Mibs and her friends hitch a bus headed for the hospital (or so they hope) and are aided by Lester, a deliveryman, and Lill, a waitress.
Whittington	2006	The tale of Dick Whittington, a legendary Englishman who owed his fortune to his cat, is told by Whittington, the cat's descendant, to Ben, a struggling reader, and Abby, his sister.
Princess Academy	2006	Miri and her family live on Mount Eskel, a struggling mining village. After hearing that the prince will one day marry a Mount Eskel girl, Miri and fellow villagers attend the Princess Academy, where they will receive training fit for a queen. With little interest in becoming a royal, Miri uses her new education to seek justice and equity for her community.
The Tale of Despereaux	2004	Despereaux, a mouse, is condemned to the dungeon when his family learns of his love for Princess Pea, a human. Meanwhile, Roscuro, a rat, and Miggery Sow, a servant girl, plot against Princess Pea, and Despereaux must find a way to save her.

in the sample; the deductive analysis was informed by Kendall's (2011) investigation of how class is portrayed in mass media, although my inductive analysis unpacked additional portrayals of class beyond what Kendall (2011) identified. Additional information about methods is available in Forest (2014b).

<div align="center">THE POOR AND THE WORKING CLASS</div>

Although I have described the poor and the working class as two distinct class groups, I group them together here because they are depicted in similar ways in the ten books. Depictions of these two groups are both positive and negative. At times, poor and working class characters are shown as hardworking, caring, and worthy of respect. Minli, the main character of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009) is one example. After endless days toiling in the barren land surrounding Fruitless Mountain and hearing her mother's laments about the family's poverty, Minli leaves on a journey to visit the Old Man in the Moon, who has the power to change the family's fortune. Minli's journey demonstrates her deep love for her family, and her compassion for others is shown later when she finally meets the Old Man. Minli is granted one question of the Old Man, and instead of asking him to help her family, she asks a question on behalf of her new friend Dragon, who wonders why he cannot fly. Miri, the working class protagonist of *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005), is particularly known for her industriousness and ingenuity. When she is sent to the Princess Academy against her wishes, Miri makes the most of the opportunity to obtain an education; she learns to read and discovers the true value of linder, the stone mined and sold by the people of Mount Eskel, her village. Miri applies her new knowledge by negotiating fair prices for linder, which enhances the quality of life on hardscrabble Mount Eskel and prompts other members of the kingdom (known as lowlanders) to view the Mount Eskel villagers with new respect. Lizzie Rose, the orphaned puppet master's assistant in *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012), is also shown as worthy of respect despite her poverty. When Clara, a wealthy doctor's daughter, first meets Lizzie Rose and fellow puppeteer Parsefall, she is impressed by them and exclaims, "'They're so clever—they must know so many things I don't. They earn their own living!'" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 11). Lizzie Rose is further depicted as caring and hardworking through her mother-like role toward Parsefall.

Several poor and working class characters in the books attain the American dream, moving from poverty to a higher social class. Although Lizzie Rose and Parsefall are desperately poor throughout *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012), by the end of the story they have inherited the fortune of Cassandra Sagredo, a witch whose opulent estate boasts "high ceilings," "Venetian windows," and "gilded furniture" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 129). Additionally, they are adopted into the wealthy Wintermute family after saving Clara from evil Professor Grisini. Minli of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009) is another example of success. Ultimately, Minli's journey to change her family's fortune is a success although

she forgoes her question to the Old Man in the Moon to help Dragon. Grateful to Minli, Dragon gives Minli his dragon's pearl, which she passes on to the king, who in turn provides Minli's village with much-needed seeds and farming equipment that bring "more prosperity than any reward of jade and gold" (Lin, 2009, p. 272). Dick Whittington is another character who achieves great success. A poor village boy, "Dick Whittington prospered and became Lord Mayor of London" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 178). Success is also on the horizon for Miranda and her mother in *When You Reach Me* (Stead, 2009). At the end of the book, Miranda's working class mother wins $10,000 on a game show, and her boyfriend hands her a stack of law school applications to suggest she can now afford her long-held dream of becoming a lawyer. Presumably, Miranda and her mother are on their way to a higher class status. Lastly, Miri's education in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005) helps her achieve a better life for the people of Mount Eskel, although Miri's success is much more modest in comparison to the rags-to-riches tales of these other characters. Notably, achievement of the American dream was evident in half the books.

While some characters achieve financial success, other characters aspire to prosperity or prestige. The latter is true for Gar Face in *The Underneath*, who aspires to be the "most revered trapper in the piney woods" (Appelt, 2008, p. 243). In *The Tale of Despereaux*, Miggery Sow, a slave to her uncle, is thrilled when she is given the chance to work in the castle as a paid servant, and later, she wishes for further social advancement as she dreams of becoming a royal like Princess Pea: "'I am to be a princess, too, someday'" (DiCamillo, 2003, p. 142). Before making his fortune, Dick Whittington dreams of having money to spend and never feeling hungry or cold again (Armstrong, 2005). Aspirations for moving into a higher social class are also evident in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005) as Miri's friends dream of becoming the next queen. Even level-headed Miri imagines how her family's circumstances would improve if she became queen. These portrayals not only show lower class characters aspiring to a higher class, but they also depict affluence as an ideal.

Hardship and financial precariousness often permeate the lives of poor and working class characters; in fact, this was a robust way of depicting these class groups. In *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, Minli thinks, "What a poor fortune we have. Every day, Ba and Ma work and work and we still have nothing" (Lin, 2009, p. 12). The miners in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005) know if they do not mine and sell enough linder, they will not be able to buy enough food to sustain their families through winter. In *Splendors and Glooms*, Lizzie Rose explains to Parsefall what will happen if their landlady, Mrs. Pinchbeck, evicts them: "'If Mrs. Pinchbeck were to throw us out, you'd have to go back to the workhouse and I'd have to live on the street. There's girls younger than me on the street and it's a bad, bad life'" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 116). Fear of job loss is constant for working class characters in *Savvy* (Law, 2008). Lester, a delivery driver, worries his boss will fire him for allowing Mibs and her friends to hitch a ride on his bus. Later, when Lester and Mibs encounter Lill, a truck stop waitress, she expresses worry that her boss will fire her for perpetual lateness: "'If I get to work

and find I still have myself a job, if my boss doesn't fire me on the spot for being so late—late again,' she groaned, 'I'll see that y'all get a fine supper'" (Law, 2008, p. 146). Precariousness is also a theme in *The One and Only Ivan* (Applegate, 2012). The mall zoo where Ivan the gorilla lives is on the brink of ruin; the zoo's owner, Mack, depends on Ivan's finger paintings to make ticket sales. Additionally, the zoo's janitor, George, recently fired by Mack, explains to his daughter why she cannot have a dog: "'Jules, I'm not even sure I have a job yet. I may not even be able to feed you, let alone some mutt—'" (Applegate, 2012, p. 247). Indeed, being a member of the poor or working class is often characterized by fear and instability in these books.

Sometimes, poor and working class characters are depicted as insignificant and lowly. A couple of examples of this are evident in *Savvy* (Law, 2008). Lester says of himself, "'I'm nothing b-but a deliveryman,'" suggesting he does not respect his own occupation (Law, 2008, p. 55). Later in the story, Mibs discovers a homeless man who is either dead or unconscious. Though Mibs thinks about the man and wonders if he is someone's loved one, her friends pass him by, ignoring him. Likewise, Professor Grisini in *Splendors and Glooms* knows disguising himself as a homeless man can make him invisible: "Here was a beggar like ten thousand others: a man so cheerless and commonplace that no one would give him a second glance" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 96). Interestingly, an old rhyme alluding to the insignificance of the poor and homeless appeared in both *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012) and *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009): *Rattle his bones/over the stones/he's only a pauper/who nobody owns*.

Lower class characters are also shown as objects of scorn. Lill, the waitress in *Savvy* (Law, 2008), is the object of her boss's scorn when he fires her and throws the bills of her final pay on the diner floor, forcing her to pick them up in a most undignified way. In *Whittington* (Armstrong, 2005), Dick begs for food and receives a kick instead, while in *Splendors and Glooms*, Cassandra's servants grumble about having to wait on "dirty little beggar children" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 209). In *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009), a peach vendor sneers at a beggar and a magistrate is outraged when he learns his son is fated to marry the daughter of a grocer. Scorn is also evident in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005) when the academy tutor, Olana, puts down the Mount Eskel girls and reminds them they are the lowliest members of the kingdom.

Other characters in these class groups are depicted as criminals. Thievery is a way of life for Professor Grisini in *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012), who steals and pawns women's jewelry, including earrings belonging to Lizzie Rose. Parsefall is likewise a thief: "Never, thought Parsefall, surveying the Wintermute drawing room, had he seen a house better stocked with things to steal" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 19). In *When You Reach Me* (Stead, 2009), Miranda's mother steals items from the office of supply cabinet. Mack, the zoo owner in *The One and Only Ivan* (Applegate, 2012), is not a criminal but is unscrupulous. When Stella the elephant gets an infection, Mack refuses to treat it due to the cost and Stella dies from her illness. As money gets tighter at the zoo, Mack cuts back on food and turns the heat off at night, actions harmful to the animals in his care.

Finally, some poor and working class characters are shown as crude, ignorant, buffoonish, and trashy, particularly in their interactions with characters in higher class groups. In *Princess Academy*, Olana constantly berates the girls for their ignorance and refers to them as "dusty goat girls" (Hale, 2005, p. 43). Parsefall in *Splendors and Glooms* is described this way: "Except for his industry, he had few good qualities. He was selfish and rude, and his personal habits were disgusting" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 16). Mrs. Pinchbeck, Parsefall's landlady, is likewise dirty and wears clothes inappropriate for her age. Miggery in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003) is characterized as a buffoon. She has a small head and a round, fat body, and her ears "looked nothing so much as pieces of cauliflower stuck on either side of her head" (DiCamillo, 2003, p. 166). Carlene, Lester's ex-wife in *Savvy* (Law, 2008) is portrayed as trashy:

> [Carlene] looked like a witch dressed up for Halloween like a movie star…She was reading the Sunday paper and wearing nothing much more than a shiny satin robe and bright pink lipstick that bled into the wrinkles radiating from her lips… (Law, 2008, p. 258)

The inside of Carlene's trailer is "smoky" with the "pungent odor of mothballs," the furniture is "garish and awful," and "tacky trinkets" fill every empty space (Law, 2008, pp. 261-262).

While there are some positive portrayals of poor and working class characters, as I will explain later, these negative depictions contribute to a discourse that may justify the low positions of these groups on the class hierarchy.

THE MIDDLE CLASS AND THE AFFLUENT

Depictions of the middle class are limited in the books. Sometimes middle class characters are shown as kind and helpful to other people, such as secondary characters in *Whittington*, namely the merchant Fitzwarren, whose motto to his customers is "give value" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 124) and the farmer Bernie, who "helped everybody" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 13). Middle class people are also depicted as proud. For instance, in *Savvy* (Law, 2008) when Miss Rosemary's teenage son has a baby, she raises the baby as her own to protect the family's pride and sense of propriety. In *Splendors and Glooms*, Lizzie Rose remembers when her parents were alive and instilled a sense of pride in her: "Her parents had taught her to carry herself well and to speak clearly" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 17). Though Lizzie Rose is poor throughout the book, she was part of a middle class family prior to her parents' death.

Affluent characters appear more frequently in these Newbery-winning fantasies. Often, they are portrayed as caring, benevolent, and admirable. When Clara invites Lizzie Rose to tea in *Splendors and Glooms*, Lizzie Rose recognizes how unusual this is for a person of Clara's class, as she explains to the constable: "'Oh yes, sir, it was uncommon,' Lizzie Rose said warmly. 'There's not many a young lady who would be so kind'" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 55). Princess Pea in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003) is kind as well. When Miggery leads her to the dungeon with a

knife to her back, Pea empathizes with Miggery, who desperately wants to be a princess. Later, Pea shows great benevolence when she invites Roscuro, a rat responsible for the chain of events leading to the death of Pea's mother, to eat soup with her even though she dislikes him. Dick Whittington is likewise portrayed as a benevolent person after he gains his fortune: "He left his money for a college, libraries, a hospital, and an almshouse where the poor could rest and get food" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 35).

Affluent characters are shown as conspicuous consumers who value money and material goods. When Miri attends Prince Steffan's banquet, she is awed by the lavish amounts of food (Hale, 2005). As the wealthy Wintermute family prepares for Clara's birthday in *Splendors and Glooms*, they spare no expense: "Clara's birthday frock was made by the finest dressmaker in London, and [Clara] knew her presents would be many and expensive" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 6). Cassandra, the witch who lures Lizzie Rose and Parsefall to her estate, is depicted as a big spender. As she explains to Professor Grisini, "'There is not a single caprice—not one—that I have not indulged'" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 129). In *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008), Josiah Worthington buys land for a town cemetery, saves the best plot for himself, and purchases a conspicuous gravestone to mark his memory. The wealth of the royal family is on full display in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003). The king, queen, and Princess Pea wear gold crowns, and Pea dons a robe "decorated with jewels and sequins" (DiCamillo, 2003, p. 132). Julia in *When You Reach Me* (Stead, 2009) is also a conspicuous consumer; her family takes trips to Europe and buys her expensive dresses and jewelry.

Additionally, affluent characters are powerful. Katar in *Princess Academy* recognizes the queen will do "important things, the kinds of things that affect the entire kingdom" (Hale, 2005, p. 57). When Clara goes missing in *Splendors and Glooms*, Dr. Wintermute, a "wealthy and important man," contacts a high-ranking official and commands the police to find her (Schlitz, 2012, p. 75). Royalty is particularly powerful; as explained in *The Tale of Despereaux*, "when you are a king, you may make as many ridiculous laws as you like" (DiCamillo, 2003, p. 119).

However, the affluent and even the middle class sometimes use their power for ill purposes. The traders in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005) profit from the miners' ignorance, paying them far less for linder than its actual value. In a ploy to save herself from the curse of a gemstone, Cassandra uses her power to lure Lizzie Rose and Parsefall to her estate; Parsefall recognizes this as a "take-in" (Schlitz, 2012, p. 187). Magistrate Tiger in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* is especially greedy and opportunistic: "Magistrate Tiger's most coveted wish was to be of royal blood…every manipulation was part of a strategy to achieve acceptance into the imperial family" (Lin, 2009, p. 19). Consequently, Magistrate Tiger is an oppressive ruler who demands unfair taxes from his subjects to build his own wealth and influence.

As I have shown here, middle class and affluent characters are generally depicted as benevolent but also greedy and unsavory. Now, I employ a critical

literacy lens to deconstruct the discourses about social class appearing in these ten award-winning fantasies.

DECONSTRUCTING CLASS DISCOURSES IN NEWBERY TITLES

From a critical literacy perspective, all texts include ideology, present some people as important and others as unimportant, and generate power for some groups (Jones, 2006, 2008). The children's books discussed here are no exception; many themes appearing in these titles reinforce dominant discourses about social class.

To begin, the rags-to-riches stories evident in books like *Whittington* (Armstrong, 2005), *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009), and *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012) lend support to the American dream myth, the idea that people can overcome poverty to achieve financial success. The prevalence of rags-to-riches stories in this sample highlights the notion that expecting success is reasonable (Hochschild, 2002). Moreover, financial success is equated with virtue (Beach, 2007; Hochschild, 2002) as poor and working class characters who are kind and industrious—namely, Minli, Miri, and Lizzie Rose—all achieve some degree of success. Despite the endurance of the American dream myth, sudden gains in fortune are rare and should not be expected (Hochschild, 2002; Wyatt-Nichol, 2011). Wyatt-Nichol (2011) argues such stories are dangerous because they keep people believing in the prospect of success rather than challenging economic inequities. A critically literate reader may recognize that rags-to-riches stories are also problematic because of the way they position class groups; the poor and working classes are positioned as places one should "escape" while membership in the affluent class is positioned as a worthy goal. Such positioning suggests the poor and working class are unimportant, a notion that could potentially damage a reader's sense of self-worth if he or she identifies with these groups. Rags-to-riches stories are countered somewhat through the depictions of hardship and precariousness in some books, yet the depictions of characters struggling for stability and financial solvency still frame poor and working class lives as undesirable.

The positioning of affluence as desirable is evident in other themes I have discussed, such as when poor and working class characters aspire to wealth and prestige like Miggery in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003) and the Mount Eskel girls in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005). The discourse of wanting to be rich (or be like the rich) manifests often in American culture, not just in these award-winning books. For instance, the endorsement of goods by wealthy celebrities encourages members of all classes to emulate the rich, namely by owning the same products that celebrities use. Indeed, purchasing the same goods as affluent people is one way that people in lower classes emulate them (hooks, 2000). Freire also makes the argument that people go to great lengths to emulate the wealthy:

> … the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the 'eminent' men and women of the upper class. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 62)

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The discourses of desiring wealth or emulating the wealthy make affluent people even more powerful. People in other classes are more likely to favor policies benefitting the rich if they, too, believe they can become rich or are like the rich.

Some themes in the books serve the function of legitimizing the economic structure in the United States. For example, many of the affluent characters in the books are shown as conspicuous consumers, like Cassandra and the Wintermute family in *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012) and Julia in *When You Reach Me* (Stead, 2010). Such depictions promote a consumerist discourse making the purchase of goods seem natural and normal. As Anyon (1981) notes, a capitalist economy depends on the production and purchase of goods, and those who benefit from this economic system count on people to believe frequent consumption is necessary. I do not mean to suggest that reading children's books featuring conspicuous consumers will lead children to become such consumers themselves (or that children's book authors are ardent capitalists). However, the prevalence of consumerism in American culture could prompt children to think that consumerism is necessary, normal, and even desirable, particularly when it is reinforced each time they turn on TV, log on the Internet, and open a book. The discourse of conspicuous consumption supports a capitalist economic system and deflects attention away from the darker side of consumerism, such the consequences of consuming beyond one's financial means.

Other themes about social class in these Newbery-winning fantasies can be viewed as supporting the existing class structure. For example, affluent characters like Clara Wintermute, Dick Whittington, and Princess Pea are admirable; they are kind and benevolent. To some extent, they are positioned as "saviors" of the less fortunate, which makes them appear more powerful and consequently diminishes the power of the poor and working class to address their own problems. When the affluent are positioned in such a positive way, their high status within the class structure is reinforced because they appear deserving of their wealth. Indeed, those in lower classes are likely to accept the class structure if they believe the wealthy are good people; challenging and questioning the equity of the class structure is less likely when people believe the wealthy are deserving of what they have. Although there are some corrupt wealthy characters in the sample, such as Magistrate Tiger and Cassandra Sagredo, their underhandedness may be countered somewhat by the power they possess if power is viewed as an admirable quality. Further, Magistrate Tiger is so one-dimensionally evil that he can easily be dismissed as a bad apple in the bunch.

The class structure is further reinforced through depictions of poor and working class characters. They are shown as objects of scorn like the Mount Eskel girls in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005); dim-witted and buffoonish like Miggery in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003); filthy and criminal like Parsefall in *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012); and lowly like Lester and trashy like Carlene in *Savvy* (Law, 2008). These depictions position the poor and working class in negative ways and justify their low class status. Their personal shortcomings make them appear undeserving of wealth or a higher class position, a common discourse in American culture (Hochschild, 2002; Langston, 1988).

Although some poor and working class characters are depicted positively, like Minli, Miri, and Lizzie Rose, it should be noted that none of these characters stay poor; they all achieve a higher class status or better fortune by the end of their stories.

It is common for Americans to believe they live in a classless or middle class society (hooks, 2000; Jones, 2006; Van Galen, 2007). Interestingly, the books discussed here disrupt this discourse. These books, all published in the United States, include characters from each of the social classes identified above, and depictions of the middle class are less frequent than depictions of other class groups. Characters in the books also show some class-based antagonisms, such as the contentious relationships between the working class Mount Eskel girls and the middle class and affluent people they encounter at the Princess Academy, such as their tutor Olana (Hale, 2005). Although the books in this sample include some unfortunate discourses about class, they may be useful for illustrating that most societies, whether real or fantasy, are pluralistic in terms of class.

Examining these books in their historical context of 2004-2013, a ten-year span including times of prosperity, recession, and recovery, yields interesting insights. As noted previously, half of the titles include stories of characters going from poor to prosperous in some degree; two of these rags-to-riches stories received Newbery nods before the recession (*Whittington*, Armstrong, 2005; *Princess Academy*, Hale, 2005) and three after the recession (*Splendors and Glooms*, Schlitz, 2012; *When You Reach Me*, Stead, 2009; *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, Lin, 2009). No book receiving a Newbery Medal or Honor during the recession years of 2007-2009 included a rags-to-riches tale (*When You Reach Me* and *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon,* though published in 2009, were awarded with the Newbery in 2010, when the U.S. economy was recovering). Perhaps rags-to-riches stories are more popular or seem more worthy of literary recognition during times of prosperity, times when people may have reason to believe they are true. Moreover, several of the books present distinct dichotomies between rich and poor characters: Princess Pea and Miggery Sow in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003), the lowlanders and Mount Eskel girls in *Princess Academy* (Hale, 2005), Clara and Lizzie Rose in *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012), and the king and Minli in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009). It is interesting to speculate whether the juxtaposition of rich and poor in these books, coupled with the absence of middle class characters, are meant as a commentary about the widening inequality plaguing contemporary U.S. society (Comber, 2015). Certainly such close interactions between rich and poor are less common in real life than they are in these books; perhaps their authors mean to suggest that class harmony is indeed the realm of fantasy.

IMPLICATIONS

The discourses evident in these ten Newbery-winning books may be especially powerful to young readers because of their occurrence in works of fantasy, a genre representing society's deeply-held ideals and desires. Although the interpretation

of a book depends on the interaction of the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978), readers may be exposed to harmful discourses about class through these books, namely the ideas that affluent lives are more desirable than poor and working class lives, and people "deserve" their class status based on their individual virtues or shortcomings. Negative messages about particular groups can have a damaging impact if children are exposed to them time and again (Boutte, 2002). As I have illustrated, many of the discourses appearing in these fantasy books relate to common discourses about class in American culture, so children are likely to be exposed to them often.

The potentially harmful themes about social class appearing in this set of books (as well as other children's literature) suggest the need for teaching critical literacy in K-12 settings. Reading from a critical literacy stance can help children understand the underlying messages in children's books and identify whose interests are served (or not) by these discourses. Teaching students to question what they read is one strategy for promoting critical literacy in the classroom. Jones (2006, 2008) offers a useful and child-friendly set of questions for educators looking to encourage students to read from a critical literacy stance. For example, Jones (2008) suggests teaching students to ask questions like "What kinds of people/lives/experiences are at the center of this book?" and "How does this book position me as a reader?" to call attention to issues of power, privilege, and marginalization (p. 58). Additionally, Jones (2006) suggests students can reconstruct, or reimagine, a story to give a marginalized group or person more power or agency. Creating such reconstructions can help students see how books privilege particular groups of people and empower them to imagine something different. Labadie, Wetzel, and Rogers (2012) also provide practical advice for enacting critical literacy with even the youngest readers; they advise 1) analyzing images in books prior to reading and asking students to consider whose perspectives are represented and whose are missing and 2) asking open-ended questions about books and allowing students ample "think time" to formulate responses. Teachers can also find excellent ideas for promoting critical literacy in the work of Behrman (2006), McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), and Powell, Cantrell, and Adams (2001). Given the power of children's literature to educate and socialize young people and the prevalence of class-centered discourse in books and American culture, teaching children to read from a critical literacy stance is an imperative undertaking for teachers who see literacy as a means of challenging and deconstructing dominant discourses about class.

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9. INDIFFERENCE, NEGLECT, AND OUTRIGHT DISLIKE

Examining Sources of and Responses to Institutionalized Oppression in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

"What are fairy-stories? What is their origin? What is the use of them?" The inimitable J. R. R. Tolkien (1965) explores these questions in his lecture-turned-essay, "On Fairy-Stories" (p. 4). In considering this first question, Tolkien writes, "…Actually fairy-stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting" (p. 59). That is, for Tolkien, fairy-stories access the essential elements of the human experience, then heighten and highlight these elements through fantasy. He expounds upon this relationship between reality and fantasy, asserting that

> Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary, the keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make. (p. 54)

Tolkien identifies a connection between reality and fantasy, and believes that fairy-stories can and do reflect aspects of the world of their readers; thus, in terms of the third and final question, the "use," or purpose, of fairy-stories, Tolkien finds his conclusions both numerous and valuable. For Tolkien, fantasy has much to show us of our minds and our world, and of their respective wonders and terrors.

Further, Tolkien (1965) indicates that reading fantasy may influence our actions in, as well as our perspectives on, our world:

> For it is after all possible for a rational man, after reflection…to arrive at the condemnation, implicit at least in the mere silence of escapist literature, of progressive things like factories, or the machine-guns and bombs that appear to be their most natural and inevitable, dare we say "inexorable," products. (p. 63)

That is, in underscoring its differences from our world, Tolkien claims that fantasy can enable its readers to alter their perceptions of and responses to certain societal elements. I concur fully with Tolkien's assertion, and further posit that fantasy can inspire the same awareness and critique in its readers through depictions of similarities between the fantasy world and our own. To support and prove this claim over the course of this chapter, I examine, analyze, and evaluate sources and structures of institutionalized oppression in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the*

Order of the Phoenix, and consider responses of the repressed as well as the empowered to this oppression within and beyond the text.

Institutionalized oppression is the deliberate, authoritative, and systematic mistreatment of a group of people united by a specific commonality, such as gender, race, or class; the force and subsequent influences of these persecutions create and reinforce strict hierarchies in which the oppressors acquire and maintain power at the expense of the oppressed.[1] In examining the construction and maintenance of structures of institutionalized oppression from an economic perspective, socialist Karl Marx laid the foundation for a form of literary theory that, today, we call Marxism. When scrutinizing literature through a Marxist lens, readers strive to understand the power structures of oppression at work in a text, as well as any and all forms of rebellion or revolution that arise in response to those structures. Over the course of this chapter, I will use aspects of the Marxist lens to show that institutionalized oppression permeates the whole of Rowling's wizarding world, and that the tensions and conflicts it generates drive the text; further, I make this claim despite the fact that our society views the *Harry Potter* series chiefly as diverting, often harmless "children's literature." Like Tolkien (1965), I believe that adults as well as children can and should read, examine, and learn from fantasy, and that *Order* in particular has much to teach us about the world in which we live.

Before beginning the examination of *Order*, I offer a brief section on Marxist literary theory in the context of its possible uses in the classroom. Marxist literary theory scaffolds this examination of institutionalized oppression in *Order,* and can provide teachers and their students with essential language for discussing and evaluating the text and its content at the independent and class levels. Following this overview, I consider, as Elaine Ostry (2003) calls them, "the two major conflicts in the series: tensions between Muggle-born and pure-blood wizards, and between human wizards and nonhuman magical creatures" (p. 92). These central, complex conflicts engender institutionalized oppression, directly as well as indirectly, within and beyond the dominant wizarding society and its respective culture. I also analyze responses to these structures of persecution, both acquiescent and rebellious. In the third, final section, I propose suggestions for inclusion and application of *Order* in schools.

DEFINING AND USING THE MARXIST LENS

As noted above, I ground this examination of *Order* in Marxist literary theory; however, I also hope to define and use the Marxist lens in a manner that is accessible to teachers as well as to their students. To that end, I have consulted and synthesized literary theory texts that focus on the interpretation and application of the Marxist lens in the classroom and its literature. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) (2010), a free, pertinent, and invaluable resource for secondary schools, states that the collective school of Marxist criticism "concerns itself with class differences, economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of [these structures]" ("Whom Does it Benefit?" section, para. 1). The Purdue OWL further stresses that Marxist literary theory invites the

question, "whom does it [the work, the effort, the policy, the road, etc.] benefit? … And Marxist critics are also interested in how the lower or working classes are oppressed—in everyday life and in literature" ("Whom Does it Benefit?" section, para. 2). Essentially, Marxist theory encourages readers to study the structures that empower certain groups while oppressing others. Commonalities often used to create and enforce oppression include gender, race, class, economic status, social standing, and combinations of these culturally reinforced categories.

Deborah Appleman (2015) brings Marxist criticism, or, as she calls it, the "social class lens," to the classroom, writing from the perspective of an educator: "slowly, yet palpably, more secondary teachers have recognized the potential richness and utility of introducing cultural criticism to their students and encouraging them to view literature through political prisms" (p. 53). Per Appleman, as the classroom becomes more diverse in terms of students as well as literature, critical perspectives like the Marxist lens can empower teachers and their learners to ask rigorous, thoughtful, and specific questions of the texts and of each other. Similarly, Bonnycastle stresses the power critical perspectives have in challenging possible structures or agents of oppression, arguing that:

> Theory is subversive because it puts authority in question…It means that no authority can impose a 'truth' on you in a dogmatic way—and if some authority does try, you can challenge that truth in a powerful way, by asking what ideology it is based upon. (as cited in Appleman, 2015, p. 57)

Here, Bonnycastle uses "ideology" in its Marxist sense, understanding it as a collection of beliefs, often unquestioned, that support a ruling group of people. Via the Marxist lens, students will learn to interrogate and examine literature for institutionalized oppression with focus and precision; ideally, students will ultimately be able to transfer and apply these skills and their conclusions to the world in which they live.

While teachers and students can access critical perspectives in as many contexts as there are texts, educators Anna O. Soter, Mark Faust, and Theresa M. Rogers (2008) consider the inclusion of literary theory as it applies to young adult literature. These authors note middle and high school students' natural connections to young adult literature, crediting personal identification with the characters in these texts and praising the empathy this experience can inspire in students. However, Soter, Faust, and Rogers also view critical perspectives as means of "helping young readers discover new and different ways of finding pleasure through reading" (p. 25). Literary theory and the epiphanies it can stimulate can be both powerful and gratifying for students, which is yet another reason to bring critical perspectives and young adult literature into the classroom.

In this analysis of *Order*, I unite the Marxist lens, a nuanced young adult literature text, and a "fairy-story" in the context of the contemporary classroom. Use of the Marxist lens allows students to begin uncovering and evaluating the complexities of fantasy. Marxist literary theory and the lines of inquiry it generates also validate and even advocate for the inclusion of young adult literature as well as fantasy in the classroom. Ultimately, the insights students will discover and the

conclusions they will draw from the critical examination of a young adult fantasy text like *Order* will encourage and lead them to become stronger thinkers and scholars.

<center>VIEWING *ORDER* THROUGH THE MARXIST LENS</center>

In the introduction to this chapter, I reference Ostry (2003) and the two essential sources of conflict she highlights in the *Harry Potter* series: "tensions between Muggle-born and pure-blood wizards, and between human wizards and nonhuman magical creatures" (p. 92). This first source of tension acknowledges the societal divide between Muggle-born wizards, or those born into non-magical families, and pure-blood wizards, or those born into families who can trace magic to their roots. However, this binary is not perfect, as it excludes wizards who were born to magical parents but may have Muggle ancestors; these wizards are neither Muggle-born nor pure-blood, and are, as a whole, referred to as half-bloods, despite the doubtless mathematical imperfections of that label. Like their titular hero, readers learn as early as the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* that some wizards believe pure-bloods are nobler by birth and family history than Muggle-born or half-blood wizards. Thus, the element that enforces this division is the presence or lack of presence of magic in the bloodline of an individual wizard.

Harry Potter encounters the effects of these societal divisions by blood directly and indirectly over the course of the series. One of the co-founders of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Salazar Slytherin, was a pure-blood, and believed that Hogwarts should be restricted to "all magic families" despite the fact that, as Ostry (2003) notes, the school "was founded in order to create a safe haven for wizards from the persecuting Muggles in the Middle ages" (p. 92). That is, Slytherin wished to keep Hogwarts free of Muggle-born witches and wizards despite the fact that these people were still magical. While the other three Hogwarts co-founders ultimately overruled Slytherin, pure-blood families such as the Malfoys, ever members of Slytherin house, support and perpetuate Slytherin's stance ages later, leading Draco Malfoy and his ilk to taunt and mistreat Muggle-born peers like gifted witch Hermione Granger. When considering the blood-superiority the Malfoys perceive in themselves, it is no surprise that they and other wizards of a similar mindset support Lord Voldemort, whose ultimate goal is to create a world in which all beings serve pure-blood wizards.

Many scholars, including but not limited to Elizabeth E. Heilman and Anne E. Gregory (2003), Ostry (2003), Julia Park (2003), Rebecca Skulnick and Jesse Goodman (2003), and Tess Stockslager (2012), view the biases and subsequent actions and oppressions of Voldemort and his followers in the contexts of race and racial prejudice in our world. We can certainly draw parallels between the treatment of magical bloodlines in Rowling's wizarding world and the treatment of race in our own, and it can be thought-provoking and enlightening to do so. For instance, in her essay "What it Means to Be a Half-Blood: Integrity versus Fragmentation in Biracial Identity," Stockslager strives to "draw an analogy between half-blood identity and biracial identity. Several of the experiences of the

three half-blood characters in the series bear striking resemblances to common experiences of biracial and bicultural people, magical and Muggle alike" (p. 123). Stockslager's insightful conclusions lend themselves to students at the personal, individual level, and to the various cultures and their respective customs in our world.

However, as Steven Barfield asserts, "an exact counterpart to Rowling's version of magic does not exist outside the world of the novels" (as cited in Stockslager, 2012, p. 123). Thus, there can be no exact, infallible translation of the magical bloodlines structure of oppression to our own. The aforementioned second source of conflict in the series, or the tensions between "human wizards and nonhuman magical creatures," further complicates this absence of a precise correlation, as scholars argue that both conflicts, despite their clear differences, correlate to race in reality. Moreover, as Stockslager (2012) herself notes, the question of race without the added element of magic is a concern in and of itself in Rowling's novel (p. 122). Barfield and Stockslager claim that the best way to view the treatment of magical bloodlines is as analogy (p. 123); however, for the purposes of examining and evaluating institutionalized oppression within these sources of conflict, I argue that readers can learn from *Order* without embarking on an impossible attempt to transfer each and every facet of the text to their own lives and world. In fact, readers may find that a more flexible approach to the structures of oppression in *Order* proves more valuable and fruitful than a narrowed quest to translate the narrative, its problems, and its themes into the varied contexts of our own world.

Much like the conflict between pure-blood wizards and Muggle-born wizards, the second source of tension in the *Harry Potter* series, or the conflict between human wizards and nonhuman magical creatures, is intricate and complex. Wizards, their cultures, and their conflicts dominate the *Harry Potter* novels, and often do so at the expense of the nonhuman magical creatures living in Rowling's wizarding world. Heilman and Gregory (2003) examine the relationships—often degradations, oppressions, or enslavements—between wizards and magical creatures, viewing groups such as house-elves, werewolves, and giants as different, lower classes; similarly, Ostry (2003) views these groups in the context of oppressed races. Again, while these analogies can be useful, readers should take care in drawing such parallels. The umbrella of nonhuman magical creatures is broad and vast, and, via the binary that defines it, levels house-elves, werewolves, giants, goblins, and centaurs with thestrals, bowtruckles, and nifflers. The multifaceted beings in this former list have language, definite cultures, and nuanced histories (however oppressed those respective cultures and histories have been and are), while those in the latter group function more as animals do in our world. Should Heilman and Gregory or Ostry hope to view nonhuman magical creatures as corresponding classes or races in our world, they would need to make a vital distinction between these two subcategories, or else liken people of different classes or races to animals. Once more, allow me to stress that readers need not attempt to find clear, neat analogies between Rowling's world and their own. Examining the institutionalized oppression in *Harry Potter*, and in *Order* in

particular, broadens and lends perspective to conversations on our societies as well as its respective cultures and structures.

Having established and clarified the two central sources of conflict that, intentionally or unintentionally, engender and sustain institutionalized oppression in the *Harry Potter* series, let us turn now to the specific presences and influences of these tensions in *Order*. At the conclusion of the fourth novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort returns, reacquiring true human form with Harry as the only apparent witness who would testify to this (Rowling, 2000). Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, Professor Minerva McGonagall, and Professor Severus Snape uncover a second source in the form of Bartemius "Barty" Crouch, Jr., a Death Eater who had been masquerading as Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor Alastor "Mad-Eye" Moody and monitoring Harry at Voldemort's behest; however, before Crouch can testify, a Dementor sucks out his soul, leaving him vegetative and unable to speak (Rowling). Despite the abundance of remaining evidence, Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge refuses to believe that Voldemort has returned (Rowling).

With Voldemort's return comes the renewed threat of severe, intentional institutionalized oppression. As Park (2003) aptly notes, the pure-blood wizards "whose families held power with Voldemort grudgingly await their return to favor" (p. 184). Considering the fear, persecution, torture, and murder that surround Voldemort, his followers, and his regime, any indication of his return should, at the very least, merit the government's serious consideration of the evidence and examination of the surrounding circumstances, as well as possible additional attention to the safety of the wizarding public. However, Fudge does not budge in his refusal to acknowledge Voldemort's return; on the contrary, he discredits and ignores the sheer possibility. Readers learn in *Order* that there has not been a single affirmation or warning, either from the Ministry of Magic or from the principal magical newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*, of Voldemort's return (Rowling, 2003). Rather, as Hermione tells Harry, the *Prophet* is denouncing him and his claims of Voldemort's return by "writing about you as though you're this deluded, attention-seeking person who thinks he's a great tragic hero or something … They want to turn you into someone nobody will believe. Fudge is behind it, I'll bet anything" (Rowling, p. 74). Readers also learn that "Dumbledore's name's mud with the Ministry these days…Fudge has made it clear that anyone who's in league with Dumbledore can clear out their desks" (Rowling, p. 71).

Fudge dedicates his time, resources, and influence to discrediting Harry and Dumbledore, and thus to silencing discussion of the possibility, let alone the certainty, of Voldemort's return. However, Fudge does not act from a position of loyalty to Voldemort, or from a belief in the maliciousness of the institutionalized oppression Voldemort promotes. Rather, Fudge fears that Dumbledore plans to acquire the office of Minister of Magic, leaving the current, incompetent Minister, Fudge, out of work (Rowling, 2003). Dumbledore believes in Voldemort's return, and begins planning to defend the wizarding world against it; thus, for fear of the loss of his office, Fudge feels he must discredit Dumbledore to protect his own reputation and status. Nevertheless, in slandering Dumbledore, Fudge indirectly

supports the ideology of, and even paves the way for, further institutionalized oppression. As Chantel M. Lavoie (2009) argues:

> Rowling makes plain the argument that nonresistance, too, perpetuates violence. When countless "good" wizards refuse to believe that Voldemort has returned, they become in some sense Death Eaters themselves; they swallow a lie that hearkens back to and foretells death. You are what you eat. (p. 80)

With ignorance of the situation at hand comes allowance of its perpetuation and continuation. In refusing to acknowledge and prepare for Voldemort's return, Fudge affords Voldemort time and protection from the law. Further, in defaming Dumbledore and Harry, two of the leading figures fighting Voldemort's intent to oppress, Fudge indirectly supports institutionalized oppression via his nonresistance.

Per Shama Rangwala (2009), Fudge's goal is "to assert the primacy of the Ministry's version of events and state control over public institutions" (p. 133). In order to accomplish this overarching control of and order in the wizarding world around him, Fudge must meddle and tamper with multiple branches of government (the Ministry as well as the high court, the Wizengamot), the mainstream press (the *Prophet*) and, most notably, the educational system (Hogwarts). Fudge's obsessive, overreaching involvement in these institutions and his actions once he achieves those levels of involvement prove, as Rangwala argues, that the Ministry is as much of a danger as Voldemort in *Order* (p. 133).

Though the appearance of the Wizengamot is brief in *Order*, it is significant in that it highlights Fudge's willingness to neglect both the truth and the law in favor of his own wishes, and to silence or oppress those who oppose him. At the beginning of the novel, after Harry is forced to produce a Patronus charm to protect himself and his Muggle cousin, Dudley, from Dementors, Fudge attempts to confiscate Harry's wand and expel him from Hogwarts on charges of underage magic in the presence of a Muggle (Rowling, 2003, p. 27). Soon after this notice, however, Harry learns he is entitled to and will receive a trial to determine his innocence or guilt. On the morning of the trial, the Ministry changes the time and location of Harry's hearing without appropriate notice; this is another example of Fudge's slick attempts to punish Harry (Rowling, p. 149). It is at Harry's trial that he and his readers learn that, per Dumbledore, "The Ministry does not have the power to expel Hogwarts students…Nor does it have the right to confiscate wands until charges have been successfully proven" (Rowling, p. 149). Fudge's eager willingness to silence and persecute Harry despite the law shows his lack of regard for the limits of his power, but also endangers Harry; without his wand, he would be unable to protect himself or defend others from the oppressive Voldemort.

During the Wizengamot hearing, readers also learn that Dumbledore was, until very recently, an esteemed member of the court himself. Fudge grows incensed as, time and again, Dumbledore is able to access and quote the law to protect Harry; finally, savagely, Fudge reminds Dumbledore that laws can be changed. In response, Dumbledore remarks,

> "Of course they can…And you certainly seem to be making many changes, Cornelius. Why, in the few short weeks since I was asked to leave the Wizengamot, it has already become the practice to hold a full criminal trial to deal with a simple matter of underage magic!" (Rowling, 2003, p. 149)

Readers are able to infer that it was Fudge who requested Dumbledore leave the Wizengamot, despite the fact that Dumbledore shows superior knowledge of and reverence for wizard law. As Susan Hall (2003) writes, "the Ministry of Magic…[possesses] wide discretionary powers, which are not subject to review by any legal process. Ministry officials enjoy a high level of immunity from being called to account for their actions" (p. 148). Thus, as Minister, Fudge is able to dismiss Dumbledore from the Wizengamot without apparent consequences; similarly, from his premature attempts to expel Harry to his blatant mishandling of and biases during the hearing, Fudge comes close to flouting the law several times, and always in favor of his personal agenda. Ultimately, Fudge's ignorance, egocentricity, and power prove a troubling combination. His persecution of Harry and Dumbledore, two of the foremost figures in terms of combating institutionalized oppression, places the whole of the wizarding world at risk.

In addition to the Wizengamot, Fudge also uses the press to discredit and defame those he views as a threat to his role and rule as Minister of Magic. As noted above and in Tracy L. Bealer (2009), Fudge uses the *Prophet* to "brand Harry a delusional liar and Dumbledore a senile relic," and readers of the newspaper, even those who know Harry and Dumbledore personally, believe it (p. 177). One of the reasons Percy Weasley, who has known Harry for many years, disassociates himself from his family is their belief in Harry and Dumbledore; he accepts a position as Junior Assistant to Fudge, and writes a letter to his brother Ron warning him not to continue his association with Harry, his best friend (Rowling, 2003). Similarly, Seamus Finnigan, a fellow Gryffindor and one of Harry's friends, trusts the *Prophet*, and confesses that his mother did not want him to return to Hogwarts as a result of her fear and doubt of Harry and Dumbledore (Rowling, p. 217). Indeed, whole groups of students, once they have "caught sight of Harry … hurried to form a tighter group, as though frightened he might attack stragglers" (Rowling, p. 223). While a few students and their families do believe Harry and Dumbledore, overall, the wizard community believes Fudge and the lies in the *Prophet*. This overarching doubt surrounding Voldemort's return leaves the wizarding world susceptible to attack and oppression, and Fudge is to blame.

Though his meddling in the Wizengamot and the *Prophet* are undeniably harmful, Fudge causes the most damage and enables direct, undeniable institutionalized oppression at Hogwarts through Dolores Umbridge. Although Dumbledore, as Headmaster, agreed to hire her in the absence of other options for a new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, Umbridge makes her loyalty to the Ministry of Magic clear in her speech during the welcome banquet; she emphasizes the value the Ministry places on education, then announces her hope that she and the school, so she claims, will begin "preserving what ought to be preserved, perfecting what needs to be perfected, and pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited" (Rowling, 2003, pp. 213-214). Umbridge also voices her

disdain for "progress for progress's sake" in this speech, presenting herself as an altogether intolerant and controlling woman (Rowling, p. 213). Overall, it is as Hermione warns: the speech "means the Ministry's interfering at Hogwarts" in dangerous and damaging ways (Rowling, p. 214).

Umbridge establishes her reign of oppression from the beginning of her first class. She refuses to allow the class to practice magic, meaning that her students will have no experience with casting critical defensive spells and, thus, will be more vulnerable to attack (Rowling, 2003, p. 244). The students question and protest this, but Umbridge refuses to alter her stance. Ultimately, Harry, concerned with student safety, voices the concerns of his readers and classmates: he stresses Voldemort's return and the importance of training all wizards and witches in defensive spellwork; Umbridge denounces Harry's statement, bluntly declaring it a lie and assigning him additional punishments each time he argues further (Rowling, p. 245). Throughout this lesson, Umbridge supports the narrative Fudge perpetuates in the Ministry and the *Prophet*. As a result, she contributes to the protection, no matter how inadvertently, of Voldemort and his regime.

However, at his first detention, Harry and his readers learn that Umbridge is far more dangerous than Fudge. In detention, Umbridge instructs Harry to write the words "I must not tell lies" for the whole of the session (Rowling, 2003, p. 266). Though the punishment seems harmless at first, Harry soon recognizes it is much worse than he had realized:

> He let out a gasp of pain. The words had appeared on the parchment in what appeared to be shining red ink. At the same time, the words had appeared on the back of Harry's right hand, cut into his skin as though traced there by a scalpel—yet even as he stared at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth. (Rowling, p. 267)

In an attempt to silence Harry, Umbridge resorts to corporal punishment, a clear demonstration of oppression. Further, the truth Harry is attempting to spread resists institutionalized oppression, and Umbridge suppresses it; indirectly, then, she too is perpetuating institutionalized oppression. Power, censorship, and corporal punishment make Umbridge a perilous oppressor and enemy. It is also important to note that at this point in the narrative, students and staff have offered little more than whispered or subtly spoken resistance to Umbridge and her policies, and that these responses have been quieted or quashed as such.

Fudge soon bequeaths more power upon Umbridge, appointing her High Inquisitor of Hogwarts. According to the *Prophet*, and, by extension, the Ministry, the High Inquisitor "will have powers to inspect her fellow educators and make sure they are coming up to scratch," as well as to write and enforce "decrees," or new school rules, as she sees fit (Rowling, 2003, p. 307). Umbridge begins exercising her newfound privileges at once, visiting classes to critique professors. The two staff members with whom she finds fault, Sibyll Trelawney and Rubeus Hagrid, are significant in terms of Umbridge's rationale, her personal biases and willingness to oppress, and the responses her actions receive.

Umbridge dismisses and tries to evict Trelawney after deeming her astronomy lessons unsuitable according to Ministry standards. Harry notes "the enjoyment stretching [Umbridge's] toadlike face as she watched Professor Trelawney sink, sobbing uncontrollably, onto one of her trunks" (Rowling, 2003, p. 595). This moment serves as an indicator of the malicious cruelty that drives Umbridge. With her new powers at Hogwarts, it seems Umbridge will succeed until Dumbledore arrives on the scene, reminding her that she neither has power to evict a professor, nor to appoint a replacement if he is able to find one (Rowling, p. 596-98). Dumbledore uses the law, as weak as it is, to combat Umbridge, and does so successfully. Furthermore, Dumbledore has chosen Firenze, a centaur, to replace Trelawney, which Umbridge finds appalling. Firenze's appointment illustrates Dumbledore's opposition to the ideologies supporting the institutionalized oppression of nonhuman magical creatures, and simultaneously exposes Umbridge's support of and belief in those same ideologies.

Readers further uncover Umbridge's personal prejudices through her longing to dismiss Hagrid, the Care of Magical Creatures teacher whom the *Prophet* exposes as half-giant earlier in the novel (Rowling, 2003). Umbridge conducts her inspection of Hagrid's class with obvious bias; as Hermione rages, "It's her thing about half-breeds all over again—she's trying to make out Hagrid's some kind of dim-witted troll, just because he had a giantess for a mother" (Rowling, p. 450). In failing and intending to fire a professor based on his parentage and place in the magical beings hierarchical structure, Umbridge enforces the institutionalized oppression of nonhuman magical creatures by wizards that functions throughout the world of the series.

However, with Umbridge's rise to High Inquisitor comes much-needed resistance against her presence, actions, and decrees. In the face of Umbridge's useless lessons and with the threat of Voldemort and his Death Eaters looming in the shadows, Hermione suggests that Harry teach a secret Defense Against the Dark Arts class (Rowling, 2003, p. 326). Such a class would battle both Umbridge's oppressive regime and the threat of Voldemort's institutionalized oppression, enabling wizards and witches to protect themselves against injustice, tyranny, and pain, regardless of their magical bloodlines. It is as Hermione replies when asked about her reasons for wanting to learn real Defense Against the Dark Arts: "I want to be properly trained in Defense because … because … Because Lord Voldemort's back" (Rowling, p. 340).

This Defense Against the Dark Arts group also fosters resistance in a second, vital way: it nurtures community and builds relationships among different Houses. As Harry and his friends are members of Gryffindor House, so it is no surprise that most of the students who attend the first meeting for the secret class are Gryffindors as well. However, several Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students also attend (Rowling, 2003, p. 346). This meeting of Houses harkens back to a moment earlier in the novel, when the Sorting Hat warns Hogwarts of the dangers of division: "I sort you into Houses because that is what I'm for…Still I worry that it's wrong … Still I wonder whether sorting may not bring the end I fear" (Rowling, p. 206). Resistance and rebellion are far more powerful and effective

when present across different groups, rather than in one alone. It is also useful to note that Slytherin House, which prides itself on its exclusively pure-blood students, neither seeks involvement in nor receives invitation to this class; this reinforces the division between self-proclaimed superior pure-bloods and those pure-bloods, half-bloods, or Muggle-borns who do not support this power structure. The students in this new Defense Against the Dark Arts group dub themselves "Dumbledore's Army," or "the D.A.," which shows further support for that pillar of resistance as opposed to the Ministry.

As *Order* continues, and as Umbridge squeezes her fingers closer and closer around Hogwarts, Harry and Hermione rebel against the High Inquisitor, the *Prophet,* and the Ministry in one smooth maneuver. Hermione enlists tabloid journalist Rita Skeeter to interview Harry for "the true story. All the facts. Exactly as Harry reports them. He'll give you all the details, he'll tell you the names of the undiscovered Death Eaters he saw there, he'll tell you what Voldemort looks like now" (Rowling, 2003, p. 567). The *Quibbler*, a fringe magazine that the Ministry does not influence, prints the interview, and soon, the truth is circulating Hogwarts and the whole of the wizarding world like wildfire. Though Umbridge bans the *Quibbler*, threatens students with expulsion as consequences for reading the interview, and assigns Harry a full week of detention for "telling lies," the interview leaves a lasting impression. As Leslee Friedman (2009) states: "the published interview provides a 'turning point' moment in the action of the novel, allowing for several people who had doubted Harry's honesty to see his side of events and to give his version some thought" (p. 201). One notable change of heart is that of Seamus Finnigan, who approaches Harry after the publication of his interview to say, "I believe you. And I've sent a copy of that magazine to me mam" (Rowling, p. 583). Thus, rebellion begins to challenge and overthrow the threat of oppression through ignorance.

As Bealer (2009) notes, Umbridge strives to quash rebellion, writing and enforcing countless decrees "in the name of preventing Harry and Dumbledore from communicating and substantiating their account of Voldemort's return to other students" (p. 179). That is, Umbridge ever endeavors to keep the truth from the wizarding world, and subjects them to the grave threat of institutionalized oppression as a result. As she embarks upon this task of suppression, Umbridge seeks and garners assistance from the students of Slytherin House, whose familial loyalties doubtless lie with Voldemort and who, as discussed at the beginning of this section, are all pure-blood wizards. Umbridge gives these pure-blood students power over their peers, many of whom are half-blood or Muggle-born, and thus reinforces that power structure. With the help of these pure-blood students, Umbridge undertakes the task of finding and proving the existence of the D.A., its members (who are pure-blood, half-blood, and Muggle-born students), and its meetings. She succeeds, and, in the following flurry of events, Dumbledore accepts undue blame for the D.A. and flees Hogwarts to avoid Azkaban Prison; thus, with the position vacant, Fudge names Umbridge Headmistress (Rowling, 2003, p. 624).

Without Dumbledore, who had been the last authority above her in the school, present, Umbridge uses her power and influence with hitherto unprecedented vigor and malice. She dubs her core group of Slytherins the Inquisitorial Squad, dispatching the elitist pure-blood students to do her bidding as she chooses and giving them additional influence over their peers (Rowling, 2003). Rowling clearly illustrates Umbridge's support of pure-blood wizards' supposed superiority over half-blood and Muggle-born wizards when Malfoy, given the power to dock points from Hogwarts Houses, hisses, "Oh yeah, I forgot, you're a Mudblood, Granger, so ten [points] for that" (p. 626). As a Muggle-born witch and, thus, beneath Malfoy in the present power structure, Hermione can only ignore and, thus, acquiesce to Malfoy's comment. In her tenure as headmistress, Umbridge's policies and student leadership assignments reinforce the belief that proud pure-blood wizards are superior to those who do not belong to this group.

Returning to Umbridge's actions at this point in the text, Bealer (2009) argues, "the powers Umbridge methodically accumulates during her tenure suggest a totalitarian regime's commitment to single control of speech, action, and even thought" (p. 177). Umbridge and her minions create and enforce institutionalized oppression at Hogwarts: professors and students who refuse to conform to Umbridge's strict, controlling rules are punished. The clearest, most violent example of Umbridge's cruelty and dominance comes as she moves to fire, evict, and arrest Hagrid via excessive magical force (Rowling, p. 720). Using numerous Stunning spells, Umbridge and her team of Ministry Aurors assault Hagrid without warning, thus highlighting the hierarchical division between wizards and nonhuman magical creatures. When McGonagall attempts to defend Hagrid, "no fewer than four Stunners [shoot] from the figures around the cabin toward Professor McGonagall" and Stun her into deep unconsciousness (Rowling, p. 721). This attack on McGonagall, a witch in her own right who intervenes on behalf of a nonhuman magical creature, illustrates Umbridge's and, further, the power structure's intolerance for change or rebellion. In her willingness to crush anyone who defies her, and in her prejudiced singlemindedness in terms of the superiority of wizards, Umbridge poses as much of a threat to freedom from oppression as Voldemort himself does.

However, even in the face of Umbridge's overwhelming power, students and staff still continue to rebel against her. Tricksters Fred and George Weasley celebrate Umbridge's first day as Headmistress by firing off enchanted fireworks across Hogwarts, disrupting order with flashes of color and light (Rowling, 2003, p. 632). Furthermore, as Bealer (2009) notes, "by pretending to require [Umbridge's] assistance in disposing of the fireworks, the professors extend to its most absurd implications Umbridge's power to oversee the other teachers" (p. 182). Though resistance ranges from subtle to blatant, and its punishments from irritating to severe, rebellion is ever present in Umbridge's Hogwarts.

In a succession of dazzling moments gleaming with poetic justice, Umbridge loses her hold on her regime. After attempting to use veritaserum and the Cruciatus Curse, a truth serum and an illegal torture curse, respectively, to force Harry to tell her where Dumbledore has gone, Umbridge turns to Hermione for answers

(Rowling, 2003, p. 748). Hermione and Harry lead Umbridge into the Forbidden Forest in supposed pursuit of a secret weapon Dumbledore has had the students create; however, in truth, Hermione intends to bring Umbridge to the herd of centaurs living in the Forest, and she succeeds. Upon meeting the centaurs, Umbridge voices her views on "filthy half-breeds, beasts, [and] uncontrolled animals" (Rowling, p. 755). These insults enrage the centaurs, proud beings who abhor wizards and believe that centaur intelligence "far outstrips" that of humans (Rowling, p. 754). The centaurs seize Umbridge, and the final glimpse of her is of "Umbridge being borne away through the trees…still screaming nonstop" (Rowling, p. 756). In the end, it is Umbridge's thirst for power and her sickening, prejudiced views that bring about her ironic downfall at the hands of the very beings (a Muggle-born witch and a herd of nonhuman magical creatures) she strives to oppress.

That said, the support for institutionalized oppression of nonhuman magical creatures has repercussions for wizards and witches other than Umbridge. The Order of the Phoenix, the titular rebellious group founded and led by Dumbledore and dedicated to defeating Voldemort, attempts to prepare for his return and its inevitable, violent consequences by garnering support from the goblins and the giants (Rowling, 2003). However, the goblins are unwilling to lend their support without first considering the proposal in depth, and the additional options of remaining neutral or of supporting Voldemort, if he is returning. As Lupin notes, if the goblins are "offered freedoms we've [the wizarding community] been denying them for centuries they're going to be tempted" (Rowling, p. 85). Similarly, the giants entertain the thought of loyalty to the Order as opposed to Voldemort despite the fact that, according to Dumbledore and Hagrid, "it was the wizards who forced 'em to go an' made 'em live a good long way from us an' they had no choice but ter stick together for their own protection" (Rowling, p. 427). Ultimately, however, the giants attack Hagrid, whom Dumbledore had sent as ambassador, and effectively reject any alliance with Dumbledore and the Order (Rowling, p. 433). Despite the fact that the Order represents the side combating institutionalized oppression among wizards, its members still remain members of the wizarding community, and are thus oppressors of the nonhuman magical creatures with whom they wish to ally themselves.

The most harmful consequences of the institutionalized oppression of nonhuman magical creatures by wizards come from Sirius Black's enslaved house elf, Kreacher. Although Sirius dedicates his life and, in *Order*, his death to fighting Voldemort and the oppression for which he stands, Sirius undeniably supports the enslavement and abuse of house elves via his treatment of Kreacher. From Kreacher's introduction, during which Rowling (2003) refers to him as "it" in the narration, Sirius speaks with loathing and disdain toward Kreacher, emphasizing his madness and uselessness (pp. 107-109). Kreacher seems to remain in Order Headquarters throughout the novel, but near the end of the text, Harry learns that Kreacher has been feeding information to the Malfoys, and that this information led to Sirius' death during the battle at the Ministry of Magic (p. 830). While Harry

is incensed over Kreacher's betrayal, Dumbledore recognizes that Sirius must share the blame for part of his own demise:

> "Kreacher is what he has been made by wizards…Yes, he is to be pitied. … He was forced to do Sirius's bidding, because Sirius was the last of the family to which he was enslaved, but he felt no true loyalty to him. And whatever Kreacher's faults, it must be admitted that Sirius did nothing to make Kreacher's lot easier." (p. 832)

Here, Dumbledore reveals the complexities of Sirius' role in combating and supporting different sorts of institutionalized oppression in the wizarding world. Sirius battled Voldemort, but he also allowed and participated in the oppression of a house elf, and, ultimately, this led to his demise.

Throughout *Order*, Harry struggles and strives to protect his mind from the connection he has with Voldemort (Rowling, 2003). This connection allows Voldemort to use Legilimency, or to see inside Harry's mind and interpret his findings there (Rowling). To combat Voldemort, Harry studies Occlumency, "the magical defense of the mind against external penetration" (Rowling, p. 519). In the context of institutionalized oppression within the novel, Legilimency symbolizes Voldemort and his oppressive ideologies, sculpting innocent minds according to the structures of unjust power and dominance. Occlumency, then, represents the efforts of resistors, combating these structures and rebelling against them whenever possible.

BRINGING ANALYSES OF *ORDER* TO THE CLASSROOM

In terms of bringing the novel to the classroom, educators can incorporate and teach *Order* from numerous complex perspectives. As Skulnick and Goodman (2003) argue:

> As teachers, we often pass up wonderful opportunities to use particular artifacts of popular culture as catalysts for thoughtful social inquiry and self-reflection … The books of *Harry Potter* represent the rare occurrence when a well-written and thought-provoking series of books has been welcomed into the school curriculum. As a result, it has provided many teachers with excellent opportunities to engage children in thoughtful study …. (p. 261)

As noted earlier in this chapter, students will and should engage in self-reflection when reading *Order*. In examining their personal views on institutionalized oppression within the wizarding world, learners may transfer their questions and conclusions to the world in which we live. Further, as noted in the first section, students can also read, analyze, and evaluate both Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" and the literary theory texts on the Marxist lens as cited in this chapter, then consider *Order* in the context of those perspectives.

Regarding additional inquiries and examinations of the text, *Order* provides a foundation for students to examine the sources and maintenance of institutionalized oppression, as well as the responses to and rebellions against such

structures. How does institutionalized oppression begin? How does it remain? How are certain characters or people responsible, directly or indirectly, for its persistence? How do authority and power contribute to or combat it? How do the press and, in our world, the media contribute to or combat it? How can we respond to and react against institutionalized oppression? How does the novel inspect or answer these questions? Readers, as students, will doubtless react passionately to the injustice of Umbridge as government official, professor, and oppressor; in turn, these responses will allow teachers to guide productive and thoughtful discussions on the actions, themes, and problems within *Order*.

Finally, students should consider the overarching message of *Order* in the context of our world. Per Ostry (2003), despite the fact that "Rowling makes an admirable attempt to broaden children's perspectives on social justice" (p. 96), the *Harry Potter* series is "simultaneously radical and traditional" (p. 90). The analyses of the text in section two reinforce the belief that the overall meaning is open to interpretation, regardless of Rowling's intentions. Some characters, such as Sirius, are well-intentioned but still guilty of promoting oppression, and this will give students pause. As Heilman and Gregory (2003) argue, "the presence of a moderate amount of social critique does not make the *Harry Potter* texts progressive" (p. 242). Students can and should consider their final interpretations of the texts, and the advice it offers in contexts beyond the wizarding world.

In the middle of "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien (1965) discusses and defines the peculiar word and subsequent sensation of *mooreeffoc*:

> *Mooreeffoc* is a fantastic word, but it could be seen written up in every town in this land. It is Coffee-room, viewed from the inside through a glass door, as it was seen by Dickens on a dark London day; and it was used by Chesterton to denote the queerness of things that have become trite, when they are seen suddenly from a new angle. (p. 58)

Certainly, students and teachers alike will experience *mooreeffoc* when reading *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Though we cannot draw a single, perfect metaphor between the novel and our world and consequent experiences, reading and analyzing *Order* through the Marxist lens of injustice enables us to see and assess our society "suddenly from a new angle." These fresh angles and broad, emerging horizons, then, will afford us clearer, more complex, and more thoughtful ways of viewing both our world and the fantasy worlds in which we wander.

NOTE

[1] This definition is the author's own, but has been developed from content in Deborah Appleman (2015); Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins, Libby Chernouski, and Elizabeth Boyle (2010); Anna O. Soter, Mark Faust, and Theresa M. Rogers (2008); and Shama Rangwala (2009).

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PART THREE

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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10. MAGIC AS PRIVILEGE IN ROBERT JORDAN AND BRANDON SANDERSON'S *WHEEL OF TIME* EPIC FANTASY SERIES

Teachers who practice social justice pedagogy face the challenge of engaging, confronting, and discomforting students around issues of privilege. Indeed, defining and recognizing privilege in daily life or mainstream culture is an essential first step to furthering the goals of social justice education, especially among the privileged themselves. Teachers encounter students' confusion, anxiety, guilt, or even ambivalence about how privilege affects oneself and others. Further, such reactions often arise hard on the heels of discussions of the roots of inequity and injustice in our society. Students who live inside privilege need help understanding how others perceive the privileged and its effects on the lives of those without it.

To that end, teachers engage in a perennial hunt for nonthreatening, yet revelatory ways to break down the resistance experienced by our students with respect to privilege. As language arts teachers around the globe know, reading from an "aesthetic stance" (Rosenblatt, 1988) can shift a student's interaction with literature from a focus strictly on language arts, toward one that foregrounds social justice concerns. By focusing on the "situations, scenes, personalities, emotions, [*sic*] called forth, participating in the tensions, conflicts and resolutions as they unfold" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 6), readers experience literature differently. As a tool for recognizing, analyzing, and dismantling assumptions about inequality, justice, and privilege, literature opens windows into the lives of those whose experience is different from the privileged elite. Through the experiences of literary characters and by witnessing the world through a different pair of eyes, readers gain invaluable insight into the life experience of the "other." Literature offers visceral, emotion-laden, aesthetic experiences that help the reader more intimately understand a fellow human being. Fantasy literature, especially, offers unparalleled opportunities to do just that.

Through the pages of fantasies, students witness injustice, inequality, and privilege framed in fantastical societies that operate as grand metaphorical narratives about the world in which we live and the historical conditions in which they were written. By witnessing injustice, inequality, and privilege in impossible worlds, students can gain insight into those same conditions in the consensus reality. During (1992) explains that Michel Foucault believed that literature reveals

> "motifs"—privileged objects that crystalize and organize the dominant
> themes of a writer's imagination, or as Foucault puts it, "figure an

experience." … Foucault's approach to literary works lies in seeing them not as the reading or interpretation of an individual's work or an oeuvre, but as a social event. The motifs that he fastens upon belong less to private creative or readerly imaginations than to history. (p. 73)

In other words, fantasy authors, like all writers, create worlds in which the historic conditions of our consensus reality are consciously or unconsciously reconstructed in their works. They draw attention to uncomfortable "motifs" of our own experience. Fantasy literature goes a step further, though. By creating worlds in which the unexpected, the surprising, or the unanticipated change places with the "normal," fantasy literature turns readers' expectations on their heads. By doing so, they make uncomfortable realities visible. They focus attention on aspects of consensus reality that are so fundamental to our understanding of the universe and our place in it that they are all but invisible to our conscious minds. In this way, Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson's Wheel of Time series, published between 1990 and 2013, illuminates the arbitrariness of power, privilege, and agency in our consensus reality by illustrating how they function in a fantasy world. By exploring the perspectives of both those with power and those without it, the Wheel of Time exposes the fear and mistrust of both groups toward one another. In doing so, it opens a window to the way power affects the relationship between the privileged and the unprivileged in American society. While on the surface this fantasy series treats the conflict between good and evil and questions of freedom and fate in a universe of cyclical time, the series also offers social justice practitioners the opportunity to expose the nature of privilege and power with students in a non-threatening, entertaining way.

FANTASY AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY

As Rosemary Jackson (1981) points out, "The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent' … [It] tells of the impossible attempt to realize desire, to make visible the invisible and to discover absence" (p. 4). Fantasy exposes a society's "dark areas" (Jackson, 1981, p. 4), and in doing so, it offers teachers a means to interrogate the rules under which we all live, whether we recognize them as such or not. Furthermore, by examining the scenarios portrayed in fantasy literature that spur heroes to act, we begin to understand how individual action and personal responsibility make change happen in the world, a key component of social justice pedagogy.

In "Reading Democracy: Exploring Ideas that Matter with Middle Grade and Young Adult Literature," Steven Wolk (2013) illustrates how teachers can and should explore topics as complex and nuanced as "moral and ethical consciousness…war, peace, and nonviolence…culture, racism, and prejudice" (p. 47) with their students. Using inquiry-based teaching, asking students to "question … investigate and explore" (p. 48) the texts they read in school or for leisure—to read aesthetically—teachers concerned with social justice pedagogy help students to engage with issues outside their classrooms.

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Naming and examining the problems of injustice, or the effects of privilege on individuals that incite emotional responses in students as they read of the lives of fantasy characters, helps them name and look critically at unjust and unfair conditions in their own world. By treating injustice, prejudice, inequality, power, and privilege overtly, fantasy writers require their readers to be open to understanding those issues in the world of consensus reality. As they give a voice to those who have no voice in a fantasy world, they also give a voice to the voiceless in the real world. They make the unseen visible. Fantasy accomplishes this through its metaphorical structure.

FANTASY AS METAPHOR

Metaphor transforms meaning in a text by deepening the associations related to the terms on both sides of a metaphor. For the reader, the text acts to unite meanings in a way similar to the way simile or symbolism tie images together in poetry or allegory. While simile and allegory intentionally draw attention to themselves and their purpose, metaphor asks the reader to seek new, more complex connections between the two sides of the metaphorical equation. By connecting the meanings of two independent ideas or images meaning travels back and forth between the two parts of the metaphor. Just as Rosenblatt (1988) suggests that readers bring a range of "sensations, images, feelings and ideas that are the past residue of psychological events involving those words and their referents" (p. 5) to a reading of a text, reading a fantasy asks readers to connect the literal meaning of the text to their own experience. Readers connect the images and emotions they experience while reading and carry them across the bridge from text to their world and back again. In this way, fantasy acts metaphorically by bringing readers' personal knowledge of their consensus world to bear on the fantasy world. Readers link concepts they know intuitively or intellectually, such as their society's class or economic structure, and more abstract ideas with which they might have little immediate experience, such as discrimination, inequality, or injustice, to events in the story. Frye (1957) suggests that metaphor asserts identity between the two components of the comparison, passing ideological meaning between the world of the narrative and the reader's world, and vice versa. The emotional content encountered in images and meaning in the text carries over to the consensus world, providing new meaning to the reader's real world context. Similarly, a student's intellectual knowledge of their own world's injustices informs the reading of the text. The metaphorical structure provokes readers to sift through their individual bank of ideas, emotions, and experiences, and apply what they find to the world they encounter in the fantasy novel. Fantasy, by virtue of its metaphorical power, evokes new meaning and understanding within the reader by connecting the emotional and political associations of one world with the other.

Fantasy as a social justice tool has yet another advantage over nonfiction or realistic texts: It conveys meaning in a non-threatening, non-didactic, imaginative, and entertaining way and is extremely popular among young readers. According to *Publishers Weekly*, fantasy represented 44.6 million units of print books alone sold

in the U.S. 2015 juvenile market (Milliot & Segura, 2016). And because it appeals to a wide variety of readers, it is read by millions of young people. Asking students to think about social justice issues using a genre they already enjoy invites them to find deeper meaning in those texts. By introducing the kinds of inquiry that social justice pedagogy encourages, by calling attention to injustice, inequality, discrimination, and the causes of fear and violence in an alternative world, teachers subtly generate critical thinking and stimulate engagement with similar conditions in a student's own world.

THE WHEEL OF TIME

In the alternative universe of Jordan and Sanderson's novels, the world faces a growing threat from the Dark One, a primeval force of evil brought into being at the moment of creation and immediately imprisoned by the benevolent but distant Creator. As the series opens, the Dark One's prison is weakening. The people of the Wheel of Time await the birth of a hero: the prophesized Dragon Reborn. According to the prophecies, he alone can prevent the Dark One from engulfing the world with his taint and enslaving all sentient beings.

On the surface, this epic fantasy series explores questions of good and evil, fate and freedom, and life and death. Read metaphorically and explored within the framework of a social justice classroom, the story offers insight into the workings of power and privilege in contemporary society. In *The Eye of the World* (Jordan, 1990a), readers meet more than a dozen characters whose paths the series follows over approximately two-and-a-half years of their lives. The first volume also establishes the social-political structure of the fictional universe. Key to understanding social status and power in the World of the Wheel is an understanding of the ability to channel the One Power, as magic is called in the novels.

The One Power emanates from the True Source, an invisible font of energy made up of the five elements of creation: earth, wind, fire, water, and spirit. By manipulating threads of these forces, individuals "channel," performing acts as simple as lighting a flame and as extraordinary as diverting lava flows from the center of the earth. They manipulate the weather, move instantly through space and across universes, or create elaborate illusions. They also have the ability to control minds, stop hearts, or inflict torture.

The One Power consists of two streams: *saidin* and *saidar*. In this fantasy universe men only have access to and wield *saidin*; women have access to and are able to wield only *saidar*. In the World of the Wheel, only a select few are born with the capacity to channel, or can learn to do so.

In a period preceding the events of this first novel, men and women channeled collaboratively in order to accomplish many of the most extraordinary tasks recorded in the World of the Wheel's histories. That age of cooperation between male and female channelers ended in one climactic moment three thousand years before the first novel opens. At that moment, the bonds of the Dark One's prison had grown weak because channelers attempted to tap the Dark One's power for

their own use. In retribution for resealing the prison, the Dark One released a backlash of evil that "tainted" *saidin*. From that moment, to touch *saidin* feels like reaching through the oily, stinking surface of a "slimy pond" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 219, 220). It causes nausea, pain, and despair to the channeler. Over time and with repeated exposure, men who channel descend irreversibly into madness. It is because of this madness that male channelers caused "the Breaking," a time of destruction, violence, and death when seas and mountains shifted, and entire nations were destroyed. Memory of the Breaking forced the proscription against the use of *saidin*. In response to this ban and out of fear of what they might do as they go mad, men who channel willingly leave behind home, loved ones, and community. Most commit suicide or are killed before they can be "gentled"— severed from the One Power. Once gentled, most lose the desire to live. Because of this taint on *saidin*, only *saidar* is safe to channel, and only women who undergo rigorous training are legally sanctioned to wield the One Power.

This society-wide prohibition against male channeling and the regulation of access to the One Power dramatically portrays a form of elite prerogative that mirrors the functioning of white privilege in modern American society. Jordan and Sanderson portray a society in which those who do not channel fear and capitulate their own autonomy to those who can. It is through this portrayal of channeling as a characteristic of an elite segment which bestows a privileged position in the society, yet also causes suspicion and revulsion among those who cannot channel, that makes Jordan and Sanderson's novels so powerful a tool for understanding privilege and power in the context of American society. Those who channel enjoy superior status and wealth. Among all nonchannelers, however, women who channel the One Power are considered "filthy" (Jordan, 1990a, p. 414) and are called "witches" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 11) or "Darkfriends" (Jordan & Sanderson, 2010, p. 187). Those who cannot channel fear, avoid, and distrust all channelers. Nevertheless, it is the use of the One Power that affords female channelers their status in the society. They are considered the most beautiful and wisest, and they are obeyed without question. In exploring this contradiction of fear and revulsion alongside obedience and deference, the novels offer a window into understanding both the privilege afforded white Americans, as well as the mistrust, fear, and resentment experienced by people of color. Just as white Americans experience the world without referencing their whiteness or the privileges they enjoy on a daily basis because of it, female channelers of the world of the Wheel of Time move through their society without concern for how their ability to channel affords them privilege or power, and distrust and fear. Men who channel and nonchannelers in the World of the Wheel live every moment conscious of how society demonizes and devalues them, just as people of color navigate the world of consensus reality in full consciousness of their devalued or demonized status.

TEACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH FANTASY LITERATURE—
A CONCEPT-BASED APPROACH

In order to understand how the world portrayed in a fantasy like Jordan and Sanderson's novels operate as metaphors for consensus reality, students must become familiar with several core concepts central to the discussion of social justice. Among them are identity, power, and privilege. In addition, social justice pedagogy requires that students think about issues of inclusiveness and fairness (Bruce, 2015).

Identity

Identity (i.e., who one is with respect to markers of race, ethnicity, cultural affinity, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status) is the first concept key to understanding one's place in a society. According to Tolerance.org, a website created by the Southern Poverty Law Center and dedicated to supporting teachers who explore social justice issues in their classrooms, identity is "the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing or person is definitively recognized or known; the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group" (The Anti-Bias Framework, 2016).

In addition, students need a basic understanding of the fact that society and culture offer both positive and negative signals about key aspects of identity. By defining who one is, an individual also begins to identify who one is not. How the community perceives someone influences that person's own perception of him or herself, for better or worse. Social justice pedagogy helps students to perceive society-wide associations, prejudices, and preferences that cling to specific identity markers. Recognizing that attitudes about an identity marker are influenced by cultural attitudes informs important corollaries to understanding identity: an individual has no control, conscious or unconscious, over such markers; one has no control over how markers are perceived by others. Identity is an aspect of a person's life over which one has no control.

In the Wheel of Time, the ability to channel is fundamental to one's identity and lies deeper in one's essence than even the color of one's hair, skin, or genetic makeup. One female channeler who trains girls to become *Aes Sedai*, a sisterhood of female channelers, explains to a young woman whom she has discovered with the talent that the number of men and women who can channel appears to be dwindling. She says that by "hunting down men who could channel for three thousand years [society has been] culling the ability to channel out of us all" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 358). This reference to culling points to the hereditary nature of channeling. But, as Jordan and Sanderson illustrate, channeling is even more fundamental to one's identity than one's hereditary genetic make-up. This idea is revealed most clearly through the character of Aran'gar.

Aran'gar is a member of an elite group of "Forsaken," men and women who have pledged their souls to the Dark One in exchange for immortality and access to

the True Source, the Dark One's own font of energy. Aran'gar, a woman, is the reincarnation of a man named Balthamel. Despite her change in biological sex with her reincarnation, Aran'gar continues to be able to channel only *saidin,* the male half of the One Power. Aran'gar's essence, and so her ability to channel one or the other side of the One Power is tied to her original *male* essence (Jordan, 2000, p. 757).

Tolerance.org explains that identity is the "collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing or person is definitively recognized or known" (Anti-bias framework, 2016). In the case of the ability to channel, because Aran'gar can only channel *saidin*, the male aspect of the One Power despite having the body of a woman, channeling represents a means by which a person is "definitively…known." At her essence, despite her change in biological sex (her genetic composition) and her personal acknowledgement that she is a woman (gender identity) she still can only channel *saidin,* the male aspect of the One Power. In fact, Aran'gar's use of *saidin* masks her true identity causing confusion at key moments in the story's development. In this sense, then, the ability to channel reveals identity in its deepest sense in that it represents a characteristic "by which a thing or person is definitively recognized or known" (Anti-Bias Framework, 2016), and is something over which one has no control. In the Wheel of Time, one's ability to channel is an aspect of a person's identity that is out of one's control in the same way that one's skin color, or how one is "known" by society is equally out of one's control.

Power

The concept of power occupies a central place in any discussion of social justice. Power, according to Foucault, always manifests itself in action. It reflects a relationship between individuals or groups in which one individual has the capacity to act according to one's own will or to have influence upon the actions of others. For that reason, Foucault understood power as the freedom to act.

In the literature about social justice, power revolves around access to resources and the ability to influence others. According to OpenSource Leadership Strategies, an online source for educational and business leaders interested in addressing issues of social justice in their organizations, power involves

> [access] to resources and to decision makers to get what you want done, the ability to influence others, the ability to define reality for yourself and potentially for others. Power can be visible, hidden, or invisible. Power can show up as power over others, power with others, and/or power within. (The dynamics of power, n.d.)

Power, then, is the ability to act freely or to act upon others' actions.

With this definition of power in mind, the ability to channel sheds light on relationships and events in Jordan and Sanderson's fantasy realm. In The Wheel of Time, kings and queens kneel before channelers (Jordan, 2009, p. 186). Channelers expect and receive obedience from the lowest to the highest members of society

(Jordan 1990b, p. 78; Jordan, 2005, p. 103); they expect and receive more respect than even members of the noble class (Jordan, 2004, p. 332); and they expect and receive deference and obedience from soldiers and stable hands alike (Jordan, 1991, p. 497). The ability to channel makes their power—the ability to act freely—obvious.

By dramatizing how the ability to channel allows some characters to walk through the world with the expectation of respect, deference, freedom, and agency, Jordan and Sanderson's novels guide students to see how power linked to identity functions. Their demonstration that power and identity relate to action offers a profound metaphorical exploration of the conditions in consensus reality, such as whiteness, that endow an individual with the ability to act freely or provide an individual with access to others' social or political power.

Privilege

Privilege is inextricably tied to power and stems from access to power. As Foucault (1994) writes, privilege involves

> … the exercise of power … [as it] operates on a field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects [both individuals or groups] is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always … [a] set of actions upon other actions.
> … The exercise of power is a "conduct of conducts" and a management of possibilities. (p. 341)

Privilege, then, is the enjoyment and exercise of power. Privilege manifests itself as the ability to act without constraint, to enjoy the possibility of action. Those without privilege find their actions proscribed by the actions of others. Privilege works invisibly at the roots of society. It is derived from identity and power in that privilege is awarded without reference to skill or effort, and allows some actors in a society to act freely, unaffected by the restricting actions of others. In the Wheel of Time series, Jordan and Sanderson dramatically bring this concept to life.

Jordan demonstrates the effects of channeling as privilege by focusing much attention in the first volume on how the use of the One Power confers status on women who can channel. Women channelers have access to training, education, and financial resources that are unavailable to the majority of people. Women and girls who have the ability to channel are sought after throughout the Westlands, the region of the World of the Wheel where the story takes place. Women channelers receive special treatment by their communities. Most importantly, they move through life with an assumption of respect, deferential treatment, and an awareness of their power. They are, as the feared and anticipated Dragon Reborn, Rand al'Thor says, "[puppeteers] who pulled strings and made thrones and nations dance in designs only" (Jordan, 1990a, p. 85) they know.

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Nonchannelers, on the other hand, show deference and fear of channelers. For example, a young tavern singer begs forgiveness for offending a female channeler for performing a bawdy song when she realizes an Aes Sedai is present. She says, "'I did not mean to offend with my common songs.' She was covering the exposed part of her bosom … 'I can sing others, if you would so like'" (Jordan, 1991, p. 497). Deference for Aes Sedai opinions and power affords them the right to dictate the actions and choices of others.

Jordan and Sanderson reveal yet another aspect of privilege essential to understanding its operation in society. Because channeling is a part of one's identity, as discussed above, channelers in the world of the Wheel of Time consider their superior status as natural and proper. When a former leader of the sisterhood of Aes Sedai exclaims that she "had caused kings to kneel before her! [Had] manipulated the Aes Sedai and planned for the deliverance of mankind itself" (Jordan, 2009, pp. 186-87), she is confident that it is her personal worth that has allowed her to succeed: her knowledge of politics, her strength with the One Power, her beauty, and her personality traits, and not merely her ability to channel. Privilege allows an individual to believe that one's success or status derive from one's own personal characteristics and are not the result of advantages bestowed on an individual by such things as Affirmative Action programs or diversity initiatives intended to reverse the effects of previous discrimination (Holloday, 2000). One's success, when one is a member of a privileged group, is one's own.

Aes Sedai privilege manifests in other ways, as well. In addition to their higher social status, they exercise freedom of movement and behavior and tolerate no challenges to their decisions. When challenged, they put their own goals ahead of the safety or wellbeing of those around them. Those with privilege defend it at all costs. For example, Aes Sedai, alone, judge and carry out the gentling of male channelers.

In the Wheel of Time series, "gentling" men who can channel, cutting them off from the ability to touch *saidin*, dramatizes the most violent response to challenges from outside the privileged group. Aes Sedai act with impunity towards male channelers, despite the fact that gentling leads to the death of the male channeler. At times, female channelers' efforts to capture a male channeler cause all-out war with those who follow him in the belief that he might be the Dragon Reborn, the prophesized savior who will combat the Dark One in the Last Battle.

In the Wheel of Time novels, girls and women who can channel are sought after far and wide, and are taken to the White Tower in the city of Tar Valon where they undergo a rigorous training period, educated in esoteric knowledge, and given access to wealth, authority, and status. Men who can channel, on the other hand, are emasculated. The entire society fears men who can channel, perceiving them to be dangerous: they are shunned, ostracized, and driven away. Boys or men who discover they can channel often choose suicide rather than risk endangering those they love. In one nation, male channelers are offered a choice, they "can either step from the bow of their ship holding a stone which is also tied to their legs, or they can be dropped off on a barren isle with no food or water" (Jordan & Sanderson, 2009, p. 126). Those who are captured by Tar Valon and "gentled" soon lose the

desire to live. Both social sanctions against men who can channel and gentling remove any threat to those with sanctioned access to power.

This manifestation of different approaches to aspects of one's identity demonstrates explicitly how those with privilege regulate and control access to it. Despite the fact that the Aes Sedai justify their actions toward male channelers based on the effects of the taint on channelers of *saidin*, society and female channelers act as gatekeepers to the privileges that accompany the use of the One Power. They prevent those who are unworthy, according to their own standards, access to it and regulate its dissemination and the accompanying access to greater wealth and opportunity it affords.

In this way, Jordan and Sanderson's novels begin to reveal the nature of privilege as it relates to identity and power, and its uneven distribution in contemporary society. Anyone who challenges elite status is trampled and emasculated. When readers of fantasy confront the lengths that those with privilege will go to protect their status, and to stifle access to power by other groups, they gain insight into situations in their own world in which privilege protects itself and denies access to power. Teachers can offer insight into the contemporary and historical realities of student's lives by directly linking the unjust emasculation of male channelers in the Wheel of Time to the conditions of the African Americans in the Jim Crow South, or the conditions that spawned movements such as "Black Lives Matter," or indigenous rights groups around the globe where access to justice, status, or resources are systematically denied.

SEEING PRIVILEGE FROM AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Perhaps the most valuable insight Jordan and Sanderson's novels afford readers is the window they provide into the world seen through the eyes of those who have no power. Early in the series, Jordan provides the reader with an outsider's view of channelers. While Aes Sedai are revered for the magical power they wield, their access to wealth, and their control of kings and queens, they are also feared and mistrusted. All know of the oaths Aes Sedai channelers must take, but those oaths do not engender trust. While the oaths make it physically impossible for Aes Sedai to lie, female channelers are known for bending the truth to fit the lie they want to tell. As one character says, "An Aes Sedai never lies, but the truth she speaks may not be the truth you think you hear" (Jordan, 1990a, p. 644).

Stories and legends tell of channelers feats with the One Power. However, all such stories are accompanied by warnings that Aes Sedai do what they do for their own purposes. Nonchannelers especially fear them because of their perceived willingness to sacrifice the lives and wellbeing of entire communities in pursuit of their own goals. For example, when the Amyrlin Seat, the leader of the Aes Sedai, rushes to meet with the newly discovered Dragon Reborn, she travels by riverboat. In order to speed her journey, her channelers call up strong winds, causing the river to flood its banks. She acknowledges the impact her journey has on the people who live on the river, as well as on the weather itself, only with respect to how it involves perceptions of Aes Sedai. She says,

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"I have seen the flooding we caused in villages along the river, and the Light only knows what we have done to the weather. We will not have endeared ourselves by the damage we've done and the crops we may have ruined. All to reach here as quickly as possible." (Jordan, 1990b, pp. 55-56)

Despite the damage her journey has caused, she blithely carries on with Aes Sadai business. The Aes Sedai exercise their prerogative, which the ability to channel affords them, no matter the effects their actions have on the lives of others.

Examples throughout the series provide ample evidence of how nonchannelers both revere and fear Aes Sedai. When one channeler, Moiraine Sedai, arrives in Emond's Field, a small town and the home of Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, she initially fails to reveal her status as Aes Sedai. The townsfolk immediately assume she is a woman of noble birth because of her apparent wealth, elegance, and her obvious knowledge of the world beyond their humble community. Moiraine initially attempts to win the Emond's Fielder's trust with gifts and coin. She shows an interest in the town's history. When Trollocs, a bloodthirsty, hybrid race of human and beast, attack Emond's Field, she uses the One Power to battle the Trollocs. The villagers initially suspect Moiraine of bringing the Trollocs attack down on them and immediately attempt to expel her from the town. Those who cannot channel want nothing to do with those who do out of suspicion and fear that the Power will be used against them. Once the town is reminded of her benevolence and aid in defeating the Trollocs, those who fear her are shamed into silence (Jordan, 1990a, pp. 130-135), and her status is restored.

In addition, those who fear them experience anxiety and ambivalence about female channelers' power. When Tam al'Thor, Rand's father, lays dying following the Trolloc attack, those who know of the Aes Sedai's ability to heal cautiously suggest that Rand take his father to Moiraine Sedai, while also reminding him that "[help] from an Aes Sedai was sometimes worse than no help at all…like poison in a pie, and their gifts always had a hook in them, like fishbait" (Jordan, 1990a, p. 99). Nonetheless, Rand must turn to an Aes Sedai for help or watch his father die. While readers witness Rand's need, they feel his suspicion and fear, as well. Later, Jordan offers the reader insight into the toll healing has on Moiraine Sedai (Jordan, 1990a, p. 101). Her own strength is diminished for a time, making her weak and vulnerable.

As a teacher seeking to help students understand the effects privilege has on both those who are privileged and those who are not, these passages demonstrate the disparate reactions that privilege and power generate. While the reader is able to see and understand the benefit that the channelers have brought to the community (the Amyrlin Seat's primary goal is to protect the world from the Dragon Reborn's madness; Moiraine Sedai battled the Trollocs; Tam would die without Moiraine's intervention), the reader also has access to the fear and the mistrust nonchannelers experience toward channelers. It is this ambivalence about both the benefits and trauma the exercise of power and privilege have for nonchannelers that provides readers insight into why, in the consensus reality, those without power or privilege react with deference and respect, but also mistrust and fear toward those with them.

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This two-sided perspective creates dissonance in readers who live within their own power and privilege. They come face to face with the obligations associated with power, but they also must confront how the powerful are viewed by the powerless. It is this dissonance that teachers can harness in order to push readers who have power and privilege to question their effects on themselves, on those around them, and on their place in society. Most important of all, however, is the revelation that often the source of one's power and privilege lies solely in an aspect of identity which is out of one's control.

Noteworthy also is that Jordan and Sanderson's novels offer readers an alternative perspective of power and privilege. By including female channelers as viewpoint characters, they offer insight into the cost power and privilege have on those who possess it. "The White Tower protects and guides the world" (Jordan & Sanderson, 2010, p. 440), they write, at the cost of family, marriage, friendship, and love. This insider's view of the cost of power and privilege subtly generates compassion toward those who might otherwise be reviled.

The workings of power and privilege in Jordan and Sanderson's fantasy world offers important insight into their effects in consensus reality. When rulers and other leaders subordinate themselves to the most elite in the society, power and privilege become visible. By linking identity, power, and privilege so clearly in fantasy literature, their connections to American society become more visible.

Jordan and Sanderson introduce still more complexity into the conditions of the fantasy realm which offers further insight into the workings of privilege in consensus reality. As the series progresses and the experiences of the original characters expand, Jordan and Sanderson introduce forces who hunt Aes Sedai and anyone who channels. The Children of the Light, or Whitecloaks as they are called, is a society of men who consider the use of the One Power blasphemy against the Creator (Jordan, 2004, p. 55). In addition, an invading force from the previously unknown Seanchan empire view all channelers with disgust. Whitecloaks oppose the use of the One Power by any channelers, and they torture and kill them. The Seanchan seek to enslave channelers by collaring them like dogs. Once collared, channelers may not channel without permission, and they are forced to use their power to serve the empire: They are seen as "tools" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 571).

Channelers are reviled by Whitecloaks, and in Seanchan society they occupy the lowest status in society (Jordan, 1990b, p. 595-96). By introducing groups whose perspective on the ability to channel so completely contradicts the view of Westlanders, Jordan and Sanderson reveal the fundamentally arbitrary nature of basing status and privilege on an aspect of identity. By subjecting channelers to humiliation, denigration, punishment, and torture because of their identity, Jordan and Sanderson expose the injustice of bestowing or denying privilege to individuals based on aspects of one's life which are out of one's control. As readers react to the debasement of one group by another, they are brought face to face with the reality of prejudice and injustice based on aspects of a person's identity in their own world. While Jordan and Sanderson's characters struggle against enslavement, discussions of Seanchan treatment of those who are leashed echo arguments defenders of the enslavement of Africans espoused, and they use

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the same language that supremacists use to justify the oppression of one group by another. For example, the Seanchan argue that collaring channelers ensures that they are under control so they cannot use their power against their handlers or "contend for power" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 572) against those of "the Blood" (i.e., the Seanchan ruling class). Channelers are "too valuable to be killed out of hand" (Jordan, 1990b, p. 572), so they are cared for and live lives of "privilege" (Jordan & Sanderson, 2012, p. 581). In reality, however, they live in kennels, apart from others, and contact with them is forbidden. The Seanchan consider those who channel to be "dirty animals" (Jordan, 1992, pp. 638, 839). When readers witness the reversal of attitudes about those seen as privileged by one group and witness their oppression by another, injustice and social justice concepts come to life. The ability of fantasy literature to resonate metaphorically in consensus reality makes it an invaluable tool for teaching in a social justice classroom.

Jordan and Sanderson teach one final lesson with respect to different perspectives concerning power and identity. When male channelers reject their emasculation and create a training facility of their own, Jordan and Sanderson demonstrate how repression cannot be borne indefinitely. When the Asha'man, as the male channelers of the Westlands call themselves, assert their own value in the battle against the Dark One, the injustice and immorality of arguments against male channelers are exposed and undermined. When the Last Battle is won by male and female channelers working together as well as with the aid of the Seanchan and Whitecloaks alike, the true value of Jordan and Sanderson's work in a social justice classroom becomes clear. Only by allowing each individual to fully express his or her identity and to access and contribute their power to shared goals can a society tackle the greatest threats to its existence. While the novels themselves may not have been intended as commentary on the injustice of privileging one group over another in society, by looking at conditions in the fantasy realm metaphorically, astute readers and teachers can explore key issues of power and privilege in a social justice classroom.

CONCLUSION

The metaphorical nature of fantasy literature allows students to think beyond the literal meaning of a text. Because the worlds found in fantasy literature distance themselves from readers' consensus reality, they also allow readers to distance themselves from the injustices they witness in them. By approaching a text "aesthetically," readers experience the lives of characters in the story. As a reader delves more deeply into the lives and the nature of the society in the impossible world, the reader's own knowledge of the consensus reality calls attention to the similarities and differences between the world of the fantasy and the one in which the reader lives. Fantasy highlights the differences between the real and the impossible, while simultaneously informing each with meaning from the other. In this way, fantasy illuminates more clearly inequities in the reader's own world and allows students to safely question the status quo.

The Wheel of Time series, like most popular fantasy, through its highly appealing and accessible content, subversively offers a critique of consensus reality while dressing it in popular fantasy tropes. Jordan and Sanderson's novels address issues of injustice and privilege through an exploration of the use of magic. Their novels open a space for readers to understand power and privilege in their own world that are analogous to the alternative world of the novel and allows them to examine it in a safe space. By aesthetically experiencing the injustices, inequalities, unfair assumptions, and prejudices about both channelers and nonchannelers and their power and privilege in relationship to their identities, the Wheel of Time Series offers teachers interested in social justice pedagogy a chance to call attention to injustice and oppression in consensus reality. By allowing students to experience dissonance in their reactions to injustice and inequality in the books they read, teachers begin to generate empathy and compassion. When students witness the mistrust, disdain, or fear of those with power in a fantasy world, and experience the frustration, mistreatment, or abuse of those without power, teachers have the opportunity to dismantle student resistance to seeing these conditions in their own world. For these reasons, fantasy literature can be a valuable tool in a social justice classroom.

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11. SEEING HARRY POTTER AS AN AT-RISK STUDENT

Critical Literacy, Cultural Capital, and the Wizarding World

"Hagrid, what's Quidditch?"

"Blimey, Harry, I keep forgettin' how little yeh know—not knowin' about Quidditch!"

"Don't make me feel worse," said Harry. He told Hagrid about the pale boy in Madam Malkin's."

"—and he said people from Muggle families shouldn't even be allowed in—"

"Yer not *from* a Muggle family …"

"So what *is* Quidditch?"

"It's our sport. Wizard sport. It's like—like soccer in the Muggle world—everyone follows Quidditch—played up in the air on broomsticks and there's four balls—sorta hard ter explain the rules."

"And what are Slytherin and Hufflepuff?"

"School houses. There's four. Everyone says Hufflepuffs are a lot o'duffers, but—"

"I bet I'm in Hufflepuff," said Harry gloomily.

(Rowling, 1997, pp. 79-80)

Despite his celebrity status in the wizard community, Harry's lack of familiarity with its culture, language, social structures, and institutions constantly causes him to question his competence and magical potential. Although most muggle teens will never deal with the challenges Harry confronts as he tries to sort out Quidditch from Slytherin and Hufflepuff on his first visit to Diagon Alley, they can empathize with Harry's attempts to acculturate into the social, academic, and political norms of a very unfamiliar world. Many students in secondary schools exist on the margins because of disconnects between their own cultures, languages, and social practices and those valued in schools. And, like Hagrid in the excerpt above, the teachers who serve these students may often feel ill-equipped to offer the needed support.

These challenges and others faced by students and teachers in the world of magic parallel those we face in our own. As a result, reading the Harry Potter series through a professional lens can provide preservice teachers with entertaining, yet serious, opportunities to critically examine issues of education and schooling. In this chapter we describe how a critical literacy framework allowed a group of preservice English teachers to actively reflect on and question educational

traditions portrayed in the series and ultimately in their own world. We focus specifically on the case of Whitney, a white, middle-class female, whose interpretation of Harry as an at-risk student motivated her to explore research on deficit thinking in education that she then used to inform her work in her own classroom. Specifically, her year-long inquiry into the concepts of cultural capital, deficit models of education, and funds of knowledge lead to transformations in her understandings about students and ultimately provided a critical framework for her to examine her own teaching.

THE INTERSECTION OF SCHOOL STORIES, FANTASY, AND CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS

Because of the overwhelming focus on the formative educational experiences of its characters in their journey to adulthood, the Harry Potter series fits within the category of *erziehungsroman* or the "school story" (Atwood & Lee, 2007). Learning plays a pivotal role in the fantasy-filled adventures of Harry and his friends throughout the series, providing a clear example of the school story genre. Replete with descriptions of students and teachers in the classroom, these narratives certainly entertain, but they can also invite readers to contemplate significant questions about education (Glanzer, 2008) and to examine representations of educational systems (Sheppard, 2008). Nuanced and sophisticated portrayals of the Hogwarts educational system offer commentary on issues such as differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, mentoring, and Vygotskian social constructivist theories of modeling, scaffolding, and relevance (Booth & Booth, 2003; Mullen, 2000).

The *erziehungsroman* elements of the Harry Potter series result, in large measure, from its foundation in modern fantasy. Susan Cooper (1996), the author of the critically acclaimed Dark is Rising series, theorized that the fantasy writing today offers stories that perform the same function that myths did for ancient cultures. Channeling Joseph Campbell, she suggested that fantasy writers compose "variations on a single theme" where a hero crosses a threshold into unfamiliar territory, full of adventure and challenges and trials, and ultimately returns home triumphant but also wiser (p. 62). In their mythic role, fantasy stories provide readers a way of making sense of the world around them, training them for the challenges they will face in real life. Similarly, the Harry Potter series provides readers with opportunities to learn to navigate schooling and education from the perspectives of both students and teachers.

The use of school stories in teacher education is not new. Coles (2004) witnessed fictional portrayals of classrooms informing the understandings and identities of the teachers enrolled in his graduate seminar, leading him to argue that stories provide authentic contexts to apply abstract concepts of teaching and learning and to explore their implications. Numerous studies also documented reading *erziehungsroman* literature as a way to give preservice and practicing teachers opportunities to explore issues of diversity and teenage experience (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; DeGroot, 2011; Mason, 2010), culture and

pedagogy (Laframboise & Griffith, 1997), and even professional development (Bach, Choate & Parker, 2011). As a result of its strong *erziehungsroman* emphasis and the documented use of stories in teacher development, the Harry Potter series is ripe for pedagogical discussion.

But, as Freire (1983) argued, reading includes not just decoding, it also involves "anticipating and extending into knowledge of the world" (p. 5). In essence, readers bring their understandings, predispositions, and knowledge of the world to their reading of texts and the meaning of a text does not exist independently of their experiences. Because they constantly experience new situations, ideas, and perspectives, individuals never read the same text in quite the same way. As Freire explained, "reading always involves critical perception, interpretation, and *re-writing* what is read" (p. 11). Applied to the context of school stories, the knowledge and experience the preservice teachers bring to their reading influences their interpretations and understandings of the story.

For this reason, true critical readings also promote "reflection, transformation, and action" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004), inviting readers to question the status quo as they challenge power structures and practices that marginalize groups or individuals. In order to support marginalized students or those from diverse backgrounds, teacher education programs need to encourage this kind of study to better help their students "reflect on their identities and privilege" (Nieto, 2000, p. 184). This specifically includes studying fictional and non-fictional narrative texts in order to help teacher candidates challenge pre-existing ideologies that influence their teaching practice (Alsup, 2003; Coles, 2004).

With its depictions of heroes on the threshold of adventure and their subsequent adventures in strange lands, fantasy literature may take on new meanings for preservice teachers who are about to embark on their own adventure into the world of professional teaching. School stories, like the Harry Potter series, can provide meaningful opportunities for this same group to turn a critical eye on the practices of the institutions and classrooms they are about to enter. These ideas suggested to us that inviting preservice teachers to revisit the adventures of Harry Potter at Hogwarts would allow for important opportunities to consider their evolving identities as teachers and the complexities of the professional world they were about to become part of.

RE-READING HARRY POTTER WITH PRESERVICE TEACHERS

The Study

In the fall of 2013 we invited preservice English teachers at our university to participate in a book club designed to examine representations of teaching, education, and schooling in the first six books of the Harry Potter series. We knew the experiences many of these preservice teachers had with Rowling's stories as young readers would motivate them to revisit the books with us. However, we also hoped that re-entering the familiar halls of Hogwarts as older readers, armed with the knowledge they gained from methods classes and field experiences, would

provide opportunities to question assumptions about teaching and learning and educational institutions. A critical literacy framework proved vital to our group's re-reading of the Harry Potter series because reading critically would involve examining practices, attitudes, and beliefs about education and ultimately lead to actions that challenged the status quo and harnessed the desire these young teachers felt to bring about meaningful change in their own work as teachers.

Participants

Six self-described Harry Potter enthusiasts chose to participate in this book club, including four female and two male white, preservice teachers between the ages of 20 and 24, from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Although not nearly as experienced as practicing teachers, as a result of five methods courses and over 80 hours of classroom observations, the preservice teachers had developed a "teacher lens" through which they could read these stories, a lens that would help them attend to details they had overlooked or deemed insignificant in previous readings.

The Process & the Products

The group met once a month and for each meeting the students agreed to re-read the designated book and came prepared with annotations and notes in response to a central question: "What teaching and learning practices did you observe in this book?" We situated the study of the narratives as working in the same way they worked in Coles' (2004) seminar; the stories provided a context for the participants to examine their own beliefs and practices about education.

As the researchers, we sought to remain on the periphery of the discussions, willing to answer questions or help students as they made connections, but primarily making observations and encouraging students to respond to one another rather than seek answers from one of us. Students drew on their own experiences in schools as well as on what they had learned in their methods classes as they prepared to become teachers while they revisited Rowling's depictions of school and teaching.

To gather data about the responses of participants, we recorded each discussion and a research assistant later transcribed these recordings; we also individually recorded observational notes during each discussion. We then coded the transcripts and our observational notes using a thematic analysis approach, which involved identifying themes and issues the students raised in their discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The book club formally ended in May of 2014, but four of the six participants chose to conduct additional research into issues raised in the discussions that they found relevant to their own professional growth. They sought out research to inform their understandings, analyzed the issues in the novel in light of this research, and then presented their findings at local and national student research conferences in the spring and the fall of 2014.

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Also, in the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, the six book club participants each began either a year-long internship or a semester-long student teaching experience. All of them finished their experiences in the spring of 2015 and we interviewed each participant again, this time asking them to identify experiences from their practice informed by their dialogues and research from the book club. These interviews were then transcribed, thematically coded, and analyzed using the approach previously described.

Whitney's Case

Our discussion in this chapter focuses on the experiences of Whitney, one of the book club participants. In her own words, Whitney described herself as a "Harry Potter nerd" but also as a privileged White, middle-class woman who needed to better understand at-risk students. She explained:

> My initial draw to at-risk students began through on-campus experiences provided by my teacher education program, including a visit from alternative high school students and their administrators. As I listened to these students share their unique struggles and successes, I recognized how different their life experiences had been from my own and wondered what teachers were doing to help them succeed both academically and personally. When the opportunity came to discuss pedagogy through reading *Harry Potter*, I became even more eager to analyze different types of students as portrayed in novels that I not only knew well, but treasured.

What began as interest in Harry Potter resulted in a year-long inquiry into cultural capital and deficit models of education that ultimately influenced her classroom practice. Drawing on our analysis of book club transcripts, Whitney's writing samples, and interviews, we demonstrate how participating in this process promoted a process of critical "reflection, transformation, and action" for Whitney that influenced the pedagogical approaches she later assumed as a classroom teacher (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 14).

Findings and Discussion

We divide our discussion between the two main educational issues that Whitney focused on in the research she did as a result of re-reading the Harry Potter series: cultural capital and deficit thinking. In each of these sections, we consider first how Whitney was encouraged to reflect on pre-existing ideas and beliefs as a result of re-reading the series and then turn our attention to how that reflection transformed Whitney's thinking, leading to action on her part once she entered a classroom.

The discussion that follows centers around Whitney's reading of Harry Potter (the character) as an at-risk student. The term "at-risk" takes on specific definitions across disciplines; in the field of education it most often refers to "one who is in danger of failing to complete his or her education with an adequate level of skills"

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(Slavin & Madden, 1989, p. 4). Whitney was first exposed to the concept in her education coursework, but as she continued to research the issue in conjunction with her re-readings of Harry Potter, she also explored the term as described by the National Center of Educational Statistics. This definition identified certain factors that can contribute to a student being labeled as at-risk: lack of parental support, below-average grades, negative peer pressure, ethnic minority, and low socioeconomic status (US Department of Education, 1992).

Based on this definition, Whitney quickly identified these characteristics in Harry's experience with the Dursley family and at Hogwarts, but she also realized how Harry's strengths, talents, and understandings complicated this categorization. As we observed Whitney's work, we realized her interest in reframing Harry's narrative moved beyond simple classifications of students as she recognized how an awareness of issues surrounding cultural capital and deficit thinking would help her productively problematize these simple stereotypes.

Cultural Capital

Reflection

> "I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families. What's your surname, anyway?" (Rowling, 1997, p. 78)

This quote, as well as others throughout the novels, exemplifies the belief of the Malfoys and several others that magical privilege belongs solely to those whose genealogies contain only pure-blood wizards and witches. Understandably, book club participants resisted the notion that even one non-magic parent demoted someone to a lower social status as well as the characterization of those without any magical parent as "invaders" worthy of persecution. The participants pointed out that some wizards and witches gained power in their community through magical prowess (even Voldemort himself), and the presence of deliberate and powerful structures that held back others like Harry often became the focus of the group's discussions.

Although the book club transcripts never mention the term "capital," as Whitney began delving into her research about at-risk students, she became familiar with this concept and its use in education settings. Coined by Bourdieu (2007), it describes those cultural (knowledge, skills, and language), objectified (goods, texts, and materials), institutional (degrees or credentials), and social (networks or group memberships) resources that privilege certain individuals over others. Against the backdrop of their analysis of Harry Potter and her own research, Whitney began asking questions about the capital Harry and her own students brought to school, the capital that they lacked, and the implications of these issues for the students in her own future classroom. Her understanding of capital also resulted from conversations about Draco Malfoy and his father. In the series both

characters heavily draw on the cultural, objectified, institutional, and social capital of their family to promote their agendas and self-interest. In the book club discussions Whitney and her peers noted not only multiple abuses of this power, but also the negative effect of it on Draco.

Whitney continued to reflect on these concepts, incorporating them into her research as well as into her teaching. In an interview conducted after she completed her student teaching experience, she reflected on moments that gave life to the concepts and theories discussed in the book club. Here she proceeded to described a doppelgänger encounter she had with the mother of one of the 8th grade girls in her class that made real the misuse of capital. After multiple grades reflected the student's poor performance, Whitney received a scathing email from the parent threatening to transfer the student out of the class and stating that her daughter was "going to be a surgeon" and that the mother "would not let" Whitney cause this girl to fail. The daughter, armed with the support of her mother, continued to cause problems in the class and, as Whitney described, act with an "entitled attitude that caused some problems later in the school year." After sharing this experience, Whitney explained the similarities between this student and her mother and Draco Malfoy and his father. In both instances the parents expected certain things from teachers and, because of their social capital, expected teachers to behave in specific ways.

Transformation & Action. Armed with a both a theoretical and applied understanding of capital and some of the ways it plays out in schools, Whitney's experiences working in her first teaching position as a 7th and 8th grade language arts teacher continued to push her notions of the implications of these forces on the lives and learning of students. After successfully completing student teaching, she accepted her first teaching job at a charter junior high school in a suburb of a large city in the Intermountain West. And, with her Harry Potter research fresh on her mind, Whitney purposely tried to remain cognizant of the power structures in her classroom and how they influence student learning and success. However, as she explains below, the students she encountered challenged her understandings of capital:

> The understanding of at-risk students I had developed—such as those with limited physical resources, uninvolved parents—began to be challenged; students that qualified as at-risk based on these needs were not immediately apparent or [not] apparent at all. This realization caused me to question which students at my school were being marginalized, and how. It did not take long for me to see that my students struggled with an alternate facet of capital: social capital. Primarily through class discussion and their individual writings, my students revealed early on that the vast majority had struggled to find a place within the social setting of their former schools. Many more than I ever expected had been victims of bullying and suffered devastating emotional effects to the point of self-harm and contemplating suicide. Several students began to show evidence of social anxiety or behaviors suggesting weakness in everyday social competency.

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Unlike the Malfoys she read about or the mother-daughter duo she encountered in her student teaching experience, the students Whitney taught seemed to be positioned on the opposite side of the social capital power dynamic. Most of her students had found their way to this school because they lacked capital in social situations—so much that it negatively affected their schoolwork and behavior—and shut down.

Because of Whitney's awareness of the challenges students faced in relation to these issues of social capital, she tried to help students take risks in the classroom to engage, to participate, and to become learners. Whitney explained it this way:

> Ultimately, my study of Harry Potter as an at-risk student sharpened my teacher lens to the areas in which my students were indeed at-risk, allowing me to better tailor my instruction and interactions to their social needs and respond to their emotional needs appropriately. For example, I strive to allow students opportunities to have their opinions and feelings validated within the context of their learning, making their experiences in the classroom more personal to them. I have also integrated several opportunities for students to simply be kind to each other and to discover things about their classmates. One such opportunity occurred at the beginning of the year within an activity I planned as a part of a conscious effort to build a safe learning community within my classroom. This activity required students to conduct peer interviews through a series of questions we brainstormed all together, after which they introduced one another to the class. The success of this activity was openly confirmed when two of my female 7th grade students approached me saying, "Guess what? We're best friends now because of you." Surprised, I asked why that was the case. They replied, "Because of that activity we did a few weeks ago. You had us partner up and talk about our lives and we found out that we're both adopted. We would never have known that about each other. Now we're best friends! Cool, huh?" Though encouraging students to interact and share personal insights is nothing new, I was struck by how significant making time for such interactions can be, especially for students that struggle emotionally and socially.

This experience represents just one instance when creating opportunities to build social networks within the classroom helped Whitney's students not only grow as literacy learners, but also as social individuals. For the students in Whitney's class, many of whom were on the margins, the tie between these two issues helped them make positive changes.

Would Whitney have made similar moves if she hadn't participated in the book club? Her education and training, as well as her innate desire to see students succeed and feel welcome, would likely have motivated her to create a safe learning environment in her classroom. But her depth of understanding and confidence to act as a critical educator or, as what Giroux (2013) called a "transformative intellectual" (p. 197) committed to working for socially just education, would not have been nearly as strong.

Deficit Thinking and Funds of Knowledge

> [Snape] got to his feet and strode past the class, his black robes billowing behind him. At the doorway he turned on his heel and said, "Possibly no one's warned you, Lupin, but this class contains Neville Longbottom. I would advise you not to entrust him with anything difficult." (Rowling, 1999, p. 132)

This scene is one of many throughout the books in which Severus Snape frames a student in ways that emphasize how he or she is deficient compared to a standard that Snape has established. In truth, Neville does struggle in Snape's subject of study (potions), but he shows remarkable skill in herbology under Professor Sprout's tutelage, and Professor Lupin, in the scene quoted above, is able to help Neville successfully dispel the boggart. He is not a failure as a student, but in Snape's eyes his deficiencies in potions class clearly suggest that Neville is incapable of anything good. Snape was problematic for our book club participants for many reasons, but his treatment of Neville (and other students, like Harry, that he seemed to dislike) was a topic of frequent discussion.

Snape exhibits classic deficit thinking, and his treatment of Neville is an example of the way this kind of thinking can lead to negative actions (our students used the word "abuse" in discussing their interactions). With at-risk students especially, teachers can be tempted to focus on where their students are "lacking" or "needing remediation" rather than on the strengths they bring to a classroom. Often, this challenge is made even harder by the fact that students' strengths may not be in traditionally valued areas (such as print literacy) in schools. Across the books in the series, vignettes like the Snape-Longbottom conflict provided these preservice teachers with opportunities to explore issues of deficit thinking and to identify ways to combat that thinking.

In reviewing the arc of the series, these books provide a remarkable opportunity to explore deficit thinking and how to combat it, especially through the character of Harry Potter. It almost seems as if Harry is deliberately positioned within the series so that his pre-Hogwarts life and non-wizard upbringing help empower him to defeat Voldemort. In trying to secure the Sorcerer's Stone before Voldemort does, Hermione and Harry face (and solve) a logic puzzle that might have stumped a typical wizard but that she, with her Muggle background, easily solves; Hermione explains to Harry that "A lot of the greatest wizards haven't got an ounce of logic, they'd be stuck in here forever" (J. K. Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone*, 1997, p. 285). In addition, the fact that Harry is an orphan whose parents were brutally murdered by Voldemort proves to be an advantage for him: The love of his mother who gave her own life to protect her son provides protection throughout the books for Harry. But perhaps most importantly, Harry being raised outside the Wizarding world means that he does not have the deep, almost paralyzing fear of figures like Voldemort, the Death Eaters, or Sirius Black; for those raised in the wizard world, story after story about the evil deeds of such figures have instilled such fear that they don't even use Voldemort's real name. Harry, raised without such tales, is often able to be more objective about the threats that Voldemort poses

or to overlook the common wisdom about Sirius Black, which proves to be critical to Harry's coming into his own. Although Rowling often portrays Harry as self-conscious about his limited familiarity with the wizarding world, a broader reading suggests that his Muggle background actually proves to be a strength.

Reflection. At the same time as our book club participants recognized the ways some teachers like Snape relied on deficit views of students like Neville or Harry, they were also quick to note those who did not let deficit thinking influence their reactions to students at Hogwarts. One specific instance of this comes in Harry's first encounter with a broom in his class on flying lessons, where he shows remarkable talent in facing down the bully Malfoy and rescuing Neville Longbottom's fragile Remembrall. However, the flying instructor, Madam Hooch, had forbidden any flying while she was escorting Neville (who had broken his wrist in his first flying attempt) to the nurse. Upon seeing Harry's actions from her office window, Professor McGonagall intervenes. In Whitney's response to what McGonagall does next, Whitney noticed that McGonagall refused to let Harry's perceived deficits govern her actions and instead sought ways to leverage the talents and skills he brought to a school setting:

> She chooses not to bust Harry for breaking the rules; technically he was not supposed to be riding a broomstick when she discovered him doing so. Instead she views her discovery as a revelation with positive implications for Harry's school experience. Then she chooses to look past school-imposed structures that would prevent him from joining the Quidditch team at so young an age. Additionally, she refuses to assume that Harry's inexperience and Muggle upbringing will prevent him from progressing quickly in the sport of Quidditch (which he indeed does).

In the group discussions, our participants noted that such an outcome might not have come to pass had Professor McGonagall chosen to see Harry as a deficient student, raised outside the wizard world and unaccustomed to wizarding ways. Our students were impressed that she instead chose to embrace the promise Harry had shown and turn a potentially harmful situation for Harry into one that lays an important foundation for his identity and role in the Hogwarts community.

One way to combat deficit thinking is through seeing students as possessing funds of knowledge, an idea that Whitney came to understand as she engaged in research about at-risk students inspired by her reading of Harry. The term *funds of knowledge* describes "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). Combining work in anthropology, ethnography, and education, many scholars have argued that individuals gain valuable knowledge and abilities that are often underprivileged in traditional school settings, but can be leveraged to maximize student learning, such as when teacher Cathy Amanti recognized that her students, many of whom came from cattle-ranching families, knew a lot about horses and capitalized on this

knowledge in delivering literacy instruction in an inquiry unit focused around horses (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Examining Professor McGonagall's response, Whitney too came to recognize the way that the funds of knowledge students bring into classrooms can be leveraged by teachers who take the time to come to know their students' interests and out-of-school skills. She reflected on how McGonagall, in legitimizing and foregrounding the talents Harry brought to Hogwarts, had set him up for important successes in school:

> Allowing Harry to join the Quidditch team ends up influencing his student life in many positive ways. Being a team member opens the door for him to make friends with those he might have never known he shared a common interest, giving him a greater sense of community within school. Harry's training on a broom also prepares him to eventually succeed in preventing Lord Voldemort from obtaining the Sorcerer's Stone, an adventure that stands as a type of final assessment of all Harry learns his first year at Hogwarts. But more than anything, Quidditch empowers Harry with the understanding that he is capable, if not talented, within this new culture.

In the fictional world of Hogwarts, it would have perhaps been easier for McGonagall to react based on the dominant prejudices in the wizard world or on what Harry was lacking in his prior experience and to see him as deficient or in need of remediation. Instead, she chose a very different path, which Whitney found inspiring and worthy of emulation in her own practice.

Transformation & Action. Resisting deficit thinking by identifying students' funds of knowledge and bringing those into classrooms in meaningful ways asks teachers to become, in a sense, ethnographers who study students' background knowledge and out-of-school lives (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The observations and reflective thinking that ethnographers engage in can help teachers become more sensitive to students as multi-dimensional individuals who bring unique and valuable background knowledge and lived experiences into a classroom learning situation.

This process of observation and reflection became a part of Whitney's practice as she completed her student teaching experience. In a follow-up interview conducted during her student teaching, Whitney noted that it took time and patience to both identify students who might be at-risk and to identify ways in which she could rely on their funds of knowledge to help them meet the learning goals in her classroom. She described one student, a young man diagnosed with autism, who refused to write regardless of the prompt that Whitney provided; during time provided for writing, she noted, "he'd just sit there and build something or doodle." In part to help reach this student, in a later assignment Whitney allowed for students to work in a visual medium, asking them to create a new version of their name (by drawing it, using color or splitting up the letters) in conjunction with writing a poetic description of their name. With this young man, Whitney noticed that he eagerly worked on visually representing his name, which

built on the expertise he brought into the learning situation, and then willingly completed the prompt to write creatively about his name. In the interview, she was excited about this success and reflected on its connection to what she had learned about funds of knowledge from studying the Harry Potter series: "We were able to incorporate some of his personal strengths, which reinforced that doing so is such an important thing to remember."

Whitney followed through on her pledge to remember in her first year of teaching when she encountered another student in a similar situation and quickly sought to identify and leverage his background knowledge. As Whitney writes:

> I remembered that autistic boy when confronted with another student at my first teaching job that similarly refused to write or even speak. He seemed so incapable of either task that fellow faculty members had become adamant that he could not process what he read or heard—his brain would not do it. Hesitant to accept such a conclusion, I decided to solicit this boy's help in creating a journal prompt for him. My inquiries, met with nods and shrugs, eventually led to the topic of video games. When I saw a smile creep across his previously empty and disengaged face, I knew I was on to something. I probed, "Which games do you like on the Wii? Do you play Super Mario? Oh, I love Mario!" And he responded quietly, "I like Super Smash Brothers Brawl." "Teach me about Super Smash," I said, and he wrote a brief but expressive paragraph that demonstrated sentence variance, impeccable spelling, and accurate comma usage.

We can see here that Whitney's attention to students' out-of-school interests and background knowledge is becoming an integral part of her teaching practice, especially when she works with students who are struggling or labeled as at-risk. Building on her early interest in Harry as an at-risk student, she is beginning to act in ways that reflect an understanding of students' funds of knowledge and the role they play in her classroom.

In our experience, most new teachers have their hands full with the demands of planning and executing lesson plans while simultaneously managing student behavior. These demands place an understandable burden on new teachers and often prevent them from attending to individual students' needs or from adapting curriculum to meet those needs. Whitney's experience reading the Harry Potter series through a critical lens, however, seems to have equipped her with an awareness of the dangers of deficit thinking, a greater sensitivity to students' needs, and the desire to act in positive ways to meet those needs.

CONCLUSION

We hoped that re-entering the familiar halls of Hogwarts as older readers would provide an opportunity for our book club participants to question assumptions about teaching and learning and educational institutions. Questioning would lead to new understandings which, in turn, would lead to actions taken that could challenge the status quo and harness the idealism and enthusiasm of these young

teachers towards meaningful change. Whitney typifies what we found in analyzing the data we gathered throughout this process: The participants in the book club engaged in critical reflection about the events and characters in the series, drawing meaningful connections to and conclusions about their own potential practice as teachers. Her experiences and reflections demonstrate how fantasy literature and school stories can nurture preservice teachers on the path to becoming "transformative intellectuals" who develop critical thinking habits that "unite the language of critique with the language of possibility" (Giroux, 2013, p. 196) as they prepare to be active agents of change in educational institutions.

The experiences of our book club participants show that fantasy literature can provide a context in which preservice teachers can reflect on educational theories and pedagogical approaches and apply them. These participants, like so many preservice teacher candidates, encountered educational issues in abstract forms in university classrooms, but revisiting the world of Hogwarts provided a compelling and familiar—even if not entirely realistic—context for them to question and challenge their perspectives, expand their understanding and discover new resolves within themselves to take action as classroom teachers. They experienced the self-discovery that Susan Cooper (1996) argued is fundamental to reading fantasy literature: "Fantasy is the metaphor through which we discover ourselves" (p. 45). The genre of fantasy, in providing a distance from reality, offers a safe space to question and challenge—a seemingly perfect match for cultivating critical responses.

Importantly, the initial enthusiasm the participants showed in re-reading the Harry Potter series with this kind of lens continues to influence their practice today, especially as seen in the case of Whitney. In one of our follow-up interviews, Whitney remarked that she had marked up all of her beloved books (those she had first read from as a younger reader) with "teacher notes." She reflected that she would like to re-read the books again, but this time with her increased experience as a teacher. She went on to explain that she expected to notice different things and react differently to events and characters: "Because all your experiences, they'll just continually change with every class and every student that you teach, so it's never going to be the same read." It is this recognition of her ever-evolving circumstances, the way those influence the way she reads these books (and the world around her), and her commitment to revisit those prior assumptions in the face of new experience that are perhaps the greatest rewards of the book club. While Rowling may not have set out to critique educational institutions and practices, a critical reading of her books has helped set our preservice teachers onto a path of critical thinking and responsive action that we hope will change their classrooms and schools for the better.

As they reflected in this way, they began to transform their thinking and understanding about the world around them. What had, to our students as younger readers, seemed unquestioningly exciting and adventurous now seemed more complex and fraught with potential problems. These new perspectives led to "reflection, transformation, and action" as they begin to ask hard questions of the teachers and administrators of Hogwarts and the practices in classrooms in this

fictional school, in a sense transforming their earlier interpretations of the series of books and leading to action based on the new understandings.

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12. MAGICAL OBJECTS IN FANTASY

A Multicultural Examination

While literary studies may seem disconnected from social problems, critical pedagogy offers ways to bridge the gap between the literary and the social. By demonstrating to students how fictional works can address issues of equality and social justice, critical pedagogy can help teachers to open up space for a socially engaged dialogue with their students. In this chapter I will argue that even an apparently remote genre such as fantasy fiction can be used to encourage students to imagine alternative worlds. I will use texts from three different languages—English, German, and Russian—to show how an awareness of the functions of magical objects in fantasy can illuminate the social mechanisms of community formation driven by mass culture. My main argument is that the depictions of objects in fantasy can teach us about how fantasies of education extend from literature to the classroom.

Fantasy fiction offers an example of how literature influences cultural change by both projecting and reflecting alternatives. Fantasy contributes many attributes to popular culture, particularly our fascination with material objects. Fantasy fiction centers on objects that have unusual powers. Such objects can serve many different purposes: Advancing stories, shaping identities, and determining relationships. In this essay I will show that one of their most important functions is to generate communities. Moreover, fantasy is one of the few genres that lead to the creation of subcultures built around objects. Thousands of people, children as well as adults, spend millions of dollars to purchase spin-off toys and merchandise from Disney movies, *Harry Potter*, or *Pokémon* in a process that could be called the commodification of desires. In my view, such fantasy spin-off products function in ways similar to their fictional counterparts: They create communities all over the world. I will use the term, "fantasy object," to refer to both the object as a literary device in fantasy and the spin-off products drawn from fantasy. Fantasy objects from literature stimulate mass production and mass culture.

Extensively published and read all over the world, fantasy fiction remains on the periphery of academic research. Even though many, including Rosemary Jackson (1981), Brian Attebery (1992), Colin Manlove (1975, 1983), and Farah Mendlesohn (2008) have written about the genre, surprisingly little has been said about the roles of material objects in fantasy narratives. There is a massive body of research on the role and functions of material objects in psychology, cultural studies, philosophy, and critical theory, from Karl Marx (1867) to Donald W. Winnicott (1971). However, in fantasy studies this topic is for the most part

neglected. There is no compelling investigation into the reciprocally transformative relationship between subjects and objects in texts. I will address this relationship by interpreting three popular fantasy novels: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (J. K. Rowling), *Reckless* (Cornelia Funke), and *The Stranger* (Max Frei). I have chosen an English, a German, and a Russian novel to demonstrate that it is not only one particular kind of national fantasy that features objects in predominant roles, but that it is a characteristic of fantasy fiction from various traditions. My intention is to interpret these texts through the functions of material objects to demonstrate how fantasy fiction from various national literatures offer models for education that can be useful in the classroom.

The word "fantasy" is ambiguous and can have many different meanings. In this paper, I will use it to refer to the genre of fantasy fiction. With Brian Attebery (1992), a leading American scholar of fantasy and science fiction, I define fantasy as "a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought" (p. 10). I extend Attebery's definition by exploring fantasy fiction's transformational power to create communities in both the fictional and everyday worlds through material objects. In a Winnicottian interpretation, material objects can become transitional for humans, and can motivate human development (Winnicott, 1971, p. 2). These transitional objects simultaneously belong to external and internal realities. They can take almost any form and emerge in most areas of life: From art to religion to dreams. Transitional objects become vehicles for someone to create a subjective reality that is shared with others and can be objectively seen. The transitional object combines elements from the individual and their environment. Though Winnicott never wrote about literary texts explicitly, his terminology can be extended to fiction. The textual objects are transitional for the characters while the physical spin-off fantasy objects are transitional for their owners. Material fantasy objects become symbols for the entire work, the fantasy universe, and the fantasies the reader generates during the reading experience. The possession of such a fantasy object or a visit to the fantasy-related space (e.g., a theme park) becomes a transitional experience, connecting psychological desires to material reality.

By discussing the roles and function of fantasy objects in the classroom, teachers can create an understanding of the reciprocally transformative relationship between objects and subjects, and thereby encourage the development of critical consciousness towards mass culture among their students. A more critical view of fantasy objects and their dissemination can expose both the positive and negative aspects of community formation. An understanding of the roles of material objects in fantasy can be used as a pedagogical tool. It can encourage an awareness of mass culture's effects on modern society and provide a platform for discussion of social justice concerns.

One of the most significant characteristics of our world today is consumerism: "The ideology of consumerism is currently one of the most dominant forces in society; we undoubtedly live in a consumer world, and we enact the process of consumption in almost every aspect of our lives" (Sandlin &

McLaren, 2010, p. 2). The fantasy industry is of course no exception. In the last fifty years, mass producers made use of the marketing potential of fantasy objects and their transitional qualities. As a result, an entire multibillion-dollar market of fantasies appeared, and we are constantly encouraged to purchase products that relate to stories from fantasy fiction. In this way fantasy is strongly responsive to contemporary mass culture: It feeds the belief that the possession of things can generate experiences, alter peoples' self-identification, and impact their social standing. The framework of a literature course can become an important place for students to discuss consumerist ideology, and fantasy fiction's potential to become its tool.

On the other hand, scholars such as Peter McLaren (2010) and Roberta Sassatelli (2007) argue for a more complex contextualization of consumerism. Similarly, I would suggest exploring the positive aspects of the massive dissemination of fantasy-related products, which mainly circulate around the ability of fantasy literature to create communities. Teachers should help students explore the idea that fantasy objects have the power to connect people from different cultures, nationalities, races, classes, and sexualities, encouraging them to coexist peacefully in a space of shared creation, for example, in fan art, fantasy conventions, and fan fiction.

There are many ways to incorporate fantasy objects in a literature and culture course. An effective way to begin a discussion of fantasy objects in the classroom is by posing the problem of consumerist ideology and opening up the floor for discussion of its deficiencies and benefits. To paraphrase Paulo Freire (2000), education only becomes successful if it is an act of communication (p. 58). In the effort to promote active learning, students should be asked to reflect on their own, private fantasy objects. This would raise the possibility of talking about the students' relation to popular culture. Following Paulo Freire (1973, 2000), Joe Kincheloe (2008), Maria Nikolakaki (2012), Patricia Hinchey (1998), and other scholars of critical pedagogy, I suggest using fantasy fiction to encourage students' critical awareness of material objects and their influence on community formation.

HARRY POTTER AND THE MAGIC OF COMMUNITY FORMATION

Of all the fantasy works from the last fifty years, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is among the best known and most influential. Deeply rooted in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, the series depicts the transition of an ordinary protagonist from an abused little boy to the hero of a magical world. Research into the *Harry Potter* series has also increased over the past decades. One of the best collections is Elizabeth Heilman's *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives* (2003), an edited volume that looks at genre, gender relations, power balances, and the representation of heroes in Rowling's work. Another important book by Susan Gunelius (2008) undertakes an in-depth study of *Harry Potter* as a business venture.

Gunelius's study demonstrates how *Harry Potter* spin-off products constitute a massive market of consumption that goes far beyond singular objects to clothing, candy, games, and household items. In the summer of 2010, an entire world dedicated to *Harry Potter* appeared: Universal and Warner Bros' chain of theme parks known as "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter."[1] Broemel (2015) calls this a "highly immersive" and "highly detailed themed environment" (p. 3) where guests can explore the main sites from the books—for example, Hogwarts Castle, Hogsmeade Village, Diagon Alley, and the Hogwarts Express—and purchase related merchandises, from magic wands to invisible cloaks, wizarding robes, and butterbeer. Apart from being an entertainment center, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a place where a community of people can come together and enjoy their favorite fantasy world.

In order to explain its merchandising success, Gunelius (2008) points out that *Harry Potter* has "a strong fan following made up of customers who are extremely emotionally involved" (p. 95) in the brand. Such customers "have personalized" experiences and "feel connected" to the brand: "As a result, social networks of loyal customers formed who seek out all products related to those brands. These loyal customers always want more of the brands they love" (p. 96). Gunelius (2008) calls these communities "networks of merchandise collectors" (p. 96). Fan interest in *Harry Potter* spin-off products is partly shaped by how Harry himself is affected by the artifacts around him in the novels. Although the stories feature numerous fantasy objects, I will focus on three which signify Harry's adaptation to wizarding communities and ultimately influence the reader's perception of subject-object relationships throughout the series: Harry's invitation to attend Hogwarts, his invisibility cloak, and the Mirror of Erised.

The very first object is the acceptance letter that Harry receives on his eleventh birthday from Hogwarts. The letter is an unexpected intrusion into Harry's unhappy life with his guardians, the Dursleys. Harry knows very little about his heritage at this point: "He couldn't remember his parents at all. His aunt and uncle never spoke about them, and of course he was forbidden to ask questions" (Rowling, 2003, p. 48). Prior to the letter's arrival at Privet Drive, Harry had only a limited set of objects in his life. He is treated like a servant, without the right to possess anything better than his cousin's hand-me-down clothes, which remind him of "old elephant skin" (p. 53), and a pair of broken glasses.

Harry does not even have a right to a proper name, as he is only called "boy," "he," and "you" by his aunt and uncle. There is no appropriate space for Harry apart from the dark and dusty cupboard and later his cousin's second bedroom full of broken things. The letter from Hogwarts is therefore not only the first object that carries his name ("No one, ever, in his whole life, had written to him" [Rowling, 2003, p. 54]), but also an invitation to a place where he could belong. In a classroom setting, the letter can be discussed as the first object in the *Harry Potter* series that reconnects the protagonist with his biological family and with the community of wizards. Furthermore, students might be asked to analyze the scene critically, to evaluate to what extent the Hogwarts administration was

aware about the abusive conditions Harry experienced. The fact that the letter was addressed to "The Cupboard under the Stairs" (Rowling, 2003, p. 54) indicates that both McGonagall and Dumbledore likely knew the boy had to live "under the stairs." This function of the letter in fantasy can be related to the general discourse on letters in literature. On the one hand, the letter is a transitional object that enables Harry to enter a place where he belongs; at the same time, however, it subverts the positive image of the Hogwarts administration as a rescuing force by putting in question Dumbledore's and McGonagall's motives.

The next object that inspires community formation is from Harry's father: James Potter's invisibility cloak. Apart from further tying the boy to the wizarding world, it provides Harry with a physical connection to his family history: "A scandal! Harry Potter not knowin' [sic] his own story when every kid in our world knows his name" (Rowling, 2003, p. 81). The cloak, given to Harry as an anonymous Christmas present, is the first material object that connects him with his deceased parents.

The third major object that allows community formation is the Mirror of Erised. The mirror further re-connects Harry to the community of his family: "Harry looked into the faces of the other people in the mirror, and saw other pairs of green eyes like his, other noses like his [...]—Harry was looking at his family, for the first time in his life" (Rowling, 2003, p. 287). After the link to his family is established, Dumbledore forbids Harry ever to look for the mirror again, as it "does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live" (p. 294). Thus, Harry is encouraged to bond with real people, as opposed to dreaming of the imaginary community of his deceased relatives. Students can be asked to reflect on the power that Dumbledore has over the formation of Harry's communities. In the spirit of critical pedagogy, students might question Dumbledore's role as Harry's educator and the leader of the wizarding world, and thus reflect upon the inherently political nature of education (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 10). Harry is being educated as a wizard in very specific ways, and it would be important for students to compare and contrast the practices of education at Hogwarts with those from their own experience.

Harry Potter can also be used as a case study of how authoritarian teachers construct the identities of their students. Dumbledore and McGonagall give Harry back his name with the letter, provide him with a history through the Cloak of Invisibility, and finally operate the mirror that has the power to reflect the essence of Harry's personality. Through the educational system and by means of material objects, Harry's identity as well as the identities of other students are shaped, molded, and constructed by the Hogwarts administration.

Furthermore, students might be asked to make connections between fantasy objects in the text and *Harry Potter* spin-off products. What kinds of communities are formed in themed spaces and through possession of *Harry Potter* merchandise? Who is shaping such community formations on a global scale? Why are consumers drawn by fantasy objects in such strong ways that they are willing to invest time and money to possess them? Harry is being drawn

into particular choices by Dumbledore and other powerful parties of the wizarding community, and in a similar way, people of all ages are drawn by influential mass producers and mega-corporations into excessive consumption of their products. Both students and teachers can benefit significantly from using popular fantasy literature to raise the level of critical consciousness, specifically about their attitudes towards material objects, in the classroom.

<div align="center">RECKLESS LEARNING PRACTICES</div>

To show different types of community formations that lead to an alternative model of learning, I would like to consider a lesser-known work of fantasy that has escaped broad attention by the mass market. Published in 2010 and a bestseller in Germany, *Reckless* is the first book of the ongoing *Reckless* series. It was written by the internationally recognized, award-winning German author Cornelia Funke. Until now there has only been limited scholarship on *Reckless*. It is nevertheless deserving of critical attention, especially for its discussion of objects, community formation, and education through experience.

The story is set in present-day New York. It begins with a glance to the past, where twelve-year-old Jacob Reckless suffers from the absence of his father. He disobeys his mother by entering his missing father's study to look for answers no one is willing to give him. Once again the magic begins with a mirror, "An abyss of glass which distorted everything in reflection that John Reckless has left behind"[2] (Funke & Wigram, 2010, p. 9). The artifact reveals its secrets only to those who cannot see their reflections in it. Once Jacob realizes he has to cover up his "distorted image,"[3] he falls through the mirror and finds himself in a different world. In both *Harry Potter* and *Reckless*, the mirror establishes a connection between the protagonists and their missing parent(s). Whereas for Harry the encounters with fantasy objects are arranged by adults and lead towards an adaptation of predetermined roles, for Jacob the adventure begins with his emancipation from his mother and little brother. Although children's and young adult literature are often critiqued for an abusive portrayal of young people (Zipes, 2006), Cornelia Funke's *Reckless* series resists this convention. From his initial entry into another world, Jacob learns by doing, experimenting and experiencing new situations. He is a stranger in "The World behind the Mirror." Whereas the Mirror of Erised reestablishes Harry's connection with his family, the mirror in *Reckless* signifies Jacob's breakup with his family and his familiar world.

"The World behind the Mirror" or, sometimes, "MirrorWorld," is strongly reminiscent of classical fairy tales, though these are the much darker tales that contrast the cheerful fantasies presented by the Walt Disney franchise. It is also a darker world than Harry Potter's. For example, one of the most horrifying places in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is the Forbidden Forest, which students are generally forbidden to enter. By contrast, the entire MirrorWorld is like a never-ending "forbidden forest" with its cruel monsters and child-eating witches.

From the age of twelve, when he first dares to step through the mirror, Jacob hunts for magical treasures and experiences adventures with his short-tempered mentor Albert Chanute. However, while the adults at Hogwarts are mainly positive and supportive role models for Harry, Jacob is stuck with a selfish, drunk, and often violent Chanute who was "a miserable substitute for a father figure"[4] (Funke & Wigram, 2010, p. 36) as his main guardian in MirrorWorld. In contrast to Harry, who faces adventures that are staged by his teachers like the obstacles in the Underground Chambers, Jacob does not experience the support of parental-like supervision. On the contrary, Chanute often uses the boy as bait for witches and monsters. After several years of a fairly rough apprenticeship, Jacob overcomes his teacher and continues the treasure hunt successfully by himself. His main goal becomes to establish a reputation as the best treasure hunter in the MirrorWorld. In contrast to Harry, who becomes exactly what the magical world wants him to become, Jacob makes decisions independently and sometimes even in defiance of his mentors, as when Jacob is preparing for the heroic adventure of saving his brother, while Chanute is the first to try to talk him out of it.

Jacob is fully in control of the objects in the MirrorWorld: he learns the skill of finding them, as opposed to Harry who is constantly given things by other characters. The relics Jacob finds, collects, and sells as a treasure hunter (a Glass Slipper, Golden Ball, and a Wishing-Table), not only serve as plot devices to advance the story, but also help to construct Jacob's personal history. These objects provide him with a valid place in the community, as well as with a day-to-day occupation: "There is always something or someone that one could be searching for in this world"[5] (Funke & Wigram, 2010, p. 68). Still, apart from his professional success, little is known about Jacob even by his closest friends. In the classroom, environments where skills and possessions have excessive value can be problematized. Students might be asked whether Jacob's reticence reminds them of contemporary social relations and whether such attitudes prevent people from achieving emotional intimacy.

The protagonist's personality corresponds to the title of the novel: Jacob is self-centered, courageous, and often impatient, yet readers still sympathize with him. He is positioned as the opposite from his younger brother Will,[6] who one day accidently travels through the magical mirror. As opposed to Jacob, Will does not look for an adventure: He merely repeats the gesture following his older brother. Will is a conformist, happy to accept his quiet life in the primary world, who nevertheless attempts to restore the lost connection to his brother (Spisak, 2010, p. 75). There is a contrast in the ways Will and Jacob approach fantasy objects and participate in communities around them. Will uses the magic mirror in order to reconnect with his brother, while Jacob employs it to escape responsibility. It is worth noting that Will only followed Jacob after the death of their mother.

Will is shown to be the good son, who is willing to commit to the relationship with his family as well as with his girlfriend Clara. Their relationship provides a contrast to the ambiguous bond between Jacob and his female companion Celeste

Auger (a.k.a. Fuchs [Fox]). Altogether, Jacob is drawn by material objects, their value and the status they can ensure. Will's sudden appearance in the MirrorWorld forces Jacob to rethink his set of priorities. Because of his impracticality, Will immediately runs into trouble. He is attacked and infected with a rapidly spreading curse. Unless his brother is able to find a cure, Will could turn to stone, or, more precisely, transform into what is called a "goyl warrior." The goyls are hostile species heavily persecuted by humans. The novel introduces multiple characters who undergo radical transformation and change, allowing the reader to explore mechanisms of self-creation.

Transformations are often connected to artifacts. Nearly every character in the novel uses objects for the purposes of connecting with or distancing from different communities. The most prominent example is Celeste-Fuchs. Celeste's artifact is a shape-shifter's dress that allows her to turn into a fox, linking her personality to her appearance. On a physical level, the dress is practically blended with the heroine. It is essentially an extension of her body: "Her hair was as red as the fur that she loved so much more than the human skin. It fell long and thick over her back, it looked almost like she was still wearing a fur. The dress too, glimmered in the moonlight just like the fox fur, and its fabric seem to have been woven from the same silky hair"[7] (Funke & Wigram, 2010, p. 69). The artifact is valuable to Celeste in many ways. Her self-identification closely relates to the object, even to the extent where she does not feel fully in control of it: She suspects that she might be losing her identity along with the dress. Even the threat of aging too quickly, a price paid by all shape-shifters in the book, cannot stop Fuchs from wearing the dress.

Celeste's dress is another fantasy object that allows withdrawal from a community rather than connection to it. She gained it as a little girl by rescuing a fox from the cruelty of her brothers, and the dress became her means to escape the community of humans in favor of becoming an animal. In addition, the treatment of material objects in *Reckless* allows for a rich exploration of gender relation and the mechanisms of identity formation. Students might be asked to reflect upon consumerist ideology, specifically in relation to fashion, and women who shape their identities according to their looks. Further, the example might be used to explore more generally the mystification and bestialization of women in fantasy fiction.

In the classroom, it would be useful to compare the different roles fantasy objects play in *Harry Potter* and *Reckless*. Harry is generally able to survive the many challenges he faces, especially through the positive effects of his school, his peers, and his extraordinary powers. Jacob, by contrast, must learn to develop his own strategies for dealing with the difficult situations he encounters. In *Reckless* it is above all the importance of learning through experience that guides Jacob and the other characters to success. The contrast between Will and Clara and Jacob and Fuchs helps point towards the different roles material objects can play in community formation. The novel emphasizes that objects can only help to achieve goals if the characters reveal sufficient moral strength, courage, and resourcefulness. The notion that, by themselves, even the most magical objects

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remain useless becomes an effective commentary on the contemporary perception of consumption.

The German fantasy novel *Reckless* touches on rebellious identity formation, individual emancipation, and resistance to authority. The book offers a meditation on the importance of recklessness when viewed against rational planning. Viewed this way, the contrast to *Harry Potter* becomes clear: In Harry's world, school authorities control and manage his education, whereas Jacob and Will struggle through various reckless adventures on their own. In both books, objects play a crucial role in enabling and limiting each character's growth. These books can help encourage students and teachers to reflect on their own values. When do objects encourage and when do they restrain community formation? How is education best achieved? In what ways does fantasy fiction comment on contemporary, consumerist culture? The contrast between Harry Potter's world and the MirrorWorld of Jacob and Will can fuel the debate.

EDUCATION THROUGH ESTRANGEMENT

The final text, *The Stranger*, is the most complex work of the three. It is the first book of the *Labyrinths of Echo* series, written by the leading Russian fantasy author Svetlana Martynchik. The works are for the most part unknown in North America, but very well-received in Russia. Martynchik first published the novel in collaboration with her husband Igor Steopin in 1996 under the pseudonym Max Frei. This book in particular is tied to philosophy through its eponymous association with *The Stranger* by Albert Camus (1942). The book series is more often discussed in the press (Booker, 2006) than in critical scholarship, even though a number of insightful studies exist, such as the research on empathy and gender-marked speech conducted by Kukushkina, Smirnov, and Timashev (2002). Although the work is frequently seen as mere entertainment, Frei's novels can be used in classrooms to deconstruct power relations, critique social marginalization, and reflect on teacher-student relationship dynamics. Above all, the *Labyrinths of Echo* series can be viewed as a profound reflection on education and its tendency to be abused for regulation and control (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 10). In fact all three works discussed in this chapter portray different kinds of learning practices, and should be viewed as examples of how fantasy literature can encourage a more self-reflexive attitude towards education.

The Stranger begins with the protagonist introducing himself as simultaneously the author and fictional character of the novel. Max "might have even been your neighbor"[8] (Frei, 2006, p. 5), but recently moved to a city that "cannot be found on any map"[9] (p. 5). He seems at first to be an average young man. In his own words: "I was a proud owner of a somewhat failed, but calm and quiet, moderately well-fed life and a great deal of illusions about what I actually deserve"[10] (p. 243-244). The reader does not learn much about Max's affiliations, possessions, or relations. However, already in the prologue, Max introduces the readers to Sir Juffin Halley, his "friend, chief, and teacher"[11] (p. 8) whom Max initially meets in his dreams. Sir Juffin will play the role of a kind of guide, even

guru, to Max's eager interest, becoming the central figure to all Max's adventures and communities. Education in *The Stranger* proceeds through an apprenticeship, in contrast to the processes shown in the other two novels. Sir Juffin will guide Max through various experiences, in the hopes of encouraging Max's own free decisions.

In *The Stranger*, dreams occupy an essential place in Max's life, potentially more important than any other experience of his otherwise unfulfilled existence. In contrast to Harry and Jacob, Max does not seem to have been part of any community whatsoever prior to his adventure. In that way, he is doubtless the most alienated character of the three: The only place where we see him interacting with others is in dreams. Consequently, when the mysterious stranger Sir Juffin promises a fresh start, an exciting job, and an intriguing future, the readers are not surprised that Max takes the chance and moves to "Echo." The portal is an enchanted, old-fashioned trolley that helps to accomplish the transfer between worlds. As with Harry's escape through the wall and Jacob's through the mirror, Max crosses into another world on a trolley.

Echo is the capital of the United Kingdom of Uguland and various other comical sounding places. The name Echo contains a word play with ambiguity typical for Martynchik: on the one hand it suggests that the "Echo" world is a shadow world to our own that we tend to oversee in daylight. On the other hand, it is inseparable from the real world in the same way an echo is inseparable from the initial sound. Echo reminds us of a dream world, a space where familiar experiences quickly become strange and marvelous.

The prologue of *The Stranger* already suggests several topics for critical reflection and classroom discussion. The students might reflect on Max's desire to escape the mundane world, his quick confidence in Sir Juffin, and the process of estrangement from a familiar environment. Attebery draws his definition of estrangement from similar images: "The concept of wonder may be understood as an alternative formulation of the idea of estrangement: […] through the formal manipulation of their linguistic representatives we are made to see familiar objects and experiences as strange" (Attebery, 1992, p. 16). The general theme of escapism and its consequences in fantasy literature might be brought up in this context.

At first it seems as if Juffin invited Max to Echo and enabled the transition between worlds. In fact, only much later in the books do we learn that the magician in a sense invented Max in order for him to save the world of Echo. At this point the Juffin-Max relationship resembles that between Dumbledore and Harry. Both Dumbledore and Juffin have complete control over the initial environment that Harry and Max encounter in the magical worlds. Similar to Harry in Hogwarts, as soon as Max arrives in Echo, he finds himself in Juffin's house. From that moment, we engage in a complex relationship between a mentor and his student that continues through the entire series.

Juffin more closely resembles Dumbledore, but very much differs from Chanute in *Reckless*. He favors Max, but Max is his only student. Juffin also has significantly more power: While Harry and Jacob are constantly exposed to other

characters from the beginning, during his first weeks in Echo Max only interacts with Juffin, his butler, and their dog. Max's entire perception of Echo is based on what Juffin and his surroundings teach him. Juffin functions as a guide or a leader, a wise vehicle for Max, to educate him in the ways of the new world. Juffin also teaches Max to communicate with material objects. Magicians in Echo are able to perceive the emotions of things. At one point in *The Stranger*, Max reads the memory of a little box that has witnessed a mysterious murder. This account helps to solve the crime by revealing details about the tragedy. In the classroom, an understanding of objects that carry a valuable past might be contrasted with consumer culture's tendency that always prefers new things, disregarding the values of older objects. As a follow up, students might be asked to reflect on who benefits from people's never-ending desire to consume.

Initially, the reason Juffin brought Max to Echo was to let him work as his assistant. He represents a successful community of people that Max wishes to enter. This new-found desire to belong to a community is contrasted with the loneliness and failure that he experienced in the primary world. Juffin essentially creates Max simultaneously on multiple levels: He teaches him how to behave properly in Echo, how to operate magical objects, and how to communicate with other characters. Juffin also provides Max with a history by inventing a legend that is supposed to explain the protagonist's strangeness to the natives. Max adopts the identity of a barbarian from a desert land: "Whatever it is you do—said Sir Juffin Halley,—you won't even have to apologize! Your origins are the best explanation of any vagary you might do in front of the capital snobs"[12] (Frei, 2006, p. 18). Juffin, as the authority figure and teacher, not only invites Max into the world, but he helps to form Max's identity. Even the name, Max Frei, technically means "without Max" in German. In the classroom, students might be asked to consider reasons that might lead Max to accept Juffin's authority. As part of a critical thinking exercise, a connection to real teachers, educators, and political authorities should be established: How often do students notice that their educators behave like Juffin, and they themselves follow along like Max?

The Stranger includes a wide variety of fantasy objects. Throughout the novel, objects contribute to reshaping the identities of the characters. Objects are described in much more detail than the protagonist. If he is not defined by Juffin, Max is defined through the objects that belong to him. When Max acquires the Cloak of Death, for example, an artifact that marks him as someone able to kill instantly, he suddenly becomes immensely powerful. As opposed to Harry's Cloak of Invisibility, Max's Cloak of Death does not provide him with a history, but instead grounds him further within the social system of the Echo world. Juffin explains: "This uniform is only for you. You are from now on Death, Max. Death at the Royal Service" (Frei, 2006, p. 208). The relationship between Max and the Cloak resembles how Celeste struggles to identify herself without the dress. A comparative reading of the two works could invite a gender studies approach, as the character's motives fit into a gender binary norm. As a woman,

Celeste struggles with her appearance, whereas for Max his clothing relates to his powers and his social status.

There are different ways that characters come to possess artifacts in fantasy narratives. In Harry's case he is largely provided with fantasy objects. Jacob Reckless learns hunting skills from his mentor and makes it his job to find, use, and sell artifacts. *The Stranger* portrays a third alternative: Max not only finds and keeps objects, but he creates them himself, pulling objects from "the crack between the worlds." To a point, Juffin displays the attitude of a conservative teacher who works within a system that Paolo Freire (2000) would refer to as "banking education." But the author ends the novel by reversing the model. Max learns how to create himself: When he pulls things from the crack between worlds, he takes them out of his primary world. In terms of critical pedagogy this means that as a student, Max is encouraged to access his previous experiences and knowledge in order to master new skills. This is the very first step of critical pedagogy.

Max not only learns to create objects, he creates his own community. Max is forced to become the ruler of a barbarian land. The protagonist eventually adopts his new identity and even takes care of the small number of his subjects. In the classroom, this episode might be discussed in relation to the overall character building of the protagonist. The series proceeds by representing the process of education and community building as more and more complex, at times questionable, but always provocative and thought provoking. The fundamental difference between *The Stranger* and *Reckless* and *Harry Potter* is that Max is ultimately able to create himself and his communities. The book shows how students can be empowered by their teacher to free themselves from external control.

TRANSITIONAL FANTASY FICTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Fantasy fiction can be used for classroom discussions about mass culture, education, community formation, consumption, entertainment, and self-development. It is a more useful genre than people tend to assume. Especially useful can be an exploration of the roles and functions of objects in fantastic narratives, their connection to consumer culture, and to the understanding of community formation.

The works I have presented explore different forms of education and various ways of creation and breakdown of communities. *Harry Potter* is a reflection on a conservative school system, where the protagonist enters an already existing community of wizards. *Reckless* represents the world full of dangers that students often must explore on their own, where protagonists remain alienated from communities. *The Stranger* depicts a guru-like mentor figure and explores his relationship with a fully dependent student, who in the end nevertheless learns to create objects and communities of his own. Starting from an analysis of objects and how they are treated in the books, we can derive a sense of how communities are formed and how education is practiced.

Taken together, the three books demonstrate that education is a complex multi-layered process, one that is not so much about schooling and training, but about learning and acquiring skills. The key purpose of education, which these books show in different ways, is formation, growth, and development instead of conforming and fitting in. In Henry Giroux's words (2010) "students need to acquire the knowledge and skills to become literate in multiple symbolic forms so as to be able to read critically the various cultural texts to which they are exposed" (p. 255).

The transitional objects in these novels enable this kind of growth. It is important to encourage students to reflect on them, instead of fetishizing and consuming them. By demonstrating how fantasy objects impact characters within the narratives by drawing them into various communities, students can be made aware of how they themselves participate in their own self-formation and the formation of communities. By stimulating their fantasies through fantasy fiction, teachers and students can be inspired to pursue their own, shared fantasies of education.

NOTES

1 In Florida as one of the seven islands of "Universal's Islands of Adventure" (Broemel, 2015, p. 32).
2 Author's translation.
3 Author's translation.
4 Author's translation.
5 Author's translation.
6 Funke suggests an intertextual narrative by naming the characters after the Brothers Grimm.
7 Author's translation.
8 Author's translation.
9 Author's translation.
10 Author's translation.
11 Author's translation.
12 Author's translation.

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13. CRITICAL LITERACY IN INQUIRY LEARNING

*Perspective Sharing through Multiple Literacies,
Continuous Inquiry, and Reflection*

Near the end of the school year, the atmosphere of my eighth grade language arts class shifted from excitement of the long-awaited summer break ahead to jitters and nerves as thoughts of entering high school loomed just beyond. My students shifted nervously in their seats as questions buzzed around the room: "What if I get lost?" "What if I can't make friends?" "What if everyone thinks I am a nerd?" I sat in awe staring at my students realizing their questions were not centered on the academics of high school; they were genuinely worried about not being accepted by their peers. All during the school year these same eighth grade students "ruled" middle school with an air of confidence bordering on narcissism. Yet, now, here they sat anxiously looking at me with wide apprehensive eyes searching for confirmation that everything would be just fine. However, this was not an answer I could easily give them and even if I did, I felt my students would still be filled with doubt. Transitioning from a middle school of about 600 students to a high school crammed with over 4,000 students presented numerous challenges my students soon would encounter.

My eyes habitually settled on three students I was most concerned about: Lauren was hunched over in the back corner of the classroom, eyes peeking from under her long dark hair and drawing away in her sketch pad oblivious to the lively discussion around her; Thomas stretched out his long legs with one arm slung over the back of his chair averting his attention to the clock and waiting for the bell to ring; and Alex, a teacher pleaser, was right under my nose eagerly participating in the endless questions about high school. And of course, Alex was the only one of the trio that spoke up, "I wish there were instructions on how to survive high school!" Students laughed and patted Alex's back as they filed out of the classroom for the day. *And why weren't there any instructions?* I thought as I sank down into a student's chair and reflected on the day. The wheels in my head started turning.

I was intrigued by the variety of questions my students pored over about transitioning to high school, and their enthusiasm on the topic could not be ignored. My students were living in the present and wanted to learn about issues affecting them now. I knew classroom learning must be connected and relevant to their lives, experiences, and passions. An inquiry-based teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by investigating their complex questions seemed to offer opportunities for making the kinds of authentic connections my students were seeking.

CRITICAL LITERACY AND INQUIRY LEARNING

An inquiry-based teaching method engages students in creating and questioning while developing their skills in critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Inquiry-based learning traces back to John Dewey and his concept of "learning by doing" (Dewey, 1916). Roots of inquiry-based learning grew from the constructivist theory that students construct knowledge through their environment and through social interaction (Piaget, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). Students' learning is driven by their own questions about their own experiences and the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape those experiences (Goodman, 2005).

Critical literacy is the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships and is a "vehicle through which individuals communicate with one another using the codes and conventions of society" (Robinson & Robinson, 2003, p. 3). It helps students to discover power relations within a social and historical context of their lives within the broader framework of their culture (Goodman, 2005). Critical literacy enriches an inquiry-based learning environment in which challenging problems are posed and higher order thinking questions are discussed with multiple perspectives rather than presenting one voice as definitive or authoritative. It is this lens through which to look critically at texts to challenge the content and intent and to get the most pleasure and inmost meaning of the text (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). This kind of higher order thinking is interdisciplinary in nature, experiential, and rigorous, enabling students to prepare for higher education.

According to Callison and Preddy (2006), critical literacy emphasizes the empowering role that literacy plays in reshaping the environment in which one lives and works, and students must be able to apply the inquiry process and knowledge gained as a means for political or social action in order to change the status quo. Researchers argue that critical literacy in inquiry learning involves more than just an academic activity; they believe it involves a proposed change and that this change must be contested, debated, and ultimately determined by the power of evidence and argument (Callison & Preddy, 2006). In this learning environment, middle school students are able to demonstrate problem-solving skills by applying what they learn to real-life situations (Finkelstein, Hanson, Huang, Hirschman, & Huang, 2010), and learning through problem solving can result in knowledge that is more transferable and flexible than that which is achieved through more traditional teaching methods (Bransford, Sherwood, Hasselbring, Kinzer, & Williams, 1990).

Critical literacy in an inquiry-based learning environment is comprised of three key practices and principles: multiple literacies, continuous inquiry, and reflection (Goodman, 2005). Multiple literacies from a variety of informational sources and continuous inquiry must be utilized in order to gain understanding of multiple perspectives. Critical reading of multiple sources is a skill and a strategy that students must utilize in order to be informed participants in their society. Critical literacy also requires students to actively reflect on their own work; consequently,

students must be given multiple opportunities to reflect on their learning. Constructionism introduced the idea that constructing an artifact that can be shared and reflected upon furthers a learner's understanding (Harel & Papert, 1991; Kafai & Resnik, 1996).

Through analyzing multiple texts, sharing their own viewpoints in focus groups and exploring their community, my students encountered a variety of perspectives on what it actually takes to survive high school. Through perspective sharing, students explored viewpoints of different characters in a story of different people in a real-life situation, discovering how and why people make new friends and the sacrifices that are often made in friendships. Alternative texts, juxtapositioning, Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits, and theme-based focus groups were some of the critical literacy strategies in an inquiry learning-environment that guided students to create alternative perspectives. Students shared their individual perspectives through focus groups, dramatization, poetry, and song lyrics. The culminating project was developed from a project of choice in themed focused groups in order for students to best express their learning.

CRITICAL LITERACY IN AN INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Engagement and motivation are key factors when teaching critical literacy in an inquiry based learning environment, and students must choose to be actively engaged and empowered to construct personal meaning (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010). Because critical literacy in inquiry learning involves a proposed change that must be contested, debated, and determined by evidence and argument (Callison & Preddy, 2006), choosing a core text is vital, as other multiple literacies chosen will all connect to the concepts debated and discussed in this text.

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1943) is often recommended in schools as a children's book due to its vivid illustrations and short page count. However, a critical look from a middle school level reveals a wealth of meaning and makes for an entertaining, powerful introduction to some of eighth grade language arts' most difficult concepts such as figurative language, symbolism, and thematic significance. Analyzing *The Little Prince* encourages engagement by having students read for authentic purposes, make personal connections, focus on comprehension, and respond in meaningful ways (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), and it can be used as a cornerstone book through which students can explore some of the issues up-coming freshman find themselves facing as they make the transition from middle to high school, helping them discover how one culture meets and comes to understand another, how and why people make new friends, and what friends are willing to sacrifice for one another.

In an inquiry-based learning environment, researching themes through multiple texts is central to critical pedagogy, and the selection of a high-quality text to first uncover these themes is vital to the process. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's fantasy novel *The Little Prince* was chosen for this eighth grade class because it contained issues involving love, loss, friendship, loneliness, and resiliency, as well as social issues.

The Novella, The Little Prince

After the eruption of the Second World War, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince*, was deported to North America. In the midst of declining health and personal cataclysms, he composed many of the writings for which he would be remembered, including a tender tale of loneliness, friendship, loss, and love from the perceptual experience of a young, little prince fallen to Earth. A previous memoir written by the author had recapped his aviation experiences in the Sahara Desert, and he is thought to have drawn on those same accounts in *The Little Prince*.

   The Little Prince is a story of the encounter of a pilot, who has crashed in the African desert, and a little prince, who himself has disembarked on earth far away from his planet which can be spotted above as a small star. The pilot, a hopeful artist at the age of six, had that career defeated by the lack of imagination of grown-ups who could not understand, without explanation, his drawing of a boa constrictor eating an elephant. The young pilot then concluded that adults were incapable of recognizing importance in anything except what lies on the surface. The little prince, through conversing with the pilot, asks the pilot to draw him a sheep and awakens the pilot to his own restricted sense of what is important, convincing him to conclude that he too is now like the grown-ups.

   The little prince speaks of his planet where baobab sprouts, and he has to dig them up every day in order to avoid them taking over the planet. He also speaks with great affection of his special rose, the only one of its kind, and his devotion to its well-being regardless of the fact that it lied to him. The little prince describes his journey to earth, stopping on the way at different asteroids on which grown-ups such as a king, a businessman, and a drunkard, among others, appear to him very strange because of their life-time dedication to things that are only quantifiable and have no ultimate purpose. He conveys the discussions he had with a fox, learning the art of taming and rites, which turns a common relationship into something rather unique to cherish. The pilot learns to love the little prince, as the little prince loves the rose. After some time, the pilot has repaired his plane, and the little prince is also ready to return to his planet through the concoction of a snake's poison. Yet the little prince reassures the pilot that the separation is only physical, for taming establishes bonds that sustain through time and space, such that the stars they each gaze upon each night will remind them of each other.

Themes.   Because the critical literacy in an inquiry-based learning environment is driven by students' questions about their own experiences and the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape those experiences (Goodman, 2005), it is important to begin with the themes that emerge from the core text. For our class, key themes emerged from the reading.

   A predominant theme is the treasure found in true friendship. The little prince learns from the fox to see with one's heart instead of just with one's eyes. This cultivates the eternal bond that is the essence of friendship. When the little prince arrives to earth, he suffers from looking at the surface of things. He leaves his

planet because he is annoyed by the vanity of the rose. The fox reminds him of how unique his rose is and since the little prince has loved and nurtured the flower, she is very special. The little prince finally understands that he must look beneath the surface of the rose to find her beauty. The pilot observes, "What moves me so deeply about this little prince, who is sleeping here, is his loyalty to a flower—the image of a rose that shines through his whole being like the flame of a lamp, even when he is asleep" (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, pp. 68-69).

Another theme, no less important, is that too often humans are preoccupied with wealth, power, and technology and are missing the important things in life such as beauty, love, and friendship. Instead of investing the time to love others and notice the small wonders of the world, people are always searching for something and are never happy with where they are in life. This theme is conveyed through the geographer who is misled into believing that facts and figures are important, and with the business man with his wealth and the drunkard with his alcohol which often hide the truth and cause them both to miss out on the true meaning of life.

One predominant theme that stands out in *The Little Prince* is that relationships teach responsibility. The theme shows that the responsibility challenged by relationships with others leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of one's own responsibilities. The group working on this theme pored over two questions: *Are taming and friendship the same?* and *Why did the little prince's opinion of the rose change?* The group decided that the little prince's love for his rose was the driving force behind the novel. They determined that the rose was the little prince's friend and companion whom he faithfully tended, yet he left her because of her vanity. The rose pervaded the little prince's conversations with the pilot; and eventually, the rose became the reason the little prince wanted to return to his planet. The fox emphasized the importance of taking time to get to know someone and used the language of "taming" to teach the gradual nature of building trust. The little prince learned through the fox that investing oneself in a relationship makes that person, and everything associated with him or her, more special. The little prince discovered that it is even more important to give to another than to receive what the other gives back in return.

The group discussed new friendships that would develop as they transfer to high school, contrasting "acquaintances" with "true friends." The group discussed how cultivating lasting, loving friendships takes time and effort and can have a huge impact on happiness and quality of life. Through research, the group found a Swedish study which concluded that maintaining rich social friendships could add significant years to one's life.

All of the groups noticed that perseverance was a trait found among all explorers. Thomas was instantly interested in the theme of perseverance as he often witnessed his grandfather endlessly working in a career that he did not like. Nonetheless, Thomas discovered through his interview with his grandfather that not only did the construction job provide a secure and stable income for Thomas and his sister, but that his grandfather developed strong, lasting relationships within his community. The group generated two questions to investigate: *Why does the little prince travel to many planets?* and *What are the similarities of the pilot's*

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commitment to fixing his plane and to learning more about the little prince?
Through analyzing the varying perspectives of the different characters, the group
found that both the pilot and the little prince had positive outlooks because they
traveled outside of their comfort zones.

However, the group also discovered that perseverance could be seen as negative
and a curse in some characters, such as the businessman and the geographer who
did not know how to stop their fruitless enterprises. The little prince and pilot were
rewarded with friendship and love as they persevered through their adventures.
The pilot learned about the little prince by asking numerous questions, even if the
little prince did not happen to answer some of them. The little prince worked hard
to tame the fox by showing up daily and working hard to gain the fox's trust. The
conclusion of the group was that the little prince would not learn from the fox if he
gave up, and that without venturing far and long in the desert, the pilot and the
little prince would not have found the well. The group felt the well's water was
sweet and satisfying because they had worked hard for it together: "It was born of
our walk beneath the stars, of the song of the pulley, of the effort of my arms" (de
Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 71).

Honesty was a characteristic discovered by many of the student explorers. Many
instantly related the theme of honesty in *The Little Prince* to how they saw others
portray themselves and how they really were on the inside. A quote provided the
focal point of one group's analysis, "One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything
essential is invisible to the eyes" (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 63). In this group, the
conversation centered on how the little prince thought that his rose was just like the
hundreds of other roses on earth; on the other hand, he learned that he must view
the rose with his heart and understood the truth about their relationship. The group
enthusiastically talked about cliques found in their middle school such as jocks,
nerds, artists, loners, etc. and how these same groups probably exist in high school
as well. They discussed how some students dress in a way that did not match who
they really were on the inside, just like when the little prince visited the
businessman who continuously counted stars, claiming he owned them. But the
little prince realized that although the businessman may not be a liar, he was
pursuing a lie. He was driven by greed and focused on unimportant things which
led the students to conclude that some students might dress differently for certain
purposes. Therefore, the group felt that they should consider the advice of the fox
to the little prince about the rose: the truth wasn't always what you saw; it was also
what you couldn't see.

MULTIPLE LITERACIES AND CONTINUOUS INQUIRY

Although multiple literacies, continuous inquiry, and reflective practices are key
components found in critical literacy in an inquiry-based learning environment,
these must happen concurrently. Multiple literacies from a variety of informational
sources, continuous inquiry, and constant questioning, discussing, and debating
must be utilized at all stages in order to gain understanding of multiple

perspectives. Consequently, students must be given multiple opportunities to question, discover new resources, and reflect on their learning.

By reading *The Little Prince*, students addressed questions of how one culture meets and comes to understand another. Read in the context of the colonization of America, the book provided a meaningful framework within which students could investigate a specific period in American history. By encountering *The Little Prince* alongside various informational sources, students developed a basis of comparison by which to understand both the real implications of figurative language in literature and the hidden assumptions and biases that may skew informational texts.

Through alternative texts, students examined essays and exploration accounts left from early American history and applied their understanding from evaluating an author's argument or defense of a claim by examining the relationship between generalizations and evidence and the way in which the author's intent affects the structure and tone of the text. Through an inquiry-based educational environment, learning grows out of challenging questions that cannot be answered by rote learning, thus placing students in an active role as problem solvers, decision makers, investigators, and/or documentarians.

Focus Groups and Class Discussions

In authentic critical literacy tasks, students must become active readers, moving beyond a simple understanding of a text into a deeper comprehension of the underlying themes, critically reflecting on the text's purpose and becoming aware of the techniques that the author uses to influence the reader. Theme-based focus groups create active readers and writers by engaging students in authentic critical literacy tasks. Critical literacy in an inquiry-based learning environment requires students to actively reflect on their own work; consequently, students must have multiple opportunities to discuss and debate in order to reflect on their learning. One way of accomplishing this is by creating focus groups based on themes that emerge from the text.

Through theme-based focus groups, students in this class worked collaboratively to gather historical viewpoints, to share their own perspectives, and to go out into their community to hear stories and learn from others. The students worked collectively, engaging in a problem-posing dialogue (Freire, 2000). They automatically developed need-to-know questions from their discussion on what to expect when entering high school the next academic year. Learning that occurs through problem solving is more likely to be retained and applied and can result in knowledge that is transferable and flexible (Bransford, Sherwood, Hasselbring, Kinzer, & Williams, 1990).

After analyzing multiple texts, sharing their own viewpoints in focus groups and exploring their community, students discussed a variety of perspectives on what it actually takes to survive high school. Through this perspective sharing, students explored the viewpoints of others though different characters in a story, as well as people in real-life situations. This spurred whole-class discussions and extended

the students' research in a variety of areas, particularly in the area of exploration, since the little prince himself explores a variety of planets on his way to Earth.

To build a common understanding of what it means to be an explorer, students began by reading examples from the early days of America's discovery, including *Who Was First?: Discovering the Americas* (Freedman, 2007), *Who Really Discovered America?* (Hart, 2003), and *Exploration and Conquest: The Americas after Columbus: 1500-1620* (Maestro, 1997) to compare with *The Little Prince*. The students wrote responses to their reading in response journals and made notes of memorable details, phrases, and passages that stood out to them. They captured their reactions by freely responding and citing evidence from the text.

During discussion groups, students discussed their readings in depth and researched a variety of other resources on explorers. One group of students discovered that explorers were sources of information for their people but were also dependent on information gathered by others—information that was not always correct. Two groups of students discovered how the planet-dwellers' individual personalities in *The Little Prince* have an influence on the landscape of their planet, suggesting further avenues for research.

Theme-based focus groups allow students to contemplate problems and situations that reflect the world as they know it. Exploration and discovery become paramount, and students were responsible for sharing their themes and gathered knowledge to the rest of the group. They developed higher order thinking questions to have a deeper understanding of the text, enhance class discussions, and encourage personal reactions. Throughout this time, the students and I assessed their progress in a collaborative and supportive manner. Students' self-assessments helped determine their learning progress and included journals, conference summaries, and written reflection. Their self-reflections were used as a final written summary to be included as part of their final projects.

Developing Questions

Critical literacy in an inquiry-based teaching method motivates students in creating and questioning; consequently, their learning is driven by their own questions about their own experiences and the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape those experiences (Goodman, 2005). According to Nicolini (2008), critical literacy may help students develop empathy, as it teaches students to reflect on social issues and shapes how they interact with one another in their learning environment. Students must find their learning personally meaningful and must meet a clear educational purpose (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010), a purpose developed in my class through student inquiries as they made connections among *The Little Prince*, the informational text, and their own experiences. However, the students wanted more: they wanted to learn about explorers in their own community. After brainstorming in groups and as a whole class, the students developed a central question: *What are common characteristics of explorers shared by human beings in the past, present, and in our own lives?*

In teams of four to six, the students developed lists of "need-to-know" questions that would help answer the central question: *What are some characteristics of explorers shared by human beings in the past and people in our community? What did explorers learn from exploring? How did exploring shape who they were? How did people in history and in our community become explorers?* and *What traits of explorers do we share with others?* To meet the curricular goals related to research, students paired up and chose an historical explorer and a community member with a story of exploration. In order to identify attributes of explorers embodied by these two examples, students were required to use evidence from primary and secondary sources. The clear educational goal focused on teaching my eighth graders how to identify important characteristics of explorers in historical figures and literature, community members, and themselves, and how to draw meaningful connections among these traits.

Interviews

Critical literacy challenges students in an inquiry-based learning environment to pursue multiple perspectives on issues of personal importance (Callison & Preddy, 2006; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004); consequently, the interview can be a powerful tool for acquiring differing opinions. Interviewing people in the community helps students to understand and embrace diverse viewpoints and consider underlying messages.

For example, Lauren was intensely interested in the illustrations in *The Little Prince*, commenting that the author had done all the art work himself and that the narrator—a pilot, just like de Saint- Exupéry—did not appear in any of the drawings, a fact she noted as significant. She explained that she viewed artists as explorers, extending her understanding of the term "exploration" beyond its physical manifestation and leading her to share her plans to interview an artist.

Another student, Thomas, had difficulty finding an explorer in his community. When another student connected the Robert Frost's (1993) poem "The Road Not Taken" to the concept of exploration, Thomas became inspired to interview his own grandfather, viewing him as an explorer who had made a difficult career choice earlier in his life.

To help connect the experiences of the historical and community explorers, students completed Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits (McLaughlin & Allen, 2002) which provided a starting point for critical discussion to examine characteristics of explorers from two different viewpoints: historical and contemporary. A whole class discussion examined how each person has their own unique personality that contributes to their adventures and shapes who they are as individuals.

REFLECTING AND AUTHENTIC CRITICAL LITERACY TASKS

Because critical literacy is the practice of evaluating information, insights, and perspectives, strategies in which students can process and reflect on different

perspectives is essential. Authentic critical literacy tasks are defined as "ones in which reading and writing serve a function for children…" and that "involve children in the immediate use of literacy for enjoyment and communication" (Hiebert, 1994, p. 391). The focus is on student choice and ownership that involve a variety of reading and writing opportunities to promote discussion and collaboration (Paris et al., 1992). Juxtapositioning requires the reader to examine two contrasting text or two pictures next to each other to make the contrast between them obvious. Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits require the reader to examine two points of view—both may be represented in a story, interview, or discussion. These reading strategies enable students to examine their topic or issue from more than one perspective. (They can also identify perspectives that are silent or missing from a text.)

The student groups represented here decided to create two Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits to create a list of characteristics of explorers, one for their past and community member and one for the pilot and the little prince. Students drew two head silhouettes, each representing a different perspective, and listed ideas that delineated that person's perspective. Students analyzed their Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits to create a whole class list of characteristics of explorers, discovering similar traits in both their historical figures and community members: learner, responsible, honest, and persistent. The pilot and the little prince in the novel also represented these traits. The students formed groups based on which theme from *The Little Prince* interested them the most: exploration, relationships, perseverance, and truth.

The class found that each of the novel's main characters hungered for both adventure and introspection, exploring both the outside world and the world within himself. The class also developed further questions for discussion: *Who changed the most in* The Little Prince*? Which became more transformed: the little prince or the fox?* and *Why does the little prince change his opinion of the rose?*

Juxtaposition is a useful device for readers to understand multiple perspectives; it can be used to sense the goodness in one character by contrasting the evil in another character. By examining character development, students compared the characters in *The Little Prince* that inhabited only their own tiny planets to the traveling main characters, and they agreed that both the pilot and the little prince had gained a greater perspective on life through their journey. The pilot and the little prince traveled outside of their comfort zones and mental boundaries as compared with the other characters. It was through the pilot's encounter with the little prince in the isolated desert that he achieved a newfound understanding of the world.

As students explored themes, they learned to relate what they were learning to their own lives. In their theme-based focus groups, students generated questions to investigate, speculate, and problem-solve in order to internalize, build upon, and transfer to their own lives. Many student-generated questions required students to analyze characters, settings, and phrases side-by-side, analyzing multiple perspectives in order to drive home messages about themes and strengthen the bond between the reader and the story. Students understood that the same event

could be perceived in many different ways and may only represent one person's or character's perception of the situation.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry showed through the little prince's travels that spiritual growth must also involve exploration. Both characters may be stranded in the desert, but the narrator and the little prince were explorers of the world and were exploring their own feelings, understanding more clearly their own essences and their places in the world. By leaving their homes and the relationships they had already formed, the pilot and the little prince learned the value of what was truly essential. Lauren was drawn to this theme as she saw art as a way of exploring oneself. She viewed art as being about creative exploration; and by challenging herself, she grew in observation and understanding of her own surroundings, enabling her to see innovative solutions in other facets of her life. These themes of exploration and discovery helped the students understand the larger discussion of their impending transition to high school. As Alex pointed out, "When we start high school we are going to meet many different types of people just like the little prince did when he traveled to different planets."

Following up on his comment, I asked students to think about resilience as a process and not necessarily a trait, mentioning that everyone in fact has the capacity to be resilient and that it was learned based on our experiences and the tools we were given to deal with them. Students revisited de Saint-Exupéry's quote, "But eyes are blind. You have to look with the heart" (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 71), as well as the character traits of the prince in *The Little Prince*. Students made the connection of resilience to the little prince's commitment to learning and self-improving, to the acceptance of others, to his relationship with the pilot, to the taming of the fox, to his planet with the Baobabs, and to his protection of the rose.

Students also made the connection of resilience to the pilot. The pilot's first impression of the little prince was annoyance of his endless questions as he was in a hurry to fix his plane's engine. However, he realized that his ability to comfort the little prince and to listen to his stories was more essential. The pilot eventually opened his heart to friendship and learned the secret of sharing, love, and how to view the world through new eyes. The narrator (*i.e.*, the pilot) wrote his story and made his drawings to remember his relationship with the little prince. The students, genuinely interested this theme, shared their own stories of personal resilience in their focus groups, making connections to both their interviewed community members and their researched historical explorer.

CONNECTING IT ALL TOGETHER: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Through examining alternative perspectives, students explored the viewpoints of different people in real-life situations and different characters in a story. Using this type of critical literacy in inquiry learning, students were enabled to create multiple perspectives that included reading alternative texts, juxtapositioning, Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits, and theme-based focus groups. Strategies such as these that foster critical literacy encourage students to be actively engaged, motivated,

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and result in a substantial amount of critical discussion. The culminating project was a student choice project, upon teacher's approval, to share with the entire eighth grade student body at our school.

One student chose to create her own children's book written in verse to share her perspective on how to survive high school, using her own illustrations to accompany the text. Another student asked if she could work with Lauren to help compose poetry for the children's book. Two other students constructed a highway with a sports car to symbolize how life is a journey. They planned to write their own lyrics to the song "Life is a Highway" (Cochrane, 2006; Rascal Flatts) to share their advice. One theme-based focus group stayed together to write several skits exploring different situations students might find themselves in during high school to perform to the eighth grade students.

As teachers, we want our students to be actively involved in their learning, so we strive to use engaging texts and teaching techniques. Critical literacy in inquiry environments offers a framework that helps us to not only engage students but also provides an avenue in which students discover for themselves meaningful lessons by seeing the world through alternative perspectives. At the beginning of the unit I just wanted the students to read and discover the many resources available to them in varied texts. What I ended up with was a class of engaged readers that had learned how to interact with the text, broadened their understanding of the perspectives of others, and saw the character value of encountering struggles in life. I ended up with a class that learned to read and think critically, to ask the difficult questions, and to value differing opinions. I also ended up with middle school students that might just be resilient enough to thrive through high school and beyond.

CONCLUSION

During the year in my language arts classroom, the students developed into a community of readers, not only reading for pleasure but also for enrichment, and/or information. They saw reading as a means for discovering more about the world and oneself and the world around them. Critical literacy encouraged my students to actively analyze and deconstruct texts they encountered. They began to see any text, whether it is a picture book, non-fiction text, novel, or a song, as something that was created by a person or people with their own distinct perspective in society. The educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (2000), stated that critical literacy is a vehicle for students to learn to "read the world." According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2016), "the Common Core State Standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers." Alex, Lauren, Thomas, and their peers are twenty-first century students who are expected to learn how to think and articulate their knowledge. Critical literacy enriches inquiry-based learning environments by posing challenging problems and challenging questions; where higher order thinking is experiential and rigorous, enabling students to understand different perspectives which help to

prepare them for the real world. Students engaged in interesting research, determined their own direction of learning, evaluated a wide range of resources, and learned how to become lifelong learners. By using critical literacy in an inquiry-based learning environment, students can see the relationship between the standards and real life as they transfer concepts and abilities in the classroom to the world outside classroom walls.

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14. "BRUCE BANNER CAN BE AN ASSHOLE"

Using a FanFic to Break Down Privilege and
Introduce Service-Learning Concepts

In primary school, when we first begin to write creatively and make up stories of our own, one of the rules authority figures often impress upon us is not to copy or imitate too closely what others have created before us. Mimesis as a teaching technique was not in vogue. Whether it's fixing holes in a plot from a book or television show or inserting ourselves as a bright-eyed "Mary Sue" or "Marty Sam" among the characters we love in a movie franchise, young writers who "borrow too much" are usually discouraged by writing teachers, scoffed at by snobby peers, or are told by the academy to avoid using what is "not yours" or face academic discipline for plagiarizing or maybe even a cease and desist order from an author. Therefore, it's not a huge surprise to find that the academic view of "fan fiction" often relegates it to the shady underbelly of creative writing that is way too friendly with much-despised genre fiction for it to be practiced much less discussed except as part of social, cultural, or media studies. Even worse, as Grady (2016) notes in her recent *Vox* article, "Why We're Terrified of Fanfiction," is the misconception that it's written by "oversexed teenaged girls" and is "porny and borderline illiterate…, which is wrong for moral, aesthetic, and legal reasons" (Grady, All of these arguments, para. 3). Whatever it is, the message from traditional authorities is clear: it's certainly not literature and should not be in a classroom!

However, the nature of fanfiction as subversive, often questioning accepted norms, makes it an accessible and useful tool for engaging students in critical thinking both in and outside the academy. Introducing it in my Composition with Service Learning classroom has helped students engage in challenging discussions about race, class, and privilege that we otherwise might have glossed over or ignored. Furthermore, the particular piece I used introduces students to what Gottlieb and Robinson (2006) describe in their *Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum* as "active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good" (p. 16).

WHAT IS THIS STUFF?

Fanfiction, also known as fan fiction, fanfic, FF, or just fic, can loosely be defined as any text that is inspired by or builds upon the original work of another. In its current form, fanfiction often uses characters or settings (even universes) found in

published novels, television shows, or films, but may also focus on musicians, celebrities, athletes, and other real people or historical figures. Fanfiction is written for other fans without the goal of monetary gain—peer acknowledgement and reactions are usually enough reward for the author. According to the *Fanlore Wiki* (2012), "It is most commonly produced within the context of a fannish community and can be shared online such as in archives or in print such as in zines [fan-produced collections] …. Writing fanfiction is an extremely widespread fannish activity; millions of stories have been written, and thousands more are written daily" (*Fanlore Wiki*, 2012). Surprisingly for some, Virgil, Chaucer, and Shakespeare all used preexisting material and their works "built on other stories, extending, extending, and sometimes subverting them" (*Fanlore Wiki*, 2012) while "derivative works, such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a prequel/retelling of the events of *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of Rochester's mad wife, can be even more readily recognized as a form of fanfiction, as can works in shared universes such as Lovecraft's Chthulu mythos" notes *HubPages* writer Kerryg (2011) in her article "The Basics of Fanfiction" (Kerryg, 2011). One might even argue that Cervantes would not have finished the second volume of *Don Quixote* if the publication of the fannish counterfeit second book by an unknown author had not spurred him to complete his masterpiece. Fanfiction has been around since the first storyteller shared a tale and the next individual retold it and added a few flourishes.

Writing about characters' relationships or "shipping," is among the most popular types of fanfiction. Pellegrini (2016) writes in her *HubPages* article, "Is Fan-Fiction Wrong?" that "Fan fiction stories can come in all different styles, genres—and ratings. Many stories are 'shipping' stories, about pairing characters together romantically, whether or not those characters 'officially' became involved or not" (Pellegrini, 2016, A brief introduction, para. 8). Another popular subgenre is "slash" fiction in which "straight characters are instead portrayed as gay or bisexual and in relationships with each other" (Pellegrini, 2016, A brief introduction, para. 9). Shipping fanfiction runs the gamut from "fluffy" G-rated romances that might lead up to a chaste kiss to mature pieces with very explicit sex scenes, rough language, sexual "kinks", and violence that are rated NC-17.

Intrigued, I began to explore some of the fanfic on *An Archive of Our Own* (AO3), I stumbled across *The Hollow Men* by an author calling herself "Lettered," which featured Bruce Banner (the Hulk) and Steve Rogers (Captain America). The summary reads, "Steve goes to Uganda, ostensibly to fetch Bruce, who doesn't want to join the Avengers. Steve tries to figure out how to do the right thing; they both try to find their place in the world" (Lettered, 2012), but what actually happens is a critical exploration of multiple types of privilege and power and the troubling nature of first-world responsibility. It's also a meditation on civic responsibility and our mixed motives for wanting (or not wanting) to help others on their own terms rather than ours. The author also touches on the evolving concept of masculinity and the role violence and its threat plays in an unstable environment.

The author weaves in the themes of action vs. inaction from the T.S. Elliot poem referenced in the title and does more than just chronicle Steve's journey to

find his calling in the world after being absent from it for 75 years. The story is told in third person from Bruce's perspective as he works within the community, but resists the temptation to tell Steve what to do because he feels Steve needs to have his own agency and make his own decisions rather than take orders or follow his advice without questioning it.

The themes of civic engagement and responsibility in the piece mirrored the process my students and I experience each term as they become a part of a community outside our academic one to perform their required field service work. Early on in the development of Service Learning as an educational movement, the Commission on National and Community Service defined Service Learning in part as a method of teaching that

> (a) provides educational experiences under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with school and community; (b) is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the service … (National Community Service Trust Act of 1993)

Surprisingly, this engagement process is what Lettered has Bruce and especially Steve manage to do over the course of the story. Although the setting is not an academic one, Bruce and other characters mentor Steve through his community engagement experience. Steve learns to work with elders and community leaders to meet the village's needs while his conversations with Bruce and local leaders show Steve engaging in reflection about his work in the community that lead to his goals of gaining empathy and insight. Just as appealing is Bruce's struggle not to over-influence Steve and force his own opinions or agenda onto him. Admittedly, I often wonder how much I should push my students to engage with the community in a structured manner as part of the course requirements as opposed to letting them find their own autonomous ways that ought to make their service and academic experiences more meaningful.

Although Lettered's piece is not as polished as most works published in a collection of readings, it is certainly as complex and more engaging than other works covering the same subject area in print or on the Internet. The added bonus is it brings together two of my teaching and research interests—Service Learning and fan culture. Not only would *The Hollow Men* be an excellent reading for introducing students to the complexities of doing service work in the urban community surrounding our university because of the obvious divisions in race and socioeconomic status, but as a piece of fanfiction, the work would also serve as an example of a newer and exciting genre my students would likely be familiar with when we studied genre analysis.

The piece explores several issues relevant to Service Learning: small things that everyone can do matter; the people who live in the village find their own agency; the status quo and power structures are challenged, unpacked, and broken down; and the superheroes go on to do what they can, but they deal with issues of doubt,

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fatigue, angst, and motivation just like the rest of us. There is no *deus ex machina* or *Überman* swooping in to save anyone.

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DIGGING IN: A CLOSE READING OF THE TEXT
WITH CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS

</div>

In Sandvoss' (2014) essay, "The Death of the Reader?: Literary Theory and the Study of Texts in Popular Culture," he argues that cultural studies of popular texts and literary criticism share the same roots: "we need to find a point of—if not compatibility—convertibility between these two fields. This point is found in the shared essence of both disciplines: the analysis and interpretation of meaning in the study of texts and their readings" (p. 62). Therefore, just as not all pieces of literature are judged as having equal value or merit, applying standards to cultural texts such as fanfictions, especially when using them in an academic setting, becomes necessary at some point. However, because texts don't exist in isolation, we have to consider their contexts. This is especially important when dealing with a piece of fanfiction that inherently depends upon other texts and presumes an audience to have a certain amount of familiarity and cultural knowledge. In other words, in the classroom, we can treat a piece of fanfiction much like we would a piece of traditional literature; however, we also need to consider its cultural origins within a fandom to fully understand it as a text. As Sandvoss concludes, "the synthesis of fan studies and reception aesthetics enables us to explore aesthetics as a *subjective* category with *objective* criteria…[and] move further toward exploring why fan texts mean so much to so many people and the meaning of this affective bond between text and reader in a mediated world" (p. 74). Thus, at this point it should be useful to take a closer look at *The Hollow Men* as an example of this type of text, so we can evaluate whether or not it is successful and to what degree.

The title of the novella is a direct reference to T.S. Eliot's 1925 poem of the same name, which has itself become a kind of popular culture touchstone via references to it or lines quoted from it in numerous films, novels, multimedia pieces, and song lyrics from *Apocalypse Now* to Kami Garcia's novel *Beautiful Creatures* to episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* and *Mad Men*. Knowing the poem and its themes of isolation, impotence, and disillusionment is helpful but not absolutely necessary to understanding Lettered's work. Much more important to the piece is some knowledge of the characters and their backgrounds in multiple forms of media.

Lettered's version of Bruce Banner is a complex one, based loosely on actor Mark Ruffalo's portrayal of the character in Marvel's *The Avengers* (2012), but also one that includes elements from the popular comic book character and television series starring Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno as well. She incorporates some of the awkward charm of Ruffalo's performance with his nervous preoccupation with his hands and self-deprecating humor; however, we see how the biting sarcasm and intelligence from the film version barely scratched the surface when it comes to his frustration and anger over thwarted ambitions and an ever-present struggle for control over his mind and body. Bruce describes himself

as incomplete and broken due to his own prideful fall and self-centeredness. He lives with the ever-present fear that his control over his inner demon might slip away at any moment with disastrous consequences. When confronted with the almost saintly presence of Steve Rogers, who embodies traditional western male virtues straight out of the 1940s, Bruce can't help but compare Steve's apparent physical and moral perfection to his own inherent flaws and shortcomings:

> When Bruce was a kid, they still had those little books in the "American Heroes" series that you could buy for a dollar. Bruce had bought the Captain America one because he'd wanted to learn more about the science behind the serum [used to turn Steve into a super being]. He'd never thought he was interested in Steve Rogers for the man himself.
>
> And yet, when Bruce had performed the experiment [to recreate the effects of the serum], he'd done it on himself.
>
> He couldn't think why. All evidence suggested Steve Rogers was the kindest, the fairest, the best, and you couldn't make that. You couldn't engineer it in a bottle; Steve wasn't Captain America because of the serum.
>
> Meanwhile, Bruce wasn't honest; he wasn't fair, and he wasn't kind. He had always been arrogant, and despite everything Dad said—maybe because of everything Dad said—he full-heartedly believed in his own brilliance. He'd never been able to kill his passion to know, and sure, curiosity sounded innocent—until you took it too far without considering the consequences. He'd been so irresponsible and—and careless; he'd been careless. (Lettered, Sect. 2, para. 1-4)

Bruce is caught in a destructive cycle of pride, anger, and guilt, which prevents him from using both his potentially lethal physical gifts as the Hulk and most of his considerable mental gifts as a genius as well. He has chosen not to act as an Avenger, but to remove himself from the world and merely get by as a small part of the existing Ugandan village community where he stands out as the only identified white Westerner. Bruce finds this situation preferable to exposing himself to the demands and temptations of Western society represented by Tony Stark (Iron Man) with his affluence and technology and the international policing organization known as S.H.I.E.L.D., which would like to put all Bruce's "talents" to use. In Uganda, Bruce has the choice to be a nearly "normal" part of the village community. He knows he is capable of doing more than just teaching biology, sanitation, and disease prevention ad hoc and occasionally practicing medicine (despite the apparent absence of a medical license), but as T.S. Eliot puts it, Bruce has chosen "Shape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" ("The Hollow Men," ll. 13-14). Although Bruce chooses this state of relative inaction to keep his own autonomy and not risk harming others, one of the consequences is a festering mental and intellectual stagnation he knows deep down is slowly becoming untenable, much like the situation Eliot describes in the referenced poem.

Initially, Steve's presence in the village serves as a painful reminder of Bruce's shortcomings, but the scientist in Bruce is also compelled to analyze Steve as both

a unique specimen and a heroic Western icon. Bruce starts his ongoing associations and comparisons with Abraham Lincoln and eventually lists Paul Newman, Buzz Aldrin, Tom Joad, a cowboy, Smokey the Bear, Thomas Jefferson, Sam Houston, Norman Rockwell, Christopher Reeve's Clark Kent, and Gregory Peck, but he eventually decides Steve is simply Steve—utterly unique and unreplicatable. Despite the fact that his physical perfection is a product of science (which Bruce values and believes in), Lettered shows what makes Steve exceptional is his grit or ability to persevere, even when he has doubts and feels weary and cynical, because he is able to make himself keep going when most others cannot. Steve can't help but take action and serve where he can because that's who he is. He's been endowed with great gifts and he genuinely believes it is his responsibility to use them wisely—as Stan Lee is credited with writing: "With great power comes great responsibility." Initially, this makes Bruce defensive and resentful, but eventually he respects and admires the other man and comes to see Steve as an equal and a friend.

Although Lettered is telling the story from Bruce's perspective, it is clear Steve is also struggling with many of the same issues the scientist turned monster and recluse is. After Bruce flatly refuses to return to the U.S. with Steve, much to Bruce's chagrin, Steve decides to stay in the area, too, and help the local citizens with projects that will benefit the village. The soldier starts by digging a well for fresh water because it's obvious to him a closer water source will benefit all the residents and they seem to agree. Next, Steve offers to rebuild the village church, which was destroyed by a fire. Bruce points out that ad hoc do-gooding and charity often don't have a lasting impact and can even cause more problems than they solve, so Steve gets to know his new neighbors and consults with community leaders and learns to determine what's needed by building a consensus with the people he wants to help.

Rosenberger (2000) in her essay, "Beyond Empathy: Developing Critical Consciousness Through Service Learning," notes how crucial it is to get community buy-in when it comes to creating sustainable projects because otherwise even the best intended "do-good" actions perpetuate the unequal dynamic of existing power structures. She suggests using a Freirean approach involving all the stakeholders on an equal footing to provide a framework for "conceptualizing a critical service learning pedagogy. In bringing a Freirean perspective to service learning, my goals are to deepen the dialogue…concerning the dynamic of power and privilege…and to generate a practice that seeks to transcend the status quo and promote justice and equality" (p. 24).

As work is progressing on the church, Steve tells Bruce there are several people who want to organize a community garden, and Bruce suggests they structure the project as a cooperative to improve its stability going forward. When Steve says he plans to provide the startup funds, Bruce points out that a microloan from a local bank would have more long-term benefits and help further invest the stakeholders in the project. Without initial buy-in, people won't feel a commitment to the work and the project will fail just as Rosenberger notes in her essay (pp. 24-28) and Freire (1994) expounds upon in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (Freire, p. 27)

Bruce would never call Steve's offer to fund the garden "false charity"; however, Lettered provides an excellent example of how the best of intentions may trap people in a cycle of helpless dependence.

As well-defined as the two main characters and their struggles are, one of the problematic elements in the piece is the choice of setting the story in Uganda and by necessity peopling it with original supporting characters who are comparatively shallow and somewhat stereotyped. Arguably, when dealing with iconic characters who have existed for over 50 years in print, it is almost impossible to balance them out with new characters, no matter how colorful or complex, especially when they are not the main focus of the story. Even setting the story in Wakanda, the fictional home of Marvel's King T'Challa, the superhero Black Panther, would not work because it is a first-world society with an elite culture—not some place Bruce would choose to lay low or that Steve would choose to lend a hand. Be that as it may, none of the minor characters have last names and only one of them (Solomon) has a story arc. Most are simply there to support and facilitate the actions of the main characters in the plot. Faridah, the nun who oversees the orphanage near the village, and Solomon, one of Bruce's students who plans to become a doctor, are the only two characters who have extended and meaningful conversations with Bruce that we get to read.

In a modest subplot, Solomon marries Irene, another student who plans to move to Kampala to continue her studies and become a physicist. At one point, while Bruce helps Solomon with his résumé, the younger man brings up the aftermath of an incident when Bruce nearly "Hulked out" while preventing Steve from interfering with the local school's principal using corporal punishment on a student. Bruce literally put his body on the line to prevent Steve's cultural interference though it greatly pained both of them to let the child be beaten. Just as the two characters must negotiate a complex cultural landscape, educators need to ease students out of popular misconceptions such as "poverty is the result of laziness or a lack of morals" and into a more nuanced understanding of our place in the broader community. Langseth (2000) in his essay, "Maximizing Impact, Minimizing Harm: Why Service Learning Must More Fully Integrate Multicultural Education," argues that myths such as "There is a hierarchy of wisdom, with faculty wiser than students and students wiser than the community," cause damage to current and future partnerships; however, "Service learning can be an extremely effective means of addressing limitations in traditional multicultural education efforts" (pp. 252-253).

Langseth stresses the importance of interrogating knowledge, showing respect, practicing intentionality, and showing leadership to build a healthy partnership with community members. He also warns academics to be prepared to receive

feedback from their partners (Langseth, 2000, p. 259). Bruce experiences this when Solomon informs him about the corrupt school official's machinations to undermine Steve after the former soldier comes back to confront the principal about the beating and not paying Lillian, one of the school's teachers. Solomon wants to know if Bruce thinks Steve will force the principal to pay because he has the physical power to do so.

> "You don't think Captain Rogers should make the principal pay?" [asked Solomon.]
>
> [Bruce replied,] "I don't think it's any of my business."
>
> "I think the principal, he's afraid of Captain Rogers."
>
> "Steve would never hurt anyone," Bruce lied.
>
> "You don't think so?" Solomon raised his brows. "Captain Rogers sure lets us know he's mighty strong."
>
> Looking down, Bruce found his glasses in his fist again. He switched them to the other fist. He put them down. "He would never hurt anyone unless he has to," said Bruce.
>
> "Ah," said Solomon. "When he has to." . . .
>
> Looking at the glasses—somehow in his fist once again—Bruce said, "He's just trying to do what's right."
>
> Solomon's voice was still soft. "I think that for a century, white men have come to my country to do what's right. Somehow they think they know that better than we. Of course, before that, they came to my country to do what's wrong. It's an improvement, I suppose."
>
> Bruce's fist tightened. "I'm sorry."
>
> "Why are you sorry? You come, you pay your rent, you mind your own business. No problem. I plan to be a tourist myself someday." The wry smile was playing on Solomon's lips.
>
> "Tourist," said Bruce, and played with the glasses some more.
>
> "Yes. Irene will become a great physicist, world renowned, and we will visit the great Doctor Banner in New York." (Lettered, 2012, Sect. 16, para. 12-24)

Much to Bruce's chagrin, Solomon has caught on to exactly who he is and knows he, like Steve, is an Avenger with great physical power and resources. Bruce has never claimed to be a permanent part of the community, yet he's a bit surprised to be called a "tourist" though he doesn't reject the label. Both this conversation and the one with Faridah, though only small parts of the overall work, come at crucial points to give both Bruce and Faridah and Solomon some insight into each other's intentions that benefit both characters involved in each dialogue, something of which Langseth would heartily approve (p. 250). Faridah makes clear her perspective that charitable acts, no matter how small when compared to the big picture, still count for those individuals involved. Solomon expresses his concerns about uses and misuses of political (and possibly physical) power escalating in his community. In the end, Faridah's young charge Asha, who suffered from meningitis, dies of her illness and the community eventually gets together to oust

the corrupt principal (and Lillian is paid her back wages). Although neither Steve nor Bruce, despite who and what they are, could do more than ease Asha's suffering a bit, and Steve's confrontation with the principal only sped up the inevitable purge, both outcomes end up being realistic, positive experiences and appropriate uses of normal, everyday power.

Like Bruce, Lettered refuses to champion a single right answer in favor of making her audience reason through what would be the right action for them to take under what circumstances. As I read through the endnotes and comments, I found the amount of research and soul searching the author had put into the story was also quite impressive. She shares her sources and reflects on her writing process as well, which is certainly an activity essential for Service Learning. Although *The Hollow Men* is not a perfect piece, I judged it to be a complex and interesting text, which deals with many of the issues my students face when they begin their field service working with a community partner.

CASE STUDY/APPLICATION: WHERE THE READER MEETS THE TEXT AND THE EDUCATOR GETS SCHOOLED

I included Lettered's *The Hollow Men* along with John Elder Robison's *Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's* as my primary texts in my Intermediate Composition syllabus. As the official course description notes, ENGL 2089 is a sophomore-level writing course that builds on the initial first-year composition course and "introduces higher-level learning about writing and reading, and focuses students' attention on how meaning is made, understood, and communicated across and within discourse communities." My department also encourages instructors to use experiential learning and the majority of instructors incorporate a genre analysis assignment as the central project for the course.

For the past fifteen years, I have included a direct service project with a community partner that involves meeting the goals of the course. Most of my students volunteer for 14 to 16 hours as tutors within the Cincinnati Public Schools system, but there are other service opportunities, including working at an urban church with a food pantry and social support services and interviewing hospice patients to create a memory book for their survivors. These opportunities are with established partners, so there is less of a need for students to negotiate their service since the community partner has already done the groundwork. However, students may also use existing partnerships if the work includes reading, writing, and/or research in combination with communicating, critical thinking, or mentoring. In this case, the lessons Steve learns about community engagement in *The Hollow Men* become much more applicable.

Because textbooks often take a few weeks to arrive, having an online text to start the course is advantageous, and my initial assumption was that aside from the T.S. Eliot poem "The Hollow Men," Lettered's piece would not require a great deal of background information. Concurrent with the reading schedule, I use the first three weeks of the 15-week term to inform students about Service Learning and its principles before training and placing them with a community partner. *The*

Hollow Men would help to soft sell some of the concepts of community engagement and use critical literacy strategies to deconstruct white privilege, gender roles, and power structures in the education system and larger community; however, when I conducted an informal poll during the first class session, about a quarter of the class did not know who Steve Rogers was and less than half of the students had seen the first *Avengers* film from 2012. Luckily, roughly half at least knew what fanfiction was and almost everyone could correctly identify a picture of the Hulk.

This immediately concerned me because one of the tenets of using popular texts in the classroom is that the audience already is familiar with characters or worlds/settings and wants to engage with the text. Jenkins (1992) in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* notes, "I have found approaching popular culture as a fan gives me new insights into the media by releasing me from the narrowly circumscribed categories and assumptions of academic criticism and allowing me to play with textual materials" (p. 5). Fortunately, there were at least a handful of students in each section who were already enthusiastic about working with characters from the Avengers films. I had already put together a picture album on my class Facebook page about Uganda to help with the setting, so I added another one with pictures and back stories for the characters. With 54 years of material to sort through, I had to limit myself to the high points, especially with Bruce Banner and the Hulk. Also, I realized I had to include trigger warnings for the abuse in Banner's background and for the schoolyard scene in *The Hollow Men*. I had not left enough time in my schedule to show the full *Avengers* film in class, but there were plenty of clips on YouTube, and Tumblr had many relevant gifs, screen captures, and stills.

I spent a class period covering T.S. Eliot and "The Hollow Men" and introducing the concepts of colonialism before assigning the first third of the novella and asking students to look for power structures and take notes on characters' motivations and any questions they had. I started off the next class by asking what questions students had and the first one was "Why is Bruce Banner such an asshole?" Everyone, including me, laughed. We talked about the character's background in comic books and what we knew collectively about him from the films, which, as it turned out was quite a bit of information. Some students had even discovered our Facebook albums and could add that angle to the conversation. This led us back to why would we say one of our two main characters was a jerk. I asked where we got this idea. A student responded that Bruce calls himself an "asshole." I asked, why would he do that? Another student suggested that maybe Bruce has some self-doubts or self-esteem issues, which sparked several minutes of discussion. I asked if Bruce actually acts like an "asshole," at least so far? That turned out to be more difficult to answer since Steve is there to ask him to do something Bruce does not want to do (return to New York and work with S.H.I.E.L.D.) and then, like an annoyingly perfect cousin, Steve stays in the place Bruce has chosen to settle. By the end of the discussion, even if the students didn't identify themselves as Bruce Banner fans, the majority could at least identify with the character.

For our next discussion, students read selections from Kretovics's (1985) article "Critical Literacy: Challenging the Assumptions of Mainstream Educational Theory," which proved to be a challenging text, but one that together we were able to break down once we tackled the jargon. As Kretovics puts it,

In placing ideological critique within the framework of a critical pedagogy, we can begin to move beyond an overly deterministic reproductive analysis and its discourse of despair. We can begin to develop strategies by which students and educators can combat the racial, class, gender, age, and ethnic distortions and biases that presently characterize the process of schooling. Consequently, we can map transformative strategies to challenge the inequalities and social injustices within the wider society. (p. 58)

Once students started spotting the biases and inequalities they had observed within their own educational experiences, they were able to critique the broader educational system and also apply similar strategies to their readings as well. As we read further into *The Hollow Men* and the plot and characters began to flesh out in more detail, students were also able to critique the complexities of the setting and the ways several characters—not just outsiders Bruce and Steve—served the community. Faridah in particular was cited as someone who worked within the system, but still tried to change the status quo by helping individual people in hopeless situations such as Asha. Several students identified with Solomon because he strove to get an education and had the goal of returning to serve the community. They also liked the idea that he could respect Bruce as a teacher, but stood up to him and didn't let him get away with omissions and avoid giving direct answers.

By the time we finished reading and working with Lettered's novella, most students had made contact with their community partners and started their fieldwork. They were also writing entries in their reflection journals, which first asked them to share their concerns about their service and then to describe their initial onsite visit to the school or agency. Likewise, I had introduced them to their literacy narrative assignment, so they were thinking about what sort of literacy they wanted to examine. As we wrapped up discussion about *The Hollow Men*, I used a survey to ask students what they had learned from the piece that they could apply to their service. Most concluded that they now had a better understanding of the importance of community buy-in and the need to include all stakeholders in any decision-making processes. Several also mentioned the importance of empowering people to make their own decisions about what help they need and matching those needs with the right volunteers.

When I asked in the survey what character students identified with the most, I was pleasantly surprised that students named Solomon and Faridah along with Steve and Bruce. Students noted these characters all exhibited patience, a willingness to communicate, and a desire to be open-minded. Steve may have come the closest to completing a traditional "hero's journey" as described by Joseph Campbell (1949) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, but he leaves the community in the end. Bruce goes from cynicism to belief in others and stays and

works in the community a little longer while Solomon is brave enough to question the existing power structure and advance through education and plans to come back and help the community as a permanent member. Faridah and the other characters continue their work as community members with the benefit of the church building and the cooperative model.

In order to get more feedback, near the end of the course I asked students to assess the piece as a course reading and to reflect on any connections to their service projects up to that point as a short writing assignment. Students were overwhelmingly positive about the piece with the only reservations being that some thought they needed more background on the movies and characters and a few even stated the novella was "deceptively easy reading" when it actually tackled complex problems and required more than one reading. A few made strong connections between both the novella and the T.S. Eliot poem as well as their views on service:

> As a whole, I believe this work succeeds immensely as a reading. Not only is reading about superheroes an incredible change from the norm, but the underlying themes actually made me question my own life. It challenged me in a new and exciting way that I haven't felt from a reading in a while. I will admit, however, I believe this self-evaluation stemmed intensely from the T. S. Eliot poem, "The Hollow Men." This poem does directly relate to the characters of the story. It discusses this beautifully broken space we all hide in, between thought and action: Bruce being chained to his thoughts and Steve being questionably liberated by his actions. In my life, I find myself struggling to escape the chains of thought, much like Bruce. (Amanda B.)

Going from the cerebral academic mode to connecting with the community can be a challenge for many students, but the reading helped prepare them to make this challenging transition. The fundamental idea that service requires making connections and being willing to both give and receive came up in several reflections. Likewise, students were able to recognize how performing service was going to require them to take action and interact with our surrounding community:

> In the end, Steve reminded Bruce that there is so much good that can be done, regardless of how Bruce feels about himself and what he can become. Steve shows Bruce that wallowing and focusing on the things he can't do turns into thousands of things he won't do. He reminds Bruce that he has to be a part of this world, whether he likes it or not. An important lesson to take into the beginning of our service learning. (Josef A.)

CONCLUSION

Overall, despite some challenges, Lettered's *The Hollow Men* proved to be an overwhelmingly successful piece to introduce my students to some of the issues, which they would face while doing their field service in the community surrounding us. For some students, connection to the characters was immediate

and gratifying while others found them more of a challenge because of the sizable amount of background information available. However, classroom discussions were lively and collaborative with student "experts" sharing information. Discussions also drew out questions about race, culture, socioeconomics, global politics, and gender that made discussing issues "closer to home" a little easier than if we had begun by reading about them in current news articles. The information and discussion about the fanfiction genre also provided a common example for introducing the second major writing assignment, the genre analysis paper. Because fanfiction often challenges the norms of existing power structures, it paired especially well with a critical literacy approach that students could in turn use to examine their own experiences in and outside academia. I plan to continue using Lettered's novella in the coming terms and refining my introduction of the material to help ease my students into their Service-Learning projects.

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