

Engaging Escapism

Narration and Persuasion in Young Adult Fantasy Fiction

Lindsey Alexandra Hodder (BArts)

Macquarie University, Department of English

10th October 2014

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Research in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University 2014.

Contents

Summary	5
Declaration	7
Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	11
Chapter 1: The Impact of Fantasy	15
Chapter 2: Escapism and the First-Person Narrator	23
Chapter 3: Immersion within Multifocal Narration	33
Chapter 4: The Relationship between Persuasion and Engaging Characterisation	43
Conclusion	53
Bibliography	57

Summary

Literary critics and educational theorists frequently dismiss escapist fantasy as frivolous, having little value for adolescent socialisation. Yet contemporary young adult fiction possesses a thematic depth and ideological complexity that appeals to readers and can influence their worldviews. This thesis challenges negative evaluations of contemporary young adult 'escapist' novels, exploring the functions and effects of heavily character focalised narration to demonstrate immersive and formative value. Analysing defining qualities and functions of narrative techniques used to construct engaging narration, this thesis examines the complex themes and ideological debates they convey. To valorise the appeal of escapism, the thesis argues that the distinctive characteristics that engage readers also allow the didactic functions of the genre to be achieved. To explore this relationship between appeal and benefit, the thesis analyses closely focalised 'engaging' narration, otherworld settings and characterisation in Tamora Pierce's *Terrier*, Lauren Oliver's *Delirium*, Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* and Cornelia Funke's *Inkdeath*. The thesis posits that narrative technique is directly related to reader engagement; fostering close character-reader sympathies that encourage readers to become immersed and, hence, susceptible to ideological persuasion. Textual analysis will also demonstrate how this genre can articulate complex thematic concerns with subject formation and offer readers subject positions from which to critique the ideological structures that ground them.

Declaration

I, Lindsey Alexandra Hodder, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Date: 10th October 2014

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis is one of my proudest accomplishments, yet it could not have been done without those who aided, supported, and guided me along the way.

I would firstly like to offer my sincere thanks to those members of Macquarie University's English Department who each took a turn juggling my supervision and offering guidance and expertise as they alternatively went on leave. To Doctor Victoria Flanagan, for her aid in narrowing down my original concept; Professor Antonina Harbus, for taking on the difficult role of interim supervisor, and nevertheless managing to always have time for my questions, and helping me nut out a solid conceptual base; and to Doctor Robyn McCallum, who saw my thesis to its completion, for ensuring I was always heading in the right direction – thank you.

I would also like to thank my fellow Masters of Research cohort from the English Department, for keeping the year interesting and for the solidarity in knowing that I wasn't the only one feeling out of my depth.

To my friends and family, for their understanding, thank you. I know there were times I was tough to be around, and I am especially grateful to my parents and brothers for their support and compassion during those extra difficult times.

To my partner Conor, thank you. Without your immeasurable support, patience, and love, writing this thesis would have been a much less enjoyable experience. For the sleepless nights, the snack runs, and the hours you spent with me hashing out each and every meltdown, thank you, so very much.

And for my Papa, who passed away two months prior to the submission of this thesis: you taught me the value of determination, and the importance of always sharing a smile. Thank you for always being eager to ask about my thesis. I did it.

Introduction

Contemporary young adult fantasy can be one of the most potentially formative genres for adolescents. Typically classed as 'escapist' fiction, these texts enjoy a privileged position for prompting the interpretation and critique of ideology, approaching their readers with didacticism hidden behind engaging narration and immersive otherworlds. Young adult escapist fantasy rises above the inherent socialising influence of adolescent literature with an overt intention to foster self-conscious ideological subjectivity on the part of readers, and it is by exploring this intention that this thesis aims to valorise the genre, and explore the effect of such reader engagement. Academically, fantasy has long been dismissed as a vehicle for provoking discussion of various ideological structures or imparting educational or moral value, due in no small part to otherworld settings that defamiliarise readers. Similarly, in the public eye, the genre has been perceived as escapist fiction offering little socialising value to readers. Within the current offerings of the genre, those texts that are celebrated for the ideologically formative discussions they provoke are understood to be texts that transcend the escapist label, for they have something worthwhile to say. Yet as readers are distanced from their reality – the very action that has caused the genre to be dismissed as 'escapism' – they are increasingly receptive to ideological persuasion, particularly the didactic paradigms that fantasy literature typically presents. That such texts are read for the escape they provide from consensus reality is highly significant to the complex interpretative processes they invite. This thesis argues against the negative connotations of the escapist label, suggesting instead that through encouraging readers to read for 'escape,' the genre can successfully position readers to be receptive to didactic and potentially formative ideological assumptions. Contemporary young adult fiction is multifaceted, with thematic depth and ideological complexity that seeks to persuade young readers to reconsider their views of the world long after they have finished reading. Narrative strategies that engage readers and distance them from their society also extend an implicit invitation that readers question their own ideological assumptions. Through an analysis of narrative modes, including closely focalised narration and otherworld settings as elements that foster a highly sympathetic character-reader relationship, this thesis will argue that an engaging narrator – defined as a narrative voice that fosters the sense of a personal relationship between character and reader – has the potential to foster greater reader involvement in texts. Further, this thesis shall undertake a close analysis of the implications of engaging narration and subsequent reader immersion upon the presentation of character, and, specifically, constructions of agency presented to readers. Ultimately, through the analysis of narration, setting and representations of agentic subjectivity, this thesis aims to demonstrate the potentially escapist and formative function of contemporary young adult fantasy texts.

The ideological views presented in contemporary young adult fantasies are most often implicit; that is representations of adolescence are informed and structured by accepted cultural constructions of youth (Trites 64). Through such covert didactic subtlety, texts successfully construct developmental paths (Stephens 3-4) that perpetuate or resist paradigms and values, presenting particular worldviews through the narrative discourse. Stephens recognises that 'narrative structure is an ideologically powerful component of texts' (6) due to 'implicit, and therefore invisible' (9) ideological positioning. In conjunction with the immersive nature of engaging narration, these texts encourage readers to 'surrender themselves to the shaping discourse' (27), giving contemporary escapist fantasy a 'powerful capacity' (3) for influencing the worldviews of the adolescents who read it. This thesis examines the implicit ideological persuasion in texts that positions readers to respond to worldviews presented in narratives. Ideological persuasion is explored in a context of reader immersion in order to posit a link between escapist fantasy narratives for adolescents and their 'privileged formativity,' a phrase used within the thesis to reference the 'privileged' position of fantasy as literature that may offer didactic influence without the knee-jerk reaction of realism. To this end, such texts are found as having 'ideological success.' That is, escapist fantasy texts are found to hold formative value for adolescents as they mature, and may thus be viewed as offering similar socialising value to more socially valued realist texts.

The primary corpus of the thesis comprises Cornelia Funke's *Inkdeath* (2008), Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011), Tamora Pierce's *Terrier* (2006), and Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* (2009). My selection was based on three main criteria. All four novels have been published within the last ten years. Together they demonstrate a range of otherworlds and varying modes of narration that enable discussion of engaging narration and its implications. Most importantly, each of the four texts uses techniques that seek to encourage significant reader engagement and fulfilment of the 'escapist' effect through their use of closely focalised narration. Further, the texts represent something of the diversity of the fantasy genre. The thesis examines texts that offer readers a position removed from their everyday world, but immersed, through varying narrative techniques, in an otherworld setting. For the purposes of this thesis, the selection of texts was further limited to those in which the otherworld is significantly different from contemporary Western reality. Texts such as urban fantasy, or 'portal' fiction in which characters return to the 'real world' (Mendlesohn xix), were not suitable for the discussion.

The corpus is representative of a range of immersive otherworld settings that defamiliarise readers and reflect back upon consensus reality. *Delirium* and *Leviathan* are narrated within settings that model our world. *Leviathan* is set in a retro-futuristic world that offers an alternative history, while *Delirium* explores a hypothetical dystopic future. Both *Terrier* and *Inkdeath* are set within medieval fantasy

worlds. However, whereas *Terrier* is set within a complete otherworld, the events of *Inkdeath* occur in both a primary world (corresponding with that of readers) and a medieval story-land setting accessed through the pages of a book. While *Inkdeath* is ostensibly a portal fantasy, it is still relevant within the constraints of my corpus. Whereas the first two books in Funke's Inkworld trilogy depict characters moving back and forth between the 'fictional' and 'real' worlds, in the style of a portal fantasy, characters in *Inkdeath* become completely immersed in the secondary otherworld.

The primary concern of this thesis is with the functions of differing modes of narration; hence this was a major consideration in selecting the corpus. The chosen texts represent various narrative modes that provide a wide range of examples of the techniques used to construct engaging narration in contemporary young adult fantasy. Both *Terrier* and *Delirium*, the focus of the second chapter, utilise first-person narration – uncommon in the young adult fantasy genre, though a standard mode for the young adult genre in general (McCallum "Young Adult Literature"). These texts also utilise various narrative techniques, including the diary format and present tense narration respectively, to invite readers to engage with character, story and setting. In contrast, *Inkdeath* and *Leviathan* are narrated from the more common third-person perspective, but both novels demonstrate the potential of poly-focalised narrative techniques for encouraging reader engagement and interrogation of dominant social ideologies (Day 67). The corpus has further been selected for the thematic depth and complexity that has come to be characteristic in contemporary young adult fantasy novels.

Chapter One begins with a brief discussion of what constitutes young adult fantasy fiction and the narrative strategies typically associated with fantasy. The primary focus of the chapter is on methodologies associated with fantasy genre studies, especially those elements of these discussions that are particularly pertinent to a contemporary corpus. Further, the chapter also explores the place of young adult fantasy within the fantasy tradition. The chapter moves from discussing the particular types of fantasy that are specifically referenced in the thesis to a qualitative analysis of the value of fantasy and its potentially formative function for young readers. From this angle, contemporary young adult fantasy is analysed as a form of escapism, but one that seeks to engage readers in reflective and interrogative processes that can encourage those readers to question their cultural and social realities. Following this discussion of the broad conceptual grounding of the thesis, the chapter turns its focus to the significance of otherworlds in encouraging escapism, and, then, to the defining qualities and functions of narrative techniques used to construct engaging narration. The chapter concludes that narration is significant for the level of engagement in escapist texts and that the displacement of readers into an otherworld affects ideological interpellation, and, therefore, interpretation.

The second and third chapters deal with narratological approaches to first and third-person narration respectively. The chapters aim to demonstrate that closely focalised narration promotes greater reader engagement in contemporary young adult fantasy novels, and may thus encourage ideological discussion. The second chapter begins with a general discussion of the various first-person modes typically utilised in the genre and the successes and limitations of first-person narration for engaging and aligning readers. Drawing examples from the corpus, I analyse and discuss the effects of the diary format and present tense narration on reader engagement with the concepts and themes of a text, and hence also with the implicit ideological assumptions enabled through this mode of narration. A discussion of setting is also pertinent to the analysis of engagement and ideology in both the second and third chapters, as the settings play a key part in creating an immersive reader experience and allowing authors to imply ideological critiques.

Chapter Three examines texts that use third-person restricted narration. My focus here is on texts which use dual or multiple focalising characters, taking examples from *Leviathan* and *Inkdeath*. Such focalisation strategies enable the immersion of readers into a fantasy world, but also encourage readers to reflect back upon dominant social ideologies. In this chapter, I analyse the functions of poly-focalisation and setting in implying reading positions that may, hence, have a potentially formative function for young readers.

Chapter Four returns to my initial suggestion that the use of closely focalised narration and otherworlds in fantasy seek to engage readers and position them dialogically, that is, in positions that encourage ideological discussion and critique. The chapter argues that the more engaging the narration, the more sympathetic the relationship between character and readers and, hence, the more receptive readers will be to (implicit) ideological assumptions. Specifically, the chapter explores representations of agency and the potential impact of such representations on the possible meanings that adolescent readers might construe. A key text for this chapter is Cornelia Funke's *Inkdeath*, an overtly metafictional novel; hence a central focus of this chapter will be the function of metafictional strategies in creating engaged (and enriched) character-reader relationships and encouraging readers to enter into reflective interpretative processes about the nature and formative functions of fantasy literature for young people.

Chapter 1: The Impact of Fantasy

The scope of the young adult fantasy novel can be difficult to define. Contemporary young adult fantasy novels are relatively easy to distinguish from their adult counterparts, yet this has not always been the case. Historically, both adults and adolescents have read 'adult' fantasy fiction, and many contemporary writers are still read by both audiences – the work of Terry Pratchett and Phillip Pullman, for example. There are many elements that play into an understanding of *young* adult fantasy as a genre, and what makes such texts successful: both aesthetically and in terms of popularity. Key elements, however, are the narrative techniques that encourage reader immersion in the fantasy world while constructing positions of critical engagement; positions from which readers are encouraged to reflect critically upon contemporary social ideologies and assumptions including identity, agency, that which is seen as Other, the environment, and politics.

Traditionally, fantasy novels for all ages have been narrated using techniques that have a tendency to displace readers from their reality, leading to claims about the negative effects of 'escapist' fantasy (Swinfen 230). Omniscient third-person narration characteristic of early fantasy writing tended towards an overt didacticism that distanced readers, while secondary world fantasy was noted to encourage uncritical immersion. In a society where realist texts have been applauded for the reflection of society and its social and personal concerns (Stephens 242), fantasy texts that fail to engage their readers critically have been seen as lesser texts, seemingly forever bound by the high versus popular culture divide. It is the argument of this thesis that contemporary young adult fantasy texts, however, by engaging with their readers through narrative techniques such as closely focalised narration and otherworld settings, can successfully encourage reflection upon societal concerns and open ideological conversation, therefore functioning as formative texts for their adolescent readers.

It is the aim of this chapter to outline the parameters for a successful fantasy text as one that engages adolescent readers, and seeks to foster ideological awareness as it encourages readers to reflect upon their growing sense of self within the real world. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the significance of the fantasy genre and some seminal definitions of fantasy, in order to posit that the view of fantasy as 'escapist' is not an inherently negative quality. The chapter shall further discuss the value of the escapist mindset to reader positioning, and subsequently to the impact of complex contemporary young adult fantasy novels as formative texts. Following this discussion, the chapter will outline the parameters for engaging narration and an immersive otherworld setting before following chapters enter a discussion of the primary corpus.

Theorising on what makes fantasy ‘fantasy,’ is not a new challenge. While this chapter will attempt to underline the particular theories surrounding immersive fantasy that will be used in subsequent chapters, it is still necessary to briefly discuss seminal fantasy theories on a generic level to understand the position of contemporary young adult fantasy. While much has been written on fantasy texts, the work of Tzvetan Todorov, Katherine Hume, Rosemary Jackson and Ann Swinfen is often seen as seminal to the theorising of the fantasy genre. It would be remiss to undertake a discussion of the formative value of contemporary young adult fantasy novels without engaging first with these theorists. Yet it must be considered when engaging with such theories that they deal with neither contemporary fantasy, having been published over thirty years ago, nor the young adult sub-genre. It is important therefore to briefly disassemble the overarching theory with regard to the application to the young adult genre in particular, and to contemporary texts which embody thirty years of genre evolution from the time of the seminal theory. Todorov put forward the position that fantasy, or ‘the fantastic’ is defined ‘in relation to [both] the real and the imaginary’(25), and further asserted that fantasy exists on a scale from the uncanny to the marvellous (27). This theory has laid the cornerstone for much subsequent genre theory, and Todorov’s theorising of the marvellous is of particular significance to this thesis. The marvellous, according to Todorov, exists when new laws of nature must be accepted for a story to maintain its integrity (41), an acceptance which relies strongly upon the degree of reader immersion within a text. Todorov’s description of the marvellous is directly relevant to the construction of successful otherworld fantasy that this thesis explores, and the grounding for the theories that are pertinent to the following chapters. The uncanny – defined by Todorov as a subversion of reality often seen as supernatural (Todorov 46, 52) – is also treated by Jackson. While acknowledging the place of the uncanny in fantasy genre theory is important, it is a mode of fantasy that lies outside the scope of this thesis, thus it – and the work of Jackson – shall not be revisited. It should be noted, however, that Jackson’s thoughts on the subversive potential of the uncanny do align with the concepts explored below in relation to escapist fantasy, and similarly serve as a counterpoint to conventional assumptions of young adult fantasy.

Theories of fantasy in which readers are immersed within a secondary world are fairly common in literature on the genre, yet they rarely paint complete immersion in a positive light. Ann Swinfen exemplifies this view in her book *In Defence of Fantasy* as she states that despite inherent ‘common ground’ between primary and secondary worlds, ‘secondary world fantasy is clearly the furthest removed from everyday experience’ (76). This a view which goes against the theory put forward by this thesis, and is in opposition to the work of several theorists including Farah Mendlesohn and, to some extent, Hume, as they state that fantastic otherworlds can reflect quite decisively upon our own. Acknowledging the presence of both advantages and disadvantages of such distancing, Swinfen ultimately falls into a similar line of thought to that favoured by Hume: that is, that secondary worlds

serve to defamiliarise readers from their reality, but typically offer little ideological reflection back upon that reality. While Swinfen acknowledges that secondary worlds do serve a socialising purpose, her belief that such an occurrence must be accompanied by a world with 'considerable common ground with the primary world' (99) is in opposition to Hume's assertions that 'fantasy is effective ... in a way that realism never could be' (65). Hume suggests a much higher dependency on fantasy than mimesis, even as she discusses the ways in which the two impulses work together. Both theorists however, agree that 'escaping' to another world and the immersion it entails tends to offer little formative benefit to adolescent readers (Hume 81; Swinfen 230). This is a view that this thesis argues must be reconsidered in light of contemporary young adult fantasy. Contemporary fantasies in which otherworlds are utilised are layered and complex, providing ample room for the opening of ideological conversation. Within recent examples of the genre, the defamiliarisation from consensus reality is highly significant to the success of such novels as formative texts. This results, as suggested, in part from the evolution of the genre, but is also a specific aspect of the subgenre itself. Young adult fantasy is necessarily formative literature, depicting adolescent protagonists exploring their agency and subjectivity within the setting of their otherworlds. The success of the formative nature lies within the thematic depth and complexity typical of contemporary young adult fantasy and the level of engagement achieved between text and reader.

Following John Stephens, this thesis treats fantasy as a metaphoric mode (Stephens 248). That is, it reflects on contemporary society in such a manner as to provoke consideration of its ideologies and paradigms – a process that happens regardless of whether the fantasy is escapist, to varying degrees of success. Stephens also discusses the metaphoric language markers that separate fantasy from reality texts and suggests that fantasy texts utilise indirect commentary on contemporary social practice (256), reflecting upon society as they distance readers from their reality. While there have been many studies discussing the value, or lack thereof, in presenting commentary on society through defamiliarised worlds,¹ there remains discrepancy as to what, exactly, it is within young adult fantasy texts that affects the success of such a defamiliarisation in terms of prompting ideological conversation. Regardless, this avenue is one that is explored often, and through many frameworks, such as Mendlesohn's analysis of reader positioning in fantasy, Hume's discussion of fantasy modes as reactions to reality and Hunt's work on alternative worlds in fantasy fiction. However, the role of closely focalised narration in fostering reader engagement and shaping the formation of readers' subjectivity is rarely considered.

¹ See Gerrig, Richard J. *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading*. Colorado: Yale University Press, 1993; Hunt, Peter. *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*. London: Continuum, 2001; Pavlik, Anthony. "Being There: The Spatiality of 'Other World' Fantasy Fiction." *International Research in Children's Literature* 4.2 (2011): 238-51; Vieira, Fatima. "The Concept of Utopia." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Ed. Claeyes, Gregory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 3-28.

The term closely focalised narration is used within this thesis to refer explicitly to narration in which the experiences, setting and story are narrated as if from within the mind of a single character, with clear distinctions between changing focalisers in books which incorporate polyphonic narration. A similar description would be that used by Andrea Schwenke Wylie in her discussion of immediate-engaging and restricted narration ("Engaging Narration" 116). The importance of closely focalised narration to reader engagement can be summarised as follows: the more closely focalised the narration is (that is, the more aligned readers become with each character as an individual), the more sympathetic the relationship between character and readers becomes, and the more receptive readers are to ideological persuasion presented in texts. The link between closely focalised narration and the interpretation of ideology is especially prevalent in the complex young adult fantasies being written today. The young adult genre – and particularly fantasy – is increasingly read as formative literature by readers into their twenties and beyond. Themes and storylines are as complex as those found in adult literary novels, and authors do not shy away from subjects as diverse as death, war and environmentalism, or 'methodological issues and social implications' (Allen 260) in favour of ensuring material is 'safe' for children. Children, it is agreed, have always read above their age group (Beckett 11; Falconer 7). Contemporary young adult fantasy novels embody the desires of children for more complex content – content usually reserved for fiction read by adults. 'There are today,' Falconer writes, 'many complex, beautifully written, thought provoking children's novels crossing to adult readerships' (Falconer 4). As reading practices change to reflect altered views of adolescence, contemporary young adult fiction is becoming more difficult to distinguish from that of adults (Falconer 4-7). The universality of themes and concepts raised in these complex contemporary young adult texts treat readers as those seeking to learn and form their own opinions. Otherworld texts benefiting from closely focalised narration persuade readers to achieve a complete displacement from consensus reality; readers are thus more susceptible to the reception of ideological critique present in contemporary young adult fantasy novels.

In general, young adult fantasy literature has followed the path of 'adult' fantasy texts, utilising omniscient narrators that can distance readers and – in the eyes of critics – seem to offer no potential for ideological persuasion (Daniels 78). The genre has been perceived as having a thematic and ideological shallowness that, coupled with techniques such as omniscient narration, conveys didactic content in an explicit manner that 'tends to provoke reader resistance' (Stephens 9). Contemporary young adult fantasy novels have been shedding this unflattering perception however, and the corpus discussed in this thesis represents a selection of closely focalised texts with a thematic complexity that successfully initiates ideological conversation. The study of the function of narration and its ideological implications in young adult fantasy is not a widely researched field. Many scholars have chosen to theorise on theme and content (Todorov; Irwin; Swinfen; Hume; Hunt), with only a passing interest in the narration through which these elements are conveyed, or have tended to focus on individual

narrative techniques such as setting or metafiction, through frameworks including genre and reader response. The function of engaging narration as a technique through which the secondary otherworlds of young adult fantasy texts are conveyed has not been explored in this context. Closely focalised narration and an otherworld setting are integral to fostering reader engagement, opening ideological conversation, and building a highly sympathetic character-reader relationship. Fantasy fiction has the potential to be a form that challenges dominant ideologies more implicitly, and thus offer more opportunity for critical reflection upon contemporary society than realist texts. The effectiveness of such commentary can be directly attributed to the level of reader engagement created by the narration, which this thesis aims to prove.

It is important when entering a discussion in which the merits of contemporary young adult fiction as escapist texts are being argued, to explain what is meant by the term 'escapist,' and what qualifies a novel as being immersive. Typically, when literature is referred to as escapist, it is done so with negative connotations (Sullivan 7). In *Fantasy and Mimesis*, Kathryn Hume defines fantasy as an impulse, dividing the genre into four differing approaches to reality. Both fantasy and mimesis, she writes, are involved in creating literature (xii). That literature is the product of two impulses: a desire to imitate and a desire to alter reality (Hume 20), is not a new concept. Escapist literature, she asserts, sits within this understanding as literature of illusion, characterised by an emphasis on appealing to readers through emotion rather than intellect (Hume 79). Hume acknowledges the merits of escapism as suggested by Tolkien that 'escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic' (Tolkien 69), concluding that 'escape from the modern world is beneficial' (Hume 67). However Hume undermines the search for value in escapist fantasy by coming to the conclusion that escapist literature 'rarely challenges [readers] to think' (81), a mark of ineffective fiction if taken in conjunction with her earlier assertion that fantasy comes from an impulse to alter reality (20) and that effective fiction holds the potential to 'modify [a reader's] relationship with his or her own world' (24). This latter concept of 'effective fiction' is explored in this thesis through a narratological frame whereby I am arguing that closely focalised narration can offer readers positions from which to modify their worldviews. Such reader positioning can hence be seen as a function of 'effective fiction' according to Hume's definition. This idea echoed in part by Farah Mendlesohn as she discusses the rhetorics, techniques and effects of various fantasy 'categories,' the most pertinent of which being that of immersive fantasy. Where Hume identifies responses to realism in her fantasy categorisations, Mendlesohn has broken the fantasy genre into four forms through which she aims to describe the influence of each form upon reader positioning. Unlike

Hume however, Mendlesohn argues for the merits of what she terms 'immersive fantasy'² as a formative genre, against Hume's positioning of such texts as lacking in ideological value – where ideological value may be understood as the ability of texts to prompt readers to reflect critically upon their worldviews. Mendlesohn's argument concentrates on the narrative techniques that comprise escapist fantasy. The success of a narrative in securing reader engagement, Mendlesohn posits, is dependent upon the degree to which '[readers] share the assumptions of the world' (59) it describes. Further, significance and depth of narrative value and the potential for ideological conversation in fantasy are, according to Mendlesohn, built directly from the sense of immersion that is created through narration (83) and, as this thesis argues, more specifically from the use of closely focalised narration and otherworld settings. Though Hume seems to argue against the ideological value of escapism, her argument that escapist literature communicates on an emotional level (66) is built upon by Mendlesohn, and is important to understanding the success of ideologically complex escapist texts. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the value of escapism for reader immersion, and key methodologies that will be utilised throughout the remaining chapters.

It is important here to note that in identifying the corpus and similar texts as 'escapist' novels that offer formative value to readers, it is not the aim of this thesis to suggest that all such novels have similar value. As Hunt writes, 'a great many fantasy worlds do not cater for a developing mind at all' (4). For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'escapism' is being used to refer to the reading positions implied by the text, rather than to imply perceived shallowness in thematic or ideological significance. That is to say, when a reader approaches a text for the purposes of escape, they do so in an unguarded state, approaching escapist texts with the expectation that social ideals will not be preached at them (Flanagan). An unguarded reading position can however endow such texts with a capacity to present ideological critique and encourage critical reflection back on the social world of readers in a much more effective manner than a position in which overt didacticism is expected, and thus often ignored. The ideological conversation provoked by texts read for their capacity to allow readers to escape can therefore be noted for its strong potential to provide socialisation to adolescents. Young adult fantasy occupies 'an inevitable role as a commentary on, or counterpart to, reality and realism' (Hunt 8). It is thus highly significant to the degree of success an escapist text achieves in fulfilling a formative function for adolescents by prompting discussions and critiques of ideology that such texts succeed in engaging readers and in immersing them within the story. The value of immersion is one discussed by various scholars, including Richard Gerrig, who writes that a reader being transported by narrative is 'one of the

² While Mendlesohn refers explicitly to what she terms 'immersive fantasy,' her definition of the subgenre is synonymous with this thesis' definition of 'escapist fantasy.' 'Immersion' and 'escape' are hereafter seen to indicate the same response.

most prominent phenomenological aspects of the experience of narrative worlds,' (2-3). Wylie expands on this assertion by detailing the importance of the narration of character. She states 'readers who become lost in the fiction ... give their hearts and souls over to the characters ... [through the use of] engaging narration wherein character, not plot, is what makes or breaks the story' ("Engaging Narration" 138). The suggestion that such immersion and engagement is achieved through narration is the focus of this thesis.

Mendlesohn's discussion of the fantasy otherworld demonstrates the potential effects of an escapist otherworld coupled with engaging narration. While an otherworld could, quite logically, be simply described as any world that is not that of consensus reality, for the purposes of the following discussion such a definition is too broad, and inadequate to describe the escapist quality of immersive otherworlds. Immersive fantasy, according to Mendlesohn, is fantasy in which the otherworld is beyond question and reader doubt – 'a world built so that it functions as a complete world' (59); a fantasy which entertains no dividing line between the real and 'not-real' (61). While this thesis does include a comprehensive analysis of the narration and otherworld setting of *Inkdeath*, a novel in which events take part in both a medieval fantasy world and a version of consensus reality, reader engagement ensures that there is no disbelief on the part of readers, no 'dividing line' between what is real, and what is not. The immersion achieved in the text through its narration and otherworld setting is such that, even though the novel contains elements of portal fiction, it is, in fact, an immersive fantasy.

The significance of otherworld settings to reader immersion within contemporary young adult fantasy is realised in conjunction with such fantasies being read as escapism. Fantasy novels, it has long been recognised, are texts that readers turn to in order to escape their everyday (Stephens; Hunt; Flanagan), yet fantasy is inevitably a metaphoric mode, deepening readers' 'understanding of the world' (242) and reflecting reality through indirections and allegory (256). While it has been suggested that fantastic otherworlds are not 'other,' but rather neutral spaces that are neither bound to reality nor operate in direct contrast to it (Pavlik 240), this is not a view entertained by this thesis. Fantastic otherworlds, it would seem, are thus necessarily related to reality as they offer social commentary, even if such commentary is unintentional (Hunt 8). This function of the defamiliarised otherworld reflecting back upon reality is in part what makes fantasy novels successful in positioning readers to engage in ideological conversation. While narration is the means through which readers enter the otherworld setting of fantasy fiction, immersion into this otherworld enhances reader engagement and provides the means through which a narrative might signal thematic significance. A fantasy otherworld that causes readers to feel 'as much a part of the world as [the characters]' (Mendlesohn 59) is thus integral to displacing a reader from consensus reality. Setting and narration must work together to create and

convey a coherent otherworld that is 'impervious to external influence' (Mendlesohn 59), as any contradiction within the otherworld presented has the potential to throw readers out of the story, revealing any overt didacticism present in the text. Mendlesohn states that the worlds of immersive fantasies are created in relationship with the protagonists (68). Similarly, many theorists of narrative empathy discuss the significance of character to securing reader engagement, suggesting that a reader's approach to narrative is based on the protagonist (Coplan 141), 'even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways' (Keen 214). This thesis examines narratives that successfully encourage escape and present fully articulated otherworlds by presenting them through the eyes of characters – that is, through closely focalised narration.

Closely focalised narration may therefore be observed as the lynchpin on which the achievement of successful escapism depends. In order for readers to become immersed within a fantasy otherworld from which their own world can be viewed in a critical light, the narration of contemporary young adult escapist novels must present a highly character focused narrative in which readers become steadily immersed. Such character immersion opens the possibility for, and is supported by, a highly coherent otherworld that serves to displace readers from their reality. That such texts demand and achieve substantial reader immersion belies the assumption that contemporary young adult fantasy is negatively escapist. Rather, the rich connection between reader, character and setting privileges formative elements of escapist young adult fantasy. Such a connection encourages reflections upon contemporary society as characters explore exaggerations and consequences of various ideological positions. While realistic fiction offers similar opportunities for ideological conversation, fantasy benefits from the otherworld setting that allows readers to escape from their reality, even as the themes and concepts of such novels speak to their unguarded subconscious. Contemporary young adult escapist fantasy enjoys a depth and complexity previously unafforded the genre as its adolescent readership is acknowledged as one maturing into adulthood. Increasingly, fantasy texts for adolescents have a formative intent, seeking (at least implicitly) to intervene in the formation of readers developing social awareness. As closely focalised narration fosters highly sympathetic character-reader relationships, and immerses readers within the fantastic otherworld, those readers become increasingly receptive to ideological conversation and critique presented in these highly complex escapist novels. Thus escapism might begin to be valorised.

Chapter 2: Escapism and the First-Person Narrator

While third-person restricted narration in young adult fantasy novels has been prevalent since the mid-twentieth century (often regarded as the second Golden Age of children's literature), first-person narration is a relatively new development within contemporary young adult fantasy (Schuhmann 314). Highly introverted narration preoccupied with the narrator's internal plight connects first-person narration with its adolescent readership by engaging with and informing readers of young adult fantasy through an implicit didacticism that is resultant of the inherent escapism of immersive fantasy texts.

Although first-person narration has become the norm in realist writing for young people since J.D. Salinger's seminal *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), its use in fantasy fiction has been limited. Instead, third-person narration has dominated the children's and young adult fantasy canon from *The Hobbit* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* to the more recent offering of the *Harry Potter* series. An analysis of contemporary young adult fantasy however reveals the preference for third-person narration is waning as authors and readers embrace the voice of the first-person narrator (Cadden 148; Feeny; Wendig). Representations of first-person narration have increasingly begun to appear in the young adult fantasy genre, expanding the potential for engagement between reader and text as novels feature close focalisation by characters within the first-person narrative mode. First-person narration is inherently immediate, inviting readers into conversation, fostering emotional connections and transporting their awareness away from consensus reality and into the mind of the focalising character.³ In this chapter I will analyse the depiction of temporality and the use of tense in Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011) and Tamora Pierce's *Terrier* (2006) to demonstrate the potential formativity afforded to contemporary young adult escapist fantasy novels using a closely focalised first-person narrative mode.

Andrea Schwenke Wylie first explained the significance of the engaging narrator in 1999 ("First-Person Narration"). Expanding the concept in 2003, she stated that as a narrative nurtures earnest and personal relationships between characters and readers through engaging narration, readers "'lose" themselves' ("Engaging Narration" 118) in texts. The presence of escapism in contemporary young adult fantasy is, as explored in the previous chapter, not a new concept. Wylie's theories on engaging narration suggest an initial framework for an understanding of the effects of closely focalised narration upon reader engagement. Wylie's discussion, however, lacks an analysis of the significance and potential implications of the formativity achieved by successful escapism with an engaging narrator. Similarly, Mendlesohn discusses narrative techniques utilised in immersive fantasy which transport readers and foster

³ This immediacy is similarly found in third-person narration closely focalised by a single character.

engagement, including the significance of narration for engaging readers, who 'must sit inside the heads of the protagonists, accepting what they know as the world' (59) in order to achieve immersion within a fantastic otherworld. Significantly, Mendlesohn grounds escapism within a rich literary tradition, linking contemporary immersive fantasy to the rediscovery of the fantastic (61), thereby situating immersive fantasy within the realm of Todorov's marvellous.

The term 'closely focalised narration' is used within this thesis to refer explicitly to narration that situates a reader's experience entirely within the internally focalised viewpoint of a single, or select group of characters. First-person narration 'is an intensely immersive device' (Mendlesohn 93) that is most commonly seen as fulfilling such criteria. Analyses of the mode have often cited the engaging benefits of first-person narration which, through its overt addressivity, (Cadden 220), encourages readers to foster an earnest relationship with the focalising character (Wyile "Engaging Narration" 118) and become immersed within the story. *Terrier* and *Delirium* demonstrate this immersion and its achievement through a range of narrative techniques used to position readers and encourage a response to the dominant ideologies and paradigms of their society. Close focalisation in contemporary young adult fantasy novels is integral to inciting the unguarded reading state that successful escapism demands. The engaging narrator encourages escapism as readers forget momentarily the structures of consensus reality. As readers are displaced from their own world, the sensation of escapism masks ideological positioning present in the themes and concepts of the text, thus avoiding overt didacticism.

Terrier charts the journey of sixteen-year-old Beka as she begins life as a member of the Provost's Guard in the pseudo-medieval city of Corus. Colloquially known as 'Dogs,' the Provost's Guard is the city's police force. *Terrier* begins with a quick succession of journal entries in the voices of characters including Beka's mother, and her future training master. These entries provide a distanced insight into Beka's early life in the slums of the Lower City and the birth of her determination to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Beka narrates the main portion of the novel in the journal mode; the immediate-past tense treats readers as trusted confidants, privy to her most private dreams, convictions and frustrations. Conversely, *Delirium* is narrated using present tense, and readers are kept at arms length by the focaliser-protagonist Lena. Yet the narration of *Delirium* is inherently more intimate than that of *Terrier* as readers are subject to Lena's stream of consciousness narration and exposed to every situation and reaction as it happens. The tone of Lena's narration, however, remains indifferent, distancing readers even as it provokes the desire for a closer connection, mimicking Lena's own displacement from her society. In a world where love is seen as a disease and a cure administered to the population at eighteen, Lena's unconventional family history positions her slightly outside of the status-quo, yet not separate from it. She experiences life through a vague haze until she meets and falls in love with Alex, who challenges her views on love and the dystopic society in which she lives.

Wyile states that '[closely focalised] first-person narratives ... are particularly engaging because of their immediacy.' Temporality thus becomes highly significant in conjunction with closely focalised narration as the immediacy of the narration is influenced by story and discourse time. *Terrier* and *Delirium* contrast in their approaches to depicting temporality. *Terrier*'s fluctuating chapter lengths reflect Beka's personal triumphs and frustrations. *Delirium* follows a more conventional chapter structure, instead using epigraphs to reflect Lena's changing worldview at the beginning of each chapter. Both novels challenge the construction of personal and societal ideological viewpoints.

Temporality is used in *Terrier* to foster engagement with Beka's journey as she narrates her awakening to the harsh realities of upholding justice amongst the desperation of poverty. Having entered the Dogs to become a champion for the Lower City, Beka's narration in the long, eager, meandering chapters that begin the novel, featuring comments such as 'I know more than any Puppy' (Pierce 22),⁴ depict her youthful naivety. Yet Beka must learn that the system she trusts to uphold the law can only do so much. Beka's idealism is evident in the first three chapters of the novel, yet at the end of her third day she narrates that she '[has] only been a Puppy three days, yet it feels like three year [sic]. I feel I have changed so much [since the] account of that first day' (174). This marks a change for Beka as she begins to adopt a less idealistic outlook, and this change is reflected in the temporal sequencing of the chapters that follow. As Beka embarks on her own, private, investigations on cases she personally prioritises, her journal entries (and thus the novel's chapters) shift in both length and narrative content. Exhaustive, seemingly trivial descriptions – 'I poured water in the basin and cleaned my teeth and face' (71) – that contributed to the length of the first three chapters give way to narration strictly relevant to her investigations. Where the accounts of her first three days in training occupied a quarter of the length of the novel, chapters begin to lessen in length as the narration becomes tighter, and the initial progress of her enquiries slows. As information dries up and Beka becomes ill and frustrated, the middle of the novel is marked by a series of chapters that range from a few pages to barely half a page long, engaging readers as they too feel Beka's frustrations. The white space of these shorter chapters and the narration that skims events or simply states a line of facts forces readers to move quickly through the sparse material.

Throughout the novel, the ethics that underpin Beka's ideologies are challenged. Faced with the logistical issues associated with upholding the law and the reluctance of those in poverty to help themselves, Beka finds she must readjust her understanding of what is 'good,' and what is 'evil.'

I mustered my courage to look at them. Surely they didn't turn their backs on the poor of the Lower City, not Tunstall and Goodwin ...

⁴ 'Puppy' is slang for a trainee guard.

Goodwin frowned "What do you want from us Cooper? ... We don't have a third of the dogs we need to cover the Lower City alone. We do what we can."

I wanted to ask, You didn't seek on any of them? but the words stuck in my throat. I know the numbers. (172, my ellipsis)

The above exchange with her training masters, Tunstall and Goodwin, demonstrates how the narration depicts Beka's reluctant acceptance that her greatest foe is resource shortages and the disinclination of those she tries to protect to protect themselves, rather than the villains she is investigating. As the novel passes the midway point, Beka's investigations begin to come to a head, and chapters begin to lengthen once more. This temporal sequencing engages readers with a very overt depiction of Beka's frustrations and triumphs. It is significant that while the narration tightens focus following her first few days as a Dog, a sizeable amount of narrative time is spent relating her growing friendships with both her fellow trainee guards, and a group of rogues.⁵ Seemingly unrelated to her investigations, her growing friendship with the rogues deepens the ideological shifting Beka undergoes. Ultimately – for Beka – this allows her an avenue of resources not typically enjoyed by Dogs. The changing focus depicted in the temporal structure of the novel narrates Beka's desire to protect the Lower City, expanding her worldview to see the bigger picture as she is positioned to shift her views on 'good' and 'evil' without compromising the convictions that led her to become a Dog. As Beka's idealism turns to realism and is reflected in the chapters that shorten at the climax of her personal shift before lengthening once more as she is able to use her newfound understanding to work *within* the tapestry of the Lower City, readers are immersed within her journey.

Oliver's *Delirium* similarly utilises temporal narrative structures to convey Lena's ideological journey throughout the text, engaging readers in her struggles. Unlike the slow journey of disillusionment and acceptance depicted in Beka's journal entries, Lena's transition is much more abrupt, and often signified by the epigraphs which precede each chapter. Lena introduces her society to readers with absolute faith in its totalitarian paradigms. In a world where love is a thing to be cured, Lena embraces her upcoming procedure and the homogenising effect it will bring, narrating 'I can't wait ... after the procedure I will be happy and safe forever' (Oliver 2, my ellipsis). Each chapter in *Delirium* is heralded by an epigraph, giving greater significance to the narration of events that challenge Lena's ideologies of love, agency and power. Often propagandic, the epigraphs encourage readers to question the seemingly utopic policies of Lena's society and indicate the focus of the chapter to come. Chapter Ten, for example, begins with a list of symptoms of *Amor Deliria Nervosa* – the chapter that follows details Lena's changing outlook on the world since falling in love with Alex. As well as indicating the path of Lena's personal journey, the epigraphs serve to add greater depth to the otherworld in which the story is set. With no

⁵ Those who tend to unlawfulness.

source attributed, the symptoms of love – seen as a ‘disease’ – are presented as an unquestionable part of the world that readers must take in stride. Yet that the symptoms have been placed in the epigraph – a place of significance to a reader’s creation of meaning – invites readers to consider a second layer of meaning in addition to Lena’s personal journey. As the epigraph to Chapter Ten lists ‘phases’ of the disease before urging the population to contact an emergency line ‘to discuss immediate intake and treatment’ should they ‘fear that you or someone you know may have contracted *deliria*’ (132-33), it plays on the futuristic dystopian otherworld, presenting readers with a defamiliarised America and the opportunity to critique a system in which one of the most basic of human emotions is a thing to be feared. Mirroring the ways in which contemporary Western society fights to regulate itself, the epigraphs function to direct ‘readers to consider reality, ironically at the same time as they are escaping from it’ (Hintz and Ostry 6). Governments that seek ‘to quell rebellious impulses’ (Ames 9) are a common trope of futuristic dystopias, and one that Oliver takes to extremes within the epigraphs, to tremendous effect.

A contrast between Chapters Two and Twenty-Six for example demonstrates the dystopic undertones of the seemingly utopic precision with which Lena’s world runs, and the dramatic change in her worldview. ‘We must be constantly on guard against the Disease;’ reads the epigraph from Chapter Two, ‘the health of our nation, our people, our families, and our minds depends on constant vigilance’ (Oliver 5). Taken from a chapter entitled ‘Basic Health Measures’ in the fictional *Safety, Health, and Happiness Handbook, 12th edition*, the epigraph alerts readers to the dystopia that governs the society that Lena sees as utopic. Where Lena sees the benefit of such a tightly run community, readers are invited to notice the discourse of surveillance undermining the utopic façade, and consider the cost of complete social harmony. The immediate effect of reading this epigraph is to direct readers to consider the degree to which the eradication of love is enforced within Lena’s reality, enhancing understanding of the following prose as the chapter goes on to explain her position on the fringes of her society. The dystopic undertones run counterpoint to significance she places upon being cured in the subsequent narration. The epigraph of Chapter Twenty-Six, in contrast, is taken from an E E Cummings poem found, in Lena’s world, in the ‘Comprehensive Compilation of Dangerous Words and Ideas:’ ‘here is the deepest secret nobody knows / ... and this is the wonder that’s keeping the stars apart / i carry your heart (I carry it in my heart)’ (Oliver 366, my ellipsis). Though the poem reflects the culmination of Lena’s personal journey as she holds her love secret, having discovered what her society desperately keeps its citizens from knowing, this epigraph holds greater significance. The second, and second-last, chapters respectively, these epigraphs convey a double meaning as they invite readers to reflect upon Lena’s personal journey, and prompt critical reflection upon the paradigms under which Lena’s society run. In contrasting the wartime propagandic tone of the epigraph at Chapter Two, and the love poem of Chapter Twenty-Six,

the narration asks readers to consider the positive and negative implications of Lena's society and her journey within it that can be reflected back upon contemporary society. Yet it is significant that whilst the epigraphs serve to encourage greater engagement between readers and Lena's narration within the chapters, the epigraphs themselves complicate the notion of closely focalised narration as the lynchpin on which the achievement of successful escapism depends, as earlier suggested in this thesis. Though narrated in a factual tone, the epigraphs serve to provide a counterpoint upon which Lena's subjective experiences may become more engaging. As readers learn more of the doctrines of *Delirium's* otherworld, readers are led to further seek a personal connection.

Delirium's epigraphs serve to engage readers with the larger social context encompassing Lena's immediate experience. Drawing a rich picture of the futuristic dystopic setting, such narrative techniques ask readers to consider a fictional 'fear-based [scenario]' and its alignment 'with contemporary cultural concerns' (Ames 4). The paranoia of a potential future is a common trope of dystopian novels (Vieira 7). Especially important in the young adult genre, it offers readers a 'safe space' to explore fears and have them resolved (Ames 7). Similarly, contemporary young adult fantasy novels with a futuristic dystopian setting often work to critique an 'advanced ... society gone awry' in a call for 'social change' in a reader's society (Zipes ix, my ellipsis). The epigraphs in *Delirium* alert readers to the scope of the dystopic society in which the story operates. As Lena's ideologies of love, agency and power change, so too does the content of the epigraphs, narrating her personal awakening to the dystopia of the system she had previously considered incontestable. Through this narration, readers are positioned to consider and question their own agency and power as they challenge the ideologies underpinning the paradigms of their own society.

Equally as influential when engaging readers within contemporary young adult fantasy texts is the use of tense that, alongside closely focalised narration, strongly aligns reader with character, and solidifies the focalising character's presence as the narrator. Immediate engaging first-person narration⁶ allows readers heightened access to the thoughts and experiences of a single character as they narrate events in present, or immediate-past, tense. The immediacy of the narration in relation to events and character experiences related is significant to the connection readers feel to focalising characters. Pierce's use of the journal mode in *Terrier* creates an overt awareness of Beka as narrator, the first-person narration creating a sense of immediacy for readers, who are positioned to feel as if they are being directly addressed. That Beka's innermost thoughts are conveyed to readers soon after their occurrence is intrinsic to the journal mode. Beka's voice dominates the narration, presenting an 'earnest telling'

⁶ Also referred to as 'closely focalised first-person narration.' Immediate engaging is the specific term used by Wylie.

(Wyile "Engaging Narration" 118) of her experiences, as in her acknowledgement that 'I'd bite my tongue off before I said it, but Rosto *is* funny. Very well. The truth.' (Pierce 198). As she details her feelings for the thief – feelings in opposition to her moral code – Beka is allowing readers insight to her confusion and insecurity as her worldview begins to shift. The combination of tone, mode of address and use of immediate-past tense conveys a sense of a privileged connection with the focalising character, 'authenticating the fictive text and the world it depicts' (McCallum *Ideologies of Identity* 221). This authenticity, according to Mendlesohn, is integral for successful escapist fantasy. That *Terrier* is narrated solely from Beka's immediate and very closely focalised perspective ensures that it is through her knowledge of the Lower City that readers are introduced to this immersive fantasy otherworld (Mendlesohn 69). The immediacy of the past tense narration and close focalisation of character encourage escape into the otherworld of the narrative while engaging readers with character, setting, and the ideological conversations the narrative has the potential to engage.

As the journal mode in *Terrier* creates an overt sense of awareness of Beka as narrator, readers are treated as if they were Beka's trusted friends, thus enhancing their escape into the text. Beka's innermost thoughts on her experiences are intrinsic to the journal format, and connection to readers is fostered with information clearly not shared between Beka and the other characters as she 'record[s] her] days in the Provost's Guard' (Pierce 21). This is particularly evident as the novel progresses and Beka's factual recounts of her rounds become infiltrated with more personal experiences. Her private frustrations when events reveal the reluctance of the people of the Lower City to stand up for themselves, and her journey as she learns to rely on others are narrated solely for the benefit of readers. As she tells her friends of her desire to catch the Shadow Snake and asks for their assistance, their replies leave her telling readers that 'my chest felt warm, warm like those times that Pounce comforted me. I like having friends' (226). Readers are invited to engage with personal insights, evocative imagery, and the immediacy of passages like 'this morning I opened my door to Kora, Aniki, and the wonderful scent of heated pasties from the basket on Kora's arm' (196) that draw them into Beka's experience. Oliver's use of present tense in *Delirium* uses different techniques to engage readers with Lena's closely focalised narration. At first glance, Lena's narration offsets readers, distancing them through the lack of reflection present in past tense narration. In addition, Lena is a much more reserved character than Beka. This shows through the narration as she leaves readers feeling slightly displaced from her experience, even as she feels the same displacement from her society. Yet the present tense narration of *Delirium* conveys a sense of immediacy that is absent from the narration in *Terrier*, no matter how promptly Beka recounts her experiences. As Lena shares her experiences with readers in instances like 'I strain to detect the sounds of passing patrols or groups of regulators – I almost hope I do, because then I'll have to go back inside, to my bed, to safety, and already the panic is starting to drill through me

again' (Oliver 107), readers are pulled into Lena's direct experience. While the sense of confidence between character and reader is missing in Lena's narration, readers are caught up in the faster paced action and feel the panic in her uncensored, stream-of-consciousness narration. In the present tense, readers are emotionally invested in every situation – the knowledge the narrator navigates events in such a way that they are free to later relate the experience is notably absent. The use of present tense narration in *Delirium*, while ultimately engaging to readers, does, as previously mentioned, also create distance. Events are related in real time; there is no anticipation or foregrounding to foster interest in Lena's narration. Similarly, the narration is unable to provide added information gained from hindsight that many readers expect. This results in narration with an added depth of unexpected, unconventional immediacy that both jolts readers in its unfamiliarity and simultaneously demands emotional investment.

As immediate, closely focalised, first-person narration reflects the personality of the focalising character, the way they relate their experiences becomes a part of their characterisation. *Delirium's* present tense narration, for example, allows readers unfiltered access to Lena's direct thoughts and experiences. When the interview that will decide the path of Lena's life is interrupted by a stampede, she narrates 'for one, weird, detached second [I] feel proud of myself for correctly identifying the noise' (Oliver 32). Without the need for explicit statement or exposition, readers are invited to expand their understanding of Lena's personality – in this case her need to identify situations so as to act in accordance with expectation – and become further immersed in her story. Yet still, readers, though inside Lena's head, are kept slightly off to one side by the unfamiliarity of the present tense narration. This in turn mirrors the detachment Lena feels from her society, to the effect that readers, as with Lena, find themselves on the fringes of her experience – craving a closer connection. Similarly, narration such as 'nervousness makes my temper flare' (68) reflects Lena's direct nature, and '*what a mess ... my mind goes fuzzy and damp and grey*' (25, my ellipsis) is an example of the run-on, stream-of-consciousness babble that describes her nervous tendencies. This nervousness is particularly evident throughout the novel's earlier chapters, shifting as Lena's ideologies of love change. The detachment and frantic energy present in the first half of the novel slowly evolves into narration that is much more certain and relaxed. Her time with Alex, spent in illicit hideaways and physical contact where 'we kiss so much that when we're not kissing it feels weird, like I get used to breathing through his lips and into his mouth' (233) is highly dangerous, and previously associated with the frantic stream-of-consciousness mentioned above. Run on, choppy sentences give way to longer, more relaxed syntax, inviting readers to chart Lena's changing subjectivity through the tonal shift in her raw and unfiltered narration, heightening engagement with her story.

First person modes of narration and the associated techniques used in *Terrier* similarly influence reader constructions of Beka. While her journal begins with a methodical and assertive tone, Beka's voice becomes alternatively frivolous, obsessive and frustrated as she narrates the evolution of her passionate adolescent ideals. The very private nature of the journal form can be interpreted to depict Beka's shyness, while the convictions that fuel her choice to record a journal so as to ensure she learns as much as possible give dimension to her desire to be a protector of the citizens of the Lower City. Similarly to the way that the narration of *Delirium* forms part of Lena's characterisation, the methodical retelling of events in *Terrier* gives readers a sense of Beka's character. The use of closely focalised narration is used to great effect to heighten reader engagement with the story; the alternate uses of tense depict how narration can influence the particular ways in which readers can be invited to engage with the characters of contemporary young adult escapist fantasy.

Terrier and *Delirium* are highly complex young adult fantasies that demonstrate a selection of the techniques afforded to closely focalised first-person narration to engage readers and assist in their escape to the fantasy otherworld that displaces them from their reality. Inherently engaging, the direct mode of address of first-person narration is enhanced by the use of *Terrier's* journal mode and *Delirium's* present tense narration as the novels utilise varying techniques to engage readers and encourage their escape. The depiction of the fantastic otherworlds of each novel, and the singular protagonists' journey throughout them can be seen to offer reflections upon contemporary society, critiquing worldviews, paradigms and ideologies including the exaggerated necessity for villains to take responsibility for society's ills, and the sensationalising of things to be feared in current Western societies. The depiction of temporality and use of tense are only two such techniques used in closely focalised narration that are effective at fostering engagement, but nevertheless demonstrate the potential formative impact such immersion can hold.

Chapter 3: Immersion within Multifocal Narration

Unlike realism, which is dominated by first-person modes of narration, young adult fantasy fiction is characterised by a prevalence of third-person narration. Historically, such novels have tended towards omniscient narration, distancing readers with overt didacticism. As the genre has evolved however, many texts have adopted restricted narration, focusing story events upon the experiences of a singular, or select set of focalising characters. In her 2003 paper on engaging narration within adolescent literature, Andrea Schwenke Wylie stated that engagement within third-person narratives comes from a 'singularity of perspective' ("Engaging Narration" 116), the development of an 'intensely personal relationship' (116) between character and reader, and the ability of 'restricted' third-person narration to provide a richer reader experience than a character narrated in the first person can provide (117). The 'restricted' third-person to which Wylie refers positions the engaging narrator as a figure who serves as the sole focaliser of a given text (118). Thus restricted third-person can be recognised as closely focalised narration. Third-person narration, suggests Wylie, is most engaging in novels whose focalising characters are severely restricted in number, in order to ensure readers 'feel personally involved with the ideas and events being related' (129). Yet the use of multiple focalisers within a text does not automatically preclude engaging, or closely focalised, narration. Multifocal viewpoints can serve to enrich a reader's immersive experience by offering comparison and contrast of character situations, ideological views, and experiences. As first-person narration provides an unassailable narrator within whose ideological journey readers become entrenched, multi-focalised third-person narration in contemporary young adult escapist fantasy texts can similarly engage readers. Multiple stories and worldviews can encourage a greater depth in the interpretation and critique of presented ideological structures, and their reflection back upon consensus reality, than can be achieved from a singular represented viewpoint.

This chapter examines enhanced critical positioning in Scott Westerfeld's 2009 *Leviathan* and Cornelia Funke's 2007 *Inkdeath*. The use of two focalisers is a particularly appropriate way of constructing ideological critique and of positioning readers to comprehend that critique. The intertwined narratives of Deryn and Alek construct two contrasting ideological positions that readers are invited to compare. That Westerfeld aims to position readers and encourage ideological critique is made overt by the world he has created around his characters. Set within the speculative otherworld of a retro-futuristic World War I, *Leviathan* pits machine against nature in a commentary on debates of industry versus genetic engineering for societal advancement, and critiques paradigms that interpret the world with an us-or-them mentality. In placing a closely focalising protagonist on each side of this debate, Westerfeld

problematizes the 'absolute nature'⁷ of societal ideologies as he presents character journeys that question the ways in which individual ideological beliefs are constructed. Whereas Westerfeld situates two characters within directly contradictory ideological paradigms, Funke's approach is more subtle. *Inkdeath* is focalised by a plethora of characters, presenting a kaleidoscope of character experiences that serve to immerse readers within a larger tapestry, in which concern is tied to the outcome of the narrative for the Inkworld itself. *Inkdeath* is strongly dependent on the pseudo-medieval otherworld Funke creates. Polyphonic narration depicts the implications of narrative events upon multiple characters, highlighting the multi-faceted nature of a society in the differing individual quests and goals that exist within the central struggle. The multifocalisation of the novel further draws attention to differing ideological views between characters and the ways in which the formation of ideological views can be influenced by literature. The fantasy world of *Inkdeath* is self-consciously fictive. Funke's metafictional positioning of her characters within a book themselves⁸ allows her to examine the power of words and the process of interpreting their meaning as well as the intertextual construction of intersubjectivity.

Leviathan's use of a retro-futuristic otherworld from the contrasted viewpoints of its two protagonists is significant to its success in engaging readers, immersing them within the story, and positioning them to consider the ideological critique presented in reference to contemporary Western society. Dual focalisation by Deryn and Alek problematizes reader understanding of the absolute nature of societal ideologies. As Alek and Deryn are positioned within environments that can be seen to represent conflicting cultural paradigms, these environments serve as an overt metaphor that dictates the ways in which Alek and Deryn portray their experiences, Westerfeld's reimagining of World War I contrasts two cultures – 'Darwinists' and 'Clankers' – in an overt binary prejudice that seems to reference the man versus nature debate. Deryn – a British girl – is a Darwinist. So named for the genetic experiments and animal fabrications integral to the running of the English empire, the Darwinists can be seen to represent nature. In contrast, Alek is the (fictional) son of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The Clankers – of which Austria and Germany are a part – operate machine-driven societies; and represent a traditional view of industrialised man. To Alek, Darwinists are little better than savages. To Deryn, Clankers are rigid and obsolescent. Yet while at first glance, Westerfeld seems to be referencing the

⁷ Where 'absolute nature' is understood to describe the perception of societal ideological assumptions as completely impervious to change.

⁸ *Inkdeath* is the final novel in Funke's Inkworld trilogy. The first novel, *Inkheart*, is preoccupied with the consequences of a character's ability to read characters out of a book – also named 'Inkheart.' *Inkspell* and *Inkdeath* are concerned with the aftermath of *Inkheart*, as characters from our world read themselves into the fictional 'Inkheart' novel.

'man versus nature' debate, the binaries represented by the respective cultures of Deryn and Alek are not this simple, rather, the binary may be seen as contrasting two aspects of human intervention: genetics, and mechanics. To this end, Darwinists and Clankers can also be seen to represent differing ideologies of societal progression. The British, having unlocked the secrets of evolution, operate a society within which the entire military consists of fabricated animals⁹ – a scientific advancement of intellectual advantage. In contrast, Alek narrates an experience that relies on the logic and power of machines, viewing the Darwinist fabrications as 'ungodly.' Introduction to the otherworld of *Leviathan* is immediate on the part of both characters, a technique significant to encouraging escapism (Mendlesohn 59). The differences between these defining paradigms for Alek and Deryn are immediately apparent as the otherworld is described.

The Austrian horses glinted in the moonlight, their riders standing tall in the saddle, swords raised. Behind them two ranks of diesel-powered walking machines stood ready to fire, cannon aimed over the heads of the cavalry. A zeppelin scouted no-man's-land at the centre of the battlefield, its metal skin sparking.

The French and British infantry crouched behind their fortifications – a letter opener, an ink jar, and a line of fountain pens – knowing they stood no chance against the might of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (1)

While references to infantry, cavalry and no-man's-land offer representations of conventional warfare recognisable to readers, it is apparent in Alek's narration that this is an enhanced method of conducting battle. Diesel-powered walking machines seem reminiscent of science fiction. Alongside zeppelins, which did exist, these machines defamiliarise readers with understood conventions of military equipment. Westerfeld presents a bricolage of futuristic and historical elements to garner interest in his speculative otherworld from the first paragraph and immerse readers in the narrative. The use of bricolage expands potential interpretations of meaning within the text, and may thus be seen to alert readers that this diversity of elements specifically related to warfare will be the crux upon which much of the textual meaning might be interpreted. The defamiliarisation of fortifications as old-fashioned writers' tools further offers readers the opportunity to recognise the significance of war and ideas of progress, subtly positioning readers to comprehend the oppositions explored throughout the text. Similarly, readers are positioned to recognise the subsequent narrative as a written construct, and thus respond more critically to Westerfeld's commentary upon contemporary society within the otherworld he creates. It is significant that the introduction to *Leviathan's* otherworld references the tools of its creation, though the novel itself is not metafictional. Similarly, the culture of Deryn's society is constructed as a bricolage of recognisable elements.

⁹ The 'Leviathan' warship for example, upon which much of the events of Deryn's narrative take place, is a hydrogen-fuelled flying whale, with talking messenger lizards that relate orders, and bats that excrete metal shards during aerial attacks.

The London omnibuses were much fancier than those back in Scotland – faster, too. The one that took them to the airship field at Wormwood Scrubs was drawn by a hippoesque the breadth of two oxen across the shoulders. (23)

Westerfeld combines archaic language with futuristic concepts to further immerse readers into the retro-futuristic otherworld. While ‘omnibus’ is reminiscent of horse-drawn omnibuses in the 19th Century, hippoesque is an unfamiliar term. Suggestive of hippopotami, the addition of the ‘esque’ suffix alerts readers that all is not what it seems, particularly, if they have picked up on the few clues prior, with the animals of Deryn’s society, and prompts reflection upon the use of genetic modification. Oxen, on the other hand, are easily recognisable, though evocative of agrarian cultures, and serve as a form of reference for the unfamiliar beast, grounding the new experience and maintaining readers’ suspension of disbelief. This suspension of disbelief is integral to maintaining reader immersion. Mendlesohn notes that immersive fantasy is constructed by restricting reader experience ‘to the worldview of someone who already knows the world’ (Mendlesohn 73). It is significant then that Deryn’s observation of the London omnibus places emphasis on its aesthetic and speed. The presence of the hippoesque itself is ordinary.

While these differences are overt, readers are invited to notice further separations between paradigms that – at this point in the narrative – are being presented in opposition. Deryn’s commoner background is noted by readers for its contrast to Alek’s position as an aristocrat, especially in the relative social freedom she enjoys in comparison to Alek.

‘Volger...’ Alek began.
‘*Quiet* boy!’ the wildcount spat.
Anger flashed inside Alek, and a curse almost burst from his mouth, even if it ruined their stupid game of sneaking out.
It was always like this. To the servants he might be ‘the young archduke,’ but nobles like Volger never let Alek forget his position. Thanks to his mother’s common blood, he wasn’t fit to inherit royal lands and titles. His father might be heir to an empire of fifty million souls, but Alek was heir to nothing. (6-7)

Alek is both privileged and, as seen in the excerpt above, marginalised, by his social status as the progeny of a morganatic marriage. While it is also significant that in order to be a member of the British navy and fly on the ‘Leviathan’ airship Deryn must conceal her gender, she remains free of the rigid social structures that define Alek’s interactions. Readers are invited to note the contrast between the tense, formal interactions between Alek and his men, and the relaxed nature of the British Army. Deryn’s casual interactions with Dr Barlow, including calling the esteemed scientist a ‘boffin’ to her face (Westerfeld 188), would be out of place in Alek’s narration. This form of introduction, to both setting and character, through the narration of character experience is significant to immersing readers within

otherworlds. The 'assumed intimacy' (Mendlesohn 75) between the focalising characters and readers presents Westerfeld's overt commentary on humanist binaries - represented by Alek, Deryn and their respective societies – in such a way that both cultures become simultaneously familiar and 'other.' Positioning each character as alternatively familiar and 'other' references socio-cultural practices that ostracise groups based on race, religion or ethnicity, an increasingly relevant concern to contemporary adolescents in light of responses to terrorism in recent years. Westerfeld's overt binary metaphor is the core theme of the novel, prompting critical reflection upon real-world practices, paradigms, and prejudices. The differences between Alek and Deryn's narrated experience are significant in that they allow readers to '[understand the] world by the *context* of what is told' (Mendlesohn 75, emphasis in original), that is, the dual narration engages readers as the narrative otherworld is depicted not through exposition but through the experiences and consciousnesses of its focalising characters.

Westerfeld's *Leviathan* uses the close focalisation of characters from oppositional cultural perspectives to problematise reader understanding of societal ideologies and to promote critique of humanist binaries. Alongside setting, the close focalisation of character experience presents Alek and Deryn as both familiar and strange, aligning readers with both characters and prompting critical reflection on the societal paradigms that each represent. Third-person narration in young adult and children's novels typically 'employ[s] one focaliser through whose eyes the events are presented and perceived' (Day 67), a technique which has been noted to 'intentionally communicate ... a single and limited awareness of the world' (Cadden 146, my ellipsis). The use of multiple focalisers expands this worldview, allowing, as Day notes, a 'thorough investigation of "opposing ideologies"' and '[demonstrating] the ways in which ... various points of view influence and are influenced by each other' (67, my ellipsis). While the second half of this assertion is perhaps better illustrated by *Inkdeath* below, the investigation of opposing ideologies is a key function of *Leviathan*. The success of the multifocal narration in exploring these oppositions lies however within the closely focalised narration which engages readers.

Engaging narration, according to Wylie, enhances reader understanding of events and experiences, as related through intensely focalised narration ("Engaging Narration" 117). While the role of characterisation in engaging narration and escapism is explored more fully in Chapter Four, this awareness remains significant to the topic at hand. *Leviathan* invites readers into Deryn and Alek's experiential consciousnesses through this close focalisation. Deryn's colloquial slang as she refers to scientists as 'boffins,' her constant swearing, and casual relationship with authority contrasts with Alek's deference to his highly ranked companions, formal language and the ease with which he accepts his situation as he is forced into hiding. The differing cultural assumptions that dictate their worldviews are especially clear in narration that contrasts similar experiences. The following excerpts, for example, detail the protagonists' first respective encounters with battle.

Deryn frowned, imagining for a moment that there were crewmen on that ship. Not a pretty picture...

Watching the fl  chette strike had left her shaky. Maybe Newkirk was itching for battle, but she'd joined the Service to fly, not to shred some poor buggers a thousand feet below. (112-15, my ellipsis)

The intercom crackled. 'Ready to fire.'

'Aim over their heads, Bauer. They're Austrians, and Klopp and Volger are somewhere in that grass.' [Alek]

'A warning shot then, sir.'

A few of the carbines crackled, and Alek heard a bullet strike metal close by. (134)

Deryn's narration is filled with emotion and introspection as she 'frowned' and found the attack 'left her shaky.' The depiction of sentiment apparent in Deryn's narration is absent in the matter-of-fact narration focalised by Alek upon his first battle. Alek's narration is formal, and clearly demonstrates his command. In contrast, Deryn refers to those whose deaths she will inevitably become involved with on a warship as 'poor buggers,' and readers may clearly note her distaste, opposing Alek's calm head and practiced authority during battle.

Readers are invited to become aware of the ideological commentary Westerfeld presents as they are encouraged to become engaged with the experiences and worldviews of both Deryn and Alek. In escaping into the fantasy otherworld of a retro-futuristic World War I, readers become displaced from their reality. The engaging narration works to forge a personal connection between character and readers, "'embracing" the reader[s]' (McGillis 38). Deryn and Alek are represented as adolescents whose worldviews are defined by their respective societies. Yet these worldviews are challenged as the characters grow throughout the novel, inviting readers to consider the content and formation of their own worldviews alongside the broad themes of the novel. That young adult literature is a genre 'preoccupied with self-development' (Wylie "First-Person Narration" 186) is by no means a new concept.¹⁰ The implicit problematisation of ideas of 'good' and 'evil' present in Westerfeld's critique of societal ideologies and the consequences of an us-and-them mentality comes to a head when the 'Leviathan' crashes on a glacier near Alek's hideout, forcing Deryn and Alek together. Deryn and Alek's ability to adapt and work together on a personal level is mirrored in the depiction of cultural prejudices evident in interactions between Alek's entourage and the 'Leviathan's crew. As 'Clankers' and 'Darwinists' must work together to escape danger, the merging of technologies serves as a metaphor for the overcoming of prejudice and the oppositional ideological views that have dominated much of

¹⁰ See McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*. Paperback ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. (7); Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992. (3); Gates, Pamela S., Susan B. Steffel, and Francis Molson, J. *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003. (139).

the novel. Readers are potentially positioned to recognise the benefits of exploring multiple avenues of cultural advancement. Similarly, the quickly formed trust and friendship between Alek and Deryn, and between Alek and Dr Barlow may be interpreted by readers as commentary on the role of younger generations to challenge the ideological structures that have defined their social traditions, or as a critique upon worldviews wherein different cultural traditions are ostracised as 'other.' The ideological critique presented by Westerfeld in *Leviathan* is overt, and primarily revolves around debates of cultural advancement as the narration works to engage readers, allow them to escape their reality and position them to interpret the problematisation and critique of ideas of 'society,' 'other,' 'good,' 'evil,' and the 'unassailable' nature of societal ideology.

As in *Leviathan*, the events of *Inkdeath* are heavily reliant upon the fantasy otherworld in which the novel is set. Funke utilises a plethora of focalising characters to provide multifocal narration that immerses readers within the Inkworld, demonstrating, as Day suggested, the ways in which 'various points of view influence and are influenced by each other' (67). In doing so, Funke's use of polyphony functions as a technique through which readers are engaged with the fate of the people of the Inkworld as a whole; the otherworld itself ties the various focalisers together in their sometimes-individual, sometimes-universal battles and grievances with each other and the central villain known as the Adderhead. *Inkdeath* is the third of Funke's *Inkheart* Trilogy: the events of the novel continuing directly from the second book, *Inkspell*. The Inkworld is a world in which words have power for those with magic tongues, for it lies within the pages of a book: 'Inkheart.' Many of the focalising characters in *Inkdeath* have been 'read' into the Inkworld and spend much of the novel discovering their place in this new, fantastic, world – including Meggie and Mo, who hold power in the Inkworld thanks to their 'silvertongues,'¹¹ Resa, who previously spent many years as a slave in the Inkworld, Fenoglio, the author of the novel *Inkheart* who sees the Inkworld as his own creation, and Farid, who is experiencing his third version of reality, beginning life in the book *1001 Arabian Nights* – while other focalising characters include those born in the Inkworld, and one who has returned to the Inkworld after many years in the 'real' world.

Mendlesohn states that successful immersive (and by association escapist) fantasies feature otherworlds which – as well as acting as a cohesive whole – are introduced to readers entirely through what the characters note as ordinary (59-60). Thus the characters of *Inkdeath*, and their questioning and testing of roles and boundaries within the Inkworld, shape a reader's understanding of it. This is particularly significant to Fenoglio's experience. As Mendlesohn observes that immersive fantasies can

¹¹ Slang for those who can bring words to life by reading them aloud.

present as ‘fantasies of thinning [in which such texts] start with what is and watch it crumble’ (113), so readers observe that Fenoglio, the author transported into his own story, struggles to acknowledge that his world has an entropy of its own. Faced with his own failures at trying to turn the Inkworld back to his will, Fenoglio describes himself as ‘a writer who ha[s] run out of words’ (Funke 49), and readers are positioned to watch his immersion into the Inkworld as the illusions of ‘his’ Inkworld crumble. Fenoglio’s initial reluctance to accept that his world has morphed into something bigger than he can control is replaced by depression as he realises that he cannot tame this very real otherworld, and finally content as he learns to work within it. Funke’s use of many varying focalisers in *Inkdeath* is a technique encouraging critical attention upon the ways in which meaning is created and interpreted through narrative. While all focalising characters share an ultimate foe, many of the characters also have quarrels with each other. For Fenoglio, ‘morose’ that the Inkworld cannot be tamed to his liking, this antagonist is Orpheus, a self-named man gifted with both a writing ability and silver tongue, for whom entering the Inkworld is akin to a child making their mark on their favourite story. As Fenoglio asks ‘was there a worse fate than having to watch someone else twist your own words, adding colourful touches – in very bad taste – to the world you’d made?’ (Funke 49) readers are entrenched in Fenoglio’s struggles through his rhetorical address, and encouraged to reflect upon the role of interpretation in narrative. For Orpheus, it later becomes clear, these changes are not malicious, but rather borne from joy at finding himself within the world of his favourite novel, the fictive ‘Inkheart.’

The polyphonic narration of *Inkdeath* foregrounds the metafiction, intertextuality and self-referentiality explored through the story events, which in turn highlight the function of Funke’s multifocal approach to immerse readers within the otherworld. The use of closely focalised narration to engage readers and encourage escape within the narrative is significant to the success of *Inkdeath*: the storyline is so complex that readers must engage with every focalising character in order to realise the depth of the narrative. Funke achieves this balance of narrative complexity and reader engagement through closely focalised narration; that is, the multiple focalisers work to foster a sense of universal experience between the characters who, despite a variety of personal grievances, share the same ultimate foe, while simultaneously ensuring reader awareness of their differences.

The sequence that details Dustfinger’s death and rebirth – focalised primarily by Dustfinger and Orpheus – is one of several that draws attention to both the novel’s metafictional techniques and the ways in which Funke uses multiple focalisers to portray the complexity of a given experience, and is, according to Loidl, a defamiliarising technique (85). Following Dustfinger’s death, Orpheus – the outsider who wishes to mould the Inkworld to his own whims and believes himself all-powerful in this world where words are magic – believes he has read favourite character Dustfinger back to life. Yet it is Mo’s voice that bids

Dustfinger return, calling 'wake up, Dustfinger ... The story isn't over yet' (Funke 244, my ellipsis). The allusion to the role of words and narratives in the lives of those in the Inkworld is continued as Orpheus is enraged at Dustfinger's lack of appreciation for the effort he perceives brought his hero back, and threatens to 'write words to harm [him]' (267). Dustfinger responds 'I'm not afraid of words anymore ... neither yours nor Fenoglio's. And neither of you was able to dictate how I'd die' (267, my ellipsis). Despite the power of story within the Inkworld, Death is a higher power, the being with whom 'all stories end' (239). It is significant, therefore, that Dustfinger's return to life comes not at the power of Orpheus' words, but at the bidding of Death and for 'as long as Death allows' (249),¹² for though words are shown to create power, this power remains limited.

Throughout the sequence, readers are alternatively aligned with both Dustfinger and Orpheus, and empathise with both. This is in spite of Orpheus' belittling of other characters and tendencies towards manipulation and control. Where other focalising characters including Fenoglio and Farid see Orpheus as a bully who spends his time 'mucking about with [Fengolio's] story,' (47) the use of close focalisation allows readers to witness Orpheus' 'genuine delight' at Dustfinger's return, as he speaks with words 'awkward with longing' (264). The defamiliarisation of Dustfinger's rebirth subtly encourages readers to set aside their prior conceptions of Orpheus' character in order to form new understandings of his character. In privileging readers with closely focalised polyphonic narration, Funke fosters empathy with all characters focalised, even those who seem universally disliked. Thus Funke invites readers to consider intersubjective themes such as the motivations of others, and the impact of one person's actions upon others, such as when Meggie's perception of Fenoglio's brusqueness is revealed to be in response to 'Meggie's desperate eyes upon him' (533). Further, if readers recognise the metafiction present in the influence of words and stories upon the lives of the characters, the novel challenges assumptions of individual interpretations from literature.

As readers are invited to become aware of the techniques through which meaning is interpreted in literature, they are invited to adopt a more critical reading position. Such a reading position heightens awareness of narrative techniques used to persuade particular interpretations. As readers become aware of the metafiction present in *Inkdeath* for example, their attention is diverted to the use of multiple characters that enhance their understanding of the otherworld. If closely focalised narration allows a story to be 'narrated as if the narrator sat somewhere inside ... a character's consciousness and strained all events through that character's sense of them' (Chatman 98, my ellipsis), it follows that alerting readers to metafictional techniques used in a polyphonic text such as *Inkdeath* encourages

¹² Also significant, when Dustfinger died at the end of *Inkspell*, he chose to do so, exercising his own agency over the pull of the narrative ending to Fenoglio's 'Inkheart.'

readers to become conscious of the choices made about 'which among the [characters' experiences] best enhances the narration' (98). That is, a multifocal, metafictional text presents varying and comparable viewpoints to readers, to which they are encouraged to be consciously aware. Further, intertextuality is apparent in the epigraphs which feature quotes from well-known literature, and other references to consensus reality in *Inkdeath*. A critical reader, however, might also recognise intertextuality implicit in the journey of Meggie. In her attempts to find her place in the Inkworld, Meggie 'constantly move[s] in and out of the primary text' (Shonoda 83), yet ultimately finds she must remain within the 'primary' Inkworld (Barthes *Pleasure* 36). Readers are invited to construct this comparison through the epigraphs, which offer a second layer of meaning to be constructed upon Meggie's journey, often quoting passages from books directly relevant to her ensuing journey. This conjunction between techniques which position critical readers and closely focalised, multifocal narration allows for a more subtle problematisation of presented ideological structures and worldviews than afforded by dual-voiced, straightforward narratives such as *Leviathan*. Where Westerfeld presents a narrative that merges contrasting worldviews, Funke offers readers a multi-layered narrative that invites readers to increase – and add depth to – their understanding of the narrative.

Whereas first-person narration lends itself inherently to fostering engagement between readers and characters, third-person narration, particularly that in which multiple closely focalised narrators are featured, offers a more nuanced and encompassing escape for readers as the otherworld which houses the narrative is necessarily more immersive. *Leviathan* and *Inkdeath* depict the function of multiple viewpoints to offer a complex articulation of the fantasy otherworlds in which they are set through comparative experiences, ideological positions and situations. Such complexity encourages a greater interpretive depth on the part of readers as such narratives reflect contemporary society. Closely focalised polyphonic narration is examined above for its use of techniques that can be seen to problematise the absolute nature of conceptions of right and wrong, and self and other, challenge the function and construction of fiction, and demonstrate the function of comparative viewpoints upon engaging readers with characters and otherworlds.

Chapter 4: The Relationship between Persuasion and Engaging Characterisation

Through the previous analysis of closely focalised narration, the success of escapist texts in engaging their readers can be seen to lie in the intensity of the characterisation. Henry James asserted the strong bond between character and plot, asking ‘what is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?’ (80). Despite positioning character and action as inseparable, James nevertheless ‘gave pride of place to character’ (Abbot 124), suggesting that the revelation of character is what makes action significant. In contrast, structuralist theorists, most notably Vladimir Propp, placed emphasis on plot as the site upon which meaning is made, positing that character is defined by actions (Rimmon-Kenan 34). Subsequent theorists including Roland Barthes (1970) and Fernando Ferrarra (1974) have however attempted to position character ‘as the structuring element’ (Ferrara 252). In *The Poetics of Prose*, Todorov expands the character-action debate, suggesting that narratives in which character or action dominate can be separated into two distinct forms, each with their own merits (67). This division is one that has influenced the contemporary theory that has driven this thesis; the significance of character driven narrative to escapism and reader engagement is emphasised by Mendlesohn and Wyile. For Mendlesohn, the centrality of character is characteristic of the immersive fantasy subgenre. She states that immersion is built entirely upon character, for ‘what [the character] understands is all that can be described to [readers]’ (112). As an immersive fantasy is constructed, a reader’s escape is encouraged in their engagement with the protagonist (59); action is secondary. Wyile’s analysis of engaging narration in young adult and children’s texts also stresses characterisation as she asserts that ‘the character takes precedence in engaging narration’ (“Engaging Narration” 134), suggesting that character – rather than being defined by actions – is instead the product of narrative relationship between narrator and narratee (134).¹³ The characters, Wyile suggests, come to life in the process of reading; engaging narration is built upon the creation of character (137).

As characterisation is found to be important to the process of escapism in securing reader engagement, it follows that the depiction of character is similarly significant to the displacement from reality that presents commentary and critique of ideological positions in contemporary young adult fantasy fiction. In Chapter One, I posited that contemporary young adult fantasy novels seen as escapist, far from being frivolous, are highly complex, and can open space for ideological conversation. The process of transportation that engagement with escapist fiction provokes masks the didacticism inherent in literature ‘capable of influencing and changing material reality at different discursive levels’ (Bhadury

¹³ A concept also suggested by Patrick O’Neill in *Fictions of Discourse* 1996.

301). To this extent, characterisation is responsible for conveying readers into the fantastic otherworld as they 'escape' reality, and for the persuasion to critically reflect upon worldviews and societal paradigms that may result. This function is recognised by Mendlesohn as she builds on the work of W.R Irwin and Peter Nicholls who state that characters must express 'interest rather than amazement' (Irwin 39) in the world, rather than 'draw[ing] attention to [the world's] absolute oddity' (Nichols 62) to acknowledge readers must see the world as characters do (Mendlesohn 59).

Yet while characterisation is significant to engaging, escapist fantasies, it remains that the concept becomes problematic in narratives encouraging a critical reader position. While escapism serves to engage readers with closely focalising characters and the fantastic otherworlds in which their stories play out, readers are yet aware that the narratives remain works of fiction. While *Terrier*, for example, fosters the sense that readers have a privileged connection to Beka, the overt references to the journal format and the jumps in story time acknowledge the fictive nature of the work. Similarly multi-focal narration such as that in *Leviathan* – while conveying dual viewpoints that engage readers – offers an irrefutable reminder that this, too, is not real. Escapist texts, then, rely on characterisation to foster personal relationships that invest readers, thus retaining reader immersion; characterisation can thus be seen to significantly impact the interpretation of meaning.

The use of metafictional techniques problematises characterisation by drawing attention to the creation of meaning. In a narrative convention in which character, otherworld and plot are intrinsically linked, James' approach to character becomes all the more pertinent. If indeed the question is 'what is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?' (James 80), what level of agency, then, can a character be shown to achieve within such a narrative? Further, what influence can such a use of metafiction have upon readers and their perceptions of their own agency? While the use of metafiction is, to some extent, an inherent quality of most literature, Funke's *Inkdeath* overtly utilises metafictional, metaleptic, and intertextual strategies to call attention to questions of agency. Such strategies further question the agency of characters who are inherently defined in terms of narrative roles, or functions. This chapter shall focus primarily on the potential functions of metafiction, metalepsis and intertextuality in *Inkdeath*.¹⁴ The metafictional elements of *Inkdeath* alert readers to the place of fiction in the formation of their own conceptions of agency and subjectivity, as well as the ways in which narratives seek to influence the interpretation of meaning. The chapter shall,

¹⁴ Wherein metafiction is understood as a technique which aims to expose the deliberate construction of literature; metalepsis is defined as 'the disruption of logical and hierarchical relations between different levels of narration' (McCallum "Would I Lie to You?" 191), which enhances the metafictionality of a text by introducing questions of who controls story and character (McCallum "Metafictions" 403); and intertextuality is treated as a deliberate narrative strategy utilised to highlight the metafictionality of the text.

however, also analyse the effect of more conventional narrative techniques upon characterisation, namely the place of 'enhanced inclusivity' to fostering a deeply empathetic character-reader bond.

In Chapter Three I touched upon ways in which closely focalised, polyphonic narration may alert readers to the use of metafiction in *Inkdeath*. I re-examine the concept of metafiction here in terms of characterisation, analysing constructions of character agency in a metafictional environment and the potential implications for reader interpretation. Meggie, Mo and Violante represent three very different struggles to achieve agency, yet, significantly, they do achieve it. Meggie, at fifteen, is undergoing the transformation from child to adolescent, struggling to find her place in a new world in which she knows none of the rules, and seemingly has no place. Mo, drawn into the story as Fenoglio's Bluejay finds himself falling into the character with little recollection of his own personality. Violante, the only character featured who knows nothing of the power of words, nor that the Inkworld is itself presented as a narrative, has had her life turned upside down by Fenoglio's interferences in 'his story', and fights for agency against the paradigm into which she was born. As Meggie finds herself a place in her strange new story, Mo rejects the role the Inkworld cast him and returns to himself, and Violante instigates change from within the story, readers are prompted to question the level of agency that Meggie, Mo and Violante can ultimately achieve if their actions are written for them. On the one hand, the three characters are defined (and constrained) by a reader's awareness of the literary constructs that limit their actions. On the other hand, the ultimate success of each character to at least express a sense of their own agency suggests that individuals may control their own fate despite the suggestion that there is an intrusive author figure (or other power such as fate or societal convention) controlling their stories.

In a conversation with Orpheus, Dustfinger comments that 'this world is spinning its own threads ... you only confuse them – take them apart and put them back together again in ways that don't really fit, instead of leaving it to the people who live in this place to improve it' (Funke 266, my ellipsis). Though talking of the outsiders eager to adjust the world of Fenoglio's 'Inkheart' to suit their own designs, Dustfinger aptly draws reader attention to the complexity of the Inkworld as its own entity, encouraging questions about the role of fate and destiny upon those who find themselves within that world. Meggie, for example, enters the Inkworld as a complete outsider. As an adolescent character, she is at an age where she has begun to navigate society in 'our' reality. This process of maturation halts, however, when she is thrust into the Inkworld and must readjust her fragile understanding of her place in society to fit her new situation. Meggie struggles to find her place in the Inkworld, and subsequently rebels in a subtle reference to the jolt many adolescents feel as they are thrust suddenly into adulthood.

"Don't you sometimes think we ought to go back? ... I know I persuaded you to stay, but ... perhaps it's time." Mo just looked at her, and Meggie knew his answer. They had changed places. Now he was the

one who didn't want to go back... [he] drew her to his side, the way he had done countless times when she was a little girl. That was long ago, so long ago! As if it were in another story and the Meggie was a different Meggie.
(39-40, my ellipsis)

Inkdeath is overtly metafictional, according to Linda Hutcheon's definition of the term (7): Meggie's rebellion leads her to constantly reference the world of her childhood – and the one readers recognise – as real, deliberately drawing attention to the Inkworld's original status as a work of fiction, creating an explicit awareness of the narrative construction of *Inkdeath* itself. The line 'as if it were in another story' highlights the position of both the Inkworld, and the world of *Inkdeath* as fiction. Her comment on her childhood self seeming 'a different Meggie' is aimed at readers who may be feeling similarly displaced upon beginning to navigate the adult world, thus readers become invested in her journey, for it mirrors their own. Meggie constantly wishes to 'go home' yet she cannot return, not least because she does not have the power to write herself there. Meggie's quest for agency is stifled by her stubborn refusal to understand the rules of the new space she must navigate.

Funke's use of the 'real' world as an intertext in order to enhance engagement with the narrative, its characters, and the metafictionality it presents is an example of the novel's metaleptic techniques. The concept that the Inkworld and its characters are made up of words is comparable with the fictionality of the *Inkdeath* novel, and suggests a homological relation between the Inkworld, Meggie's 'real' world, and the world of readers. This metalepsis and intertextuality is implicit to Meggie's characterisation, drawing overt attention to the construction of character and narrative, thus demanding readers consider the impact of perceived fate upon ideologies of agency and power. Questions of fate and comparisons to story are brought to the fore as Meggie often comments on the ending of a chapter of life (387), that events are entering 'a new chapter' (518), or, in times of overcoming adversity, that 'the story was beginning again' (387). Similarly, as readers experience Meggie's closely focalised narration, they empathise with her when she notes the influence of Fenoglio's authorship over her and those she loves. This empathy strengthens the bond between reader and character, ensuring that when assumed narrative levels are disrupted, as when Meggie comments Fenoglio 'doesn't know where his story is going' (518), readers remain immersed within the story. Meggie increasingly questions the effect of Fenoglio's original narrative upon the events that make up her reality, inviting readers to correspondingly consider the role of narrative upon reality. This questioning is not limited to literature, though the nature of such narratives to instruct is overtly referenced throughout the novel. It is only when Meggie accepts the Inkworld as a world with an entropy of its own and allows herself to become a part of the story that she can accept the agency she has had all along. Funke's novel questions the impact and rigidity of destiny and fate ("Publishers Weekly"), highlighting, as McCallum suggests of metafictional narratives, 'relationships between narrative structure, characterisation, agency, and self

definition' ("Would I Lie to You?" 187). As Meggie finds agency comes when she accepts her place as part of the Inkworld, readers are positioned to realise the impact of narrative upon their own maturation, and the potential for their own journeys into adulthood.

In contrast to Meggie's reluctance to accept the Inkworld as her new reality, Mo, her father, is deeply entrenched within Fenoglio's story as the Bluejay – a robber hero constructed by Fenoglio in Mo's image. Whereas Meggie's characterisation is defined by an intertextual relationship with the 'real' world, Mo's is recognised in the close focalisation of his own experiences and the observations of others in Funke's polyphonic narration. The role of the Bluejay is repeatedly referenced as one Mo had no choice but to embody upon arriving in the Inkworld. '[Fenoglio] made him into a robber' (333 emphasis in original) exclaims one character, while Meggie tells Fenoglio that 'you can't write any more about him ... let Mo be Mo again, just Mo and no one else ... [he] certainly wouldn't want you catching him in your words like a fly in a spider's web. You're changing him!' (435, my ellipsis). Mo's plight as he first falls into, then struggles to free himself from, the role that the story has pushed him into is contrasted by the impact his absorption into the story has upon those around him. To Meggie, for example, the Bluejay is 'a stranger with her father's face' (Funke 65), and to Resa, Mo's wife, his voice 'no longer sounded like her husband's. It was the voice of the Bluejay' (150). To regain the agency he lost upon becoming the Bluejay, readers witness Mo striving to fight against the words that now determine his fate. Mo's realisation that he must shed the character the book has assigned to him to regain his agency is an example of the metalepsis that disrupts the reading experience. Readers engaged in the narrative are persuaded to consider the symbolism of Mo's journey to return to himself. Made overt by the metafictional strategies used in the novel, Mo fights against the role 'fate' has determined for him, mirroring aspects of the maturation process in which adolescents play at various personalities and roles.

In the Bluejay role, the entropy of the Inkworld controls Mo's fate. His actions in *Inkdeath* are driven by both the writings of Fenoglio and Orpheus – who seek to help and harm respectively – and by the governing influence of Death, who is personified to demand Mo fix the damage caused by his prior interferences with the Inkworld. Significantly, the Bluejay character, while written by Fenoglio, is not part of the original Inkworld. Rather, the Bluejay is a character from a series of ballads written by Fenoglio upon becoming trapped in his creation. Though Fenoglio consistently denies that he is responsible for Mo's absorption into the character, arguing that '[Mo] himself decided to be the Bluejay! I just wrote a few songs' (Funke 436), it is apparent to readers that words written from within the Inkworld are just as powerful as the words that wrote it. This challenges reader assumptions of the way narrative is shaped (Bhadury 308). Mo's absorption into the narrative questions the role of free will in predetermined narrative – or societal – patterns, while his emergence into a character with agency of his own challenges ideologies of power and agency that suggest dominant paradigms cannot be

transgressed. Similarly, the ultimate failure of those with power in the Inkworld to control Mo's destiny as he sheds the Bluejay persona and regains his independence draws attention to the metafictional elements of the novel, including the metalepsis that is central to the immersive reader interactions of *Inkdeath* (Bhadury 311). Mo's fight against the words that 'ate into his heart like pale maggots' (Funke 589) is a fight directly against the words of the narrative that have bound him inside it, positioning readers to consider the agency a character can have within a set narrative. The characterisation of Mo ensures maintained immersion and persuades readers to read critically as the narrative draws comparisons between the hyperbolic influence of narrative upon Mo's subjectivity and the ways in which literature provides a formative influence to the subjectivity and agency of readers themselves.

Violante's quest for agency is highly significant, as she is one of the only characters completely unaware of the fictionality and power of words in the Inkworld. Violante, daughter of the Adderhead (the nemesis against whom Funke's entire cast of characters is pitted), and widow to the late Prince of Ombra, has had her fate turned upside down by Fenoglio's egotistical interferences. While reader knowledge is privileged by the polyphonic narration, Violante knows only that she inhabits a world in which her father and his steward define her level of power. Violante's journey to heighten her personal agency drives the events of the latter half of the novel. As Violante takes her father's prized prisoner – the Bluejay – to the castle her mother grew up in, believing it will give her an advantage from which to negotiate power on her own terms, Funke utilises the character engagement gained by the close focalisation of characters including Violante, Mo and Dustfinger to draw a rich picture of both the efforts of the individual characters toward personal goals, and highlight the extent to which Violante's role in the Inkworld is predefined by the narrative. Violante's quest for agency is pitched against the efforts of Fenoglio, Meggie and Orpheus to alter the Inkworld for their own selfish desires, and acts as a counterpoint to the overt metafictionality apparent in the focalisation of other characters. Where Meggie's achievement of agency comes only as she accepts the story and creates a role for herself within it, Violante is a part of the Inkworld and is aware of the ways in which its paradigms deny her agency. Violante steps outside of her pre-determined destiny to challenge the gender ideologies that define her independence. In deliberate contrast to Meggie's desires to hold onto her childhood, Violante is depicted in her attempts to manipulate adult society. To readers, engaged with the plight of all characters, the understanding of Violante's journey is most significant. Significantly, though readers are aware of the narrative metafiction that has defined her actions, Violante herself is not. The metafictional elements that define Violante's characterisation are relatively subtle, and more closely aligned to the experiences of adolescent readers; Violante escapes her reality through reading, she is remarked upon as being 'in love with the role' (Funke 692) of the Bluejay, and fights to adjust the world to her liking from within its boundaries. Metaleptic strategies can be seen to define the characterisation

of Mo and Meggie to draw attention to the role of narrative in the interpretation of meaning, and the processes that inform ideologies of agency and selfhood. Violante's achievement of agency and her characterisation however depict a character who inhabits her world much as readers do theirs. Violante provides a character experience that does not rely upon attempted manipulation of the fabric of the Inkworld, offering relief for readers from the overt metafiction present in *Inkdeath*. Thus the characterisation and focalisation of Violante acts in counterpoint to the experiences that seek to challenge reader assumptions of story, a technique that ensures readers remain engaged with the narrative. Similarly, Violante can be interpreted as the only character to achieve true agency, because she alone works within the entropy of the world to improve it – coming full circle from Dustfinger's earlier quoted comment.

The characterisation of Funke's many focalising characters influences reader interpretation of meaning. Metafictive and metaleptic transgressions are highlighted by the engaging narration that transports readers into the story. The positioning of readers to receive metafiction is not however the only way in which engaging narration privileges characterisation. Depictions of power and agency also offer significant impact on readers' worldviews through heightened reader-character sympathies fostered through the use of an 'enhanced sense of inclusivity,' a term used here to refer to a combination of factors including tone, mode of address, and the use of heightened addressivity that contribute to fostering a sense of personal connection between character and readers. This personal connection allows for the opening of ideological conversation between readers and text. As readers are entrenched within a narrative, they absorb ideologies of power and agency portrayed within it, question these ideologies in relation to their reality, and finally turn such questioning away from the novel into which they have been encouraged to escape and back upon the paradigms that govern their society.

To explore the concept of enhanced inclusivity as I refer it to narration and characterisation, it is significant to first consider the concept of addressivity. Addressivity, according to Bakhtin, marks the way in which narration seems to address readers directly (280). Fostering a sense of inclusivity is integral to engaging readers in the story and inherent in all literature. I argue, however, that the use of closely focalised narration to enhance the 'earnest and personal' (Wyile "Engaging Narration" 118) character-reader relationship builds upon the inherent addressivity of narrative. This elevates addressivity from a concept inherent in all literature to be recognised as a deliberate technique that positions readers to open the interpretive process (McCallum *Ideologies of Identity* 15). As the narration of a novel reflects the polyphony of authorial, narratorial, character, intertextual and even reader voices that inform the interpretation of a text, many contemporary young adult escapist fantasy texts consciously emphasise the natural addressivity as a narrative technique that, alongside tone and mode of address, further immersing readers and persuading them to certain interpretations of ideological critique.

The journal mode in which *Terrier* is narrated is, as analysed in Chapter Two, highly inclusive. Readers become trusted friends in whom Beka confides her fears and anxieties as she strives to protect the residents of the Lower City against the conspicuous evil of the villain Crookshank, and the obscure Shadow Snake myth. This close connection to Beka as positions readers understand her frustration when she is forced to choose between the two cases, forcing a kidnapped friend to wait as she instead frees twelve men about to be murdered.

Tunstall's reasonable voice was like a hammer in the shadows. I knew he was right [in placing a higher priority on the twelve diggers], but I had the taste of the Shadow Snake like blood in my mouth.

And yet there were the ghosts [of the diggers], seventeen of them. How many more would come in the morning? Would it be poison again, or swords like the first time? (454)

As a Dog, Beka's power is such that she is in a position to act against criminals, yet that same power also hobbles her as she is relied upon to act upon priority rather than personal interest. Throughout the novel, Beka strives for the power to act – a power that comes with as many consequences as it does benefits. As she wrestles with the competing priorities in the excerpt, Beka recognises the duty of care she must uphold. Her rhetorical questioning demands readers also consider the impossibility of her situation, and to consider that power is two-sided.

While the dystopia of *Delirium*, and the initial characterisation of Lena, makes it clear from the beginning of the novel that Lena has no desire for agency of her own, her commentary on her past alerts readers that she is subconsciously striving for agency even before she realises it herself. In a monologue, Lena states:

'You may think the past has something to tell you ... You may think there's something in it for you, something to understand or make sense of. But I know the truth: ... I know the past will drag you backward and down ... If you hear the past speaking to you, feel it tugging at your back and running its fingers up your spine, the best thing to do – the only thing – is run' (Oliver 157-58, my ellipsis)

To readers, who know that Lena consciously looks forward to receiving her cure, such narration uncovers a less tangible aspect of her characterisation. As Lena expresses her desire to run from the past, it becomes apparent that her anticipation for the cure is borne – not from a firm belief in the paradigms of her society – but from an unconscious yearning to break out of the situation that has governed her childhood and adolescence. Her constant assertions that she looks forward to the cure are undermined by similarly constant, longing reflections upon her relationship with her deceased mother, who was not cured, and filled her early childhood with love. Lena's characterisation throughout the novel ensures that readers are able to read the double meaning in the monologue quoted above, demonstrating that without agency, one cannot achieve independence.

Westerfeld's *Leviathan* achieves an enhanced sense of inclusivity through the strict separation of the dual-voiced narration that conveys the limited experiences of Alek and Deryn. This limitation of narration retains the sense of personal relationship with each character. *Leviathan* relies on the encompassing otherworld as much as the experiences of Alek and Deryn to inform both characterisation, and their respective searches for agency. As Alek is restricted by his position and the rigidity of the 'Clanker' societal paradigm, his search for agency begins when he makes the conscious decision to throw himself on the mercy of the Darwinist airship. Deryn's journey, in contrast, is far less clear-cut. As a midshipman in the Royal Navy, Deryn has, for all intents and purposes, agency and power enough to be viewed as an adult. As the narration of *Leviathan* however engages with both adolescents, Deryn serves to offset Alek's journey, providing a counterpoint in order for Alek's lack of agency and power to be recognised. With this contrast of the characters and their respective cultural paradigms, readers recognise that Alek must shed the ideological paradigms of his birth society in order to achieve agency and power outside of the 'rules' he is governed by. To a reader exposed to texts that construct a critical reading position, such as Funke's *Inkdeath*, Alek's search for agency can be seen to similarly question the relationship between character and plot; Alek is strictly governed by societal expectations, and readers become engaged with a situation they may feel mirrors their own as they stand on the cusp of adulthood. Significantly, Alek does not achieve agency of his own until he begins to challenge the role laid out for him by society, adopting a personal worldview that sits between the two represented cultures.

Characterisation is unquestionably significant to both escapism and the interpretation of meaning in closely focalised contemporary young adult fantasy novels. In young adult fantasy narratives, the engagement between reader and character is integral to reader immersion within a text. Closely focalised narration can thus be seen as inherently and intricately linked with depictions of character. That fantastic escapism lends itself to influencing a reader's developing subjectivity was touched upon in the first chapter of this thesis, and has been returned to in this final chapter to examine the ways in which closely focalised young adult fantasy can be formative for readers through an analysis of the representation of agency in the corpus texts. The use of metafictional strategies is specific – in this corpus – to Funke's *Inkdeath*, yet it is significant to consider the impact of how such disruptive techniques upon depictions of agency may influence readers' own agency. Similarly, the impact of techniques that persuade readers to adopt a critical reading position is significant to influencing readers' approach to other texts, and offers significant socialising value to maturing adolescents. The closely focalised polyphonic narration of *Inkdeath* privileges characterisation, in turn influencing interpretations of meaning that can be made from the text. Depictions of power and agency further impact readers' worldviews through an enhanced sense of inclusivity. Regardless, fostering a strong reader-character bond incites a personal connection that prompts societal critique as readers consider their own place within their society.

Conclusion

Escapism in contemporary young adult fantasy literature holds the potential to inform and shape the beliefs and worldviews of adolescent readerships. Engaging narration offers a means through which readers can become immersed in fantastic otherworlds, escaping from their everyday reality. Whereas such escapism has traditionally been viewed as 'superficial' fiction offering little of educational value to readers, contemporary young adult fantasy fiction, however, offers a depth and complexity of thematic content that suggests this is not always the case. This thesis has been primarily concerned with the analysis of engaging narration as the means by which texts become 'escapist.' Throughout the discussion, I have aimed to demonstrate how the use of closely focalised narration can immerse readers within fictive otherworlds, and to analyse how such displacement might position readers ideologically and invite societal critique.

Fantasy literature, particularly that written specifically for adolescents, is apt to be judged as frivolous and of 'inferior quality to realism' (Flanagan) due to its escapist quality. Yet, as seen in the preceding chapters, this judgement fails to take into consideration the complexity of contemporary texts and the potential for such escape to have a socialising effect. While it would be remiss to assert that every contemporary young adult fantasy text encouraging reader immersion through engaging narration will impact on the formation of a reader's belief systems, world views and frameworks for cognition, it remains that such narrative strategies and possible reader positionings offer the potential for ideological persuasion.

Fantasy theorists assert that escapism is the result of an immersed reading position. Therefore the potential for formative privileging, the means through which escape into fantastic otherworlds might be valorised, places great significance on the techniques through which escape is achieved. Immersion within fantasy texts is varyingly attributed to either the presented otherworld, or character. While the fantasy texts examined present fully articulated compelling otherworlds in which readers may 'lose themselves' for a time, I have argued that escapism is realised most fully through a reader's alignment with character. In Chapter One, I defined closely focalised narration as that which clearly relates the experiences of a single character as if readers were inside that character's experiential consciousness. Throughout this thesis I have argued that techniques present in closely focalised narration foster engagement between reader and character and, encouraging readers to invest in a character's maturational journey. Closely focalised narration and reader engagement are thus crucial to character representation and development. In Chapter Four I pulled together the theories and techniques

discussed in Chapters One, Two and Three to discuss the depiction of agency in contemporary young adult fantasy, seeking to demonstrate the effect that closely focalised characters can have upon reader engagement in escapist texts – and thus the genre’s potential formative success.¹⁵ The relationships between character and plot were explored in a discussion of *Inkdeath*; in the exaggerated literary environment of a highly metafictional text, I analysed the function of characterisation as having greater significance than plot for the interpretation of meaning. In the remaining corpus, *Terrier*, *Delirium* and *Leviathan*, it was again posited that characterisation can be more important than plot to reader engagement.

The analysis of closely focalised narration – a technique that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the genre – privileges character over plot as the site through which a reader interprets meaning. When considering fantastic escapism, at least, characterisation is key, as the engaging narration so integral to immersing readers within the genre is inherently character focused. The positioning of the narrator within the limits of the focalising character’s experience ensures that, even in multifocal novels – the character is the lens through which readers experience the otherworld. The techniques examined in Chapters Two and Three for their potential to foster engagement with characters and otherworlds can almost all be seen to directly serve the characterisation of the focalising characters. Much as there would be no immersive fantasy without the fantastic otherworld that so defines the subgenre, without character there would be no story at all

A narratological study of escapist fantasy novels for adolescents suggests that readers ultimately connect to the central character’s journey. Successful immersion within young adult fantasies comes from using techniques to strengthen the reader-character bond. Readers who become Beka’s confidants, a position which is fostered through *Terrier*’s use of the journal mode and immediate past tense, or those who understand Mo’s plight more than he does due to the polyphonic narration and overt metafiction that highlights his loss of agency in *Inkdeath*, are invested in their journeys. As Beka’s worldview shifts and Mo’s belief in the power of words is challenged, readers react to their experiences. It is this reaction that is the great success of escapist fantasy. Such narratives demand an immersion that requires psychological displacement from the ideological structures of a reader’s reality, producing a reading experience that fosters, if nothing else, a compassion for differing societal ideologies and paradigms. The potential for formative instruction, however, is immeasurable.

¹⁵ Wherein success is defined as escapist fantasy offering a socialising benefit to readers, disproving opinions of young adult fantasy as a genre universally lacking in value to maturing readers.

It has been said that the great benefit of fantasy comes from its lack of the knee-jerk reaction readers experience towards overt didacticism in realist texts. The previous chapters have explored the success of escapist fantasy to offer readers didacticism that is, for the most part, masked by the engaging narration and speculative otherworlds that obscure overt reflections upon contemporary society, and thus more easily accepted. Analyses of various cultural paradigms and worldviews expressed in the journeys of the characters who focalise the corpus novels have revealed the ways in which engaging narration exposes readers to discussions of ideological assumptions present in contemporary society, not the least of which are assumptions of adolescent identity, and expectations of agency. That the immersive nature of young adult fantasy defamiliarises such reflections upon society is where escapist texts find their greatest success. In their encouragement of immersion, such texts use their otherworlds to overtly critique contemporary society, and subsequently persuade readers to engage, but also to respond in a manner that is critical of that engagement. Similarly, the use of techniques such as metafiction and the depth gained by the use of dual-voiced or polyphonic narration holds the potential to produce readers who adopt a more critical reading position when approaching other texts. It follows that novels of the genre then also hold the potential to not only position readers to reconsider personal worldviews and ideological assumptions, but also the potential to produce readers who approach society critically. Thus it may be seen that contemporary young adult 'escapist' fantasy novels are significant to the socialisation of adolescent readers, fostering a critical reading position and potentially shaping readers as these novels influence the ways in which readers may approach their own 'quest for meaning and self-definition' (McCallum *Ideologies of Identity* 260).

Bibliography

Primary Literature

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkdeath*. 2007. Trans. Bell, Anthea. Somerset: The Chicken House, 2008.

Oliver, Lauren. *Delirium*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2011.

Pierce, Tamora. *Terrier*. Sydney: Omnibus Books, 2006.

Westerfeld, Scott. *Leviathan*. Camberwell, Victoria: The Penguin Group, 2009.

Secondary Resources

Abbot, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2005.

Allen, Amanda K. "Breathlessly Awaiting the Next Installment: Revealing the Complexity of Young Adult Literature." *Children's Literature* 40.1 (2012): 260-69.

Ames, Melissa. "Engaging "Apolitical" Adolescents: Analyzing the Popularity and Educational Potential of Dystopian Literature Post-9/11." *The High School Journal* 97.1 (2013): 3-20.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination - Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Trans. Holquist, Caryl Emerson and Michael. Austin: University of Texas, 1981.

Barthes, Roland. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." *Image-Music-Text*. London: fontana, 1977.

--- *The Pleasure of the Text*. Trans. Miller, Richard. London: Cape, 1975.

Beckett, Sandra L. *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2008.

- Bhadury, Poushali. "Metafiction, Narrative Metalepsis, and New Media Forms in the Neverending Story and the Inkworld Trilogy." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 37.3 (2013): 301-26.
- Cadden, Mike. "The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 25.3 (2000): 146-54.
- Chatman, Seymour. "Point of View." *The Narrative Reader*. Ed. McQuillan, Martin. Oxon: Routledge, 2000. 96-98.
- Coplan, Amy. "Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fiction." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62.2 (2004): 141-52.
- Daniels, Cindy Lou. "Literary Theory and Young Adult Literature: The Open Frontier in Critical Studies." *The ALAN Review* Winter (2006): 78-82.
- Day, Sara K. "Power and Polyphony in Young Adult Literature: Rob Thomas's 'Slave Day'." *Studies in the Novel* 42.1 (2010): 66-83.
- Falconer, Rachel. *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Feeny, Nolan. "The 8 Habits of Highly Successful Young-Adult Fiction Authors." *The Atlantic*, 22 Oct 2013. Web. 5 May 2014.
- Ferrara, Fernando. "Theory and Model for the Structural Analysis of Fiction." *New Literary History* 5 (1974): 245-68.
- Flanagan, Victoria. "Children's Fantasy Literature: Why Escaping Reality Is Good for Kids." *The Conversation*, 3 Mar 2014. Web. 16 Mar 2014.
- Gates, Pamela S., Susan B. Steffel, and Francis Molson, J. *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003.
- Gerrig, Richard J. *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading*. Colorado: Yale University Press, 1993.

- Hintz, C., and E. Ostry. "Introduction." *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*. Eds. Hintz, C. and E. Ostry. New York: Routledge, 2003. 1-20.
- Hume, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis*. London: Methuen Publishing, 1985.
- Hunt, Peter. *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*. London: Continuum, 2001.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative*. 1980. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1984.
- "Inkdeath (Review)." *Publishers Weekly*, 22 Sep 2008. Web. 7 Aug 2014.
- Irwin, W.R. *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction." *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*. 1884. Ed. Shapira, Morris. Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1963.
- Keen, Suzanne. "A Theory of Narrative Empathy." *Narrative* 14.3 (2006): 207-36.
- Loidl, Sonja. "Constructions of Death in Young Adult Fantastic Literature." *International Research in Children's Literature* 3.2 (2010): 176-89.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*. Paperback ed. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- "Metafictions and Experimental Work." *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Ed. Hunt, Peter. London: Routledge, 1996. 397 - 409.
- "Would I Lie to You? Metalepsis and Modal Disruption in Some "True" Fairy Tales." *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody and Self-Referentiality*. Eds. Sipe, Lawrence R. and Sylvia Pantaleo. New York: Routledge, 2008. 180-92.
- "Young Adult Literature." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Ed. Zipes, Jack. Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Web 10 Aug 2014.
- McGillis, Roderick. "The Embrace: Narrative Voice and Children's Books." *Canadian Children's Literature* 63 (1991): 24-40.
- Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- Nichols, Peter. "Trapped in the Pattern: Science Fiction Vs Fantasy, Open Universes Vs Closed Universes,

Free Will Vs Predestination." *The Fantastic Self: Essays on the Subject of the Self*. Eds. Webb, Janeen and Andrew Enstice. North Perth: Eidolon, 1999. 28-36.

Pavlik, Anthony. "Being There: The Spatiality of 'Other World' Fantasy Fiction." *International Research in Children's Literature* 4.2 (2011): 238-51.

Rimmon-Kenan, Schlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. 1983. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Schuhmann, Elizabeth C. "Shift out of First: Third-Person Narration Has Advantages." *Two Decades of the Alan Review*. Eds. Kelly, Patricia P. and Robert C. Small Jr. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999. 314-19.

Shonoda, Mary-Anne. "Metaphor and Intertextuality: A Cognitive Approach to Intertextual Meaning-Making in Metafictional Fantasy Novels." *International Research in Children's Literature* 5.1 (2012): 81-96.

Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992.

Sullivan, C. W. III. "Introduction." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 12.1 (1987): 6-7.

Swinfen, Ann. *In Defence of Fantasy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Books, 1984.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. New York: Cornell Paperbacks, 1975.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy-Stories." *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories*. Eds. Flieger, Verlyn and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2008. 27-84.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. "Growth in Adolescent Literature: Metaphors, Scripts, and Cognitive Narratology." *International Research in Children's Literature* 5.1 (2012): 64-80.

Vieira, Fatima. "The Concept of Utopia." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Ed. Claeys, Gregory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 3-28.

Wendig, Chuck. "25 Things You Should Know About Young Adult Fiction." *Terrible Minds*, 4 Jun 2013.

Web. 5 May 2014.

Wyle, Andrea Schwenke. "Expanding the View of First-Person Narration." *Children's Literature in Education* 30.3 (1999): 105-202.

--- "The Value of Singularity in First- and Restricted Third-Person Engaging Narration." *Children's Literature* 31.1 (2003): 116-41.

Zipes, Jack. "Foreword: Utopia, Dystopia, and the Quest for Hope." *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*. Ed. Ostry, C. Hintz & E. New York: Routledge, 2003. ix-xxi.