# THE BENT MIRROR

# SPECULATIVE FICTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract

As eleventh and twelfth graders discover their identity, they become tied to gender/culture/ethnic communities. Students explore these identities to form connections to understand writing and ideas about their increasingly diverse world, challenging educators to creatively keep students from cynicism in citizenship.  Speculative fiction exposes students to radically different cultures, not Americanized variations, where presupposed rules can't be applied, and are unable to change the culture. This demonstrates blanket-solutions can't be applied to all situations/cultures and expected to work.  Rather solutions must be unique to that problem and culture.  Speculative fiction authors create original settings that are contrary to the presupposed world, requiring imagination in examining the setting's effect on characters and interactions.  This position paper reviews the literature on meaningful adolescent literature experiences with an emphasis on speculative fiction, provides an overview of science fiction, fantasy and horror genres, and critically review two of their narratives to teach social justice.

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The Argument for Speculative Fiction

   Speculative fiction is literature that infers from, conjectures about, or represents the effects of science, technology, or natural forces on human or other sentient creatures so as to warn against undesirable consequences that might arise.  Speculative fiction develops students into critically literate citizens, "democratic agents and social critics" (Shor, 2009, p. 291), asking the right critical questions in which to deconstructs messages and attitudes towards culture/ethnic/religious groups, teaching how to deal with inherent changes of the world.  The critical questions required to develop citizenship need reconfiguration and restructuring of schema in new forms, as offered by speculative fiction, assisting readers in forming the basis of discovering ways of interrogating the status quo, which is at the heart of teaching social justice, developing and justifying points-of-view.  The goal of critical literacy instruction is to assist students in building more sophisticated schema to question authority by learning of similar collective struggles, "with the goal of challenging inequality and developing an activist citizenry" (Shor, 2009, p. 290), capable of making civic choices for societal change.  Speculative fiction is a genre of change, developing active creative innovative personalities capable of facing uncertainty and ambiguity without disorientation, teaching that change is natural and inevitable, by "explor[ing] the nature, causes, and consequences of change" (Dorsey, 2013, p. 76), that endanger individual and mutual survival.

   An English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum that utilizes "real literature [with] real motivations for reading it" (Peterson, 2011, p. 35), allows reading to aid in developing students as active citizens capable of compassionately understanding human values, creative experiences, and skills in conflict resolution by directly apply a character's solution to their own life, rather than characters whose problems are not similar, causing solutions to become abstract and unable to relate.  Adding speculative fiction to an eleventh and twelfth grade ELA/literacy curriculum

"create[s] conditions for student self-empowerment and self-constitution as an active political and moral subject" (Giroux, 2009, p. 448), aiding modern students in acquiring new critical skills required to navigate societal advancements. Speculative fiction utilizes the conventions of various genres to sensibly anticipate the future of social, political, and technological movements. Speculative fiction provides context for important elicitation-response-evaluations; or constructivist transactional/reader response theory, which, because of schema every reader's experience is unique and emphasizes students as active agents in their learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Speculative literature's familiar story grammar in a literacy curricula entices, motivates, and instructs on becoming critically literate, questioning "the social construct of the self" (Shor, 2009, p. 282). Exposure to more genres of fiction develops student empathy because experienced readers are able to discuss characters' motives and mental states, while providing non-experienced readers to focus discussions around story grammar, as both student groups are able to conceptualize genres along the protagonist's emotional journey (Fong, Mullin, & Mar, 2013).

In ELA classrooms traditionally utilized texts "are laden with polarizing socio-political undertones, making difficult for students to step outside their ethics and engage in effective discussions of the issues posed" (Dorsey, 2013, p. 75), squelching student ability to ask "what if?" Speculative fiction empowers a questioning mind through suspension of disbelief (Hamdan & Noritah, 2010), by taking the same literary issues from integral socio-political influences and relocates them to a speculative setting (Dorsey, 2013), through macro-details of world building. Macro-details are at the heart of speculative fiction world-building, making it diametrically opposed to traditional literary fiction where macro-details are already pre-supposed descriptors outside the purview of the narrative (Cixin, 2013). Macro-details are historical, socio-political,

and cultural descriptors that if included in the main narrative of a literary fiction text, the story transforms into history, while in speculative fiction macro-details can be the narrative (Cixin, 2013), because the history and culture were created by the author.  The macro-details involved in speculative fiction's world-building allows authors to superimpose an entire culture onto a singular character for readers, removing the questions and themes from polarizing cultural contexts, allowing for critiques of narratives associated with distinct cultural and socio-political influences (Wohlwend & Lewis, 2011).  As the constructed world is created by the author's imagination students must "infer from the text when making interpretations of what the world and characters may be like" (Hamdan & Noritah, 2010, p. 6). Being able to demonstrate skills of inference in an ELA classroom is heavily stressed in ELA Common Core Standards.

When ELA/literacy curriculums go beyond canonical fiction to include speculative fiction, damaging dominant/subordinate culture dichotomies are left behind in favor of a wider-breadth of self-governing positive role-models for people marginalized by mainstream society (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2002).  Should the muli-cultural representation be inaccurate or stereotypical educators "indirectly encourage student passivity, and perhaps resentment" (Aho, 2008, p. 35), as it forces literature to be a solution to multidimensional problems.  Speculative fiction combats misrepresentation by being current and free from historical and cultural accuracy, and relies on assumptions based on previous similar historical occurrences to portray the possible pros and cons of social, political, and cultural ideas.  This freedom comes from speculative fiction authors' ability to mix-and-match history and culture creating multiple interpretations, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which pulls equally from a variety of *real* historical coups, such as the Iranian Revolution of 1979 or conservative right wing religious movement of the 1980s.  Increasing exposure to self-governing positive sub-

culture role models, all groups achieve multiple "text-to" connections necessary for critical thinking, intracultural and intercultural understanding beyond the classroom to possess autonomy in the decision making process/national dialogue (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Being completely abstract and based in the imagination speculative fiction provides no wrong connection for multiple "text-to" connections in the classroom. With no wrong connection speculative fiction has a safety in the familiar to branch into dangerous topics, increasing student exposure to historical and cultural understanding. For students this teaches a critical "vocabulary for discussing race, identity, discrimination, and oppression" (Dunbar, 2013, p. 30), aiding students in seeing how writers situate readers to characters and texts. This allows student voices to be heard, creating multi-tonal dialogues and away from dominant mono-tonal viewpoints (Glazier & Seo, 2005, p. 688). Speculative Fiction empowers students by teaching "about attitudes and behaviors that are valued in societ[ies]" (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2002, pp. 7-8). Formal analysis of speculative fiction "form[s] the foundation of an intellectual process of discovering and interrogating the status quo…highlight[ing] how things are by imagining how things might be different" (Passell, 2013, p. 61), focusing the dangerous dialogues of identity, history and politics (Dunbar, 2013).

As cultural-access texts speculative literature is uniquely filled with influences inspiring students who hold tightly to their own culture's attitudes and beliefs to re-imagine and appreciate the world from another cultural perspective, combatting students' inability "to see the intersection between the story world and their schema" (Dressel, 2005, p. 751), due to limited experiences with others. Student failure to assimilate and synthesize readings results in students personalizing characters, and thus students incorporate readings into their views furthering narcissism. By adding modern speculative fiction to a curriculum keeps narcissism at bay,

putting students in other cultures and settings, seeing how others would deal with similar problems in different historical and cultural contexts, and be unable to change the rules, such as the radical fantasy series *Tales of Neveryon*.

By acting as a window into the outside world, literature engages students in identity development "because they relate to characters, identify with situations, and understand personalities or behavior, they come to the realization that there are others like themselves" (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2002, p. 7), providing context for developing emotional intelligences, and broadening understanding. If the ELA literary canon is a mirror to reality, then speculative fiction is a "bent mirror, so the biggest questions of life can be more fully illuminated and explored" (Baker, 2012, p. 89). I will present over-views of the speculative fiction subgenres of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, and provide critical reviews of texts for educators and librarians to include to help students "deconstruct dominant narratives and contend with oppressive practices" (Simmons, 2012, p. 24), to create social justice.

Science Fiction

   Science fiction allows authors to perform thought experiments that investigate, through the narrative, "the definition of 'human'…the development of social groups and establishment of complex societies, appreciation of other cultural systems and the relation of humans to the universe (Jakimovska & Jakimovski, 2010). Modern socially aware science fiction, "consider[s] and identifies the complexities inherent within interrelated systems" (Zigo & Moore, 2005, p. 40), by weaving economics, politics, and sociocultural experiences with technological speculation. Science fiction works hard to avoid narcissism because of reduced emphasis on character, and greater emphasis on "humanity's relationship with nature…provid[ing] a more sober understanding of humanity's place in the universe" (Cixin, 2013, p. 27). Science-fiction themes support already included canonical texts (Zigo & Moore, 2005), illuminating truths about contemporary society when critically reviewing tropes and expectations of the genre when grafted onto mainstream canonical fiction (Atwood, In other worlds: SF and the human imagination, 2011). As a paradigm socially aware science fiction has been the province of unconventional and unorthodox ideologies and lifestyles, and marginalized voices due to its hypothetical and speculative thought experiments/nature/investigations (Teampau, 2014; Obeso, 2014).

   Authors chose to write socially aware science fiction because it is characterized by strong speculation on the future of humanity based on intuition, and beyond natural physical laws (Laz, 1996; Jakimovska & Jakimovski, 2010), to elicit emotional responses "such as awe and wonder along with love, fear, hate or pity" (Hamdan & Noritah, 2010, p. 5), to confront not only complex inter-relations of technology, power and society, but also of self, to explore what it means to be human (Dorsey, 2013). High quality socially aware science fiction has students become productive skeptics, capable of asking "what if" in problem solving and not just fact

checkers to foresee upcoming problems (Svec & Winiski, 2013)  Mainstream literature has moved into deep narcissism, allowing the grand narrative to disappear and is replaced by increasingly "introspective and ever more internalized accounts…leaving only a mumbled monologue of the intra-personal relationship" (Cixin, 2013, p. 31).

Science fiction's world-building requires the author to create exotic settings ranging from stars, parallel and virtual worlds, and uninhabited and inhabited planets.  New extreme settings requires "attention [to be] paid to natural characteristics of these worlds and how they affect those who enter them" (Cixin, 2013, pp. 27-28), extending the experience to parallel the marginalized experience.  Authors accomplish this by not working towards justifying the improbable exotic, but by making it every day within the constructed reality (Zgorzelski, 1979). Similar to the marginalized experience science fiction's exotic settings challenge and progresses readers' beliefs regarding gender roles and sexual behavior (Fong, Mullin, & Mar, 2015), because of characters with multiple genders or identities, forcing the confrontation of what "had previously been accepted as utterly inviolable can collapse at the first cosmic blow" (Cixin, 2013, p. 30).  This reminds students that "we are aliens to ourselves as well as to one another, transactions with science fiction texts can lead readers to deeper explorations of self by becoming aware of the ways one responds to questions about identity and social responsibilities" (Zigo & Moore, 2005, p. 41).

By utilizing distance in time and space to imagine how the physical world could be different, socially aware science fiction "points students to the excitement of identifying and describing social forces at work in their world" (Passell, 2013).  This has science fiction's authors "invent[ing] lies – fictions – to represent "reality" and to present "truth"" (Laz, 1996), and the text gaining social awareness  This is because science fiction's character, plot, and

setting operate as "representative of social forces often symbolizing power, oppression, and marginalization" (Dorsey, 2013, p. 76), aiding students in reframing social facts (Laz, 1996).  By confronting the nature of reality, science fiction urges students "to think about real and imagined social life, their own values and experiences the ways in which we collectively shape social arrangements" (Laz, 1996), thrusting students out of their comfort zones into worlds that operate according to a different reality (Dorsey, 2013). Following, I will provide two possible socially aware science fiction texts that challenge student perception of gender binaries for use in the eleventh and twelfth grade ELA classroom.

The Handmaid's Tale

Margaret Atwood's science fiction novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is presented as a primary resource of an intelligent Handmaid named Offred, and her decisions to defy her assigned position in Gilead.  Gilead is a future U.S. run by a pastiche of oppressive Christian fundamentalist ideologies, fulfilling the desires of a select few men, the Commanders.  Offred, and all Handmaids, act as "two-legged wombs,…sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 156), moving from Commander household to household every two years, in order to participate in scheduled routine sexual unions with Commanders and their wives.  The purpose for the ritual three-way is to reproduce the population of Gilead, which is suffering from low infant mortality rates and rising infertility brought on by nuclear war and environmental factors.  In return women are protected from casual physical violence "unless they disobey an order" (Nakamura, 2012, p. 13), which then is public execution or banishment to remove nuclear waste in the Colonies.  For Handmaids language has been exterminated to constructed "expressions of bare necessities and morally sanctioned phrases, [and] written language is totally forbidden" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 142), going so far as to remove names of shops

and replaced them with pictures.  Through the course of the narrative Offred accepts and

subverts the Handmaid role assigned to her.  Offred rebels against Gilead's patriarchal hierarchy

by becoming aware of language's power to deconstruct and reconstruct reality (Gokcen, 2014),

enlisting her oppressors participation without their knowledge.

       Offred finds solace in memories of the freedoms present in pre-Gilead life, creating doubt

in Gilead's safety in monotone hierarchy, in favor of a personalized multi-tonal tale (Staels

1995).  This continual doubt of certainty has Offred ponder multiple meanings within language,

an excess of play – word play – that Gilead is unable to eradicate/control (Feuer, 1997).  This

failure to eradicate word play by Gilead gives Offred the "ability to play with language generates

new meanings unforeseen by authorities" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 144), such as when Offred first

arrives at Commander's home and searches for proof of the previous Handmaid's residence.  She

finds the Latin phrase "Nolite te bastardes carborundorum" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale,

1985, p. 69), carved inside her cabinet.  Not knowing Latin the phrase gives Offred power, as the

words "invite her to discover their meaning; therefore, she starts a game, which connects her to

her predecessor" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 145), crumbling Gilead's walls of silence and isolation.

Offred discovers the translated meaning to be "Don't let the bastards grind you down" (Atwood,

The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 242), a joke from the Commander's pre-Gilead schools days.

Offred transforms herself from an enslaved Handmaid to an active agent by making the Latin

phrase into a rebellious call to arms, because aside from its figurative language the phrase's

origin in the Commander's youth recasts Offred as adult and Commander as adolescent.

       Offred and Commander's relationship began as secret night meetings to play Scrabble,

separating their relationship from authority controlled public life (Gokcen, 2014), allowing her to

reclaim portions of her "imagination despite the oppressive mind control of the Gildean regime"

(Ghosal & Chatterjee, 2013, p. 31).  Scrabble depends on jurisdiction over language, memory, words, and letters, empowerments that radically go against the new regime (Gokcen, 2014; Ghosal & Chatterjee, 2013).  As such Offred is able to use Scrabble to empower herself, as the game brings up Offred's beloved memories of playing Scrabble in pre-Gilead, sitting in chairs with her husband and using a dictionary to search for words and spellings.  By extension Scrabble also allows Offred to re-investigate "the rich potentials of language" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 146), in everyday activities.  Offred is also able to use the secret Scrabble games to gain power with the Commander by recognizing the need for shifting roles in their transgression, narrating "I win the first game, I let him win the second" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 180), noticing he enjoys moments she takes charge so that he can be the one to follow (Gokcen, 2014), as when he sits on the floor after their first game.  He sits like a child at his mother's chair.  The new interaction between Offred and her Commander grants her new power over him, because it is reminiscent of the aftermath of love-making, particularly a transgressive role-play, which is illegal in Gilead.  The Commander fails to see the shifting power, believing they are unshakably unequal, convinced it is unnecessary "to look powerful and oppressive in front of Offred" (Nakamura, 2012, p. 11).  The Commander "often assumes the role of teacher or trainer" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 148), forcibly instructing Offred to become his perfect sex doll, not realizing that she is "play[ing] along with his expectations" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 148), to increase her chances of survival.

As their secret Scrabble relationship develops Offred gains the ability to ask for rationales behind the new system, with the Commander answering, "We thought we could do better" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 185), revealing himself to be a utilitarian, "genuinely believ[ing] that the social order that he has helped to accomplish is ideal even if a

small percentage of individuals…have to suffer" (Thomas D. , 2008, p. 94). Almost immediately through the Commander questions his reasoning asking Offred if there was anything the new regime had forgotten, to which she responded "Love" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 185). While Offred was referring to pre-Gilead life, she could as equally been referencing the monthly humiliating and physically paralyzing three-way intercourse between Offred, Commander, and his Wife. Hearing how he wants to hear Offred, the Commander takes her to Jezebel, a brothel where unorthodox women – nuns or lesbians – and intellectuals – lawyers or sociologists – who refuse to align with Gilead's hierarchy are sterilized and work as prostitutes (Gokcen, 2014; Nakamura, 2012). When the Commander brings Offred to Jezebel he does so "pretending she is one of the prostitutes" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 149), to have sex away from the constraining involvement of the Wife, floundering in licensed immorality (Nakamura, 2012; Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985). Offred does not enjoy her experience of Jezebels to that when the Commander has more traditional sex with her, Offred narrates "I lie there like a dead bird" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p. 255). Offred choses to fake arousal, in her sexual encounters, to speed along the intercourse that negates any personal rebels act to fill herself with language.

From her time after Jezebel, Offred's best rebellious act is her clandestine affair with the Commander's chauffer, Nick. The Wife arranges the affair to get Offred pregnant, and hopefully pass the resulting child off as the Commander's. For the wife she maintains her status by the virility of the Commander, and Offred avoids ritualized sex acts for nine months, placement in the Colonies as she hasn't conceived after three placements, a cigarette, and a picture of her daughter in the Wife's possession. Offred "allow[s] herself to fall surreptitiously in love with Nick" and so rebels both mentally *and* physically against the Wife's deal and Gilead (Ghosal &

Chatterjee, 2013, p. 38), going for enjoyment of touching, being touched, and kissing, which are

"superfluous [actions] to the mere function of procreation" (Gokcen, 2014, p. 151). Throughout

their encounters Nick remained "a cardboard cutout" (Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, 1985, p.

304), allowing Offred to romanticize their relationship in order to continue their sex acts. That

same romanticized relationship allows Offred to trust Nick, at the end of the novel, to escape into

the van he has called for her.


The Left Hand of Darkness

Ursula Le Guin's 1969 futuristic *The Left Hand of Darkness* is a thought experiment of

chapters alternating narrators, that are intercut with Gethen mythology, which gives way to

Genly as the lone narrator, to understand 'the other.' It is the story of an Ekumen envoy, Genly

Ai, to the planet Gethen to convince the citizens to join the Ekumen. Gethen's population,

Gethenians, are ambisexual spending the majority of their time as androgynous beings. Genly Ai

narrates the novel from the future admitting that the story is not his alone but shared among

many voices. By making a story with more than one voice rather than a report Genly has created

a dialogue. As narrators and myths alternate the text is difficult to follow for readers, until later

chapters when deep authentic communication develops between Genly and his Gethenian liaison

Estraven.

In the beginning Genly lazily assigns human binary gender attributes to what he sees in

Gethenians; as distrustful he labels as the feminine 'other,' and what is safe is labeled as the

familiar masculine. Genly's gender categorization brings into question the natural suppositions

about the meaning of "be[ing] human and less than human, particularly when 'human' is taken to

mean white and male" (Pearson, 2007, pp. 185-186). His clumsy attempts at categorization help

him cope and make the Gethen world recognizable is similar to all colonists (Cornell, 2001, p.

318), missing the purpose of his role as Ekumen ambassador. The Ekumen are the opposite of a colonial power, seeking to acquire "[i]ncrease of knowledge. The augmentation of the complexity and intensity of the field of intelligent life. The enrichment of harmony and greater glory of God" (Pearson, 2007, p. 190). This is contrary to most commercial colonial exchanges where an 'Us' from 'Them' dialectic is necessary, while also demonstrating shifting boundaries between self/other (Pearson, 2007). This creates hierarchal interactions that "amounts to an on-going and enormous-scale scapegoating of some groups within a culture, according to gender, race, and/or class" (Adams, 1991, p. 36).

Genly's efforts at categorization at the beginning of Le Guin's novel "are attempt[s] to come to terms with a world without permanent or essential gender roles" (Pearson, 2007, p. 188), causes him to reject his political liaison Estraven. When Estraven falls out of favor with the king Estraven communicates to Genly how he should proceed diplomatically with the king following Gethenian *shifgerthor* – offering direct advice is an insult. Genly blames Estraven for the breakdown in communication. When Genly finally understands Estraven about falling out of favor Genly, narrating, continues to blame Estraven's "[d]amning his effeminate deviousness" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 14), rather than his own lazy anthropological skills. While Genly's poor anthropological skills "allows the construction of Us and Them, of a binary that is automatically hierarchical, so that They are always less (human) than We" (Pearson, 2007, p. 189), Genly's failure to understand Estraven, the inability to understand Estraven's communication, is rooted in Genly's "preconceptions based on Estraven's social position and on his androgyny" (Cornell, 2001, p. 320).

As the novel progresses Genly's ability to let go of his preconceptions of Estraven and of the Gethenians, his "understanding of the Gethenians and of himself develops because

communication becomes possible" (Cornell, 2001, p. 320).  It's during Estraven's rescuing of Genly from Pulefar Farm, a penal farm, that Genly has his breakthrough.  As Genly and Estraven escape across the arctic Gorbin Ice and dialogues become more direct, Genly is finally able to relinquish his preconceptions, seeing how his mis-readings were rooted in fear, narrating that he finally saw "what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended to not see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 214).  After building frustration in both parties, Estraven explains his motivations, saying to Genly, "I am the only man in all Gethen that has trusted you entirely, and I am the only man in Gethen that you have refused to trust" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 198).  Genly's response is both an "apology and admission" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 199), beginning for both to "alter their approaches in order to accommodate each other" (Cornell, 2001, p. 321), allowing for deeper conversations.  Estraven and Genly have a revealing dialogue about dualism, with Genly noting how Gethenians are "as obsessed with wholeness as we [Ekumen] are with dualism," with Estraven saying "Duality is an essential, isn't it?  So long as there is *myself* and *the other*" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 233).  This conversation leads into Estraven's request for Genly to explain sex differences and the nature of women, and Genly's response that "women are more alien to me than you are" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 235), which "illuminate[s] the relationship between binary sex/gender systems…and the treatment (and, indeed, the identification) of the [o]ther" (Pearson, 2007, p. 192).

While escaping across the Ice Estraven goes into *kemmer* – the time a Gethenian assumes a male or female sex and finds sex a difficult avoidance – with Estraven transitioning to a female assignment.  During this time it's possible for their new found understanding, forming a loving bond, to take on a sexual element, as for the first time chapters containing overlapping narratives, "bring[ing] together the voice of the human, individual, the Gethen individual, and the Gethen

culture" (Cornell, 2001, p. 323).  Both characters admit the tension between them but Genly

diffuses the idea, because it would cause them "to meet once more as aliens" (Le Guin, 1969, p.

249).  That is because Genly will always be male, and when Estraven goes into *kemmer* will

always assume female, and "women are more alien" than Gethenians (Pearson, 2007, p. 193).

As they reach safety Estraven sacrifices his/her life to fulfill Genly's mission by allowing

security to shoot him/her, allowing for the first time Le Guinn's novel is able to have Genly

narrate chapters back to back, narrating "My friend [Estraven] being dead, I must accomplish the

thing he died for" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 272), becoming part of the Gethenian voices, and so calls

down the Ekumen delegation "ensuring the successful foundation of a new cultural order on

Gethen" (Adams, 1991, p. 37).  At last Genly has understood the Ekumen practice of sending a

single ambassador, "Alone, I cannot change your world.  But I can be changed by it.  Alone, I

must listen as well as speak.  Alone, the relationship I finally make…is not impersonal and not

political: it is individual, it is personal, it is both more and less than political" (Le Guin, 1969, p.

259).  This creates a bittersweet ending to the novel as Genly, through Estraven, has evolved to

make the Gethenians Self and humans Other, but retains his "tendency to masculinize

everything, including Estraven, then Estraven, despite biology, remains discursively male"

(Pearson, 2007, p. 194), and so sustains a reliance on a gender/sex binary system.

Fantasy

In today's digital age and virtual learning age, literary realism may lose student engagement as it no longer adequately traces every day realities of constructing dominant ideologies, while fantasy fiction offers a radical agent of change by removing students from a secure belief in reality "plunging through and beyond [realism]" (Baker, 2012, p. 437), to a newer version of everyday reality. This is the same purpose as literary fiction and realism: portray daily life as it is in order to shock readers to a new perspective. Fantasy fiction is set against realism by selectively distorting reality's time and space and rigid distinctions of character in pursuit of creating new perspectives (Jackson R. , 1981; Barron, 2012), through de-familiarizing readers from their entrenched habits of thinking and perceiving what is real and possible, allowing for additional new perceptions in critical awareness (Baker, 2012; Suvin, 2000).

Similar to socially aware science fiction, radical fantasy is reactionary to the "experiences of everyday life" (Suvin, 2000, p. 222), formed by the continuing socio-economic history, material, and stifling political reality of the author (Baker, 2012; Suvin, 2000). Radical fantasy differs by celebrating human creativity and individuality by magic, when employed, standing "as a figure for enlargement of human powers...their actualization of everything latent and virtual in stunted human organism" (Jameson, 2002, p. 278). Radical fantasy authors have an interest in taking the everyday social context of marginalized social classes and groups so that students face the present and future reality with shock or resolve (Suvin, 2000; Esberk, 2014). This is done by radical fantasy's desire to display "material struggles for progressive social justice and economic equality, and in the relationship of the individual and collective identity understood on the basis of class struggle rather than subject positions" (i.e., identity politics)" (Burling, 2009, p. 330). Radical fantasy authors' pre-occupation with the impossible, to depict another world to express

the "dark areas" of their social totality (Baker, 2012), have characters and settings "represent actual estranged human history" (Burling, 2009, p. 335), in order to create critical critique; due to the everyday socio-political interactions the fantastic elements change with each author's various political reality (Esberk, 2014). Radical fantasy's characters serve to "represent the totality of capitalism's opaque operations and the complex personal and social dynamics" (Burling, 2009, p. 330).

Radical fantasy's intrinsic socio-political concerns are in response of "spatial arrangements of global rather than national capital, and to a world more or less acclimated to the omnipresence of technology and commodity exchange" (Burling, 2009, p. 329), framing how fantasy represents, interrogates, and alters reality (Baker, 2012, p. 440), allowing authors to violate dominant realistic power relation norms (Esberk, 2014). Progressive fantasy fiction's intrinsic link to "grandiose, detailed, completely immersive [realities]" (Teampau, 2014, p. 373), allows teaching how subjectivity is related to the construct of reality, by "show[ing] what is there, not what can or should be there" (Baker, 2012, p. 445). This means that within the deliberately created world one or more of the primary characters' everyday activities have them interact with a reality "not only radically different from the author's historical moment of social life but also, and primarily, *denying history as socio-economic lawfulness*" (Suvin, 2000, p. 223). Having characters perform familiar activities allows authors to have their worlds appear similarly inhabitable, highlighting the differences in the pros and cons of societal pressures and forms of resistance are tried for the entertainment and education of readers (Suvin, 2000).

Radical fantasy authors utilize creative anachronism in building worlds "with a mélange of past culture, practice, peoples, and ideas" (Baker, 2012, p. 440). Creative anachronism is taking aspects of the past and placing them in modernity "contrast[ing]…the disjunction,

transforming the present" (Attebery, 1991, pp. 15-16). This creative transformation "does not

invent supernatural regions, but presents a natural world into something strange, something

'other'" (Esberk, 2014, p. 142). Creative anachronism does not ignore reality, but instead exists

symbiotically (Esberk, 2014), by rewriting, re-purposing, and re-covering of history brings new

voices and meanings to illuminate present contradictions and complications in urban life,

complicating personalized identity issues and power relations (Suvin, 2000; Burling, 2009),

impossible fantastic narratives. Those same fantastic narratives "alleviate subjection and

marginalization… [combatting the] huge rise of every day humiliations in shamelessly exploited

labor buttressed by sexism and racism" (Suvin, 2000, p. 237). Following I will provide two

radical fantasy texts for eleventh and twelfth grade curriculum that challenge the individual's

complex role in society.

Perdido Street Station

China Mieville's 2001 radical fantasy novel *Perdido Street Station* is "a disturbing,

totalized reflection of a capitalist society" (Baker, 2012, p. 445), that explores the idea if a

diverse city population can work collectively to save the city of New Crobuzon from slake

moths, extra-dimensional creatures that drain people of higher cognitive abilities, leaving them

comatose husks. By moving a capitalist reality to the dark, erosive, and grimy New Crobuzon,

reveals the oppressive economic every day of urban citizens (Baker, 2012), so students may

explore "the mechanism and effects of economic exploitation and ideological mystification

under industrial capitalism" (Burling, 2009, p. 331). The story beings when Isaac Dan der

Grimnebulin, a renegade scientist, is approached by Yagharek, a garuda looking for aide in

restoring his ability to fly without steam-powered assistance. In his obsessive quest to regain

flight Yagharek accidentally unleashes the slake moths. Isaac must bring together a "dappled

gang" (Mieville, 2001, p. 482), a "criminal foursome" (Mieville, 2001, p. 521) of urban low-lifes: Yagharek, Derkham, Lemuel, and himself.  Isaac finds success when his interspecies alliance successfully organizes laying cable throughout the tunnels, alleys, and sewers of the city for a crisis energy machine, which defeats the slake moths.  While the quartet of exotic species organized the plan, the resolution was enacted by "collective class action among the previously unaligned subaltern segments of [New Crobuzon]" (Burling, 2009, p. 332), the banal industry workers.  The main characters eschew their personal ethics and morals and are forced by "their historical and material circumstances to react in the collective interests of freedom and equality *not* on the basis of personal ethics" (Burling, 2009, p. 339), unify their agendas to form a collective political entity.  While the city was saved, "progress and co-operation are haunted by darker forces" (Palmer, 2009, p. 227), as New Crobuzon itself "scarcely knows and quickly forgets" (Palmer, 2009, p. 229), with characters' individual goals abandoned and all but Yagharek leaving.  The fantasy quest of a small troupe of heroes saving their home is not new, but *Perdido Street Station*'s social complexity of the collective versus individual is of interest to high school readers.

The country of Bas-Lag is made of "imaginary cities and species evoked and re-evoked in messy organic corporality" (Palmer, 2009, p. 225), and so de-familiarizes the urban experience by creative exaggerations, but also keeps it ironically knowable (Hamdan & Noritah, 2010).  The sprawling city of New Crobuzon is populated by co-existing dominant humans and ghettoized xenians – humanoids that are natural hybrids of avian, insect, plant, or machine – and remades, bioengineered humans and xenions with animal or mechanical attachments for punishment or labor.  New Crobuzon's buildings are "gluttonous and ravenous, animal and foreboding" (Baker, 2012, p. 446), marking the city's alleys, ghettos, and toxic river with

"history and improvised social development" (Palmer, 2009, p. 226), through "a conspiracy of industry and violence" (Mieville, 2001, p. 5). In New Crobuzon political movements attempt to progress society forward but ultimately fail because of the challenges brought by an oppressive underlying discontent, the entropy caused by a capitalist society (Baker, 2012; Palmer, 2009). New Crobuzon then is a city a malignant edifice, explicitly dangerous and alien to its populace (Baker, 2012; Palmer, 2009), transforming individuals into twisted and grotesque reflections of itself while remaining startlingly relatable. This makes New Crobuzon not just the background to the action but a unique complex setting that the narrative could only derive from (Burling, 2009). In New Crobuzon both Yagharek and Isaac are considered individuals, those "whose relations with others are intermittent and ambiguous, and whose sexuality is uneasy or suppressed" (Palmer, 2009, p. 227). Yagharek and Isaac's everyday interactions then confront "individualization and totalization" (Cooper, 2009, p. 216), embedding a crisis of gender subtext into the narrative, reflective of the real-world (Ganapathiraju, 2012), allowing students to deeply analyze and redefine what it means to be human (masculine) free from the "ideological assumptions congenial to and serving the interest of capitalism" (Burling, 2009, p. 340).

When the reader and Isaac first meet Yagharek he is seen as a victim of a cruel punishment that has removed Yagharek of the symbol that make him garuda, the loss of his wings, metaphors for his "loss of phallic authority" (Ganapathiraju, 2012, p. 6), subordinating his masculinity. For spectators – in this case student readers – facing the horrifying abject that places one outside the social order is an inherently traumatizing experience (Kristeva, 1982). As gender isn't a social practice, but instead what a body does (Connell, 2005), Yagharek's masculinity is defined by his missing wings leaving him a deformed and imperfect masculine body, and his quest to regain his masculinity by cowardly undoing his punishment

(Ganapathiraju, 2012).  Yagharek goes as far to maintain his masculinity by wearing and concealing, under a black robe, an ornate wooden frame to give the impression of wings and whole-ness.  Throughout the story the details of Yagharek's crime remain a secret, described only as "second degree choice-theft with disrespect" (Mieville, 2001, p. 63).  Towards the end of the novel the nature of Yagharek's crime becomes known, the human equivalent of rape. Garuda, a collective warrior clan of intellectuals, stress respect for the individual and the individual's free choice – such as choosing to not engage in an activity – instead of violence to be made a victim.  Yagharek views his crime as a conscious exchange between equals and not a violent aggressive act that emphasizes unequal "distribution of power" (Ganapathiraju, 2012, p. 7), and not disrespectful of the group's and individual's principles.  By Yagharek believing his crime to be a conscious act Mieville allows readers to examine contemporary notions about masculinity in relation to sex cries.  By placing the discussion in the secondary world of Bas-Lag "radically reframe[s] the moral dilemma…re-construct[ing] fictional and real conceptions of masculine identity" (Ganapathiraju, 2012, p. 8).  Yagharek's quest to regain flight spurs him to journey across Bas-Lag defining him by the typically duel masculine characteristics of violence, passion (Ganapathiraju, 2012), while also being a coward and not accepting his punishment.  The revelation of rape causes Isaac to reject Yagharek, and no longer help Yagharek regain flight. Isaac's decision, right or wrong, goes against the text's theme of *not* judging a person's present by their past (Palmer, 2009).  As Isaac and the rest, including Lin – Isaac's girlfriend – leave, Yagharek tries to self-fashion his own identity, denying the one placed by society by rejecting his incomplete identity by removing his remaining feathers, choosing to not be a chimera but a man and enters New Crobuzon.

Unlike Yagharek's physical emasculation, Isaac's is an intellectual castration (Ganapathiraju, 2012), caused by the disappointment that he is too undisciplined to be able to teach. As well, Isaac is too unfocused to complete a crisis energy machine. Isaac is also aloof as demonstrated by his self-aware half-cocked attitude towards his girlfriend artist Lin, a vodyanoi – a hybrid with a human body and insect head. Additionally, Isaac is aware of his self-generated position in New Crobuzon's race and class-based structure through Vermishank, his boss and is I charge of New Crobuzon's clandestine science projects. Their relationship is defined by Vermishank as the dominant masculine to Isaac's subordinate masculinity (Ganapathiraju, 2012). Being aware of his marginalized role infuses Isaac's dreams and everyday activities with anxiety, and thrusts Isaac forward in all his decisions. Isaac attempts to help Yagharek in his flight goal, out of intellectual curiosity more than empathy. In his goal to help Yagharek, Isaac initially refuses to ask Vermishank for help but agrees out of a commitment to the project's challenge (Ganapathiraju, 2012). In that interaction Isaac takes control of the situation is he makes a conscious decision to enact his socially constructed role. Later in the novel as the slake moths ravage New Crobuzon, Isaac gains full control and understanding of his position when he seeks help from Vermishank, and finds the authority figure shaken and useless. Feeling empowered Isaac gains the dominant role through his principle to stay on the morally correct side to not become monstrous as he is forced to make choices, in defeating the slake moths (Baker, 2012; Ganapathiraju, 2012), establishing his identity as contextual construct of action (Connell, 2005). Isaac enacts his new identity when he kidnaps a dying man, completing his quartet, to kill the dying man in order to defeat the slake moths (Palmer, 2009). The old man is killed by Isaac, who straps him into the crisis energy machine, sacrificing the old man to attract the slake moths to crisis energy in order to have them gorge to death. The horror of the sequence exemplifies the

story's "capitalist logic, the ends justify the means" (Baker, 2012, p. 448).  For Isaac the ending

is bittersweet as he recognizes the deplorability of the actions necessary to enact his plan he

knows he is "unable to act differently" (Baker, 2012), demonstrating the city's belief that no

matter an individual's actions New Crobuzon is always in control, but also abandon's New

Crobuzon's socially constructed identity for him in pursuit of one he has constructed.

American Gods

       Neil Gaiman's fantasy novel *American Gods* (2001) has its characters explore individual

and cultural identity.  Ancient myths and modern historical context are blended on a profound

kaleidoscopic road trip across an America that is at once similar and alien to students, that

describes a cultural tendency to satirize dominant power paradigms (Blomqvist, 2012; Slabbert

& Viljoen, 2006; Helfrich, 2005).  This is because myths correspond to the search "for clear

answers and epistemological satisfaction" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 11).  Its main character Shadow

Moon, a recently released convict becomes a body guard to a mysterious Mr. Wednesday.

Together they go on a traditional American road trip exposing Shadow to various aspects of the

United States' culture, learning of a war between old European gods and the mythification of

new 21st century popular concepts.  After a physical and metaphysical travels through dreams

and the realm of the dead, Shadow discovers that the growing war is a plan by Mr. Wednesday –

revealed to be Odin – to generate more power for himself.  Discovering the truth Shadow stops

the war.  Along the way he slowly comes to accept a new personal ideology of culture and

identity.

       At the beginning of the novel Shadow accepts the reality of modern cultural life.  He was

raised by a woman who needed to move internationally every few months for work, making

Shadow a lifelong expatriate (Carroll, 2012, p. 319), a man who has no identity to self or nation.

Shadow begins his journey of actualization with Mr. Wednesday because upon release from prison learns of his wife Laura's death and affair. The revelations leave Shadow numb and eager to be kept busy, and so jumps at Mr. Wednesday's job opportunity, making Shadow's job his identity (Blomqvist, 2012). By aligning himself with the European gods Shadow has "taken a step toward reconciling himself with the nation from which he has been alienated" (Carroll, 2012, p. 319), because somewhere in America's big cities and small towns, culture as roadside attractions Shadow believes he will find a connection to belong so that he may create his identity.

On their road trip Shadow and Mr. Wednesday stop at various roadside attractions, so Mr. Wednesday can accumulate power before the conflict. This is because the old gods consider the roadside attractions as places of power, as they "pretend to history, to local specificity, to uniqueness" (Carroll, 2012, p. 319). The roadside attractions, whether their outlandish claim of uniqueness, "willfully construct[ed] place rather than non-place; they assert difference rather than homogeneity" (Carroll, 2012, p. 319), drawing tourists in order to perpetuate their own existence and identity. For Shadow none of the attractions, or town they are located near, offer any solid answers about his or the nation's identity. In each new locale Shadow creates a different alias and personality to enjoy time away from himself, but they all fail to provide a more concrete personal identity. This inability to locate his self along his travels, Shadow comes to believe the 'real America' does not exist, but has learned to appreciate the national myths that bring everyone together. While on their road trip Mr. Wednesday instructs Shadow to that "the United States [is] a patchwork of isolated regional identities held in thrall to a grand illusion of national commonality" (Carroll, 2012, p. 319).

As Shadow attempts to gain purpose within a system he is ambivalent to Mr. Wednesday stages his own death and leaves Shadow with his own resources on the rest of the road trip.  To succeed Shadow relies entirely on the unbiased assistance of his dead wife Laura, new friend Sam Black Crow, and the buffalo man from Shadow's dreams.  Being either dead, abnormal, or an odd character Shadow's supporters exist in the novel's periphery as character-narrators, external-focalizers who know everything about the text's represented reality.  By not being part of the dominant paradigm because of their outsider status, they experience reality giving Laura' Sam, and buffalo man's assistance and "interpretation of reality [to have] epistemic and ontological, moral, and ethical value" in Shadow's quest for his personal and cultural identity (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 6).  Through their conversations the supporting characters awaken Shadow's ability to form his own opinions and therefor challenge Shadow's sense of duty, by "raising uncomfortable questions about personal purpose in relation to culturally constructed myths" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 12).  As Shadow's character develops his supporters' "opinions correlate with [Shadow's] view of reality" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 9), losing their partiality and reinforce Shadow's developing individuality. The buffalo man first appeared to Shadow on a flight, and spends the majority of the novel guiding Shadow to "Believe...If you are to survive, you must believe" (Gaiman, 2001, p. 264). The buffalo man's insistent urging to believe and question if one is to consistently believe, provide the seed for Shadow's rejection and belief to choose humanity. Laura takes a more involved role in Shadow's journey by offering physical assistance such as rescuing Shadow when he is abducted, or sacrificing herself to defeat Loki while Shadow is attached to the World Tree.

Since Shadow is defined by his duty he loses direction in small town America Lake Wobegonish.  There Shadow rebirths himself first as the new alias Mike Ainsel, and particularly

after a walk in the woods with Laura's ghost, who explains why she cheated on him: "You're this big, solid, man-shaped hole in the world" (Gaiman, 2001, p. 370), he lacked a will. Laura's words make Shadow "[r]ealiz[e] he has escaped life by fleeing from his will" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 18). To remedy this Shadow calls upon Mr. Wednesday by using his boss' sigil, and is transported to a tree, which he finds himself restrained to while this is party of his job, Shadow's reasoning for it is for himself, "to change not only his own life but to see the big picture and prevent the war" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 18), and so gain a will to act. While attached to the tree Shadow is confronted with the possibility of godhood when through a conversation with Norse god Loki, who explains that by being a "concentrated, magnified, essence of you" (Gaiman, 2001, p. 443), on is able to reach a divine existence. Confronted with a decision between godhood and humanity Shadow chooses a third option: to be a man, an individual. He makes this choice because he believes that people don't need to be believed in to exist, and are able to just keep going. Shadow's new agency leads him to defuse the gods' war by explaining to both sides Odin and Loki's reason for the conflict.

Shadow's experiences in the narrative demonstrated to him "how a dominating system can be abused" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 19), and so realizing this Shadow's third option allows him to create a personal journey filled with agency that "embrace[s] instability and mobility" (Carroll, 2012, p. 323). With this knowledge Shadow ascribes more value to the journey itself than an inflexible belief in one set of stories, beliefs, and traditions he never connected with, having learned that his own will still only serves as *one* example of how and where one might find meaning" (Blomqvist, 2012, p. 23).

Horror

In life horrors of all kinds impact the individual and their loved ones with such frequency that damaging travesties visited upon strangers feel as though they happen to the self. Horror literature narratives provide terrifying anti-social behavior, allowing students "to confront the issue of evil in everyday lives by vicariously confronting unknown creatures and events, or, even more alarmingly, by exploring the evil within our neighbors and inside ourselves" (Geddis, 2011). Horror's investigation of public and private fears evolves into liberal horror literature when it "depict[s] an ever present threat of social disintegration through vivid images of gruesome monstrosity, and emphasize" (Anker, 2014, p. 795), "energies that might burst or intrude on everyday" (Wisker, 2005, p. 8). To combat "natural, historical and individual horrors" students must refuse to be apathetics" (Tracy, 2014, pp. 739-740), towards injustice in all its forms. By utilizing surreal and the fantastic liberal horror examines "the motivations of people and the society and institutions they create" (Magistrale, 1992, p. 15). Liberal horror provides students a "complex and ambivalent story, which foregrounds not merely individual freedom limited governing power but also expansive state power and intervention" (Anker, 2014, p. 796). This emphasizes not only the promotion of individual freedom, but also "legitimating rhetoric for expansive, violent, and anti-democratic state power" (Anker, 2014, p. 798).

Liberal horror appeals to students who do not see themselves in the ELA literary canon, because they "feel comfortable with the topics at hand and get lost in the horror stories" (Aho, 2008, p. 32). This is due to horror literatures roots in the "repressed fears and desires" (Smuts, 2010, p. 229), of 'the other,' those whose behavior is contrary to the dominant culture, because of sexual orientation, racial/ethnic/cultural/religious grouping, and mental or physical disability. In horror "monsters are the perverse, excessive double of ourselves" (Dixon, 2011, p. 440), a paradoxical reminder of the relation between self and other. For liberal horror monsters

comment on the horrors of submersion into a foreign environment (Grosz, 1991), "stand[ing] in for the insecurities lurking underneath ostensibly stable orders" (Anker, 2014, p. 796).  Ghosts in particular serve as "double-sided figuration of powerlessness and power" (Brogan, 1998, p. 25), allowing the marginalized to discover a healing strength that is not socially acceptable (Anderson, 2009). Monsters that attack the body such as viruses and zombies remind that "the body [is] the locus of personal worth" (Herman, 2014, p. 436), that existence is dependent on causes and conditions, which are dependent on another set of conditions and causes (Herman, 2014).  This is because liberal horror authors utilize monsters to extrapolate to create new scenarios for human interactions, "allowing students to imagine situations that are different from their known history and nature" (Aho, 2008, p. 32), avoiding a detrimental "laser-like focus on 'just the facts'" (Svec & Winiski, 2013, p. 35).

Liberal horror literature's mobilizing and intensifying of public/social nightmares pulls students to automatically begin "processing information according to the schedule of a suspense narrative, our cognitive structures oriented to problem-solving instantly begin to entertain both optimizing and aversive counterfactuals" (Dawes, 2004, p. 449).  Horror literature has students "utilizing what they have previously learned, their preconceptions about a situation or what they've read in order to create their own contexts" (Aho, 2008, p. 32), while also suspending belief to avoid a detrimental "laser-like focus on 'just the facts'" (Svec & Winiski, 2013). Authors demonstrate the damaging effects of focusing on facts by using a skeptical character, who typically dies first as they're the least prepared to deal with the threat (Smuts, 2010). Students read of the conversion of beliefs by surviving characters and convert with them, while also feeling empathy for the fallen skeptic (Smuts, 2010). Following, I will provide two

examples of liberal horror texts, which utilize ghosts as metaphors for the pressures of outdated

societal gender roles, for eleventh and twelfth grade ELA classrooms.

The Haunting of Hill House

Shirley Jackson's 1959 liberal horror novel *The Haunting of Hill Hou*se is an "uncanny

domestic fiction" (Anderson, 2009, p. 198), that explicitly dramatize the anxiety of family

monsters in America formed by a combination of permissiveness and authoritarianism (Pascal,

2014), through the figurative relationship with an all-consuming house (Rubenstein, 2009). The

book is about Eleanor, a timid young woman, who attempts "to construct a unified adult

personality in defiance of a voracious mothering force embodied by Hill House" (Pascal, 2014,

p. 469). She is among three others who spend a summer in the sprawling mansion Hill House.

The three other assembled people are: Dr. John Montague, a paranormal anthropologist;

Theodora, Theo, an independent young woman, who appears to have ESP; and Luke, a

descendant the house's original designer and owner, who stands to inherit Hill House. While no

actual ghosts are physically seen plenty of unexplained phenomena does occur, because "Hill

House seeks living ghosts, in particular women to control and destroy" (Anderson, 2009, p. 199).

Women have achieved this ghost because society does not recognize them and in doing

so has given them "illegitimate strength" (Brogan, 1998, p. 25).  Eleanor is a character who

doesn't do much physically, she internalized what society expects of her by repressing all

"outward expressions of her personality" (Anderson, 2009, p. 199), believing that all she does

and says is offensive. Hill House then is a symbol of a dominant patriarchal domination that by

claiming Eleanor transforms her into what she has always been - a ghost. "Eleanor's inability to

form a coherent and forceful personality makes her the perfect prey for Hill House, and...its

penchant for meddling with taken-for-granted realities" (Anderson, 2009, p. 200).

Hill House was built and designed by Hugh Crain in hope it would become a showplace just as with Winchester House, but instead created the monstrous "domain of an unbalanced and powerful male figure, an emanation of his bizarre psyche" (Pascal, 2014, p. 471). Additionally every Mrs. Crain died after its construction: the first Mrs. Crain dies in a carriage accident in Hill House's driveway; the second suffers a fatal mysterious fall; and the third dies abroad from consumption. Nothing besides how each wife died suggests their individuality, giving the reader the impression "they were so nondescript in personality as to have made little impression on the house" (Pascal, 2014, p. 470). Crain's daughters also succumb to Hill House by quarreling over the house and family heirlooms. The older Crain sister's female companion inherits the house upon her passing, and so the companion becomes a target of scorn by the townspeople and the surviving Crain daughter, until the companion's suicide in the library. A marble statue in the house could be read as "a Crain family portrait dominated by the egregiously masculine figure of Hugh himself" (Pascal, 2014, p. 471). The character Theo suggests the statuary was created by Mr. Crain to scare his daughters into obedience. Hill House has become "the center of the destruction of all female relationships and attempts at community" (Anderson, 2009, p. 201), including the relationship of Eleanor and Theo. This is evident in Theo accusing Eleanor of ruining her clothes, or when Theo believes Eleanor is guilty of flirting with Luke, which is parallel to the Crain Sisters bickering.

Of the two female guests Eleanor's "weaker and more dependent nature, her placelessness and lack of human connections" (Anderson, 2009) are too tempting to Hill House to make her its perfect victim. This is in contradiction to the sensual, free-spirited Theo. Eleanor is literally and existentially homeless having spent the past eleven years taking care of her mother as a nurse up to her death, and has learned to hate her mother. This hatred extends to Eleanor's sister who

married and so wasn't required to provide daily care for their mother, and now expects Eleanor to play housemaid in her home. Twisting the knife sister and brother-in-law speak of Eleanor as if she wasn't present. To escape her new confinement "and her annihilating experience of being lost" (Rubenstein, 2009, p. 317), Eleanor steals her sister's car, which Eleanor owns half, and drives to Hill House to participate.

On her drive to Hill House Eleanor sees a small child in a restaurant refuse to drink her milk because it isn't in her personal "cup of stars" (Jackson S. , 1959, p. 22). Eleanor herself never had such an individualized cup or item, but usurps one into her imagination, betraying her need for freedom from maternal nurturing (Rubenstein, 2009). Eleanor silently urges the girl to not give in, while wishing she had her own individual cup, because "once they have trapped you into being like everyone else you will never see your personal cup of stars again" (Jackson S. , 1959, p. 22). Eleanor has a desire to be an individual, but "believes that she is mired in conformity" (Anderson, 2009, p. 202). This is evidenced by her continued drive to Hill House when she passes time by creating fairy tale narratives that place her in the homes she passes. The personal narratives are elaborate variations of her playing a dutiful daughter in a functional loving family while waiting for Prince Charming (Anderson, 2009). Eleanor transpose her desire for a loving family onto Hill House repeating "Journeys end in lovers meeting" throughout the text, showing she expects a girl's romance at Hill House. "Eleanor has bought into scripts delineating how her life should be, rather than taking control and actually living it" (Anderson, 2009). Eleanor even takes a break driving because she ought to, not because she wants to.

As the supernatural haunting incidents occur "Eleanor is progressively incorporated - and infantilized - by the malign powers of Hill House" (Rubenstein, 2009, p. 318), which have begun to consume her and call to her by placing Eleanor at the center of events: the house scrawls

Eleanor's name in blood in Theo's room; is present for both banging and knocking events; and sees the ghost family having picnic. As the events begin happening with greater frequency, Eleanor begins to disassociate saying, "I'm living in one half, my mind, and I see the other half of me helpless and frantic and driven and I can't stop it...if I could only surrender" (Jackson S. , 1959, p. 160). She has begun to disappear into the house, surrendering to "a house that functions figuratively as the externalized maternal body, simultaneously seductive and threatening" (Rubenstein, 2009, p. 317). In return Hill House grants Eleanor the ability to hear everything from crickets in the lawn to supernatural laughter and singing.  Hill House easily seduces Eleanor by "envelope[ing] her in a maternal embrace so comprehensive that her newly won independence and all vestiges of her individuality will be subsumed utterly" (Pascal, 2014, p. 496), because it has given her a locale to recreate and expire under the "maternal might that had oppressed her throughout her life" (Pascal, 2014, p. 469).

The final night in Hill House Eleanor succumbs to the house and begins haunting the other participants by recreating the previous noises herself. When the others track Eleanor down, at the location in the library where the eldest Crain daughter killed herself, the participants believe Eleanor is compromised and so force Eleanor to leave the next morning. It is then Eleanor admits to being homelessness and wants to stay at Hill House. Rather than go to her sister's Eleanor commits suicide by driving her car into a tree at the end of Hill House's driveway, believing she is in control as she wonders why she is committing suicide, and why isn't anyone prevented her from her actions and becoming confined within Hill House's "pantheon of isolated and destroyed women" (Anderson, 2009, p. 204).

The Shining

Stephen King's haunted house ghost story *The Shining* (1977) "historicizes twentieth-century American masculinity by tracing gender performance and anxiety through multiple decades and generations of males" (Davenport, 2000, p. 309). It is the story of the Torrance family's ruin in the Overlook hotel through six months of impassable cold winter. Jack Torrance is hired to be the Overlook Hotel's caretaker until spring when the hotel can reopen. Jack views the job as an opportunity that will enable him to rebuild his marriage, preserve his family, complete a play, regain his lost teaching position, and leave an alcoholic and abusive history behind him (Davenport, 2000; Holland-Toll, 1999). Instead of healing the family the Overlook Hotel alienates and kills (Holland-Toll, 1999). The damage of jack's addiction and consequent behaviors have made him and his family perfect victims for the Overlook Hotel & its ghosts. Jack surrenders to the hotel, which is after Jack's son Danny, who is gifted with psychic powers. Danny doesn't play along with the possessed Jack, who manages to wrest control long enough to save his family but loses his own life.

The Overlook Hotel is a metaphor for a "macrostructure for an exploitative society" (Davis, 1994, p. 83), "run amok" (Holland-Toll, 1999, p. 139), that organizes the Torrance family, around Jack's attempts at the single minded capitalist goal of bettering himself at the risk of his family unity. The hotel then belongs exclusively to Jack, isolating him from his family as the work that cares for the hotel takes Jack physically from his family, and work on his play takes him mentally from his family. Jack then is a "transitional form of masculinity" (Davenport, 2000) in conflict, created by the hard masculine father figure who was in control, breadwinner, and made all the decisions regardless of emotional and financial ramifications, versus Jack's attempts to forge an artistic and public identity that is independent of his family

and obligations to them. Jack's time at the Overlook Hotel then casts the hotel as a staging

ground to act out the dangers of continuing society as it has always been.

Jack Torrance is burdened by the history (Davenport, 2000) of his alcoholism, negative

family history, and a fractured personality (Strengell, 2005), that created the gender anxiety,

manifesting as "male baggage" on "how and where to be a man" (Davenport, 2000, p. 310).

Being damaged by his father's abusive and authoritative behavior made Jack "susceptible to the

alienating and inhuman" (Holland-Toll, 1999, p. 135), Overlook Hotel. Jack works diligently to

combat his alcoholism, which unleashes a violent temper similar to his father's, and caused Jack

to dislocate Danny's shoulder at the age of two. Jack's temper also caused him to lose his

teaching position at a prep school, and forced the necessity to take the job at the Overlook Hotel.

The temper is passed on to Jack from his father, "[a] caricature of 1950s' hard masculinity"

(Davenport, 2000, p. 310), which was used to rule the family with a brutal abusive iron fist;

conversely Jack's mother is described as weak and passive, which Jack believes caused his

father's behavior. Jack's father worked as a nurse, not a typical male job in 1950s America,

which likely fueled his emasculation leading to alcoholism and physical abuse. The crystalizing

moment for Jack's model of family dynamics is when at the age of nine he witnesses his father

beat Jack's mother with a cane and puts her in the hospital. The cane then is the scepter the

father uses to rule his home as his castle, and the beating is him demonstrating the quick

effective "long arm of his law" (Davenport, 2000, p. 310). As a grown family man while

working at the Overlook, Jack hears his father's voice over the hotel's CB radio, triggering

nightmares of his mother's cane beating. Jack's father voice also makes an appearance when

Jack discovers the hotel's master key, the voice tells Jack that Danny is to blame, urging him to

believe his son "abused his father's authority…[and should] correct his son's willful behavior"

[for] abus[ing] his father's authority" (Davenport, 2000, p. 311). Jack controls himself, further conflicting his self-image of a "whining self-pitying failure" (Holland-Toll, 1999, p. 137), that if he accepts his father's voice then also accepts his father's version of discipline as viable towards Danny, "pass[ing] the memory, the legacy of violence visited on his mother, to his son" (Davenport, 2000, p. 317).

As a writer Jack views himself as a misunderstood literary genius of elite fiction and as a popular financially successful writer of bestsellers. Jack's artistic authenticity is on the line when he takes the caretaker position. Jack views the Overlook as his last hope, wanting to use the winter as a time of magical artistic isolation to produce work that will "maintain his status as sole breadwinner but also to fulfill his early promise as the kind of writer who attracts the attention of the literati" (Davenport, 2000, p. 312). While Jack had early success in *Esquire* magazine, he has been unable to capitalize on it because of a fear he is incapable of making art, and so hides behind his literati aspirations, to the cost of wretched failure. Jack's inability to complete a story has locked him out of the "male literary tradition…that would allow him to talk across decades and centuries with male forbearers, to participate in a system of literary fathers and sons, where he can remain a son and become a father" (Davenport, 2000, p. 315).

In the end Jack succumbs to the Overlook Hotel, and its replication of his father's voice transforming into a human monster. Jack "asserts his masculine rights and administer[s]...the necessary discipline" (Holland-Toll, 1999, p. 142), and rampages through the hotel with a roque mallet after his family. Jack's obsessive rampage causes him to become derelict in caring for the Overlook, and so neglects to release the pressure in the boiler, leading to the Overlook's destruction and Jack's death in an explosion. Jack's behavior and experiences as a father, son and human monster have taught Danny, and the reader, that if he is to escape the wounding caused

by a dominating ideology, he must release his male baggage to develop a level of self-control

that is "a marker of psychological health and evidence of mature masculinity" (Davenport, 2000,

p. 325).

Summary

        The imagination has always played an imperative role in human history delivering "required hypotheses, speculative artifices and brave motivations for political, social, cultural, and even economic progress" (Teampau, 2014, p. 383). ELA educators must take advantage of this and include a variety of speculative narratives at a level of cultural relevance, acting as points of access, so that students connect to people/characters with similar problems in different historical and cultural contexts, creating empathy. Speculative texts in an ELA curriculum are powerful tools that inviting students "to identify and problematize what it is that we 'use' – as well as consider the full range of consequence of use and misuse" (Zigo & Moore, 2005, p. 41), pushing young adult readers to think critically and respond personally on playing fields that may not seem familiar.

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