

The YA Novel in the Digital Age

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Department of English and Film Studies
University of Alberta

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Abstract

Recent research by Nielsen reports that adult readers purchase 80% of all young adult novels sold, even though young adult literature is a category ostensibly targeted towards teenage readers (Gilmore). More than ever before, young adult (YA) literature is at the center of some of the most interesting literary conversations, as writers, readers, and publishers discuss its wide appeal in the twenty-first century. My dissertation joins this vibrant discussion by examining the ways in which YA literature has transformed to respond to changing social and technological contexts. Today, writing, reading, and marketing YA means engaging with technological advances, multiliteracies and multimodalities, and cultural and social perspectives. A critical examination of five YA texts – Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, Libba Bray’s *Beauty Queens*, Daniel Handler’s *Why We Broke Up*, John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars*, and Jaclyn Moriarty’s *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* – helps to shape understanding about the changes and the challenges facing this category of literature as it responds in a variety of ways to new contexts.

In the first chapter, I explore the history of YA literature in order to trace the ways that this literary category has changed in response to new conditions to appeal to and serve a new generation of readers, readers with different experiences, concerns, and contexts over time. Chapter Two explores the presence of extensive intertextuality and intermediality in contemporary YA novels as one type of response to new contexts through an examination of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* and *Beauty Queens*. The third chapter investigates two examples of multimodal YA novels, that is, novels that include both texts and images, yet in a way that retains a high ratio of text to image. *The Book Thief* and *Why We Broke Up* are exemplary texts through which to analyze this relationship. Chapter Four moves outside of the YA text itself in order to understand how paratextual materials function in the twenty-first century. Authors John

Green and Daniel Handler/Lemony Snicket have created a rich paratextual space in which to explore the role of the author in contemporary YA.

While my dissertation explores YA literature in the twenty-first century, it also examines its readers. Chapter Five turns to the adult readers of YA to ask: If YA literature is a category aimed at teenage readers, then how do we conceive of this category today when it is read overwhelmingly by adults? A conclusion explores the implications of these concepts on the future of YA literature, and discusses the difficulty of examining a category in flux, one that continues to adapt to contemporary social and technological contexts.

Preface

A shortened version of Chapter Three of this dissertation, “Multimodal Forms: Text, Image, and Visual Literacy in Daniel Handler’s *Why We Broke Up* and Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*,” is forthcoming as a chapter in *Teaching Comics Through Multiple Lenses: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Crag Hill (Routledge).

Acknowledgements

I have always been the kind of reader to flip to the back of the book in order to read the acknowledgments and thank yous even before beginning to read the story. I like to see the vast network of people that a writer recognizes. It is always a map of thank yous that has shown me that writing does not happen in a vacuum, and it is never an entirely solitary endeavor.

I therefore want to say thank you to the following:

To Jo-Ann Wallace, for showing me that it is possible to love YA while also being critical of it, and for the many meetings and discussions in Edmonton and Canmore. Thank you for your support and for helping me to develop my writing in ways that reach so much further than this dissertation.

To Margaret Mackey, for your enthusiasm, professional advice, and many YA resources. Thank you for seeing me through my first conference with the Children's Literature Association and for being so generous with your time and feedback.

To Natasha Hurley, for challenging me to think more critically and reflectively about myself as a reader, writer, and researcher. Thank you for showing me how to imagine my dissertation as a book project, and encouraging me to consider the ways in which I can continue to develop my research.

To the members of my examining committees, Cecily Devereux, Jill McClay, Lynne Wiltse, and Kerry Mallan, for your insightful questions and feedback at both my candidacy and at my dissertation defense. Thank you for helping me to view my research in new ways, and from the perspectives of other disciplines.

To the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta, and the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta for the financial support that allowed me time to focus on my academic work.

To the Children's Literature Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English for encouragement through membership and discussion. These organizations helped me see where my work belongs in academic discourse. My research and reading benefitted greatly by the work of these organizations.

To Christl Verduyn, for her many supportive emails about academia, research, conferences, and books since I graduated from Mount Allison in 2010. I cannot thank you enough for your incredible mentorship and caring conversation.

To Steven Bickmore and Crag Hill for providing life-changing opportunities in the area of YA literature, including the fantastic conference at Louisiana State University in 2014 that has been a foundational experience to my growth as a reader, writer, and researcher.

To Matt Schneider, Paige McGeorge, Caitlin Tighe, Kerrie Waddington, and Liam Sherriff for your friendship, and for conversations that helped me work out ideas and arguments, and assisted me in gaining new perspectives on my work.

To Annette Bright, Becky Colbeck, and Kari Tanaka at the University of Lethbridge Bookstore for the numerous YA book recommendations, conversations, and Twitter activity. Thank you for always pointing me in the direction of a new YA book and sharing so many ARCs with me.

To Leona King, for all of the many fantastic YA novels that you shared with me while you owned Macabee's Books. You consistently pointed me towards exceptional YA, and also introduced me to the work of Kathy Stinson and Peter Carver of Red Deer Press, with whom I would go on to work with on my own YA novels.

To the fantastic General Studies instructors at the Lethbridge College who have shown me so much support and enthusiasm since I started teaching there in 2014. It has made all the difference to me as a new instructor.

To Canada Heritage Fairs for allowing me, as a nine-year-old, to participate with a presentation on Canadian authors and illustrations, beginning to pave the way for a future as a researcher.

To my sister, Erin Bright, for always supplementing my YA reading with films about high school and young adulthood (and that includes *High School Musical*). I read many of the books that ended up in this dissertation after you recommended them to me (you found Morgan Matson first!). Thank you for being my very favorite person to talk to about books. And my very favorite person period.

And to my parents, Robin and Glenn Bright, for their incredible support over the last four years and my lifetime. I would not be the reader and writer that I am if not for the many trips to bookstores all over Canada and the United States with you, especially after soccer, basketball, and volleyball tournaments, and during track and field and ski meets. Thank you for coming with me to Harry Potter midnight release parties and not minding how much time I spent reading in the car (I did not always make the best passenger!). Thank you for your constant support and for being always excited about my work.

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Introduction

Reading, Writing, and Marketing Young Adult Literature in the Twenty-First Century

In 2012, Bowker Market Research reported that adults were purchasing 55% percent of all young adult (YA) novels sold (“55%” Publishers Weekly). YA, ostensibly a category designed for and marketed to teenage readers, saw more than half of its sales going to an unanticipated readership. The number might not be that surprising, considering the remarkable visibility of YA literature in the twenty-first century. YA novels are prominently featured in bookstores and frequently adapted into movies and TV shows, and a handful of highly grossing movie franchises began as YA novels, for example, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and *The Twilight Saga*. Websites such as *Forever Young Adult* and *Epic Reads* have also originated to target the growing interest in YA, and to create digital spaces for discussing these books online. This category of literature has experienced both an increase in sales as well an increase in critical and popular attention in the twenty-first century.

Yet new research by Nielsen in 2015, only three years after the Bowker study, reports adult readers now buy 80% of all YA (Gilmore). Children’s and YA literature accounted for \$4.40 billion worth of sales in the publishing market in 2014, with purchases from this category increasing by 20.9% from 2013 to 2014 (Nielsen). Meanwhile, sales of adult fiction in this period fell 2.0%. While YA has previously been thought of as a category exclusively for teenage readers, it now appears to be a marketing term, one that easily generates interest from a wide age range of readers.

I am one of these adult readers of YA. When I write about YA, I write as an academic, as a lifelong reader of that category, as an online reviewer of YA, and as an author of two YA novels. My dissertation examines YA literature from these perspectives. My interest in YA stems

from the fact that it constituted much of the literature I read as an adolescent and teenager, and it also forms much of the material I continue to read as an adult. While I do not read YA exclusively at the expense of other literature, I will admit that it is the literature I return to most often, and the literature I keep best up-to-date about. Many of the novels examined in this dissertation were not new to me, or read solely for the purpose of conducting intense academic research.

Although I have read YA throughout my life, writing this dissertation has provided me with the opportunity to be critical about the literature I have read over the last fifteen years, and to adopt another perspective and understanding of its reception and circulation. My work on this project has led me to revisit my own qualities and capacities as a reader and a selector of exemplary titles. I have unabashedly loved YA since I started reading from the category, and much of my reading from the category of adult fiction consists of books that read “like YA,” meaning they tend to focus on an adolescent or teenage protagonist. When I started studying English as an undergraduate, YA was a category I read consistently “for fun.” This dissertation provided me with the time and the space to engage in critical study of the category I have never purposefully read under a critical lens. It has also allowed me to question why I and others continue to read YA as adults. This cross section of my reading – more YA than adult – is certainly not uncommon. What does YA do that retains readers long after they are actually teenagers? What accounts for this unprecedented popularity? One possible explanation is that, more than any other literary genre or subgenre, YA novels embrace and explore the effect of new digital technologies on culture and cultural expression.

My dissertation examines the ways in which social and technological contexts are changing the way that contemporary young adult (YA) literature is read, written, and marketed in

the twenty-first century. YA literature emerged from a very specific set of social and technological contexts, as its origins were shaped by World War II, the invention of the “teenager,” and a youth-oriented marketing culture. *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, published in 1967, is considered by some to be the first YA novel. Since its publication, the category of YA literature has changed in response to social and technological contexts. My research project seeks to identify a new and significant transformation of contemporary young adult literature in the twenty-first century as it responds to contemporary social and technological contexts.

Literary forms have continuously changed in response to contemporary contexts. Stephen Burt’s *The Forms of Youth: Twentieth Century Poetry and Adolescence* (2007) takes as its subject both youth culture and twentieth-century poetry. Burt studies the way poetic forms changed in the 1900s to respond to the newly defined developmental category “adolescence,” poets creating new forms to articulate this new period of development. Burt identifies how poets such as W. H. Auden, Philip Larkin, and William Carlos Williams “alter or reinvent verse forms, literary modes, and verbal resources, trying to make new kinds of poems in order to match the new kinds of young people they see” (7-8). While my project developed out of a similar imperative – questioning how the form, content, and style of contemporary young adult books changed to meet the needs of readers – it has developed to consider not just the physical YA novel itself as a text and as an object, but also the material that surrounds the contemporary YA novel. Many of the digital technologies shaping the print form of contemporary young adult novels are new, having emerged out of a twenty-first century context. My research is attentive to the ways digital technologies change the printed form of many contemporary young adult novels. Additionally, while this study is necessarily focused on YA literature, I also examine reception –

and readers – in order to understand how changes in social and technological contexts have influenced adolescent and adult readers’ expectations for YA.

Any study of young adult literature must take into consideration its ephemerality and its ability to respond to readers living in a contemporary social, political, and cultural context. YA authors have commented frequently on the short publication schedule that this category necessitates. In order to stay relevant to teenage readers, they have to publish, and publish often. Authors such as Emery Lord, Morgan Matson, Stephanie Perkins, Patrick Ness, Andrew Smith, and Matthew Quick publish a book a year (and sometimes two). YA is a lucrative category for publishers in the twenty-first century, who help to facilitate a consistent publication schedule for some authors. I have never had more trouble keeping “on top” of YA literature than I have in the last four years, at a time when I was actively dedicating my time to reading the most recent YA publications. YA is also a category that is increasingly flexible and malleable, and its shape is changed and altered by all members of the publishing chain.

Additionally, a study of how technological contexts influence print books must take into account the rapidity of advancements in that technology, and the responding changes to how literature is written for teens. Social contexts have also influenced the visibility and publication of more purportedly diverse YA literature since 2014, when organizations such as We Need Diverse Books brought attention to the lack of diversity in YA, and YA readers and authors attempted to address these concerns. The We Need Diverse Books campaign impacted my reading and my identity as a critical reader, a shift that I will discuss further in this introduction. This study attempts to be comprehensive in its breadth up to the present day in order to capture a picture of young adult literature at a certain and specific contemporary time, including attention to questions of diversity.

Terminology: “Young Adult Literature”

The term “young adult literature” did not come into use until 1967 with the publication of *The Outsiders* (Campbell, “*The Outsiders*”) and is used to delineate a category of literature that spans genres and formats – for example, fiction, fantasy, sci-fi, graphic novels, mystery, and thrillers – and is sustained by teen and adult readers. Many academics distinguish YA from other categories of literature based on a range of characteristics that would have us take young adult literature as a category that: “engages with this notion of change and transformation” (Horrell 47); is “less predictable and [has] more complex plots” than children’s literature (Kaplan 43); “mirror[s] the changing nature of society” (Koss 74); is fluid and “conform[s] to the experiences of young people in specific contexts and shift[s] with changes in sociopolitical ideologies” (Bittner 3). Koss’s assertion stands out from these various definitions, claiming as it does that YA is a category of literature poised to take up contemporary concerns and social issues (although not always through a contemporary setting). Additionally, YA is novel-based, although within the novel many YA authors experiment with forms and formats such as poetry, the graphic novel, and the screenplay, for example. Some YA novels combine forms and formats (for example, utilizing images and the screenplay format alongside traditional prose) while others favor one form or format (such as YA novels told in verse).

It also provides an element of pleasure reading, especially for entertainment, escape, relaxation, imaginative purposes, and reassurance (Howard 52-3). Often, YA includes a focus on romance (Hedeem and Smith), especially as the subgenre of YA romance flourishes with books like Stephanie Perkins’s *Anna and the French Kiss* (2010), Lauren Myracle’s *The Infinite*

Moment of Us (2013), and Deb Caletti's *Honey, Baby, Sweetheart* (2004) – although even novels that aren't marketed as romance still contain some element of a love story.

While the aforementioned critics provide several definitions of YA literature, Katherine Bucher and Kaavonia Hinton argue that,

The term *young adult literature* can be difficult to define. Is it the literature that young adults select, on their own, to read? If so, some mainstream adult novels by Danielle Steele or John Grisham might be classified as young adult literature. Or is young adult literature any book that is written specifically for a young adult audience? In that case, consider that highly recognized young adult authors such as Bruce Brooks and Robert Cormier actually became young adult authors because of their publishers. (3)

In addition to Brooks and Cormier, Australian Markus Zusak became known as an author of young adult literature in the United States where *The Book Thief* (2005) was marketed for teen readers, while the same book was previously published as an adult book in Australia. Bucher and Hinton argue that YA is a marketing category, and I would agree. Teenage readers might engage with both YA and adult books, but they are specifically aware of the kind of book they are reading because of marketing designations.

G. Robert Carlson provides the following definition of YA literature in his 1980 publication *Books and the Teenage Reader: A Guide for Teachers, Librarians and Parents*:

Young-adult literature is literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. Such novels are generally of moderate length and told from the first person. Typically, they describe initiation into the adult world, or the surmounting of a contemporary problem forced upon the protagonist(s) by

the adult world. Though generally written for a teenage reader, such novels – like all fine literature – address the entire spectrum of life. (qtd. in VanderStaay 48)

Bucher and Hinton agree with this statement by highlighting in *their* definition of YA “a unique adolescent point of view” that reflects the “concerns, interests, and challenges” of young adults (8-9). Yet, YA novels are no longer moderate in length, as Robert Carlson suggests. The average YA novel runs just over 300 pages, with many running past 500 (Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, Moriarty’s *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, Chabon’s *Summerland*). They are also not exclusively told from the first person, although this perspective is popular for the immediacy and directness it communicates. Furthermore, present tense is utilized often in YA novels, suggesting that the urgency and acuity associated with the present is important to the category. Jonathan Stephens adds to these definitions by explaining the YA novel “tackles the difficult, and oftentimes adult, issues that arise during an adolescent’s journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice that holds the same potential for literary value as its ‘Grownup’ peers” (40-41). YA novels, Stephens notes, are written about teens. It is worth considering his suggestion that YA novels are written in a teenage voice. What is a teenage voice? How is it mediated through the adult writer?

For the purpose of this study, young adult literature describes any book that 1) contains a young adult protagonist, broadly defined as an individual between the ages of 12 and 18, 2) preoccupies itself with issues related to young adulthood in the West, including (but not limited to) coming of age, high school, the relationships of young adults, career aspirations, the issue of dependence on parents, adults, and others, and 3) is specifically marketed to young adult or teen readers, that is, appears in the “young adult” or “teen” section of the bookstore, or is marketed as “young adult literature” through other methods of categorization, although it may also appeal to

adult readers. In this study, I regard young adult literature as engaging with or being influenced by technological and social contexts, while also acknowledging a clear technological border that distinguishes between YA novels published before 2000 and after 2000. Not only are the YA texts themselves impacted by this technological border, but so too are the ways in which they are marketed, received, and circulated.

Furthermore, it is necessary to set boundaries to define “contemporary” young adult literature. How present is contemporary? How close to the present day do I include new publications in this study? Eliza Dresang’s *Radical Change* (1999), as well as the technological border set by the digital turn at the beginning of the twenty-first century, usefully set my boundaries. Since 2000, the cultural, social, and political arena Western teenage readers inhabit has changed dramatically, and their literature has adapted to meet these changes. Dresang’s “Radical Change Theory” is integral to understanding how changes in digital technology affect the form, content, and style of young adult literature. Dresang’s *Radical Change* was published in 1999, and uses books published before the millennium as its evidence base. Dresang shows how technology influences the way YA books were written, read, and marketed in the 1990s, and provides a framework that can interrogate similar influences in the last decade and a half. The technological landscape has changed even more significantly since 2000, with the advent of social networking sites, cellphones, texting, and synchronous communication on a global level influencing the ways in which young adult literature is read, written, and marketed in the twenty-first century. Therefore, “contemporary young adult literature” is, at the time of this research project, any book published between 2000 and 2016. My dissertation research investigates the ways in which new technological and social contexts impact contemporary YA literature.

Methods and Approach

This research project emerged from extensive reading of YA literature, and its critical apparatus – journal articles, monographs, and blogs by academics in the field. I was interested in the patterns that appeared in contemporary YA texts. These patterns correspond to four specific concepts that describe how YA is responding to changes in social and technological contexts: 1) Extensive intertextuality and intermediality, 2) The addition of images and graphics to the printed YA novel, 3) The creation of digital paratextual materials, and 4) Crossover appeal, that is, YA read both by teenagers and adults.

I arrived at these four concepts by reading a wide range of books that engaged with a selection of key terms, phrases, and ideas that articulate the changes that have taken place in contemporary literature, particularly those reflecting a digital influence. These terms were refined through discussions with my supervisors and other faculty in English, Library Studies, and Education. The key terms, phrases, and ideas that led to my selection of exemplary YA texts include: formally interesting, complex plotline, intellectually rich and demanding, high quality of writing, contemporary in “feel” (if not in setting), digital sensibility, crossover potential, authorial quality, teen protagonist/late teens, and address to teen readers (although adults may also read these books). The employment of these terms is influenced by Raymond Williams’s (1976) seminal book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Study*, a “record of an inquiry into a *vocabulary*: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as *culture* and *society*” (13; emphasis in the original). A category such as YA, which not only crosses over disciplines in academic study but also readerships, requires a shared set of terms to enhance congruency and understanding in

conversations that cross these different categories of readers. Building critical discourse about YA also relies on a consistent vocabulary used to discuss this category.

In order to select the books for this study, I then conducted a purposeful search, utilizing personal and public selection processes as a guideline for choosing texts that engaged with my key terms. Young adult literature book lists, book awards, and author profiles reaching a North American reading audience aided my selection of a wide variety of contemporary young adult novels published since 2000. The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Awards – including the Michael L. Printz Award – were integral in creating this list, as they purposely recognize experimental, innovative, challenging, and exceptional books for young adults. The Printz Award was created at the end of the twentieth century to recognize new novels that pushed the boundaries of young adult literature. The first iteration of the award went to *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (1999), a novel that engages with the screenplay format. My selection process also pulled from several reputable and refereed journals on adolescent and young adult literature that frequently review recently published novels for teens including YALSA, Kirkus Reviews, Booklist, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, and Book Links. I also received and read advanced reading copies of several YA novels from conferences such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Assembly of Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE (ALAN), took recommendations from professors and mentors, from booksellers (especially from Rebecca Colbeck and Kari Tanaka at the University of Lethbridge Bookstore), and librarians (especially Paige McGeorge, the teen librarian at the Lethbridge Public Library). Other selections of books stemmed from my personal and professional interest and through Amazon's recommendation system.

Additionally, my own network through social media, blogging, bookstores, and educators led me to important books often before I read compelling reviews, and has been helpful in conducting research for this study. Authors of young adult literature occupy digital spaces, and connect with one another and their readers through social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. I joined Twitter in June 2014, after attending and presenting at a landmark conference on YA literature at Louisiana State University. YA expert Teri Lesesne was a keynote speaker, and she communicated the conference proceedings in real time through her numerous social media accounts. Conference organizer Steven Bickmore consistently referred to her as a guru of social media, and I remember watching many of the keynote speakers through the lens of Lesesne's raised iPad camera, as she recorded snippets of the proceedings. Later, when we attended the opening night of the movie adaptation of John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, conference attendees tweeted out updates, and posted photos from the theater on Facebook. It was an instant mode of communication and connection, one where updates about conference material were immediately posted, and quickly disseminated to a wide network of the larger YA community. I have been able to virtually attend conferences on YA literature based on the amount of information tweeted out, to check in with attendees that I know, and to get both visual and textual information. Social media dissolves many of the boundaries among different members of the line of production in publishing: writers, editors, marketers, publicists, agents, publishers, and booksellers are equally accessible, and likely to respond to readers on a regular basis.

Additionally, my decision to begin writing a book review blog in 2011 radically changed my connections to YA literature. I began the blog, *Girl to the Rescue* (inspired by Bruce Lansky's revisionist fairy tale series for adolescents, *Girls to the Rescue*), during the summer of

2011 when revising my own young adult novel, which had recently been accepted for publication by Canadian publishing house Red Deer Press. I began *Girl to the Rescue* as a way to motivate myself to write every day. I had never had any trouble writing about – or talking about books – and it became a steady routine that allowed me to write constantly while working on longer projects. *Girl to the Rescue* allowed me to have lengthy email conversations with many of my favorite authors. I remember very memorably connecting with *Jasper Jones* author, Craig Silvey, who was nominated for the Printz Award. He was in touch with me after his publisher emailed him my book review of *Jasper Jones*, and we emailed for several weeks after that. As well, my reviews of their books have been retweeted and commented on by authors such as Becky Albertalli, A. S. King, Kekla Magoon, Meg Medina, Matt Ruff, E. Lockhart, Susan Juby, Jennifer Niven, and Morgan Matson (as Katie Finn). It is a level of access that I cannot imagine having had as a teenager reading YA, when authors were reached only by email and snail mail and often only through their publishers. These connections have been invaluable in shaping my understanding of YA literature from a “behind-the-scenes” perspective, one that I could only acquire *after* being a teenager, when social media technologies enabled such communications.

After reading broadly in the category of YA literature by utilizing these selection processes, I evaluated the texts in order to come up with five YA novels that I believed best embodied the key terms outlined earlier: they are formally interesting, have a complex plotline, are intellectually rich and demanding, display a high quality of writing, are contemporary in “feel” (if not in setting), exhibit a digital sensibility, have crossover potential, demonstrate a strong authorial quality, focus on a teen protagonist/late teens, and are directed at teen readers. Furthermore, the five books corresponded to the larger concepts I outlined above: 1) Extensive intertextuality and intermediality, 2) The addition of images and graphics to the printed YA

novel, 3) The creation of digital paratextual materials, and 4) Crossover appeal, that is, YA read both by teenagers and adults. The five primary texts of this study are: *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray (2011), a reimagining of *Lord of the Flies* (1954) with a female cast; *Why We Broke Up* by Daniel Handler (2011), a second-person, illustrated account of the break-up of Min Green and her boyfriend Ed Slaterton; *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by Jaclyn Moriarty (2012), a novel that takes place in its entirety within the context of a high school English exam; *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green (2012), a novel about two teenagers with cancer that greatly appeals to teenage and adult readers; and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (2005), a Holocaust novel narrated by Death. While these texts are my primary focus, I also include numerous supporting YA novels, which also exhibit some of the key terms.

My dissertation work has taken me from 2012 to 2016, and during this time, the category of YA literature has continued to change and respond to contemporary contexts that are not necessarily addressed by my primary five novels. Since 2012, when I started this work, those changes have continued to shape YA novels, and the category has responded accordingly. If I were beginning this dissertation today, in 2016, my book choices might look different, especially as conversations about race and gender have shaped YA literature since 2012.

A pressing concern for readers and writers in YA literature in the twenty-first century is the lack of diversity in contemporary YA novels, in terms of representations of diverse characters, the visibility of diverse authors, and the tension between YA's potential to reflect society and culture and the potential to shape it. Readers and critics of YA have identified the lack of diversity as falling into five categories: race, gender identification, sexuality, ability/disability, and religion. YA still remains largely characterized and defined by white authors, for example, John Green, Rainbow Rowell, Sarah Dessen, and E. Lockhart. Remarkable

YA authors such as Matt de la Pena, Benjamin Alire Saenz, Jacqueline Woodson, Jason Reynolds, Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki, Sherman Alexie, Padma Venkatraman, and Bill Konigsberg certainly represent and present diverse voices, and are frequently nominated for the most important awards; yet, they are not regarded as the “public faces” of YA.

I think this public nature has much to do with the fact that although YA novels are frequently becoming the most sought-after narratives for movie adaptation, very rarely is that source material optioned from YA authors who are not white. In the last decade, we have seen movie adaptations of popular YA novels and series such as *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Maze Runner*, *The 5th Wave*, *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*, *If I Stay*, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Paper Towns*, *The Host*, *Hoot*, *The Mortal Instruments*, *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist*, *The Giver*, *Holes*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *I Am Number Four*, *Inkheart*, *It’s Kind of a Funny Story*, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Coraline*, *The Spectacular Now*, *The Book Thief*, *A Monster Calls*, *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *The Princess Diaries*, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Not one of these movie adaptations is based on a novel written by a non-white author.

These representations are not surprising. Discussions around the whiteness of nominated actors in 2016 Academy Awards spurred the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, which was critical of the Academy for not recognizing non-white actors. Many of these conversations revealed discrimination both in the Academy and in the Hollywood film industry itself, which limits opportunities to actors and directors who come from diverse racial backgrounds. Although diverse writers certainly constitute much of YA, their visibility is not as pronounced as the white writers who have gained opportunities for their books outside of the print format. Much of the

popularity of a YA novel depends on inter-media exposure and extensive digital paratexts – where it can ostensibly reach teenage readers – and the exclusion of some authors from this multi-media marketing can mean that their novels are not as visible as others.

Publishers themselves bear considerable responsibility too. The visibility of YA has changed in recent years, attributed in part to the substantial growth of category. *The New York Times* broke down statistics from Bowker Market Research noting that while 4,668 YA novels were published in 2002, 10,276 YA novels were published in 2012 (Vineyard and Whitford). That amounts to a 120 per cent increase over ten years. Although much research addresses the growth of the category of YA, there is no corresponding data to track the growth of diversity, or a set method for measuring diversity. There is no way of knowing just how underrepresented diverse voices in YA are in conjunction with these statistics. Corresponding research has tracked diversity in children's books through the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) to show that in 2002 only 169 out of 3,150 books published were created by African Americans, First Nations, Asian, and Latinos and in 2012 only 216 out of 3600 books published were created by African Americans, First Nations, Asian, and Latinos. These statistics show an almost insignificant increase in books published by non-white writers over ten years, from about 5% to 6%. However, the CCBC measures more than just YA texts, and included in this study "everything that comes into the CCBC annually... This includes picture books, novels, and non-fiction" (CCBC). Bowker Market Research did not specifically identify diverse YA novels in their statistics. Certainly diverse authors write YA and contribute to these growing numbers, but there is a lack of visibility for these authors outside of those who we would regard as mainstream.

My critical reading of YA and my understanding of the diverse paths I have not taken in my doctoral work have been influenced by campaigns that have arisen to address issues of diversity in YA literature in the last four years, causing me to consider the choices that led me to my five key texts. The *We Need Diverse Books* (WNDB) campaign, a grassroots organization that arose in April 2014 to address the need for diverse voices in YA, especially impacted my understanding of diversity in YA, and my identity as a reader, writer, and researcher of this category. The campaign aims to affect publishers, authors, booksellers, librarians, and distributors to amplify the visibility of YA novels that focus on “LGBTQIA, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities” (We Need Diverse Books, “Mission Statement”). The campaign was first started by YA author Ellen Oh, after she engaged in a public Twitter exchange with her friend Malinda Lo (who co-founded the website *Diversity in YA* with YA writer Cindy Pon) about the lack of diversity in literature for young people. This lack of diversity was highlighted by 2013 research by Lee and Low Books, a multicultural publisher, which found that while 37% of the population of the United States are people of color, only 10% of published children’s books contained multicultural content (We Need Diverse Books, “Mission Statement”). Additionally, the Time’s List of 100 greatest YA books was released in 2014, and contained only seven books by authors of color (it also contained many novels that are traditionally categorized as “middle grade” and not YA). Laurie Halse Anderson, author of the celebrated YA novel *Speak* (1999) wrote an extended tweet in response to the list:

I feel about seeing SPEAK on the Time Best “YA” list the same way as I did when it made the NPR list: horrified.

The Time “YA” list is ridiculously skewed towards white authors. I don’t want to be a part of that. I want to be a part of change.

As an [sic] American author, I feel a responsibility to all of my country’s children, not just the ones who look like me. (qtd. in Cueto)

Halse Anderson is a white author, and her comments initiated discussion on Twitter between a variety of individuals in the publishing industry: readers, writers, agents, and editors. These conversations came into the forefront of critical discussions of YA in 2014, especially online, and influenced my understanding of the relationship between diversity and YA literature, and of its role as a specific cultural force that drives reception of the category of YA literature. They also led me to consider my own reading practices, and the way I conceived of YA as a category.

Ellen Oh addressed the importance of taking action in order to improve the visibility of diverse characters and writers in YA, and she was backed by other authors, bloggers, editors, and publishers. Oh is now the acting CEO and President of We Need Diverse Books. Her team includes writers Nicola Yoon (*Everything Everything*), Alex Gino (*George*), and Anne Ursu (*Breadcrumbs*), as well as a wide range of librarians, publishers, editors, and agents. Her advisory committee reads like a “who’s who” of YA and includes Meg Medina (*Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*), Grace Lin (*The Mountain Meets the Moon*), Christopher Myers (*Black Cat*), Linda Sue Park (*A Long Walk to Water*), Matt de la Pena (*Mexican WhiteBoy*), Cindy Pon (*Fury of the Phoenix*), Cynthia Leitich Smith (*Rain is Not My Indian Name*), Jacqueline Woodson (*Brown Girl Dreaming*), and Gene Luen Yang (*American Born Chinese*). We Need Diverse Books arranges and runs programming for author visits by diverse writers. It also creates toolkits for educators, which help integrate diverse books into elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. Watching many of my favorite authors become part of We Need Diverse

Books, interacting with the campaign through social media and its crowdfunding efforts on Kickstarter, and reading critical articles about WNDB encouraged me to reexamine my own reading habits and my understanding of diversity.

We Need Diverse Books is actively targeting YA in order to promote positive changes in writing, reading, marketing, and publishing practices. In their annual report for 2014, they put forward the following changes for 2015:

- Creation of the Walter Award, named for Walter Dean Myers. It grants \$2,000 to an outstanding book written by a diverse author. The first award was announced in 2016, for a title published in 2015. (9)
- Creation of the Walter Grants, which provide grants of \$2,000 each to five unpublished writers whose background and work is diverse. (9)
- Forthcoming publication of the WNDB Anthology: *Stories for All of Us* by Crown Books for Young Readers/Random House. (11)
- Creation of WNDB Internships, which provide supplemental grants of up to \$2,500 to interns from diverse backgrounds if they wish to work at publishing houses. (11)
- Creation of WNDB Mentorships, which matches writers and illustrators from diverse backgrounds with mentors for a one-year period, beginning in 2016. (12)
- Creation of the WNDB Diversity Festival, to run in 2017 or 2018. Designed to bring together readers, teachers, librarians, writers, agents, and editors. (13)

This is how one campaign is ensuring that YA literature responds to concerns about the lack of diversity. Rather than insisting readers read more books written by non-white writers, WNDB instead targets the market itself by creating opportunities for non-white writers.

WNDB received a total income of \$333,023 in 2014, contributed by three major sponsors. The first is the Indiegogo Campaign run by WNDB. Indiegogo is an international crowd funding website that allows groups and individuals to fundraise for ideas, charities, or start-up businesses. WNDB raised \$213,023 through Indiegogo, seeing over 2,400 contributors from 164 countries donate an average of \$137 per person (We Need Diverse Books, “Annual Report” 5). \$110,000 was raised through #CelebrateJackie, a campaign that arose after YA writer Daniel Handler’s racist comments in response to Jacqueline (Jackie) Woodson’s National Book Award win for *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Handler agreed to match all donations to WNDB up to \$100,000 to make amends for his remarks. As a result, he effectively funded about a third of the WNDB campaign. Finally, Project4Awesome, a campaign created by YA author John Green and his brother Hank that encouraged YouTube users to promote and support their favorite charities, raised an additional \$10,000. Clearly, WNDB was viewed as an important campaign and the high response articulates that diverse books are viewed as a necessity.

WNDB specifically cites the importance of children and adolescents viewing themselves in books. WNDB outlines three effects of this:

1. *Seeing Reflections of Themselves*: WNDB quotes a 1990 article by Rudine Sims Bishop entitled “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,” which states, “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.” (qtd. in We Need Diverse Books, “FAQ”)
2. *Learning the True Nature of the World Around Them*: WNDB states the importance of white children also viewing the world around them as it really is, and not as it is when it

is distorted through books that focus on a white and heteronormative experience.

Diversity needs to be reflected in books not just for children of a diverse background, but also for white children who need to understand the richness of culture. (“FAQ”)

3. *Seeing Themselves in Characters and Their Environment*: WNDB cites research that insists that children search for themselves in the books they read, and they therefore deserve to be able to find characters that reflect their experiences. Schools and libraries are searching out more diverse experiences reflected in books for young people, but are finding it a challenge. (“FAQ”)

There is a demand for more diverse content to help readers to see themselves reflected in literature, and to also benefit the readers who have traditionally already found themselves there.

Publishers have acted in response to Oh’s work through WNDB. In February 2016, Simon & Schuster created a new imprint designed to publish Muslim-themed children’s books called Salaam Reads. Reporting on this new imprint for *The New York Times*, Alexandra Alter explains Salaam Reads will release nine or more books per year that include children’s board books, picture books, middle grade reads, and YA titles. Zareen Jaffrey, who is heading up the new imprint, explains that books should reflect the experience of Muslim children and adolescents in America, and Salaam Reads “will highlight the experience of being Muslim through their characters and plots” (qtd. in Alter). Salaam, Jaffrey explains, means “peace” in Arabic.

Additionally, YA literature recently gained a new public face and representative. In January 2016, author and comics artist Gene Luen Yang was appointed as the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, an honorary title bestowed by the Library of Congress. The title recognizes a writer or illustrator in the United States who has impacted the

category of literature for young people. The Ambassador's ability to communicate to youth about books is key, and the committee often chooses a dynamic speaker. The Ambassadorship was established in 2008, and Ambassadors have included Jon Scieszka (2008-2009), Katherine Paterson (2010-2011), Walter Dean Myers (2012-2013), and Kate DiCamillo (2014-2015). Yang's focus in this role has been on his "Reading Without Walls" campaign, which urges readers to 1) Read a book about a character who doesn't look like you or live like you, 2) Read a book about a topic that you don't know much about, and 3) Read a book in a format that you don't normally read for fun (a chapter book, a graphic novel, a book in verse).

While these initiatives increase the visibility of diverse authors and their work, these resources – and reading diversely – have caused me to rethink my definitions and understanding of diversity. These resources have also been integral to my critical examination of my own reading of and research in YA literature. They have pointed me towards books that are often not displayed at bookstores, and made me more aware of authors that I had not engaged with before. Yet they have also helped me to understand that diversity doesn't necessarily happen through the inclusion of non-white characters in YA novels. When engaging in research on YA literature, I slowly began to examine the choices I made as a reader, and over the course of my reading and writing, I began to think more critically, not only about YA and the media age, but also about those choices. The choices appeared to show a lack of diversity and once I noticed that, I attempted to learn more about diverse literature to include or refer to in my discussions. I began researching and reading YA literature labeled diverse. At first, I might have thought that this was enough – to be able to point out the lack of diversity in YA and then show how this is being addressed through organizations like We Need Diverse Books. Through Louise Saldanha's research, I came to understand the notion that "unreflective gestures" of simply having more

diverse books and characters is not enough to change the dominant narratives of power in our society. Rather, it started to become apparent to me that diverse literature itself needs to be more critically considered. In other words, I thought that diverse titles helped to meet a need for diverse readers, but have reconsidered the ways in which YA literature does not let its narratives go much farther than that. YA does not encourage readers to do the critical work when reading diverse characters in a category of literature than has largely been shaped by white heteronormative authors, but instead focuses on the fact that they are there.

Some members of the YA community are engaging in that critical work, specifically the website *Disability in Kidlit*, which addresses and discusses portrayals of disability in middle grade and YA literature by publishing articles, reviews, interviews, and conversations. Corinne Duyvis co-founded the website with YA author Kody Keplinger, who wrote the popular novel *The DUFF (Designated Ugly Fat Friend)* (2010), later adapted into a movie in 2015 starring Mae Whitman. The website offers thoughtful and critical examinations of YA novels that include disabled characters, written by disabled people in order to reveal the difference between fictional portrayal and real experience, and is often critical of those books lauded by publishers, booksellers, and critics for their diversity.

As this work has taken place visibly in YA literature in the last two years, my critical understanding of diversity and YA literature has also helped me understand that the five texts I have chosen might not represent exemplary texts for all readers, and that, in fact, many readers might feel excluded from these titles. I began to question to whom these five books are speaking. What audience is being addressed, and what is the consequence of that address? To whom are the books not speaking? The diverse paths I did not take were a result of my initial understanding of the category of YA, which has developed from my personal reading history. I have also

realized that I have had an unrealistic understanding of the number of diverse books written for teenagers, reinforced by Malinda Lo's research using the American Library Association's Best Fiction for Young Adults list to chart diversity from 2011 to 2013. She found that characters of color made up 16.8 percent of YA on this list in 2011, 21.2 percent in 2012, and 21.9 percent in 2013 ("Diversity"). LGBTQ characters and issues were at the center of 2 percent of YA fiction on this list in 2011, 3.4 in 2012, and 4.9 in 2013. Characters with disabilities have fluctuated differently, including 5 percent in 2011, 4.5 percent in 2012, and 2.9 percent in 2013 (Lo, "Diversity"). Representation is not as diverse as my selective reading suggested.

My concept of diversity in YA novels has been challenged and reshaped over the last four years. I have learned that it means different things to different people, and is an extremely complex concept that functions differently in YA (for example, many new panels on diversity often contain white authors who write non-white characters, rather than non-white and diverse authors). I have also come to understand the way that my reading choices – both as a teenager and as an adult – influenced my selection processes and perhaps excluded books from this study that would have added to the ways in which contemporary YA has been shaped by cultural and technological contexts. My dissertation does not attempt to enforce a binary between my five key texts (as exemplary texts) and diverse texts (as less exemplary). Instead, my reading background led to such texts being left out of my initial selection processes. If I were beginning my dissertation today, I could imagine a set of texts that included YA novels that reflect diversity of both characters and writers. These novels might include Laura Ruby's *Bone Gap* (2016), Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* (2014), Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* (2015), Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki's *This One Summer* (2014), Kekla Magoon's *How It Went Down* (2014), Una LaMarche's *Like No Other* (2014), David Levithan's *Every Day* (2012), Meg

Medina's *Burn Baby Burn* (2016), G. Willow Wilson's *Ms. Marvel* (2014), Julie Murphy's *Dumplin'* (2015), and Becky Albertalli's *Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015). These books and more reflect the visibility of diverse authors and characters in YA and require the same critical examination that my five texts receive here. YA is a quickly changing category of literature, one that responds very swiftly to contemporary contexts, and one that highlights new and notable authors. Any study of YA cannot be fully comprehensive, and can only represent a segment of its publications. Although any of these publications could have been the focus of a dissertation on the ways in which social and technological contexts have affected the category of YA literature, the books I chose for study in this dissertation are *The Book Thief*, *Beauty Queens*, *Why We Broke Up*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, and *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*. These five books are touchstone texts for the ways in which digital technologies are changing YA novels, even if they do not represent other social forces at work in the area. Their inclusion in this dissertation comes from my dual focus as a lifelong reader of YA and also as an academic, which has provided me with the position to see authors adapt their novels to new contexts.

These books have been chosen in part because of my familiarity with their authors and texts. For example, I have been reading books by Jaclyn Moriarty since the publication of her first book, *Feeling Sorry for Celia* (2000), when I was in grade six. I reviewed the first three books in Lemony Snicket's (Daniel Handler's) *A Series of Unfortunate Events* for the teen review section of *The Lethbridge Herald* in 2000: *The Bad Beginning* (1999), *The Reptile Room* (1999), and *The Wide Window* (2000). I first encountered Libba Bray's debut publication, *A Great and Terrible Beauty* (2003) in high school. I read a copy of Markus Zusak's *The Underdog* (1999) while working at a secondhand bookstore in Sackville, New Brunswick while working on my BA at Mount Allison University. My reading of John Green's *Looking for Alaska*

(2005) came later, during my MA at the University of Victoria. I read the subsequent novels by these authors over the course of a decade. The release of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, *Why We Broke Up*, *Beauty Queens*, *The Book Thief*, and *The Fault in Our Stars* stood apart from their previous publications, and appeared to me to be doing something new, different, and innovative – something that hadn't been apparent in their earlier works. These new works pushed the boundaries of not only the previous publications by these authors, but also of YA itself. These books specifically inspired this study, and although I read widely in the category of YA to search for books for study, these five texts stood out as the most exemplary texts in my critical and personal experience reading YA at the beginning of this process. Another reader may have encountered another set of authors in his/her teenage years, whose writing continued to develop and adapt over the ensuing decade. Many of the other authors in this study have currently written debut novels, which makes it difficult to evaluate the changes in their work over time. Yet, these were *my* authors, and these were the changes I saw as a reader transitioning out of young adulthood and into adulthood.

My reading as a teenager may also have influenced the issues with lack of diversity in my chosen texts. Many of the books that I was able to acquire as a teenager were purchased from my local Chapters in Lethbridge, Alberta, a Canadian bookstore, where mainstream YA authors dominated only one or two shelves, although today, YA books take up a great deal more store space. As a teenager, I did not have access to an independent bookstore, where recommendations might be more specifically curated and diverse (in fact, Chapters drove out the only indie bookstore in Lethbridge, Macabee's Bookstore, when I was in grade six!). As well, the digital network on which I would later rely on for recommendations and information was not available to me as a teenager. The digital history that accompanies the visibility and transformation of YA

has influenced my reading, writing, and research, especially since the creation of Twitter in 2006. My work as an academic in the area of YA literature is largely influenced by the authors I encountered as a teenager, and the reading experience I had with this category. A different understanding of the category of YA as a teenager, or a different geographical location, might have resulted in an altogether different set of texts. For example, in addition to the diverse novels stated above, I can imagine any of the following novels fitting well into the focus of this dissertation: M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002) and *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation Volumes I & II* (2006/2008); Matthew Quick's *Sorta Like a Rock Star* (2010), *Boy21* (2011), or *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* (2012); A. S. King's *The Dust of 100 Dogs* (2009); Melina Marchetta's *Jellicoe Road (On the Jellicoe Road in Australia)* (2006); E. Lockhart's *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* (2009); and Craig Silvey's *Jasper Jones* (2012). These novels would have led to other findings about the category of YA in the twenty-first century, some tangentially linked, and some much more discursive. However, these novels demonstrate how contemporary YA authors make use of similar concepts and contexts in their work, and would have fit in well with my primary texts. I can also imagine having used books published after the cut-off date of 2012 to a similar effect: Jandy Nelson's (2014) *I'll Give You the Sun*, Sally Gardner's *Maggot Moon* (2013), Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* (2013), E. Lockhart's *We Were Liars* (2014), A. S. King's *I Crawl Through It* (2015), or Jesse Andrews's *The Haters* (2016). The category of YA is broad, and it contains multitudes of genres and formats. I have tried to be comprehensive within my reading and research, but I have also challenged my key texts and noticed that my reading has become more critical over the last four years particularly as YA continues to respond to and reflect changing technological and social contexts.

Chapter Breakdown

The first chapter, “The Creation and Ongoing Transformation of Young Adult Literature,” examines the history of YA literature, beginning with a consideration of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* and Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as precursor YA novels. In order to determine how contemporary social and technological contexts have influenced printed YA novels, it is important to understand how similar conditions both gave rise to the category and provided the impetus for YA to change over the course of almost 150 years. This chapter also considers the relationship between readers and texts, and specifically seeks to understand whether new readers, with different expectations, or new literature, which offered different experiences, were introduced first with each transformation of YA literature.

In Chapter Two, “Internalizing YA: Intertextuality and Intermediality in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by Jaclyn Moriarty and *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray,” evidence of intertextuality and intermediality are traced through contemporary YA novels. The chapter shows how intertextuality and intermediality appear frequently in young adult books as a way to connect readers with references outside of the text itself. *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray and *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by Jaclyn Moriarty both exhibit rich intertextuality and intermediality that creates meaning for their readers. *Beauty Queens*, for example, not only references the canonical text *Lord of the Flies*, but also interacts with the story by mimicking, re-envisioning, and re-writing Golding’s text. Bray’s novel updates *Lord of the Flies* by imagining if, instead of a plane of adolescent boys, a plane carrying a group of teenage beauty queens crashed on an isolated island. Bray questions the core idea in *Lord of the Flies* – how society re-forms in isolation – and substitutes a feminine lens for Golding’s masculine one. Bray uses mainly female characters

instead of entirely male ones. However, this intertextual engagement represents only one text referenced in *Beauty Queens*, even if it is the one explored most fully. Bray also expects readers to be familiar with a social intertextuality and intermediality that is interested in reality television, politics, current events, and pop culture in general, and she consistently references these social or cultural texts in order to craft her story. *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, on the other hand, uses the genre of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel as its intertext. The characters in Moriarty's almost 500-page book write an English exam on Gothic literature as a framework for her story. Knowledge of a canonical and social intertextuality gives the book its meaning.

Chapter Three, "Multimodal Forms: Text, Image, and Visual Literacy in Daniel Handler's *Why We Broke Up* and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*" focuses on the increased use of graphics and images in contemporary YA literature. Images are used sparingly in many YA novels, and appear next to high ratios of text. Text is still maintained in a much higher ratio to image, and images appear as one-page drawings, half-page drawings, doodles, or self-contained stories told with images within a text-based book. Both *Why We Broke Up* by Daniel Handler and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak employ graphics and images; however, they do so in remarkably different ways. Handler teams up with artist Maira Kalman to tell the story of Min's break-up with her boyfriend Ed Slaterton. Throughout the book, Min collects items that are significant to her relationship with Ed. Kalman illustrates the items as one-page images and Handler writes the text, or story, that describes the item's importance to the relationship. Kalman is an award-winning artist who provides art for *The New Yorker*, and she has also collected her pieces in books for adults, the most recent of which is *Beloved Dog* (2015). *Why We Broke Up* is an expensive book, and it includes glossy images of the full-color illustrations. *The Book Thief*, however, uses image much more sparingly. In fact, images are used primarily in a very short

section in the middle of the book, where Zusak illustrates a several-page picture book. This picture book is one of the most effective pieces of *The Book Thief*, hastily drawn images on pages of *Mein Kampf* that have been painted over in white. It effectively ties together previous plot developments in the book by heightening the World War II context (the author of the short picture book is a Jewish man hidden in the basement of a German family), while also setting up much of what is to come.

The fourth chapter, “The Authorial Constellation: Paratextuality and Daniel Handler/Lemony Snicket and John Green” traces the vast paratextual materials associated with two prominent YA novelists. Critic Jonathan Gray notes, “paratexts tell us what to expect, and in doing so, they shape the reading strategies that we will take with us ‘into’ the text, and they provide the all-important early frames through which we will examine, react to, and evaluate textual consumption” (26). These frames and advanced texts are frequently presented with young adult literature. Both Daniel Handler and John Green are authors with a remarkable amount of paratextual material available both before and after the publication of their physical books. This chapter presents a study of each author’s paratextual material, which necessitated a careful searching of the many threads that exist outside of the books themselves.

Chapter Five, “‘Why Do We Even Call it YA Anymore?’: Crossover Literature and Adult Readers,” reveals the blurring boundaries between YA literature and adult fiction, and the resulting anxieties about categories and genres of literature. Many young adult novels have a crossover appeal, that is, they have the potential to attract an audience of both young adults and adults. Two novels in particular, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak and *Looking For Alaska* by John Green, have been popular with both teenage and adult readers. *The Book Thief* was initially published as an adult novel in Australia, although it was designated a young adult book when it

was released in the United States. It was also adapted into a movie in 2014, which provides the potential to reach new and more varied audiences. John Green is well-known for having a diverse audience that is comprised of young adults and adults; indeed, those readers that discovered Green through his first publication in 2005 continue to read his books through to the present, developing into adult readers themselves. The goal of this chapter is to understand what leads to a book's crossover appeal, and to explore the reasons why adult readers now purchase 80% of all YA novels. How are books read, written, and marketed in the twenty-first century in a way that appeals to adult readers?

Finally, in the Conclusion, I discuss YA literature as an unstable category undergoing transformation and change in the twenty-first century, and speculate about the future of reading, writing, and marketing YA. I examine both young adult literature and middle grade literature as adapting to meet new contexts and technologies, and encroaching on the boundaries of other categories of literature.

Chapter One

The Creation and Ongoing Transformation of Young Adult Literature

Young adult (YA) literature is not a new phenomenon. Often traced to the 1942 publication of Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer*, it emerged from a specific set of social and technological changes and it has continued to evolve as those conditions have changed. Numerous scholars have examined the cultural, social, and historical conditions that have led to the development of YA literature. As a result, investigating the history of YA literature is complex, and the date of its origin is highly contested. This chapter will examine the conditions that gave rise to the YA novel, tracing the historical contexts beginning in the 1870s. These include the passing of compulsory education laws, the publication of G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*, the creation of the National Youth Association in the United States, the advent of World War I and World War II, and the founding of *Seventeen Magazine*. Throughout its history, YA literature has changed in response to new conditions and to appeal to and serve a new generation of readers, readers with different experiences, concerns, and contexts.

I consider young adult literature to be an American phenomenon, one that grew out of and was shaped specifically and primarily by American contexts. Indeed, the concepts of both adolescence and the teenager are American inventions, and have perhaps most shaped the way we understand this literature today. American novels provided the templates for YA literature, and characteristics that were present in these early novels persist in the literature today. When psychologist G. Stanley Hall wrote his pioneering study identifying a new stage of development in 1904 – adolescence – he suggested that America itself was a nation in adolescence, still coming to terms with defining its identity and purpose. America was considered a young country, entrenched in the aftermath of the Civil War and searching for ways to identify itself as

a nation. Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) were published in the aftermath of the war, and we are able to trace the roots of young adult literature to these two germinal novels. Americans may have understood themselves as inhabiting a country in transition, and may have been more interested in the stories, characters, and contexts that exemplified a similar intermediate space. Early YA literature was shaped by American contexts, and American titles remain the most popular and critically reviewed internationally. Scholars such as Michael Cart explain that YA became popular in the 1960s due to the fact that the children's divisions of American publishers issued new titles and marketed to libraries and schools (qtd. in Doll). Ray Walters, writer for *The New York Times*, notes that the "Teen Age Book Club" was established by Scholastic in 1947, and that students paid 25 cents a month in order to receive a new paperback book. Scholastic is an American publisher of educational materials and books for young people and notably sells its book catalogue in school environments. Scholastic book sales drive much of the publisher's revenue, reporting \$458.2 million dollars in sales in 2013 (Milliot). While certainly YA thrives internationally, both young adult literature and its readership developed out of specific American cultural and technological contexts, creating the types of novels that we recognize as YA.

This chapter is influenced by two scholarly works that specifically focus on the creation of teenage culture, which has largely been informed by the social contexts that both shape and reflect the experience of youth. Jon Savage's *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture 1875-1945* (2007) provides a historical context for the emergence of the idea of the teenager. He traces the origins of youth culture to the late nineteenth century, and investigates its influence until the end of World War II. Savage is adamant that although youth were the subject of important cultural, political, and social discussions from the 1870s onward, it was not until 1944 and 1945 that the

term “teenager” was used to define young people who occupied the intermediate space between childhood and adulthood. Savage explains that “adolescent” was viewed as a dated term, in circulation for forty years since its creation in 1904 by G. Stanley Hall. New terms such as “sub-deb” and “bobby-soxer” were viewed as either perpetuating class distinctions or else as being intrinsically tied to music culture, and were too specific to refer to the broad group of young people (453). Instead, Savage notes the creation of the term teenager was more utilitarian:

The term’s origin lay in the inflected form of “ten” that, according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, was “added to the numerals 3 to 9 to form the names of those from 13 to 19.” From Tarkington [author of *Seventeen*] to Daly [author of *Seventeenth Summer*] and the magazine itself, *Seventeen* had long been the apotheosized adolescent age: old enough for self-determination yet still not adult. The suffix ‘teen’ had also had a long life, occurring in *Adolescence* and in the 1920s with *Harold Teen*. “Teenage” had been freely used after the mid-1930s, often hyphenated as “teen-age,” while attempts to promote clunky alternatives like “teener” and “teenster” had failed.

Teenage it was then. (453).

While Savage does not present a history of literature for youth, he makes note of germinal publications in the category that correspond with changing social contexts. These contexts include juvenile delinquency and mass media, movie and music culture, and World War I and World War II.

Grace Palladino’s *Teenagers: An American History* (1996) provides a more specific focus on the invention of the teenager. Palladino highlights the cultural and social contexts that followed World War II; although her brief discussion of the Great Depression provides some context for the social conditions the teenager developed out of, she largely focuses on teen

culture from 1945 onward, ending her work in the mid-1990s. Palladino's focus is the United States and the American teenager. Neither Savage nor Palladino focuses specifically on young adult literature; however, they make note of some of the germinal titles published for teenagers.

This chapter will focus on the cultural, social, and historical conditions that led to the birth of young adult literature, while also examining the early titles that were integral to creating a literature for young people. Beginning with the publication of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* in 1868, and ending with the creation of New Adult Literature in the early 2000s, I will provide a context from which to discuss new adaptations of YA literature in the twenty-first century. The relationships between readers and books are integral to tracing the development of young adult literature. At many stages of its development, the question of which came first – a new readership or a new literature – targets how categories of literature develop and change over time. While it is often difficult to pinpoint the originating factor – readers or books – examining the variety of social and technological contexts that formed the backdrop of the creation and development of young adult literature answers interesting questions about relationships between readers, writers, librarians, and teachers.

Precursors of YA Literature: *Little Women* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

While YA literature did not fully emerge until after World War II, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, published in 1868, and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1885 are, as I explain below, considered precursors of the category. Their influence continues to be visible in contemporary publications in YA literature. When I first encountered *Little Women* in junior high, I remember being surprised by how similar it was to the contemporary YA I was reading at the time (2001-2003). It seemed accessible and fresh, while offering characters that

felt real and interesting. The following is an examination of the social and technological contexts that helped to shape *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn*, and the way these two seminal novels have shaped the category of young adult literature.

The framework of the production, reception, and readership of these two novels is critical to understanding the rise of the YA novel. Children's Literature scholar Roberta Seelinger Trites makes particular note of their similarities in *Twain, Alcott, and the Birth of the Adolescent Reform Novel* (2007), and their lasting influence on contemporary YA literature. Seelinger Trites best compares *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn* by describing both publications as "reform novels." This means that Alcott and Twain used their adolescent protagonists as metaphors for reform: "for both of them, the young represented the capacity for change that is necessary for a culture itself to change" (xiv). Adolescent reform novels highlight the relationship between the protagonist and the community by targeting individual and community ethics. We might view the ethics of race, gender, and politics as informing much of the core material in Alcott and Twain's novels. Ethical flaws are therefore highlighted by the disjunction between the ethics of the protagonist and the ethics of the community. The growth of the protagonist signals that society, too, can change, and the reform novel outlines methods of achieving such growth. It is this parallel between a protagonist's need to grow and a society's need to change that is characteristic of adolescent reform novels (144).

Little Women was initially published in two volumes, the first in 1868 and the second in 1869 (the popularity of Alcott's work driving its publication). The first volume of the novel sold out its first print run in four weeks, and even though the print run was increased for the second volume, it also sold out quickly (Cauti xvii). Little, Brown and Company reported sales of 1,500,000 copies by 1898, thirty years after the initial publication (xvii). The novel follows the

March family, specifically sisters Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Meg is the oldest at sixteen, while twelve-year-old Amy is the youngest of the sisters. Their father, Mr. March, is engaged in the Civil War, and the novel follows the four sisters as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Alcott's youth spent with her own sisters greatly influenced the content of *Little Women*. Remarkably, *Little Women* provided readers with four young female characters, each of whom exemplified possibilities for young women at the time. While Meg typified beauty and the domestic, Jo was defined by her strong personality and love of reading and writing. Beth was notably musical and shy, while Amy, the youngest sister, was interested in art and beauty, although she is perhaps best remembered for her vain and self-centered nature. In her introduction to the book, Camille Cauti reminds readers that Alcott based Jo on herself, and, as a result, "Jo is the most fully realized, complex character and, not surprisingly, the one most beloved by Alcott's readers across generations and most inspirational for these readers' own fantasies and ambitions" (xxiii).

The popularity of Alcott's *Little Women* effectively transformed her into a celebrity author. We might choose to view Alcott as inhabiting the authorial constellation that I will examine in chapter four, which describes the various ways YA novelists participate in celebrity. In her book *The Afterlife of Little Women*, Beverly Lyon Clark attributes the popularity of Alcott's novel to the positioning of literature in the mid-nineteenth century, when the market had not yet "segregated literature for young and old, and for boys and girls" (10). The novel was more far-reaching and was not constricted by age or gender. *Little Women* was read by boys, even though it was about a family of young girls (29). Sequels *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys* focused on both male and female characters. Alcott's celebrity was acknowledged by her copious fan mail, and this newfound status was largely influenced by the fact that she was a woman; Lyon

Clark insists this made her more approachable, and the fact that the focus of her books was on children added another level to her accessibility. Alcott reflects on the role of author in her novel *Jo's Boys* (1886), using protagonist Jo to comment on the experience of “living in a lantern” (72). In this scene, Jo reads and answers fan mail sent after she becomes a public authorial figure, and becomes preoccupied with the following thoughts,

For suddenly the admiring public took possession of her and all her affairs, past, present, and to come. Strangers demanded to look at her, question, advise, warn, congratulate, and drive her out of her wits by well-meant but very wearisome attentions. If she declined to open her heart to them, they reproached her; if she refused to endow her pet charities, relieve private wants, or sympathize with every ill and trial known to humanity, she was called hard-hearted, selfish, and haughty; if she found it impossible to answer the piles of letters sent her, she was neglectful of her duty to the admiring public; and if she preferred the privacy of home to the pedestal upon which she was requested to pose, ‘the airs of literary people’ were freely criticized. (70-71)

She also makes note of one letter in particular, sent by a boy who she recognizes from his previous correspondence. She decides, “I will not answer this kind of letter. I’ve sent at least six to this boy, and he probably sells them” (74). We might read these comments as Alcott’s own, though they are delivered through Jo.

Although there was much about the novel that appealed to young people – and helped to form the category of juvenile literature only a few decades later – it also specifically presented models of girlhood in sisters Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy that were largely attractive to female readers. Lyon Clark notes that the themes Alcott offered regarding girlhood inspired several subsequent publications, such as those by Susan Coolidge and L. M. Montgomery (11).

Perhaps most notable about *Little Women* is that the subjects of the novel inhabited an intermediate space, one that we would now recognize as adolescence. In their introduction to *Contemporary Adolescent Literature and Culture: The Emergent Adult* (2012), Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva note that a significant pattern in popular publications at the end of the nineteenth century was the focus on an intermediate space between childhood and adulthood, although it did not yet have a corresponding label. Hilton and Nikolajeva note that novels such as *Little Women* presented “a clear sense of integration between child and emerging adult” (2). In North America, publications that emphasized this intermediate space included books such as Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1872), Kate Douglas Wiggin’s *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903), and L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1912), and their sequels in which the heroines move into adulthood. In Britain publications included Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883), Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), and E. Nesbit’s *The Railway Children* (1906) (Hilton and Nikolajeva 2).

The delineation between childhood and adulthood was discussed in great detail during the decade after *Little Women* was published. Americans especially recognized the need to acknowledge and explore the intermediate space that preoccupied so many nineteenth-century novels. Writer Jon Savage attributes the first examination of the transitional period between childhood and adulthood to a specific event in the 1870s. The highly publicized incarceration of fifteen-year-old Jesse Pomeroy, a young murderer in Massachusetts State, was the moment that many Americans began to view the definitions of childhood and adulthood as becoming more mutable. Pomeroy’s appalling crimes and incarceration instigated a nationwide debate about capital punishment, and also about developmental categories. Pomeroy could not quite be defined and tried as an adult at the age of fifteen, yet his crimes were too abhorrent to label him a

child. This discussion led to the conception of an indeterminate state that was gaining momentum at the end of the nineteenth century.

A decade after the conversation about Jesse Pomeroy, the publication of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) sparked yet another debate about youth in the United States. The novel is a first-person account by Huck Finn, who first appeared in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) as a friend of the protagonist. While *Tom Sawyer* was largely viewed as a book for boys, *Huckleberry Finn* was a much more difficult novel to categorize. Because its characters and setting overlapped with *Tom Sawyer*, many readers expected it to follow the same format of a boys' adventure story. However, the content was much more complicated, complex, and mature than *Tom Sawyer*, and examined social issues such as race and politics prominent in the late nineteenth century. Like *Little Women*, it took on the characteristics of an intermediate category, and its position on the cusp of two categories of literature – the boys' adventure story and the adult novel – largely affected the public's reception of the novel. The novel follows Huck's adventures along the Mississippi River; vernacular and regional dialects add particular style as he moves from place to place. Seelinger Trites explains that *Huckleberry Finn* also set up the bildungsroman as a picaresque: "follow a boy on a trip, and you'll follow him as he grows" (144). Although Tom Sawyer is a character in *Huckleberry Finn*, he appears as a much different iteration than in that first book.

The public reception of *Huckleberry Finn* is well recorded and detailed, particularly in articles by Arthur Lawrence Vogelback and Victor Fischer. Readers expected *Huckleberry Finn* to be a children's novel, preferably in the vein of *Tom Sawyer*'s adventure story, yet instead, the combination of mature content, complexity, racial issues, and a young protagonist placed the novel in an unarticulated category of literature, one that was neither exclusively for children nor

for adults. Perhaps the single event that overwhelmingly shaped reception of Twain's new novel was the condemnation of the book by the Committee of the Concord Public Library in Massachusetts. The committee announced that the book was to be excluded by the library, engaging in a brand of censorship and of evaluation. Members of the committee characterized the novel as "rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people" (qtd. in P. 572). Twain, however, was not rankled by the statement. Instead, he saw the capability for the public denunciation to increase sales of *Huckleberry Finn* and, in a letter to Charles L. Webster, he wrote, "The Committee of the Public Library of Concord, Mass., have given us a rattling tip-top puff which will go into every paper in the country. They have expelled Huck from their library as 'trash and suitable only for the slums.' That will sell 25,000 copies for us sure" (qtd. in Vogelback 265). The novel continues to generate controversy and, although it is widely taught in high school American literature classes, it is also frequently derided, banned, and viewed as a book that promulgates racism. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, readers could experience the transitional space between childhood and adulthood, and view literature as engaging with and articulating a new category of youth.

Both books are largely attributed with providing templates for early YA literature, and many of the literary techniques they ushered in are largely still visible in YA novels today. For example, Hilton and Nikolajeva note that *Huckleberry Finn* presents a specific first-person narration, a popular trait of contemporary YA novels (4). It also introduces a vernacular style (Seelinger Trites 144), which would be taken up later in 1970s problem novels that emphasize slang and colloquial language. Characteristics introduced by *Huckleberry Finn* – "the ironic, vernacular, first-person narrator who is on a journey" (144) – embody much of what is "young

adult” about the YA novel, and Seelinger Trites notes the inheritance of these characteristics in the 1951 publication of J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*. She states, “Holden Caulfield...has been compared to Huck so often that even CliffNotes informs its readers of the parallel” (145). *Huckleberry Finn*, she notes, has influenced important YA publications such as *The Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Outsiders* (149). The road trip journey epitomized by so many YA novels may also be influenced by the river journey depicted in *Huckleberry Finn*. YA road trip novels such as John Green’s *Paper Towns* (2008), Morgan Matson’s *Amy and Roger’s Epic Detour* (2010), and David Arnold’s *Mosquitoland* (2015) follow the physical (and psychological) journey of its protagonists.

Likewise, *Little Women* has influenced other aspects of YA literature. For instance, Seelinger Trites sees Alcott as providing three lasting effects in the literature: the format of the sister novel, the kunstlerroman of the female writer, and the creation of the androgynous female protagonist (146). Novels about sibling relationships, especially between sisters, are integral to YA literature. For example, Ava Dellaira’s *Love Letters to the Dead* (2014) is written in epistolary format, as protagonist Laurel drafts letters to dead celebrities. These letters help her come to terms with the recent death of her sister May, and she begins by writing a letter to Kurt Cobain, May’s favorite musician. The novel explores their relationship, and flashes backwards and forwards to examine how it was changed and altered by high school. Margo Lanagan’s *Tender Morsels* (2008), Rainbow Rowell’s *Fangirl* (2013), and Lauren Oliver’s *Vanishing Girls* (2015) are just a small sample of the many YA novels that explore this relationship.

Additionally, the female kunstlerroman, or the development of the artist, is examined by much of YA literature. If we were to take the careers options offered by YA as a template for real teens’ aspirations and goals, then it would be safe to assume that all teenagers desire to become writers

or artists. The development of young writers and artists is perhaps overemphasized in YA literature. YA female protagonists with aspirations to be writers and artists include Jude in Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* (2014), Mattie in Jennifer Donnelly's *A Northern Light* (2003), Violet in Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* (2015), and Normandy in Susan Juby's *The Truth Commission* (2015). Normandy, for example, is the implied writer of the novel, which she is writing for an assignment for her creative nonfiction class, although the novel also touches on the artistic endeavors of her sister Kiera, who has fictionalized their family in her bestselling graphic novel. Normandy attends the fictional Green Pastures Academy for Art and Design in Nanaimo, BC. Meanwhile, Nelson's female protagonist Jude attends a prestigious art school in California and is mentored by a famous sculptor in her community. Their growth as artists takes up the narrative space of each novel.

Lastly, Alcott's Jo emphasizes the boyish female character, a trait that has persisted in YA literature, especially in protagonists Bella Swan in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2004) and Kippy Bushman in Kathleen Hale's *No One Else Can Have You* (2014). Additionally, Sammy Keyes, the protagonist of Wendelin Van Draanen's long-running *Sammy Keyes* mystery series, exemplifies the character traits introduced by Jo March. Sammy is in grade seven when the series begins, and the eighteen-book series came to an end in 2014 with the publication of *Sammy Keyes and the Killer Cruise*. At the beginning of the series, Sammy is sent to live with her Grams in a high-rise apartment complex for seniors. She sneaks in and out of the building, takes the initiative in solving mysteries in the town of Santa Martina, California (a fictionalized Santa Maria), and hangs out with her best friends. She loves skateboarding and other activities that the male characters in the novel enjoy doing. However, as the series progresses, she develops a crush on Casey Acosta, and they end up dating in several books in the series. Romance continues to be

a lasting trait of YA literature, which Seelinger Trites touches on when she suggests the category of “chick lit” developed out of the same romantic preoccupations of *Little Women* (160).

While Seelinger Trites is hesitant to state that all YA novels are descendants of these two novels, she does detail their lasting influence and their ability to shape much of what we recognize as young adult literature. Other writers and scholars similarly attempt to define origins and points of similarity in YA literature. For example, in a 2006 article “Footnotes” published on his blog, *John Green Books*, YA author Green attributed the beginnings of contemporary (twenty-first century) YA literature to David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest* (1996), which he claims influenced the shape of future YA publications. YA, Green says, borrows “a host of techniques from the book, including weird and largely inexplicable abbreviations (henceforth WALIAs), a breathless narrative voice that isn’t quite stream-of-consciousness, repetition of the word and, and footnotes” (“Footnotes”). The characteristics Green highlights from *Infinite Jest* – a breathless narrative voice and repetition – are certainly indicative of YA literature, and of influential texts such as *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Green’s essay highlights the adaptation of YA novels, to new contexts, culture, and politics, while also remarking on the endurance of those traits that best define young adult literature.

Not only did *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn* introduce characteristics that have persisted through contemporary YA literature, but they also provided early examples of the relationships between writers, editors, and publishers in the creation of books, especially those targeted at young people. As well, publication of *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn* were bound to the modes of publication popular at the time. For example, Seelinger Trites explains that both Twain and Alcott found their writing productivity affected by the following three publishing venues: serial publications, subscription books, and trade books (115). Serial

publications were the most popular venue for publishing material for children in the nineteenth century, particularly because they were inexpensive and easily distributed. Serials created a demand for story and content, and it was this demand that gave Alcott and Twain access to a literary market that led to profits at a fixed rate. While subscriptions were quite lucrative, they were not consistently so, nor were they valued for their literary merit (Seelinger Trites 123). While trade book publications did not guarantee a profit, they were the most literary and respected of the three venues, and also the publication type that would best guarantee Alcott and Twain's endurance as literary authors. This was because "youth librarians throughout the twentieth century were more likely to promote novel reading for teenagers than serials reading" (123). Their novels were much more likely to circulate to library patrons as trade books than serials. The role of the library and librarians in shaping YA literature, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, will be examined later in this chapter. Both writers were better able to secure their legacy by moving from publishing serials to trade books. The publishing venues available to Twain and Alcott at the time were distinctive: serials allowed them access to the children's market while trade book publications secured their work and reputation.

Both novels also influenced the way in which YA novels were produced and marketed. The editors of *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn* had an involved role in shaping the novels, and also in determining the readership they should be marketed to. Seelinger Trites explains that as the profit for publishing trade books increased, editors took on a much more important and influential role in the publishing process, trumping authorial decisions to appeal to salability. Alcott was greatly influenced by her editors and expressed this distasteful relationship in many of her letters to friends and contemporaries. For example, Thomas Niles of Roberts Brothers publishers encouraged Alcott to write a girls' book, despite the fact that Alcott expressed a lack

of interest in this type of writing. In her journal, she wrote, “Mr. N. wants a *girls’ story*, and I begin ‘Little Women.’ Marmee, Anna, and May all approve my plan. So I plod away, though I don’t enjoy this sort of thing. Never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters; but our queer plays and experiences may prove interesting, though I doubt it” (qtd. in Seelinger Trites 124). In her selected letters and journal entries, Alcott outlines the changes Niles encouraged her to make to *Little Women* and its sequel:

- To write a second novel, now known to American readers as “Book II.”
- To marry Jo to another character, even if it wasn’t Laurie (which readers implored her to do in fan mail). Alcott vehemently expressed her distaste for Niles forcing writing changes “so my little women must grow up & be married off in a very stupid style” (qtd. in Seelinger Trites 123).
- To add another chapter to *Little Women*.
- To speedily write *Little Men* and then to capitalize on her popularity (123-4).

Niles shaped the publication schedule of these novels, and we can speculate that *Little Women* would most likely not have been written without Niles’ influence. His determination that *Little Women* be a “girls’ book” shows his guidance in producing the book for a specific audience. Its success was due in part to that fact that it was shaped, molded, and marketed according to the way a publisher sought to sell books to a segment of the reading population.

The marketing influence behind *Huckleberry Finn* was as significant, and was perhaps foreshadowed by the publishing process of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Editor William Dean Howells persuaded a reluctant Twain that *Tom Sawyer* was for boys and asked Twain to get rid of some light swearing to make the novel appropriate for the target audience. Twain and his wife also agreed *Tom Sawyer* was a book for boys, and it fell specifically into a category for boys’

adventures stories. Yet soon after, Twain had some regrets about the way *Tom Sawyer* would be marketed. He saw the children's market as less profitable than the adult market and asked his agent in England to change the categorization (132). Instead, the book became a crossover title, one described by publisher Elisha Bliss as the “adventures of a boy overwhelmingly fascinating to grown up readers” (qtd. in Seelinger Trites 132). *Huckleberry Finn*, however, was published as a book for adult readers, and much of its controversy seems to stem from the fact that *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* overlap characters, while being marketed for different audiences.

The influence of publishers and editors on YA continues to drive much of the market, an area I will explore in more detail in chapter four of this dissertation. Publishers and editors have a view of readers and the market that authors do not, causing them to shape the novels being published and determine who should read them. Both Alcott and Twain were impacted by the relationship between the artistic impulse to write and the monetary mobilization by trade publishers. Yet, perhaps the success of their novels would not have been so great and so influential without the heavy hand of their editors and publishers who knew the market well, and could shape these new publications to meet the needs of a new readership, and retain popularity and literary investment for readers of the future.

Little Women and *Huckleberry Finn* lay down the roots of YA by identifying an intermediate state still undefined in conversations about development; introducing early templates and characteristics of the category; and engaging in complicated relationships between writers, editors, and publishers in order to drive the market.

Social Forces and their Influence on Development

Further expanding on and legitimizing the idea of an intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood articulated at the end of the nineteenth century were the compulsory education laws passed in the United States. While certainly titles such as *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn* were attractive to readers of all ages, compulsory education in the United States aided in the creation and maintenance of a literate young population. Compulsory education began in the US with the passing of a compulsory attendance act in Massachusetts in 1852. Laws passed in the North and New England later spread to and influenced the passing of laws in the South. By 1918, all states had enacted laws that made education compulsory, with Mississippi the last state to implement similar laws (Rauscher). Sociologist Emily Rauscher explains, “Compulsory laws aimed to achieve universal school attendance and were primarily directed at lower-class and immigrant families who did not already send their children to school” (1402). While the goal of education in the 1850s was to create a skilled and educated workforce to participate in an increasingly industrialized economy, it also had the result of extending childhood by creating a space for youth separate from the working world. In fact, young people had to pass through the mandatory education before moving on to adulthood.

Savage identified a steady increase in the number of adolescents who attended school between 1852 and 1940. After that, schools saw a decrease in attendance due to America’s entrance into World War II. Attendance in school demarcated more clearly the distinction between child and adult, creating a space for this new population to be simultaneously monitored and molded, effectively preparing youth for employment in a way previous generations hadn’t. By the 1890s, Savage notes young people were encouraged to stay in school, delaying their entry into adulthood (66). This delay widened the gulf between childhood and adulthood, leading to G. Stanley Hall’s germinal work *Adolescence* (1904), a two-volume study that called for

recognition of a new stage of development. Stanley Hall announced, “Adolescence is more than puberty, extending over a period of ten years from twelve to fourteen to twenty-one or twenty-five in girls and boys, respectively, but the culmination is at fifteen or sixteen” (qtd. in Savage 66). The education system itself helped to solidify adolescence as a separate stage of life, both by creating a space for adolescents to convene and by delaying their entrance into the workforce.

High school had become an important institution by 1920, when 37 percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds were enrolled. Savage insists that a certain homogenization of age among high school youth occurred, creating a “peer society” that resulted from compliance with education laws (206). These numbers doubled by 1940; 75 percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds attended high school, which Savage estimates numbered nearly 10 million. Peers became the defining influence on youth rather than adults, as young people were spending much more time with those their own age (363). During the Great Depression and near the start of World War II, staying in school allowed youth reprieve from competing with adults for jobs. Palladino notes that the Great Depression had effectively “pushed” youth out of the workplace and into high school classrooms (5). Youth correspondingly began to rely on an extensive peer network in order to create a standardization of behavior, and searched out peers for “advice, information, and approval” (5). High school provided a second option for youth who could not compete in the world of work, creating another place for them where they could interact with others their age in a supervised setting.

High schools became institutions that necessarily separated young people who were essentially still in development, thus lengthening childhood into the stage of adolescence. However, additional institutions were created with a youth population in mind. At the turn of the twentieth century juvenile delinquency had come to the attention of state governments. In

response, the state of Illinois passed the Juvenile Court Act in July 1899 to “regulate the treatment and control of dependent, neglected and delinquent children” (qtd. in Savage 64). The Act defined a delinquent as “any child under the age of sixteen years” who was in violation of “any law of this state or city or village ordinance” (64). This law also resulted in the creation of a separate juvenile court. The Act recognized adolescence (or the juvenile) as a separate stage, one that could not be fairly treated by the adult court. The juvenile court was very successful, specifically for the way it provided a preventative method for dealing with difficult youth. The juvenile court also provided a progressive approach by replacing punishment with rehabilitation; this was an approach that recognized the source of youth troubles in social conditions (Savage 64). The court provided another method of recognizing the space between childhood and adulthood, and allowed youth delinquents the rehabilitative space of an institution or foster home. This also prevented them from interacting with older criminals in prison. It physically divided them into a separate category.

Additionally, after taking stock of youth unemployment and the difficulties young people faced remaining in school, Eleanor Roosevelt remarked in 1934 that she had “moments of real terror when I think we might be losing this generation” (qtd. in Woolner). Eleanor Roosevelt encouraged her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to address the problems young people experienced. The creation of the National Youth Association (NYA) in this decade recognized the need for the U.S. federal government to also carve out a space for adolescents. The NYA was founded in 1935 as a New Deal agency and focused on releasing youth (both male and female) from the hardships of the Great Depression. The government recognized adolescents as a group requiring special treatment separate from that received by children and adults, and, as a result, public policy contributed to the shape of a new developmental stage. President Franklin D.

Roosevelt declared, “We shall do something for the nation’s unemployed youth, for we can ill afford to lose the skill and energy of these men and women. They must have their chance in school, their turn as apprentices, and their opportunity for jobs – a chance to earn and work for themselves” (qtd. in Palladino 39). Fifty million dollars was allocated to fund youth, bridging work and education through educational courses and work training.

The Roosevelt Institute outlines the changes the NYA effected in the United States. The NYA had two goals:

- 1) To prevent students already enrolled in high school from dropping out due to financial reasons. This was achieved by creating incentives for students to complete part-time work as janitors, cafeteria workers, and as library staff. These grants allowed students to work on school campuses.
- 2) To provide training and employment that had long-term value. The Roosevelt Institute recorded 400,000 youth employed by training programs like these under the NYA by 1937. With the advent of World War II in 1939, these figures rose as youth enrolled in massive numbers to begin training to bolster America’s defenses. (Woolner)

Over 4.5 million youth found work, training, or access to education through the NYA between 1935 and 1943 (Woolner).

Before the creation of the NYA, the only organization serving youth was the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC; however, it was not available to boys under the age of eighteen (Palladino 38). Instead the CCC targeted unmarried and unemployed men, first between the ages of 18-23, and then expanded to those between the ages of 17-28. It was designed to provide jobs to men in the conservation of American natural resources. While the NYA targeted both male and female youth, the CCC was only available to young men.

Marketing firms and advertisers seized on the identification and formation of a youth category. Youth now occupied a specific space in society, created by educational institutions and the American government. Additionally, turn of the century technological advances allowed consumerism to take on new and novel forms. Take, for example, the following inventions and innovations: the first nickelodeon (a small theater that projected motion pictures for the cost of a nickel) in 1905 and the first radio broadcast in 1906. These two media – film and radio – provided alternate methods of communicating to consumers, and highlighting products and advertisements. Movies began to attract between ten and twenty million visitors weekly between 1904 and 1914 (Savage 118). Movies created a form of mass entertainment, which was becoming increasingly popular before World War I. Going to the theater represented a communal activity, one that youth particularly engaged in. Savage explains,

The relation of the movies to America's youth was psychologically intimate. On the one hand, they represented a fantasy world that offered a pause from everyday life. On the other, they began to produce images reflecting aspects of adolescent life that, subtly fictionalized, fed back into fertile psyches. The consequence was a sophisticated dance between audience and producers: the studios might have held the key as far as making the product, but the audience had the power to bestow or withhold success. (121)

Advertisements became more interactive and inventive. They also crossed media to reach young consumers.

Savage notes that during 1922, “at least 45 percent of American adolescents went to the movies once a week. At the same time, record sales were up to a peak of over \$100 million, while the medium of radio was expanding nationally – up to 20 million listeners during 1923 and 1924” (205). Narratives, and especially narratives young people could escape into, were in high

demand in the years leading up to and during the Great Depression. Palladino's account of a young girl who frequented the movies in the 1930s highlights what youth were searching for from the format: "The movies have given me some ideas about freedom we should have," she explained (qtd. in Palladino 6).

Youth grew to encompass a viable share of the consumer market, and American youth in particular enjoyed both an increase in leisure time and in spending money in the 1920s (Savage 285). As a result, entertainment and products were more readily targeted towards this group of young people that had money to spend on new purchases and the time to enjoy them. Youth had become a distinct market.

The term "teenager" came into use and was solidified by the conditions of World War II, which provided a context that brought together many of the reasons youth were necessarily becoming more active and visible in the twentieth century. When the United States entered the war in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the experience of American youth changed utterly. Attendance in school, which had been rising steadily since compulsory education laws had been passed, suddenly dropped in 1942 and 1943, as youth were needed to fill jobs recently created by a focus on wartime industry. By 1944, three million boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were employed, a total of thirty percent of the youth cohort (Savage 393). Savage notes that as youth and women entered the workforce in greater and greater numbers, "public places of entertainment" such as movie theaters became "the new child-minders," as sleepy children were left in theater seats until the end of their guardians' shifts at work (395). Attendance at the movie theaters increased, as those teenagers who fulfilled intensive work for the war effort craved relaxation in their free time. There were over thirty million attendances to the theater each week during the mid-1940s, as movies provided

entertainment and escape for overworked youth (Savage 414). While contributing to the wartime economy and taking over those responsibilities that had been vacated by the men who joined the U.S. army, youth had developed into a specific group defined by their conditions. No longer associated with childhood, yet not adult enough to join the war efforts in Europe, they existed in a separate stage that had been carved out over the previous century. Wartime made youth mature much faster than ever before, and allowed them to earn money and cultural capital; however, there were still adult barriers they could not yet overcome. For example, young men under the age of eighteen were not able to enlist. They participated in World War II through industry and without leaving the United States to contribute in the war effort abroad. The Second World War experiences of American youth helped to consolidate them as a separate demographic. The word “teenager” replaced “adolescent” in popular culture and this new stage was marked by changes in the popular mass culture aimed at this demographic.

Consumerism continued to shape the modern teenager, indicative in the 1944 launch of *Seventeen Magazine*. Created by publishing magnate Walter Annenberg and editor Helen Valentine, the magazine was directed towards teenage girls in high school. While Annenberg suggested Valentine helm the editorship of the failing movie magazine *Stardom*, she identified a more pertinent market to direct content to: “There’s room today for a publication aimed at teenagers. They have been neglected by the established fashion publications. Everyone treats them as though they were silly, swooning bobby soxers. I think they are young adults and should be treated accordingly” (qtd. in Massoni, “Teena” 32). *Seventeen Magazine* hired consultants in 1945 and 1946 to better identify their audience. While providing demographic information was instrumental in producing editorial content, these surveys also assisted advertisers in pairing appropriate marketing content. Kelly Massoni, author of *Fashioning Teenagers: A Cultural*

History of Seventeen Magazine (2010) and the article “‘Teena Goes to Market’: *Seventeen Magazine* and the Early Construction of the Teen Girl (As) Consumer,” noted that the magazine encouraged readers to read both editorial and advertising content “for advice and direction” (“Teena” 35). *Seventeen* imagined its ideal reader as a fictional American girl named “Teena” who embodied the following characteristics:

Through [our demographic research] we learn that Teena is 16 years old, 5 feet 4 inches tall, 118 pounds, attends public high school, expects to go to college – and then marry and stay home. Dad is a businessman/white collar worker and her family is middle class. She works after school hours (often babysitting) to make extra spending money. Teena helps others with their shopping selections, including her family members, girl friends, and boy friends. She also helps mom with domestic activities, including grocery shopping, menu planning, and preparing meals. Teena uses cosmetics, goes to the movies, and participates in athletic activities. Her favorite magazine? *Seventeen* – of course – and she shares it with her mom, sister, and friends (and there is some indication that her brother even reads it). (“Teena” 33)

Valentine was careful to announce to teenagers that the magazine was their own publication, identifying them as a group separate from both children and adults. The first issue announced, “SEVENTEEN is your magazine, High School Girls of America – all yours! It is interested only in you – and everything that concerns, excites, annoys, pleases or perplexes you” (qtd. in Savage 448). While teenagers did not generate all of the content for *Seventeen*, Valentine encouraged readers to respond to articles, effectively participating in curating the magazine and making it *theirs*. Young readers responded to the creation of a magazine that both spoke to them and further honed the definition of teenager. The magazine was incredibly popular with teenagers.

The first print edition of 400,000 issues sold out in two days: after sixteen months, circulation was over one million (Palladino 103). The market expanded by appealing to white youth, as advertising adapted to meet the needs of a new segment of the market population. *Seventeen's* definition of teenagers as white persisted until July 1971, when African-American model Joyce Wilford appeared on the cover next to Diane Leich (often the first *Seventeen* cover featuring an African-American woman is attributed to Whitney Houston's 1981 cover, which she graced at the age of eighteen) (J. Wilson). However, Katiti Kironde became the first black woman to appear as the face of a prominent magazine aimed at teens when she was the cover model for the August 1968 publication of *Glamour*. *Glamour's* inclusion of a black cover model therefore predated *Seventeen's* by several years.

The influence of *Seventeen* magazine is evident in the twenty-first century as the idea of the teenager continues to evolve and find new expression in venues such as *New Moon* and *Rookie*. *New Moon* magazine was founded in Duluth, Minnesota in 1992. *New Moon* targeted younger adolescents, and was moderated and edited by an editorial committee constructed of young girls between the ages of eight and fourteen. It tackled girls' activism, international issues, women in history, and body issues, relying on readers to generate much of the content. *New Moon* does not contain any advertisements; however, it is moderated, co-edited, and co-created with adult influence. The inspiration of *New Moon's* creation of content by girls for girls perhaps led to Tavi Gevinson's creation of *Rookie*, an online magazine with content – writing, illustration, and photography – created and curated by teenagers. *Rookie* facilitates advertising through the online magazine, and while ads do not hinder the platform and design of the website, they do intrude and impede. Gevinson, a teenager who had garnered much acclaim for her wildly popular fashion blog, founded the magazine in 2011. Beginning in 2012, a compendium of the

best articles, interviews, and illustrations of the year was published in book form. Experimenting with content created by its target audience, *Rookie* has been very successful in creating an online community produced for and moderated by teenagers, building on *Seventeen*'s understanding that young people require content tailored to their interests and imagination that is also curated, written, and edited by real teenagers.

Refining YA: The Role of Librarians

While novels identified an intermediate or adolescent space in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, young adult library services further refined the category of YA literature through the choices librarians made in recommending books to teens. Jennifer Burek Pierce describes the influence of young adult library services in her article "The Borderland Age and Borderline Books." Burek Pierce provides context for the beginning of the twentieth century, when "doctors, psychologists, and ministers" commented on the relationship between books and a reader's physical, psychological, and moral state. This group of professionals viewed reading as formative, and believed that books had the potential to impact a reader's morality or immorality. The method of finding "good" books was emphasized, and specifically librarians' roles in recommending books to young library patrons. Reader's advisory is a term most often associated with library services, wherein fiction and nonfiction titles are recommended and suggested to readers directly or indirectly (through library displays, bookmarks, and posters). Complicating the conversation was an article published by G. Stanley Hall the same year as his seminal *Adolescence*, entitled "What Children Do Read and What They Ought to Read." He insisted there was a link between young people reading books that portrayed negative behaviors and then acting out those negative behaviors. Girls in particular, he noted, needed to be mindful

of the literature they consumed, and that they should “read good things” (qtd. in Burek Pierce 44). He also saw that children were self-selecting their own books, and suggested that adults take a role in determining which books they were reading. Burek Pierce is adamant that these early conversations formed the basis for reader’s advisory, or the practice of librarians recommending books. Hall’s article “established the issues regarding young readers that were to concern librarians in the decades to come: that offering what has since become known as reader’s advisory was an important component of service to youth and also that there was a relationship between moral behavior and reading” (Burke Pierce 45). A YA category did not exist in the first few decades of the twentieth century, and librarians had to be inventive with their recommendations for teenagers.

Librarian Margaret Alexander Edwards is remembered for her advocacy on behalf of young adult literature, and specifically for matching adolescents with books that would challenge their imaginations and their understanding of the world. She ran young adult programming at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, and also designed a training program for librarians who intended to work with adolescents. Edwards was born in 1902 and passed away in 1988. After her death, the American Library Association (ALA) created an award in her name – the Margaret A. Edwards Award – that recognizes an author who has created a body of work that has a “significant and lasting contribution to young adult literature” (ALA). Previous winners include S. E. Hinton (1988), Cynthia Voigt (1995), Terry Pratchett (2011), and David Levithan (2016). Betty Carter’s article first published in the 1992 edition of *The ALAN Review* provides some context for Edwards’s life and her contribution to young adult library services. When she began young adult programming, Edwards was new to the literature. Although she had training as a teacher and a master’s degree from Columbia University, her career as a Latin teacher was short

lived. She enrolled in a librarian-training program at Enoch Pratt Free Library when she was thirty years old, where she was assigned to work with adolescents. In order to determine how to connect adolescents to literature, she read widely. Carter describes this as a “marathon reading binge” which “last[ed] over several years, [and] gave Edwards the confidence to establish special young adult collections in the Baltimore branch libraries. But, typical of her approach, Edwards did not merely order books reflecting her own taste; instead, she solicited suggestions and recommendations from teenagers in order to form a balanced core” (“Who Is Margaret Edwards?”). She also began booktalking YA novels in the community, a method of selling books to readers based on a short summary, a rare practice in the 1930s. In his dissertation *The Effect of Booktalks on the Development of Reading Attitudes and the Promotion of Individual Reading Choices* (1992) for the University of Nebraska, Terrence David Nollen notes that term booktalking first appeared in librarian Amelia Munson’s monograph *The Ample Field: Books and Young People* (1950). However, there is no precise beginning date of the use of the term, nor has the origin of the term been attributed to any one specific individual. It is a practice that has continued to be popular in library and educational environments.

Edwards also took a “horse-drawn book wagon service to youth in poor neighborhoods in Baltimore” (Bernier, Chelton, Jenkins, and Burek Pierce 108). She continued to develop young adult library services over the next thirty years, and created training programs that specifically targeted librarians serving young people. Edwards also created “Book Week parties,” where teens were invited to the library with the express purpose of meeting and interacting with popular YA writers at the time. During her first Book Week party, she invited Maureen Daly, author of *Seventeenth Summer*, and teenage patrons came dressed up as characters in books. The next year she invited John Tunis, author of popular sports books. Eventually, however, she began to view

these parties as too difficult to plan and also as taking away from the act of reading (Edwards 51).

While the Margaret A. Edwards Award was established to recognize a body of work by a YA author, Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) also created the Alex Awards from the Margaret Alexander Edwards Trust, a monetary fund that Edwards left to be used towards the dissemination and recognition of young adult library services. The Alex Awards are named for Edwards, who was known as “Alex” to her friends. The award recognizes books written for adults that have a special appeal to teen readers. Because Edwards used adult books extensively in her recommendations to teens, the award recognizes those novels that serve a role in the reading lives of adolescents. Edwards’ work with adult novels that would appeal to teenagers is documented in her publication *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts: The Library and the Young Adult* (1969). Her book lists include titles she recommended to teen readers, falling under categories “For Younger Readers,” “Useful Titles for Transferring the Reader to Adult Books,” “Adult Titles for Good Readers,” and “Advanced Reading.” Clearly, Edwards saw young adulthood as a state of transition, and viewed YA novels as serving the reader “in formation” or “in transition.” Her lists lead the reader from where they are, to where “they ought to be,” and are reminiscent of Teri Lesesne’s *Reading Ladders*. Edwards states that her goal, and the goal of other young adult librarians, should be to create YA collections “composed of books that widen the boundaries of adolescents’ thinking, that enrich their lives, and help them fulfill their recreational and emotional needs” (138). She clearly viewed adult books as doing some of that work.

In *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts*, Edwards recommends YA novels such as *Go Ask Alice* (Anonymous); *The Outsiders* (Hinton); *My Darling, My Hamburger* (Zindel); *The*

Pigman (Zindel); *Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank); and *Let the Hurricane Roar* (Wilder Lane). Adult books dominate her book lists, and the titles aren't surprising. They are the same that frequently are labeled "YA" and used for studies in high school English classes. A selection includes *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Lord of the Flies*, *A Separate Peace*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Of Mice and Men*.

Writer, librarian, and teacher Patty Campbell writes extensively about Margaret A. Edwards, and was asked to compose the introduction to the 1994 edition of Edwards's *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts*. While Campbell's introduction focused on the impact Edwards had, she was not able to address all aspects of Edwards's lasting influence on young adult library services. In "Reconsidering Margaret Edwards: The Relevance of the Fair Garden for the Nineties" Campbell explains that she was asked to refrain from taking a critical stance on Edwards in her introduction to *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts*, and, in response, she published a separate article that wrote from that perspective.

In the article, Campbell is most critical of Edwards's reluctance to view contemporary YA novels as valuable reading material for teenage readers. Edwards's work with YA predates the creation of the category, which she sets at 1967 with the publication of Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Edwards, however, was reticent to recognize the growing body of YA novels, and when asked in 1987 to recommend the perfect YA novel, *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) was the only YA title she mentioned. In fact, Campbell's interviews with other young adult library services librarians reveal that Edwards avoided reading many of the new titles published after *The Outsiders*. At the time she began her career as a librarian, there were so few books written

specifically for this category of young people and, consequently, she had to be very familiar with both adult and new YA titles in order to be able to find a book for a reader. Campbell seems to suggest that Edwards's reluctance to welcome new YA novels may have been because she did not read as widely in the second half of the twentieth century as she did in the first half, and as a result, continued to view novels for young people as superficial, and as a means to arriving at adult literature.

Librarians were at the forefront of shaping YA as a category, and making connections between books and young readers. In addition to Margaret Edwards, Jane Anne Hannigan identifies five other female librarians who were making strides in the twentieth century. Mabel Williams (1887-1985) from the New York Public Library emphasized the importance of contact and conversation with young people, promoted book clubs, and created browsing rooms for teenagers (857). Margaret Scoggin (1905-1968) created a separate building under the New York Public Library system (funded by the estate of American philanthropist Nathan Straus) dedicated for the use of young people (859). Jean Carolyn Roos (1891-1982) from the Cleveland Public Library was a proponent of co-operative practices, meaning that she believed the library should partner with other youth-serving organizations in the community (862). Campbell credits Roos with creating the first separate YA room in 1926, while the Brownsville Branch of Brooklyn Public Library created a YA department in 1930, and the Toronto Public Library created the Kipling Room for teens in 1931 ("Foreword" x). Librarians physically shaped the category of YA by constructing spaces that included early adolescent novels as well as adult titles that might appeal to young readers. Finally Dorothy M. Broderick (1929-2011) and Mary K. Chelton (1942-) created a new journal highlighting young adult library services, *Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA), which continues to provide a space to hold new conversations about services for young

people (Hannigan 866). This critical voice further legitimized and created a space for librarians to discuss the relationship between teen readers and YA novels.

The literature these librarians were disseminating varied. Campbell notes that Rose Wilder Lane's *Let the Hurricane Roar* (1933) was so popular with young readers that its influence caused librarians to call for more realistic fiction with familiar settings such as Wilder Lane presented ("Foreword" xi). New writers emerged to fill this gap, including H.G. Felsen's car stories, sports stories by John Tunis, and romance by writers Betty Cavanna, Rosemary Du Jardin, Anne Emory, and Mary Stolz.

Edwards's work as a young adult services librarian emphasizes the fact that young readers existed before young adult literature did. Librarians had to be inventive about the literature they recommended to teens, calling for new authors to put out the material targeted to young people that they knew would be popular in their libraries.

Twentieth Century: The Creation of YA Literature and the Problem Novel

It is clear that, by 1944, "teenage" and "teenager" were the accepted terms that identified youth aged fourteen to eighteen, flexing to encompass younger and older teens. "Seventeen" became the age most associated with this group, and two publications specifically exemplified the focus on this specific age: *Seventeen* by Booth Tarkington (1916) and *Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly (1942). Daly wrote *Seventeenth Summer* when she was an adolescent, penning the novel when she was seventeen-years-old. *Seventeen* magazine had proved that youth-generated and curated content reached teenagers and generated profit. Surely longer forms of this content would also target teenagers. Twenty-five years later, S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967) would resonate with teenage readers and critics alike; Hinton began writing it when she was sixteen-

years-old. These two teenagers wrote seminal YA novels, casting early definitions and expectations for the literature. Although it is rare for teenagers to write such defining YA literature, Christopher Paolini did so in 2002 with the publication of his fantasy novel *Eragon*, becoming a best-selling author at the age of nineteen.

Although her novel is viewed by many as the first YA novel, Daly intended *Seventeenth Summer* to be read by an adult audience. Amanda K. Allen notes that early book reviews discussed the novel as gender neutral, focusing on the nostalgic quality *Seventeenth Summer* engendered rather than labeling it a “girls’ book” (“Dear Miss Daly”). Like Handler’s *Why We Broke Up*, Daly’s novel was popular because its teenage love story provided a template readers could connect with. Similarly, Allen notes that Daly’s fan mail was neither gendered nor sent strictly by young people. Young men sent Daly fan mail, as well as much older readers than those that we would categorize as “teen.” How, then, did *Seventeenth Summer* become one of the germinal texts of YA literature? Allen suggests that librarians and academics shaped its categorization, specifically making mention of librarian Margaret Scoggin, who not only recommended the novel to young readers, but who also publicly set forth a call for its inclusion as a novel for youth in a 1942 article for the *Atlantic Monthly* titled “New Books for Young People.” She specifically targeted 12-14-year-olds as the ideal reading audience (26). Indeed, Allen makes note of a thirteen-year-old reader named France De Conca who encountered Daly’s novel in the 1940s. In a letter to Daly, De Conca states that her librarian introduced the novel, and it was a hit among her and her friends (26).

The title of Daly’s novel, *Seventeenth Summer*, suggests its appropriateness for a teenage audience, focusing as it does on female protagonist Angie during the summer that she is that age. *Seventeenth Summer* introduces several threads that continue to run through YA novels in the

twenty-first century, including a focus on a singular age of adolescence, a summer setting, a story timeline limited to the season, and an emphasis on young romance.

Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* also marks the beginning of a subcategory of young adult literature, which Allen defines as the "female junior novel." Allen notes that hundreds of such novels were published between 1942 and the 1960s, and were a category separate from the novels we would deem "canonical YA," for example, *Catcher in the Rye*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, and *I Capture the Castle* ("The Girls' Guide to Power"). Female junior novels flourished in Canada and the United States. Allen names authors such as Betty Cavanna, Maureen Daly, Anne Emery, Mary Stolz, and Amelia Elizabeth Walden as those who defined this literature. Their books tended to address and focus on "the woes and social successes of pretty, white, middle-class American girls" (2). The subject of these novels was the modern white American girl, who *Seventeen* also addressed. Female junior novels provided the space for books for young people to continue to develop after the Second World War.

Several books published in the 1940s and 1950s continued to shape and develop possibilities for YA literature, which many suggest came of age with the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* in 1967 (Hill; Michaud; Talley). Two precursors to the literature Hinton ushered in with *The Outsiders* include *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith (1943) and *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith (1949). Both are novels about teenagers, and seem to carve out a literary niche for teens between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Published in 1943, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* introduced readers to an urban, lower class family that provided a more familiar setting to a larger audience of teenagers through its examination of poverty by following young protagonist Francie Nolan through her adolescence. Until Smith's novel, a middle-class context largely characterized books for young people. On the other hand, Dodie Smith's *I*

Capture the Castle introduced readers to the vibrant world of Cassandra Mortmain who lives with her family in a crumbling British castle. Her father is an eccentric writer who can't follow up his first book *Jacob Wrestling* because of lack of inspiration, and her stepmother, Topaz, is an artist's model with a penchant for nudity. Cassandra feels she has a literary future, and so captures the essence of her day-to-day life in her journal. *I Capture the Castle* certainly embodies the influence of *Little Women* by highlighting the importance of Cassandra's growth as an artist. Although her circumstances are unconventional, and therefore perhaps considered to be extraordinary, she still struggles through all the familiar stages of being a teenager in order to come to terms with who she is and where she can find her place in the world.

While Smith and Smith focused on female adolescents, novels by J. D. Salinger, William Golding, and John Knowles in the 1950s also developed expectations for young adult literature, yet with a focus on male adolescent and teenage protagonists. While Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Knowles's *A Separate Peace* (1959) exist within the realm of private school and boarding school, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) removed its readers from society (and from an American context), by asking readers to imagine the results of leaving adolescent boys to govern themselves. Many scholars agree that *The Catcher in the Rye* specifically altered the shape and development of young adult literature. Sheila Schwartz views Holden Caulfield, protagonist of the novel, as "a hero who sees, feels, and responds to the real world of the adolescent, who *is* in fact a real adolescent" (2). Holden's frank and colloquial speech has continued to characterize many of the first-person narratives of contemporary YA. Holden is viewed as a direct descendant of Huck Finn, as *The Catcher in the Rye* parallels the vernacular speech utilized in the novel. Publications such as these still retain their literary value today, and are often used as models of adolescence in high school English classes. While books for young

people were written prior to the post-World War II period, using “young adult” to describe books for teenagers was documented as early as 1937, “although it [the term young adult] didn’t come into general use until 1958” (“*The Outsiders*” Campbell 180). The category of young adult literature fully emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with books such as S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* (1967), Paul Zindel’s *The Pigman* (1968), and Robert Cormier’s *The Chocolate War* (1974).

Adding to concepts of adolescence and young adulthood, psychologist Erik Erickson introduced the developmental concept of “identity crisis” in his 1950 publication *Childhood and Society*, which describes the ways in which young people grapple with emerging from adolescence with a strong identity. It is the main focus of adolescents to solve their identity crisis, and many of these early YA titles focused on teenage identity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many YA publications were characterized as “problem novels,” in which a protagonist solved, in a linear fashion, a problem specific to his/her age group. Problem novels addressed dramatic shifts in social values and stability, and quite clearly focused on a laundry list of issues that teenagers might be dealing with. There was a widespread perception that parents exerted less influence on their teenage children, and authors speculated about where this newfound freedom could lead. Canadian critic Shelia Egoff’s chapter “The Problem Novel” in her book *Thursday’s Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children’s Literature* (1981) remains the best-known critical article about the “problem novel.” Egoff’s chapter is critical of popular problem novels when considered alongside exceptional literary works written for teens, such as *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971) by Virginia Hamilton and *A Sound of Chariots* (1972) by Mollie Hunter, and she believes that the simplistic problem novel overshadowed these more literary works not in terms of quality, but in the sheer number of readers they attracted (Egoff 66). Although the problem novel formula provided an accessible

plot and relevant material, Egoff argued that it was not representative of the exceptional writing for teenagers at the time. However, as a product of marketing and development, the problem novel offered a formula that provided easy replication of sellable content. Egoff notes that the following are often components of problem novels:

- A teenage protagonist's alienation from the adult world.
- Association with an unconventional adult character who exists outside of the protagonist's family.
- First person and confessional tone.
- Short sentences and paragraphs, and a limited vocabulary.
- An urban setting, such as New York City, New Jersey, or California. (67)

Parents, Egoff notes, are present, yet they do not interact meaningfully with the protagonists of the novels.

Egoff attributes the beginning of this new genre to the publication of Emily Neville's Newbery Award winning novel, *It's Like This, Cat* (1963), which focused on the alienation of a teenage protagonist, his uninterested parents, and a miscellany of stereotyped characters. The publication of the novel is a fascinating study in the way early YA literature was shaped and refined, and was investigated by Kathleen T. Horning in an article for *The Horn Book Magazine*. She writes that Neville found success with the publication of her short story "Cat and I" in the New York *Mirror*, and felt confident enough to submit her writing to editor Ursula Nordstrom at Harper & Row. Nordstrom has often been credited as changing the nature of children's literature, moving away from morals and didacticism to stories that appealed to children's imaginations. She edited famous picture books such as Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon* (1947), Crockett Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1955), Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild*

Things Are (1963), and Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974), as well as E. B. White's *Stuart Little* (1945) and *Charlotte's Web* (1952). YA author Robert Lipsyte has gone so far as to say that Nordstrom "sort of invented" YA literature (qtd. in Brookover, Chapman, Downey Howerton, and Young 41), perhaps referring specifically to *It's Like This, Cat*. Nordstrom suggested Neville use her short story "Cat and I" as the basis of a full-length contemporary manuscript, and it was under Nordstrom's direction that Neville composed *It's Like This, Cat*. The novel follows fourteen-year-old Dave Mitchell, who lives with his parents in New York.

Not all critics would agree that *It's Like This, Cat* was a failure, or simplistic, as Egoff suggests problem novels are. Indeed, the fact that it was awarded the Newbery Medal casts it in another category altogether. The Newbery Medal is regarded as a prize that recognizes the best American children's book published each year. The award has a long history, and was the first created to recognize exceptional examples of children's literature (American Library Association). If *It's Like This, Cat* was retrospectively declared a "problem novel," then it is very possible that the structure that now seems simplistic and routine was in fact innovative in 1963. In the same way that many of the literary plots and characters that were once unique are now deemed cliché, perhaps the problem novel was originally an interesting form that appealed to readers, and was not simplistic at all. It is only retroactively that books like these are evaluated by new standards. The Newbery Medal is also an award bestowed by a committee of adults – specifically librarians – and therefore perhaps the method by which problem novels addressed current societal issues was well-received by adults who hoped to pass a book that emphasized the process of problem-solving on to young readers.

Another problem novel Egoff identifies is Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, yet it too has been well-received by both critical and popular audiences. Zindel's novel follows teenage protagonists John and Lorraine who befriend an older man that they nickname "the Pigman" based on his collection of pig paraphernalia: "[His house] was a real dump except for the table and shelves at the far end of it. The table had pigs all over it. And the shelves had pigs all over them. There were pigs all over the place. It was ridiculous. I never saw so many pigs. I don't mean the live kind; these were phony pigs. There were glass pigs and clay pigs and marble pigs" (46). Lorraine and John visit Mr. Pignati (the Pigman) regularly, spending time at his house, taking him to the zoo and the department store. Both John and Lorraine are high school sophomores, and the novel alternates between both of their perspectives as they tell their story. Both come from homes and family situations that are less than ideal, and it becomes clear that while the Pigman isn't exactly normal himself, he does offer both of them a stable second home. I find it difficult to agree with Egoff's characterization of *The Pigman* as simplistic and problem-oriented. While Lorraine and John have unsatisfying home lives and befriend an adult outside of their families (both key characteristics of Egoff's template), I would view it as occupying the same category as Hunter's *A Sound of Chariots* and Hamilton's *The Planet of Junior Brown*. There are complexities and intricacies about *The Pigman* that are revealed in Lorraine and John's observations, experiences, and understanding of the world. Their self-awareness separates them from the rote protagonists of the problem novels Egoff seems to take umbrage with.

While not always simplistic, the problem novel was emblematic of much of what was recognizable as being young adult in nature in the 1970s, achieved through a first person perspective, colloquial and expletive language, an open discussion of sex, a sense of alienation from the adult world, and short, terse sentences (Egoff 67). Publishers and writers benefited from

marketing sellable content that appealed to teenage readers. As a result, problem novels dominated the 1960s and 1970s in young adult literature. Michael Cart speaks to problem novels in *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (2010), stating, “In retrospect, it seems that the problem novel offered readers the same sort of appeal that horror fiction would a decade later: the frisson of reading about darkness from the comfort of a clean, well-lit room” (33). Egoff notes that American authors greatly narrowed and re-modeled realistic fiction into a very specific genre that was extremely popular with young readers. This “narrow” focus characterizes much of what Egoff notices in problem novels. She states, “But while the realistic novel may have conflict at its heart, conflict being integral to plot and characterization, its resolution has wide applications, and it grows out of the personal vision of the writers. In problem novels the conflict stems from the writer’s social conscience: it is specific rather than universal, and narrow in its significance rather than far-reaching” (67). Problem novels, however, greatly changed the shape of young adult publications, and publishers flooded the market with these types of novels.

The most popular of these problem novels is perhaps the 1971 publication of *Go Ask Alice* by Anonymous, about a drug-addicted teenager who dies of an overdose. *Go Ask Alice* is the definitive problem novel, and is, as Egoff suggests of the category, simplistic in nature. The book was purported to be the published diary of a real teenage girl and was shelved early on in the nonfiction section. However, eventually a psychologist named Beatrice Sparks admitted to editing the diary, and the copyright for authorship of *Go Ask Alice* was held in her name. In an article entitled “The House that Alice Built” written for the *School Library Journal*, Alleen Pace Nilsen reveals that Sparks based the book on one of her former patients, who left behind a collection of papers that comprised her own diary. The real “Alice” gave Sparks her diaries and notes as a way for her to better understand the issues she was facing, and her own mental health

(and the mental state of other drug-addicted teenagers). She felt the diaries and notes were safer with Sparks than with her parents, who she didn't want to know the entire truth of her experiences. "Alice" died six months after leaving Sparks the diaries.

It is difficult to determine how much of *Go Ask Alice* was in the original diaries. While the original two diaries remain with publisher Prentice-Hall, Sparks destroyed much of the writing scrawled on brown paper bags, scrap paper, and other paraphernalia. Although Sparks requested release of the diaries from Alice's parents, she did not specifically share the content with them, allowing them to conjecture how much was their daughter's experience and how much was fiction. Sparks imagined this was a good compromise, and allowed her to keep her promise to "Alice" to not reveal the contents of the diaries to her parents. "Alice" did not die of a drug overdose like she does in the book; however, Sparks insists that her death was influenced by her extensive drug use (111). Rather than feeling ethically wrong by publishing the contents of the diary, Sparks has instead absolved herself of any wrongdoing, insisting that she was "Alice's" friend rather than her counselor or psychologist.

By publicizing the fact that she wrote *Go Ask Alice* in the late 1970s, several years after its publication under "Anonymous," Sparks was able to take a more commercial role in writing and publishing. *Go Ask Alice* is significant for attempting to model a real life problem novel, suggesting to teenage readers that the fiction they read might not be so far off from the real experiences available. It is one of the most popular and bestselling problem novels written for teenagers, and is notable also for drawing attention to ethical issues between fiction and nonfiction, an issue that would again enter general conversation with the publication of James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003).

Problem novels continue to be popular in the twenty-first century, albeit in different forms. Now many of the characteristics that Egoff identified in 1970s problem novels are visible in series fiction such as Stephenie Myer's *Twilight* Saga, in which protagonist Bella Swan feels like an outsider to her family, and deals with the supernatural, rather than realistic, problems that plague her high school life. We might also consider series such as Marissa Mayer's *The Lunar Chronicles*, four books that rewrite traditional fairy tales against a dystopic setting: Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, and Snow White. Problems with family, romance, and friends are common to these young protagonists; however, they play out against a futuristic or fantastic world. Series like these continue to be popular with young readers, demonstrating that the problem novel may still have a place in contemporary YA literature, although the realism associated with the 1970s is re-envisioned. These new novels often fall under categories of fantasy, science fiction, and magic realism.

Egoff suggests that problem novels presented the limitations of young adult literature, pigeonholing them as simplistic and formulaic. While certainly publications such as *Go Ask Alice* fit this description, not all of the titles she references represent the nadir of YA literature. By the time Egoff was releasing *Thursday's Child* in 1981, the characteristics of the "problem novel" were well entrenched, so much so that they were becoming cliché. However, the format was new at the time of publication. Horning notes that when *It's Like This, Cat* was published, reviewers such as *Kirkus* praised its "new-style story" and its presentation of a "rare reading experience" (83). Experimenting within a template – that of the problem novel – was popular for twenty years, and produced and reiterated many characteristics that describe the YA novels published in the 1960s and 1970s. Egoff describes these in great detail, and those with the most longevity include adolescent characters with unfulfilling home lives, absent parents, and adult

mentors outside the family. Many of these characteristics continue to persist in the literature today. Absent parents have become staples of YA literature, as it is their absence that allows teen protagonists the independence they need to control their stories. Adult mentors often come in the form of teachers, emphasized by those presented in Jon van de Ruit's *Spud* (2005), Matthew Quick's *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* (2013), and Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999). Perhaps the replication of these characteristics across publications in the 1960s and 1970s solidified many of the characteristics we have come to recognize as being emblematic of contemporary YA.

Young adult literature continued to develop in the 1980s and 1990s, providing young readers with more options for reading. I view two types of YA novels as typifying these two decades: romances and multi-narrator novels. Michael Cart explains that in the 1980s, publishers revived the romance genre by creating specific romance imprints to match the high demand. As stated earlier, Alcott's *Little Women* was a seminal novel that perpetuated the idea that romance belongs in books for young people, an influence that was largely revitalized in the 1980s. Cart makes note, for example, of new publishing imprints for YA romance including Scholastic's Wildfire (1979), Dell's Young Love (1981), Bantam's Sweet Dreams (1981), and Simon & Schuster's First Love (1982), all of which responded to readers' desire to read romance marketed to teenagers (Cart, *Young Adult Literature* 39). Additionally, there were 34 million Sweet Valley High books in print by the end of the 1980s, with narratives that focused on high school love and relationships (39). In an interview with *Seventeen* magazine, YA author Jane Yolen speculated that young readers were returning to romance in the 1980s because, in this decade, adolescence was negatively impacted by the graphic nature of TV and mature books (qtd. in Cart 39). A return to romance was a return to love, and to the "mystery and beauty" it contained.

Aside from the series books and publishers' imprints that presented romance material for young readers, there were several noteworthy romance novels from the decade. Katherine Paterson had established herself as a writer for adolescents in the 1970s with standout titles such as *Bridge to Terabithia*. Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved* (1980), winner of the Newbery Award, follows the relationship of twins Caroline and Sara Louise (Wheeze). They live on an island called Rass in the Chesapeake Bay, and their livelihood depends on their father's crab fishing. While the novel focuses on the relationship between the twins, it also explores the love triangle between Caroline, Wheeze, and Wheeze's best friend Call. To Sara Louise's dismay, Call marries her sister Caroline, and she loses her friend and potential romantic interest. Romance was also a critical aspect of Tamora Pierce's fantasy publications, *The Song of the Lioness* quartet: *Alanna: The First Adventure* (1983), *In the Hand of the Goddess* (1984), *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man* (1986), and *Lioness Rampant* (1988). In the first book of the series, Alanna disguises herself as her twin brother Thom, and journeys to take his place to train for knighthood. Over the course of the four-book series, Alanna develops two important romantic relationships, which are explored in much detail.

Finally, Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind* (1982) focuses on the lesbian relationship between Liza and Annie, two seventeen-year-old girls from New York. Since its publication, the book has never been out of print, and a new edition was released to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary of publication in 2005. *Annie on My Mind* opened up the idea of romance by highlighting a lesbian romance that ended happily. Christine A. Jenkins called it "a groundbreaking novel" and noted that it appeared on the American Library Association's (ALA) "Best of the Best Books for Young Adult" list. *School Library Journal* included it on a list of the most influential books of the twentieth century. Jenkins explains that before the publication of *Annie*

on *My Mind*, only one YA book with a LGBTQ focus was published each year, starting in 1969 with John Donovan's *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip*. Yet many of those books included gay characters as "a sidekick or foil for the straight protagonist and at worst a victim who would face violence, injury, or death (fatal traffic accidents were commonplace). Young protagonists who worried that they might be gay would invariably conclude that their same-sex attraction was simply a temporary stage in the journey towards heterosexual adulthood" (49). *Annie on My Mind* changed that, and opened up possibilities for positive portrayals of LGBTQ relationships.

Digital Influences, Awards, and New Adult Literature

In the 1990s, writers of YA literature explored multiple voices and perspectives through the publications of novels containing multiple narrators. For example, Paul Fleishman's *Whirligig* was published in 1998, and alternates perspectives rapidly in the short 133-page book. After exhibiting inappropriate behavior at a party, teen protagonist Brent drives away drunk and lets his car drift into another on the highway, instantly killing teenager Lea Zamora. Lea's mom encourages Brent to plant a whirligig – a spinning wooden toy – in each of the four corners of the United States in memory of her daughter. While Brent's perspective, and Greyhound bus journey, composes half of the novel, the other half revolves around four additional perspectives: those of the young people who encounter the whirligigs he leaves in Washington, California, Florida, and Maine. Laura and Tom McNeal's *Crooked* (1999), on the other hand, alternates between the perspectives of Clara Wilson and Amos Mackenzie, teenagers whose lives uniquely intersect after Amos becomes the local town hero. Eliza Dresang's analysis of books for young

people in *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (1999) helps to provide the context for these new publications, and particularly the focus on multiple voices.

In *Radical Change*, Dresang argues that the changing form, content, and structure of many books written for young adults in the 1990s was a response to technological advances of the time. Changing technological contexts created new readers in need of new reading material. Access to and fluency with digital technologies affected print books published in the 1990s. Books were still published in print form, but the way their stories were presented was altered. Dresang defines Radical Change theory as “a way of understanding books that can be used by anyone interested in literature for youth – used to identify books with characteristics reflecting the interactivity, connectivity, and access of the digital world” (xv). These three categories – interactivity, connectivity, and access – are the means by which Dresang categorizes the books in her study.

Briefly, *connectivity* shares similarities with intertextuality, that is, the connections that readers make both within and outside of the text. Dresang describes these as aligning with the way hypertext works by linking many separate ideas together, a series of links that can be followed (12). *Interactivity* is described as what makes a book “challenging” or “mature,” as interactive books require a more active and involved reading (12). This higher level of interactivity refers most generally to readers making connections both within and outside of a book; navigating different forms of writing such as the screenplay format, poetry, and prose; and encountering more mature content. The books that Dresang discusses involve facets of each, if not all, of these ideas about interactivity. Finally, *access* refers generally to breaking down the boundaries in young adult literature that previously dictated that certain points of view, language, and subject matter were off-limits (13). These previously off-limit categories may refer to

different types of characters portrayed in the literature (Dresang notes different races and nationalities, as well as disabled or disfigured individuals), as well as more mature content than was previously deemed acceptable to provide to younger readers. I would argue that Dresang's concept of *access* also means the availability of multiple interpretations – or versions – of one story, which is often presented through multiple narrators. Dresang also notes that graphics and images are used with more frequency in 1990s adolescent literature, as “‘Reading’ no longer means interacting with words on a page alone. In an increasingly graphic environment, words and pictures are merging. We see this on computer monitors and television screens, and we are beginning to see it in printed books” (65). The influence of these social and literary phenomena – connectivity, interactivity, and access – is visible in publications of the 1990s, when new technologies were much more accessible, advanced more quickly, and, as a result, impacted the category of young adult literature. Multiple narrators are a very engaging result of these technological changes.

Chris Crowe's article, “Young Adult Literature: YA Boundary Breakers and Makers,” likewise identifies the changing nature of young adult books in the 1990s, characterized by Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Make Lemonade* (1993), Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust* (1997), Walter Dean Myers's *Monster* (1999), and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000) (117). This representative sample of books exemplifies changes to how young adult books are written, specifically, alterations to form, content, and structure: *Make Lemonade* and *Out of the Dust* are written in blank verse, *Monster* utilizes a screenplay format, and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* challenges the notion that young adult novels are slim, short volumes, by clocking in at nearly 800 pages. Several of these books bear the mark of Dresang's concepts of connectivity, interactivity, and access.

The proliferation of writing for teenagers during these decades led to the creation of diverse imprints for popular publication houses in the 1990s and early 2000s. Michael Cart identifies the creation of the following imprints, many of which continue to publish YA novels today: Simon & Schuster Pulse (1999), Scholastic Push (2002), Penguin Razorbill (2004), and Abrams Amulet (2005) (“*Young Adult Literature*” 91). Like the concept of the “teenager,” YA literature was recognized as a separate marketing category, and necessitated the creation of additional imprints. Additionally, in 1999, the Young Adult Library Services Association established the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. The Printz Award recognizes the best young adult novel each year, while also awarding up to four Honors to recognize other well written YA novels. The award is based on literary merit and was named for a Topeka, Kansas school librarian who appreciated and advocated for young adult literature. The first award was given to Walter Dean Myers’s *Monster* (1999) in 2000, with Honor Awards going to Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak* (1999), David Almond’s *Skellig* (1999), and Ellen Wittlinger’s *Hard Love* (1999). Recipients of the Printz and Honor awards are valued as respected members of the YA literary community and include authors such as Libba Bray, John Green, Jack Gantos, Meg Rosoff, Melina Marchetta, and Craig Silvey. Awards such as these validate the category of YA literature and draw attention to what are arguably the most important YA novels each year. The simultaneous creation of multiple YA imprints with the development of the Printz Award increased the visibility of YA.

Awards also have a hand in shaping the category of YA literature, and the Printz is no exception. The award can go to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, short story collections, anthologies, collaborations, graphic novels, and books published first in other countries (Cart, “A New Literature” 29). The Printz seeks to,

1. Recognize the best in the field of materials for young adults
2. Promote the growing number of books published for young adults
3. Inspire wider readership in the genre
4. Give recognition to the importance of the genre, and
5. Position YALSA as an authority in the field of evaluating and selecting materials for teen library collections. (Young Adult Library Services Association)

The Printz searches for literary quality above popularity, and, as a result, many of the winners are contested each year. Patty Campbell describes it as “the YA Newbery” (“The Sand in the Oyster” 501). She also discusses the controversy surrounding the early winners of the award, citing *Postcards from No Man’s Land* by Aiden Chambers (1999), *A Step from Heaven* by An Na (2001), and *Kit’s Wilderness* by David Almond (1999) as inaccessible to teen readers. In 2003, when Campbell’s article was published in *The Horn Book Magazine*, the debate about the Printz Award raged on yalsa-bk – the YALSA message boards – where young adult service librarians argued for teen interest and popularity to comprise key components of the award (502). As a founder of the award, Michael Cart has responded several times over the last decade to claims that the Printz winners alienate real teen readers. He cites the range of awards YALSA offers, many that allow for the recognition of more popular books, including the Best Books for Young Adults/Teen Top Ten. He even notes that four of the Printz winners have also crossed over to popular lists like these (“A New Literature” 31). However, Cart seems unaffected by the controversy surrounding the award. He asks, “Can’t we have one award that solely honors literary merit?” (“Carte Blanche” 71). Yet Cart underestimates the power of the Printz Award, which has come to represent “the best of YA.” Award-winning books are more often purchased for libraries, taught in high school English classes, included on summer reading lists, and

highlighted through Scholastic book sales. When the books recognized by the Printz do not appeal to teens, teenage readers might not be receptive to engaging with texts like these in a school environment, where they might be expected to read them.

Criticisms like these are not unique to the Printz Award. Anita Silvey's 2008 article for the *School Library Journal* "Has the Newbery Lost Its Way?" articulates many of the same conversations surrounding the children's award, which is likewise based on literary merit rather than popularity. These conversations took place in the first decade of the 2000s, suggesting that a narrowing of categories of literature for young people was taking place. My experience with Printz Award books is pertinent to this discussion, as the award was created the year I was in grade six, on the cusp of young adulthood. Although I read widely in the category of YA as a teen, the only Printz winners or Honor books I can recall reading are Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999), Louise Rennison's *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* (1999), Aidan Chambers' *Postcards from No Man's Land* (1999), Jennifer Donnelly's *A Northern Light* (2003), and Kenneth Oppel's *Airborn* (2004). In seven years of awards, 2000-2006 (when I was in grade six to twelve), I read a total of five out of a total of thirty-two books recognized by this award. Any of my other reading of Printz books came retroactively: my reading as an adult has drawn on this list particularly for book recommendations, and as a jumping-off point to discover an author's body of work. It wasn't until starting this dissertation that I noticed the majority of the books I was interested in studying corresponded to Printz Award or Honor books, perhaps because of their implicit literary value. These include Honor books *Why We Broke Up* and *The Book Thief*, and while *Beauty Queens* and *The Fault in Our Stars* did not appear on the list, Libba Bray and John Green have won the Printz for their other books, *Going Bovine* and *Looking for Alaska*. The only primary author in this study who hasn't appeared on the Printz lists is

Jaelyn Moriarty. However, many of the books referenced throughout my dissertation have appeared on teen choice lists, are popular with young readers, and support, to a lesser extent, many of the qualities these key texts engender.

Librarians such as Diane Colson have suggested that the Printz Award is more interested in generating conversation than choosing a book well loved by teen readers, even if that conversation turns controversial. She states, “Certainly we don’t want the Printz books to be shelf sitters. It does happen, though; I admit that there are winners that I haven’t been able to sell to kids” (19). Teacher Claire Horn sees the Printz as having unintended consequences, such as suggesting that teens can’t make evaluative choices about literature, and that if they were asked to volunteer a choice for the award, it would dilute the literary category (349). Teacher/librarian Jonathan Hunt takes this even further by asking whether the Printz Award is for the author or the reader. YA authors see a boost in sales of their books and in their popularity, which is supported by an article for *The ALAN Review* in 2007 that interviewed authors about the effects of the Printz Award on their writing lives. Jack Gantos admitted that the award made his memoir *A Hole in My Life* more attractive to male readers and Kenneth Oppel stated that the award is “a must” for authors (39). Hunt also served on the committee to choose the 2008 Printz Award winner. He states often that Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* should have won the award. Why wasn’t it chosen? Hunt doesn’t say, only alludes to the issues that led to its exclusion: “What happened??? Oh, wait, I was on the committee. I know” (“Retrospective” 402). Alexie’s novel went on to win the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and the Boston-Globe Horn Book Award, and was perhaps the most talked about book that year. Yet, it was not even listed as a Printz Honor book that year (the award went to Geraldine McCaughrean’s *The White Darkness*). Is the Printz Award meaningless to real teen

readers? Does it have a purpose for readers, or only for authors, librarians, and teachers? Is it effectively asking YA authors to write more complex, literary, and experimental YA novels, not for teen readers, but for award committees?

Hunt suggests that the Printz Award effectively emphasizes the creation of novels written *for* young adults, but not necessarily read by them. He uses the examples of M. T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation* (2006/2008), Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005), and Aidan Chambers *This Is All* (2005), three complex YA novels that he posits as causing YA literature to "matur[e] into something virtually indistinguishable from the best adult literary fiction" ("Redefining" 147). By insisting the Printz represents the "best of YA," perhaps professionals are trying to take away any remaining stigma attached to YA as an illegitimate category of literature. By choosing novels that exhibit "literariness," perhaps the Printz attempts to suggest "all YA looks like this." The award may create an interest in YA for readers who might want a more literary experience. However, YA is not *all* like the books the Printz Award identifies. In fact, the Printz skews towards more literary novels that many teens are not actually reading. When examining my own primary sources for this dissertation, I wonder whether the books I have chosen for this study are "young adult"? Several of the novels and their authors are certainly recognized as such by the Printz, but if the Printz is out of touch with real readers, can these books be used to generalize commonalities of YA as a whole? Do we need a new category that splinters YA for teens and YA for adults? Are these different categories?

Some publishers have recognized the need to create new categories of literature that surround YA. For example, New Adult literature is a category that developed in 2009 to describe books written for and about 18-25-year-olds. The term "New Adult" was created by publishing house St. Martin's Press in 2009, when editor S. Jae-Jones proposed a contest to search for "new,

cutting edge fiction with protagonists who are slightly older than YA and can appeal to an adult audience. Since twenty-somethings are devouring YA, St. Martin's Press is seeking fiction similar to YA that can be published and marketed as adult – a sort of an 'older YA' or 'new adult'" (JJ). The minimum age of the protagonist was set at eighteen, although "20s are preferred" (JJ). This age limit allows for more mature stories that are relevant to readers who are "new adults" themselves, and novels in this category focus on topics such as sex and sexuality, relationships with family and friends post-adolescence, first jobs, college and university, moving out or moving back home. New Adult literature was manufactured to meet a perceived consumer need and generate more profit for a publishing house such as St. Martin's.

New Adult arises from many changes to theories of development posited in the twenty-first century. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett is credited with proposing this new theory of development in his 2000 article in *American Psychologist*, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties," where he set the parameters of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood at eighteen and twenty-five. Patterns of development, Jensen Arnett states, changed between the 1970s and 1990s. He attributes this change to: 1) men and women married later in the 1990s than the 1970s, 2) the age of first childbirth was later in the 1990s than in the 1970s, and 3) Americans obtained higher education in greater numbers than ever before (14% in 1940 to 60% by the mid-1990s) (469). Jensen Arnett claims that this "delay" in life milestones such as attaining education, getting married, and having children, widens the gap between adolescence and adulthood, and while he cites American statistics, he maintains that this trend is common across international industrialized countries. Emerging adulthood is thus defined as a transitional stage marked by uncertainty and flux: "a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain,

when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course" (469). The developmental category "emerging adult" is thus extending adolescence as a stage of development. While the compulsory education laws of the late nineteenth century extended childhood in America by providing a standardized timeline that dictated when youth could enter the workforce, two- and four-year college and university programs are now extending adolescence. Higher education is perceived as a priority and necessity for many young people, and has successfully become another means of extending development.

These changes have gained new ground in the twenty-first century, and are the subject of many research projects. Comedian Aziz Ansari's 2015 publication of *Modern Romance*, for example, specifically examines the ways in which dating culture has been altered to respond to social and technological changes in the twenty-first century. He argues that emergent adulthood requires a response from new technologies to assist in facilitating relationships in the twenty-first century. Dating apps like Tinder, websites like Match.com, and synchronous communication like texting specifically address the fact that current social contexts necessitate that dating changes in response to technological contexts. As new technology matches individuals based on compatibility, likes/dislikes, and geographical location, Ansari insists that it is possible for twenty-first century individuals to believe they can find a "best" option, thus delaying marriage and living through this transitional space.

While Jensen Arnett's "emerging adulthood" is an appropriate label for a developmental category, it is not the term of choice in pop culture, newspaper reports, and other media when describing 18-25-year-olds. Instead, the term "Millennial" identifies emerging adults who experience this time of transition and uncertainty, largely referring to the new millennium that

many of these individuals have seen shaping and altering their experiences. In defining their sample for study, the Pew Research Center defined the Millennial as “an adult born after 1980...In 2012, Millennials were 18 to 31 years old” (Fry). The term is favored when articulating the experiences of these age groups.

Jensen Arnett’s identification of several markers that signal emerging adulthood is supported by recent research that focuses on two other methods by which young people are delaying adulthood: continuing to live in the childhood home and failing to secure gainful employment. Annie Lowrey reports that the unemployment rate for twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds has reached seventeen per cent (in early 2013) while an August 2013 Pew Research report stated that 63% of 18-31-year-olds had jobs, down from 70% in 2007. The inability to attain employment has sent many emerging adults back to their childhood home, where a record number of 21.6 percent of 18-31-year-olds live with their parents (Pew Research). Todd G. Buchholz and Victoria Buchholz’s article in *The New York Times* suggests that American Millennials are less mobile than they have been in the past. They elect to stay in their home state, and, if possible, their hometown. Since the 1980s, Buchholz and Buchholz insist, “The likelihood of 20-somethings moving to another state has dropped well over 40 percent.” Although many emerging adults may return home, this research suggests that still many more may not even leave home in the first place. Pew Research shows that 78% of adults who still reside at home are content with their living situation, and their family dynamics do not negatively reflect their decision to remain at home (Henderson). In fact, research from the University of Pennsylvania shows that emerging adults who live at home end up entering more financially secure and rewarding jobs when they do enter the job market (Henderson). Henderson states, “Just having the option to move back home provided enough of a psychological security net to allow them to

be more discriminating about the kind of jobs they accepted, which translates to holding out for positions with higher long-term earning potential.” As well, physiological research makes a strong argument for extending our conception of young adulthood to the age of twenty-five, rather than the traditional cut-off of eighteen. In their co-authored book *Welcome to Your Child’s Brain: How the Mind Grows from Conception to College*, Dr. Sandra Ammodt and Dr. Sam Wang show that a teenager does not have a fully developed (and adult) brain at the age of eighteen, but rather, an individual’s brain continues to develop until the age of twenty-five. There are many factors that influence this lengthened adolescence (through emerging adulthood), and these physiological aspects are only one segment.

As developmental stages expand and lengthen, new readerships and new kinds of books emerge. As a developmental stage, the emerging adult is now conceived as a necessary category, created by changing social and technological contexts in the twenty-first century. New Adult literature is, blogger Molly Wetta argues, “a reader-driven trend.” As a category of literature, New Adult fiction is concerned with individuals in another transitional period, this time between young adulthood and adulthood. Concerns may be romantic, fantastical, realistic, or fictional, meaning that New Adult literature contains several corresponding genres, such as romance, fantasy, and realistic fiction. Alison McDonald, an agent with the Rights Factory, describes New Adult fiction as being about “seconds” instead of “firsts” (qtd. in Harowitz). She notes that YA fiction tends to focus on first love, first jobs, and burgeoning identity, while in New Adult literature, characters have moved onto their next romantic relationships, their many and diverse jobs, and their more stable – albeit transitioning – sense of identity (qtd. in Harowitz). New Adult novels operate on the assumption that readers read to find themselves mirrored in the stories they consume, so that if YA and adult novels provide experiences out of reach of 18-25-

year-olds, then NA novels must provide contemporary representations that should be meaningful to that age group.

Self-publishing – driven by advancements in digital technology – has fuelled the growth of NA fiction. For example, in 2014 fan fiction writer Anna Todd secured a six-figure publishing advance for *After*, a *One Direction* fan fic (Holpuch). This means that Todd cast the members of the boy band *One Direction* in a myriad of romantic scenarios, specifically Harry Styles, and she shared her writing online. The rights for the movie were subsequently purchased by Paramount on October 16, 2014. Her self-published fan fiction posted to WattPad (an app used to share writing) led to the publishing contract.

Blogger Molly Wetta notes that while the term emerged from St. Martin's Press, it only gained popularity “in 2012 when many independently published New Adult novels began to appear on bestseller lists before being picked up by traditional publishing houses” (Wetta). Katja Millay's *The Sea of Tranquility* (2012) was released as a self-published e-book well before its popularity led to publication as a physical book, and it is frequently categorized on Goodreads as “New Adult.” Although the book's characters are teenagers, they are older teenagers at the cusp of “new adulthood”; they are in their final year of high school and the book concludes during the summer after high school ends. *The Sea of Tranquility* straddles categories of YA and NA, occupying the space of the emergent adult.

The romance genre has received the most attention within the category of New Adult Fiction, and websites such as *New Adult Alley*, and online reading databases like Goodreads, highlight books focusing on topics such as love and sexuality. E. L. James's *50 Shades of Grey*, an erotic romance trilogy, may be the most popular example of New Adult romance. The trilogy focuses on twenty-one-year-old Anastasia Steele; her age neatly falls between the eighteen to

twenty-five age recommendation for readers of new adult fiction. Leslie Kaufman of *The New York Times* notes that the focus on romance allows publishers to retain readers who, in their adolescence, enjoyed series such as *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, and *Twilight*, all of which veiled or concealed overt sexuality. By building the sex and sexuality from these YA series into New Adult romance – where there is more freedom for explicit content – readers are given what they want when they are ready to read it.

New Adult has likewise been viewed through its more literary publications, such as Curtis Sittenfeld's *Prep* (2005) and Marisha Pressl's *Special Topics in Calamity Physics* (2006). If the umbrella term "New Adult" means marketing to 18-25-year-olds, we might also consider a non-fiction study such as Ansari's *Modern Romance* as New Adult. Other NA novels tackle concerns that research shows are specific to emerging adults by addressing the return home narrative, reflecting the real life economic pressures that necessitate emerging adults move back to their childhood home. New Adult books in the romance genre cannot tackle the return home quite as effectively; a focus on sex and sexuality requires that the protagonist have more independence than living in the family home allows for. It is therefore literary fiction – books that have been critically acclaimed and well-reviewed in newspapers and literary journals – that take up this specific concern. Three of these recently published novels are *The Sleepy Hollow Family Almanac* (2012) by Kris D'Agostino, *Come, Thou Tortoise* (2010) by Jessica Grant, and *The Family Fang* (2011) by Kevin Wilson. They take up the concerns of the imagined reader of New Adult fiction, specifically, unemployment and the necessity to return to the childhood home. *The Sleepy Hollow Family Almanac* follows Calvin Moretti as he gives up on his MA in Film Studies at Boston University and returns home to Sleepy Hollow, New York. He moves back in with his parents, his brother Chip, and his seventeen-year-old sister Elissa. Calvin

quickly reverts to his high school self, leaving behind any ambition he may have felt at leaving home for the first time. The protagonist of *Come, Thou Tortoise*, twenty-four-year-old Audrey Flowers, is a “leapling” – born on the leap year – which means that although she is twenty-four, she has only had six birthdays. She returns home to Newfoundland when she gets a phone call saying that her father, a scientist, is in a coma. *The Family Fang* charts the return home of Annie (Child A) and Buster (Child B), who participated in their parents’ performance art as children. After personal failures in their own lives and careers, both return home as adults, hoping that their parents will take care of them.

These novels arise from acute understanding and experience by the authors of their characters’ predicaments. Kris D’Agostino makes most explicit the connection between reality and art, his real family and his fictional family. As D’Agostino explains in his Author’s Note, “The wackiest and thereby most vexing period of my life (so far) was my midtwenties. I found that handful of years, roughly from twenty-three to twenty-six, and the extended period of postcollege floundering that went with it, to be stranger and far more coming-of-age than high school and my teen years (encapsulated for me by a white suburban upper-middle-class bubble) ever were. I knew I wanted to try and express the emotions, the anxiety, the excitement, the antsy-ness, the wonder – and the lurking, unspecified dread – that informed that period” (333). Indeed, Gabrielle Gantz of *The Nervous Breakdown* book review blog additionally notes in her interview with Kris D’Agostino that the postcollege/emerging adult stage “was a total shock to me. There was no pop culture to explain it.”

However, some critics are wary of further dividing up book categories between young adults and adults. Lauren Sarner of *The Huffington Post* has expressed criticism of the continuous categorization of books, arguing that creating new, specific labels alienates readers

who may initially be receptive to a wide variety of literature. She writes, “New Adult is a label that is condescending to readers and authors alike. It implies that the books act as training wheels between Young Adult and Adult. For the New Adult books that are particularly childish, the label implies that they are a step above Young Adult – which is insulting to the Young Adult books that are far superior. For the New Adult books that are particularly sophisticated, the label implies that they are not worthy of being considered ‘adult.’ It’s a lose-lose situation for everyone” (Sarner). Nonetheless, New Adult literature continues to flourish, and is certainly a case of new social contexts shaping new narratives, which publishers have addressed.

Cultural and Technological Contexts in the Twenty-First Century

Two twenty-first century cultural and technological contexts contribute to the shape of contemporary YA: the specific category of Christian YA and ease of access to online pornographic content. Although they exist on wildly different spectrums, they are both positioned to impact this category of literature. While these two cultural contexts are not at the center of my dissertation, they do help to locate the ways contemporary YA has adapted to new contexts.

Christian YA is a category of literature that is presently trying to break into the mainstream success of secular YA. Christian YA reflects the attitudes, belief, and spirituality of its targeted Christian readers, typically focusing on Evangelical Christianity. Generally, Christian YA presents a Christian worldview, and explicitly references God, Jesus, the Bible, sin, and redemption (Francisco). Christian YA might be best represented by the sixteen-book *Left Behind* series (1995-2007) co-authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, the content of which focuses specifically on the Rapture and End Times. The *Left Behind* series were very popular

when I was growing up in Southern Alberta, and while they did not represent the books I read in elementary and middle school, they were frequently purchased, exchanged, and discussed by most of my friends (and, surprisingly, often recommended by teachers). Currently, Melody Carlson is the most prominent author of Christian YA, and is best known for her *Diary of a Teenage Girl* series, which have sold over 600,000 copies since 2008 (Graham, “Are You There, God?”). Although Christian YA is a subset of the larger and more general body of YA literature, it too is a category that contains many genres, including realistic fiction, fantasy, romance, and sci-fi, for example; frequently, it is also divided by religion. It is a category that includes publishers and imprints such as Baker Publishing Group (Bethany House and Revell), HarperCollins Christian Publishing (Blink, Thomas Nelson, and Zondervan/Zonderkiz), Tyndale House, WaterBrook Multnomah (WaterBrook Press and Multnomah Books), and Moody Publishers (Moody Urban). Standout Christian novels are recognized by the Christy Awards, inspired by Catherine Marshall’s *Christy* (1967), published the same year as *The Outsiders* (Graham, “Are You There, God?”). Joanna Penn notes that Christian literature makes up a \$1.2 billion dollar market, representing about 10% of the broader US publishing market, although Dan Balow notes that there is a relatively small number of Christian titles published each year, capping at about 250-300 annually, not counting romance titles. While articles by Jana Riess and Ann Byle for *Publishers Weekly* insist that Christian YA is booming, many other articles contradict that statement, and even the publishers, editors, and authors Byle interviews note the obstacles Christian YA has to overcome to compete with secular titles.

While secular YA is currently experiencing more focus and attention than ever before, Christian YA is contracting, and receiving much less notice. This contraction is due not only to the content of Christian YA, but also to the way it is marketed and sold in physical bookstores.

Publishers note that the very themes that are implicit in much of secular YA are those that Christian teen readers search out, meaning a separate category of literature is not necessary a demand of these readers. Daisy Hutton, the vice president and publisher of Christian publisher Thomas Nelson notes, “The Christian story and faith so easily lend themselves to what is popular in the general market – the ultimate fight of good vs. evil, uncertainty in trying to figure out who you are, and how to handle the issues they face” (qtd. in Byle 7). Secular YA meets many of teen readers’ needs, even when they identify with the Christian faith. Popular YA series such as Stephenie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga* and Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* trilogy are widely popular with religious teens, the very same that Christian publishers view as their target reading audience. Meyer, for example, is a Mormon writer, and many of the major themes of her *Twilight* novels – domestic work, a focus on family, and abstaining from sex until marriage – are lifted from the Mormon faith. While the explicit focus might be vampire romance, its implicit influences are certainly tenets of the Mormon faith, and Meyer has often discussed the Mormon influence on her series. Additionally, Roth’s *Divergent* is routinely categorized as Christian YA. The novel imagines a dystopic setting in which individuals are sorted into factions based on personality traits: Abnegation, Erudite, Amity, Candor, and Dauntless. Roth very clearly acknowledges God at the end of her novel, which has led many Christians to endorse the series. Teens looking for Christian themes do not have to search out a specialized category of literature; they can find similar content in secular YA.

While adult readers of YA might be prompting the literature to become more mature, complex, and engaging, adult readers are having a much opposite effect on the category of Christian YA. For example, editor Christina Boys attributes the slump in Christian YA sales to the success of *adult* Christian fiction (qtd. in Riess, “Finding Its Footing”). Boys notes that adult

Christian fiction (sometimes called *inspirational fiction*) stays away from objectionable content, meaning that it is appropriate for Christian teen readers. Christian YA doesn't offer teenage readers anything that they can't find in adult Christian fiction, meaning this niche market is not actually serving its intended audience. Although adults are reading secular YA in greater and greater numbers, the same is not true of Christian YA. WaterBrook Multnomah editor Shannon Marchese suggests that adults are much more stringent gatekeepers of Christian YA, and put tighter constraints of what Christian YA can actually be. Even if teens argue that Christian YA does not address their real-life concerns, publishers are pressured to satisfy adult demands over their supposed target audience (Byle 8). I would put forward the Dove Foundation website as a similar example of this type of gatekeeping, a website where adults post reviews of recent movies, TV shows, video games, music, and books, and evaluate whether or not they are appropriate for children and teenagers with a Christian worldview. They use a five-point scale that adjudicates for depictions of sexuality, language, violence, drugs and alcohol, and nudity. The first time I encountered the *Dove Foundation* website was in middle school, when a friend of mine could not see a movie at the theatre because it had scored poorly when reviewed by the website (for some perspective, the *Harry Potter* movies have been reviewed as "not recommended for families" on the Dove Foundation website). The evaluations show the tightrope that authors of Christian YA have to walk in order to satisfy parents of teenage readers. For example, author Richard Paul Evans, author of popular inspirational/Christian titles such as *The Christmas Box* (1993) and *The Gift* (2007), started writing his Michael Vey series for teenagers as a way to overcome the fact that "There are a lot of books that don't carry any hope, and those are not what our kids need today. I've never seen a society so hopeless" (qtd. in Byle 8). Interestingly, the second book in his Michael Vey series was not approved by the Dove

Foundation, and therefore not recommended to teenage readers. Contradiction appears to be a characteristic of examining the category of Christian YA. Don Pape, vice president of trade publishing for David C. Cook comments on this incongruity, noting, “The biggest question we all face is how far we can go with YA. We have to be true to our Christian values and mission, but we know what the kids are seeing in the media, in film, and in books” (qtd. in Byle 10). As a result, Christian YA cannot really crossover with secular fiction, because it cannot truly address contemporary teenagers while also satisfying their parents. Additionally, the market seems to skew towards the homeschooling market, meaning that Christian YA most often aims itself towards a very niche market. Blogger Mike Duran states that not all parents homeschool their children to protect them from “worldly influence,” although many do, and a specific Christian YA category appeals to those parents, and, presumably, those teens.

While the content of Christian YA certainly affects its reception and popularity, so too does the way it is marketed and sold. Most proponents of Christian YA note that its position and location in physical bookstores can be an obstacle to its greater and more widespread success. David Long, Bethany House senior acquisitions editor, notes that there is reluctance to stock inspirational/Christian YA in the secular YA section, meaning that Christian YA is often stocked with adult titles in chains such as Barnes & Noble and Borders. Riess explains, “Christian YA novels don’t belong in with the adult inspirational fiction, and some booksellers are hesitant to stock them alongside *Gossip Girls* in general YA, so Christian YA simply gets lost in the chains, where many Christian publishers long to be well represented” (“Gains Ground” 12). Julie Gwinn also notes that Christian YA is a completely separate market from secular YA, which affects marketing: “You have to go after the teens *and* the parents, which means you have to spread your marketing dollars really thin” (qtd. in “Finding its Footing” Reiss 30). Christian publishers seem

to want their books to be shelved with secular YA, so they can share some of that market, but bookstores are hesitant to do that. Instead, these books are shelved with the children's books or with adult books, even though they are marketed as YA (Byle 9). Pape reinforces this definite contradiction between what book buyers and publishers want in terms of categorization by explaining, "Buyers want our YA titles in the inspirational section, but we want our titles on the regular YA shelves" (qtd. in Byle 9).

Yet, many Christian publishers remain critical of the way that religion is treated in the secular YA, including critic Ed Sullivan who notes that most novels explore religion through explicitly negative portrayals, and that Christian YA can offer a more well-rounded vision of Christian youth than secular YA can. However, many contemporary YA novels address religious themes, and many novels do so in a thoughtful and engaging way, perhaps subsuming Christian YA into the more general market. Indeed, the 2015 publication of Patty Campbell and Chris Crowe's *Spirituality in Young Adult Literature: The Last Taboo* (2015) might mark the new and complex focus on religion in secular YA, and the breadth of titles offered. I would name several novels that thoughtfully explore religion, rather than focusing on its negative sides, as many readers are critical of. *The Serpent King* by Jeff Zentner (2016) rotates between three primary characters - Dill, Lydia, and Travis. Dill's father is a local preacher who handles poisonous snakes and drinks arsenic with his congregation. He has recently been sent to prison; not for these unconventional practices, but instead for possession of child pornography. Dill is living in the aftermath of his father's crimes, saddled with the name of his father and the legacy of his grandfather, known as The Serpent King. While the novel is told from an omniscient point of view, Dill's story is the one that continuously comes into focus, and roots the direction of the narrative. At the beginning of the novel, he seems content to continue living in his small town for

the rest of his life, paying down his parents' legal debts. But his aspirations soon grow wider, aided by Lydia's belief that he should attend college. When this new path is opened for him, he understands "nothing makes you feel more naked than someone identifying a desire you never knew you possessed" (82). Dill is hemmed in by the inescapable pressures of religion, and especially as embodied in his family. His mother doesn't want him to go to college and when Lydia asks him how it went when he finally tells her, he says, "And how do you think? She went, 'Sure, Dill, go off to college and have fun and learn about evolution and pay tuition and go to class instead of working, and I'll hold down the fort here and it'll be cool.'" No. She crapped herself, obviously" (179). Yet, Dill never turns his back on spirituality or religion, but rather aims to find his place within it.

Similarly, author John Green has often been categorized as a Christian author, since many of his novels for teens focus on religion and theology. Green studied to be a minister, and discussed this in a blog post on his personal website in 2008. He wrote,

I don't talk about it very often, but I'm a religious person. In fact, before I became a writer, I wanted to be a minister. There is a certain branch of Christianity that has so effectively hijacked the word "Christian" that I feel uncomfortable sometimes using it to describe myself. But I am a Christian. ("Faith and Science")

Sara Zarr likewise writes out of a religious background, although none of her books were explicitly so until *What We Lost* (originally published as *Once Was Lost*) (2009). Zarr was raised as an Evangelical Christian and makes her home in Salt Lake City, Utah, and her 2007 *Story of a Girl* was a National Book Award Finalist. *What We Lost* focuses on teenage Sam, who grapples with faith and family when a thirteen-year-old girl from her small town of Pineview goes missing, and her brother Nick is a suspect. Zarr was influenced by the disappearance of Elizabeth

Smart in Salt Lake City, who was abducted from Zarr's neighborhood. She writes on her website,

I grew up in church. We rarely missed a week. My mother was the church secretary. I feel like an honorary pastor's kid. My faith is still important to me, and I've long wanted to write a YA novel that involved a character with a sincere but conflicted religious faith. That's how I usually feel: sincere but conflicted. So, in some ways *What We Lost* is about faith. In some ways it's a mystery. But, at its heart, it's about what all my books are about: family, identity, and growing up. ("*What We Lost*")

Christian YA presumably narrows its focus by categorization and marketing, and its more sanitized content ignores much of the explicit reality that teenagers encounter, which editors, publishers, and booksellers in the industry admit many Christian teens have been critical of. The decline of Christian YA has intercepted another digital and cultural change that explicitly affects teenagers: ease of access to graphic and pornographic content online. While it is not within the scope of this dissertation to focus specifically about this new access in detail, neglecting to mention it here means overlooking a cultural and technological context that has impacted contemporary YA literature. Specifically, research shows that the average age of boys' first viewing of Internet porn is 11.5 years, and, as *Pornland* (2010) author Gail Dines points out, as softcore pornography has entered the mainstream, internet pornography is primarily hardcore, graphic, and violent in nature. Dines explains that the growth of the Internet, and the digital technologies used to access the Internet, means that pornography has become "affordable, anonymous, and accessible." Additionally, while research shows that less than a quarter of teenagers used a smartphone in 2011, by June 2015, 80% of teenagers had smartphone access (Ireland). It is not hard to imagine teenagers accessing pornography online, whether they mean to

or not. Nonetheless, oftentimes YA literature is attacked for depicting teenage characters engaging in a wide range of sexual activities, specifically by parents who prefer the sanitized content presented in Christian YA. John Green's *Looking for Alaska* is perhaps the most recent and visible example of a book that has been deemed by some parent groups as presenting "hardcore pornography"; the parent group that formed the website Safe Libraries labels Green a "porn pusher." These labels address the sexual content in Green's novel, as parents have specifically reacted to the fact that Green depicts a female character giving protagonist Miles "Pudge" Halter a blowjob. In 2008, parents at Depew High School outside Buffalo, New York banded together to fight the inclusion of *Looking for Alaska* as part of eleventh grade curriculum, protesting against a form that was sent home with students asking parents to give or withhold their consent for their children to read the book. The very same gatekeepers who dictate the content of Christian YA also have a hand in shaping how secular YA is used in schools. Green commented on the act of censorship in a YouTube video addressed to his brother, Hank Green, stating,

There is one very frank sex scene. It is awkward, un-fun, disastrous and wholly un-erotic. Hank, the whole reason that scene in question exists in *Looking for Alaska* is because I wanted to draw contrast between that scene, when there's a lot of physical intimacy but it's ultimately very emotionally empty, and the scene that immediately follows it when there's not a serious physical interaction, but there's this intense emotional connection. The argument here is that physical intimacy can never stand in for emotional closeness and that when teenagers attempt to conflate these ideas, it inevitably fails. Hank, it doesn't take a deeply critical understanding of literature to realize that *Looking for Alaska* is arguing against vapid physical interactions, not for them. ("I Am Not a Pornographer")

There is certainly more prurient content available online, although YA literature continues to be a source of controversy when parents take issue with depictions of sex and sexuality in the books their children are reading. However, this type of censorship might be outdated in a digital age. The implicit contradiction between John Green, on one hand, being folded into “Christian YA” and, on the other hand, being labeled a “porn pusher”, only draws attention to the battleground that is often YA. There are ostensibly more gatekeepers for YA than for what is found online.

It has been my experience that depictions of sex in YA novels are, as blogger Erin Farrow suggests “honest and subtle,” but they are also candid, clear, and sincere. Authors of YA seem to recognize that they need to think responsibly about how they depict sex. It is this sincerity that has caused librarian Amy Pattee to suggest that YA novels present a complementary form of sex education, one that is not candidly taught in middle and high schools. Many YA novels seem to approach sex in a way that presents readers with depictions that are at odds with those presented on the Internet, arguing for Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional reading theory, which suggests efferent reading of fiction. Indeed, in an interview with NPR’s Neda Ulaby, author Christa Desir suggested that YA can be a place for teenagers to find answers to their questions about consensual sex. I would put forward novels such as Jesse Andrews’s *The Haters* (2016), Emily M. Danforth’s *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* (2012), Emery Lord’s *When We Collided* (2016), Sarah Dessen’s *The Moon and More* (2013), and Lauren Myracle’s *The Infinite Moment of Us* (2013) as those that offer the types of depictions Pattee emphasizes.

Whether these depictions are made to contrast with hardcore pornographic content viewable by teenagers online, or if they fall naturally into books that are aimed at teenagers, isn’t clear, but there has been a certain increase to these honest depictions in recent years. It’s

interesting to think about how Christian YA and access to pornographic content shape two cultural interpretations affecting YA literature.

Conclusion

The category of young adult literature has been shaped by social and technological contexts over the last 150 years. With the publication of *Little Women* and *Huckleberry Finn*, writers – and their editors – recognized an intermediate stage of development that could be addressed. Readers responded by voraciously reading both novels. Alcott and Twain’s novels also created many narrative innovations that continue to define YA: an immediate, first person perspective, vernacular speech, the androgynous female character, and the romance novel. The next push for books for teens came in the post-World War II period, when young people with disposable income had the means to purchase products to fill their leisure time. Again, readers drove the demand for books targeted at their demographic, and writers filled the gap with new publications targeted at young people. Next, the problem novel of the 1960s and 1970s was created in a collaboration between editor Ursula Nordstrom and writer Emily Neville, resulting in the seminal problem novel of the time, *It’s Like This, Cat*. Neville’s novel introduced another template for the YA novel, introducing characteristics that persist today: absent parents, adult role models, and a focus on problems relevant to teenagers. Finally, the literature of the 1990s responded to the social and technological contexts of the time, which saw a move towards widening the literature to include more diverse perspectives, to reflect the advent of the digital age, and to engage readers in participation in more complicated narratives.

Recent advancements in technology have created a digitalization of the teenage world, ushered in at the turn of the century. The technological landscape has changed significantly since

2000, with the creation of social networking sites, cellphones, texting, and synchronous communication on a global level causing different technological models to influence and alter young adult literature. These conditions shape the current conversation about young adult literature, which has been altered by contemporary contexts. YA literature now responds to, adapts to, and exploits these new conditions, comparable to the ways in which YA literature of the past responded to and arose from other conditions. Knowing more about what came before in YA literature better identifies what is truly new or different about YA now, as well as what exists as part of a continuum of this literature. Twenty-first century contexts have likewise changed the way contemporary YA is read, written, and marketed, particularly influenced by advancements in digital technology.

While these contexts have necessarily shaped the literature, teachers and librarians have further refined it along the way, those with direct contact with the real teen readers who the literature is presumably written for. The following chapters examine the current state of YA literature through social and technological contexts, but also through the individuals who have influenced the literature, and fashioned it into its current shape.

Chapter Two

Internalizing YA: Intertextuality and Intermediality in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by

Jaclyn Moriarty and *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray

In an interview with A. Merrill in 1998, Warren Robinett, a programmer for Atari in the 1970s, explains how he was attributed with the creation of the first Easter egg (a hidden message or image, often associated with visual media). In the video game “Adventure,” developed for the Atari 2600 console, Robinett created a secret room within the game that took some effort to get to, and was effectively the first Easter egg created in a video game. In an interview with Arthur Merrill, Robinett explained,

The secret room is inside the black castle in Games 2 and 3, in a part of the Catacombs (the maze where you can only see a little ways). There is an isolated section in the catacombs that you can only get to if you use the bridge to cross the maze walls, and inside that little isolated pocket is an object (not mentioned in the game’s documentation, because I didn’t tell anyone about it): the Gray Dot. The dot was just one pixel in size, to make it seem as insignificant as possible. It was also the same color as the background color in all the rooms, so it was invisible in most places. You had to take the dot and use it to get through a side wall below and to the right of the Yellow Castle, and then you got into the secret room, which had my signature in it: “Created by Warren Robinett.”

The dot functioned as a key, opening the secret room in which Robinett had hidden his name. At the time, Atari did not give credit to specific designers for the games they created and worked on for the company. In order to be acknowledged for his work, Robinett decided to hide his name within “Adventure.” Atari did not find out until players began to discover the Easter egg for themselves. Robinett has said that “little surprises in games” such as his became popular, and

although they developed from a programmer's impetus to put his signature on a video game, they evolved to also acknowledge the players playing the game. Since video games scaffold the knowledge needed to play them, as gamers play a game, they learn the skills necessary to finding secret rooms, signatures, and other types of Easter eggs.

Easter eggs have developed into a type of intertextuality, although they did not start that way. They are now tied to two forms of media – video games and movies – meaning that their creation is entirely reliant on new technologies and social contexts. They arose out of the assumption that gamers want to work hard at a game, in fact, they derive pleasure from this hard work, an area of research Jane McGonigal has taken up as a video game designer. It has become standard for video games and movies to include references to other media, some more subtle than others, and both gamers and viewers derive gratification from the work it takes to search out this intertextual information. For example, a student enrolled in a course titled *The Rhetoric of Gaming* at Stanford University shared the following example on a class blog about his experience playing *Skyrim*, an action role-playing open world video game,

I was playing *Skyrim* and wanted to see how the world looked from the highest point on the map, so I bought a horse and started painstakingly ascending the Throat of the World. I didn't expect there to be anything up there, since there is no in-game motivation to climb it, but there were several ore veins and a pickaxe labeled "Notched Pickaxe." This is a pretty clear nod to Notch, the creator of *Minecraft* – interestingly, whatever drives *Minecrafters* to build for hours on massive scales is likely the same thing that motivates one to climb the Throat of the World. (jdaerthe)

The student expresses that there is a creative impulse necessary for a gamer to play *Minecraft*, and that a similar imperative might also cause a gamer to venture away from the main storyline

in *Skyrim*.

Additionally, Pixar, the company behind animated films such as *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *Up* (2009), and *Inside Out* (2015) consistently hides a very specific Easter egg in its movies. Pixar's first film was *Toy Story* (1995), a critical and popular hit about the toys that live in a young boy's bedroom, and the movie heavily featured a beat-up delivery truck, advertising the fictional Pizza Planet. Now, Pixar pays homage to its first film by inserting that same delivery truck in every movie it produces, which not only functions as an intertextual reference, but also provides an interesting look at how animation has progressed over the last twenty years. Marvel superhero movies – *Captain America* (2011-2016), *The Avengers* (2012), and *Ant-Man* (2015), for example – also make use of Easter eggs, and most critics make note of these references, which are to other comic books and superheroes in their critical reviews. The choice by directors, animators, and editors to insert an Easter egg into a movie or video game is deliberate and intentional.

Easter eggs are generally not used to describe intertextuality in printed texts, but recently they have become more popular. Easter eggs, as they have come to be represented in the printed text, are present throughout Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens*. Reading Bray's acknowledgments at the end of the book, for example, might help readers make meaning retroactively. For example, in *Beauty Queens*, Bray writes a short fictional screenplay near the end of the novel, and notes that it is "Directed by: David L. Evithan" (271), an almost perfect rendering of YA author and editor David Levithan's name. Levithan is the author of celebrated young adult books such as *Boy Meets Boy* (2003) and *Every Day* (2012). He has also co-written *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* with Rachel Cohn (2006) and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* with John Green (2010). In the acknowledgements to the novel, Bray insists that it was Levithan who provided her with the

idea for *Beauty Queens*, telling her over lunch, “A plane full of beauty queens crashes on a deserted island. And...GO!” Later in the novel, she references “Westerfeld” (307), possibly referring to another well known YA author, Scott Westerfeld, who contributed alongside Bray to the anthology *Zombies vs. Unicorns* (2010). Westerfeld is the author of the *Uglies* series (2005-2007), as well as the *Leviathan* series (2009-2012). Readers would have to have prior knowledge of Westerfeld in order to parse this reference, as he is not cross-referenced in Bray’s text as Levithan is.

Additionally, Ernest Cline’s novel *Ready Player One* (2011) includes Easter eggs as a core concept, and provides a stunning example of the ways printed texts have incorporated the influences of other technologies. Although the novel was written for adults, it won an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association shortly after publication, which recognizes books published for adults that have widespread appeal for teenagers. Cline’s novel follows eighteen-year-old Wade Watts, an American teenager living in the year 2044. He, like most of society, inhabits a virtual reality world called the OASIS, created by James Halliday and Ogden Morrow. He spends almost all of his waking life in the OASIS, using it to virtually attend his last year of high school. When Halliday dies, he announces to the world in a pre-recorded video that he has hidden an Easter egg in the OASIS and whoever finds it will inherit his vast fortune. The Easter egg, and subsequent puzzles, are carefully structured on 80s pop culture, since Halliday (and author Cline) grew up in that decade. The contest Halliday created goes on for several years without success, as “gunters” – professional Easter egg hunters – attempt to find clues that will lead to the first puzzle. *Ready Player One* begins as Wade discovers the Easter egg, and sets the contest in motion. Wade’s proficiency comes from his obsession with the 1980s. He studied the pop culture, video games, music, movies, and technology from that decade

in order to get an edge on the other gunters, assuming that Halliday would use the 1980s as a reference text. References to the 1980s are varied, encompassing songs “Dead Man’s Party” by Oingo Boingo and “Beds are Burning” by Midnight Oil, movies *War Games* and *Blade Runner*, TV shows *The Muppet Show* and *Family Ties*, authors Roger Zelazny and Michael Moorcock, and video games *Joust* and *Space Invaders*. Wade’s intense knowledge of the 1980s allows him to interpret clues that would be lost to individuals without his intense study of this decade.

Heightening Cline’s extensive and deliberate use of intertextuality is the fact that he also embedded an Easter egg in the text of *Ready Player One* for readers to find. Ten months after the publication of the novel, Cline announced that he had hidden an Easter egg in the book. Readers eventually discovered a URL hidden in the text, which, when entered into an Internet browser, led to a series of puzzles online. If a reader was able to solve these puzzles, he/she would win a DeLorean, the car made famous by *Back to the Future*. In August 2012, reader Craig McQueen successfully solved the puzzles and won the vehicle, mirroring the same process that protagonist Wade had engaged in throughout *Ready Player One*.

Over the last decade, intertextuality and intermediality in YA literature has been remarkably influenced by new digital technologies, especially by Internet search strategies, the use of hyperlinks, and investment in extratextual knowledge, particularly about pop culture, movies, and TV shows, which is provided greater visibility online. My interest in both intertextuality and intermediality developed from reading YA novels widely as a teenager and adult. Specifically, I remember being fascinated by the way YA novels functioned as reader’s advisory. Reader’s advisory is a term most often associated with library services, and describes the process by which fiction and nonfiction titles are recommended and suggested to readers directly (through a reader’s advisory conversation or interview) or indirectly (through library

displays, bookmarks, and posters). Reader's advisory also has a function in YA novels, as teenage characters indirectly recommend to readers certain books that they are reading either for pleasure or at the suggestion of a fictional character, teacher, or mentor. This is a transparent influence, one that flags the texts writers deem important to include in their novels. I sought out the same books that my favorite characters were reading, memorably asking for a copy of *The Odyssey* in grade four after Mary Lou Finney read the epic as part of a summer reading project in Sharon Creech's *Absolutely Normal Chaos* (1990). I have continued to take book recommendations from fictional characters as a reader; similarly, I have seen my own reading choices validated and acknowledged when they appear in the pages of a YA novel.

In this chapter I examine intertextuality and intermediality in contemporary YA literature, focusing specifically on Jaclyn Moriarty's *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* (2010) and Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens* (2011). First, I define the terms intertextuality and intermediality through both an English and education studies lens, drawing on work by Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and Stanley Fish. I then examine how these concepts function in contemporary YA novels, which will lead into a conversation about digital influences, focusing particularly on hypertextuality and the valuing of partial information in the twenty-first century. Finally, I engage in a close examination of both *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* and *Beauty Queens* in order to determine how two major contemporary YA authors make sense of intertextuality and intermediality in their work. My conclusions about how these two concepts function in their novels can inform our readings of other contemporary YA novels. As *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* and *Beauty Queens* demonstrate, references to other texts and media can be highly interactive. That is, they can demonstrate the author mimicking, rewriting, or reimagining another text. Conversely, references can demonstrate a low interactive quality. That is, they can constitute a reference to the title of a

book, a movie title, or a celebrity name. I carefully read both books searching for instances of intertextuality and intermediality. When I began this research, I was most interested in references to pop culture and books, both canonical and contemporary, as these are often common in YA novels (and the ones I engaged with the most as a teenage reader). However, a close examination of *Beauty Queens* and *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* led me to reimagine my understanding of intertextuality, and to view it as much more amorphous and atmospheric than simple references to pop culture and other YA or canonical texts. Questions that guide this chapter include: What is the difference between references to literature and references to pop culture? Are intertextuality and intermediality necessary in contemporary YA novels? Can a reader fully understand a book without knowledge of its intertextual references? Is it necessary to understand a book fully or are there other ways of reading it that may offer value to a reader?

Locating Intertextuality and Intermediality in Contemporary YA Literature

Julia Kristeva was one of the first literary critics to use the term “intertextuality” to describe the way a text functions within another text (37). Kristeva noted, “...any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37). Texts, Kristeva suggests, are permeable; they interact and engage with other texts and rely on readers to make meaning out of the presence of one text in another. Roland Barthes has gone as far as identifying “The Death of the Author” in his article of the same name, placing responsibility with the reader for combing through “multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation” (148). Rather than assuming the author is the “one place” where “this multiplicity is focused,” Barthes argues instead that the emphasis is on the reader, “the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without

any of them being lost” (148). Stanley Fish’s article “Is There a Text in This Class?” uses an anecdote to elucidate the responsibility of the reader to make meaning out of a text, typically understood as reader response theory. Fish recalls a class in which his colleague was asked by a female student whether or not they were using a text in his class, and then clarifies her question to ask specifically, “...in this class do we believe in poems and things, or is it just us?” (574). Fish notes that she was a previous student of his, and discusses his own inclination to focus on the instability of the text and on the responsibility of the reader to make meaning. Whether there is a text in the class is a question that targets the author and the reader, and who constructs meaning in a text. Critics such as Michael Riffaterre, Jonathan Culler, and William Irwin have similarly taken up the idea that intertextuality describes the process of a text referencing and interacting with one or more texts, suggesting that intertextuality is an inevitable quality of all texts. Intertextuality can be extensive or understated, and can engage with many structures and formats. Parody and pastiche are two playful forms of intertextuality, both of which engage with a comprehensive network of reference material.

For example *Beauty Queens* is, in part, a parody of William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (1954). It imitates the conventions and plot of *Lord of the Flies* in order to poke fun at that seminal novel. Bray builds on the expectations set by Golding, and then shows her female characters reacting much differently than Golding’s male characters while marooned on an island. Yet, *Beauty Queens* only uses Golding’s novel as a jumping off point before it heads off in search of a different, more optimistic conclusion. *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, on the other hand, engages with the literary technique pastiche: Moriarty uses characteristics of Gothic literature to write a Gothic tale of her own. While the teenage characters in her novel might make fun of the Gothic and complain about writing about the genre on their final exam, Moriarty

creatively imitates the Gothic in many different ways contemporary to the twenty-first century (including a ghost who appears to take over control of a character's computer), and through the points of view of several characters to great effect. Rather than imitating a single text (like the pairing of *Beauty Queens* and *Lord of the Flies*), pastiche draws on a wide range of texts. In Moriarty's case, these texts are from the Gothic genre. Parody and pastiche are forms of intertextuality, both of which are less superficial and more extensive than referencing pop culture (which both novels also do to great effect). Yet, neither necessitates knowledge of the source texts; the writers make connections in the text itself, meaning readers do not have to arrive at the text already having read *Lord of the Flies* or *The Castle of Otranto*, for example. They are not necessarily utilized with a didactic or educational impulse. Parody and pastiche entertain, and have an aesthetic objective.

Much of the understanding that young readers in the twenty-first century bring to contemporary texts is media-based rather than text-based. While intertextuality is a term that deftly describes what several of the books in this study do, that is, they continuously reference other texts, it does not fully take into account the multimodal content of many of the texts' references. For instance, the majority of the references found in *Beauty Queens* are to movies and TV shows, websites and blogs, memes and Twitter feeds, articles and plays, art and performance art. An understanding of intermediality adds to theories of intertextuality, broadening the possibilities for texts referenced in YA novels. While the first use of the term intermediality is typically ascribed to Coleridge in the 1800s, it was not until the 1960s that Dick Higgins used "intermedia" in the context of Fine Arts "to describe works of art that seemed to 'fall between media'" (Elwell 25). While Higgins's definition highlights hybridity, intermediality articulates the possibility of mixing media, increasingly encouraged in the twenty-first century,

which has perhaps impacted the types of texts referenced in YA novels. Marina Grishakova and Marie-Laure Ryan's definition of intermediality expands the potential of intertextuality:

In its broad sense, the one we endorse here, it is the medial equivalent of intertextuality and it covers any kind of relation between different media. In a narrow sense, it refers to the participation of more than one medium – or sensory channel – in a given work. The opera, for instance, would be intermedial through its use of gestures, language, music, and visual stage setting. (3)

Intermediality accounts for the inclusion of references to other media and the inclusion of multimodality in YA novels. These include “photographs, maps, and sketches” (Grishakova and Ryan 2); references to a “film, television program, TV commercial, Web site or music video” (Watts Pailliotet, Smali, Rodenberg, Giles, and Macaul 208); or “words, images, pictures, sounds, music, and multimedia combinations” (Watts Pailliotet, Smali, Rodenberg, Giles, and Macaul 210). Print can be enlivened by references to media other than print, especially considering the increase in the pattern of such references in the past decade.

For example, Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* (2014) is a YA novel that consistently references art, integrating Bracusi's *The Kiss* (sculpture), Magritte's *The Therapist* (painting), Jackson Pollock's *One: Number 31* (painting), Michelangelo's *David* (sculpture), Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (painting), and the cherubs from Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (painting) as reference texts. Jesse Andrews' *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (2012) references movies, including *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Casablanca* (1942), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), as protagonists Greg and Earl remake these classic films. Because young adult texts frequently connect to diverse media, they are a productive resource to study how digital technologies affect print-based literature.

Many scholars in the field of education studies are particularly interested in the purposeful, or didactic, use of intertextuality in novels for children and young adults. David Lewis, for example, has discussed intertextuality as a sense of “knowingness,” or a “privileged sense of being in the know” (59), which occurs when certain words, phrases, and references activate readers’ prior knowledge, making intertextual links to material current with young people’s every day contexts. “Knowingness” can also refer to the feeling, atmosphere, or mood that certain references call upon, which makes transparent the importance of *prior knowledge*, or the information that readers bring to a book. *Prior knowledge* asks very generally: What do readers already know? Comprehension of a text, especially with young readers in school, is dependent on a reader’s prior knowledge, or the information that he/she brings to a text. Prior knowledge connects to Barthes’s and Fish’s assertions that meaning resides with the reader, and is not necessarily embedded in the text itself.

Additionally, YA expert Teri Lesesne suggests readers make intertextual connections between books in order to become more competent readers, and to find material that matters to them. Her book *Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We’d Like Them to Be* (2010) examines the connections between middle grade novels and YA novels and situates them on a “ladder” that moves young readers from “easy” reads to more complex novels in the category of YA literature. Lesesne’s purpose is reader’s advisory; her recommendations provide readers with novels that are interconnected by theme, plot, setting, or other motivating factors. For example, reading ladders for a series such as *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) are organized into “books about magic” and “motifs and archetypes in fantasy,” with different YA novels appearing on each list. Lesesne’s ladders can thus be organized in numerous ways, in order to bring young readers from their favorite books to YA novels they may have never

considered reading before. Take, for example, a reading ladder for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997). Lesesne suggests readers progress from *Harry Potter* to Arthur Slade's *The Hunchback Assignments* (2009), to Jonathan Stroud's *Bartimaeus* series (2004), to Libba Bray's *A Great and Terrible Beauty* series (2003), to Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* (2003), to end with the much more challenging *The Once and Future King* by T.H. White (1958). Readers of *Twilight* (2005) might reach the end of the ladder with the canonical Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), but not before reading *Night Road* by A.M. Jenkins (2008) and *Thirsty* by M. T. Anderson (1997). Lesesne emphasizes making connections between YA novels, whether overt or implicit, to encourage readers to find books that are similar to their favorites. Additionally, I have argued intertextuality can be used as a tool to prepare middle school readers for the more difficult texts they will encounter in high school and university in "Writing Homer, Reading Riordan: Intertextual Study in Contemporary Adolescent Literature." Using *their* literature as a gateway to canonical texts prepares adolescents by referencing characters, plot, and dialogue from more complex works. The impetus for the article came from the fact that many adolescent characters read canonical novels at the request of their English teachers in YA novels, which is best demonstrated by Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) and Jon van de Ruit's *Spud* (2005). The protagonists in these books are exceptional readers and writers whose teachers not only recognize their ability, but also curate out-of-class reading lists. The books recommended from teacher to student include contemporary classics such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), Ernest Hemmingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). Meanwhile, authors Chbosky and van de Ruit complement the core themes of these canonical novels with the struggles of their teenage protagonists.

However, intertextuality does not always reflect an educational or didactic impulse, nor is it consistently understood and accessed by readers. The nuance of intertextuality is that it doesn't have to be understood to be effective. Even if a reader fails to recognize a reference, texts still function effectively. Readers can be flexible in their comprehension and *use* of intertextuality. As Margaret Mackey asserts in her 1997 article "Good-Enough Reading: Momentum and Accuracy in the Reading of Complex Fiction," readers of fiction can get a "good-enough" understanding of a text through hints provided, without necessarily knowing specific references. Every reference does not need to land in a meaningful way; the presence of the reference can itself be meaningful. For example, E. Lockhart references YA author Jaclyn Moriarty in her critically acclaimed novel *We Were Liars* (2014), which examines the wealthy Sinclair family who own a private island off the East Coast of the United States. Protagonist Cady had been "reading her [Moriarty] all summer" and is given a copy of an unnamed Moriarty novel, inscribed "*For Cady with everything, everything. Gat*" (116). The presence of the novel can simply indicate that Cady is an avid reader, and an avid reader of one author in particular. Extensive knowledge of Moriarty's YA novels is not necessary for this reference to be effective; yet, for readers who are well-versed in her novels, there is some incentive to trying to guess the book referenced in *We Were Liars* (and there are many online spaces dedicated to doing just that).

Jesse Andrews's YA novel *The Haters* (2016) also adds to this specific discussion. *The Haters* is Andrews's hilarious new novel that follows best friends Wes and Corey as they attend a two-week summer jazz camp. The novel makes heavy use of musical references, especially in the category of jazz. Jazz camp attendees have to audition for one of five bands that are ranked from most skilled to least skilled: the Duke Ellington band, the Count Basie band, the Thad

Jones-Mel Lewis band, the Woody Herman band, and the Gene Krupa band. Wes and Corey make Gene Krupa, and while readers are meant to understand that Krupa is the *worst* possible option of the five bands (and that Wes and Corey are the least skilled musicians at camp), Andrews doesn't provide much context why, but does show Corey and Wes describe Krupa as a "herb," which Wes elaborates, "is just a generic term for someone lame. Corey is probably the last person on earth who uses it. I think he likes it because it reminds him of Herb Alpert, a smooth jazz trumpeter who both horrifies and fascinates us" (8). A deep and critical reading of this reference has to occur outside of the text itself – what makes him lame? what did he contribute to jazz? – unless a reader brings prior knowledge about the history of jazz to the novel itself. Knowledge of Gene Krupa might add to background depth and to the complexity of the reference, but readers (myself included, and I actually was in jazz band as a teenager) are probably not going to need to know much about the Gene Krupa reference, other than that it denotes a low rank of skill at Wes and Corey's jazz camp.

Intertextuality is certainly viewed by many literary theorists – especially Kristeva and Barthes – as a necessary component of all texts, one that often occurs unconsciously and unintentionally. For example, the prolific use of canonical works as references in YA novels may be a result of the simple fact that many authors of YA are teachers, English majors, and avid readers. It is very possible to view their use of canonical texts as reference material not as a reflection of real teens' contemporary reading, but instead as reflecting the very engaged and specific reading that has formed many YA writers' literary interests. The novels that they have read in a sustained way may certainly influence their writing. Raziq Reid, author of the 2015 Governor General Award in Canada for his novel *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* (2014), has spoken frankly in interviews about the reading and pop culture landscape that has

influenced his writing. While he made a deliberate choice to base his novel on a very real 2008 murder of gay teenager Larry Fobes King, his intertext is rooted in pop culture, which Reid has stated shaped the background of his adolescence and identity. In an interview with *The Globe and Mail*, Reid told journalist Marsha Lederman,

I wanted to be famous since I was a child. My generation, we grew up on TMZ, so it was kind of like that was the goal; fame was the most common goal...I sort of succumbed to that kind of superficiality when I was a teenager and up until maybe like a couple years ago and then I realized that I didn't want to be that kind of famous...I think it used to be vulgar to say that you wanted to be rich and famous ... but now it's just so common. I think it's uncommon not to want those things.

TMZ is a celebrity news site created in 2005, and it has since grown into a daily thirty-minute television show that reports on Hollywood gossip. Reid's gesture towards celebrity gossip sites such as TMZ explains the vast references to contemporary pop culture in *When Everything Feels Like the Movies*, where he references celebrity actors Liam and Chris Hemsworth, pop singers Miley Cyrus and Britney Spears, and TV shows *E! True Hollywood Story* and *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, among others. References to celebrity gossip culture appear on nearly every page of Reid's slim 171-page novel. Rather than being deliberate about each reference he includes, Reid's stated interest in pop culture – as reported in interviews in Canada and the United States – seems much more ingrained, informing his writing style, content, and references wholly and completely, but not necessarily purposely.

Additionally, Robyn Schneider's *Extraordinary Means* (2015) is an example of a novel in which intertextuality promotes a sense of in-group membership, although it is unclear if Schneider decisively employed references to create this effect. It's possible that authors

unconsciously create rich intertextuality to connect with a group of readers who are familiar with specific references, creating “membership” to a book’s community, and to validate their interests. However, as with Reid, the references to books, movies, TV shows, and music employed by Schneider reflect her personal interests, and the fact that they promote in-group membership may be an unintended consequence. She deals in pop culture references that don’t stray far from science fiction and fantasy. There are multiple references to and discussions about *Harry Potter*, *Doctor Who*, Dianna Wynne Jones novels, *Game of Thrones*, Miyazaki films, P.G. Wodehouse, and *The Princess Bride*. Dialogue is bullet-fast and nonstop, as characters try to one up each other with their quotations and references to pop culture. References function to create in-group membership or belonging, but they also describe characters who don’t belong in the in-group by placing their characteristics, likes, and dislikes at odds with the core group of characters. Rainbow Rowell also creates a sense of in-group membership, especially in her novels *Fangirl* (2013) and *Carry On* (2015). The focus of *Fangirl* is fan fiction; protagonist Cath writes fan fiction about Simon Snow, a *Harry Potter* knockoff. Rowell released *Carry On* in 2015 to present the original Simon Snow story that is referenced by imagined fan fiction in *Fangirl*. Many writers of fan fiction enjoyed Rowell’s novel, as it creates another space to talk about that type of writing. However, Rowell’s focus on fan fiction was inspired by the fact that she writes it in her spare time.

While intertextuality can be a natural component of all texts, as demonstrated by the examples above, intertextuality can also be viewed as a technique deliberately employed by a writer. Harold Bloom’s understanding of influence exemplifies this intention. Bloom outlines influence in the text *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), which borrows the terminology and focus of psychoanalysis, particularly the Oedipus complex. Bloom is preoccupied with intertextuality

as a way to trace the influence of texts (and of authors) through an examination of the relationships between contemporary and historical poets. Bloom notes that this is an ambiguous relationship, one that is made visible by tracing the works that poets read, especially that of precursor poets. Writers are therefore innately *influenced* by the works they read. Bloom insists that it can be very difficult for a poet to produce an original work under the pressure of influence. This influence is what guides connections between texts, a more subtle intertextuality, and one that perhaps asks us to question the author rather than the reader. Bloom is interested in the influence of one poet on another, made clear by his statement that, “Without Keats’s reading of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, we could not have Keats’s odes and sonnets and his two *Hyperions*. Without Tennyson’s reading of Keats, we would have almost no Tennyson” (xxiii). Although Bloom is interested in the influence between poets, other academics have transposed Bloom’s anxiety of influence to writers of other literary genres, especially evident in William Gray’s study of the connections among Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, and George MacDonald in “Pullman, Lewis, MacDonald, and the Anxiety of Influence.”

The “influence” Bloom writes about was also the focus of important discussions in 2006 about Harvard freshman and YA author Kaavya Viswanathan, who secured a two-book deal from Little, Brown and Company for the sum of half a million dollars. After she showed her writing to the private college counselor hired by her parents, Katherine Cohen of New York-based educational consultant firm IvyWise, Cohen shared Viswanathan’s writing with her own literary agent at the William Morris Agency, Suzanne Gluck. Viswanathan’s writing sample bore similarities to Alice Sebold’s *The Lovely Bones* (2002), a dark piece of fiction. Rather than using that sample to secure a book deal, Viswanathan states, “They thought it would be better if I did a lighter piece. They thought that was more likely to sell” (Rich and Smith). With help from Alloy

Entertainment, a book packaging company that was also involved in the publication of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (2001) and *Gossip Girl* (2002), Viswanathan wrote a book synopsis and four chapters, which sold to Little, Brown and Company and provided the basis for *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild and Got a Life*.

The novel was published in 2006 and was categorized as YA. Viswanathan's novel follows the titular character in her senior year of high school as she pursues an offer of acceptance to Harvard, mirroring the author's own college trajectory. It is highly autobiographical, focusing on an Indian-American protagonist under many of the same pressures Viswanathan faced: "I was surrounded by the stereotype of high-pressure Asian and Indian families trying to get their children into Ivy League schools...I'd just been through the applications process. It was very tense, very stressful, marked by a lot of competition and secrecy" (qtd. in D. Smith). *Publishers Weekly* highlighted its potential for widespread popularity by describing the book as "*Legally Blonde* in reverse" (D. Smith). Little, Brown and Company clearly viewed the book as a lucrative title, one that would appeal to a wide range of readers of YA.

The film rights were quickly optioned for a movie adaptation, and its debut was highly publicized. However, readers have come to remember Viswanathan for reasons other than the quality of her novel. Shortly after publication, Harvard University's student-run newspaper *The Harvard Crimson* exposed Viswanathan for plagiarizing parts of her book, at one point borrowing a fourteen-word passage from Megan McCafferty's YA novel *Sloppy Firsts* (2001). Reporter David Zhou compared McCafferty's writing on page 6 of *Sloppy Firsts* with Viswanathan's on page 39 of *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life*:

McCafferty: “Sabrina was the *brainy* Angel. Yet another example of how every girl had to be one or the other: Pretty or smart. Guess which one I got. You’ll see where it’s gotten me.”

Viswanathan: “Money Penny was the *brainy* female character. Yet another example of how every girl had to be one or the other: smart or pretty. I had long resigned myself to category one, and as long as it got me to Harvard, I was happy. Except, it hadn’t gotten me to Harvard. Clearly, it was time to switch to category two.”

Viswanathan vehemently denied the accusations of plagiarism, claiming instead that it was her photographic memory that had caused her to replicate certain passages from *Sloppy Firsts*. Any similarities were “unconscious and unintentional” (D. Smith). Viswanathan told reporters that McCafferty’s books *Sloppy First* and *Second Helpings*, “spoke to me in a way few other books did...I wasn’t aware of how much I may have internalized Ms. McCafferty’s words” (D. Smith). She also described herself as a “huge fan” of McCafferty (D. Smith).

Viswanathan’s defense against claims of plagiarism seems to be tangled up with the literary concepts of intertextuality and influence. She claims that her internalization of the novels she read as a teenager allowed her to reproduce them almost word-for-word when she became a writer herself. Yet, Viswanathan also seems to insist that her identity as a young woman was constructed by the YA texts she read as a teenager. Not only was her internalization of the novels a photographic rendering of the text, but they also became reference texts for her identity. In this case, Viswanathan may be seen as Claude Levi-Strauss’s “bricoleur,” an artist who “has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and ... to engage in a sort of dialogue with it” (Levi-Strauss 18). Viswanathan, however, does not seem to engage in a dialogue, but rather appears to transcribe one.

For a reading audience, the line between influence and plagiarism is typically quite clear. But how does influence manifest itself when an author expresses that certain books were so important personally that they were internalized, contributing to identity formation? There is little question whether or not Viswanathan's work is plagiarism; clearly, it is. A quick publishing deadline coupled with her frantic class schedule at Harvard led many to assume that she mined her favorite YA books to produce her own. But Viswanathan's comments suggest that there is something more complex occurring, which has to do with the way that YA texts informed her development.

When news broke in *The Harvard Crimson*, Viswanathan's agent brushed off negative comments: "Knowing what a fine person Kaavya is, I believe any similarities were unintentional. Teenagers tend to adopt each other's language" (D. Smith). Although her publisher and agent initially denied claims of plagiarism, they reversed their stance as it became more apparent that Viswanathan had borrowed from a wide range of YA texts. Initially, Little, Brown and Company insisted Viswanathan would include a note of acknowledgement to McCafferty in future publications of *HOMGK*, but as reporters presented evidence that additional books were plagiarized, the publisher canceled future printings of the book. Viswanathan has now been accused of plagiarizing from McCafferty's *Sloppy Firsts* (2001) and *Second Helpings* (2003), Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), Sophie Kinsella's *Can You Keep a Secret?* (2003), Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries* (2000), and Tanuja Desai Hidier's *Born Confused* (2002). Detailed comparisons of plagiarized passages can be found online at *The Harvard Crimson*, *The New York Times*, and *The Harvard Independent*.

Other YA authors have talked about the complex nature of influence. In a recent interview with Malinda Lo about first novels on the podcast *This Creative Life*, YA novelist Sara

Zarr asked, “You know how a lot of us, when we do our first books, they’re almost like an imitation of our favorite books?” Lo agreed, telling Zarr, “My first book was a complete knock off of *The Blue Sword* by Robin McKinley.” Zarr and Lo mean that the first book a writer writes is a cobbling together of their favorite books; these are the texts that modeled to them how to tell a story. This is intertextuality at its most general definition: a text that references other texts. Writers, like Lo, Zarr, and Viswanathan, are influenced by formative texts. Lo and Zarr seem to agree that influence is acceptable, as long as it serves as writing practice that will lead to the development of an individual voice.

Scholars discuss intertextuality in a variety of ways, viewing it as both a necessary and natural component of all texts and also as a deliberate literary technique employed by writers. I view intertextuality as embodying multiple locations on this spectrum, from unconscious to conscious employment by writers. However, both Jaclyn Moriarty’s *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* and Libba Bray’s *Beauty Queens* structure their novels on a deliberate use of intertextual materials, and these varied examples provide an idea of how some contemporary YA novels engage with these concepts.

Digital Influences, Multiliteracies, and Hypertextuality

Contemporary contexts have affected the function of intertextuality in YA novels, as the increased use of digital technologies has facilitated the ease in which media are mixed. The Internet, smart phones, and other digital technologies have allowed for greater access to information, to a fluid interaction between texts, and the ability to link a series of references digitally in one text. For example, consider the concepts of hypertext and hypertextuality. T. H. Nelson first used the term “hypertext” in 1965 “to mean a body of written or pictorial material

interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper” (OED). The term originated from advances in computer technology and emphasized the nonlinearity of text, and the ability for a reader to choose when to abandon the text for new, yet related, reference material. Agnes Rocamora clarifies, “Hypertextuality has come to commonly refer to the electronic linking of a wide range of written texts and images, brought together in a constantly shifting configuration of networks” (94). Hypertextuality is made possible by the link or hyperlink, “which allows Internet users to move through this configuration, jumping from one site to the other by clicking on the related signifier, usually a word displayed in a different colour, font, or style” (Rocamora 94). For example, a writer may review the latest book by a prolific author on a personal book review blog. In the body of the review, the writer might list the other books by the author, and may create a hyperlink to connect to reviews of these previously released texts. Hyperlinks can present different perspectives and voices by linking to an external website; they can also promote one perspective by linking internally. There are, of course, downsides to the constant linking made available online. Hyperlinks are meant to emphasize connections between texts, but with the importance of marketing and ad revenue on the Internet, many times these links are used not to connect, but to distract readers by linking them to advertised websites rather than related content. Many blogs utilize hyperlinks to direct readers to online stores where they can purchase the advertised content, and websites use hyperlinks to facilitate purchasing products.

Compare hyperlinks to marginalia in medieval texts, where text is annotated and connected usefully to other texts; yet, online, the text remains “clean” and appears to be not annotated because it is digitally marked by hypertext markup language (HTML), rather than visually marked up. J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst’s recently published novel *S* (2013) makes

transparent the possibilities of hyperlinks and HTML in contemporary literature, and the difference between hypertext markup and visual markup. *S* presents dueling stories in a physical book. It contains *The Ship of Theseus*, a novel by a fictional writer, as well as the marginal notes of two college students communicating with one another on the pages of *The Ship of Theseus*. *The Ship of Theseus* can be read in its entirety; however, the marginal notes also present a narrative that, at times, is much more interesting than the fictional novel itself. Readers must make a choice between the linearity of *The Ship of Theseus* and the linearity of the marginal notes. Reading both concurrently is overwhelming, and forces readers to make decisions about how to navigate the narrative. I have found reading the book a frustrating experience; I have been unable to choose between privileging either text, and have instead tried to read the dueling texts at the same time. While the physical form of *S* resembles a library book through binding and due date stamps, letters and paraphernalia inserted between pages, and yellowed pages, the e-book version offers an interesting alternative and a more easily ordered narrative. As Tim Martin explains in his review for *The Telegraph*: “An unusually thoughtful ebook conversion even allows you to manipulate the inserted documents and turn textual annotations on and off with the press of a button.” Hypertext, which should increase the variability of a text, is actually limited by the e-book version, yet the option to limit the text greatly appeals to me as a reader of this particular book.

This digital impulse allows YA authors to engage with other reference texts in a variety of ways, specifically using intertextuality to connect readers to music. YA literature scholar Karen Coats insists that authors should engage more actively in intentional intertextuality and consider the effects their references – especially to music – will have on the implied teenage reader. In Coats’s article “‘The Beat of Your Heart’: Music in Young Adult Literature and

Culture,” she examines the intertextual references to music in contemporary YA novels. Coats draws on research by Donald Roberts and Ulla Foehr that states teenagers are avid music listeners, and that between the ages of fourteen and twenty, they are more likely to voraciously consume music more than any other time in their lives. This is because of the relationship between brain development and emotional maturation in adolescence. The music teenagers listen to in their youth can constitute the most important music they will encounter in their lives. Coats references research by David Levitin, whose study of Alzheimer patients showed that they still had the capability to remember the music they listened to when they were fourteen (120). As brain structures develop and change during adolescence, there is a disconnect between the underdeveloped prefrontal cortex – accountable for preparation, risk assessment, impulse control, and rationality – and the limbic system, charged with regulating emotional response. Because music creates first an emotional response, Coats insists that it strengthens connections between the prefrontal cortex (through music’s organizing structures such as rhythm) and the limbic system (reliant on the emotional accessibility of music). Coats states that it therefore “makes sense to think that young people may use music to forge and strengthen connections between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex” (120). Coats believes YA writers “overlook the importance of music in their writing” (111-112), which has great meaning and significance to teenage readers.

Many authors frequently reference songs and music lyrics as a way of creating ambiance. Although lyrics lack an accompanying tune in the pages of a printed book, they have the effect of delivering poetic interludes in prose-based novels. In *Open Road Summer* (2013), for example, author Emery Lord includes the song lyrics that she penned throughout the novel. Her novel focuses on protagonist Reagan and her best friend Dee, a teenage country music star. Dee’s

lyrics dredge up her previous relationship as writing works as a way to move through the aftermath. Reagan notes that the title song from Dee's new album *Middle of Nowhere, Tennessee* was written for Dee's ex-boyfriend Jimmy:

*Middle of nowhere, Tennessee,
 Exactly where I want to be.
 Our initials carved into the old oak tree,
 And every road takes me back home.
 Middle of nowhere, Tennessee,
 Dancing on the porch, you and me.
 This is where I was born to be,
 No matter how far I may roam. (2; emphasis in original)*

The lyrics encourage a poetic impulse and might ask readers to make connections between the inclusion of lyrics in YA novels versus the inclusion of a song title or artist name (or a way to stream real music). An experience like this is much different than the way some YA novels have tried to include music in the past. For example, A *Sammy Keyes* mystery novel published ten years or so ago included a physical CD at the back of the book that included music to accompany the novel, and included a song penned and performed by author Wendelin Van Draanen, which summarized the plot of her previous *Sammy Keyes* novels.

Additionally, Morgan Matson's *Amy and Roger's Epic Detour* (2010) uses music to explore themes, moods, and character development. The novel follows Amy Curry and Roger Sullivan as they embark on a cross-country road trip. After her father's death, Amy's family is moving to a new state on a new coast while Roger is going to spend the summer with his father in Philadelphia. Their parents decide that the two teens will travel together, with Roger driving

because Amy is still reeling from the car crash that killed her father. Along the way, they exchange road trip playlists that are listed in their entirety in the pages of the novel. Matson creates eleven playlists in total that include over 150 songs. The songs are meant to shape the drive from state to state, and also provide something for Amy and Roger to talk about. For example, while Roger's choices are mainly classic and indie rock, Amy's playlists are a combination of songs from Broadway musicals and Elvis Presley (her father's favorite). Until music sharing website GrooveShark collapsed, Matson posted the complete playlists for readers to find and listen to. Rather than facilitating readers *listening* to the music while reading a printed text, lists such as these are more important for their evocative qualities, and the way they reference categories of music that could indicate something about the fictional listener. Unlike a TV show, where a song might play for fifteen to thirty seconds as an atmospheric cue, books don't allow for the same auditory aid. In a book like *Amy and Roger's Epic Detour*, the song title and artist name stand alone, perhaps instead evoking feeling through the poetic nature of song titles and band names. Other YA novels that include song titles and artists are *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky (1999), *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell (2013), and *If I Stay* by Gail Forman (2010). Song titles and band names can communicate meaning; however, it is up to the reader to go outside of the book to listen to the music and lyrics if they choose to do so.

When lyrics, band names, and song titles do not play an important role in YA novels themselves, authors acknowledge their influence in other ways. Maggie Stiefvater, for example, is famous for sharing the playlists that she created while writing her books to "reinforce the mood or help [her] through a scene" (Stiefvater). A book like Stiefvater's critically-acclaimed *The Scorpio Races* (2011) is reproduced as a list of Welsh and Scottish songs while her werewolf

love story, *Shiver* (2009) was inspired by a playlist mainly composed of indie rock. Steifvater is not alone in creating playlists like these, acknowledging music that will never appear in the pages of her book. John Green created a playlist for his novel *Paper Towns* (2008), another road trip YA novel, and posted it to his website after publication.

The Internet has changed our reading habits and our understanding and valuing of text in many ways. For example, Bertrand Gervais observes that Internet texts are more ephemeral than physical texts. Consider the ephemerality of references to contemporary culture. Intertextuality is important to YA, perhaps because so much of YA is about relating to a contemporary reading audience. *Goosebumps* author R.L. Stine recently told *Time Magazine* interviewer Nolan Feeney that he eavesdrops on real teenagers' conversations, and researches their likes and dislikes as a way to make his novels relevant to his implied teenage reader. He notes avoiding being too specific about technology in his novels, because "the technology changes every two weeks" (Feeney). Stine seems to suggest that while intertextuality and intermediality are often employed as conscious literary techniques, many YA novelists might in fact avoid this active referencing to prevent their novels from becoming dated and irrelevant to contemporary readers. Some writers are happy to sacrifice the longevity of their novel for the contemporaneity and present popularity they can call upon by working with the type of intertextual material that we might view as ephemeral or fleeting. In *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Young Adult Literature*, Roberta Seelinger Trites provides an analysis of the intertextual references present in Chris Crutcher's *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* (1993), which largely explores this issue with ephemerality. Crutcher seems to offer a way around this.

In her analysis of this novel, Seelinger Trites contends that the novel communicates through intertextual references better directed towards Baby Boomers; Bob Dylan, Buddy Holly,

the Byrds, the Son of Sam, and Edgar Bergen are a sample of the references she highlights (82). She notes that these references to the sixties and seventies may function in a few different ways. First, employing references that date back 20-30 years before publication helps Crutcher avoid “evanescence,” a term Seelinger Trites notes is employed by Caroline Hunt to describe the fleeting nature of references (especially to pop culture) in YA novels, which are quickly rendered out-of-date and obsolete. She also suggests that the references might instead succeed in displacing the implied adolescent reader who might not be able to fully understand the intricacies of the text. She attributes this to the fact that Crutcher might be out-of-touch with contemporary references (unlikely, due to his extensive work as a high school teacher and counselor) or else he is providing an example of how to understand YA literature as a category that attempts to demonstrate to adolescents how to stop being adolescents (82-3). Seelinger Trites chooses to view the references as paradoxical instead.

Yet viewing references – especially to pop culture – in YA literature as ephemeral is appropriate; many references naturally date the novel (especially references to technology). As cultural and technological contexts change, the knowledge needed to interpret intertextual references can be lost. Libba Bray certainly seems to have considered the ephemerality of intertextual references in *Beauty Queens*, where she fictionalizes references to contemporary pop culture. Her references thus become a *type* rather than a specific reference culturally and temporarily located and dated by the time of publication. As a result, it is often possible to anticipate which references might age better than others. For example, Raziell Reid’s *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* may feel dated in a decade, when the pop culture icons he describes begin to age and lose the one-dimensional format he relies on for meaning. His novel is intricately tied to its time and place of publication. Conversely, Ernest Cline’s *Ready Player One*

mines a significant decade best known for the pop culture it promulgated, which might be why his novel feels fresh rather than out of date. He also transmutes the 1980s over the 2040s, effectively imagining the future importance of the pop culture he shares (and anticipates its current comeback in contemporary culture).

The function of contemporary references is interesting to consider, particularly in our current cultural context. Gervais notes that the “context of cultural hyperextension and linked computers is a consequence of the convergence of two transformations: technological and cultural.” I emphatically agree with his identification of culture and technology as influencing intertextuality in the twenty-first century. For instance, Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel identify the shift towards an “attention economy” (19), in which readers must interact with and react to a “superabundance of information” (20), visible in the large amount of content available when reading on screen. With more information available than ever, readers must determine where best to allocate their attention, which is “inherently scarce” (20). When the connection facilitated by the Internet allows for unlimited information, individuals have to make decisions about which content to engage with. Ephemeral references to pop culture might be considered easier to consume quickly, compared to the knowledge necessary to connect a reference to a book-length text.

The abundance of information online means we might search out unfamiliar references when reading larger bodies of text, whether they are in the form of hyperlinks that take us to Wikipedia pages, Twitter accounts, or online articles. They can provide shortcuts through a larger text, meaning that attention can be diverted to hyperlinked references that lead away from the main content, but that may help to make it more clear. As Byeong-Young Cho and Peter Afflerbach have noted through research in reading on the Internet, “A reader makes continuous

decisions about what to read, and what to ignore, and the reading path is constructed in relation to the reader's particular goal" (505). Maryanne Wolf, author of *Proust and the Squid*, has noted often that Internet reading utilizes efficiency and immediacy. She is not the first researcher to suggest that the Internet reduces the capacity for *deep reading*, meaning that readers can understand the most pertinent points by skimming online content. Reading online, Wolf notes, encourages readers "hopping from one source to another and rarely returning to any source they'd already visited. They typically read no more than one or two pages of an article or book before they would 'bounce' out to another site" (59). It is therefore possible to consider partial information (intertextual references) as more valued than whole information (complete text) in the twenty-first century, meaning contemporary readers may find that the reference to a text may be more evocative than the text itself, and might privilege information that would "bounce" them out of the text over information that anchors them to it.

While it may seem productive to encourage *deep reading*, some research shows that many young people excel when engaging in multitasking activities, leading some to perform better in testing situations. A study by Kelvin Lui and Alan Wong suggest multitasking can be beneficial for young people to engage in, as they demonstrate a positive correlation between multitasking and multisensory integration. Lin Lin, Jennifer Lee, and Tip Robertson attribute young people's multitasking in part to the ability to stream TV programs and videos online, meaning that teens can watch anything from anywhere, at any time. Shifting TV watching processes to a cell phone screen provides more opportunities to shift attention frequently. Lin, Lee, and Robertson found that students performed better on reading comprehension when there was a video playing in the background while they read, and that they performed more poorly when reading in complete silence (188). The researchers insist that the participatory nature of

social media has fostered multitasking, enabling “switching frequently between tasks at hand, and integrating various activities such as reading, searching, and communicating with friends simultaneously into the viewing process, online and offline” (199). Rather than being limited, information and social connections are easily accessed. It is up to a reader to decide the most efficient route through information, and whether leaving one article (or platform) to pursue another is more efficient, or whether this instead provides distraction from the text. Adolescents’ ability to practice multitasking often may lead to them becoming better skilled at switching between media (Adams).

The effects of multitasking on young people are highly contested, and although research studies such as these enumerate its benefits, many others describe multitasking as negatively affecting working memory and long-term memory (Uncapher, Thieu, and Wagner), concentration (Baumgartner, Weeda, van der Heijden, and Huizinga), and academic excellence (Hill). If some research shows readers privilege partial information, bounce in and out of texts, and are searching for distraction from the text, can intertextuality actually offer readers depth? Or is its function purely superficial? I believe depth is achieved through extensive and prolonged use of intertextuality in YA novels. For example, Shakespeare is highlighted in Louise Rennison’s Georgia Nicolson series, including *Romeo and Juliet* in *Are These My Basoomas I See Before Me?* (2009) and *Macbeth* in *Startled by His Furry Shorts* (2006). These are included in Rennison’s novels not only for the behind-the-scenes moments they offer, but also for the opportunity Shakespeare’s plays present to characters to interpret their meaning and significance (at times to their own lives). They are at the center of both novels.

Other YA novels present Shakespeare’s plays as a means of engaging with the subtleties of character and plot through intertextual reference. When Naomi runs back into her high school

to retrieve a yearbook camera in Gabrielle Zevin's *Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac* (2007), she falls down the cement steps and hits her head hard enough that she gets amnesia. Naomi has to figure out who she used to be, and discover who she is now. There are hints about her past along the way – a food diary in her bedroom, birth control pills in her nightstand – but Naomi has to decide if she wants to be her past self, or instead become someone new. As her new amnesiac self, Naomi is cast in the role of Ophelia in a production of *Hamlet*. References to the play are fleshed out with the background material Naomi engages with as she participates in the play. Additionally, *Forever in Blue* (2007), the fourth entry in the *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* series by Ann Brashares, provides an in-depth account of a performance of *The Winter's Tale*. Carmen, one of the four characters the series focuses on, attends a summer drama program after her first year of college. She has lost her identity while away from her high school friends, and has only one person to rely on: the popular Julia, who is everything Carmen believes she isn't. Yet, rather than building sets for the summer, as Carmen expected would be her role, she is instead cast in the play as Perdita. It is her role as Perdita that brings her back to herself and helps her gain her self-confidence, a trajectory that mirrors that of Perdita, who discovers her true identity at the end of the play. This level of depth is not offered by all references in YA novels, nor should it be expected. Many times references to other texts are encountered like tough vocabulary words in novels read in grade school: context clues help to define their presence, but do not necessarily provide a more in-depth meaning. If writers want to create more depth for the references they employ, they have to scaffold the supporting details in the novel itself. Intertextuality has to be extensive rather than superficial. When intertextuality is extensive and models engagement with the chosen reference – whether it is a book, play, poem, movie, TV show, or video game – readers can engage in in-depth reading experience, as teenage characters

share their interpretation of the works presented in YA novels. Jaclyn Moriarty's *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* and Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens* provide two models of this type of extensive intertextuality.

Intertextuality and Intermediality: *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by Jaclyn Moriarty and *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray

Australian author Jaclyn Moriarty has been writing YA novels since the release of her debut *Feeling Sorry for Celia* (2000). She followed that novel with *The Year of Secret Assignments* (2003), *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie* (2006), *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* (2010), and a new trilogy for young people called *The Colors of Madeleine* (2012-2016). Many of her books have alternate titles in Australia; however, unlike many Australian authors who may only see a few books published internationally, all of Moriarty's have been published and translated for global readers. Four of Moriarty's novels navigate around a handful of core characters, and take place at two fictional Australian high schools: private school Ashbury and public school Brookfield. Moriarty's books are known for their inventive format, composed largely of letters, notes on the refrigerator, memos, diary entries, and transcripts. Moriarty has often said that she has always been interested in the gaps between documents like these that ask readers to make connections in the unarticulated space. *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* utilizes a unique format, where four primary characters reflect on their final year of high school through a series of questions on an exam for their English class. The exam is on the topic of Gothic literature, which they have been studying over the past year. This means that the characters must integrate Gothic tropes, themes, and influences in their test answers, and make connections to their real lives. As a result, much of the novel – almost 500 pages in length – takes place on a high school English exam. It is an

entertaining and complex novel, and knowledge about Gothic literature enhances the effect of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*.

Similarly, American author Libba Bray contributes prominently to YA literature, and has published across genres in this category. For instance, her Printz Award-winning novel *Going Bovine* (2009) follows protagonist Cameron on a hallucinogenic journey after he contracts mad cow disease. Bray uses *Don Quixote* to guide the plot in its fantastical direction, even providing Cameron with a Sancho-like sidekick named Gonzo. Bray has also published two fantasy series for young adults. The Gemma Doyle trilogy (2003-2007) takes place at the fin de siècle, while *The Diviners* (2012-) series is rooted in the jazz clubs, flappers, and New York of the 1920s. Her novel *Beauty Queens* was published in 2011, and takes *Lord of the Flies* as its literary template. An airplane full of Teen Dream beauty contestants crashes onto an island, leaving only a handful of survivors, each representing American states such as Texas, New Hampshire, Nebraska, and New Mexico. The boys from *Lord of the Flies* are replaced by a group of diverse teenage beauty queens who never forget that they are ultimately competing against one another for the title of Miss Teen Dream. Protagonists include Adina Greenberg, who entered the competition to expose its deep-rooted sexism, and Petra West, who hopes to be the first transgender winner of the pageant. Miss Texas, Taylor Rene Krystal Hawkins, keeps the girls on track by practicing choreography in the wreckage of the crash. While the canonical source text certainly influences the plot and motivation of *Beauty Queens*, pop culture is also important, as are the stories that it tells about celebrities, pop stars, and reality TV contestants.

The Ghosts of Ashbury High and *Beauty Queens* employ extensive intertextuality in different ways. Kelly Byrne Bull's dissertation for the University of Virginia helps to shed light on these differences. Byrne Bull discusses how intertextuality works in three ways: "within,

among, and outside” of texts. An example of intertextuality working *among* texts would correspond to books loosely connected; they exist in the same setting or story world, or revolve around the same characters. Take, for example, Sharon Creech’s Bybanks, Kentucky books, which focus on new protagonists, while always including the same secondary characters. *Walk Two Moons* (1994), *Chasing Redbird* (1997), and *Bloomability* (1998) all make reference to Bybanks and its fictional inhabitants. Moriarty also engages in this by setting many of her books at the fictional Ashbury and Brookfield schools. Creech’s and Moriarty’s novels cannot be categorized as *series*, as they are not reliant on previous installments; they can all be read as standalone novels. However, knowledge of secondary characters or specific locations in the setting may resonate more if a reader has read more than one of Creech’s or Moriarty’s books.

Intertextuality that works *outside* of texts is defined as references to other texts. Jaclyn Moriarty’s reference to Ann Radcliffe’s (1794) *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other canonical works of Gothic literature shows specifically how a text reaches outside of its pages towards another text. Intertextuality *within* texts is best exemplified by what Libba Bray does in *Beauty Queens*, by creating a complex set of fictional pop culture references that loosely correspond to real-life pop culture and trends. Her references only work within the book itself since they are largely fictional. They are enhanced by a reader’s prior knowledge, but that knowledge is not necessary to enjoy the overall humor of the novel.

Byrne Bull’s concepts of intertextuality within and outside of texts correspond to what I call *internal* and *external intertextuality*. *Internal intertextuality* is the term I use to describe the way Bray uses extensive footnotes to describe made-up references that have real world resonance. She references a type of text that readers may be familiar with – movies, TV shows, and celebrities – but fictionalizes the specific reference. In *Beauty Queens*, internal

intertextuality is created by *fictional* references that loosely connect to *real* people, celebrities, and events. All references are internal; they do not exist externally to the text. They function differently *in* the text and *outside* of it. *External intertextuality*, on the other hand, functions in the way we typically think of intertextuality. This includes references to other texts outside of the text that further illuminate the narrative. In *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, the four protagonists create separate renderings of the Gothic that emphasize facets of what we have come to define as Gothic literature. Much of what is described as Gothic in Moriarty's novel can be found in real Gothic novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). However, Moriarty scaffolds information about Gothic literature in her novel, meaning readers do not need to come to *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* with an in-depth understanding of the Gothic genre. My discussion of intertextuality in these two texts is organized around internal and external intertextuality in order to ask questions about YA novels, readers of YA, and prior knowledge. Rather than describing all of the individual references in both books, I will instead focus on the organizational intertextuality that more specifically dictates the shape of both books, and actively contributes to plot, character development, and style.

External Intertextuality: Reading the Gothic in The Ghosts of Ashbury High

Jaclyn Moriarty works extensively with the tropes of Gothic literature in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* by drawing on important works in the genre. For example, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is a seminal Gothic text, and is agreed to be the first work of its kind. The first edition represented itself as a "found text," a translation of a sixteenth-century edition of an Italian manuscript by Onuphrio Muralto, a fictitious writer. The manuscript was supposedly

written some time between 1095 and 1243 and described supernatural events, a haunted castle, and evil machinations. The success of Walpole's novel led him to release a second edition in 1865, where he took authorial responsibility for the manuscript. The preface for the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* essentially outlined major Gothic tropes, and offered readers a guide for understanding the genre. Specifically, Walpole's addition of a subtitle to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, "A Gothic Story," provided classification for the literature (Watt 2). In a preface to the second edition of the book, Walpole admits that he sought to combine both old romance and new romance in an innovative genre. Old romance was fantastical and supernatural; new romance incorporated aspects of realism as highlighted by other nineteenth century novels. Walpole states, "In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success" (9) He sought to "reconcile" both types of romance.

In their comprehensive surveys of Gothic literature, Andrew Smith and Carol Davison each attempt to "compil[e] a very basic generic laundry list of Gothic ingredients" (Davison 56) that characterize the mode. They determine that Gothic literature includes "representation[s] of 'evil'" (A. Smith 3); "[r]epresentations of ruins, castles, monasteries" (A. Smith 4); "forms of monstrosity, and images of insanity, transgression, the supernatural, and excess" (A. Smith 4); dreams and nightmares (Davison 34); haunted houses (Davison 51); and spectres (Davison 51). Gothic literature can focus on issues such as "gender, race, history, class, nation, and the self" (A. Smith 10) and politics and religions (Davison 33). The combination of *the supernatural* and *the realistic* helps to identify the category. It's possible to imagine Moriarty working with a reference list like this when composing *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*.

Although the Gothic emerged in Britain, works such as Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798) and Edgar Allan Poe's short stories fall into a subset of Gothic literature: the American Gothic. For the purposes of this chapter, it is relevant to also take note of the Australian Gothic novel. Gerry Turcotte's chapter in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* provides a brief summary of Australian Gothic literature, and notes its effectiveness in giving voice to the colonial experience. He expresses that although Australia doesn't have the immense history, lineage, and background that allowed the Gothic to flourish in Britain, the Australian landscape instead connected with Gothic themes such as "isolation, entrapment, fear or pursuit and fear of the unknown" (278). He notes that Australia was conceived as a "grotesque space" by explorers, "a land peopled by monsters" (277-8). The Australian landscape provided a variation on the theme of the Gothic. In his essay "The Fiction Fields of Australia," Frederick Sinnett initiates a discussion about the Australian Gothic:

It must be granted, then, that we are quite debarred from all the interest to be extracted from any kind of archeological accessories... There are no ruins for that rare old plant, the ivy green, to creep over and make his dainty meal of. No Australian author can hope to extricate his hero or heroine, however pressing the emergency may be, by means of a spring panel and a subterranean passage, or such like relics of feudal barons. [...] There may be plenty of dilapidated buildings, but not one the dilapidation of which is sufficiently venerable by age, to tempt the wandering footsteps of the most arrant *parvenu* of a ghost that ever walked by night. It must be admitted that Mrs Radcliffe's genius would be quite thrown away here; and we must reconcile ourselves to the conviction that the foundations of a second 'Castle of Otranto' can hardly be laid in Australia during our time. (qtd. in Turcotte 279-80)

The Gothic as it existed in Britain could not be replicated in Australia, but could instead be rewritten for a different geography, history, and culture. Turcotte notes that Australian authors such as Marcus Clarke (1846-81) and Barbara Baynton (1857-1929) imagine the Gothic as resonating in Australia with the transportation of convicts to Australia, and their subsequent living conditions in the bush, “a particularly Australian terror” (282). These are the Gothic conditions that Moriarty works with in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*.

The Gothic has traditionally had a place in children’s and young adult literature, most often emerging in fairy tales and their retellings. A contemporary example of the long-lasting appeal of the Gothic is the 2014 YA graphic novel by Emily Carroll, *Through the Woods*. Carroll’s novel was decidedly written for teen readers, and was catalogued as YA in both bookstores and libraries. Carroll rewrites several dark fairy tales for teen readers such as “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Bluebeard,” while also inventing modern Gothic tales populated by teenage characters. Her art emphasizes a Gothic aesthetic, especially the “Bluebeard” tale in which the ghost of Bluebeard’s murdered wife comes alive in the walls of the haunted castle. Additionally, Joseph Abbruscato and Tanya Jones have edited a collection of essays entitled *The Gothic Fairy Tale in Young Adult Literature: Essays on Stories from Grimm to Gaiman*, which undertakes an analysis of several YA novels including David Almond’s *Skellig*, Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game*, Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* and *Coraline*, Lemony Snicket’s *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, Terry Pratchett’s Tiffany Aching series, and Holly Black’s urban fantasy novels. I would add a few additional titles to this list of Gothic YA. Stephenie Meyer based the third novel in her *Twilight* series, *Eclipse* (2007), on *Wuthering Heights* (and vampires have been a staple of the Gothic since *Dracula*), while Jack Gantos’s *The Love Curse of the*

Rumbaugh's (2006) deals with love curses, taxidermy mothers, and the burden of history and lineage. Novels like these explore the gap between fantasy and reality.

Moriarty's author's note at the beginning of her novel provides a definition of "Gothic fiction" for readers who might be unfamiliar with the genre. She sets up many of the plot points, themes, and tropes that will be important throughout the story, while also referencing *Wuthering Heights* and *Frankenstein* as important Gothic texts. She notes in a brief preface,

In a gothic novel, you will often find mad people locked in attics, secret passageways, monsters, murderers, ghosts, and family curses. A beautiful young woman is likely to ride in a carriage through a bleak landscape, hear the toll of a distant bell, see a black crow, hear a rumble of ominous thunder, see drops of blood, hear haunting music, see a figure shrouded in mist, hear a bloodcurdling scream – and it will all make her prone to fainting several times a day.

Each of these tropes makes an appearance in the novel, simply updated to the contemporary setting. Told through the point of view of five characters, Emily, Lydia, and Toby, as well as new Ashbury students Riley and Amelia, *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* constructs an overarching Gothic story as characters respond to questions on a final English exam focused on Gothic literature. The questions divide the book into parts and ask the students to,

- 1) "Write a personal memoir which explores the dynamics of first impressions. In your response, draw on your knowledge of gothic fiction" (1), and
- 2) "Write the Story of Term 2 as a Ghost Story" (105).

The teens' answers to these questions form the narrative, and are appended by blog entries, memos, letters, and transcripts that fill in the gaps.

Emily Thompson is a recurring character in Moriarty's novels and appears also in *The Year of Secret Assignments* and *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie*. Her parents are lawyers, perhaps an influence of Moriarty's previous career as an entertainment lawyer. Emily frequently misspells and misuses words, and her narrative is increasingly emphatic. Exclamation marks are not uncommon in her writing. She is a detail-oriented character, and it is no surprise her angle is working a "laundry list" of Gothic characteristics into her exam. She repeats Gothic tropes throughout her exam answers, inserting descriptors ("looming" "monstrosity"), tropes ("a crow, a raven, or any other bird" "Lightning struck!" "a storm rattled the windows"), images ("Like the gothic moat around a gothic castle"), and interjections ("Pay heed, my gothic reader!" "So, I take you by the hand and lead you to a time two years ago"). She ends her exam with a summary that touches on as many Gothic characteristics as she can:

I have done a lot of *senseless fainting*. With a little more time I might have found some *femme fatales* and *family curses*, yet still there have been *ghosts*, and *doppelgangers* (e.g., Lydia has both a big games room and a small games room), and *gloomy weather*. (364; emphasis in original)

She spends much of her exam discussing new students Amelia Damaski and Riley Smith, and the eerie way they have infiltrated the high school. Her interest in Amelia and Riley is infectious. They are at Ashbury High on scholarship, although none of the Ashbury students know that. They are simply new students who have seemingly appeared out of nowhere, displaying talents in swimming, art, drama, and music. Emily's blog entries (and the ensuing comments) provide gossip and speculation about Amelia and Riley. While Emily views their arrival as very Gothic, she spends much of her exam writing the term at school as a ghost story.

Emily's invention of and belief in the ghost that may haunt Ashbury High's Art Rooms stems from a discussion with her principal Mr. Ludovico who avoids signing Emily's application for law school at Sydney University after he overhears her telling her friends, "He should not have taken on the job of principal if he could not cope with the responsibilities" (179). He accuses her of being ill-suited to a profession in law, noting that she has been "shouting to the world – including, I might add, on some childish hysterical blogs – that there's a ghost living in the Art Rooms at this school!" (203-4). Unable to process that her principal is refusing to advance her future, Emily insists she *will* prove the existence of the ghost, and Mr. Ludovico agrees he'll sign her form if she does so.

Emily's ghost story is the most literal of those presented in the novel, and the most realistic. Even if she doesn't believe *wholly* in a ghost, she does gather significant evidence that there is *something* haunting the Art Rooms. She attributes the following to the Ashbury ghost: 1) mandarin orange peels left behind in the Art Rooms, 2) a feather falling from the ceiling, 3) finding a book, *The Complete History of Politics of Australia*, with an inscription to Sandra Wilkinson, an Ashbury student who died at the school years before, 4) the chill air in the Art Rooms, 5) the scent of talcum powder, 6) a dropped white handkerchief, 7) the photograph taken by Bindy Mackenzie of a mysterious face through the window of the Art Rooms, and 8) the vandalism of a student art piece. Emily concedes by the end of her ghost story that only a small part of her believed there was a ghost. Instead, she explains, it was her experience of the difference between being an adult and being a child that made her seek out evidence of the otherworldly. She writes, "I'm scared of the future and the adult world so I want that childish spookiness to return. Where you make yourself afraid, but all the time you know that it's just imaginary, and you're safe. Maybe the reason I'd been *so* caught up with the ghost – and written

that angry blog about it – was that nobody else was playing along” (205). The ghostly events are explained away in the final part of the novel, when Emily discovers that a mad and elderly woman named Constance Milligan has been secretly living above the Art Rooms, reliving her days at Ashbury High and dwelling on a love that was never hers. It’s her talcum powder, her handkerchief and mandarin peels, her book, feather quilt, and her fiddling with the temperature gauge. These ghostly items and activity can be explained away, both by Emily and the other characters in the novel. While Emily’s ghost story dismisses the supernatural, hers is not the only ghost that haunts the novel.

Emily’s best friend, Lydia Jackson-Oberman, has similarly appeared in other Ashbury High novels, specifically *The Year of Secret Assignments* and *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie*. Her narrative continuously overlaps with Emily’s, and relates alternate perspectives of the same events. Lydia’s life is much different from Emily’s. While most of the students who attend the prestigious private school Ashbury High come from wealthy families, Lydia’s soap star mother and her father, a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, position her as extremely privileged. Indeed, Riley describes her house as “a network of closets. In a house with a master suite that spans a single floor. Masterpieces hanging on the marble walls of bathrooms. A guest suite, home theater, library, billiards room, gym. Kitchens and swimming pools in pyramids of star-spangled glass. A tennis court, topiary gardens, outdoor swimming pool, plus lap pool and jacuzzi on the terrace” (237-8). Her parents have an unhealthy and unstable relationship, and Lydia has recently broken up with her long-term boyfriend Seb, a student at Brookfield. Often, Riley and Seb are paired side-by-side, and Lydia clearly sees them as doppelgangers. During the second term of school, she uses her parents’ extended absence (a trip to Tuscany) to hold nightly parties at her house, sometimes drawing over 200 people from Ashbury and Brookfield.

When crafting her ghost story for her final exam in the Gothic Literature elective, Lydia reproduces a transcript of a conversation on her computer where she becomes an unlikely participant in a real-life ghost story. She overstates her skepticism about believing in ghosts in a brief preamble to her story: “It is important that I preface this transcript by saying that I am not, and never have been, a believer in ghosts. Nor, for that matter, do I believe in anything pertaining to the supernatural. I cannot emphasize this strongly enough” (137). Her statement is an attempt at veracity, highlighting her skepticism in order to heighten the reality of her story. Nonetheless, Lydia converses *textually* with a ghost through a typing program on her computer. She observes the keys on her keyboard physically moving up and down while the ghost interjects her *fictional* ghost story to create a real one. Lydia good-naturally keeps up a conversation on her computer, believing the “ghost” to be her ex-boyfriend Seb, who she imagines has hacked her computer to keep up the conversation. Lydia’s ghost warns her about Emily’s Art Room ghost, typing, “I know the Ashbury Ghost well. You are all in danger” (147). Lydia’s transcript, copied down for her English exam, is detailed, and runs for quite a few pages.

However, Lydia undermines the legitimacy of her ghost story while responding to another exam question, in which she must imagine her year at school in the form of a gothic tale. She has a tendency to exaggerate, overreact, and bend the truth. For example, when she stays home because her mom asks her to: “Had to stay home because my head exploded...I finished sweeping up my head and then, for a laugh, picked out a couple of the bigger pieces, and juggled them” (25-6). When her dad sits beside her on the couch: “I bounce straight up and smack my head against the ceiling. Slip into a coma for a moment, then wake up. Dad doesn’t notice. Flips through the pages of my German” (53). When she sees Seb with another girl: “I stand on the stairs and I laugh so hard I knock myself unconscious. You know – that laughter where you howl

and accidentally slam your head against the wall and knock yourself out? So that's what happens. I'm unconscious on the floor" (344-5).

The supernatural element of her ghost story is overturned near the end of the book when Emily tells Mr. Botherit, her English teacher, that Lydia made up the entire story, writing it only to get a good mark for her exam. Mr. Botherit is thoughtful, because as much as the supernatural aspect seemed an invention, Lydia interjected with realism, speaking frankly about her parents and her past relationship with Seb. Mr. Botherit was more convinced the story was true, only he believed the ghost could have been a computer hacker. Moriarty continuously uproots and reroutes the Gothic.

Moriarty provides Riley Smith with the role of gothic villain in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*. For example, Lydia watches him at the Blue Danish Café, recording his reaction when a male student makes fun of a female student:

You know the expression on the gothic villain's face? The scene where he wants the heroine to sign away her future...Villain's cape is casually flung across the document so all that the heroine can see is the dotted line...And then, the expression on the villain's face! He needs her fortune or he's ruined! All is lost! Now he won't get the signature so his face – Black as night. Ferocious as a wolf. Treacherous, thunderous, murderous. That expression – that's what I'm talking about. I saw it on Riley's face. (280)

Riley has all of the makings of such a character. In the ghost story he writes for Mr. Botherit, he expresses cruel and nefarious intentions towards the students at Ashbury High, especially Emily, Lydia, and their friend Cass. He reveals that he and Amelia have chosen the three of them for *something*, without articulating what, and describes them in the cruelest terms: "Em was hysterical, melodramatic, and not very bright. Sheltered all her life, she'd stayed a little girl. Cass

was quiet, and essentially pointless. And Lydia was one of those spoiled rich kids who know about nothing, but put on a cool and cynical face because they think they know it all. None of them was worth a thing. None of them was real” (101-102).

Riley and Amelia come to Ashbury with a simple goal: to trick a group of rich students into supporting their musical talents, enabling them to sign a record deal and leave their difficult pasts behind. Lydia is the perfect candidate for their treachery, since her famous mother has recently acquired Distressed Weasel Records. But eventually, Riley’s exam results raise enough red flags that Mr. Botherit warns other parents at the school about his intentions and digs into Riley’s past. Riley’s truth is ugly: “The truth is sealed, bricked up. You never know what ugly things decay behind brick walls” (255). Emily goes so far as to call him a “gothic monster” when she learns about his past. Riley and Amelia had been put into a detention center before coming to Ashbury, “not just because they stole money from a petrol station. No. It was because, when a man tried to *stop* them stealing, Riley beat him up so badly – with his bare hands – that the guy ended up unconscious, his arm fractured in three different places, and his spinal cord damaged in such a way that he’ll never walk again” (365). Emily is right about the superficial details, but Riley’s past is much more complicated than that.

His narrative is disconnected, communicated in images and short thoughts that distinguish his writing from that of the other characters. The teachers and adults who granted the scholarships to Riley and Amelia express trepidation at what they call their “troubled times” (11). As readers learn about Riley’s history over the course of the novel, and the steps that brought him to Ashbury, “trouble” becomes an understatement. Even then, Riley reverses his status as “gothic villain/monster” by the end of the novel, as Moriarty continuously focuses on the *real* in the Gothic.

Through Riley (and, to a lesser extent, Amelia) *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* addresses the socioeconomic differences between the students at the prestigious private school Ashbury High and those who attend Brookfield High, a public school that is frequently described as low-class, criminal, and destitute throughout the series. Class has often been a context of focus in Gothic literature. Moriarty privileges the perspectives of the three Ashbury High protagonists, who drive readers' focus and relationship with the story. If readers are familiar with Moriarty's previous work, then they have already encountered characters Emily, Lydia, and Toby before, while Riley and Amelia are new characters in this iteration of the loosely constructed series.

Riley and Amelia, who previously attended Brookfield, are accorded less space in the novel than Ashbury students Lydia, Emily, and Toby, and they are consistently labeled as strange, different, and dangerous. Their fascination comes, in part, because they are scholarship students, creating a very marked difference from the other students at Ashbury, whose parents pay for their education (the scholarships are new this year). Rather than overturning stereotypes based on the public/private school divide, Moriarty instead reinforces these boundaries. In an interview with Kristen Yinger, Moriarty describes her impetus for juxtaposing these two schools: "I liked the contrast between an exclusive private school like Ashbury and a rougher public school like Brookfield. My own high school was a Catholic girls' school – a little like Ashbury, but not nearly as wealthy or exclusive – and there were always tensions between my school and the public school down the road. We were drawn to them, afraid of them, contemptuous towards them, and envious of them and their confidence, all at the same time." Riley and Amelia are subjects of intrigue to the Ashbury students, who observe the two from afar without getting close enough to get to know them. When Emily discovers that the two used to attend public school Brookfield, she informs her "dear reader" that "Brookfield is a den of iniquity, violence,

vandalism, drug abuse, knife wars, and no doubt extensive gun possession. At the very least, it is a public school with students who dress badly” (60).

While Riley observes the unattractive behavior of the Brookfield students, it is rarely thorough enough to distort readers’ view of characters such as Emily, who many readers have already encountered in two other books by Moriarty (she is a fan favorite). For example, Riley observes the detritus from a birthday party at school, left for the janitor to clean: “But I’m thinking of the cleaner’s face. Later tonight when he opens that door. Sees the torn streamers, / cake crumbs, /deflating balloons” (238). He judges the Ashbury students for failing to see the repercussions of their actions. Yet, only twelve pages before Riley’s comment, readers first encounter Emily’s much more upbeat address of the birthday party, focusing on the present action of the party, rather than on what will happen after: “We had balloons, streamers, party poppers, chocolate crackles, and cupcakes. (In other words, it was a ‘children’s party’ – people are holding a lot of ‘children’s parties’ this year, I’ve noticed – hmm, are others, like me, trying to ‘cling to a fading childhood’?)” (224). Riley’s observations might matter more if they didn’t have to compete with Emily’s, which are more engaging (indicated through use of exclamation marks) and descriptive.

For readers who are public school students rather than public school students, the divide between public and private, socioeconomic status, and privilege and wealth is further delineated, and difference is more firmly marked. When Riley and Amelia’s difficult pasts are revealed, and they befriend the students of Ashbury, they are shown as exceptions to the Brookfield rule as they integrate themselves into the ranks of their privileged classmates. Issues of class are perhaps handled better in an earlier book such as *The Year of Secret Assignments*, in which Ashbury teacher Mr. Botherit institutes a letter writing program between the two schools. In that book,

Brookfield students are given more breathing room to show that they aren't the underprivileged criminals the Ashbury students peg them as, and their voices are given fairly equal billing. Yet, in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, privileged characters are given the primary viewpoint. This one-dimensionality can be frustrating for readers. A quick skim of Goodreads suggests that many readers didn't like Riley and Amelia, and found them uninteresting, boring, and flat, which contrasts very markedly with how likeable Ashbury characters are. These issues of class and socioeconomic status are explicitly delivered in the novel.

The ghost story in *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* lies with Toby Mazzerati and Amelia Damanski. Toby is a recent addition to the Ashbury High series, making his first appearance in *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie*. His father is a parent representative at Ashbury High who regularly participates in the narrative through transcripts from meetings about Riley and Amelia's scholarships. Toby's parents are divorced; his mother has moved to Brisbane while he lives with his father in Castle Hill. After performing abysmally in his high school English classes, he is given a history project by his teacher Mr. Garcia to write about a package of letters from an Irish convict named Tom Kincaid who was transported to Australia in 1804. The letters are addressed to Maggie, the woman Tom had to leave behind in Ireland after his arrest. Toby becomes invested in the letters, especially because Kincaid lived in the Castle Hill area. Toby inhabits the space of Turcotte's Australian Gothic by focusing on the transportation and living conditions of the English convicts forced to live in Australia. He becomes obsessed with the letters, and writes sections of his narrative *as* Tom Kincaid. Tom's story, Toby insists, *is* a gothic tale: "It's blood, gore, betrayal, torture, murder – plenty of murder. And it's kind of a love story too" (20). Turcotte asserts that the Australian Gothic focuses on the Australian landscape, and indeed, Toby highlights this when he inhabits Kincaid's voice: "They've hardly scratched the

corner of the land where we're headed, and who can tell what might be hidden there? It's a great unfolding mystery, it's the future! There could be monstrous creatures as big as the hills! Blue grass, purple trees, and little people! Nobody knows!" (48). The transport itself is gruesome, with rebels executed for mutiny, and the convicts locked below deck in cramped quarters. Toby also learns that the barracks Kincaid lived in when he arrived in Australia were converted into "The Black Hole," the first lunatic asylum in the country. Toby inhabits this historical character, going so far as to tell a committee,

I wrote the story out for my exam and while I was writing, it was like someone else gradually took over. Like Tom was there writing it for me, and I just let him, or maybe I *became* him some of the time, and I realize that doesn't make sense so you can get that expression off your face, Dad, but I've gotta say, *something* was going on, cos I never wrote so much in an exam in all my life. (384).

Amelia's experience crosses over Toby's. Amelia is given a voice in the novel through a few blog entries composed in blank verse, although her poems are disconnected and fleeting. Amelia is perhaps the most ghostly character of all. She is presented through Riley, Lydia, Emily, and Toby, but rarely through her own perspective. The Australian title of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High – Dreaming of Amelia* – makes this connection more apparent.

Slowly, Amelia reveals pieces of her past. Her fight with her mother. Running away from home. Living in a hostel. Readers are given a glimpse into the cause of her flight: the stepfather who coached her at swimming, who told her Irish fairy tales, and who took pornographic photos of her when she was an adolescent. Her interest in Irish fairy tales connects her to Toby, who shares Kincaid, Castle Hill Park, and a history of Irish convicts with her. When Amelia begins visiting "a friend" at a home for the mentally ill, describing events, people, and conditions that

are concurrent with the nineteenth century lunatic asylum Kincaid helped to build, Toby starts to believe that she is visiting a ghost. Readers are meant to infer that the friend Amelia visits at the asylum is Maggie, the woman Kincaid wrote to. Amelia's ghost is the real one.

The Ghosts of Ashbury High ends in a tangle of the historical and the contemporary, where Amelia and the fictional Maggie save one another, and where Toby imagines himself as Kincaid. It is the only truly supernatural thread of the story, one that Moriarty does not explain away, but instead leaves with readers. Moriarty is clearly influenced by Gothic texts, and uses them to create the effect of extensive intertextuality in her novel.

Internal Intertextuality: Making Up References in Beauty Queens

Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens* borrows from the structure, ideology, and plot of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, but Bray's invention and humor makes it more than a parody of one canonical novel. Yet knowledge of the source text adds much to the humor of *Beauty Queens* and insight into the characters. *Lord of the Flies* begins with an airplane full of adolescent boys crashing onto an island during their evacuation from Britain during World War II. The survivors separate into two factions – one where the members become hunters under the leadership of a boy named Jack, and another where members work towards survival and civilization, led by a boy named Ralph – that very quickly come in conflict with one another. When they are rescued at the end, several boys have been murdered, evidence of the breakdown on the island.

Beauty Queens shares similarities with the initial premise of the novel, although in Bray's version, it is an airplane full of twenty-first century teenage beauty queen contestants who crash into an island and have to survive until they are rescued and are able to resume their competition. In both books, characters are allegorical, as Golding and Bray set up certain character types in

order to communicate different ideologies. However, in *Beauty Queens*, the characters who might initially seem stereotypical and one-dimensional (for example, they are initially described by their home state) are fleshed out and become much more complicated as the novel progresses. As well, the rescues at the end of both novels vary in success. In *Lord of the Flies*, when help comes to the boys, they have already seen and participated in many horrors, and several of the boys have been murdered. Rescue for the beauty queens is much more successful, which comes in part from their ability not only to rescue themselves, but also to overthrow the fictional Corporation (who orchestrated their crash) in the process. They meet the challenges that they face, rather than falling apart under pressure.

Yet the connection to the canonical novel is undeniable, made transparent by a conversation that occurs near the middle of the novel,

“I’ve been thinking about that book about the boys who crash on the island,” Mary Lou said to Adina one afternoon as they rested on their elbows taking bites from the same papaya.

“*Lord of the Flies*. What about it?”

“You know how you said it wasn’t a true measure of humanity because there were no girls and you wondered how it would be different if there had been girls?”

“Yeah?”

Mary Lou wiped fruit juice from her mouth with the back of her hand.

“Maybe girls *need* an island to find themselves. Maybe they need a place where no one’s watching them so they can be who they really are.” (176-7)

YA novels are not always so transparent with intertextuality, but Bray finds it particularly important to underscore the importance of *Lord of the Flies* to her novel, while also highlighting

the differences between both texts. In addition to *Lord of the Flies*, other models for *Beauty Queens* might include *Mizora* (1809) by Mary E. Bradley Lane and *Herland* (1915) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, both of which explore female utopias; however, in her acknowledgments, Bray instead makes visible her intertext by referencing William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2008), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), and the James Bond movies (395-6).

Beauty Queens also attempts to answer questions English teachers have been asking their students for decades: what if the boys on the island in *Lord of the Flies* were replaced with girls? Is *Lord of the Flies* really an accurate and true reflection of humanity? These questions ask us to consider gender essentialism, and whether there is something distinctly different about how adolescent boys and girls would behave in a situation like this. Bray assumes that girls would act very differently and that, for them, the isolation and invisibility of the island is beneficial. Instead of reverting to the savagery of *Lord of the Flies*, the teenage beauty queen contestants create a new civilization on the beach they crash on, complete with their own inventions and mechanics. The worst of human nature is not on display in *Beauty Queens*.

Notably, the novel includes a series of fictional footnotes (forty or so scattered through the book) that provide readers with references to information they already have; yet, Bray imagines a new context for that information (and that context is specific to the story world of *Beauty Queens*). While a reader may not know what "Babez Dolls" are when a reference to them appears in the middle of a passage, a footnote describes them as "the most popular toy for girls age 4-10. Known for their oversize heads and fabulous accessories, including the Babez Peacock-Feather Sports Bra and the Babez Rockin' Doc Cubic Zirconia Stethoscope/Microphone

and Peel-Away Lab Coat. Total sales annually: one billion” (21). Bray therefore takes a very real and very popular toy for young girls (complete with their well-known oversized heads and elaborate accessories) – the Bratz Dolls – and describes them in a new context, under a new name. Many readers will already have the prior knowledge that allows them to compare Babez Dolls and Bratz Dolls, and if they don’t, the answer lies in the footnotes. By defamiliarizing pop culture by renaming, recontextualizing, and fictionalizing its components, Bray acknowledges the information readers already have about their world, and asks them to consider it from a new perspective. Bray provides just enough distance from an item such as this to make it seem, for a moment, like an invention.

Bray’s footnotes in particular are integral to understanding her work with intertextuality and intermediality. They provide descriptions of *fictional* people, products, and events. However, readers familiar with pop culture can connect these fictional footnotes with their not-so-fictional counterparts. Bray focuses her intertextuality on general *types* – of TV shows, movies, and products – recognizable to readers, but fictionalizes specifically within those types. Bray’s humor is not lost if a reader fails to understand the real life reference. She provides clear instructions for reading references. There are several reasons Bray may choose to make up references from pop culture rather than choosing to insert *real* instances of pop culture into the novel. Bray may be resistant to valorizing pop culture and consumerism by giving them a space in her novel. Books are much less visual than movies and TV shows when providing space for advertising. While it is not out of the ordinary to watch a TV show where characters wear brand name clothing, and drink and eat branded products, books conceal these markers unless authors choose to make them transparent. Bray may be hesitant to embrace or endorse cultural capital in the same way that TV makes so readily accessible to viewers. Bray ensures that readers can’t

take cultural recommendations from her novel and support the same industry that she is critical of. Fictional references also serve to build Bray's unique story world, one in which a plane full of teenage beauty queens can crash onto a semi-deserted island controlled by a foreign dictator. The characters are a product of their environment, one that is celebrity-obsessed and run by the fictional Corporation, which maneuvers politics, culture, and consumerism. Fictional references specific to this story world are necessary for readers to understand the context they are reading into.

Another reason she may fictionalize these references is to ask readers to make connections to and reflect on their understandings of pop culture. References to "DiscomfortWear" and "Design This!" might not initially activate readers' prior knowledge, but as Bray elaborates on these concepts through footnotes and scaffolds the information in the text, readers can find parallels between "DiscomfortWear" and Spanx, the tight, slimming shape wear, while "Design This!" bears resemblance to the most popular home renovation shows on HGTV. Bray asks readers to make connections between her extreme examples of pop culture and real pop culture, and asks readers how different they really are. By working within a *type*, Bray is free to fictionalize while also activating readers' prior knowledge about pop culture. Footnotes are integral to understanding the relationships between these more general types and the more specific references Bray creates. Two footnotes in particular are exceptional examples of internal intertextuality and are notable for the way they emphasize trends in pop culture at the time Bray was writing her novel. I am including the reference and footnote in full in order to show how Bray enhances the influence of pop culture in *Beauty Queens*.

J.T. Woodland, known as "the cute one" in The Corporation's seventh-grade boy band, Boyz Will B Boyz. Due to the success of their triple-platinum hit, "Let Me Shave Your

Legs Tonight, Girl,” Boyz Will B Boyz ruled the charts for a solid eleven months before hitting puberty and losing ground to Hot Vampire Boyz. Five years later, Boyz Will B Boyz is nothing more than a trivia question. (7)

Bray clearly parodies pop music and boy bands with a reference to the fictional Boyz Will B Boyz, fronted by J. T. Woodland (who we might read as Justin Timberlake). Contemporary parallels to a band like Boyz Will B Boyz could be One Direction, The Jonas Brothers, The Backstreet Boys, or N’SYNC. The boy band is a type; we can certainly find many specific examples that fit into this larger category. The success of a boy band relies on the carefully curated image that all members of a band ascribe to, although each individual member takes on a certain personality trait that individualizes him within the band. Fictional songs like “Let Me Shave Your Legs Tonight, Girl” and “Safe Tween Crush” seem outrageous, and include lyrics such as, “*Wanna rock you, girl, with a butterfly tunic. / No, I’m not gay, I’m just your emo eunuch. / Gonna smile real shy, won’t cop a feel, / ‘cause I’m your virgin crush, your supersafe deal. / Let those other guys keep sexing. / You and me, we be texting / ‘bout unicorns and rainbows and our perfect love*” (73; italics in original). Bray focuses on the sensitivity and simplicity lyrics like these communicate, which is reflected in songs by real contemporary boy bands like One Direction (whose hit song is titled “What Makes You Beautiful”). Bray also alludes to the ephemerality of boy bands by giving Boyz Will B Boyz an eleven-month expiration date. Boy bands are continuously remade for a new generation of pre-teens. Bray’s use of a reference like this targets both young adult and adult readers because it provides a context shared by adolescents and adults who have been adolescents.

The reference to J. T. Woodland develops throughout the novel, and is a prime example of how Bray’s internal intertextuality is a structural effect that propels the development of the

novel. Readers first meet contestant Petra West (Miss Rhode Island) as she searches frantically for her overnight bag in the wreckage of the overnight plane. Petra is transgender, and reliant on the hormones she has packed for the competition. What is unique about Petra, I think, is how far along she is in her transition when compared to other characters her age in YA literature.

Eventually, Petra is revealed to be J. T. Woodland, a discovery made when the girls are singing old Boyz Will B Boyz songs and Petra's rendition reminds everyone of the sound of the real band. Bray subverts what we typically associate with the future of boy bands, showing Petra's experience to be transformative rather than stagnant. She pursues a relationship with the star of a reality show, *Captains Bodacious IV: Badder and More Bodaciouser*, who is also a fan of the band she used to front.

In the following footnote, Bray continues to explicate references to pop culture, this time focusing more specifically on television.

Vampire Prom, The Corporation's Monday night supernatural drama about a pack of high school vampires and their dating dilemmas. Based on the novels, which were based on the graphic novels based on the comics, which in turn were based on the Swedish art-house movie. "Some vampires are born to kill. Some, to dance." (Catch the Vampire Prom dance tour coming to an arena near you!). (187)

Bray might include a reference to *Vampire Prom* for two reasons: 1) the reference reminds readers of the contemporary context they are reading in, which is rife with representations of vampires in literature and pop culture and 2) it creates a model for how to continue reading the references to TV shows in the rest of the novel. Bray's reference to the fictional *Vampire Prom* does careful work referencing many different texts in contemporary culture. For example, by using the term "Vampire," Bray draws attention to the popularity of vampires and vampire

literature in the twenty-first century. Stephenie Meyer burst onto the YA literature scene with her vampire quartet *The Twilight Saga*, the success of which was replicated with the publication of the *Vampire Academy* series and the adaptation of the popular *Vampire Diaries* books into a TV show for the CW Television Network, a joint venture between CBS and Warner Bros. that focuses on programming for young people. In the world of adult literature, a focus on vampires was just as popular in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with focus specifically placed on both Charlaine Harris's *True Blood* and Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* series. Bray connects readers to a very specific time period beginning shortly before the publication of *Beauty Queens* in order to say something about the ubiquity of vampires in contemporary literature. By listing the different formats these stories come in – novels, graphic novels, the Swedish art-house movie – Bray calls out a number of references for the reader to connect to, while joking about the genre. For example, *Twilight* was adapted into a comics series by Colleen Doran and Anthony Shasteen. The nod to the “Swedish art-house movie” could be *Let the Right One In*, a critically acclaimed Swedish vampire movie that was later adapted for American audiences under the title *Let Me In*. This is the type she is working with.

When Bray is critical of a *type* of text – the contemporary vampire novel – readers can recognize that type and react accordingly to the specific, fictional reference. References to TV shows in *Beauty Queens* include *Girls Gone Rumspringa* (“that show about Amish girls who share a house with strippers”), *The Shills* (a clear parody of *The Hills*), *Patriot Daughters* (“chronicling the lives of three teen girls during the Revolutionary War as they fight the British, farm the land, and take off their clothes to secure America’s freedom”), and *Captains Bodacious IV: Badder and More Bodaciouser*. Reality TV is an important text for Bray to critique. She uses internal intertextuality to reference a *type* of text, and then invents wildly within that category.

The category is recognizable, but the specific reference is not. This provides readers with a critical distance from their own context.

Writers of YA novels must be aware of how much contemporary culture shapes the development of teenagers. By using *types* as intertext, they remind readers about the information they already have, but then examine it through a fictional lens. M. T. Anderson worked in a similar way through his 1999 novel *Feed*, which takes place in a dystopian future and focuses on a small group of teenagers. Much of the advertising, products, and technology highlighted in *Feed* are simply extrapolations of what young adult readers would find in their real life environments. There are other texts at work in *Beauty Queens*, but they are *types* of texts, rather than specific texts. This internal intertextuality is specific to the book itself, although readers can work with the text to interpret references. Not all YA novels deal in types. Some provide an extremely specific set of intertextual references, and those could arguably be more ephemeral or embody Hunt's "evanescence" in a way that types don't. While boy bands are a recognizable type, the specific bands that make up that category certainly become obsolete and do not generate meaning to all readers. By using types to explore intertextual references, Bray seems to insist on providing a more timeless reading experience that is not tied to the context in which it was published. Bray's use of intertextual material and footnotes is deliberate and purposeful, providing a structural mechanism for *Beauty Queens*.

Finally, *Beauty Queens* engages with a trope that is typically associated with movies that focus on teenagers, a "where are they now?" feature that speculates about what will happen to their teenage characters in the future. This trope might lead readers to think about movies such as the 1999 comedy *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, a mockumentary that takes the teen beauty pageant as its subject matter. The last few minutes of screen time (and ending credits) are dedicated to

imagining where the beauty contestants have ended up since the pageant passed.

The last few pages of *Beauty Queens* are celebratory, and physically imagine how the end credits of a movie might be represented in the pages of a book (included as the epilogue). *Beauty Queens* doesn't exactly hold the pageant at the end of the novel as its set piece – it concludes quickly in the last fifty pages – but it is arguably the event that the book leads up to, and the one that organizes the characters' life on the island. The beauty pageant contestants practice their routines and interviews as a way to stay focused, fully believing that the pageant will eventually take place. The last few pages of *Beauty Queens* represent the closing titles or end credits of a pageant, figuring readers as the “viewers” of the pageant, watching it come to a close.

The epilogue shows the assembled contestants taking to the stage for one last appearance, while a short, block-formatted paragraph informs readers about where the characters have gone since the end of the pageant. For example, the caption written for Petra West (Miss Rhode Island) reads, “Transwoman host of the popular nighttime chat show *Go West*. Married to Sinjin St. Sinjin, music producer and bon vivant. They both look great in heels” (385). The conclusion provides readers with the certainty that not only does everything work out for the characters of *Beauty Queens* in this novel, but that they also work out for more than a decade into the future.

One characteristic that is often identified as integral to the YA novel is the hopeful ending, one that gestures toward the future and leaves readers feeling optimistic. While not all YA novels offer hope by the end of the novel, as a category, YA is biased towards the hopeful, and often happy, ending. The novel ends with the following lines: “As one, they leap, laughing, and that is where we leave them – mouths open, arms spread wide, fingers splayed to take in the whole world, bodies flying high in defiance of gravity, as if they will never fall” (390).

Louise Saldanha notes that authors who create an image of diverse characters conforming

within the happy ending fit into an existing narrative without perhaps questioning the narrative or fighting against it. Saldanha asks writers to pause or “refrain” in order to see how, using the example above, they continue to feed into a narrative about how the world works – a world of hope and happy endings – a world that does not exist for everyone. In her article “Bedtime Stories: Canadian Multiculturalism and Children’s Literature,” Saldanha discusses the ways in which the “happy ending” of multicultural children’s books dissolve difference rather than celebrate it. In *Beauty Queens*, the characters who are not white or heteronormative, whose differences are marked throughout the novel, are dissolved by the time the reader reaches the end. Petra is married to Sinjin, Jennifer’s wife is named as a co-owner of Galaxy Comics, and Shanti is “engaged to an awesome high school science teacher found by her parents” (389). While this kind of “where are they now” trope does not exactly lend itself to more than a gesture toward future job and relationship status, it does have the effect of glossing over difference.

Perpetuating these types of narratives can cause some adolescent readers to become “happiness bound” (Squire 41), as evidenced by James’s Squire’s study “The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories.” Squire showed that readers enjoy books that end happily by measuring their responses to short stories that sometimes complicated happiness and hopefulness. He found that readers would interpret the most optimistic option when reading a short story, even if it didn’t actually exist in the pages of the story. He writes, “They are ‘happiness bound’ both in their demand for fairy tale solutions and in their frequent unwillingness to face the realities of unpleasant interpretation. Consequently, their sentimental overemphasis on the good frequently leads them to distort and misinterpret both characters and their actions” (41-2). He also found that “‘happiness binding’ can occur regardless of the intelligence of the reader” (43) and that readers prefer “the pleasant rather than the plausible”

(44). At the end of the novel, Bray resolves conflicts and difference into the format of the beauty pageant, reinforcing the hopeful ending through the use of a trope like “where are they now?”

Conclusion

Intertextual references have become more varied, interactive, and multimodal in contemporary YA novels. Intertextuality seems inescapable in contemporary YA literature, although not all YA novels rely on it to form an organizational structure as complex as in *Beauty Queens* and *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*. For example, Bray employs fictional references that make connections to real world pop culture while Moriarty engages in extensive use of Gothic literature, its tropes, and its history. Both are challenging intertexts, but are made familiar through intricate scaffolding by both authors. Moriarty consistently educates readers about Gothic literature while also leading them through a truly Gothic tale. Bray utilizes footnotes to explain unfamiliar references to readers, using this extratextual space to prove to readers that they already have the information they need to understand these unique intertexts. Both novels provide evidence of extensive and deliberate intertextuality at work.

The future of intertextuality and intermediality in YA has the potential to be even more interactive and prolific than it is presently. Hypertextuality might influence readers to begin reading *through* the page rather than reading *down* the page. If we imagine the Wikipedia page, for instance, which provides text that is riddled with hyperlinks, each of which leads a reader physically to another Wikipedia page focused on a relational (or discursive) topic, the reading experience often lends itself to distraction. Readers physically leave the page, abandoning the original content for the content provided at the end of another hyperlink. Rather than scrolling to the bottom of one article and reading it in its entirety, readers may instead read *through* to the

next article linked with a hyperlink, and from there move through to the next, and to the next.

The *Choose Your Own Adventures* series of novels might be printed precursors to this process, and Ryan North's graphic novels *To Be Or Not To Be: That is the Adventure* (2013) and *Romeo and/or Juliet: A Chooseable-Path Adventure* (2016) makes explicit the reader's ability to choose explicit paths through texts, modeled on *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Readers may encounter instead annotation on top of annotation, building a narrative by reading *around* and *through* the main topic rather than reading about it in its entirety.

The way readers navigate digital technologies and the Internet may continue to affect the print-based YA novel. Readers cannot naturally "click" on a hyperlink in a physical printed book, and so perhaps YA authors will instead experiment with the idea of reading *through* in other ways. We can encounter a model of this process in a novel like John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) during a confrontation between the protagonists and character Peter Van Houten. Van Houten is a reclusive American author who lives in Amsterdam, and the protagonists of *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters, have both become obsessed with his book, *An Imperial Affliction*. When they are given the opportunity to fly to Amsterdam to meet him, they encounter not a professional and kind man, but instead a man who talks in tangents, his discourse mirroring or mimicking the way a reader might follow hyperlinks through a series of related Wikipedia articles. Van Houten's tangents lead into one another, jumping into the next topic as if the reader instantly "clicked" on a related hyperlink. One such passage runs from page 180 to 193 and flawlessly transitions between providing a detailed definition of apparitions (180), a description of Churchill and England (185), Zeno's tortoise paradox (187), Swedish hip-hop (187-8), Rudolf Otto's work in comparative religion (189), back to Zeno's paradox (189), on to Cantor's proof that some infinities are bigger than

other infinities (189-190), and a cursory literary analysis of *The Great Gatsby*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (191-193). The tangents are clearly related to one another and flawlessly flow, mimicking the process of clicking forward and backward through hyperlinks. Of course, characters Hazel and Gus are clearly disoriented by this process, and readers might be, too. But it is perhaps the most stunning example of hypertextuality in a printed YA novel, functioning without the reader leaving the printed page.

Some contemporary YA novels currently use footnotes to pick up on related tangents that disrupt the flow of the text, yet these too can be affected by advancements in digital technologies. If, for instance, the footnotes typically employed by some YA novels were subsumed into the text rather than being physically removed to the bottom of the page, we might imagine a similar outcome as that in Green's text. This occurs often in the adaptation of YA novels to audiobooks. Many YA audiobooks adapted from printed novels that employ footnotes do not necessary indicate to the reader that they are listening to a transition between text and footnote; instead, the narrator of the audiobook makes this transition by seemingly subsuming the footnote into the text. In fact, when I first encountered E. Lockhart's *Ruby Oliver* series of novels (2005-2010), I did so through the audiobook format. I did not know that the novel used an intricate system of footnotes until I was able to pick up a physical copy of the book years later, and learned that footnotes are present on nearly every page of Lockhart's *The Boyfriend List* (2005), the first novel in the series. Audiobooks change the way that footnotes are consumed; tangents are built into the reading – or listening – experience. Compare this to the fact that many e-books collate footnotes at the back of an e-book, where they go unread as endnotes. In the continuous scroll of the e-book format, there simply isn't room allocated at the bottom of the

page for individual footnotes. The e-book is also changing the way that related information is consumed. Imagining this possibility, will writers avoid using footnotes to expand upon information? Will they subsume footnotes into the body of the text? Do possibilities for audiobooks and e-books affect the way writers choose to engage in this format?

While intertextuality and intermediality are often deliberate literary techniques employed by an author to achieve a certain effect, a specific meaning and purpose is not always implied by the author. References are a product of the writer's cultural context just as they are a part of the context that the reader inhabits and responds to, and can be unconsciously applied in order for a writer to make sense of his/her text. Yet, intertextuality opens up multiple possibilities for a text, widening and expanding its capabilities. It can also operate subtly, providing a shift in atmosphere or mood that affects the reader. It can also be ignored, skipped over as a reader engages in the momentum of reading. The possibilities for the future use and replication of these concepts is certainly exciting, and Bray and Moriarty pose two examples of novels that acknowledge the technological influence on intertextuality and intermediality.

Chapter Three

Multimodal Forms: Text, Image, and Visual Literacy in Daniel Handler's *Why We Broke*

Up and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

In 2008, the graphic novel *Skim* was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award, one of the most prestigious prizes in Canada. Cousins Mariko and Jillian Tamaki collaborated on the YA graphic novel, which follows Japanese-Canadian teenager Kimberly Keiko Cameron (Skim) after a suicide shocks her Catholic high school. Mariko contributed the text, while Jillian composed the illustrations. Both Mariko and Jillian are well known in their fields for the work they have produced individually, although *Skim* was their first collaborative work. For example, Mariko's YA novels include *Cover Me* (2000), *(You) Set Me On Fire* (2012), and *Saving Montgomery Sole* (2016). Jillian's illustrative work is in publications such as *Gilded Lilies* (2006) and *SuperMutant Magic Academy* (2015), the latter of which was an online comic later published in book form.

In interviews, both artists emphasized their collaborative process on *Skim*, one that saw little separation between text and image. *Skim* was published by Canadian publishing house Groundwood Books, an imprint of the House of Anansi Press, well known for outstanding publications in children's and adolescent literature. Although the novel was recommended for adolescents over the age of fourteen, the physical shape of *Skim* resembles a children's picture book. Oversized, slim, and larger than a typical graphic novel, *Skim*'s physicality is carefully designed. While graphic novels do not have a standard size, they tend to take on the dimensions of comic books, 6 5/8 inches wide and 10 1/4 inches high. *Skim* is much larger. At times, sprawling, two-page illustrations fill the pages, and at others, text takes precedence. For these and other innovations, *Skim* was praised and well received by critics. However, its nomination

for a Governor General's Literary Award soon came under close scrutiny and became the subject of a literary controversy. At the time of nomination, the Governor General's Awards did not include a nomination category that recognized graphic novels. Instead, jurors had to decide whether *Skim* should be entered into either the category for "Children's Text" or the category for "Children's Illustration." Rather than recognizing the graphic novel as displaying an integral relationship between text and image, jurors nominated Mariko Tamaki for the text of the book, while neglecting to also recognize Jillian Tamaki for her illustrative work. Like many graphic novels, the text and image in *Skim* are typically viewed as inseparable, not easily compartmentalized into distinct parts. Isolating the text of *Skim*, many critics argued, meant devaluing the book as a whole. Indeed, Mariko Tamaki noted, "I suppose it can be argued that one could read the text and look at the illustrations of a children's book separately, but that's impossible with a graphic novel" (qtd. in Nelles). Both Jillian and Mariko expressed their regret that a nomination for the Governor General's Award necessitated the separation of the text from the illustration in *Skim*. Jillian commented, "We have always been co-creators. We were not put together (by a publisher). We pitched the book together. It's been Jillian and Mariko the entire time" (qtd. in Tousley).

Criticism of the Governor General's Awards was extensive after news of *Skim*'s treatment by jurors went widespread. Most notably, Canadian graphic novelists Chester Brown and Seth collaborated on an open letter to the Governor General's Literary Awards, outlining their disappointment with the jury's decision to nominate the text of *Skim*, while neglecting the complementary illustrations that were integral to comprehension of the graphic novel. Graphic novels, they insisted, could not be separated into their parts. Both Seth and Brown are respected and important members of the Canadian literary scene. Brown is perhaps best known for his

graphic novel *Louis Riel* (2003), which documents the life of the historical figure using text and image. The novel is frequently recommended as a young adult title, and is often used in high school Social Studies classes as a companion text in studying Canadian history. Seth focuses on creating mock-autobiographical comics, collated in compilations such as *It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken: A Picture Novella* (1996). He also illustrated the Lemony Snicket series, *All The Wrong Questions* (2012-2015).

Brown and Seth's letter was published online by *Drawn & Quarterly*, a Canadian publisher of comics, graphic novels, and illustrated works. In an interview with Nancy Tousley in Canadian newspaper *The Calgary Herald*, Seth stated, "When I first heard about the nomination, it seemed, clearly, like a wrong-headed understanding of how comics work." Both artists insisted that text cannot possibly be recognized without an acknowledgment of illustration; they suggested Mariko and Jillian be recognized as co-authors creating the text through two complementary modes. In their open letter, Seth and Brown explained, "The text of a graphic novel cannot be separated from its illustrations because the words and the pictures are the text. Try to imagine evaluating *Skim* if you couldn't see the drawings. Jillian's contribution to the book goes beyond mere illustration: she was as responsible for telling the story as Mariko was." Indeed, Tousley acknowledges in *The Calgary Herald*, "Jillian's images fill out the characters and show their changing feelings and moods, establish the sense of place, describe the surroundings and how the characters relate to them, and add layers of information critical to the story. Kimberly Keiko Cameron, whose nickname is Skim, would not come to life without them." Seth and Brown explained in their letter that, often, graphic novels and the rules for reading them are misunderstood. They clarified,

We're guessing that the jury who read *Skim* saw it as an illustrated novel. It's not; it's a graphic novel. In illustrated novels, the words carry the burden of telling the story, and the illustrations serve as a form of visual reinforcement. But in graphic novels, the words and pictures BOTH tell the story and there are often sequences (sometimes whole graphic novels) where the images alone convey the narrative. (Seth and Brown)

Several Canadian and American graphic novelists added their names to the open letter, including such venerated artists as Art Spiegelman, Lynda Barry, Dan Clowes, Julie Doucet, and Bryan Lee O'Malley, and garnered widespread support. Still, no changes were made to the literary categories recognized by the Governor General's Literary Awards, and John Ibbitson's *The Landing* (2008) won the award for which Mariko Tamaki was nominated for.

In their letter, Seth and Brown clearly identify the equal relationship between text and image, categorizing *Skim* as a graphic novel. Comic book theorist Scott McCloud explains that graphic novels, like many picture books, employ roughly equal amounts of image and text, meaning that the two are proportionately balanced throughout the text. Will Eisner first popularized the pre-existing term "graphic novel" with his publication *A Contract with God, and Other Tenement Stories* (1978), which created a book-length publication rather than the slimmer comic issue. The Eisner Awards, which recognize comics and graphic novels, is named after him. Neither text nor image is more important than the other in the graphic novel; they are considered equally and synergistically. Eisner has defined graphic novels as a form that "consists of text, either narrative or dialogue (in balloons), integrated with sequentially deployed art" (*Comics and Sequential Art* 140). He has called the form the fastest-growing literary medium in America, especially as the average age of readers of comics has risen throughout the later twentieth century and since (*Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* xvi). Eisner also makes

note of the generally equal relationship between text and image in graphic novels, noting, “The reading process in comics is an extension of text. In text alone the process of reading involves word-to-image conversion. Comics accelerates that by providing the image. When properly executed, it goes beyond conversion and speed and becomes a seamless whole” (*Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* xvii). An equal interaction between text and image is the hallmark of graphic novels.

Yet, this relationship does not represent the way text and image interact in all YA novels. As images proliferate in new books for young adults, discussions about graphics and images in contemporary literature have become the focus of many literary conversations in the twenty-first century. There has been a marked increase in the inclusion of graphics and images in YA novels in the last decade, which is related to advancements in printing technology and a focus on visual literacy in the twenty-first century. Many discussions about this increase focus on the interaction between text and image, and the way the formats work together to communicate a narrative. In this chapter, I examine *multimodal YA novels*. Multimodal YA novels use graphic devices – for example, photographs, illustrations, and interesting typography – in conjunction with written text. However, these texts cannot necessarily be defined as “graphic novels.” Graphic novels typically include an equal amount of both text and images, which complement one another and are necessary to be read *together* to fully comprehend the story. *Skim* emphasizes this relationship. However, in multimodal YA novels, there is a very high ratio of text to image, meaning that images may be present on only a handful of pages in the novel, while the text communicates the greater part of the story. These images can be present in varying degrees. For example, full-page illustrations, half and quarter page illustrations, doodles, and comic strips are often displayed in several contemporary YA novels. Although a focus on prose largely

outweighs the focus on illustration, both are important to understanding the story, and they should not be separated (as the Governor General Awards attempted to do with *Skim*).

The prevalence of images in contemporary YA novels bears close examination, as it reveals much about readers, technology, and literacy in the twenty-first century. Daniel Handler's *Why We Broke Up* (2011), illustrated by Maira Kalman, and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005), illustrated by Trudy White, both experiment with the relationship between text and image in a book-length format. This chapter provides an inquiry into the use of image in multimodal YA novels by first outlining the new focus on visual literacy, reviewing the text to image ratios in recent YA novels, and performing a close examination of *Why We Broke Up* and *The Book Thief*, two multimodal YA novels. This chapter investigates the importance of visual literacy when reading in the twenty-first century, and examines the influence of digital technologies on the increased use of images and graphics in YA novels.

Defining Terms: Visual Literacy and Multimodal Forms

Much research has addressed the changing forms of print literature and literacy, and informs my discussion about the influx of images in recent YA novels. Specifically, a theoretical overview introduced by The New London Group in the 1990s addressed changing literacy practices influenced by digital media by coining the term “multiliteracies.” The New London Group (1996) was composed of ten academics advocating for teachers to change their own practices in order to support a new generation of students coming from a more multimodal context.

Multimodality combines textual, visual, aural, and spatial forms. There are many scholars who remind us multimodality isn't new. For example, Carey Jewitt attributes traditional multimodality to space, color, font, style, and images included in printed text. However, it is

evolving to encompass digital literacy – which defines how readers encounter and interpret online and onscreen content – and visual literacy – the way readers interpret visual material.

The New London Group insists that an emphasis on multiliteracies, which calls for reading diverse media such as film, image, animation, sound, and online content, is important in the digital age. A multiliteracies approach is visible in multimodal YA novels that incorporate images in text-heavy books, experiment with typography, and insert texts, emails, and webpage screenshots in the pages of printed books. Eliza Dresang notes in *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (1999) that the addition of graphics in new forms and formats of literature for young people represents a much higher level of reader interactivity because of the influence of digital technologies. She suggests that the combination of words and images reaches new levels of synergy, and provides an important relationship for readers to recognize and interact with (19). Literacies, rather than being isolated, appear to be synchronous and collaborative. As such, it would appear that printed books are adapting to changes in digital technologies, and making room for images, for example, within print-based forms.

Diane Barone and Todd E. Wright attribute new literacies to the new activities engaged in by young people that extend traditional literacy experiences (292). YA novels are usefully scaffolding new literacies by becoming multimodal and including visual content in printed texts, which allows readers to work among literacies, particularly visual literacy. In part, integrating graphics into YA novels recognizes the needs of a young audience, which is more participatory, visual, and searching for connections. In the 1990s, YA novels with multiple narrators proliferated to meet a need for readers looking for more various and multiple perspectives than they were traditionally offered. The addition of graphics into YA novels may fill a similar gap for contemporary readers, providing more than one authorial perspective. This may, in fact, say

something very important about contemporary readers and the evolution of literacy practices. Access to information through new media highlights the visual, meaning that readers encounter images perhaps more often than they read text. Gretchen Schwartz insists that new media offer new opportunities for creativity and connection, but that “they also demand that more attention is paid to images, print, and sounds working together” (71). Images and text work together in printed multimodal YA novels, asking readers to decode them both separately and in relation to one another. Readers perhaps have more visual awareness that directly affects the way a book is put together.

Visual literacy is associated with a number of terms under an umbrella of multiliteracies. Kathy Ann Mills, for instance, notes other literacies such as medial, digital, visual, aural, spatial, and gestural in her article on New Literacies. She attributes these to changing practices of communication in a digital age, which reorganizes information in a variety of ways, facilitated by development of the Internet and other digital technologies. She states, “literacies are digital, pluralized, hybridized, intertextual, immediate, spontaneous, abbreviated, informal, collaborative, productive, interactive, hyperlinked, dialogic (between author and reader), and linguistically diverse” (255). Take, for example, the online program Audiobook Sync, which pairs a required reading audiobook (typically a canonical novel) with a contemporary YA audiobook. Teachers, librarians, and young people are encouraged to download the two audiobooks for free every week between May and August each year. Audiobooks are multimodal, presenting the text aurally. Perhaps recognizing readers’ ability to multitask, and to engage with stories in different ways, programs like Audiobook Sync suggest multimodality is key to consuming literature in the twenty-first century.

Researchers also point to new generations of readers who engage in daily use of computers (and other smart technologies) as influencing the increased focus on images in the twenty-first century. They note that the Internet both fosters visual literacy and makes connections between text and image. Social media platforms such as SnapChat, Facebook, and Instagram model methods of pairing images with text, whether the text takes the form of a short caption, a few sentences, or several paragraphs. Internet users are therefore familiar with viewing text and image in tandem (Beatty; Milbourn; Rockenbach and Fabien). Gunther Kress insists the visual is more capable of communicating “great amounts of information” in the twenty-first century (55). Smart technologies often pair text and image in order to communicate information, especially through screen-based reading. Many times, the relationships between text and image are indivisible on the Internet, and meaning is often impeded when one is removed. Multimodal texts would seem to connect to an era of multitasking, where smart phones and other digital devices allow readers to navigate fluently between apps and programs, as they follow hyperlinks, communicate with friends, and post content. For individuals who read this way, traditional reading may pose a struggle, particularly when novels are devoid of image. By combining text and image, multimodal novels foster understanding through visual literacy while still retaining a high text to image ratio.

The YA novel may be adapting to contemporary contexts, which tend to be more image-based. Readers often require an interruption from online text, which is abundant and unlimited, and many times that interruption comes in the form of an image. Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles explain,

It is often said that we live in an increasingly visual, image-based culture. The digital age has brought with it a growing expectation of pictorial instruction, signs and symbols.

Images, moving or static, now seem to accompany most forms of information and entertainment. The art of illustration is traditionally defined as augmenting it with visual representation. But in many contexts, the image has begun to replace the word. (7)

Just as innovations in printing technology at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries encouraged developments in children's picture books, innovations in digital typesetting may encourage developments in young adult literature, specifically an increase in use of image. Digital typesetting and printing make the use of images – especially embedded black and white images – cost neutral, meaning their addition is easily done. Jocelyn Hargrave uses the term “disruptive technologies” to describe the ways in which printing technologies have changed over time and adapted to new contexts, and addresses both the innovations that advanced children's picture books and those that are currently advancing YA literature. She notes that these technologies “provide customers with new products or services with attributes different from those of their competitors in the mainstream market who are interested in sustainable technologies,” however, they are successful because they are cheaper, smaller, and more convenient to use (221). The four disruptive technologies Hargrave identifies are paper making in Europe in the late thirteenth century; Gutenberg's printing press and type-casting from metal in the fifteenth century; lithographic offset printing in the twentieth century; and digital printing in the twenty-first century (222-231). She usefully provides an overview of how printing technology has adapted to contemporary contexts, and influences the types of books created.

First, Hargrave notes that papermaking at the end of the thirteenth century made paper readily available, and it was a much cheaper and lighter product than either parchment or vellum, which were typically used by monasteries and universities in the late thirteenth century. The abundance of paper meant that books could be copied in much larger numbers and books also

took less time to manufacture (223). The abundance of paper seemed to anticipate Gutenberg's inventions in the fifteenth century that made it possible to print efficiently and effectively.

Hargrave insists that Gutenberg's printing press "laid the groundwork for an industry that would remain virtually unchanged until the nineteenth century" (226). It was revolutionary because it irrevocably changed book production. Unlimited copies of books could be printed, and the book only needed to be proofread once (which of course brought up another set of concerns – an error in one copy meant an error in all copies), turning printing into "a mass-market enterprise" (226).

Barbara Kiefer adds that effective and inexpensive color was also refined in the 1860s by publisher and artist Edmund Evans. Before, color had to be added by hand to prints, pages, and books using a stencil or brush (except, Kiefer notes, for studio experiments, such as the colored etchings by William Blake). After color had been revolutionized, Evans called upon illustrators Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway to create illustrative work for children (Kiefer 92).

Innovations in color and print technology certainly added to innovations in books for children, and ushered in a golden age of picture books. Illustrations were added to children's books much more readily, and the interaction between text and image became more sophisticated. New books focused less on text and more on image, and Seth Lerer notes that this "provoked a reconception of the children's book as fundamentally an illustrated object" (323). Indeed, the addition of color attracted numerous artists to the picture book format, including Randolph Caldecott, Beatrix Potter, Arthur Rackham, Leslie Brooke, and Ernest Shepard in Britain, and artists Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, and Jessie Wilcox Smith in the United States (Kiefer 92). Many of the most prestigious prizes awarded to children's books are named after these seminal figures. For example, the John Newbery Medal recognizes excellence in American literature for children; the

Caldecott Medal recognizes excellence in American picture books; and the Kate Greenaway Medal recognizes excellence in illustration in British books for children.

In their critical work on picture books, Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles suggest that Caldecott prompted a golden age of picture books, specifically occurring during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. They attribute the quality of picture books at the time to the aforementioned advancements in printing technology, changing attitudes to childhood, and the emergence of new artists who invigorated the literature (18). Additionally, the new print technology that revolutionized color illustrations made picture books more affordable to a growing middle class market for books (Burlingham). Growing literacy rates in the nineteenth century were attributed to two education laws passed in Britain. The Reform Bill of 1832 expanded education to the working classes, while the Forster Act of 1870 made the government responsible for providing elementary education (Taunton). Matthew Taunton cites literacy rates rising from 69.3 per cent in 1851 to 97.2 per cent in 1900 in males and 54.8 per cent to 96.8 per cent in females during that same time. While high-quality and expensive illustrations by Thomas Bewick and William Blake still appeared in some books, they were the exception, rather than the rule (Burlingham). Class was no longer an impediment to purchasing books.

Hargrave states that the mass printing of books using Gutenberg's press produced a certain standardization of language. Book production and distribution became more effective, resulting in the general public having greater accessibility to books. A literate population developed and was influenced by these innovations, allowing many individuals to read a text simultaneously across geographies (226). Next, the twentieth century ushered in lithographic offset printing, which relied on printing using flexible plates. The plates were cheaper than the

printing press “because the printing plates were not as expensive to produce as those for the letterpress; they were also more durable and easier to store” (229). More cost effective and efficient than Gutenberg’s printing press, lithographic offset printing was used up until the creation of digital printing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Digital printing is now essential to book production in the twenty-first century, as it has become more cost effective, efficient, and convenient than lithographic offset publishing. It also allows graphics and images to be seamlessly integrated into the pages of YA novels. As well, each printed text is an original from the source, rather than a copy that comes printed from a plate (as with lithograph printing). Digital printing has opened up possibilities for independent publishers and self-publishers. These types of publishers are able to print books at a low cost, and choose the print run they prefer (231). Hargrave states that digital printing “has enabled short print runs to be economically viable and assisted in freeing the market from past bias against niche publishing” (232). Take, for example, independent publisher Craigmere Creations, based in out of Portland, Oregon. In 2012, Craigmere Creations published *Eliza’s Journal*, a novel that follows a young girl who goes to stay with her aunt and uncle on Orcas Island, Washington for the summer. Eliza becomes the self-styled artist, decorating her journal with illustrations and art. The journal is highly produced and combines text and image, and it is perhaps the ease and low-cost facilitated by digital printing that allows a smaller publisher to create this type of YA novel.

Consider also the way that independent publishing houses allow for collaboration. Rather than being paired with an artist by a larger publishing house, independent writers and illustrators can combine their talents to create a text like *Eliza’s Journal*, and find a publisher willing to print it. Digital technologies enable the development of the multimodal novel, as electronic typesetting makes it easier and cheaper to incorporate graphic elements by new and emerging writers and

illustrators. Also, printing technologies allow these innovations to occur in the printed book itself, rather than in digital spaces.

Multimodality therefore facilitates artistic potential and a collaborative impulse. The ability to participate and collaborate in the creation of texts is intrinsically tied to the ease with which texts are created, printed, and communicated about in the digital age. While there are some examples of writers who prepare both the text and image in a multimodal YA novel, such as Lynne Rae Perkins's *Criss Cross* (2005) and Stephen Emond's *Happyface* (2010), *Winter Town* (2011), and *Bright Lights, Dark Nights* (2015), the creation of most multimodal YA novels is collaborative. Take, for instance, when author Sherman Alexie and illustrator Ellen Forney (2007) collaborated on *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. Forney describes their process of collaboration in an interview that appears in the new edition of the novel. She explains, "Sherman would give me a few chapters of his manuscript and ideas for what I might draw, and I'd do thumbnail sketches using his list as a bouncing-off point. Later, we'd go over what I'd come up with. About a third of the graphics were Sherman's ideas, a third were real collaborations, and a third were my ideas that struck me as I read the text." The partnership clearly contributed to the visual content of the novel. Collaboration can lead to exciting and engaging books that combine the capabilities of artists, facilitated by the ease with which electronic typesetting makes it easier and more cost-effective to incorporate graphic elements.

Digital printing is certainly more immediate than any other printing technology that has come before it, and allows for the source text to be reproduced en masse. Now, however, we are seeing 3D printing as the newest innovation in printing technology. Abbie Brown defines 3D printing as "a broad range of technologies that are directed toward producing three-dimensional objects from computer-based designs" (18). The possibilities for graphics and images to take 3D

form, and accompany YA novels, might be a trend to watch for in the future. This type of trend might be a throwback to children's books such as *A Pretty Little Pocket Book* (1944) published by John Newbery in the eighteenth century that included small toys, a ball and pincushion (Lyon Clark, "Introduction" 1). Printing technology has certainly changed the possibilities for YA novels, and the easy, cost-effective addition of graphics and images may be one such response these texts are making to these new methods of printing, and to the creative impulse of YA.

For these reasons, multimodal YA novels are important texts in the twenty-first century. They ask readers to engage with visual literacy in order to interpret both text and image in the pages of a printed book. While I call these types of texts multimodal YA novels, this is not the only term in use for novels that combine text and image. Take, for example, *hybrid novels*. Rather than displaying an equal interaction between text and image, hybrid novels typically include a high ratio of text to image. Christin Galster defines the "hybrid novel" in an entry for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative*, under the heading "hybrid genres":

Hybrid novels...combine, transform, and subvert the conventions of several narrative sub-genres; break down the boundaries between fiction, poetry, and drama; import non-literary discourses and text-types; and employ narrative strategies that strive to imitate the organising principles of painting, music, and film. Hybrid narratives can be interspersed with short stories or fairy tales, poetry or drama; they confront the reader with scientific treatises, courtroom testimonies, film scripts, or cooking recipes. By transgressing genre boundaries, hybrid genres aim at distancing themselves from the homogeneous, one-voiced, and 'one-discoursed' worldview conventional narratives seem to suggest, a notion which is closely related to Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic imagination. (227)

The hybrid novel is a traditional novel *interspersed* with other formats and genres.

The hybrid novel is not a new invention. In fact, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767) is often discussed for its unique typographic and graphic contributions, although it is overwhelming a prose novel. These include, for example, a black page that represents the death of a character, hand-drawn diagrams, and typographic experimentation. Hybrid novels combine two or more formats or types, although in this chapter I am interested in the integration of image with text. As well, hybrid novels cannot be read without both components; both text and image contribute to comprehension of the narrative. They usefully change our reading rhythm, asking readers to inhabit a space *between* prose novels and graphic novels, navigating text interspersed with image. Today, the publishing industry also acknowledges "hybrid writers," defined as individuals who publish some books with traditional publishers while self-publishing others.

In her PhD dissertation, Australian graphic designer Zoe Sadokierski studied three "hybrid novels" from the category of literary fiction – *The Raw Shark Texts* by Steven Hall (2007), *You Shall Know Our Velocity* by Dave Eggers (2002), and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) – all of which include a high ratio of text to image. The focus of Sadokierski's dissertation is on visual literacy and the relationship between text and image. Sadokierski's purpose is to determine not only how images interact with text in three important novels, but also how experimental typography (the art of designing texts), changes in text color, and other graphic devices affect the works. Her dissertation similarly combines instances of text and image, and her skill with graphic design lends a stylistic layer to her research. Sadokierski's definition of hybrid novels both differs from and expands on Galser's, and focuses particularly on the integration of images into prose novels,

hybrid novels – novels in which graphic devices like photographs, drawings, and experimental typography are integrated into the written text. Within hybrid novels, word and image combine to create a text that is neither purely written, nor purely visual. Although not new, hybrid novels are increasingly appearing in commercial publishing, and increasingly recognised as an insufficiently explained phenomenon by both literary critics and academics. (ix)

Sadokierski notes that hybrid novels must include graphic elements that are “*integral* – there should be no evidence of these devices appearing or disappearing; they are intrinsic to the primary text” (28).

Many scholars use “hybrid” and “multimodal” interchangeably; however, after reviewing research and primary sources, I hold to a distinction between the two terms that arises from the intricacy of the relationship between text and image. I would argue that the graphics and images in the YA novels that are the subject of my close examination – *Why We Broke Up* and *The Book Thief* – are not intrinsic to the text, although *The Book Thief* is more exemplary of this type of text. It is certainly difficult to read *The Book Thief* without images, which use the momentum and intricacy of visuals to explore aspects of character, story, and setting. *Why We Broke Up*, however, sees images disconnected from text, appearing only at the beginning of each chapter. This means that it is, in fact, very easy to read the text without the images. The integral relationship key to hybrid novels is not evident in a text like Handler’s. Here the images are additive, but not essential. Hybridity seems to describe a more informed, deliberate design, where author and illustrator need to make all parts of text and image intricately fit together. Indeed, Karen Macpherson has argued for hybrid novels as providing a type of “reading training” for young readers, bringing them from picture books to text-only novels. MacPherson

notes, “In hybrids, the pictures must be ‘read’ as much as the text, something that many kids love as an extension of their highly visual world. For reluctant readers, the pictures in hybrids give them clues about the story.” It is important to consider both terms in this chapter, as hybrid novels and multimodal novels are often used to describe novels that combine text and image. The following section provides an overview of the multiplicity of relationship between images and graphics in YA novels, some more interconnected – and integral – than others. Yet, multimodal novels seem to allow for more flexibility between text and image, and more ability for readers to make meaning of the connections between both.

Examining Image and Text in Contemporary YA Literature

YA novels demonstrate a wide range of text to image ratios. Some are styled as hand written journals, such as Stephen Emond’s *Happyface* (2010). Although *Happyface* combines text and image, the text is in a font that mimics a teenager’s handwriting, making the novel appear like a book-length journal. On some pages the text spirals, backflips, and inverts, meaning that a reader has to understand it as image, moving the book this way and that in order to fully comprehend its meaning. Additionally, A. S. King’s *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* (2010) spirals and flips handwritten text to represent real notes left by protagonist Vera’s best friend Charlie. The book also contains two full-page flow charts: “Ken Dietz’s Flow Chart of Destructive Behavior” (128) and “Ken Dietz’s Face Your Shit Flow Chart” (274). Both come courtesy of Vera’s father, and are aimed at his daughter and her recent actions. On the other hand, a book like Patrick Ness’s *A Monster Calls* (2011) combines text and image in one edition, alternating chapters with illustrations by Jim Kay. Yet, in another edition of the novel, the images are removed and only the text is available to readers. Different editions of the novel therefore provide two different

reading experiences, especially as the illustrated edition shows readers how to interpret key elements of the novel.

Another way that YA novels include images is through the self-styled teenage artist. Consider the following novels. Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* received the National Book Award in 2007, and presented the first-person point of view of protagonist Arnold Spirit Jr. After an incident at school, Junior decides to leave the Spokane Indian Reservation and attend high school in Reardon, a white, farming community. He illustrates his journey, supplementing his frank and transparent writing with pictures. The illustrations are provided by Ellen Forney, and are included on most pages of the novel. Similarly, Andrew Smith's *Winger* (2013) is written in journal-style entries, and embellished with illustrations ascribed to the teenage protagonist. *Winger* takes place at an Oregon boarding school, where fourteen-year-old Ryan Dean West begins his freshman year. His nickname "Winger" comes from the fact that he plays that position for his school's varsity rugby team. Sam Bosma created the illustrations, which range from full-page cartoons to small doodles and Venn diagrams throughout the novel. Susan Juby's *The Truth Commission* (2015) combines footnotes with sparse illustrations throughout protagonist Normandy Pale's final project for her high school Creative Nonfiction class. Normandy styles both footnotes and illustrative details as a way to lay claim on veracity in her project, at one point illustrating a doolie, a six-wheeled truck that she believes readers might not be familiar with (unless they live in northern British Columbia, like she does). Trevor Cooper, a one-time student of Juby's, illustrates the images throughout (Juby, "Truth").

Additionally, photographs offer a visual component in many YA novels, particularly in Ransom Riggs's (2011) *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* and its sequels *Hollow*

City (2014) and *The Library of Souls* (2015). The novels are structured around several “found photographs,” which are black-and-white and provide the historical setting and characters. Riggs used these photographs as inspiration for his novels, and included them in the published works. Several YA novels also include a series of photographs as part of an index, particularly in the case of historical novels. These include, for example, Jack Gantos’s *Dead End in Norvelt* (2011) and Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014), two semi-autobiographical novels (Gantos’s is much more fictionalized than Woodson’s); however, they are typically not integrated into the text of the novel, but are instead collated at the end.

Australian author Jaclyn Moriarty often experiments with typography and the page format in her novels, especially *Feeling Sorry for Celia* (2000) and *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie* (2006). Moriarty’s novels combine journal entries, letters, memos, notes left on the refrigerator, and elaborate lists, meaning that font changes, experimental typography, and some inventive page design is necessary for her novels. While this represents a marked difference from plain text, Moriarty never quite includes images in her novels. Another such example is *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (1999), which experiments with format by communicating the majority of the story in a screenplay format, inspired by protagonist Steve Harmon’s interest in film studies. The novel also experiments with typography, and sparse use of images throughout. Additionally, Jandy Nelson’s *The Sky is Everywhere* (2010) only changes typography when introducing protagonist Lennie Walker’s handwritten poems that, in the wake of her sister’s sudden death, she writes on the backs of receipts, napkins, and papers and leaves all over town. Similarly, Lauren Oliver’s *Vanishing Girls* (2015) is a YA thriller that follows sisters Nicole and Dara after a car accident. While first-person prose comprises the majority of the novel, there are also documents, handwritten journal entries, and website posts (and comments) included in varying

typography. *Vanishing Girls* also includes some black-and-white photographs, although they are not woven into the text, but instead exist to accompany the blank spaces before new chapters.

Pictures also permeate middle grade novels, those that bridge the gap between picture books and YA novels. After “growing out of” picture books, young readers may transition into middle grade novels, which frequently include full and half-page illustrations. Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and *Fortunately, The Milk* (2013) are two such publications in which text greatly outweighs image. Both books are aimed at readers who are sophisticated readers “too old” to read picture books, while too young to read YA. Jeff Kinney’s popular middle grade series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007-), which follows protagonist Greg Heffley through text and images as he prepares to begin middle school, is one example. The books are hugely popular with elementary and middle grade readers, a type of “novel in cartoons” (Publishers Weekly, “Diary”). Many middle school novels, especially series, combine text and image, perhaps as they transition readers out of picture books and towards novels. Even those novels that are intended for an older middle grade readership incorporate some images into text. Sally Gardner’s *Maggot Moon* (2012), for example, follows protagonist Standish Treadwell, a dyslexic character who processes information differently than his friends and peers. Standish lives in an alternate reality set in the 1950s, where he lives with his Gramps in the undesirable Zone 7, which is under strict control of the Motherland. Gardner utilizes a back and forth narrative that doesn’t stick to linear time; instead, she jumps around in order to cover different periods of Standish’s life in Zone 7. Gardner creates a bleak and grey world that is equal parts *The Book Thief*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *1984*. A reading of *Maggot Moon* alongside any of these novels would emphasize the dystopian, historical, alternative, and grim realities of each. In Zone 7, school is an institution that breeds a certain kind of conformity and fear, and Standish

substitutes the word “sheep” for his classmates as they submit to the authority figures in the novel. The images in the novel are insidious, appearing at the bottom of the pages in a flipbook style. If the reader flips the pages rapidly, the images react in cinematic fashion and become momentarily animated. The images – or animation – depict a rat, ugly and big-toothed, living, dying, and decaying against the backdrop of the text that depicts the horrid dystopia of Zone 7.

Other authors acknowledge readers’ transition between different ratios of text and image as they age. Take, for example, picture book author and illustrator Chris Van Allsburg’s *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (1984), an almost wordless picture book. The book presents a series of seemingly unrelated, but highly-detailed, images that are accompanied by a title and a line of text. Van Allsburg presents them as “found images” from the collection of the very fictional Harris Burdick. Presented with only an image with a curious caption, readers are left to invent their own stories about the images. Stephen King’s short story “The House on Maple Street” is based on the last image in Van Allsburg’s book, which is captioned with the same title. The image depicts a family home lifting off the ground as if it’s a rocket ship, with the caption “It was a perfect lift-off.” The highly successful book was followed up in 2011 by *The Chronicles of Harris Burdick*. The same images from the original picture book are reproduced, but this time they are accompanied by short stories written by prominent authors for young people. Each author claimed an image, and invented an accompanying short story. Writers include Sherman Alexie, M. T. Anderson, Kate DiCamillo, Jules Feiffer, Stephen King, Tabitha King, Lois Lowry, Gregory Maguire, Walter Dean Myers, Linda Sue Park, Louis Sachar, Jon Scieszka, and Chris Van Allsburg. The book is clearly meant for older readers than those who were targeted by the first publication, and includes a much higher ratio of text to image. Furthermore, books like *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), *Wonderstruck* (2011), and *The Marvels* (2015) by Brian

Selznick are written for middle grade readers rather than teenage readers. The books also contain a complicated relationship between text and image, and Selznick experiments wildly with the ratios between the two, in a way perhaps not seen in many other works in this category of literature. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, for example, includes roughly equal amounts of text and image, but rather than alternating (for example, like in a graphic novel), several pages of all text will be followed by an illustrated sequence, meaning Selznick's books often run longer than five hundred pages each. While there might not be an equal relationship between images and text, the sophistication of publications like these allow readers to continue to view images in their books well past childhood.

Adaptations of YA novels to graphic novels occur frequently with popular YA novels. Ransom Riggs's *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* is one such novel that rendered a graphic novel adaptation two years after publication, while Stephenie Myers's *Twilight* (2005-2008) series was also provided with the graphic novel treatment after the success of her fantasy novels. For publishers, graphic novels represent another way to supply beloved and best-selling books to readers, and also to capitalize on the popularity of an existing product. Changing the format and adding illustrative components is akin to providing a new perspective on a familiar story. For readers who might not be interested in reading Myers's novels, which each number over five hundred page in length, a graphic novel can be a good tool for struggling or uninterested readers. Graphic novels read quickly compared to text-based books because of the way they alternate between text and image and thus reach different audiences than traditional books, while also maintaining some of the original audience. Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* was adapted into a graphic novel not long after publication, while Cassandra Clare's *The*

Infernal Devices series was adapted into a popular manga. Now stories like these are available across multiple platforms, accessible through multiple access points.

“Blended novels” are another new sub-category of YA literature that experiment with typography and online forms. Jill Olthouse has written most comprehensively about blended books, which she suggests ask readers to engage in a literacy of font and what that communicates. Blended books, Olthouse states, incorporate current literary practice into teen fiction. This means utilizing “text speak,” the common abbreviations used while texting, IMing, or chatting. Olthouse calls text speak “textese” (35). For authenticity, many YA novels utilize text speak when replicating teenage characters’ texting, although some authors (such as John Green), instead use complete sentences when transcribing characters’ texts. Text speak mimics online writing practice, working with the syntax and genre structures of texting. Blended books are almost entirely written in text speak. Consider Lauren Myracle’s four-book *Internet Girls* series, which is largely narrated through IMs, texts, and emails, and utilizes textual abbreviations. Teenagers’ process of writing is thus activated. Olthouse continues, “literacy is contextual, multimodal, and ultimately related to issues of social power” (36). Blended books allow us to ask important questions about reimagining YA literature in subsequent decades. For example, should teen speak be accessible to outsiders? Can adults read these books with the same fluency that teenagers can?

Many of the aforementioned multimodal YA novels represent a collaboration between artist and illustrator; few YA writers take on both duties when constructing a novel with both text and image. Perry Nodelman notes that the greatest innovators of picture books were those who were *both* artist and illustrator, and similarly, some of the most expressive and interesting multimodal YA novels come from those authors who are also illustrators. *Criss Cross* by Lynne

Rae Perkins (2005) is a deft example of a book-length work by a single creator – Perkins creates both text and illustrations – depicting the relationship between text and image. Perkins’s illustrations interact constantly with text, sometimes interrupting words and transitioning into visual language. Images appear on almost every page of the novel, some that make visual chord progressions for a character learning how to play guitar, and others that depict a character’s bell-bottom jeans. However, *Criss Cross* is most certainly a middle-grade book, also emphasized by its Newbery Medal for excellence in children’s literature. Peter Hunt suggests that the true innovators of the picture book, that is, those who took on the role of both writer and illustrator, had more influence on the development of the modern picture book than illustrators. They were able to orchestrate the precise plotting of story through both words and images, and were thus capable of controlling both parts of the process. We can consider also the role that author/illustrators such as Lynne Rae Perkins have on shaping the future of multimodal YA novels.

Finally, take into consideration the artistic potential YA enables. While the YA novel section at bookstores and libraries has been steadily expanding over the last decade, a new sub-category of its literature has also been identified: the YA Graphic Novel. Consider titles such as Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* (2006), Joe Kelly and J. M. Ken Nimura’s *I Kill Giants* (2009), Raina Telmaiger’s *Smile* (2010), *Drama* (2012), and *Sisters* (2014), Vera Brosgol’s *Anya’s Ghost* (2011), Faith Erin Hicks’s *Friends with Boys* (2012), Derf Backderf’s *My Friend Dahmer* (2012), Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki’s *This One Summer* (2014), Emily Carroll’s *Through the Woods* (2014), Maggie Thrash’s *Honor Girl* (2015), and Noelle Stevenson’s *Nimona* (2015). These graphic novels explore adolescence, and provide an equal combination of text and image in order to communicate these ideas. Authors such as Brosgol,

Hicks, and Carroll might not have gained as much traction if their books were primarily marketed under the more general term “Graphic Novels.” It is instead their specific situation in the teen market that has enabled them to create for a wide audience. It is perhaps the publishing power of YA that propels their creative endeavors and locates a space and voice for adolescence in graphic novels. Perhaps it is this recognition of a separate sub-category of YA literature that has also allowed writers of YA to experiment with including images in their texts. A marketing impulse has certainly driven the increase of images and graphics in YA novels.

Multimodal YA novels display varying interactions of text and original image in a YA novel. While there exists a wide range of interaction between text and image in many contemporary YA novels, *The Book Thief* and *Why We Broke Up* represent exemplary texts in displaying a high ratio of text to image. In what follows I describe the relationship between text and image in both multimodal YA novels.

***Why We Broke Up* by Daniel Handler and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak**

Daniel Handler is a popular author in the categories of middle grade and YA literature, although he is better recognized by his pseudonym, Lemony Snicket. As Snicket, Handler wrote thirteen novels as part of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999-2006), which documented the perils of the fictional Baudelaire orphans. After their parents pass away, Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire are shuffled between a series of guardians. At the same time, they are pursued by the pernicious Count Olaf, who is after the vast fortune they will inherit when Violet turns eighteen. The thirteen novels (with alliterative titles) – *The Bad Beginning* (1999), *The Hostile Hospital* (2001), *The Penultimate Peril* (2005) – are accompanied by a range of paratextual material, including supplemental books, letters, a movie adaptation, and a forthcoming series on Netflix.

As Snicket, Handler followed this first popular series with a second, entitled *All the Wrong Questions* (2012-2015), which contains four books in total. Lemony Snicket is both the author and the protagonist in the series, which is usefully set in the same story-world as *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

Handler has written a much smaller selection of novels under his own name, including four adult books: *The Basic Eight* (1998), *Watch Your Mouth* (2000), *Adverbs* (2006), and *We Are Pirates* (2015). *Why We Broke Up* is arguably Handler's first YA novel; although *The Basic Eight* focused on a teenage protagonist, the novel was categorized as adult literature. *Why We Broke Up* follows protagonist Min Green as she writes a novel-length letter to her ex-boyfriend Ed Slaterton to explain the reasons why their relationship is ending. Each section of the letter focuses on an object that contributed to their break-up, illustrated by renowned artist Maira Kalman. For example, an illustration of an umbrella is accompanied only by Min's one-sentence desire to have it returned to her. An image of a sugar dispenser is paired with a chapter-worth of Handler's text. *Why We Broke Up* explores the connection between objects and the stories that they tell, pairing a writer and illustrator who have continued their collaborative relationship through the creation of several children's picture books.

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* continues to be one of the most popular published YA novels, and routinely returns to claim a spot on *The New York Times* Bestseller list, despite having been published in 2005. Uniquely positioned as a Holocaust novel narrated by Death, *The Book Thief* shares with readers a compelling blend of text and image. The novel follows protagonist Liesel Meminger when she is sent to live with foster parents, the Hubermanns, at the beginning of World War II. Only a very small section of the novel is illustrated, not by Zusak, but by Australian artist Trudy White. The blend of text and images invites questions about why

certain scenes are provided with an illustration while others are not, especially as images are present on only a handful of pages in a nearly 500-page novel.

Both are multimodal novels necessitating readers engage in visual literacy. To restate, multimodal YA novels use graphic devices – for example, photographs, illustrations, and interesting typography – in conjunction with written text. Both books integrate images into text in interesting and compelling ways, and offer two distinct examples of multimodality. For example, rather than yoking them together, *Why We Broke Up* distinctly separates text and image. Full-color, full-page images precede each “chapter” or “section” of the novel. Other such novels interweave images into the text, becoming truly hybrid – it is difficult for a reader to encounter text without image, or image without text. Indeed, *The Book Thief* carefully interweaves some of its images among the text within the chapter or section of the novel, but the entire novel is not indicative of the hybrid form. Formats are mixed, blended, and harmonized more thoroughly. The following is an analysis of the text to image ratio in *Why We Broke Up* and *The Book Thief*, and provides a model for reading images and graphics in contemporary YA novels.¹

Images in Why We Broke Up by Daniel Handler

In *Why We Broke Up*, Maria Kalman’s illustrations alternate with and impinge upon Daniel Handler’s text, at times appearing in three page spreads, while at others taking up only one page. There are also splash pages, inked in with the background color of the illustration that follows. In the 357-page book, 283 of those pages are text-only, while 74 of those pages include either illustrations or full-page backslashes. The colors are bright and electric and backed by high quality paper. In this way, Handler describes Min and Ed’s fictional relationship and

¹ I was able to secure permissions for only images from *The Book Thief*.

Kalman pairs her illustrations with his text. Although the reader is told at the beginning of the book that their relationship has ended (and indeed, Min is writing a letter to inform Ed she is returning the objects that epitomize important moments in this relationship), the ups and downs are revealed over the course of the over three hundred and fifty page novel. Min is a first person narrator delivering a second person address. While Min is outspoken, an outsider who loves classic movies, Ed is a basketball superstar, and so good at math that he carries around a protractor (illustrated on page 232). While readers know from the outset that their relationship is not going to last, finding the reasons why it fails propels the forward motion of this book. Each object that Handler describes provides the impetus for Kalman's illustrations, providing the importance of the object to Min and Ed's relationship. Text and image are inextricably linked, allowing each other breathing room; the illustrations enrich the prose while the prose illuminates the image.

Kalman's images assist in a reader's *immersion* into the book, taking over for the text in order to make the experience of Min's high school break up even more tangible than Handler's already expressive language allows. High school objects and keepsakes in particular amplify Min's own description of high school days, some of which go on – stream of consciousness – for several pages. These images include a poster put up at the high school, advertising a Halloween dance (that Ed rips unceremoniously, seconds after Min and her friend Al tape it up) (72-73); a note from Ed, "I can't stop thinking about you," folded origami-style (66, 70-71); a green and yellow pennant supporting the Hellman High School Beavers, a show of loyalty for Ed's basketball team (106-7); and the protractor Min steals from Ed (232). The images act as prompts for Min's stream-of-consciousness, a jumping-off point for her to elaborate on. While most of the images are completely recognizable to a reader, there are times when their significance needs

to be explained, and the nuances of the illustration interpreted (such as a tea towel with oil stains, which Handler later explains are the result of greasy onion rings). Handler also references movies, music, and celebrities, all invented for the purposes of the novel. In fact, Kalman illustrates a fictional movie poster with great detail, which Handler then elucidates for plot, characters, and connection to the story. Min is obsessed with a classical movie star named Lottie Carson, whose movie *Greta in the Wild* she sees with Ed. She includes the ticket stub in the box at his doorstep, as well as the movie poster (24; 32-3). Kalman's illustrations act as the evidence or proof that there is paraphernalia to accompany these fictionalized references, individualizing the story world and allowing the reader a more visual experience of fiction.

Two images in the novel are significant for how they interact with the text and shape the ongoing story, and set up the relationship between text and image. First, Kalman's illustration of the cardboard box Min tells Ed she is leaving on his doorstep is presented to readers on the second page. The box is marked fragile, and also includes a quote scrawled in caps lock print: "You either have the feeling or you don't" (2). The illustration appears on page two, and is both introduced and then actualized on the preceding and following pages. In her letter, Min explains to Ed, "In a sec you'll hear a thunk. At your front door, the one nobody uses. It'll rattle the hinges a bit when it lands, because it's so weighty and important, a little jangle along with the thunk, and Joan will look up from whatever she's cooking" (1). An image of the box physically manifests on the following page, as Min promises it will, making tangible the "dropping off" of the box on Ed's front steps. On page three, Min continues to explain that the box contains, "Every last souvenir of the love we had, the prizes and the debris of this relationship, like the glitter in the gutter when the parade has passed, all the everything and whatnot kicked to the curb. I'm dumping the whole box back into your life, Ed, every item of you and me" (3).

It is, perhaps, the most dynamic move in the entire novel, one facilitated by the interaction between text and image. The kinetic quality is perhaps most reminiscent of Brian Selznick's (2007) *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which compiles several pages of images together to produce this same effect. Zooming in and out, experimenting with "camera" angles and jump shots are all ways that Selznick works *within* the image to call forth cinematic qualities. However, he also introduces the images with text, and segues from image back into moving text in the same way that Handler and Kalman appear to do here, creating a forward motion and movement. The close-up image of the cardboard box after its hastily described introduction is perhaps meant to place the reader even more firmly within Ed's point of view, confronted with the very box described in the letter, its presence visual and moving.

The second image of interest appears on page 6, a close up of the cardboard lid, inviting the reader to assume that Ed has opened the box and will begin moving through its contents. Min explains in the following text the importance of the quote that she included on the lid of the box, explaining, "I wrote my favorite quote on the lid of this box, from Hawk Davies, who is a legend, and I'm writing this letter with the lid of this box as a desk so I can feel Hawk Davies flowing through every word I write to you" (7). While the quote and the fictional Hawk Davies appear in other places in the novel, Min's assertion here provides the reader with another way to understand the complementary nature of the text and images. Handler and Kalman create this effect by showing the box on Ed's front step, the lid lifted from the box, and the objects removed one by one, presumably by Ed. However, although Min's letter addresses Ed, it is unclear that he has yet received these objects. Min is frantically scribbling the last few lines of the letter when she pulls up to Ed's house with her best friend Al. The opening pages masterfully model the

relationship between text and image, and Min as first person narrator and Ed as the second person addressee.

Min's role as an unreliable narrator is also important to consider, specifically the way her capricious narration plays out against the physical objects Kalman illustrates. Many reviewers have commented on the unreliability of Min's narrative, and in an interview with Zack Smith of online literary blog *Indy Week*, Handler addressed this observation. He said,

I think romance itself is constructing a beautiful story from the very ordinary things that you are surrounded by, be they objects or people. So I think Min had a long narrative in her head informed by movies that she liked that didn't in fact always fit the narrative that was going on. So sure, I think she's unreliable, in the way that everyone is a little unreliable in their memory.

Handler's comments are apt when considered against the book. Min's obsession with movies, especially the classics that she names and describes, certainly provides formative structures that she relies on for stories of love, romance, and relationships. When her relationship with Ed maneuvers outside these carefully crafted narratives, it fails. In fact, when Min and Ed break up (Ed cheats on Min with a girl named Annette), Ed tries to steer the relationship back to a common narrative: "Min, *please*. It was – we're – it's *different*, you know that... There must be some – I don't know, like a movie, right? Isn't there some movie where it's like there's two guys, twins I think, one guy doing the right thing and –" (332). For Min, the failure of her relationship with Ed is the fact that he doesn't place as much weight and meaning into the moments that are weighty and meaningful to her. Min's letter is written with the knowledge of what she has learned through her first meaningful relationship. She is able to turn the relationship into a narrative in a way that she couldn't when she was experiencing it from the inside. Her

foresight when the relationship is over provides her with the types of observations that might not have been genuine at the time, but are formed in retrospect. A librarian from Portland, Oregon posted a review of the audiobook version of *Why We Broke Up* on his blog, *Reading with My Ears*, noting that the novel is written in the form of an *esprit de l'escalier*. The word is derived from the French “staircase wit” and was coined by Denis Diderot, co-founder of the *Encyclopedie*. These are the comments and retorts we remember when it is too late to deliver them, imagined in retrospect. They are formed with careful thought and understanding that comes from the end of a confrontation, event, or breakup, rather than formed from the middle and in the moment.

Min creates distance between herself and Ed by using a variety of references to fictional classic films. Min introduces films as a way to compare fictional experience with real experience, trying to bridge the gap between herself and the implied reader by offering the comparison of a classic film. The first reference comes when she tells the implied reader, Ed, “Lately I’ve been like Aimee Rondele in *The Sky Cries Too*, a movie, French, you haven’t seen” (4). These fictional references provide Handler with the opportunity to fictionalize wildly and create movie foils that Min can bounce off of, but they also have the effect of isolating Ed (who we have consistently been told is not a fan of the classic movies that Min loves, and moreover, he hasn’t seen them), and in doing so, isolating or alienating the reader of *Why We Broke Up* as well.

Handler provides a plot summary of *The Sky Cries Too* immediately after introducing the character, Aimee Rondele: “She plays an assassin and dress designer, and she only smiles twice in the whole film. Once is when the kingpin who killed her father gets thrown off the building, which is not the time I’m thinking of. It’s the time at the end, when she finally has the envelope

with the photographs and burns it unopened in the gorgeous ashtray and she knows it's over and lights a cigarette and stands in that perfect green of a dress watching the blackbirds swarm and flurry around the church spire" (4). Interestingly, references in texts are often employed to circumscribe this additional description; readers generally must interpret the meaning of the reference to the story for themselves, without enjoying this elaboration.

For young readers who might not know that these references are fictionalized – and many do not draw attention to this fact – this can risk disrupting their sense of cultural capital. A scan of Goodreads reviews shows that many readers admit to not getting the movie references, or not knowing the movies; they seem not to recognize that they are fictional. While Goodreads reviews are not necessarily the most accurate way to judge the quality of a book, they do provide us with access into readers' responses, unprovoked.

A description like this also underscores the way that this letter is not really for Ed – who cannot parse these meanings on his own – but for Min. It might be worth asking a similar question of Handler – whether these fictionalized references and descriptions are for his own interest, or if he believes they will be of interest to the reader. References to classic films become the means by which Min judges Ed, especially when he does not value understanding their meaning or their importance to Min. Because of the second person address – the implied reader is Ed – these sometimes pretentious references can also have the effect of casting judgment on the reader, and critiquing him or her for not having the resources to read these. For readers who think these are *real* references that they are missing, the effect can be alienating and hurtful. Unintended elitism can turn into real elitism. Min's references would mean nothing to Ed, and, as a result, they often mean nothing to readers.

While Min's text is unreliable, the objects illustrated by Kalman add verisimilitude to the

novel. The objects provide the physical evidence and detritus of their relationship. Min's ability to compile a box full of objects that are emblematic of their relationship lends an interesting sense of credibility to the narrative. Perhaps the truth shines from the objects, and while Min describes their meaning and relation to her, readers can imagine that Ed might construct a varying narrative if he were to open the box Min leaves on his porch. The images are not left to stand alone as renderings of the objects in the box on Ed's doorstep, but are instead imbued with a very specific meaning; they can't be read in a valueless way. Min shapes the reader's reading of her relationship with Ed through these illustrated objects. Min provides readers with instructions for how to read them by writing extensively about the relationship between object and experience. We can only imagine Ed's version of events, a different set of instructions for reading these images, one that might conflict with Min's.

Handler's long run-on sentences can be difficult to parse, especially as some run almost a full page in length, and change topics and direction without warning. Min's stream-of-consciousness is meant to evoke the hasty way she is writing this letter to Ed – presumably as she drives to his house in her best friend Al's truck – paired with the amorphous and emotion-based method of recalling memories. Take, for instance, Min's first date with Ed at a showing of one of her favorite movies, *Greta in the Wild*. The following excerpt covers three-quarters of one page:

Boy does she regret that gesture with the fur, because the train goes north, way north in a montage I just love, even better on the big screen with the edges of the picture all cloudy, announcing “Buffalo! Next stop Buffalo!” and then the funnier and funnier towns, “Worcester! Badwood! Chokypond! Ducksbreath!” until she's in the goddam Yukon with Will Ringer all bundled up on a dogsled ready to take her the rest of the way to

where she's hiding out, your hand on my neck and me not knowing if you'll slide it down to feel me over my second-favorite top with the weird pearly buttons that mean you have to hand wash it, or just move to hold me at the waist before making your way up underneath, and if I'll stop you, if I want to, if you'll tell anyone, your hands on me and we're only twenty minutes into the first movie of the first date. (29)

The shift in the middle of the paragraph – from watching the movie to being aware of Ed's hands on her – is abrupt, and can take an unskilled reader out of the novel itself. If this run-on sentence was an exception, rather than the norm, it might not have such an alienating effect on some readers.

It would be easy to say that the novel could be read without the images, and indeed, when I read an advanced reader's copy of *Why We Broke Up* in the fall of 2011, I did just that. Yet, I think the images have a stabilizing factor on the text, which, as shown above, often goes off the track, shifts gears, and engages in tonal shifts throughout. The images recenter the reader and remind him/her of the point of this novel: these are the objects in a box dropped on Ed's front porch. This is the story of their breakup. Some frame narratives are simple to follow; however, I think Handler's frame – Min's letter to Ed – is more easily led off track. There are not that many ways to remind the reader what they are reading without that reorienting "Dear Ed." The best Handler can do is repeat Ed's name throughout, reminding the reader of whom Min is addressing. The other strategy is to use the images a way to remind the reader of the box, of the frame, of the overarching text.

There is a sense that the text and images are always working together: to tell the story, to communicate the feelings of the characters, and to communicate a certain mood or atmosphere. Kalman's images are perhaps meant to appear much more personal to a reader who is presented

with a plethora of meaningful objects ostensibly left in a box on Ed's doorstep. Perhaps Min describes the objects, but readers get to view them, perhaps encountering them with Ed as he removes them one by one from the box (or encountering them with Min as she places them in the box). Working together in this way, text and image create a kind of synergy that works towards Handler and Kalman's overall conceit: to provide a timeless break-up story that will reach readers. Illustrations like these pull the reader in on a personal level. They individualize and nuance the narrative, meaning that readers must widen the imaginative story world through the given objects, interpreting their relationship to the text as they move from image to image.

Images in The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* is a multimodal YA novel that combines several graphic devices over the course of five hundred pages. *The Book Thief* makes use of typographical experimentation; images integrated into the text; and short booklet-length picture books as graphic devices. Although I will focus on the images and graphics present in *The Book Thief*, it is also worth noting that Zusak makes some changes to font and text placement throughout the novel in order to individualize certain characters, settings, and scenes. These changes to typography affect most, if not all, pages in the novel. For example, the narrator, Death, frequently interjects into the narrative, foreshadows content to come, and reframes the way the reader is meant to understand relationships between characters. But Death also acts in asides, in which the font is bolded and centered, surrounded by asterisks. Readers must change the way they consider text as they move from one section of words to another. There is a very visual break between Death's narration of other characters, and its internal observations. Death, the

narrator of the novel, uses these font changes as uninterrupted footnotes. Rather than asking a reader to shift his/her attention down the page, the narrator interrupts the story itself.

Unlike Kalman's in-color illustrations for *Why We Broke Up*, those that appear in *The Book Thief* are exclusively in black and white. They are stark line drawings and paintings. Rather than appearing after chapter breaks, they are integrated into the narrative itself. While there is no artist credit on the cover of the book (unlike *Why We Broke Up*, where Handler and Kalman share equal room on the page), Trudy White is listed in the copyright pages of the novel. The images are certainly not as prevalent in *The Book Thief* as they are in *Why We Broke Up*, and the work is primarily Zusak's. Yet, the images are perhaps more meaningful and deliberate because of their intermittent nature. Like Zusak, White is Australian, and illustrates only a few sections in the novel. In addition to illustrating her own books – *Table of Everything* (2001), *Japan Diary* (2005), and *Could You? Would You?* (2007) – White actively displays art in exhibits, and runs writing and visual art workshops for adults and children.

The first full section that she illustrates of *The Book Thief* occurs between pages 234 to 236. The thirteen pages are described as a “booklet” entitled *The Standover Man*, which is made out of pages cut out of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and painted over in white, the only paper available to the characters. The fictional author and illustrator of this booklet is Max Vandenberg, a young Jewish man who is hidden away in the Hubermanns' basement. He comes to Himmel Street when Hans Hubermann agrees to uphold a promise that he made to Max's mother years ago, after he served with her husband in World War I. Liesel keeps Max a secret, and finds out that they both share the nighttime routine of having terrible nightmares that stem from personal traumas. Max gives the booklet to Liesel for her birthday, leaving it by her bed while she is sleeping. It tells Max's story – his father leaving when he was young, his time spent in hiding,

his journey to the Hubermanns, and his friendship with Liesel. As viewed in Figure 1, Max depicts himself as a bird, remembering Liesel once describing his hair as “like feathers.” The booklet is illustrated in the style of a children’s book, alternating between image and text, told simply, yet effectively. At times, the text of *Mein Kampf* bleeds through the white painted pages, Max’s past and present buried beneath the simple story he shares with Liesel.



Figure 1. “But there is one strange thing. The girl says I look like something else.” Illustrated by Trudy White.

The Book Thief constitutes just 4% images. Because of the high text to image ratio, these images might be deemed less important than the text, and indeed, it is possible to read the novel without necessarily taking the images into account. Considering the role of images in *The Book Thief*, and others multimodal novels, means acknowledging readers for whom these images

might be inaccessible. Visually impaired readers, for instance, might be disadvantaged by texts like *The Book Thief* that require visual participation. Rather than providing scaffolding for readers who comprehend texts better when they combine words and images, or for whom image provides another means of accessing the story, multimodal texts like these can instead impede access and comprehension. What is lost when the images are inaccessible? What is lost when only 4% of the book contains images, and when arguably more focus is placed on the text itself?

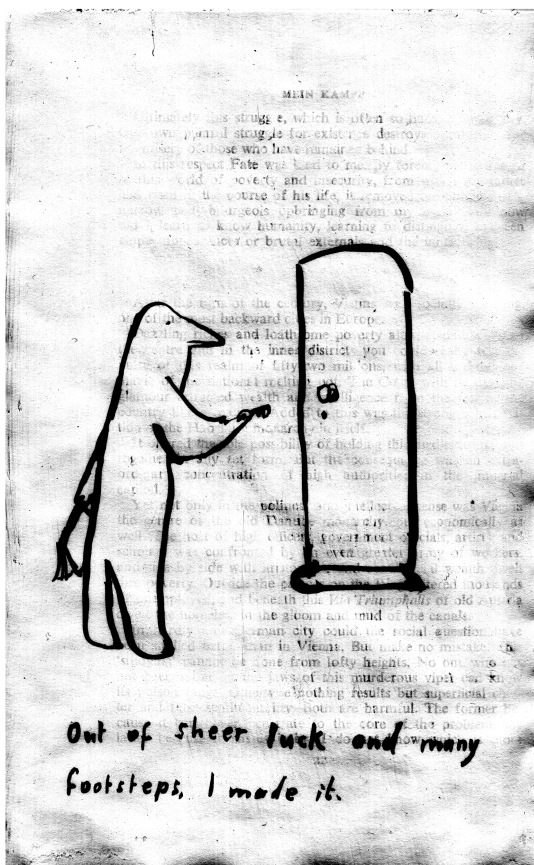


Figure 2. “Out of sheer luck and many footsteps, I made it.” Illustrated by Trudy White.

The Standover Man is perhaps where issues of accessibility are most prominent, affecting the way that a reader receives the text. Figure 2 shows Max arriving at the Hubermanns’ house and unlocking the front door with a key. On this page, *Mein Kampf* bleeds through most

profoundly, competing with Max's illustrations through the paint. Max's journey to the Hubermanns is also, perhaps, one of the most harrowing communicated in the novel. His anxiety and fear of being found out and taken to a concentration camp is palpable in the text. However, it is perhaps even more visible in the illustration, as the text of *Mein Kampf* emerges from the page and impeding on the graphic depiction. It reminds readers of the threat of Hitler that is, at times, background to the story, especially when Liesel's attainment of literacy and reading takes precedence so often. But this is one of the instances in which this background comes into the forefront, reminding readers of Hitler's presence. It also reminds readers that Hitler's narrative is the main narrative at that point in Germany's history, and even though Max tries to write his own narrative, it must compete with *Mein Kampf*.

What is also notable about these illustrations in *The Standover Man* is that Max draws himself as a bird, responding to Liesel's observation that his hair looks "like feathers." Without access to this booklet, readers might know the literal way Max reconfigures himself as a bird, making himself stand out as physically different from the German family he stays with (Liesel, the Hubermanns, and other Germans are drawn as humans). Setting this difference apart by drawing himself as a bird, rather than as a human, parallels the ways in which Art Spiegelman's *Maus* casts Jews as mice and Germans as cats in that graphic novel. Max physically separates himself from the Germans around him, and he does so in a story that is specifically written for Liesel: he draws attention to their difference in the way that he draws himself and the way that he draws her. This creates a formal tension between text and image. Liesel understands that she has to keep Max's presence in their basement a secret, but perhaps it is not until Max marks their differences so physically in the booklet that he reminds her why. Page 229 presents a very gritty illustration, one that seems half-finished as the text of *Mein Kampf* bleeds through a story that

highlights the difference between Jews and Germans, and between Max and Liesel. Without this booklet – and without access to these images – readers (and listeners) lose access to Max’s voice and the very specific story that he can tell through the interaction of words, images, and the painted over paper.

Until the reader encounters more of Max’s illustrations, he/she can’t know just exactly how the content of *The Standover Man* was tailored to Liesel’s age and condition, or how curated the subject matter. On pages 279 and 290, Liesel finds Max’s copy of *Mein Kampf*, painted over in white and missing just the pages that he needed for Liesel’s birthday present. He is continuously writing and sketching in the painted over book, which has become his notebook. It is “a collection of random thoughts and he chose to embrace them. They felt *true*. . . . The desecrated pages of *Mein Kampf* were becoming a series of sketches, page after page, which to him summed up the events that had swapped his former life for another. Some took minutes. Others hours” (277-8). He has decided to give the book to Liesel once it’s finished, but he is adamant that he will wait until she is older, “old enough,” and when the war is over (278). The content is much more complex and difficult than that presented in *The Standover Man*, and reveals much about his life and interior thoughts. As such, Liesel encounters much different images in Max’s private book, sneaking a look when he is asleep in the basement.



Not the Führer- the conductor!

Figure 3. “Not the Führer – the conductor!” Illustrated by Trudy White.

The full-page illustrations in this later section (which Liesel views when Max is sleeping) lose the roughness of Liesel’s booklet, where it was still possible to see some of *Mein Kampf* beneath the white paint peeking between Max’s words and illustrations. The images in Max’s notebook could best be compared to political cartoons, blending truth and irony through image and caption. The first that Liesel comes across depicts Hitler standing in front of a crowd of people, his speech balloon holding musical notes rather than words (see Figure 3). The caption describes him as, “Not the Führer – the conductor!” (279). The second shows a young boy and girl holding hands, with the girl remarking via speech balloon, “Isn’t it a lovely day...” (280)

(see Figure 4). They stand on top off a pile of bodies, while the sun beams with a swastika at its center. Liesel is frightened by both images, and when Max acknowledges her snooping by thanking her for putting his book back, Liesel expresses her fright,

“Holy Christ,” Liesel gasped. “You scared me, Max.”

He returned to his sleep, and behind her, the girl dragged the same thought up the steps.

You scared me, Max. (291)

The reader finds Liesel frightened, not only because Max suddenly wakes up, but also because of the images he’s sketched into his book. They tell a much different story and experience than that presented in *The Standover Man*.



Figure 4. “Isn’t it a lovely day...” Illustrated by Trudy White.

Finally, the last series of illustrations appears near the end of the book, between pages 445 and 450. At this point in the novel, Max has disappeared. Liesel and the Hubermanns expect the worst, and Liesel watches for him during the marches that drive Jewish concentration camp prisoners through their town of Molching. Rosa Hubermann finally presents Liesel with Max's sketchbook, deeming it time for her to read its contents. Its title is *The Word Shaker, A Small Collection of Thoughts for Liesel Meminger*. While Liesel encounters once again the pictures and captions that she had stumbled across on her one illicit look in the book while Max was still living in the basement, there is a new story written just for her. This is *The Word Shaker*. A note in the book from Max remarks, "Liesel – I almost scribbled this story out. I thought you might be too old for such a tale, but maybe no one is. I thought of you and your books and words, and this strange story came into my head I hope you can find some good in it" (444). Liesel calls it a fairy tale or a fable, although even with the help of the *Duden Dictionary*, she can't quite distinguish between the two terms and decides the short story is a combination of the two. The use of both text and image in Max's story is reminiscent of a children's story, shifting readers temporarily from the precise context of World War II, and rewinding, creating an almost timeless, geography-less place. It is possible that while images provide detail and specificity, they also create icons general enough for readers to view in tandem with their own experience. In *The Word Shaker*, Max writes about Hitler, describing, "Then one day, out of nowhere, it struck him – the perfect plan. He'd seen a mother walking with her child. At one point, she admonished the small boy, until finally, he began to cry. Within a few minutes, she spoke very softly to him, after which he was soothed and even smiled" (445). Max then depicts Hitler's decision to make words and symbols the way to carefully change how people think. Max represents words and

ideas as trees, growing from the seeds that Hitler plants all over Germany. He imagines “word shakers” who throw down words to those below, as they are not allowed to climb up and take them for themselves.

Liesel and Max are the main characters in the story. Max calls Liesel a “word shaker,” insisting that her desire and her love of words allows her to climb higher up the word trees than anyone, and retrieve truly important words. Max enters the story himself as a character despised by Liesel’s homeland, and together they create a word seed called “friendship” which is planted in the forest. Liesel scales the tree when Hitler tries to cut it down, and lives in it for months and months, knowing that the tree remains standing because she is holding it up. It isn’t until Max scales the tree to find her that they finally come back down to the ground, and a new path is created where the tree is felled. The story presents Liesel with a way to understand Max and the experience he endures as a Jew in Nazi Germany. The images are drawn in a much different style than in *The Standover Man*. There, Max’s hard brush strokes were visible, while in *The Word Shaker*, Max’s handwritten letters and images are much cleaner. He appears to be working in a different medium than the one he worked in for his first gift for Liesel. The new book reveals to Liesel how Max imagined her. It explains something about herself, and how her love of words could change the world, if she is brave enough to use them.

The Book Thief integrates text and image to varying degrees, including Max’s notebook and booklets, small hand-drawn doodles, and some typographical experimentation. Images provide an additive quality to Zusak’s prose. The juxtaposition of mature and complex material with Max’s simplistic – and sometimes childlike – illustrations is much more affecting than plain text. Zusak seems to suggest that there are some topics image is better at communicating than text, and he gracefully makes way for White’s illustrations when necessary. Moreover, by

invoking the picture book format through Max's booklets and notebook, Zusak suggests the difficulty young people like Liesel may have with coming to terms with the horrors of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, and the paradox of using a format for children to convey such material.

Conclusion: Future Shapes of Images and Graphics in YA Novels

YA multimodal novels are meaningfully influenced by technological innovations, yet these innovations do not radically alter the form of the printed book. It is true that the integration of media into the format of the book is on the rise. Take, for example, the "vook," which allows readers access to videos in the text of their e-readers. However, "vooks" necessitate leaving the physical book itself. In many cases, they may also require an Internet connection in order to connect readers to content. Alternatively, many YA authors attempt to connect readers to the real music that appears in the pages of their books (in the form of a song title or artist name) by creating elaborate playlists online. However, in order to truly integrate these into the pages of a book (most likely an e-book), publishers would need to use either a physical CD or stream the music on an e-reader using a wifi connection. The benefits of a multimodal book, especially in the category of YA literature, is that it does not necessitate renouncing the printed book for electronic forms in order to make connections to new media. Media are mixed, but the mixing occurs on the printed page. Perhaps this helps to explain the high quality of a book like *Why We Broke Up*, which presents text and image on thick, glossy pages. The ability for a book to become more than just text within the traditional format of the printed book is perhaps what makes innovations in YA literature so exciting: the ability to adapt, while also retaining ties to the printed text, and to connect to new technologies without necessarily subscribing to them.

Images may scaffold and support the experience of reading, and also reflect the requirements of the reader, who experiences a much more multimodal reading experience when reading online or on screens. Trudy White's illustrations in *The Book Thief* effortlessly carry the story from text to image, while readers of *Why We Broke Up* can expect the tone of each chapter to be set by the preceding image. Readers are used to seeing text paired with image in their daily reading. Bringing that relationship to multimodal YA novels may popularize other forms of reading (off-line, off-screen), and show readers that YA is adapting to online contexts. Images are recognized as important and renewed by digital influences. For example, in a presentation in Lethbridge, Alberta in 2013, comics theorist Scott McCloud emphasized his current presentation style, which he describes as a "visual lecture." He uses visual communication, which includes "a cascade of fast-changing images (as many as 700 in a single talk) from the worlds of comics and communication" (McCloud). He adapted these presentations from his research, which explores the importance of images. Visual communication, many insist, transmits data more effectively in the twenty-first century. As researchers, teachers, and theorists adapt to a visual culture in order to meet the needs of the many young people who are acclimatized to visual literacy, both the tools and environments for teaching are altered accordingly, including the exponential use of technology in the classroom. The multimodal YA novel attempts to work through that digital impulse from the comfort of the printed book, which is itself adaptable and able to be influenced utterly by visual communication.

Possibilities for the future of graphics and image in YA novels may be much more interactive. Take the concept of Augmented Reality (AR), for example. Augmented Reality bridges a gap between text and reality, and is viewed as a method of enhancing text. AR is achieved by pairing a text with some form of technology: *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr.*

Morris Lessmore pairs a children's picture book with an iPad, while Sony's *Wonderbook* pairs text with the Playstation 3 to bring *Harry Potter* to life. Digital devices like these enhance and transform texts. Of course, pairing text with technology necessitates considering the reader: if a reader does not have access to the necessary technology, how is their experience of the book affected? How is their access changed? Are readers who do not have iPads or a Playstation 3 limited by their inability to gain access to the additional information and visuals presented through AR? Will advancements in technology increase access to the platforms and devices young people need in order to access and engage with these books? Graphics and images can certainly become a more interactive and integral component of texts, but access to the technologies necessary to achieving this interaction is important to consider.

It might also be useful to think about the effects of digital technologies on graphics and images that are perhaps more conservative than progressive. The ease of using audiobooks to access stories in an aural way, and the accessible nature of these texts, means that this format is readily available in the twenty-first century. In an article for *Publishers Weekly*, Kat Meyer suggests that several factors are leading to the popularity of audiobooks at the library. First of all, young patrons find it easy to access audiobooks through the library using apps such as OverDrive, while older patrons who have difficulty physically accessing the library can benefit from this technology as well (29). She notes that interest in audiobooks is shifting across age groups and socioeconomic groups. Myer also views publishers as more progressive when it comes to giving libraries access to audiobooks, which she sees as being much more accessible than e-books. She notes, "Perhaps seeing libraries as a relatively stable segment in a volatile market (and audiobook lending as less of a threat to hardcover and paperback sales than e-book lending), publishers large and small are responding to the library market's demand for digital

audiobook titles” (30). Joyce Saricks has also commented on the popularity of audiobooks, providing statistics that show more than 35,000 audiobooks published in 2013, which was double the production of 2012 (131). Audiobooks also appeal to multitaskers, who can engage in several activities simultaneously, including listening to a book (Jacobs; Malczewski).

Many audiobooks deftly make the transition from printed book to audiobook, retaining as much of the overall effect of the novel as possible. For example, GraphicAudio is a company that specifically releases audio interpretations of print-based texts by using a full cast, along with music and sound effects. Most recently, GraphicAudio paired with DC Comics in order to adapt a series of *Justice League* comics into an audio format. Additionally, noted YA expert Teri Lesesne discusses the differences between the printed and audiobook copies of Louis Sachar’s *The Card Turner* (2010), which focuses on the relationship between teenager Alton and his great-uncle Lester. Sachar’s novel revolves around the card game bridge, and in the audiobook, “Sachar employs the use of a foghorn to indicate to readers that the book will now go into some detailed explanation of bridge rules and plays” (“Lessons” 46). When segueing into the details of bridge in the printed book, however, Sachar employs a visual device that illustrates the game. Sachar has obviously thought about how to translate image for the audiobook. Other adaptations from printed book to audiobook are less able to retain a call-back to visual devices. For example, if a printed novel has many images and graphics, most audiobook adaptations will include a downloadable PDF that includes the images (the voice supplying the narration will often prompt readers when it is necessary to refer to this file).

Yet, when audiobooks are taken out of a library using an app like OverDrive, the PDF gets left behind, and the listener does not have any images to reference. For example, while the audiobook format for *Why We Broke Up* includes a reference file, separating this material from

the narration means risking readers will not search out material excised from the audiobook. The articles above note that *ease* and *accessibility* are behind readers' utilization of this format; a separate file of reference materials challenges this ease. On the other hand, the audiobook for *The Book Thief* does not include any reference material, and focuses solely on the prose.

Although the audio version adds an extra sentence to the text that appears in the book to explain that the booklet includes Max represented as a bird, and a few descriptive lines to fill in the gaps between text and image, it cannot account for losing access to the images (indeed, the last page of the booklet is not included at all, as it contains no communicable text). Max's specific experience as a Jew in Hitler's Germany is less impactful when these images are removed. Listeners of the audiobook might not know that Trudy White's visual images are important to the story. While some listeners might enjoy the pared down text of the audiobook format, others might find it lacking, and missing the visual elements that are so characteristic of these two novels.

Multimodal YA novels are popular in the twenty-first century and show varying degrees of synergy between text and image, relying on readers' visual literacy skills to decipher the intricate relationship between text and image. *Why We Broke Up* and *The Book Thief* constitute compelling examples of the relationships between text and image, integrating illustrations into text. They are also representative of the wide range of multimodal novels that are flooding the YA market today. Multimodal YA novels may transition readers into the much more image-heavy category of graphic novels, or challenge their expectations about how text interacts with image. For readers who read mostly graphic novels, multimodal novels can scaffold text and image in an accessible way. These novels appear to create points of access for many types of readers by connecting two popular and visible forms. The YA novel continues to adapt to

contemporary contexts, and is specifically influenced by innovations in digital technologies that expand the possibilities for multimodal printed texts.

Chapter Four

The Authorial Constellation: Paratextuality and Daniel Handler/Lemony Snicket and John Green

In 2014 *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured an article entitled “The Paratext’s the Thing,” which examined paratextuality and television. Paratextuality is a term that describes the material elements that surround and frame a text. In printed texts, this includes cover art, blurbs by other writers, preface material, and author dedications. In the medium of television, paratexts include promotional material, live-tweets of TV episodes, online recaps of TV episodes, and director interviews and commentary. Catherine Johnson, author of *Branding Television* (2012), corresponded by email with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* writer Thomas Doherty to discuss the topic of paratextuality in the twenty-first century. She told Doherty, “in today’s digital media environment the ‘text’ itself is becoming increasingly dispersed and this makes paratexts more important and more interesting.” These surrounding materials – recaps, promotional material, and commentary – become, at times, the focus of attention, sometimes displacing the text itself. For example, take Raymond Williams’s examination of television as a type of cultural technology in *Television: Technology and Cultural Flow* (1974). Williams writes extensively about broadcasting *flow*, the concept that television is designed to move effortlessly between TV show, commercial, newsbreak, and advertisement. He writes,

What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real ‘broadcasting.’ Increasingly, in both commercial and public-service television, a further sequence was

added: trailers of programmes to be shown at some later time or on some later day, or more itemised programme news. This was intensified in conditions of competition, when it became important to broadcasting planners to retain viewers – or as they put it, to ‘capture’ them – for a whole evening’s sequence. And with the eventual unification of these two or three sequences, a new kind of communication phenomenon has to be recognised. (91)

Paratexts – or surrounding texts – were usefully included in the flow in order to effortlessly connect content. As a result, television content flows until the TV is turned off. Williams cites promotional material from programmes that would be shown later in the day as an example of the type of paratexts included in the flow, to keep the content moving *forward*. This forward momentum could propel interest in not just the TV show itself, but also in commercials, previews, and promos, effectively generating consistent profit. These paratexts are integral to our understanding of television. However, the communication phenomenon Williams suggests also highlights the ability of the contemporary reader to be continuously engaged with a text, relying on the connective and surrounding materials.

William Uricchio has taken up Williams’s idea of flow when identifying the surrounding material of television including “promos, opening credit sequences, websites, and vast quantities of user-generated media” (41). He notes also that the conversations happening on the Internet – on message boards, in comments on TV series’ websites, and on blogs that take up television – can affect the creation of those television shows. Their outcomes can be altered by fan reactions and suggestions proliferating online. He notes that U.S. television networks have particularly expanded the digital media and content available to viewers. This allows TV shows to increase interest in television programs by providing additional narrative elements for viewers to find

online. He notes that these include ways for viewers to quickly catch up on episodes that they may have missed, or by inculcating new viewers to the visual culture of a show through online paratexts. As a result, Uricchio states, “Network homepages have become repositories of synoptic paratexts, including essays, interviews, episode guides, clips from recent episodes, recycled ‘previously on...’ recaps and, from 2005 onward, video abridgements” (45). This scaffolding supports the television narrative and helps both new and old viewers continue to invest in the visual content and narrative storytelling.

While paratextual elements of television have attracted critical attention over the last four decades, paratextual materials associated with YA literature are expanding, producing new and exciting framing material. YA paratexts are becoming a new field of study, integral to the contemporary YA novel, and influenced by contemporary social and technological contexts.

Paratextual Material in Contemporary YA Novels

Paratexts in twenty-first century YA novels are varied and capacious. They frame and expand on the text, providing opportunities for readers to explore related content. For example:

- Readers are able to visit and tour Forks, Washington, the town author Stephenie Meyer used as the setting for the *Twilight Saga*. Although Meyer admits she had never visited Forks before borrowing it for the setting of her four novels, she has stated that its reported high volume of annual rainfall made it an optimal environment for her fictional characters. The town has enjoyed the new popularity imparted by the books, and official tours of Forks take visitors to locations central to Meyer’s novels.
- *Universal Studios* in Orlando, Florida is home to *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*, a pair of interactive theme parks that allow guests to experience Hogwarts School of

Witchcraft and Wizardry, the neighboring town of Hogsmeade, and Diagon Alley in London. The Hogwarts Express ferries guests between the two parks where they can experience theme park rides created from book content, eat meals at restaurants from the seven *Harry Potter* books, and purchase magical accessories necessary to study at Hogwarts.

- J. K. Rowling helped to create and continues to maintain *Pottermore*, a website that allows individuals to participate in an interactive reading of the seven *Harry Potter* books and experience new content Rowling created for the site.
- Fan fiction continues to grow as readers write back to their favourite works of fiction. Fans create new content using characters and settings from published books, imagining them in new situations and new relationships. Fans expand on the fictional world created by an author.
- Publishers create alternate cover art for books depending on the intended audience. For example, *Harry Potter* is a children's book, and its illustrated, fantastical covers reflect content for younger readers. However, editions of *Harry Potter* intended to attract adult readers present much more stark and less childish cover art. Consider also a book like *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness (2011). Two versions of the book were published: the first, for adolescents and young adults, includes illustrations by Jim Kay (who also illustrated the 2015 edition of the first *Harry Potter* novel), and the second, for adults, is devoid of illustrations.
- Indie movie adaptations of several YA novels accompany the published texts. For example, Louis Sachar's *Holes* (1998), Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), and Jesse Andrews's *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (2012) have

been adapted into movies. Rather than providing the same blockbuster movie experience associated with YA series such as *The Hunger Games*, the *Twilight Saga*, and *Harry Potter*, movie adaptations of *Holes*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* are considered “indie” or independent films, which are produced by a minor, rather than a major, movie studio. Author commentary, social media posts, speculation about casting, set visits, and promotion constitute much of the paratextual material associated with these adaptations.

- Authors can create Twitter and Instagram accounts for their fictional characters. For example, Jenny Han, author of *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2014), consistently updates social media content for her characters Lara Jean Covey and Peter Kavinsky.

French literary theorist Gerard Genette first discussed paratexts in *Seuils* (1987), later translated as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). He explained that a literary work is rarely presented without accompanying textual productions such as “an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations” (1). While these markers do not necessarily *belong* to a text, they do “surround and extend it” in order to present a complete work to an audience. Paratexts are therefore transactional spaces, thresholds that mark the inside and outside of a text. Genette suggests a preface is most often used to introduce a text to all readers, while other paratexts are aimed more specifically at critics or booksellers.

Genette also distinguishes between the *public* paratext and the *private* paratext. The public paratext describes the material available to readers, which includes the information on the cover: title, author, cover art, and notation. Private paratexts, on the other hand, are addressed “orally or in writing, to ordinary individuals, who may or may not be well known and are not supposed to go around talking about them” (9). These paratexts may be the author’s personal

notes or diary entries, or letters that are not in the public arena. He also distinguishes between the peritext and the epitext: the peritext is everything *inside* the bound volume (and on the covers) while the epitext is outside of the volume. The epitext is composed of public or private elements such as interviews, reviews, correspondence, and diary entries. The amount of epitextual material has increased exponentially over time, influenced by factors such as the rise of mass media and the Internet. In this chapter, I will be using the term “paratext” or “paratextual materials” to denote all additional materials, rather than distinguishing between the peritext and the epitext.

Much of the paratextual material surrounding contemporary YA novels is interactive and digital. However, the theory Genette first posited also applies to these new novels, as readers can learn much from material such as the preface, title, cover art, and author bio. For example, many YA novels include an “Interview with the Author” in the end pages, a series of questions that readers are encouraged to read to perhaps better understand a writer’s intention for writing a book. John Green’s *Looking for Alaska* (2005) includes a multi-page interview with the author, which asks him questions about his inspiration for the book. This “bonus material” appears in the 2007 publication of the book, released by Speak, an imprint of Penguin. Green is asked, for instance, “...just how autobiographical is *Looking for Alaska*” to which he responds “I have always danced around this question, and I think I’m going to continue dancing around it now.” He is also asked about the “unusual” structure of the book, the catalyst for writing the story, the deeper meaning of dialogue characters speak, and how the characters interact in the story. Two additional resources that readers can seek out for further information about Green supplement the interview questions. Both articles were written for the YA book review publication *Booklist*, one penned by Green’s mentor and Children’s Books Editor at *Booklist* Magazine, Ilene Cooper, and the other authored by Green himself.

Looking for Alaska also includes a set of Discussion Questions, perhaps imagining the book taking a starring role in a book club, or used for study in a high school setting. The questions ask readers to push their understanding of the story further and to imagine other possibilities for the characters after the novel ends. Discussion questions are fairly popular in YA novels, and appear near the end of the book. Perhaps YA novels are now staples of book clubs, or perhaps readers are demanding more material, which can extend the novel past its ending. This new material often appears in the second, or paperback edition, of many YA novels, although the novels publishers anticipate being bestsellers include this information in the first, or hardcover, edition. Consider also the didactic impulse these questions can have when books like *Looking for Alaska* are used as novel studies in high school classrooms. For example, Jandy Nelson's *The Sky is Everywhere* (2010) includes a ten-question discussion guide for the novel. *The Sky is Everywhere* was rereleased with new cover art and accompanying materials in advance of the publication of Nelson's second novel, *I'll Give You the Sun* (2014). Indeed, following the discussion questions and an interview with Nelson is a fourteen-page excerpt from *I'll Give You the Sun*, in order to connect readers to Nelson's subsequent work. These excerpts are not new, and are frequently included in mystery and series novels in order to gain interest in the subsequent publication.

Additionally, several YA novels contain an Author's Note. If a series of interview questions do not provide a method for writers to reflect on their writing, or describe their impetus and inspiration for the novel, then most often an Author's Note provides them with the space to engage with this process. Robyn Schneider's note in *Extraordinary Means* (2015) is six pages in length and discusses her inspiration for the subject material in the novel. *Extraordinary Means* follows two teenagers – Laine and Sadie – who are relegated to Latham House, a sanatorium for

teenagers who have contracted a new and deadly strain of tuberculosis. Schneider explains that she felt compelled to write about the disease because of its rise in recent decades, evolving to resist the medications used to treat it. Her background in bioethics led her to study the disease, and to connect it to a contemporary context. She explains that she created a story that aligned with a coming-of-age novel, where she could imagine “how a teenager would be transformed by the experience of moving from the institution of a school to the institution of a medical facility.” The note delves deeper into the novel’s material and allows readers to trace Schneider’s inspiration and influence for writing her novel.

Finally, many YA novels that are works of historical fiction often contain an appendix of material that informs the historical content of the story. For example, Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014) contains eight pages of black and white photographs to accompany the autobiographical material. *Brown Girl Dreaming* is a memoir, one that follows Jackie from childhood through adolescence. Not only do the photographs present a type of veracity that highlights the truthfulness of her narrative, but they also allow readers to connect to the story on a more personal level by engaging with the real people who populate the novel. Additionally, the first few pages include a family tree that traces Jackie’s family history to her great-grandparents (viii and vii). Jack Gantos similarly uses an appendix of black and white photographs from his childhood in *Dead End in Norvelt* (2011). The photographs show Jack, his family, and the town of Norvelt that he writes about in the novel (his protagonist is also named Jack Gantos). These historical appendices provide readers with evidence of historical veracity, and provide context through visual images meant to accompany the text. Both writers acknowledge the importance of visual communication, or the pairing of both text and image in order to further comprehension and connection.

YA literature includes print paratexts that physically accompany the text; however, oftentimes these are also available in a digital form. For example, Green, Nelson, Schneider, Woodson, and Gantos have extensive content on their personal websites that communicate similar information as that included in the back of their books. Although these types of paratexts align with Genette's conception of paratextuality, these YA novels have enacted a digital shift, meaning that YA readers are often encouraged to move to online spaces in order to find materials that accompany printed novels. Paratexts are enhanced by digital spaces, which provide new ways of conceptualizing and presenting material related to the text. Digital environments expand the possibilities of paratextuality, and create an open-ended and limitless space for readers to explore parallel texts. They are able to participate in as much, or as little, external reading as they want. Additionally, paratexts are increasingly commonplace in discussions about YA novels. Readers of YA now expect material adjacent and parallel to the text. Therefore, of particular interest to me is Genette's acknowledgement that paratexts are changed by "period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition, with varying degrees of pressure" meaning that they are altered by the contexts that necessarily shape them (3). In her book *You're Never Weird on the Internet (Almost): A Memoir* (2015), acclaimed "Queen of the Geeks" Felicia Day inadvertently addresses the evolution of paratexts by describing her experience with computer games in the 1980s. Day's book elaborates on Genette's acknowledgement that paratexts change. In this case, advancements in technologies in the twenty-first century have provided the impetus for paratexts to become more digital.

Day is perhaps best known for her web series *The Guild*, which she wrote and starred in from 2007 to 2013. The series followed her character Cyd Sherman, a young woman addicted to the online role-playing game, *World of Warcraft* (WoW). The show was based on Day's own

addiction to WoW, which she details in her memoir. Day was exposed to both computer games and the Internet early in their invention, and she describes her obsession with a computer game called Ultima (1981-Present) that she played throughout her adolescence. When her family accessed the Internet through a prototype program called Prodigy, she was able to connect with other Ultima players on online message boards. The individuals meeting on the message boards called themselves the “Ultima Dragons,” and although Day notes that discussing the game was the main function of the online space, content eventually became much more varied. For example, Day wrote poetry inspired by the game and also contributed to a separate message board called the “Drunken Stupor,” where members posted “what I now understand to be ‘fanfic’” about their Ultima characters (45). The message board facilitated real-life meet-ups, where the Ultima Dragons talked about the game face-to-face. Day emphasizes the connections she made on online message boards. She explains that the Ultima Dragons not only wrote back and expanded the content of Ultima, but they also found a common ground for connecting with one another. Advances in digital technology connected Day to other Ultima players through Internet message boards. These paratexts – or the material that *surrounds* the text – extend past cover art, title, and preface, as new digital technologies facilitate the expansion of texts. Day addresses how she was able to write back to computer game text and respond to the content through new digital technologies, specifically, the Internet.

Today, marketing and selling YA is intricately tied to the production of paratexts. The monetization of paratexts comes in many different forms. For example, author Robyn Schneider, who has written the bestselling *The Beginning of Everything* and *Extraordinary Means*, produces a series of YouTube videos where she recommends beauty products. Schneider interned for YouTube in her early twenties, and perhaps her experience with the company has influenced the

high quality of her videos. Typically, YouTube users who recommend beauty products are sent these products by various makeup companies in exchange for a publicized review. Beauty and fashion YouTube channels can provide an income and career for some individuals through advertising revenue (both through YouTube ads and from beauty and fashion companies) and through the promotion of products. Schneider does not acknowledge whether or not the products she reviews are sent to her on behalf of the company, yet she is effectively advertising a series of products to viewers interested in her content; presumably, teenagers who read her books.

Nonetheless, she does receive advertising revenue from the ads that appear in advance of her video content. She also focuses the timing of her videos to occur simultaneously with the build-up to a new book publication, or to keep readers interested between books. In a similar vein, Emery Lord sends out a monthly newsletter to subscribers, which includes a miscellany of thoughts as well as excerpts and highlights from her social media accounts. She informs readers of her progress on manuscripts, and also provides background information about her inspirations. She creates a collection of material that might interest readers in-between her “official” publications, behind-the-scenes material that isn’t accessible to all readers; the newsletter requires an email for sign-up. Lord doesn’t acknowledge whether her publisher asked her to provide this interstitial content. Based on her high activity across social media, most likely it was voluntarily. Yet authors such as Neil Gaiman have made clear the way publishers insist on this creation of paratextual material. Gaiman famously began his online blog in February 2001 at the request of his publisher, just a few months in advance of the June publication of his adult novel *American Gods*. He was meant to comment on the final process of creating the novel, because he imagined if he had kept the journal throughout the writing process, it would be quite boring for a reader. He started blogging after submitting the final manuscript,

...thus sparing the reading world lots of entries like “Feb 13th: wrote some stuff. It was crap.” and “Feb 14th: wrote some brilliant stuff. This is going to be such a good novel. Honest it is.” followed by “Feb 15th. no, it’s crap” and so on. It was a bit like wrestling a bear. Some days I was on top. Most days, the bear was on top. So you missed watching an author staring in bafflement as the manuscript got longer and longer, and the deadlines flew about like dry leaves in a gale, and the book remained unfinished. (Gaiman, “Now We Are Ten”)

Gaiman does not reveal whether or not he was compensated for this online blogging.

By putting themselves out there in digital ways, authors remain visible even when they do not have a current publication on the market. They rely on the fact that some readers are searching for information that will carry them between publications, or that will inform them about the personal life of YA writers. This paratextual information can keep readers engaged and interested between publications, or increase the demand for their writing (both published and online). I have always found Jaclyn Moriarty’s blog one of the most engaging models of this type of engagement, because she writes her blog in the same voice that she uses in her YA novels. Reading her blog posts – which are almost all over one thousand words in length – is almost the equivalent of reading a short story, albeit with an autobiographical edge. I read Moriarty’s posts voraciously between publications; in 2014 she stopped posting on Blogspot, and moved to Tumblr, where she updates much more frequently and interacts more with her readers. There is a wide range of paratextual material created by YA writers, which not only holds the place of the author between publications, but also generates revenue in a variety of ways.

Paratexts thus fill the spaces between book publications. As series books become more and more lucrative for adaptation across media, providing additional and supplemental

information in digital locations becomes a way to increase interest in and expand the world of a series. Publishers often release series books over several years. Oftentimes, the schedule is demanding. For example, the *Chaos Walking* trilogy by Patrick Ness (2008-2010) saw publication of *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), *The Ask and the Answer* (2009), and *Monsters of Men* (2010) over three years. Each is over 500 pages in length, and adheres to a strict publishing schedule. Readers did not need to wait long to satisfy their need to know what happened next in the series. However, oftentimes authors and publishers also benefit from a longer publishing schedule for series books. Take, for example, Stephanie Perkins' loosely connected series that includes *Anna and the French Kiss* (2010), *Lola and the Boy Next Door* (2011), and *Isla and the Happily Ever After* (2014). Perkins spoke extensively about the delay between the second and third novels in her loosely connected series. On the second episode of YA author Sara Zarr's popular literary podcast *This Creative Life*, Zarr interviewed Stephanie Perkins and asked specifically about her publication schedule with Dutton Books, an imprint of Penguin. Zarr asked,

You blogged a little bit about the process of writing that book and deciding to postpone that from its original publication date... What led you to that decision of giving yourself more time for the book and how, you know, was that a really hard decision to make, and how you feel about it now?

Perkins noted that each book was published a year after its predecessor, and the third installment, *Isla and the Happily Ever After*, was supposed to be released in 2012. However, Perkins notes that she underwent a difficult and exhausting writing process with her second book, *Lola and the Boy Next Door*, one that left her, "very, very burnt out and unable to write for half a year, maybe even longer than that... I think burnout is, is getting to be kind of a common thing in young adult

literature.” Zarr and Perkins addressed the YA publishing schedule significantly in their conversation, noting that the ideal for publishers is a book a year from authors. Zarr noted, “To do a book a year, you really can’t do anything else and, uh, I don’t really see how that schedule is sustainable in any real way or for any extended amount of time.” Although Perkins noted in the podcast that *Isla and the Happily Ever After* was going to be published a year later than scheduled (in 2013 instead of 2012), it was not released until a year after that, in August 2014. Perkins benefitted from the openness of her many conversations about the YA publishing schedule. She posted multiple posts on her blog *Natural Artificial* on a BlogSpot website between the publications, generating interest in her series and in the resulting publication of *Isla and the Happily Ever After*.

The space between publications allows paratextual materials to flourish and function as interstitial material tying texts together. Joe Hill, son of horror writer Stephen King, created a comic book series entitled *Locke & Key* that ran from 2008 to 2013. The series focuses on the three adolescent Locke siblings – Tyler, Kinsey, and Bode – as they relocate to Lovecraft, MA after the murder of their father. They live in the family estate of Keyhouse and adjust to their new reality. The popular series was optioned for a TV series by Fox in 2011, but ultimately the network did not pick up the pilot. The pilot trailer is still available to view on YouTube. Since then, readers of the series have highly awaited a new adaptation, which has alternately been rumoured to be released as a TV series or a movie trilogy.

Meanwhile, as fans have awaited adaptations like these to go into production, *Locke & Key* was adapted into an audio dramatization and released for free (between October and November 2015) by audiobook platform Audible. Over fifty voice actors provided their vocal talents for the audio production, including Tatiana Maslany (*Orphan Black*), Haley Joel Osment

(*The Sixth Sense*), Kate Mulgrew (*Star Trek Voyager*; *Orange is the New Black*), and Stephen King. Paratextual material often serves the purpose of a placeholder, providing just enough information to carry a reader from one publication date to the next. In an interview with Steve Foxe of *Paste Magazine*, Hill commented on the adaptation:

I did not handle adapting the story to audio play. Audible handled the adaptation, and that's how it should be. I did my version of the story. Whether the audio recording is brilliant or terrible, it won't change one word of what's there in the comic. Me and [comic book artist] Gabriel Rodriguez did that together to the best of our abilities. We did our beginning, our middle and our end, and we wrapped it up and walked away. If there are other versions of the story that come along, if there's an audio play, a TV show, a video game, those will not be the same as the comic. Those will be some new version of it and will inevitably involve other people's contributions and points of view. That said, I've listened to enough of the audio play to know that it's pretty faithful to the source material. (qtd. in Foxe.)

The adaptation of his comic book series necessitated the use of a full voice cast and an extensive array of sound effects in order to translate the visual medium to audio.

Paratexts can increase interest through movie adaptations, comic book adaptations, information posted by writers and publishers, tweets, blog entries, and other digital communication, merchandise, audiobook releases, interviews, excerpts, and short stories. Series books can maintain interest in the story and story world through a proliferation of paratextual materials, as they become the sustaining factor of lengthy publication schedules. These paratexts can be created by the author, but they can also provide an outlet for other writers, artists, and

collaborators to play with the unofficial and unauthorized space between publications, as Audible seems to have done with their adaptation of *Locke and Key*.

Paratexts transform and affect the types of books being published. Because series books often carry readers through multiple books published over several years, they are often an important way to maintain revenue for publishers. If publishers can retain readers over the course of a 3-7 book series, rather than lose them to other books, authors, and publishing houses, then they can keep the reading revenue in-house. YA series novels flourish in the twenty-first century in a way standalone novels do not. While standalone novels are often the ones nominated for important awards, series books generate much more revenue. The state of the YA publishing market suggests that publishers are more interested in encouraging writers to craft a series than create a standalone novel. For example, take Lance Rubin's *Denton Little's Death Date* (2015), a novel that takes place in a world in which everyone knows in advance the day on which they will die. Teenage protagonist Denton Little discovers that he is going to die on the same day as his Senior Prom, which is a mere two days after the book starts. An intriguing premise, however, is marred by the promise of a sequel, in which a government conspiracy, secret experimentations, and the mystery of Denton's missing mother contribute to the fact that Denton does not, in fact, die on the day he is supposed to. Although the sequel promises to delve deeper into the conspiracy, it undermines the fact that by continuing to write about a universe where individuals do not know when they are going to die after all, Rubin is simply providing readers with their real-world experience. Sequels, however, ensure that readers who bought the first book will be intrigued by the notion of a second, one that continues world-building as well as the promise of more books sold.

Encouraging authors to create series rather than standalone novels is not new. Louisa May Alcott was deeply influenced by her editor Thomas Niles, who encouraged her to quickly write *Little Men* in 1871, just three years after the first volume of *Little Women* was published. *Jo's Boys* followed in 1886, rounding out the trilogy. Niles's motives were driven by the market and by the profit in-demand sequels such as *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys* would bring. Alcott was much less motivated to continue writing about her characters from *Little Women*. Yet today, the YA market is much more lucrative than it was in the late 1800s, when Mark Twain was requesting that his British agent reassign *Tom Sawyer* from the category of children's literature to the category of adult fiction, which was more profitable. YA now dominates a large share of the publishing market, and publishers and editors shape the category more rigorously in response. As Niles shaped Alcott's work, we can point to individuals in the twenty-first century who are determining the course of YA. Take literary agent Barry Goldblatt, for example. Goldblatt worked in the publishing industry for ten years before creating his own literary agency, which now represents some of the most influential YA authors. He is one of the most popular literary agents for YA, and secures high figure advances with reputable publishing houses for his clients. These clients include: Angela Johnson, an award-winning author who has written over forty books for children and teens; Shannon Hale, who rewrites fairy tales for children, adolescents, and young adults; Jo Knowles, who focuses on realistic fiction; Lauren Myracle, who wrote the popular "Internet Girls" series that was composed of the emails, text messages, and chats that circulated among a group of girls; Ellen Oh, CEO and President of the We Need Diverse Books campaign; and Sara Ryan, who writes a wide range of YA books, comics, and graphic novels. Goldblatt also represents his wife, Libba Bray, who writes prolifically within the category of YA and who won the Printz Award for her novel *Going Bovine* (2009). Goldblatt's

clients represent a significant segment of the YA market. Agent Jodi Reamer likewise represents many of the most visible YA authors of the twenty-first century. She is best known as the agent who secured publication for Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*; however, she also represents John Green, Ransom Riggs and his wife Tahereh Mafi, Kami Garcia, and Ally Condie. This sample of clients is prolific, and represents the public faces of YA. Riggs, Mafi, Garcia, and Condie are popular for their multi-book series that fall into the genres of dystopia, fantasy, and thriller. Certainly, Reamer's clients have authored some of the most lucrative YA novels. Goldblatt and Reamer are agents who represent some of the most visible authors in YA, consistently selling their books and shaping the category of literature. This material exists outside of these authors' published works; however, a knowledge of these relationships adds to an understanding of how authors are paired or grouped together for author tours, or how they promote and interact with each other's books online.

YA literature is becoming less about the process of reading a single novel, but is instead about creating material that will carry readers between new publications by their favorite authors and in their favorite series. Publishers encourage readers to stay active and, at times, practice critical thinking in the space between publications, ensuring readers maintain a high degree of engagement and interest. Publishers might ask themselves: How can we retain readers during the months and years between subsequent publications?

The goal of YA publishers is to activate a community, before, while, and after readers read a novel. The act of reading does not necessarily generate the conditions necessary to create a community; the process of reading is often a solitary activity. However, publishers can actively create communities for readers to join in the space between publications. For example, after the publication of Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun*, the novel was chosen for an online book

club created by Canadian bookstore chain Chapters. Readers across Canada were asked to read *I'll Give You the Sun* and then discuss the book through online communities: on Twitter, Facebook, and Chapters blog posts. Readers generate content to share with one another and to read; this content is created *around* the novel. Although fan fiction is a prominent paratext, not all readers want to write back and participate *in* the novel. Instead, readers might want to read content that has been produced in conjunction with the text, but created by more authorized writers.

While Genette defined paratextuality as made up of the physical objects that surround a text, media and digital paratexts are much more liminal and less tactile. Contemporary YA novels exemplify these new types of paratexts. Scholars Henry Jenkins and Jonathan Gray inform and shape a conversation about the potential for paratextuality, or, as they see it, its function in shaping future media contexts. Jonathan Gray takes up Genette's definition of paratextuality in his book *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (2010), arguing that paratexts have a different role in contemporary contexts, especially when considered alongside television programs. Similarly, Henry Jenkins coined the term "transmedia storytelling" in order to describe texts whose stories are not entirely contained by the printed novel. Instead, a story is told across several different mediums: books, TV series, movies, comic books, and video games. Consumers who are anxious to "read" the entire story must cross media boundaries in order to do so.

Gray and Jenkins provide two models for understanding paratextuality. Gray suggests that paratexts are limitless. Anything that is not the original text itself – for example, Handler's *Why We Broke Up* or Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* – is a paratext, ranging from a tweet, a piece of fan fiction, an interview, an adaptation, a critical commentary, or an example of fan art.

These are webs that spiral off of the original texts, becoming fainter and fainter as the distance grows between text and paratext. Of course, some of this paratextual material might at times usurp the primary text. For example, Handler and Green have each been at the center of controversies that have temporarily become the narrative that takes the forefront in their professional lives. I will return to these later in the chapter.

Jenkins's vision for paratextuality, through the lens of transmedia storytelling, is both more subtle and more participatory. Jenkins figures contemporary consumers of content as "hunters and gatherers" (*Convergence Culture* 21) who put the story together themselves, and through a wide variety of media. Jenkins insists that transmedia storytelling is more in the hands of the reader. Jenkins states, "Reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption. Redundancy burns up fan interest and causes franchises to fail. Offering new levels of insight and experience refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty" (96). Transmedia storytelling also offers parallel transmedia texts that are not paratexts in the way Gray defines them – movie trailers, reviews, interviews – but instead engage in the "canon," or original, content in a different way. Transmedia storytelling, then, offers a more participatory and in-depth experience than does chasing down all of the paratextual threads, both important and inconsequential, as Gray models. Jenkins insists there are new story structures at play in the twenty-first century, and they can create more dynamic experiences with an original text, even though they run parallel to it. These structures "create complexity by expanding the range of narrative possibility rather than pursuing a single path with a beginning, middle, and end" (119). Content flows, Jenkins states, and creates new relationships between writers, readers, and publishers.

Gray and Jenkins's examinations of media and digital paratexts will inform my discussion about the shape of the YA paratext. In this chapter, I argue for expanding Genette's definition of paratexts to include the more participatory elements of contemporary paratextuality. YA novels encourage readers to develop the skills necessary to navigate multi-layered and transmedia texts, which are becoming essential components of these books. Digital paratexts are shaping readers' understanding and interpretation of YA novels. They are also normalizing interactivity. I will look closely at authors Daniel Handler and John Green in order to focus on innovative and *digital* paratexts; that is, those that are not physically attached to a novel. I will focus on Henry Jenkins's "transmedia storytelling" in conjunction with my discussion of Handler, while Jonathan Gray's notion of media paratexts will support a discussion about John Green. Finally, I will speculate about the future of YA paratexts. As a result, this chapter will examine the shape of paratextuality in recent YA novels, both digital and physical.

Daniel Handler Meets Henry Jenkins: Transmedia Storytelling and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

Popular children's author Daniel Handler writes novels under his own name as well as under his more popular pseudonym, Lemony Snicket. While Handler tends to write publications for adult readers under his own name, he primarily writes for children and young people as Snicket. As Handler, he has written four books for adults – *The Basic Eight* (1998), *Watch Your Mouth* (2000), *Adverbs* (2006), and *We Were Pirates* (2015) – as well as his YA novel *Why We Broke Up* (2011). *The Basic Eight* crosses over the category of young adult literature, as it takes place at a high school loosely based on the one that Handler himself attended. As Lemony Snicket, he is much more prolific. As Snicket, he has written thirteen books in the long-running middle

grade series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999-2006), which have sold more than 60 million copies worldwide (Wired); seven companion books within the series; four books in the *All the Wrong Questions* series, in which Snicket is both author and protagonist; and seven picture books. Much of Handler's success comes from separating himself from Snicket and creating a "fictional" author by means of abundant paratextual material.

Lemony Snicket

In her article "Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*: Daniel Handler and Marketing the Author," Kendra Magnusson discusses the way Handler relies on a fabricated paratextual context in order to maintain his public persona, usefully separating author from "handler."

Magnusson posits this as an effect of contemporary celebrity culture, where "an author's public persona is entangled in the mass production and consumption of literature" (86). Lemony Snicket is best known as the author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, a thirteen-book series that follows the fictional Baudelaire triplets when they become orphans in Snicket's fictional world. They are shuffled between a series of guardians, and their situation grows more and more dire as the books progress. Meanwhile, Count Olaf, a pernicious figure who plots to steal the Baudelaire inheritance, pursues the triplets. Handler and his publisher have released details about Snicket over the course of the publishing history of this series, imagining him as a reclusive, mysterious writer of indistinguishable origin. For example, the website created for *A Series of Unfortunate Events* offers quite an ambiguous biography of Snicket, which includes the following:

Lemony Snicket was born before you were, and is likely to die before you as well. His family has roots in a part of the country which is now underwater, and his childhood was spent in the relative splendor of the Snicket Villa which has since become a factory, a

fortress and a pharmacy and is now, alas, someone else's villa. To the untrained eye, Mr. Snicket's hometown would not appear to be filled with secrets. Untrained eyes have been wrong before. (Snicket, "The Afflicted Author")

Two author photographs by Meredith Heuer show Snicket with his back turned to the camera, although his suit jacket and top hat are clearly visible. Information provided about Snicket does not actually tell readers much about the fictional author himself. Consider *Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography* (2002), which plays into ideas of authorship and authenticity. Readers of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* might be familiar with the presentation of information that does not provide answers or explanation. While many mysteries, indiscriminate clues, and uncertain origins plague the series itself, Snicket suggests that all mysteries will eventually unravel – *if* the reader continues reading. Yet, by the thirteenth and final installment of the series, the mysteries that may have hooked readers initially only multiply, and do not offer the satisfaction of an ending neatly tied up. The thirteen books offer information, character development, and plot movement, but they do not provide a resolution. Readers are not meant to finish the series confident in their interpretation of either the books or their author.

While Handler carefully avoided association with Lemony Snicket while the series was in publication, he has since been much more open about his creation of the fictional author as a literary and marketing device. Handler's account of how he created the pseudonym Lemony Snicket was documented on the online magazine *Wired* in 2012. The name, Handler recounts, originated in a telephone conversation with a conservative organization whose materials he was interested in acquiring while researching cultural commentary for his first book, *The Basic Eight*. Rather than allowing his real name to be placed on the mailing address for the organization, he identified himself as Lemony Snicket over the phone:

And I thought to myself – during the pause that followed on the phone – I thought, “That was a really terrible name to say. Out of all the fake names you could have given, that’s the least believable one.” And then she just said, “Is that spelled how it sounds?” And I said, “Yes,” and I said, “Read that back to me,” because I had no idea how it sounded like it was spelled. And that was the first time that the name Lemony Snicket existed, and I began to use it for various pseudonyms, prankish things. (Wired)

Handler admits he subsequently used the pseudonym to write angry letters to the editors of newspapers. Eventually, he decided to use the name when writing for children, deciding to “writ[e] under the name of the narrator rather than the name of the author” (Wired).

Many factors contributed to the production of Lemony Snicket as fictional author and character, aided by Handler’s distancing of himself from his series; for several years, he did not publically claim ownership of the text. Indeed, Snicket’s invented personality has often necessitated Handler to step in at literary events, signings, and interviews in the place of his larger-than-life pseudonym. When present at author signings, Handler presents himself as Snicket’s “handler,” and signs autographs on behalf of the author.

Perhaps the concept of “transmedia storytelling” best describes Handler’s success with Lemony Snicket. In his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006), Henry Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as “the art of world making” where consumers “chas[e] down bits of the story across media channels, compar[e] notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborat[e] to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience” (21). The story, then, is told across many different formats, such as printed books, movies, TV, websites, and video games. Consumers (readers) must navigate all of these formats in order to fully participate in, or read,

the entirety of the story. Jenkins notes that all of these media components are necessary in order for the reader to engage with the story in its entirety. He insists that parts of a movie might not make sense to a viewer until he/she plays the accompanying video game. Similarly, clues presented in a book might not be fully understood until the reader reads the accompanying comic book. Back-story, Jenkins explains, may be understood through a series of shorts on the Internet, viewable only after consumers have seen the movie (94). In this way, “The most committed consumers track down data spread across multiple media, scanning each and every text for insights into the world” (95). A single author cannot possibly produce all of these texts, and perhaps it is the creative capacity for collaboration and inspiration that is so important to twenty-first century paratexts.

Convergence, Jenkins explains, is the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between media industries, and audience movement between media platforms in order to find a compelling entertainment experience (2). Media flow directs content from one format to another, allowing “readers” to migrate among types. As media evolve and adapt to changing cultural contexts, content can usefully be delivered in new and evocative ways.

Jenkins elaborates on these ideas by describing the difference between *delivery technologies* and *media* (13). Delivery technologies, Jenkins explains, can become obsolete, can die, and can be forgotten. These are the tools that we use to access media content, or different mediums: they include the 8-track, the Walkman, the VCR, and the DVD player. We have seen these technologies become obsolete over the past few decades, updated by other tools that we can use to access media. For example, the 8-track and the Walkman were used to access recorded sound; the VCR and the DVD were used to access visual content. A more contemporary example is the medium of television. Traditionally, we have required the TV as the delivery tool for this

content. Now, streaming services online enable us to use laptops, computers, and tablets to access television content. The tools that we use to access media become obsolete. Mediums, Jenkins insists, evolve to suit new contexts.

Jenkins describes media convergence as impacting the way that we consume media. He cites *multitasking* as one such way we have adapted to the convergence of media: an individual might work on a Word Document, text his/her friends, respond to email, check social media accounts, listen to music, peruse popular websites, and watch streaming video at the same time. The convergence and accessibility of media makes this possible.

Jenkins suggests that new consumers are therefore more active and interested in participatory content than old consumers, whom he describes as passive, static, and predictable. New consumers, he states, are migratory and will move among media in order to consume content. Connection is important to contemporary readers while, in the past, Jenkins insists that readers were isolated and disconnected from one another, or at least unable to access connection on a digital scale (18-9). Perhaps these distinctions have contributed to the popularity of Lemony Snicket, whose ambiguous and ill-defined role as author, character, and narrator requires readers to assemble his presence by engaging with information presented across different media. If transmedia storytelling is “the art of world making,” then using its facets and techniques in order to create Snicket’s surprising existence suggests that it can also be utilized to suggest the existence of a character (21). Readers must engage in participation in order to glean new information about this remarkable fictional individual.

As many authors became more and more accessible through online platforms such as Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and the blogs that they maintain, a popular children’s writer like Lemony Snicket instead continues to use more traditional (and less accessible) means of

communication. For example, any communication for Snicket is directed to a physical address supplied through HarperCollins Children's Book Publishers, necessitating readers use snail mail to connect with the author (Snicket, "The Afflicted Author"). In January 2014, science fiction and fantasy blog io9 (an imprint of Gawker) posted an example of how Lemony Snicket responded to fan mail sent over a decade ago (Davis). The letter reads,

nly two things are more hazardous than writing to me during these times. They are eating mussels in July and receiving a reply from me, both of which may leave you feverish, shaking, and alone.

However, it can also be very uncomfortable to wait day after day for a reply that never comes, as I have since my last letter to a dead friend.

Consequently, I am sending you a letter containing Very Few Details.

Accept my humble thanks and fervent wishes for your continued safety, as well as the safety of the familiar-looking neighbor with whom you have never spoken.

With all due respect,

Lemony Snicket (qtd. in Davis)

The rushed letter is missing several alphabetical letters which, when put in order, spell out a hidden message – Olaf Nearby – an explanation for how quickly it was written, and how disjointed the subject matter is. Snicket asks his readers to engage actively in the receipt of a response to their own fan mail, and to 1) notice that the letter is not complete, in fact, there are letters missing from several words, 2) understand the message without engaging with the code, and 3) understand the message while engaging with the code. While it is incredibly easy for writers to respond to an email or a tweet, some take the idea of fan mail one step further. Chuck

Palahniuk is well known for sending “stuff” to readers who write to him, sending substantial “care packages” through the mail (Palahniuk).

Snicket’s response to fan mail is tangentially related to the text, paratextual material that continues the narrative of the story. As well, the “coded message” keeps with Snicket’s style of writing in *The Series of Unfortunate Events*, where he continually uses different writing techniques; for example, repeating a page of a book when writing about déjà vu and including visual clues for the next book in the cover illustrations of the current one.

Communities that formed around the activity of reading Lemony Snicket’s books were much more participatory, depicting an engaged twenty-first century audience. Jenkins notes that these communities are “defined through voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments” (27). Emotion – and the satisfaction of unlocking a piece of a larger mystery in Snicket’s series – is a resource, one that Handler mines throughout his series. Readers’ understanding of Snicket (and, to a lesser extent, Handler) is dependent on how much effort they are willing to put into following the story. Transmedia storytelling encourages a collaborative relationship with readers, one that is altered by reader feedback online (96). It also leads to exciting and vibrant productions and reproductions of the work. Indeed, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* was released as a movie in 2004, successfully adapting the first three books in the series into a full-length movie. It included actors such as Meryl Streep, Jude Law, and Jim Carey, and was a critical, and popular, success. However, the road to its adaptation was not so smooth. Although Handler was signed on to write the screenplay, he was not credited as the film’s writer when it was finally released in theatres. After eight drafts of the script, Handler was replaced by another screenwriter and ceased working

for Paramount Pictures. His experience visiting the set after being fired as the screenwriter was less than ideal. Handler told Andrew Goldman at *The New York Times*,

My clearest memory was visiting the set in a shutdown aircraft factory in Southern California, where they were building the lake. They said, “Here, you can help us make a decision.” They led me into this room where they had kind of giant casserole dishes of water and different squares of cement painted different shades of gray, and they said, “We’re trying to decide what shade of gray to paint the bottom of the lake.” It was the most boring thing I’d ever looked at in my life...they weren’t letting me pick the color, they were just continuing on with their day, and I got to watch. (Goldman)

Whether Handler’s next experience with the adaptation of his books will be successful or not remains to be seen. Netflix announced a new adaptation of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* in November 2014, this time as an episodic TV show rather than a movie. YouTube user Eleanora Poe released a trailer in June 2015. Fans of Lemony Snicket might recognize Poe from *Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography* and *The Penultimate Peril*, the twelfth book in the series. She is the editor-in-chief of fictional newspaper *The Daily Punctilio*, and is the sister of Arthur Poe, a principal character in the series (he appears or is mentioned in all thirteen books). Netflix quickly released a statement denying that their company released the trailer, and the consensus about the trailer is generally that it is fan-made. However, no such individual has claimed credit for the production, leading others to believe that the trailer is official and Netflix’s denial of its creation plays into the misdirections, mistaken and conflated identities, and obtuseness that characterizes the series. Many viewers have identified in-video clues that point towards the trailer being a satisfying adaptation of the series (which the movie failed to be), and that suggest Handler’s participation in its creation. For example, the record spinning on the

record player is *The Tragic Treasury* by The Gothic Archies, an album of thirteen songs that appeared on the audiobook versions of the series (narrated by actor Tim Curry). Musician Stephen Merritt of *The Magnetic Fields* recorded the songs. Merritt is close friends with Daniel Handler; on the tour for the album, Handler performed accordion live alongside Merritt.

Snicket functions in multifaceted ways, including inhabiting the roles of public author, narrator, and literary character. Kendra Magnusson, however, provides him with a fourth persona: “the subject of supplementary publications” (86). This is certainly the case with *All the Wrong Questions*, a four-book series published between 2012-2015 and authored by the fictional Snicket. In *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, Snicket figured as narrator and author, only briefly appearing in the novels in the form of small asides and interjections. In *All the Wrong Questions*, however, he is the adolescent protagonist, transporting readers back in time from the position he takes in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. There, he is an adult character with a certain authority to narrate the story of the Baudelaire triplets. Ostensibly, young readers (the new series is marketed as middle grade) can retrace Snicket’s steps and understand how he came to be embroiled in the story of the Baudelaires. This constellation of material allows readers to trace Snicket’s beginnings. He is character, subject, and writer; all three identities are created and maintained in order to market the books. It is perhaps Handler’s skill as both marketer and author that has allowed him to continue to expand his series through the use of his pseudonymous invention. Rather than subsuming a series like *All the Wrong Questions* into paratext, we can instead make a case that this series represents parallel transmedia storytelling. For readers who are unfamiliar with *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *All the Wrong Questions* becomes the primary text. Of course, Snicket’s thirteen book series is not merely paratext, but instead runs on a parallel track, part of the story universe, yet also outside of it.

Many contemporary YA novels are the result of publishers endeavoring to create a recognizable brand that they can license, option, and sell through a variety of different formats and media. Indeed, the world of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is represented through a thirteen-book series; supplemental book publications; journals, postcards, and posters; a movie adaptation; a forthcoming series on Netflix; thirteen audiobooks; a themed thirteen-song record by The Gothic Archies; and vast paratextual material that accompanies advance reading copy of Snicket's books. By separating himself from his books, Handler can participate in and support the kind of consumerism that his books rally against. He is not Snicket; Snicket's views are not his own. It is possible to view many YA novels – series especially – as soliciting young readers to continue to buy into a very specific type of world-building, one that is expanded upon in other formats and types. As fascinating as transmedia storytelling can be, it relies on consumers buying into a story that is transmitted across many different mediums, which may demand a variety of prices associated with purchasing products, engagement, and participation. Asking adolescents (and children) to buy into this multi-faceted engagement is disconcerting, as is the way purposeful marketing is insinuated into participation culture. Series like *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Twilight Saga*, *The Mortal Instruments*, and *A Series of Unfortunate Events* generate content among media, asking readers to invest money, time, and engagement in the products and productions that accompany their favorite books.

Handler's disavowal of Snicket protects him from being responsible for the anti-consumerism, anti-didactic, and frank advice Snicket espouses, and to create content that is as far-reaching as his readers. He rejects association with the rapid production of all things Snicket by disavowing himself of the responsibility of the writer. Snicket is also an interesting example of the way publishers market an author, and not just the book. Authors now have Twitter and

Facebook accounts, blogs, websites, digital interviews, audiobooks, and Instagram. Many informal paratexts created between book publications are authorized and controlled by authors.

Daniel Handler

When writing under his own name, Daniel Handler often participates in creating paratextual material. Handler (and publisher Little, Brown and Company) released a website for his YA novel *Why We Broke Up* before publication, a place where individuals could post stories about their breakups well in advance of the book release (which is about a fictional breakup). The website was created by Handler's publisher, Little and Brown Teen, and was designed using Tumblr. The website is advertised on the back flap of the dust jacket of *Why We Broke Up*, beneath the author descriptions. It is a very simple but well-produced website, with Maira Kalman's illustrations and handwritten font lifted from the book itself. While advertising the book, the website also encourages readers to share their own breakup stories. Just beneath the title, authors, book synopsis, and book cover on the website is the invitation, "That's their breakup story – what's yours?" There is a submission form individuals can use to share their breakup story (after accepting the Terms of Submission, which requires submitters to confirm that they are thirteen years old or older), and the option of allowing their story to fall under one of six categories (tagging their entries as one of the following): I can't believe how disgusting you were; I can't believe there was someone else; I can't believe you did that; I can't believe that's what you thought; I just can't believe it; I'd take you back in a minute. There are thousands of entries, breakup stories as short as one sentence and as long as several paragraphs. There is, of course, a place for "celebrity break-up stories" on the website, where celebrity authors such as Mo Willems, Lisa Brown (Handler's wife), Matthew Quick, Neil Gaiman, Jack

Gantos, David Levithan, Holly Black, Sara Zarr, Brian Selznick, and M. T. Anderson share their writing.

A video on the *Why We Broke Up* website shows Handler walking around Grand Central Station, interviewing travelers about love and breakups. It functions as a book trailer: a short video posted to YouTube that visually describes the content of the YA novel. Handler's ability to go with the flow and talk off the cusp is comedic and thoughtful. Interestingly, although *Why We Broke Up* is marketed as a YA novel, Handler is seen speaking only to adults in this video.

Whether this is a case of clearly ignoring the target audience of the book, or is instead an attempt to generate a crossover audience is unclear. A combination of ethics and risk avoidance might also have influenced executive decisions leading to Handler interviewing only adults, and the conflict that might arise from an older man interviewing young people about their breakups. He also acts as moderator and commenter on the website, responding to a handful of the break-up stories posted. His responses are humorous, and at times callous, but he does respond to several on the website. For example, the following break-up stories and responses appear on the website:

We broke up because you deserve someone who knows what they want and, incidentally, so do I.

Comment from Daniel: Someone who knows what they want is like someone who knows how to tame a tiger. It's much more interesting it [sic] they're wrong.

We hooked up. I stayed hooked. You kept fishing.

Comment from Daniel: The more you fish, the more worms in your life.

We broke up because it became more about lust than love. And he thought it was acceptable to flirt with other women because he always came back to me in the end.

What a pillock.

Comment from Daniel: I had to look up the term “pillock,” and learned it comes from the Scandinavian, meaning “penis.” I offer this because it may be of interest.

he made me read his manuscripts.

Comment from Daniel: Honey, is that you? (Handler, *The Why We Broke Up Project*)

Although Handler has seamlessly transitioned between authorial identities, there is one controversy that he has not been able separate from his work under either name. At the National Book Awards in November 2014, which he hosted, Handler reacted inappropriately after YA novelist Jacqueline Woodson won the award for “Young People’s Literature” for her free verse memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*. His comments followed her acceptance speech:

I told you! I told Jackie she was going to win. And I said that if she won, I would tell all of you something I learned this summer, which is that Jackie Woodson is allergic to watermelon. Just let that sink in your mind. And I said, “You have to put that in a book.” And she said, “You put that in a book.” And I said that I am only writing a book about a black girl who is allergic to watermelon if I get a blurb from you, Cornell West, Toni Morrison, and Barack Obama saying, “This guy’s okay. This guy’s fine.” (C-SPAN)

Handler apologized for his comments the next day, when news of his ill-timed “joke” made the news rounds. He also pledged to match donations up to \$100,000 for the YA campaign We Need Diverse Books, which attempts to draw more attention to the need for diversity in YA. Soon after, Woodson responded to Handler in an article for *The New York Times* entitled “The Pain of the Watermelon Joke.” She responded to the stereotype Handler encouraged, expressing her astonishment to “hear the watermelon joke – directed by the M.C., Daniel Handler, at me” (Woodson). Handler’s ignorance, Woodson stated, was at the heart of the comments he made. Handler’s comments came just weeks after his Netflix series was announced, and whether his

comments will affect its reception and viewership remains to be seen. Handler could not separate his private and public persona in the wake of such comments, as news outlets included his real name and pseudonym in most headlines: Daniel Handler, AKA Lemony Snicket. His comments decreased the gap between Handler and Snicket, and reminded readers of the fact that supporting *A Series of Unfortunate Events* means supporting Handler, a real person, whose inappropriate comments were widely heard and criticized.

Paratexts can be authorized and unauthorized, and Handler's behavior at the National Book Awards is an example of how an uncontrolled paratext can damage a writer's image, as well as the reception of his/her books. Readers participate in an interactive reading, one that crosses both official and unofficial boundaries.

John Green's Digital Paratexts: Brotherhood 2.0, Crash Course, and Tumblr

John Green is one of the most popular authors writing for teens today, and his books frequently appear on bestseller lists. For example, the New York Times Bestseller list for young adult paperback books in September 2015 included four John Green novels: 1) *Paper Towns*, 4) *Looking for Alaska*, 7) *The Fault in Our Stars*, and 9) *An Abundance of Katherines*. The popularity of *Paper Towns* can be attributed to the July 2015 release of the movie adaptation, which was also accompanied by a new trade paperback with a tie-in movie cover. *The New York Times* recently changed the way its bestseller lists are organized in order make its recommendations and suggestions much more effective in directing readers to the most exciting and popular books. Changes to the new lists mean that the previous category of books for young people has been divided into four categories: Middle Grade Paperback, Middle Grade Hardcover, Young Adult Paperback, and Young Adult Hardcover. Additionally, middle grade and YA series

books are now on a separate list, differentiating them from standalone novels in both categories. Before, *The New York Times* organized best sellers for adolescents in one broad category, combining middle grade and YA paperbacks and hardcovers. As a result, bestselling paperback titles (specifically movie tie-in editions) were overwhelming new hardcover publications in the category, meaning that the titles on the list were slow to evolve, get subbed out, or change. Readers were therefore not being exposed to new titles in the category, but were instead viewing the same titles recycled under different editions. These changes have particularly benefitted middle grade and young adult books, which had previously been lumped together on one list. That meant fewer books from each category could be recommended, and movie tie-in books and sequels often dominated the category. On the old list, John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* occupied three places on the bestseller list for Middle Grade and YA Novels at one point: the hardcover, the paperback, and the movie tie-in. As well, the old list did not differentiate between paperback and hardcover books. However, even with the new changes implemented, Green still displays a strong presence on the New York Times Bestsellers list. Bestsellers lists are another form of paratextual material, and a type that has the ability to influence a text's reception differently from Goodreads and Amazon reviews, an author's self-promotion on social media, or a book tour.

Green's first novel, *Looking For Alaska*, was published in 2005. The novel is set at a boarding school called Culver Creek Preparatory High School in Alabama, which protagonist Miles Halter attends after his parents agree he can go to boarding school. He quotes writer Francois Rabelais's last words, "I go to seek a Great Perhaps" to justify his choice to attend boarding school in his junior year of high school. While there, he befriends Chip "The Colonel" Martin, Takumi Hikohito, and Alaska Young, the girl he falls in love with. *Looking for Alaska*

begins “one hundred thirty-six days before” and ends “one hundred thirty-six days after” the central event of the novel. By placing the climax in the middle of the book, Green insures that his teenage protagonists are given equal time to lead up to the event, and to deal with its aftereffects. It was awarded the Michael J. Printz Award in 2006. Green has since followed up his first novel with several other YA publications. *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) followed protagonist Colin Singleton in his search to create “the Theorem of Underlying Katherine Unpredictability,” which would predict the chance that any two people would remain together in a relationship. Next, he co-authored *Let It Snow: Three Holiday Romances* (2008) with YA novelists Maureen Johnson and Lauren Myracle. Green’s novella was entitled “A Cheertastic Christmas Miracle.” The book was positively reviewed, and its rights were purchased by Universal Studios in 2014. His other collaboration was with author and editor David Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010). He returned to sole-authored novels with *Paper Towns* (2008), a coming of age novel that follows Quentin “Q” Jacobsen’s search for his neighbor Margo Roth Spiegelman, which was adapted into a movie in 2015. His latest, *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) is narrated by protagonist Hazel Grace Lancaster, who falls in love with another teenager named Augustus Waters when they meet at a support group for teens with cancer. It was a box office hit when the movie adaptation was released in June 2014. While Green has noted that his recent success and popularity has slowed down his writing schedule, he continues to produce content elsewhere.

Green presents perhaps a greater volume of paratextual material than his own physical book publications, and as such, only a representative sample of this material will be examined here. Green is a prolific user of both Twitter and Tumblr, posting multiple times a day, and interacting with fans and readers through these online platforms. These digital paratexts border the text, and also attempt to guide one’s reading of Green’s physical work, that is, his published

YA novels and short stories. While these digital paratexts do not necessarily accompany Green's YA novels, their presence contributes to readers' understanding of the author, his writing for young readers, and his online connection and communication.

These digital paratexts extend and reimagine Genette's original definition of paratextuality. Jonathan Gray's significant work *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (2010) is particularly important to a discussion of Green's digital paratexts. Gray insists "paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them" (6). Although paratexts may *start* texts (and this might include the markers Genette identifies of title, author, and preface), Gray notes that they also create and continue them. Digital paratexts are necessarily productive, not only providing readers with instructions and suggestions for how to read a text, but also generating supplemental material that extends, reinterprets, and prolongs the original text. In an age of attention when online information appears limitless, especially when it is composed in the "never-ending scroll" provided by platforms that monetize the production of content, paratexts help readers decide where to spend their time.

In an interview with Henry Jenkins, Gray reinforces his focus on media paratexts. He is interested, for example, in how trailers, reviews, DVD interviews and commentary, fan fiction and fan creations, and other such paratextual media alter our reception of a text. Whether paratexts are created before or after the text also affects reception and interpretation. Storytelling, therefore, occurs over time and across media. Media can be primary, such as movies, TV, books, comics, and videogames, but Gray also discusses how paratexts can arise out of supplementary media sources. These, he says, are "opening credit sequences, or DVD bonus materials, posters,

ad campaigns” (qtd. in Jenkins, “Anti-Fans”). He cites the first *Star Wars* trilogy as an example of how paratexts extend storytelling between films, providing viewers with other materials to hold them over until the release of the next film. Gray notes that *Star Wars* toys were the paratextual material that held viewer attention during the three-year gaps between films. Gray states, “The toys kept *Star Wars* alive by transferring the story and the world to the playground, and hence by keeping that galaxy from drifting far, far away” (qtd. in Jenkins, “Anti-Fans”). *Synergy* occurs, Gray notes, when all media paratexts are engaged, and a viewer navigates seamlessly between them, perhaps watching a movie trailer, eating from a fast-food restaurant that markets the tie-in for the movie, and purchasing the DVD after its release. Gray writes, “Hype and synergy abound, forming the streets, bridges, and trading routes of the media world, but also many of its parks, beaches, and leisure sites. They tell us about the media world around us, prepare us for that world, and guide us between its structures, but they also fill it with meaning, take up much of our viewing and thinking time, and give us the resources with which we will both interpret and discuss that world” (1). Paratexts work together through media contexts in order to create meaning about a text.

However, scholar Paul Grainge asks critics to remember the ephemeral nature of digital paratexts, which are created and discarded rapidly in the age of attention. Yet Grainge also acknowledges that Google and YouTube function as media archives, which allow digital content to retain a physical location on the Internet and continue to be shared among online communities (3). Consider too the digital archive provided by archive.org/The Wayback Machine, which allows users to examine past incarnations of online content. It is possible to search across, within, and through the Internet archive, and consider its present and past incarnations. Readers might deem this archival information irrelevant to their comprehension of paratextual materials,

yet it underlines the fact that these materials have physical form on the Internet and can be accessed from a wide range of geographical locations, while print-based paratexts can be lost with the introduction of a new edition and can be specific to place.

In 2007, John Green began a YouTube collaboration with his younger brother Hank Green. They proposed the project to one another as “Brotherhood 2.0,” a way to keep in touch through a series of short, recorded videos they addressed back and forth to one another daily over the course of a year. The project was a way of experimenting with online video, and, Green says, “to make videos that would make each other laugh and that would encourage us to be in better touch” (“Youtube and Online Video Questions”). Rather than communicating privately, their correspondence would be public, preventing them from carrying out a textual form of keeping in touch – text messages, email, etc. – which had characterized their relationship since they lived on opposite ends of the country. In 2014, their videos had been viewed over 427 million times, and they had almost 2 million subscribers to their channel. Green attributes the production of these videos to creating his close relationship with his brother as well as providing him with the exposure he needed (to an audience he may not have expected) to become a best-selling author. While Hank and John Green no longer exchange videos every day, they still update the vlogbrothers channel regularly. The videos focus on varied subject matter, with video descriptions ranging from “How to Become an Adult” (August 31, 2011), “Is College Worth It?” (August 21, 2012), “Why Does Congress Suck?” (January 1, 2013), “But is Worm Pizza Poisonous?” (November 12, 2013), and “What Boys Look for in Girls” (April 11, 2014). John Green told Andrea Seabrook at WBUR, Boston’s NPR News Station, “I left home when I was 15 to go to boarding school and so the last time in [sic] lived full time with Hank he was 12. And

this was our first real opportunity to become grown up siblings” (Seabrook). However, the project clearly resonated with an audience much wider than the two brothers.

“Brotherhood 2.0” spawned numerous other projects helmed by John and Hank Green. Hank Green, for example, co-created and co-wrote *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012-2013), an adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* told in a vlog format. Twenty-four-year-old Elizabeth “Lizzie” Bennet video blogs (vlogs) two to three minute episodes where she comments on her own life as well as the lives of her older sister Jane, her younger sister Lydia, and her matchmaking mother. Hank Green brought his experience with vlogging to an adaptation of a classic book, harnessing his vlogbrothers audience. Indeed, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has over 160,000 subscribers, and was a transmedia effort: viewers could fully immerse themselves into the story world through avenues other than the web series. For example, 1) the creation of social media accounts for all of the characters, where they could post on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Pinterest; and 2) other YouTube spinoff series, such as *Pemberley Digital*, *Maria of the Lu*, and *The Lydia Bennet*. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* makes it possible to follow interesting threads of the show – including fan favorite characters – in a way that is tangential to the show itself. The show was both popularly and critically acclaimed, winning a Creative Arts Emmy for Original Interactive Program in 2013.

Most recently, Hank and John Green both individually helm an educational series on YouTube, the newly created Crash Course and SciShow (2012). Learning, these programs suggest, can be facilitated through video, and *effectively* through video. Crash Course originated from the YouTube Original Channel Initiative, a 100 million dollar program that sought to produce original content for the website (Hustvedt). The channel uses a series of roughly ten-minute videos to “teach” a lesson – in Science, History, or English – to viewers. Hank Green has

taught Biology, Ecology, History, and Psychology, while John Green focused on World History, American History, and Literature. In the Literature category, John Green has taught from the canon, especially *Jane Eyre*, *Frankenstein*, *Hamlet*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Catcher in the Rye*. These canonical novels, and his detailed explication of them, call back to his book *Looking for Alaska*, where titular character Alaska collects books that she intends to spend her life reading. She calls it her “Life’s Library.” Alaska explains, “Every summer since I was little, I’ve gone to garage sales and bought all the books that looked interesting. So I always have something to read. But there is so much to do: cigarettes to smoke, sex to have, swings to swing on. I’ll have more time for reading when I’m old and boring” (20). Some of Alaska’s books are canonical, including Kurt Vonnegut’s *Cat’s Cradle* (81) and poetry by W. H. Auden (85), and Green’s own interest in and knowledge of the content of these books certainly speaks to their influence on his writing. Crash Course has over a million subscribers and boasts almost 100 million views. These statistics are notable considering the channel launched in just 2012. The stylization of the videos – including features such as John Green speaking to his past self, revealing a mystery item, or being shocked by a shock pen – tackles these educational subjects in a fun and engaging way. Crash Course videos make connections between the subject matter and contemporary contexts.

All of this material and more is available to the readers of Green’s books, who rely on digital technology in order to access these comprehensive paratexts. Green’s books are deeply intertextual: he makes reference to literature constantly. The ability for a reader to simply go online and watch Green’s ideas elucidated by his educational videos is invaluable. Hundreds of hours of content are available on the Green brothers’ YouTube channels, a volume that greatly outdoes the content John Green has published in book form.

Fans of these videos, John Green's books, and Hank Green's music have banded together online under the moniker "Nerdfighters." In an article for *The New Yorker*, Margaret Talbot relates the origin story of the name:

Early in 2007, Green filmed one of his vlogs in the Savannah, Georgia airport, in front of an arcade game whose logo appeared to read "Nerdfighters." (In fact, the game was called Aero Fighters.) Green found the name funny, and said, in a later video, "Here's my question about Nerdfighters: Is Nerdfighters a game about people who fight against nerds, or is it a game about nerds who fight against other people? I've come to believe that Nerdfighters is a game about nerds who fight, nerds who tackle the scourge of popular people. And I've been thinking to myself...this would be a great video game." (Talbot)

His viewers, on their own vlogs and blogs, began to refer to themselves as Nerdfighters, and a social and cultural movement was born.

The term has become ubiquitous. Annette Bening and Warren Beatty's son, Stephen Ira, described himself as a "Nerdfighter" when he participated in a video for transgender health care rights (Dean). When I presented to a group of middle and high school-aged teenagers at a writing camp a few years ago, a select few immediately identified themselves as fans of Green's work. When I mentioned *Paper Towns*, they made the Nerdfighters salute (arms crossed in an X with both hands making a Vulcan salute) without prompt. The slogan of Nerdfighters everywhere is "Don't Forget to Be Awesome," or, DFTBA, and many teens can be seen sporting plastic bracelets with just that stamped on colored bands. When John Green participated in a Google Hangout with U.S. President Barack Obama, Obama signed off the chat by telling Green, "Don't forget to be awesome" (Talbot). With an acknowledgement from Obama, it would seem as if

Nerdfighters have gone mainstream. However, Green insists that it is not his intention to make Nerdfighters the norm; he is very aware of how this group, as large as it is, provides a niche for many young adults and adolescents (Talbot).

However, teenagers are participating in Nerdfighters culture. They are even able to create content for dftba.com, also known as Don't Forget to Be Awesome Records, which was co-founded by Hank Green and Alan Lastufka and located in Missoula, Montana. While music and digital downloads are the focus of the website, readers are also able to purchase shirts, hoodies, mugs, and other paraphernalia that is branded with the Green brothers' various projects: John Green's books, the Crash Courses, Sci Show, and Hank Green's music. It is possible to participate in the paratextual material created both by John and Hank Green and fans of their work. This digital material has helped Green gain a readership much larger than he could have achieved from his printed works alone.

Finally, John Green has produced a large volume of paratextual material for his website, johngreenbooks.com. Although the website is quite simply designed, Green has written much content. Each book that Green has written – *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherines*, *Paper Towns*, *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson*, and *The Fault in Our Stars* – has an extensive FAQ section where Green provides a number of comprehensive answers to questions from readers, fans, and critics. The FAQ for *Looking for Alaska* is broad, ranging from Green's musings on writing and inspiration, to specific instances of metaphor and symbolism that readers ask him to explain. He addresses some of the most pressing issues with *Looking for Alaska*, especially its status as a frequently banned book. Green recently made a 2014 Tumblr post which drew attention to the fact that three of his books were being challenged at a high school in Strasburg, Colorado. An English teacher had created an elective young adult course for students in grades

ten to twelve, and she included *Looking for Alaska* on the reading list. Parents at the school “created a petition to ‘cleanse’ the book list, claiming that the majority of the books on the curriculum, ‘are profane, pornographic, violent, criminal, crass, crude, vile, and will result in the irreparable erosion of my students’ moral character’” (Green, “Paper Towns and Looking for Alaska Challenged”). Green’s post asked for support by way of individuals mailing letters to the school board on behalf of the teacher. His personal website, specifically the FAQ section on *Looking for Alaska*, discusses the most frequently challenged scenes in his book, and addresses reader questions about the content.

Green’s website is also a place to discuss and update readers on prospective movie adaptations of his books. Almost all of Green’s books have been optioned, including *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherines*, *Paper Towns*, and *The Fault in Our Stars*. *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson*, Green has said, has not been optioned. He has said, “To quote a real live movie producer who really said this about *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson*, ‘The only thing Hollywood hates more than smart teenagers is smart, gay teenagers.’ I hope Hollywood will prove this movie producer wrong someday” (Green, “Movie Questions”). Movie adaptations of books have the ability to widen the reading audience, or else to sell more books (especially as re-releases of adapted books are published in order to match with a tie-in movie cover). As well, for dedicated readers (such as Green’s), a movie adaptation provides another means of consuming a meaningful and important story. A book like *The Fault in Our Stars* does not have to end when the covers close; instead, readers can see an adaptation of the story, their favorite characters, and the book’s setting in theaters. *The Fault in Our Stars* movie adaptation cast Shailene Woodley as Hazel Grace, and Ansel Elgort as Augustus Waters. With a release date of June 6, 2014, the movie sought to hit the summer blockbuster list, while also being a critically reviewed film.

All of this information and more is available through John Green's website. A book like *Looking for Alaska* is no longer contained to the space between two covers. Instead, Green initiates a conversation about the content, meaning, and adaptation of his novels, particularly *Looking for Alaska*. It is possible to read *Looking for Alaska* without engaging in the paratextual material for the book; however, from the thousands of comments on Green's website; re-tweets and conversations on Twitter; and content posted on Tumblr, it is clear that fans are searching out and generating this paratextual content. They enlarge the space that they can inhabit, enjoying Green's books and characters long after the books are over. In many ways, digital technologies are the key to Green's success. He facilitates, acknowledges, and creates paratextual information, oftentimes with help from his fans. For fans, this acknowledgment – of their interests and prior knowledge – is paramount.

An example of the way readers engage with the space between text and paratext is through a popular quote from Green's *Looking for Alaska*. The line reads, "So I walked back to my room and collapsed on the bottom bunk, thinking that if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane" (88), but is usually shortened to "if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane." The line is in regards to Alaska Young, the titular character in the novel, as protagonist Miles (Pudge) Halter compares himself to her. Readers have connected in a variety of ways to the quote, and have driven reader-generated content that reimagines Pudge's words through a variety of visual designs. The quote has spurred a Tumblr page, <http://peopleraindrizzlehurricane.tumblr.com>, where a variety of these designs exist across seventy-five pages. Some of the posts are elaborate graphic designs; some are photographs of the quote tattooed onto someone's body; others are a series of connecting gifs, pictures, or original artwork. Green has acknowledged the popularity of this quote, and has commented on his own

Tumblr that “I am best known on tumblr for a drizzle/hurricane metaphor.” He also often reposts much of the content from that popular Tumblr page onto his. He has also noted “People Rain Drizzle Hurricane: Still my favorite tumblr” and has elaborated on his personal website about the creation of the line in *Looking for Alaska*:

I am totally delighted that people/rain/drizzle/hurricane has become so widely quoted online that an extensive tumblr is devoted to it.

The original line was “If people were precipitation, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane,” but then the brilliant Julie Strauss-Gabel stepped in and improved it, thank God. And then in the last big round of edits, I wanted to cut the line, and Julie was like, “Eh, I think we should keep it in,” and BOY, WAS SHE RIGHT.

Of course, I hope lots of people read (and buy!) *Alaska*, and that the p/r/d/q quote is not their only interaction with it, but that little quote has brought a lot of people to the book who otherwise might never have heard of it. (Green, “Questions About Looking for Alaska”)

Surprisingly, Green has monetized the quote through his online storefront, Don’t Forget to Be Awesome (DFTBA). It is possible to purchase a watercolor poster that contains the line.

However, Green did not create the original poster. Instead, it came from a user on Tumblr, who Green found through the p/r/d/q site: “This beautiful poster is part of a series of paintings by 21-year-old Malaysian artist and nerdfighter Mei” (DFTBA Store). Fans create and interact with paratextual materials, and in this case, Green later authorized their contributions through the p/r/d/q quote.

Another paratext that readers interact with enthusiastically is author Taherah Mafi’s Instagram account. Mafi is the author of the wildly popular *Shatter Me* series (2011-2014) a

dystopia thriller that focuses on seventeen-year-old Juliette, who physically hurts anyone she touches. Mafi married another famous author – Ransom Riggs, author of *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* – in 2013, and she details their lives together through Instagram. Mafi’s fans consistently comment on her unique fashion style, which has led Mafi to 1) tag designers, products, and labels in her photos, allowing viewers to purchase the same items for themselves, and 2) start a lifestyle blog called *We Still Write in Cursive*, where she, along with her best friend Tana, advertises products and processes that interest her. Her fans aspire to her fashion sense, and Mafi now builds this information into each post. This paratextual information both sells Mafi’s image, but also cross-references a variety of designers, creators, and innovators who may benefit from this advertising.

Gray has suggested that writers become better known to us through paratexts, and, more frequently, through digital paratexts (113). This can certainly be beneficial to writers who want to curate the way they present themselves to readers, crafting an online persona that is supported by paratextual documentation. This “authorial constellation” becomes how we know and relate to writers, by buying into the persona they present through paratextual material. However, writers do not have complete control over their image, especially on the Internet, where users can edit, update, and comment on information, changing or reinterpreting a writer’s image. This was certainly the case in June 2015 when Tumblr user virgn posted unsubstantiated claims about John Green on the website:

i bet john green thinks people don’t like him because he’s a “dork” or a nerd or whatever when in reality it’s because he’s a creep who panders to teenage girls so that he can amass some weird cult-like following. and it’s always girls who feel misunderstood, you know, and he goes out of his way to make them feel important and desirable...

also he has a social media presence that is equivalent to that dad of a kid in your friend group who always volunteers to “supervise” the pool parties and scoots his lawn chair close to all the girls.

The user went on to say “lets get this enough notes so he has to address it and try to defend himself.” Green used Tumblr to respond to the post soon after. “Throwing that kind of accusation around is sick and libelous and most importantly damages the discourse around the actual sexual abuse of children,” he wrote. “When you use accusations of pedophilia as a way of insulting people whose work you don’t like, you trivialize abuse.” Green pulled away from social media in the months that followed. He stated on Tumblr that he needed to have some distance from the platform for his “well-being.” Additionally, in September 2015 he went on hiatus from Twitter, citing needing to focus on writing rather than interacting with friends and fans through the popular social media platform. Paratexts can be co-opted by other users who can edit, respond to, or comment on Green’s physical online space in order to change the way his image is presented in online platforms.

A reader-created paratext such as this can have negative effects on how the public interprets Green’s texts, and can also harm the narrative or story world of his YA novels and their movie adaptations. Green’s exchange with the commenter on Tumblr allows us to consider the paratexts created by readers, or by readers’ exchanges with authors. YA author Kathleen Hale is perhaps the most publicized example of the way exchanges between readers and writers can create unintended paratextual material that affects the public reception of a writer’s work. Hale burst onto the YA scene with her mystery novel *No One Else Can Have You* (2014), a *Fargo* for teenage readers (the dialogue is peppered with “you betchas” and “doncha knows”). The novel is set in the small town of Friendship, Wisconsin, and follows sixteen-year-old Kippy

Bushman as she investigates her best friend's murder. The mystery is engaging and the book well-written, but Hale is instead known for a parallel narrative that runs alongside *No One Else Can Have You*. In an article for the *Guardian* titled "Am I Being Catfished?" Hale admitted to tracking down and stalking a critic who gave her book one star out of five on Goodreads and a scathing review. Hale was able to find the name, address, and other contact information for the reviewer that made it possible for her to pay for an online background check and visit her at her house. The fallout led to the creation of the Twitter hashtag #HaleNo, as other authors, bloggers, and readers responded to Hale's article. Many readers noted that Hale violated the relationship between writer and reader, and that once her book was published, it was out of her control how readers responded to it. The Goodreads page for *No One Else Can Have You* is filled with gifs, memes, and comments by readers who insist they will never purchase or read one of Hale's books again. When her second novel – a sequel to *No One Else Can Have You* entitled *Nothing Bad is Going to Happen* – was assigned a Goodreads page, readers posted one-star reviews months in advance of its publication. The page is littered with gifs and images that support Goodreads users' declarations to never purchase or read the book.

Hale, however, has many supporters in her corner, and is unlikely to be professionally damaged in the long run for the way she interacted with the critic of her book. Her husband is former SNL writer Simon Rich, her mother-in-law is an executive at HarperCollins (Hale's publisher), and her father-in-law is Frank Rich, of the *New York Times*. Still, for fans of YA, the narrative of her stalking a Goodreads critic is more authoritative than the text of her novels.

Gray reminds us that "paratexts tell us what to expect, and in doing so, they shape the reading strategies that we will take with us 'into' the text, and they provide the all-important early frames through which we will examine, react to, and evaluate textual consumption" (26).

Paratexts, therefore, have significant value. They can confuse the hierarchy of information, as we may place more value in paratexts (such as the accusations leveraged against Green) than we do in the texts. Often, popular interpretations are based on paratexts rather than on the text itself (Gray 26). Unofficial or unauthorized paratexts can have the effect of casting a negative light on the source material, especially when an author is so well known for the creation and proliferation of this supplementary material.

Conclusion: The Future Shape of Paratexts

The kinds of material we consider paratextual has been redefined by contemporary contexts. Digital and media paratexts provide opportunities for source texts to be enhanced, altered, and affected by readers effectively *writing back* to the material, taking on a much more participatory role in reading. Paratextual materials are no longer optional and novel compendiums to texts, but instead are integrally linked to the YA novel. Daniel Handler and John Green represent extreme and copious users of and participators in paratextuality; however, YA novels continue to shift towards this extreme, particularly as writers are more active in all aspects of online communication. Take, for instance, the difference between Daniel Handler responding to fan mail as Lemony Snicket for *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and his online comments on the website created to market *Why We Broke Up*. In the handwritten letter, Snicket uses code to communicate to the reader, omitting the very letters necessary to spelling out his reason for composing a hasty note. The handwritten letter had to be mailed to the original sender, meaning that there was some delay between sending a letter and receiving a reply. On Handler's *Why We Broke Up* website, however, he could respond much more quickly to the posted content, responding in real time to comments from readers. While he did not participate in this

commenting for long, it provided an effective way for him to interact with readers without much delay.

J. K. Rowling is another author who continuously reshapes, transforms, and adds to her fictional *Harry Potter* universe, although the final installment in the series was published in 2007. For example, Rowling's interactive website *Pottermore* frequently includes new writing from the author expanding upon character history, series artifacts, and insights into the Wizarding World. *Pottermore* received a revamp in September 2015, when Rowling released a new version of the website that would effectively continue reinterpreting the story. This includes, for instance, commentary on the production of *The Cursed Child*, a 2016 theatre play, and a movie trilogy based on her 2001 reference text *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. *Pottermore* will now continue to share an interactive reading experience, provide a platform for Rowling to continue to post original writing, and also comment on the behind-the-scenes production of these new additions to the story. Rowling pairs official material such as her writing on *Pottermore* with tweets on the social networking site Twitter in order to keep readers immersed in the world of *Harry Potter*. Take, for instance, a series of tweets that she wrote in September 2015. On September 1, the date that Hogwarts students traditionally return to school in the series, Rowling tweeted "I'm in Edinburgh, so could somebody at King's Cross wish James S Potter good luck for me? He's starting at Hogwarts today. #BackToHogwarts." King's Cross Station responded by altering their train timetable to accommodate a train departing for Hogwarts "for wizards and witches only." Later that day, Rowling tweeted, "Have just heard that James S Potter has been Sorted (to nobody's surprise) into Gryffindor. Teddy Lupin (Head Boy, Hufflepuff) disappointed." By providing digital updates that correspond to the date that the fictional Hogwarts school year begins *and* to the real time date on which Harry Potter's son

would begin school, Rowling continues to expand upon her story world. These paratexts are popular with fans who continue to read voraciously for new information and insights into *Harry Potter*. This information keeps the series new and interesting, as readers continue to revise their understanding of the story based on new information.

The future shape of paratexts may be more intimate than they are now. The rise of crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter and Patreon are emblematic of how paratextual material, or the material that surrounds, engages with, and sustains a text, may function in the future. Kickstarter is an American crowdsourcing platform that allows artists to ask the digital community for help with funding a creative project. Those who donate money are called “backers,” and based on the amount of money they pledge, they receive benefits from the artist. These tangible rewards can range from a copy of a physical product once it is made to a phone call, visit, or creative performance from the artist. The platform allows artists to connect personally to many backers, and provide a type of connection that is often unrepresented when an artist creates a product. Patreon, on the other hand, is a platform that provides recurring funding for artists, rather than Kickstarter’s one time donation. On Patreon, backers can set an amount of money that they are willing to pay every time an artist releases content, and may set a monthly maximum. Although an album, book, collection of short stories, short film, or web comic may constitute the “product” that Patreon users are paying for, they are also paying for exclusive content only available to them. These include private updates, blog posts, and curated content, all creating a narrative that ties together product to paratexts. Paratextual material will perhaps become more personal and informal than what Genette originally described, and it will occur on a digital scale, meaning more people have more access to materials that might otherwise have been intended for only a few people.

YA paratexts might also ask us to continue questioning the role of the author, and especially the role of the author in the twenty-first century. Handler's comments at the National Book Awards in 2014 continue to circulate online. After the 2015 awards, many newspaper articles and online blogs discussed the way Handler acted at the 2014 ceremony, emphasizing that at the 2015 ceremony, three out of the four awardees were African American. While writers like J. D. Salinger have been able to hide behind their most popular publications, contemporary YA novelists are in the spotlight more than ever, especially as they continue to generate a large share of the publishing market revenue. It is a much more complicated role, and a more public role, where authors cannot separate themselves from the range of narratives – both fictional and real – that are presented to the public. Their writing is just one segment of the wide range of texts that are put out there, in real, digital, and printed formats. These texts converge and become inextricably linked, affecting readers' interpretation and understanding of YA novels and the authors who write them.

YA novels frequently create paratextual material. These materials are increasingly important in literature for young people in a way that they are not yet in literary fiction. Perhaps it is this level of intimacy, of getting to know not only the story, but also the author, the inspiration, and the background that young readers are searching for. This connection is oftentimes defined as a digital impetus: many people use the Internet and social networking sites to connect with family, friends, and acquaintances. Paratextual material provides another kind of connection, one that delivers a truncated version of Raymond Williams's *flow*. The story does not have to end completely, but can instead be sought out through digital and multimodal platforms. The fact that content drives advertising revenue online means that writers and publishers are benefiting from producing extratextual materials that can extend interest in texts.

The shape of future paratextual materials may indeed be more participatory, intimate, and complex. Whether all readers will find engagement in this type of material is unclear, although if the success of content produced by Daniel Handler/Lemony Snicket and John Green is any indication, readers are interested in extending their knowledge of a story world much further and much deeper than the printed text may allow.

Chapter Five

“Why Do We Even Call It YA Anymore?”: Crossover Literature and Adult Readers

Since the publication of *Harry Potter* at the end of the twentieth century, the number of adults who read YA has increased dramatically. The “all ages” popularity of *Harry Potter* reinvigorated the term “crossover literature,” used to define texts that are typically categorized as children’s or YA novels, but also hold a certain appeal for adult readers. Many books – both historical and contemporary – have the potential to attract an audience of both young adults and adults, and marketing (including cover art and advertising) certainly plays an important role in determining the audience of a book. *Harry Potter* was not the first book that crossed categorical boundaries, or the first that was read by both children and adults, but its reception drastically changed the way readers viewed categories of literature for young people. Research published by Nielsen in 2015 shows that a staggering 80% of all YA is now purchased and read by adult readers, meaning that adults are turning to this category of literature in greater and greater numbers (Gilmore).

In her critical work on crossover literature, Sandra Beckett examines both historical and contemporary works that have “crossed over” discrete readerships, and provides an international sample of the *crossover effect*, a repeating phenomenon, with focuses on literature from Norway, Japan, Sweden, Australia, South Africa, and the United States. Her reach is both historical and international. She names hundreds of books and authors, providing a comprehensive survey of the category of crossover literature and its progression, popularity, and growth. Beckett attributes the awareness of crossover literature in the West in the twenty-first century to the publication of children’s fantasy series such as J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), Phillip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), and Lemony Snicket’s *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999-

2006), which span multiple books and many years. This means that while a reader may be a child developmentally when reading the first book in one of the three series, such as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), he/she will be an older teenager or adult by the time the final book in the series is published, such as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). Beckett also connects contemporary crossover novels to historical novels that attracted child and adult readers by citing books such as *Oliver Twist*, *Treasure Island*, *Don Quixote*, and *Les trois mousquetaires* and claiming they have “be[come] the property of young readers” (5). She also insists that “crosswriting” (5) has been central to the migration of adult readers to children’s literature. Generally, crosswriting occurs when writers who have previously written adult works also write for children. Historically, authors such as Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, and Oscar Wilde have written for both children and adults (5-6). Crosswriting has continued into the twenty-first century, as contemporary authors such as Michael Chabon, Neil Gaiman, Ann Brashares, Margaret Atwood, Salman Rushdie, and Toni Morrison alternate between composing works for children and works for adults. Beckett argues that many readers follow their favorite authors across generic and categorical delineations. I would offer author Neil Gaiman as a compelling example of an author who crosses not just categorical boundaries such as “adult” or “young adult” but also formal boundaries. Gaiman writes adult novels, children’s picture books, poetry, TV episodes, movie scripts, short story collections, and graphic novels. It is not terribly exceptional for fans to own much, if not all, of his work. Crosswriting can make it difficult to categorize a writer, much less his/her writing.

Beckett makes a strong case that crossover literature is not a new development. Yet conversations about adult readers of YA have dominated online discussion in the past few years,

and rather than defining specific YA novels as examples of “crossover literature” the entire category is now being read by an unintended readership. The influx of adults readers to YA was the focus of an article by Ruth Graham entitled “Against YA: Adults Should Be Embarrassed to Read Children’s Books.” The article was published on June 5, 2014 on *Slate*, an online magazine that reports on politics, business, technology, and culture. At the center of the article are 2012 statistics from Bowker Market Research that revealed 55% of all YA novels were bought by adults (those numbers have since increased to 80%) (Publishers Weekly, “55%”). 78% of those books were purchased for adults’ own reading, rather than for the purpose of passing a novel along to a teenage reader, and 28% of total sales were by adults between the ages of thirty and forty-four. Graham’s article is highly critical of adults reading YA literature, a much different stance than Beckett takes in her critical work. Graham views YA as a necessary category for *teenage* readers – indeed, she cites *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) and *The Westing Game* (1978) as important YA novels because they “provided some of the most intense reading experiences of my life” and “helped turn me into the reader I am today.” Yet, Graham notes that she is no longer that teenage reader shaped by YA, and adult fiction instead provides the necessary reading experience she now requires as an adult. She clearly views YA as a literature for readers in transition, or in development, and one that teenagers ultimately read *through* in order to arrive at adult fiction. This sentiment is very similar to that articulated by librarian Margaret Edwards in *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts*.

The publication of Graham’s article corresponded with the premiere of the movie adaptation of John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars*. Graham acknowledges Green quite clearly in the opening of her article, insisting that it was the release of the movie that provided her the impetus to write about the adult readers of YA. Her article generated 3,200 comments and

88,300 shares via Facebook, but even more notable were the detailed responses posted by writers, librarians, and teachers in longer online formats, and in other digital locations. Julie Beck, writer for *The Atlantic*, analyzed the most popular and widely circulated responses to “Against YA,” which are revealing for the ways they engage with Graham and her criticisms of YA. Beck notes that responses to Graham generally fall into two categories of discussion. The first tackles Graham’s prescriptive brand of reading, which, at its most basic, articulates that adults should read literature and teenagers should read YA. Responses in this strand generally argue that readers should have the freedom to read what interests them without being made to feel shame or embarrassment. The second type of response takes umbrage with the representative sample of YA that Graham outlines in her article: John Green, Gayle Forman, Rainbow Rowell, and Stephen Chbosky. These types of responses outline the wide reach of YA across many genres and formats, and suggest that a reader more versed in YA would find examples that counter Graham’s specific criticisms of YA.

These two types of responses to Graham’s article resonate with me, and I remember, following the article’s publication, compiling a list of YA titles that refute the major generalizations Graham makes about YA: the lack of ambiguity and the lack of critical examination of adolescence, for example. Yet, as one of the 55% of adults who purchase and read YA (now one of the 80%), I could imagine another type of response. Graham notes that adult readers are reading YA at the expense of literary fiction, but I don’t think that is entirely true. I do not read novels from the category of YA literature exclusively, or at the expense of a wide range of other types of literature. It is entirely possible that the other adult readers of YA are doing the same, adding YA books to their yearly reading, which might already include a combination of categories of literature, including sci-fi, fantasy, romance, and mystery, instead

of replacing all of their reading with choices from the category of YA. Reading YA can be an additive process for adult readers, rather than a subtractive process, meaning that YA novels are not necessarily taking the place of adult fiction, but are instead being added alongside them. While I love YA, I cannot imagine tailoring my reading to just one category, and I don't think many avid readers are comfortable reading one type of book exclusively. While Graham's comments about the increase of adult readers of YA were timely, and actively engaged with statistics from Bowker Market Research, many readers who wrote back to Graham seemed to agree that her article was a means to create conversation, and drive traffic to *Slate*. An inflammatory stance was necessary to generate this response.

While Graham was criticizing adult readers of YA, Meghan Cox Gurdon, writer at *The Wall Street Journal*, was engaged in another argument focused on YA literature and crossover. Her article "Darkness Too Visible: Contemporary Fiction for Teens is Rife with Explicit Abuse, Violence, and Depravity" was published in 2011, and was critical of the darkness in contemporary novels, which she presented as being characterized by violence, incest, pedophilia, and depravity. Some YA novels, Cox Gurdon insisted, were not appropriate for teenage readers. Two YA novels that she cites as containing mature and graphic content are Andrew Smith's *The Marbury Lens* (2010) and Lauren Myracle's *Shine* (2011). While *The Marbury Lens* was Smith's first book, he has since rocketed to the top of the YA literary scene with *Winger* (2013) and its sequel *Stand-Off* (2015), *Grasshopper Jungle* (2014), *100 Sideways Miles* (2014), and *The Alex Crow* (2015). Smith is a very popular author, and especially with male teenage readers. *The Marbury Lens* follows teenage protagonist Jack, who is able to move between the real world and a fictional, ultra-violent world called Marbury. Jack's own experience of horror in the real world – he was kidnapped and sexually abused – drives him towards an otherworldly violence that

seems safer and more controlled. While the graphic violence is unrelenting, Jack calmly observes the world around him: “Most of the bodies hung upside down, those with heads arched their necks backward, chins petulantly angled like hell-trained magnets at the ground. Men and children, adorned, every one of them, with stained stakes or arrow shafts” (148). Smith’s focus on violence and horror might require a more mature reader, but he gives credit to his audience by supplementing mature content with a complexity of style. His short, terse sentences create a physicality that underlines the violence depicted in the novel. Lauren Myracle is another prolific YA author, and has published almost thirty books since 2003. Her novel *Shine* focuses on a small, Christian community where meth is the drug of choice, and the high school is run by a group of individuals nicknamed the “redneck posse.” When protagonist Cat Robinson’s best friend Patrick is left comatose after a brutal beating – the result of a hate crime – Cat goes looking for his attacker. By unraveling the mystery, she also confronts her past, which includes a sexual assault that has changed her major relationships.

Not much content is taboo in young adult literature. I would add an additional title to Cox Gurdon’s list that includes mature or challenging content. Australian writer Margo Lanagan’s *Tender Morsels* (2008), for example, focuses on a damaged young woman who retreats into a fantasy world after experiencing horror and trauma in the real world. This medieval-set novel introduces thirteen-year-old protagonist Liga Longfield. The reader finds her trapped in a smoky (but not burning) house at the beginning of the novel, the smell of which makes “her insides dangerous, liquid, hot with surprise and readying to spasm again” (6). Her innocence and naiveté prevent her from understanding that the smoke causes her to have a miscarriage, and it is not until her second pregnancy, when she is fourteen, that she realizes that the smoke and teas her father brings home from town are designed to cause her to lose the babies she carries. The

mature themes of *Tender Morsels* are introduced not because of the miscarriages Liga suffers, but because the babies that Liga carries are her father's. When he dies traveling home on the road from town, Liga finds herself alone and unprotected, fifteen-years-old, and caring for a newborn. It is here that she suffers a gang rape from five town boys, a horrific incident that causes her to attempt to kill herself. Magic enables her and her daughters, Branza and the still unborn Urdda to escape to a perfect fantasy world where they stay for almost twenty-five years. Rape and sexual violence are common in YA literature, spanning novels such as Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999), Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), Sarah Dessen's *Just Listen* (2006), Kevin Brooks's *The Road of the Dead* (2006), Courtney Summers's *All the Rage* (2015), Kristin Halbrook's *Every Last Promise* (2015), and Matthew Quick's *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* (2013). It occurs in contemporary and historical contexts, and happens to both female and male characters. While Cox Gurdon is quite critical of this content, it characterizes many YA novels published each year.

What kind of material is too mature for teen readers? What kinds of YA novels are not for twelve-to eighteen-year-olds? I think it's also worth mentioning Phoebe Gloeckner's *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2002) in relation to the questions at the heart of Cox Gurdon's article. *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* is a multimodal book, and includes a higher ratio of text to image. It presents a semi-autobiographical account of Gloeckner's childhood, but is fictionalized through protagonist Minnie Goetze who lives out her adolescence in 1970s San Francisco. Minnie is asked by her English teacher to keep a journal, and her artistic aspirations lead her to illustrate large sections of the diary. While her father lives on the East Coast, Minnie and her younger sister Gretel live with their irresponsible mother. The novel begins as Minnie begins an illicit affair with her mother's boyfriend Monroe, and graphically explores their relationship through

both text and image. While Gloeckner's book is categorized as adult, its title increases the book's visibility to young readers. In 2002, the year the book was published, I was fourteen-years-old. I have a first edition of *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, first published by Frog Books, an imprint of North Atlantic Books in Berkeley, California. Perhaps it's not so surprising that a teenage girl might read a book with the description "teenage girl" in its title. Marketing terms and markers like these certainly blur boundaries between adult and young adult, and aid in a book being read by both adults and teens, perhaps making mature content more accessible to younger readers.

By detailing the mature content of some YA novels, Cox Gurdon suggests that some YA should be reserved for adults. These criticisms are not new. They were previously levied on the problem novels of the 1960s and 1970s, specifically in regards to *Go Ask Alice*, which spent over twenty years on the American Library Association's Frequently Challenged Books list. What is interesting, however, is how both Graham and Cox Gurdon construct the category of contemporary YA literature in their inflammatory articles. Graham insists YA literature should be read only by teens; Cox Gurdon thinks that some YA should be reserved for adult readers. Both writers suggest that YA literature is an unstable category of literature in the twenty-first century, and express the difficulty of trying to pin down a category that is ostensibly "for" teenagers.

When taken together, these articles identify three characteristics of the category of contemporary YA: 1) The readership of YA is more adult than young adult, 2) YA novels are becoming more mature and have more in common with adult fiction than YA literature, and 3) The marketing term "YA" has a certain visibility and cachet in the twenty-first century that makes it appealing to an all-ages readership, and this term is being employed to describe a wide range of novels. This chapter therefore focuses on these three areas: the readership of YA, the

state of the contemporary YA novel, and the YA publishing market in order to speculate about how social and technological contexts are influencing *who* reads YA, and what its purpose might be in the twenty-first century. It is also useful to consider that as adult readers continue to read YA, they may, in fact, be making irrevocable alterations to the category of YA literature. Adult readers' purchasing power creates a demand for certain types of books and stories, and not for others. How might YA respond to an influx of adult readers? Who is the YA novel written for? Why is YA generating an overwhelming response from adult readers? How is the content of the YA novel shifting? How is YA literature addressing adult readers? How can we distinguish between the real reader and the implied reader? Has YA literature changed at all, or is it the readership that has changed? What are the difficulties in examining a category that is in flux? After the previous three chapters explored important components of contemporary YA literature – extensive intertextuality and intermediality, increased use of graphics and images, and the creation of digital paratextual materials – it is interesting to consider how these, and other characteristics, might contribute to the crossover appeal of YA.

Adult Readers: Why Do Adults Read YA?

Crossover literature experts Sandra Beckett and Rachel Falconer both speculate about why there is an increased focus on books for young people in the twenty-first century, and an increase in adult readers of YA. In *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* Beckett attributes the general popularity of children's and YA literature to four main attributes:

- 1) a sense of optimism in contemporary children's and YA novels;
- 2) references to adult and canonical works;
- 3) stories that focus on a complex struggle between good and evil; and

4) an undeniable sense of hope.

YA literature is becoming a category of literature shared by both teenage and adult readers; it is consistently discussed by the media and across social networks, and it is visible in current and contemporary news. This may be because children's literature, Beckett argues, is extremely adaptive, where it has, time and time again, "emerge[d] as a survival technique for the book in the face of the threatening forces of the visual media in this global economic and technological age" (253). Rachel Falconer adds similar characteristics to Beckett's list. Through a close reading of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series (1995-2000), Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), Geraldine McCaughrean's *The White Darkness* (2005), David Almond's *Clay* (2006), and C. S. Lewis's *The Silver Chair* (1953), Falconer hypothesizes that children's books are routinely read by adults when they embrace three main features: "a sense of lightness and, conversely, of mortal limit; a sense that the process of coming of age means something new and different in our time; and a sense that the child's eye view can reinvigorate, transform and even redeem adult lives" (8).

While scholars like Beckett and Falconer speculate about how some children's and YA novels appeal to adults, there has not yet been a fully comprehensive study that examines why adults read YA. However, author Malinda Lo took an informal survey of adults who read YA in 2013, only a short time after the Bowker Market Research statistics were released, the same that incited Graham to write her article. Lo is the co-founder of Diversity in YA, a website that compiles lists and reviews of YA novels diverse in race, sexual orientation, gender identification, and ability. She created the website with Cindy Pon, who writes fantasy YA. Diversity in YA is separate from the organization We Need Diverse Books, and preceded it by three years. Yet, Lo

also had a hand in the creation of We Need Diverse Books. The origin of We Need Diverse Books came from a public Twitter exchange between Malinda Lo and Ellen Oh (President and CEO of We Need Diverse Books) on April 17, 2014, where they expressed frustration with the lack of diversity in YA literature. We Need Diverse Books explains,

This wasn't a new conversation for Ellen or Malinda, just the latest, this time in response to the all-white, all-male panel of children's authors assembled for BookCon's May 31st reader event. In a series of tweets, Ellen started talking about taking action. Several other authors, bloggers, and industry folks piped up saying they would like to be involved as well.

We planned a three-day event for May 1-3 to raise awareness, brainstorm solutions, and take action (Diversify Your Shelves). Aisha Saeed primed the pump on April 24th with the first tweet including the #WeNeedDiverseBooks hashtag. ("FAQ")

Lo's conversation with Oh was instrumental in creating We Need Diverse Books, yet, she has been involved with Diversity in YA since 2011. Lo writes often about the YA publishing industry on her author blog, and it was here that she started a conversation about adults reading YA.

She published her blog post "Unpacking Why Adults Read Young Adult Fiction" on September 9, 2013 and explained the results of her informal survey and her impetus for conducting it through Twitter. She notes that she conducted the survey as a way to respond to an article about adult reading habits that appeared on Book Riot, a website and podcast with a focus on books, writers, and the publishing industry (predating Graham's article by about a year). Book Riot blogger and librarian Kelly Jensen rounded up the most viewed and discussed blog posts, newspaper articles, and social media posts that suggested reasons adults read YA, and

sorted them in to five categories: 1) Our culture encourages an unnatural and prolonged adolescence; 2) YA books are escapist and easier to grasp; 3) Adults aren't able to comprehend past a middle school or high school reading level; 4) YA books are about hopefulness; and 5) YA is all about first experiences, YA is nostalgia for adults, YA is cheaper than literature. Lo connected with some of these motivations, but did not believe that they presented a comprehensive understanding of why adults read YA.

Lo's interest in the subject was piqued by Jensen's article, but her survey of adult readers of YA was influenced by journalist Porter Anderson's viewpoint in *Publishing Perspectives*. He presented a way of looking at the number of adult readers of YA from a different theoretical perspective:

I'm always sorry that some people seem to think the 'why would adults read YA?' question is about quality. Or even about YA. I don't think that – in its best iterations, at least – it is that at all. I think it's an honest question more sociologically based than literature-based, and I do think the question has merit. ... The question really is this: If our adult and senior-adult readers find stories of teens told from the teen perspective, what does that say about these readers — not about the books, not about YA. (qtd. in Lo, "Unpacking")

Anderson's identification of the necessary focus on *readers* in discussions about adult readers of YA is apt (although I do not think it's possible to take the books out of the equation completely) and his comments align with reception studies, which focus on reading as a social process, and necessitate a focus on the reader.

Lo cites Janice Radway and Henry Jenkins as two academics with a focus on reception studies, and whose work might make it possible for us to query why adults are reading YA. In

her popular study *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1984) Janice Radway used interviews and surveys to understand why adult women read romance. Radway concluded, “romance reading creates a feeling of hope, provides emotional sustenance and produces a fully visceral sense of well-being” (12), which shares some characteristics in common with Beckett and Falconer’s suggestions for why adults read YA. Radway also suggested that romance reading provides women with private and individual time while also addressing the individual situation of the reader: “the physical exhaustion and emotional depletion brought about by the fact that no one within the patriarchal family is charged with *their* care” (12). Romance reading addressed needs that a male partner could not. Additionally, Henry Jenkins’s study of media fan culture was published as *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992). He was able to focus on a specific subset of fan culture because it actively wrote back to and engaged with media texts. He could see specifically how this subset of fans received texts. He notes his ease in the ability to document this reception, since it is possible to view “the material signs of fan culture’s productivity” (4). He was therefore able to see fans as collaborators in his research process, and he specifies the way that he has provided his research to fans to critique and add to, meaning their imprint is physically stamped on the text itself. Jenkins states, “Fandom recognizes no clear-cut line between artists and consumers; all fans are potential writers whose talents need to be discovered, nurtured, and promoted and who may be able to make a contribution, however modest, to the cultural wealth of the larger community” (286). Fans actively respond to and engage with media texts, positioning their reception for other viewers. Both Radway and Jenkins explore the way texts are received. YA literature constitutes another set of texts that are currently publicly received by adult readers, and adult readers’ response to and engagement with these texts has been documented in many digital

spaces.

While Lo's survey of readers is much more informal than Radway's or Jenkins's, she did yield interesting results. In late August 2013, Lo tweeted, "If you're an adult who chooses to read YA, why? All honest answers are valid. I'm genuinely curious about your reasons. #whyadultsreadYA." All tweets that included the hashtag "#whyadultsreadYA" were collected in one place on Twitter. Lo acknowledges that by using Twitter, she could not guarantee a random sample. Twitter limits responses to Lo's followers, and to their Twitter communities, who she admits are largely connected to YA. Lo highlights the following tweets, and states that they represent the general reasons adults provided for reading YA:

"I find the narratives are sometimes less cynical without being too twee." –

@DoubleEmMartin

"I enjoy the immediacy of the stories and the sense of being at the beginning of the path of who you'll become." — @sesinkhorn

"I think every YA bk has some sense of hope & that there is so much out there to see/do." —

@LKeochgerien

"I love the intensity of 1st time experiences, experimentation, & growth that we're told to stop doing as adults." — @sarahockler

"I like the mash-up of genre & style. Unpretentious/literary, fast-paced/big-ideas, fantasy/mystery..." — @ErinSatie

"I like story length, type of stories being told, the pacing, char development, and the lack of pretension." — @ek_johnston

"It is the in between – where imagination still reigns and cynicism isn't quite as present." —

@niais

“I was shocked at how completely unpretentious, thought-provoking & strong YA was. So I’m now a huge fan!” — @ThisIsOurNow. (Lo, “Unpacking”)

After analyzing the survey results, Lo concludes that, compared to adult fiction, “YA fiction often delivers accessible, emotional, fast-paced stories with an optimistic or hopeful outlook” (“Unpacking”). While Lo admits the bias in her survey, these results – derived through the responses of real adult readers – provide some insight into why adults might choose YA. Lo admits that her survey results would benefit from additional scrutiny and follow-up, but she is not able to be involved in further research. In order to understand why adults are turning to YA, it is important to survey adult readers and to engage with reception theory. Adult readers articulate reasons for turning to YA in Lo’s informal research survey, but what part do YA novels have to play in attracting these readers? What are YA novels actively doing to attract this readership? Have the books changed?

Indicators of Crossover: *The Book Thief* and *The Fault in Our Stars*

Two YA novels in particular are noted for their popularity with both adult and teenage readers. These are Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief* (2005) and John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012). Zusak’s *The Book Thief* continues to be one of the most read books by adolescents and adults internationally, and has now spent a total of 375 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. It is currently celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2016. While *The Book Thief* focuses on protagonist Liesel Meminger, who ages from ten to fourteen in the novel, it is narrated by a personified Death. Death’s omniscience is often touched by humor, and a preternatural awareness of the fate of the characters who populate this book. Death meets Liesel a series of times during World War II as he travels across Europe collecting the dead. He nicknames her

“The Book Thief,” because of her proclivity towards stealing books. While it was first published as an adult book in Australia, it is now viewed as a YA title with crossover appeal.

Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars* was decidedly categorized as YA, following his previous YA publications *Looking for Alaska* (2005), *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006), *Paper Towns* (2008), and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (with David Levithan) (2010). Protagonist Hazel Grace Lancaster is a sixteen-year-old girl who refuses to live her life according to a collected list of tropes from popular literature about cancer. After being diagnosed with Stage IV thyroid cancer at the age of thirteen, Hazel is given some relief by a miracle drug called Phalanxifor. She is living on “purchased time” (26), understanding that her cancer has not been cured by any means, but that the treatment has enabled her to live longer than anticipated by the initial prognosis.

Green’s novel appeals greatly to both adolescent and adult readers. Its cover art is not particularly YA. The title is white chalk on a black and blue background, a simple representation that makes it difficult to immediately tell whether *The Fault in Our Stars* is a YA or adult novel. As noted by a reviewer on popular website *Forever Young Adult*, the cover lacks traditional “markers” of books about cancer: there are no footprints in the sand, no sick-looking people, and no art that represents the content of the book (Posh Deluxe). Instead, John Green is described as a noted New York Times Bestselling author on the cover page, and the book is blurbed by Markus Zusak on the hardcover and by Jodi Picoult on the paperback.

Both texts are exemplary YA novels that appeal to both YA and adult readers. I examined both novels with the intent of understanding what qualities might appeal to adult readers. What aspects were *similar to* adult texts? What seemed unconventional in a YA novel? I explored both books with the understanding that they had crossover appeal, and sold to a wide, all-ages audience. I also approached these novels from the position of being an adult reader of YA.

Malinda Lo's survey of adult readers on Twitter, responses by adult readers of YA to Graham's article, and research by Beckett and Falconer informed my understanding of the myriad reasons adults read YA. While adults may read both novels for many reasons, there are two common indicators that I found both novels shared. The first is that these two books are surprising and fresh. They are inventive in the way they present content and overturn major conceptions about the topics they communicate about. They offer something new and innovative to the category of YA literature. The second is that the books are smart. They offer interesting ideas, and these are often presented through the protagonists. I have called these "Interactive Reading" and "Mature for Their Age." The "surprising" aspects of both books are those that ask readers to engage with the text in an interactive way, challenging them to encounter a new format, perspective, or genre within YA literature. Additionally, what makes these books smart typically falls to the protagonists, who are often precocious and able to articulate important ideas.

Both *The Book Thief* and *The Fault in Our Stars* ask readers to participate in engaged, interactive reading. YA has often been categorized as presenting "easy read" material; YA books are often speedier reads than adult literary fiction. Certainly, in material that prefaces the novel's text, *The Book Thief* is described as "an important piece of work, but also a wonderful page-turner" (*The Guardian*); "[Both] gripping and touching, a work that kept me up late into the night feverishly reading the last 300 pages" (*The Plain Dealer*); "A tour de force to be not just read but inhabited" (*The Horn Book Magazine*). Similarly, the preface pages of *The Fault in Our Stars* describe the novel as "so compulsively readable" (*NPR.org*); "A tour de force" (*The Montreal Gazette*); "[an] intellectual explosion of a romance" (*Kirkus Reviews*). The ideas are big but the narrative is compelling, a combination that many YA novels seem to often include. Many YA novels have forward momentum; a feeling that the story is rushing towards *something*,

while also routinely asking readers to pause over exceptional language and ideas. “Ease” may instead be defined as the pleasure of reading, and reading without pause.

My understanding of interactive reading is derived from Eliza Dresang’s concept of “interactivity” in *Radical Change* (1999). Dresang describes interactivity as what makes a book “challenging” or “mature,” as interactive books require a more active and involved reading (12). This may require a more attentive reading by readers; interactivity may equally ask readers to engage in challenging structure, narratives, or ideas. Both Green and Zusak write challenging books that ask readers to slow their reading process, engage with ideas, appreciate language, but also carry readers through with the momentum of a compelling story.

In *The Book Thief*, interactive reading becomes necessary when readers are confronted by Death’s narration, which combines first person and third person narration. Death is the “I” who introduces “The Book Thief’s” story, yet his narration of the events often appears omniscient. Death foreshadows and interjects, dispels mystery, and jumps between perspectives and timelines. While the story swells easily into these interruptions, readers are asked to be vigilant in their reading of the story, asked to cling to the right path when Death knocks them off the main path with asides.

There is an episodic quality to Liesel’s character arc, as Death weaves in and out of her timeline. Although Death follows the timeline of World War II quite closely – beginning the narrative in 1939 and concluding in 1943 – two literary techniques disrupt the linearity of the story: heavy use of foreshadowing and interjections by the narrator. First of all, extensive foreshadowing reveals the fate of many characters quite early in the novel. Rather than waiting to find out what will happen to a character, Death tells the reader from the onset:

Of course, I'm being rude. I'm spoiling the ending, not only of the entire book, but of this particular piece of it. I have given you two events in advance, because I don't have much interest in building mystery. Mystery bores me. It chores me. I know what happens and so do you. It's the machinations that wheel us there that aggravate, perplex, interest, and astound me. (243)

Death consistently tells the reader what will happen to a favorite character, sometimes juxtaposing a happy moment with a horrific fate, combining the present and the future in the same sentence. As a narrator, Death doesn't deal in suspense and mystery. He suspects mystery matters greatly to his readers, which is why he adds a caveat such as the above. But 300 pages later, readers are not deterred in getting to the ending (and the narrator holds back some important information for the last several pages of the novel). Contemporary readers may read slowly, deliberately, and transparently. It is perhaps *more* suspenseful to know the ending without understanding how Zusak will get us there. The sense of immortality that typically accompanies YA novels is absent in a novel narrated by Death. Instead, mortality is at the center of *The Book Thief*, and we are reminded as readers constantly about the humanity of Zusak's characters, whether they are children, teens, or adults. It is not until the final few dozen pages that Death elaborates on his narrative technique, which was not to give away the ending as much as it was "to soften the blow for later, or to better prepare *myself* for the telling" (497).

Foreshadowing may be too anemic a term to describe what is happening in *The Book Thief*. Death doesn't simply *allude* to an occurrence later in the novel. Death prepares readers for character Rudy's death beginning on page 241 with a note that "He didn't deserve to die the way he did." We are again nudged on page 518 when Death tells us Rudy has only one month left to live. Hans Hubermann's conscription into the army is hinted at throughout the novel, particularly

when Death notes, “We’ll give him seven months. Then we come for him. And oh, how we come” (128). Hans does not go to war until the last quarter of the novel, although we know he will from page 128. Although we, as readers, are always aware of what is coming down the road, the steps that will get us there are not as clear. I would argue that an interactive reading can involve the difficult work of keeping tabs on a narrator who jumps between perspectives and timelines. It is Death’s omniscience, the circuitry of the timeline, that overwhelms readers. As readers we *must* remember what Death tells us – hints, clues, and dead giveaways – and find solace in the novel as a journey wherein we already know the destination.

The Fault in Our Stars asks for a different type of interactive reading, one that relates more to Dresang’s concept of connectivity. Briefly, connectivity shares similarities with intertextuality, that is, the connections that readers make both within and outside of the text. Dresang describes these connections as working in a similar way to hypertext, which links many separate ideas together online (12). Readers need to navigate between the knowledge they have and the knowledge they don’t have. Interactivity with the text occurs when a reader interacts with ideas they may not be familiar with, or may need scaffolding to understand. Green’s intertext does not connect to a teenage world. Outside of a handful of references to *America’s Next Top Model* (which Hazel’s parents also watch), Green’s is a sophisticated intertext, one that asks readers to have access to philosophical and religious contexts (or at least to a Wikipedia search page). Neither book will lose readers who don’t read interactively; indeed, both present stories that are compelling, demonstrate forward momentum, and carry readers easily through the pages. But adult and teenage readers who actively read may find their own ideas challenged, and they may find themselves reading deeply. While the concepts, ideas, and intertexts are vast, the

majority are related through the work of character Peter Van Houten, the author of the fictional *An Imperial Affliction*, which happens to be Hazel's favorite novel.

Allusions are endless in *The Fault in Our Stars*, and they privilege readers who are educated in a number of subjects. There are allusions to Magritte's pipe on Hazel's T-shirt (178), Churchill's alcoholism (185), Zeno's tortoise paradox (187), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (211), the Fourier transform (223), and Philippa Foot's Trolley Problem thought experiment (286). Readers might be moved *out* of an immersed reading by the vast amount of information presented throughout the novel. However, Green scaffolds this information in the book itself, through characters asking questions of one another and from explanations by one character to another, which may account for why both adults and teenagers read *The Fault in Our Stars*. The volume of information presented to readers asks us also to consider Louise Rosenblatt's concepts of efferent and aesthetic reading. Rosenblatt describes efferent reading as "the kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what is to be extracted and retained after the reading event" (12). Efferent reading describes reading for information. For example, reading textbooks, reading for memorization, reading brochures and emails. The aesthetic reader, on the other hand, "experiences, savors, the qualities of the structured ideas, situations, scenes, personalities, and emotions that are called forth, and participates in the tensions, conflicts, and resolutions as they unfold. The lived-through meaning is felt to correspond to the text" (13). Aesthetic reading is pleasure reading, reading purely for experience. A reader's experience can fall at either end of the efferent-aesthetic continuum, or else at the center, where both processes are engaged. By scaffolding complex ideas and information, Green gives readers the option to read just aesthetically, or both efferently and aesthetically at once. A high volume of secondary

information is presented, and readers must rely on following conversations between characters (or else their outside research) to understand unfamiliar concepts.

For example, Hazel describes her physical self by noting her “pageboy haircut” her “fat chipmunk cheeks, a side effect of treatment,” and what she deems “the cankle situation” (9). Yet love interest Augustus Waters describes her as “a millennial Natalie Portman. Like *V for Vendetta* Natalie Portman” (17). Meanwhile, Hazel tells us that Gus is “[long] and leanly muscular,” he has “[m]ahogany hair, straight and short,” blue eyes; in short, “[he] was hot” (9). Although his leg was amputated after he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, Gus is outwardly and conventionally attractive, and his disability is not the center of his life, nor does it especially keep him from living his life. Both are also visibly white, and enjoy a kind of middle-class upbringing that allows them to draw on the types of benefits that they call “Cancer Perks” which are “the little things cancer kids get that regular kids don’t: basketball, signed by sports heroes, free passes on late homework, unearned driver’s licenses, etc.” (23). But Gus and Hazel have cancers that, although rare, have left them healthy enough to draw on these types of perks. They also have supportive middle-class parents who have the luxury of spending most of their time with Hazel and Gus; Hazel’s mother does not have a job, and ferries Hazel between doctor appointments, support groups, and other outings. Their homes are large enough to afford them the privacy to experience their illness alone when they need space, and with a wide array of entertainment to keep them occupied – from books to video games to PVRed episodes of *American’s Next Top Model*. Green’s language is specific, and although many readers appreciate specificity from character descriptions in order to more easily visualize them, it also has the effect of narrowing or excluding readers who are aware of Hazel and Gus in such an exact way. They are conventionally attractive teenagers who have not been radically altered by

chemotherapy, radiation, or other forms of treatment. There is a physical difference between Hazel and Gus, and other characters in the novel who have cancer.

This difference is implicit in the line that is drawn between Hazel and Gus and their friend Isaac. Isaac's disability is more visible; he has what Hazel describes as "some fantastically improbable eye cancer" (6), and although he has already had one eye surgically removed, during the year that he is seventeen he learns that his other eye needs to be removed as well after a recurrence of his cancer. Isaac is largely played in the novel for comic relief; he is a secondary character who is often in the background. He recounts to Hazel his latest trip to the clinic:

...I was telling my surgeon that I'd rather be deaf than blind. And he said, 'It doesn't work that way,' and I was, like, 'Yeah, I realize it doesn't work that way; I'm just saying I'd rather be deaf than blind if I had the choice, which I realize I don't have,' and he said, 'Well, the good news is that you won't be deaf,' and I was like, 'Thank you for explaining that my eye cancer isn't going to make me deaf. I feel so fortunate that an intellectual giant like yourself would deign to operate on me.' (15)

Before Isaac's other eye is removed, physically changing his appearance and his daily life, his girlfriend leaves him. She does it before his surgery because, as Isaac tells Hazel, "She didn't want to dump a blind guy" (60). His abilities are different from Hazel and Gus's. By the middle of the novel, he is, in many ways, a character who exists for comic relief, and the scenes he contributes to are there to show Hazel and Gus growing closer, and understanding their relationship. While he has a minor breakdown after his surgery, he is incredibly good-humored about his disability, and deals with it through humor, suggesting to readers that he will get through this eventually, if not by the time the book ends. After his surgery he tells Hazel, "Come over here so I can examine your face with my hands and see deeper into your soul than a sighted

person ever could” (74). He quips throughout his recovery, and his blindness is the butt of the joke at times:

“Not to one-up you or anything, but my body is made out of cancer.”

“So I heard,” Isaac said, trying not to let it get to him. [Isaac] fumbled toward Gus’s hand and found only his thigh.

“I’m taken,” Gus said. (225).

There is a delineation made – at least in the narrative of this novel – between cancer that leaves teens unblemished or disabled in unnoticeable ways and cancer that leaves its mark more firmly and the repercussions and chances for love. Disabilities are complex and multifaceted, but here, they are also distinguished between and ranked, especially in terms of romantic opportunity.

To a certain extent, Green also engages in literary intertextuality. Aside from *An Imperial Affliction*, works of canonical literature are discussed, especially by Hazel and Gus. A sample of literary references include Emily Dickinson’s poetry (71); “Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg” by Richard Hugo (71); Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* (152); excerpts from T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (153); Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (88); MacLeish’s “Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments” (112); Vonnegut’s “So it goes” (137); Gatsby’s Dr. T. J. Eckleburg (191); Proust’s Narrator, Holden Caulfield, and Huckleberry Finn (193); William Carlos Williams (246-7); Robert Frost’s “Nothing Gold Can Stay” (278); and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (289). While the literary references are certainly more extensive and numerous than those listed above, these items represent the works most likely to be studied in high school English classrooms in North America. References like these may induce readers to search out canonical works, or emphasize the link between historical and contemporary literature through

interchanges like these. If readers are familiar with these canonical texts, they may find their enjoyment and value of *The Fault in Our Stars* enhanced.

Additionally, although there are adult characters in both *The Book Thief* and *The Fault in Our Stars*, at many times the adolescent protagonists take on adult characteristics and appear more adult than young adult. Many times YA protagonists are seen as more adult and less adolescent than real adolescents; that is, in their representation, they become more adult, a reflection of the adult author who is more experienced than the teenage protagonist, who has lived through young adulthood, but who has not remained there. In “Against YA” Ruth Graham insisted that adult fiction provides critical distance from adolescence in a way that YA cannot; however, both Green and Zusak provide that distance through their adult-like protagonists. There are several reasons for their maturity, bred in the context of their lives, the occasion for recording their stories, and in their interests and dislikes. But perhaps their maturity also manifests as an extension of the authors themselves, whose not-young-adulthood allows them to see further and to push deeper when writing about Liesel and Hazel. When Hazel and Gus visit the Anne Frank museum in Amsterdam, a recording of Anne Frank’s father Otto Frank plays in the background, and stays with Hazel (and this reader): “And my conclusion is...since I had been in very good terms with Anne, that most parents don’t know really their children” (203). Perhaps these characters seem adult because they don’t mesh with our ideas of the stereotypical teenager. It is possible, however, that adult readers are attracted to characters who may – to them – seem more adult than young adult.

I would argue that Hazel’s story is more new adult than young adult, even though she is a sixteen-year-old teenage girl. While her cancer arrests her in young adulthood, it also provides her with the opportunity to escape the typical conventions of that stage of development. Hazel’s

cancer has prevented her from attending school, and while she retains some friends from her past, “[she] hadn’t been in proper school in three years” (12). She feels a gulf between her and her friend Kaitlyn, explaining,

...three years removed from proper full-time schoolic exposure to my peers, I felt a certain unbridgeable distance between us. I think my school friends wanted to help me through my cancer, but they eventually found out that they couldn’t. For one thing, there was no *through*. (45; emphasis in original)

She understands and feels separation from other teenagers her age. Hazel has been busy attaining her GED and attending classes at MCC, the local community college, which subverts the timeline of a typical YA novel. Many realistic (and some fantasy) YA novels follow the structure of the school year, using it to organize the plot. For example, a YA novel like Jaclyn Moriarty’s *The Year of Secret Assignments* follows an entire academic year at an Australian high school. Jon van de Ruit’s *Spud* uses the timeline of a yearlong South African boarding school. Others take the form of a single semester or a summer between grades. *The Fault in Our Stars* does not follow this convention. Hazel is so beyond the “normal” conventions of young adulthood that high school and its timeline do not figure into her experience. Attending college, however, is typically associated with new adult novels, as protagonists between 18 and 25 typically work towards some type of post-secondary education. Perhaps it is this experience that allows Hazel access to language and ideas that might not yet be available to a sixteen-year-old reader. For example, when Hazel accuses Gus of having a *hamartia*, she has to define the term for him (and perhaps readers) when he doesn’t know the word. Green scaffolds these ideas throughout the novel, using Hazel and Gus to define, explain, and counter with words and ideas that might be unfamiliar to readers (adult and young adult alike).

There are many points in the novel like these when Hazel self-consciously separates herself from other teenagers and from teenage experience. Although she is sixteen, she understands that her sixteen-year-old life does not look the same as the lives of other teenage girls her age. When her mom asks Hazel if it's still cool to go to the mall, she answers, "I take quite a lot of pride in not knowing what's cool" (40), undercutting the focus on trends, coolness, and popularity that we might glean as important to teenage life from sites such as Tumblr, Instagram, and other blogs. This could be an adult dismissal of trends and popularity, or it could follow from the current hipster trend where disavowing all that is "cool" and "popular" is, in a sense, cool and popular. However, it also shows Hazel as removed from her peers. Another marker that not only separates Hazel from other teenagers, but also teenage (and adult) readers, is her texting habits. Hazel's texts are sent in complete sentences, using correct punctuation, grammar, and the full spelling of words. Few teenagers, let alone adults, text without abbreviation.

Readers are asked constantly to evaluate Hazel not as a teenager, but as a new adult or an adult. When she is moodier than usual, Hazel's mom accuses her as "being very teenagery today" (99). Typically, Hazel is not "teenagery." Even when she is angry with her parents, she is still aware enough to know she wants "an old-fashioned Teenager Walkout, wherein I stomp out of the room and slam the door to my bedroom and turn up *The Hectic Glow* and furiously write a eulogy" (255). Additionally, she compares the color of the fluid in her lungs to "[her] dad's favorite amber ale" (107), not only using a sophisticated and adult comparison, but also delineating between types of beers, which seems out of character for a sixteen-year-old.

The Book Thief's Liesel, on the other hand, is made more mature through the development of her literacy – both the ability to read *and* write – along with the backdrop of

World War II. Her ability to appreciate literacy presents her with maturity above her age, and her progression as a reader elevates her beyond adolescence. Even the adults around her read less than she does. For example, Hans admits “I am not such a good reader myself” (65) and he struggles with some of the words in the books he reads with Liesel. The ten parts of *The Book Thief* are named after the books Liesel discovers and reads in each section, meaning that the novel is split into books. Each part is also divided into several subsections, or chapters. Death is first attracted to Liesel’s story when he sees her steal a book as he collects the soul of her younger brother. The book “had silver writing on it” (24), and it is simply titled *The Grave Digger’s Handbook: A Twelve-Step Guide to Grave-Digging Success* (published by the Bayern Cemetery Association). Liesel can’t yet read the book, but the theft marks “the beginning of an illustrious career” (29). She frequently pulls the book out of its hiding place at the Hubermann’s and looks at the cover. At first, the book as an object is more important than what it says. It marks the last time she was with both her mother and brother (38). Reading *The Grave Digger’s Handbook* helps cement Liesel’s relationship with Hans, and becomes a constant in a life that was previously inconsistent and unpredictable. Their night classes together bring them closer, and help Liesel eventually move up into the class with the rest of her age group. Completing one book makes her ravenous for another, as if the act of completion provides her with the confidence to move forward.

When Liesel steals her second book, it is at a Nazi book-burning in the middle of Molching to celebrate Hitler’s birthday in 1940. Out of the burning embers of the heaped, burned books, Liesel takes *The Shoulder Shrug*: “It was a blue book with red writing engraved on the cover, and there was a small picture of a cuckoo bird under the title, also red” (84). The book burning angers Liesel; her late attainment of literacy makes her all the more aware of how

important books are. Over time, Liesel steals several from the mayor's wife's private library, including *The Whistler*, *The Dream Carrier*, *A Song in the Dark*, *The Complete Duden Dictionary and Thesaurus*, and *The Last Human Stranger*. With the acquirement of *The Whistler* and *The Dream Carrier*, reading ceases to be a solitary act for Liesel (although it can be argued that it never was, but instead has always been a shared activity). She reads *The Whistler* out loud to the residents of Himmel Street while they seek refuge from air raids underground, taking over Hans's role of calming her with reading in the middle of the night. Liesel also reads to Max. She reads *A Song in The Dark* while he reads and sketches on the pages of *Mein Kampf* that have been painted over in white. She follows with *The Dream Carrier* when Max slips into a coma-like sleep, at which point her nightmares replace her brother with Max as she carries him in her dreams.

The final book is Liesel's own, *The Book Thief*, marking her progression from reader to writer. The book details her life on Himmel Street, and Death excerpts from it sporadically. Writing saves Liesel's life at the end of the novel, as an air raid destroys Himmel Street and everyone who lives there. She is busy writing in the basement when the Hubermann house is bombed. Death collects the book, forgotten by Liesel in her distress – Rosa, Hans, and Rudy have been killed by the bombing – and he carries it with him, reading and rereading her words until the end of the novel, when he returns the book to a dying Liesel.

For Liesel, books are both objects and events. The books she steals greatly mirror her own development and her understanding of the importance of literacy. Literacy ultimately saves her life; reading helps her find home and writing helps her define it. Though fictional, the books that wind through *The Book Thief* are central to elucidating ideas, moving the plot forward, and participating in Liesel's development and maturity.

Taken together, these terms – “Interactive Reading” and “Mature for Their Age” – could indicate what it is about some YA novels that appeals to adult readers; they could create a schema for anticipating crossover of YA novels.

YA Literature: A Narrative of Consistency and Continuity

While the content of some YA novels might be changing in order to appeal to adult readers, it is also very possible that there are essential characteristics of the category of YA that attract adult readers. What are those essential characteristics? Is there anything innate about the category of YA?

Victoria Stapleton, Director of School and Library Marketing for Little, Brown Books for Young Readers presented the Keynote Speech at the ALAN Convention in Washington, D.C. in November 2014. Stapleton is one of the most prominent voices in the YA market, and during her keynote she outlined the delineations between categories of middle grade, YA, and fiction. Generally, she said, middle grade books show children learning that the world is not random, that they, in fact, must live in the wake of the decisions that adults make on their behalf. They live largely in a world where adults make choices for them. YA novels deal more with individuals’ primary agency. Stapleton noted that teenage characters move from their family of origins (parents, siblings, extended relatives) to their family of choice (friends, significant others, and mentors). This is their opportunity to choose what to believe in, and perhaps also their first exposure to mortality. YA novels focus on impermanence, and especially the impermanent repercussions of their decisions. Adult fiction, however, forces readers to learn about permanent choices. While many choices made in YA novels could be permanent – and could affect characters’ adult lives – readers are left to speculate at the end of the book whether the situation

will get better, improve, or change. YA novels have been generally characterized as “hopeful”; that is, readers complete a novel from this category optimistically, and with hope that characters’ young age does not limit them to a certain choice, or certain repercussions of that choice. Adult novels, however, sometimes end with the unmistakable feeling that time is running out.

While Stapleton makes generalizations about these three categories of literature that are as sweeping as any made by either Graham or Cox Gurdon, they do ask us to consider what YA offers that perhaps adult fiction does not. If YA is a literature that adapts to social and technological changes, it’s worth examining what has stayed the same. What is essential about YA literature? As adult fiction and YA are viewed as more similar and adults are reading it in higher numbers in the twenty-first century, is there anything essential about YA that adult readers could possibly be searching for? If the history of YA shows constant adaptation and change, is there a corresponding narrative that describes the category as constant and continuous? I would suggest three characteristics that are integral to YA novels: a lack of the portrayal of real world work, a pedagogical imperative, and an inability to explore the realities of long-term romantic relationships. Perhaps these consistencies also appeal to adult readers.

First, if we were to take YA as a blueprint for real teenage lives and experiences, then we might assume that all teenagers aspire to be writers or artists, as this creative work is overwhelmingly portrayed in YA literature. It might be possible to view YA as a category that favors the *kunstlerroman*, or the development of the artist, a characteristic that has roots in protagonist Jo March of *Little Women*. Real world work is not as well represented in YA as it is in adult fiction. Much of the employment that is presented in YA is part-time, casual, or impermanent; it is not the teenage protagonist’s last stop in the working world. Tedious, routine, realistic, and long-term employment is not explored by teenage characters in YA. For example,

Vera Dietz in A. S. King's *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* (2010) delivers pizza for Pagoda Pizza. In Sarah Dessen's *Saint Anything* (2015), protagonist Sydney spends much of her time at Seaside Pizza, a restaurant located close to her new high school. It is owned by the Chatham family, and Sydney becomes ingrained in their lives – she dates Mac and becomes best friends with his sister Layla, both of whom work at Seaside. *Love and Other Perishable Items* by Laura Buzo (2010) is an Australian YA novel that rotates between the point of view of fifteen-year-old Amelia Hayes and twenty-one-year-old Chris Harvey. The two work at Coles, a grocery store at the local shopping center. It's Amelia's first job, one she sought out because,

Money is never openly discussed in my house, but I suspect that last year was a bit tough. My sister Liza moved out to go to university in Bathurst, and my dad was longer than usual between jobs. Asking for money began to stress me out. Dad would say he didn't have any cash and to ask Mum. Mum would sigh and look pissed off and give it to me with less than good grace. So I thought, *Enough of that*. (4)

Protagonist Jill in Sara Zarr's *How to Save a Life* (2011) works at a bookstore. Ed Kennedy of Markus Zusak's *I Am the Messenger* (2002) lies about his age to get a job as a cabdriver. Julie Murphy's *Dumplin'* (2015) sees protagonist Will take a job at fast-food joint Harpy's. This part-time work fits around the teenage protagonists' school schedule.

Additionally, summer jobs are relayed in a variety of YA novels: Auden in Sarah Dessen's *Along for the Ride* (2009) works at her stepmom Heidi's boutique while staying with her dad's new family for the summer in seaside Colby. Nicole (Nick) from Lauren Oliver's *Vanishing Girls* (2015) works at Fan Land, an old amusement part a short bus ride away from her house. Morgan Matson favors ice cream parlors as the location for her protagonists' summer work. In *Second Chance Summer* (2012), Taylor works at a beachside concession stand; in *Since*

You've Been Gone (2014) protagonist Emily scoops ice cream for the summer; and in *Revenge, Ice Cream, and Other Things Best Served Cold* (2015) (which Matson writes under the pseudonym Katie Finn), Gemma get a job behind the ice cream counter. Carol Matas's *Telling* (2002) is interested in Alex's summer job at a renaissance fair. Matt de la Pena's *Mexican WhiteBoy* (2008) sees its protagonist Danny play baseball for money over the summer that he spends in National City with his father's family. He's moved to National City to save up money over the summer so he can book a flight to Mexico to visit his dad, and he finds it lucrative to use his skills as a pitcher to do just that. We might see the development of the athlete (coined as the *sportlerroman* by Chris Crowe) as a parallel narrative to the development of the artist in YA, which might include books such as Matthew Quick's *Boy 21* (2012), Kwame Alexander's *Crossover* (2014), Michael Chabon's *Summerland* (2002), and Wendelin Van Draanen's *The Running Dream* (2011).

The reality of long-term work is absent from YA novels, and overwhelmingly, part-time jobs in YA are for the purpose of saving for college or filling time in the summer, although at times the jobs also help teenage protagonists contribute to their family. This representation varies wildly from the more permanent and routine positions that are present in fiction targeted at adult readers, where enduring working for the same company and in the same position for years, and sometimes decades, presents a different focus on employment. YA literature does not include this perspective and perhaps, by the nature of the category, it cannot.

Second, a pedagogical impulse is present in many YA novels, in a way that we might not view in adult fiction. The "pedagogical impulse" of YA is much more subtle than the didacticism we might associate with children's literature. YA novels refrain from showing readers how to act and are more interested in sharing concepts that can enrich their reading experience. John

Green's novels most visibly engage in this practice. For example, in *The Fault in Our Stars* Hazel accuses Gus of having a *hamartia*. She then defines the term for him (and readers also) since he isn't familiar with the word. In Green's *Looking for Alaska*, protagonist Miles "Pudge" Halter explains at the beginning of the novel that he is going to boarding school because of the author Francois Rabelais. He then goes into detail to explain, "So this guy...Francois Rabelais. He was this poet. And his last words were 'I go to seek a Great Perhaps.' That's why I'm going. So I don't have to wait until I die to start seeking a Great Perhaps" (5). Matthew Quick's *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* scaffolds new ideas and information through extensive use of footnotes, some of which fill half of a page of text. While many of the footnotes expand upon the text itself, others explain concepts for the reader in more detail. For example, while describing his friend Baback, protagonist Leonard says, "if you gave Baback some wrinkles and a salt-and-pepper beard he'd look exactly like the current Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which could cause him problems, especially during patriotic times like 9/11 anniversaries, and whenever Ahmadinejad made anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, and anti-American comments, which was all the time" (78). Quick uses this descriptive sentence as a jumping off point into a more in-depth discussion, delivered in footnote form by Leonard:

Herr Silverman says Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier. Walt Disney was accused of being a Nazi sympathizer too, according to Herr Silverman. Walt Disney actually went to Nazi meetings, put anti-Semitic images in his cartoons, and joined a group that discriminated against Jews in the entertainment industry. Walt Disney! It's amazing how many people are secretly racist. I mean, millions of good little kids from all over the world go to Disney World and have this really nice family time – all orchestrated by an alleged Nazi sympathizer. Why don't more people talk about this? Herr Silverman says

Disney wanted to create a utopia that was so alluring, so convincing that no one would dare oppose it. “Who does that remind you of?” Herr Silverman asked, and we all understood the answer was Hitler. That made a bunch of people in my class angry. Lori Sleeper said, “Why are you trying to ruin our childhood?” And Herr Silverman said, “You’d rather not know that Walt Disney is often accused of being a Nazi sympathizer?” And Lori Sleeper said, “YES!” That bit depressed me because I could tell she really meant it. (78-9)

Leonard continues in the footnote to describe class with his Holocaust teacher, Mr. Silverman. However, this footnote exists to engage with readers’ assumptions, and to present information that readers might not be aware of. I’m not suggesting that adult fiction doesn’t scaffold new ideas and information; however, I think most adult fiction engages in this process more subtly, and perhaps with less detail. This pedagogical impulse in YA explicates ideas for readers, and builds in this process of scaffolding information into descriptions by the author, internal comments by the protagonist, or through dialogue between characters.

Finally, YA cannot explore the realities of long-term relationships through the experience of a teenage protagonist. While adult characters in YA novels can engage with and model these types of long-term relationships, the teenage protagonist cannot. I think this is an interesting concept to consider, because most YA novels include a romantic relationship. YA novels might present romantic relationships the way perhaps teenage readers would like to believe relationships develop. One of Graham’s criticisms in “Against YA” is the fact that love as experienced by adolescent characters in YA novels is unrealistic, trite, and cliché. I would agree with this claim to a certain extent; romantic relationships function differently for teenage characters than adult characters. When YA novels end with two characters in a relationship,

readers tend to speculate that those two characters are going to remain together forever – the terminal point of the end of the novel leaves a couple happy and with the expectation that they are going to stay together. While it is certainly not the objective of YA to portray realistic relationships, writers of YA do have a responsibility to think about the way these portrayals impact their readers. Indeed, many writers of YA are very aware of the impact their novels might have on an adolescent reader. Courtney Summers and Kristin Halbrook, two writers who engage with discussions of rape in their YA novels, are very aware that they have a responsibility to create a productive dialogue around how rape culture affects teens. In an interview with Stephanie Kuehnert from online blog Jezebel, Summers explains,

I think it's so critical, when exploring topics like sexual violence and rape culture, to ask yourself what your work is adding to the larger conversation *about* sexual violence and rape culture. Are you undermining it? Are you doing more harm than good? I believe those questions should put a very necessary pressure on a creator to treat the material thoughtfully, carefully, respectfully, and to do the best by it that they can. If you're not asking yourself these questions or feeling that pressure when you write about these things, that's a huge problem and it's going to show in the work. It's offensive. It's lazy writing.

What do romantic relationships look like in YA? Overwhelmingly, YA novels end with a couple who gives the effect of being together forever, or at least long after the book ends. Graham cites Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* as a YA novel that presented a romantic relationship that made her cringe with secondhand embarrassment. It is a novel that pairs an overweight character named Eleanor with Park, a half-Korean teenager, who meet on the school bus. While the two sixteen-year-olds experience resistance to their relationship from family and peers, the book ends with

the understanding that the two characters will be together, as Eleanor sends Park a postcard “Just three words long” (325). When YA novels end with characters in a relationship, it has the effect of allowing a reader to imagine that such a relationship is infinite. Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* illustrates this in its clearest form by showing its central couple, Bella and Edward, as immortal vampires who really do have the ability to live out an infinite relationship. *Harry Potter* is another such novel. It pairs Harry and Ginny, and Ron and Hermione, and the “19 Years Later” coda shows both couples still together in adulthood, suggesting to readers that relationships started in a “high school” are common, a point which is refuted by current research.

A recent survey on Twitter shows that there may be a logical reason for this depiction of relationships in YA novels. Nova Ren Suma, the author of the recently well received YA novel *The Walls Around Us* (2015), began a conversation in October 2014 on Twitter when she tweeted, “Yes, I’m one of those YA authors who found her other half as a teenager...I wonder if this has anything to do with what I write?” Malinda Lo chimed in “I never knew anyone who met their long term spouse as a teen until I got to know folks in YA.” Through an informal survey on Twitter, a high number of popular YA authors admitted to marrying their high school sweethearts: Beth Revis, Tiffany Trent, and Emily Hainsworth, for example. Brenna Yovanoff chimed in, “I did a (very unscientific) poll at an agency gathering – the results were bizarre. In a group of 50-ish, about 45% had met before 22.” Sarah Dessen has admitted the same, as have Stephanie Perkins and Elizabeth Eulberg. YA author Lindsey Leavitt speaks often about having married her high-school lab partner. In fact, at a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) panel, Leavitt, Eulberg, and Susanne Colasanti discussed the propensity for authors of YA to marry early, specifically marrying their high school sweethearts. Colasanti admitted to

being the exception. It is worth thinking about the ways that authors' experiences affect the narratives of romantic relationships in their books.

Are these innate features of YA literature appealing to adult readers? Why? If we view these three characteristics – a portrayal of limited work experiences, a pedagogical impulse, and an the inability to explore the long term effects of romantic relationships – as present in most YA novels, it might be important to consider that adult readers are searching for this content in YA rather than adult fiction.

YA: A Marketing Term

The distinction between readers and literature presents only one side of the current focus on young adult literature. Marketing also has a distinctive role in the current popularity of YA with adult readers. "Teenager" has existed as a marketing term since its emergence in the 1940s as corporations appealed to young people with leisure time and a disposable income following World War II. It may be useful to view "young adult" as a marketing term that is increasingly lucrative to publishers in the twenty-first century, meaning that it is a body of literature that might appeal to many types of readers, and is distinguished from adult fiction by its label rather than its content.

For example, many authors have discussed the ways in which their books have been categorized and then marketed by their publishers, highlighting the role of the publishing industry in making categorical distinctions. Sandra Beckett, for example, makes note of the publication history of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), a children's book that is often categorized under "horror." She explains,

When Neil Gaiman submitted his initial draft of the eerie novel *Coraline* to his editor, she told him: ‘You can’t publish this for kids. This is obviously an adult novel.’ Gaiman asked her to read the book to her six- and nine-year-old daughters, who loved it, and *Coraline* was published for children in 2002. (182)

Gaiman has also commented on the role of the market in shaping positive reception for *Coraline*, stating that in 1990, he showed the manuscript to an English editor who said “he thought it was absolutely brilliant and completely unpublishable” (qtd. in Grant). Gaiman noted that while the manuscript itself did not change in the next decade, the publishing landscape did, perhaps particularly in response to the publication of the first few *Harry Potter* novels.

It is worth emphasizing the role *Harry Potter* has had in changing reading habits internationally, and in adding market value to the label “YA.” In her article for science fiction and fantasy blog io9 Charlie Jane Anders itemized *Harry Potter*’s influence on the publishing industry. Potter, she states, prompted adults to read in droves. It kept them in the “loop” both in regards to the content other adults were reading, as well as their children. As a result of the influx of readers to children’s/YA literature, publishers saw the marketing power of young people’s literature: “The Potter books helped to prove that books aimed at middle-grade and young-adult readers could gain a sizeable audience, of all ages – and that they could deal with fantastical and speculative topics” (Anders). Anders notes that YA fantasy writer Tamora Pierce commented on this, noting that publishers were convinced that young people would read big books. As an avid reader of Pierce, I remember the way her novels changed to respond to the popularity of *Harry Potter*. Until 2003, Pierce wrote quartets, four-book series, with each book ranging from 250-300 pages in length. After *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* – a nearly 800-page book – proved young people would read long books, Pierce condensed her next quartet – *Daughter of the*

Lioness – into two books, *Trickster's Choice* (2003) and *Trickster's Queen* (2004). Each book totaled nearly 500 pages.

Harry Potter also provoked a more interactive experience, and Anders cites the series as bringing book cosplay into the mainstream. Cosplay combines the words “costume” and “play,” and book cosplay specifically refers to individuals wearing costumes to represent a specific character from a book. Some of this emerged from the midnight release parties for the last four *Harry Potter* novels, where readers would congregate at bookstores around the world in order to purchase the newest *Harry Potter* book at midnight of its release. Many readers would dress up as their favorite characters, and I recall attending an Orlando, FL Barnes and Noble release party in 2005 where a costume contest was central to the event. Release date parties like these, Anders explains, helped boost book sales at independent bookstores, which were able to physically cater to the release date in a physical way that online retailers such as Amazon could not. Now, *Harry Potter* cosplay is showcased at LeakyCon, a *Harry Potter* convention that takes place in Orlando, FL every year, as it is the home of *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* theme park. LeakyCon highlights *Harry Potter* as well as other YA fiction. Authors such as Rainbow Rowell, Ransom Riggs, Holly Black, John Green, and Tahereh Mafi have attended and presented at the conference in past years.

Harry Potter also invigorated fan-fiction, and was a canon text that many readers chose to write back to through online environments. Popular YA author Rainbow Rowell told Sarah Shaffi of *The Bookseller* that she wrote *Harry Potter* fan fiction “after getting ‘kind of depressed’ between writing two of her own novels.” Her fan-fiction was a 30,000-word novella that she claims to have written between *Fangirl* (a novel that focuses on a young woman who writes fan fiction) and *Landline* (a work of adult fiction) that focused on Harry Potter and Draco

Malfoy. Rowell states, “It’s funny because it’s where I was in life. It’s Harry and Draco as a couple who have been married for many years, and they’re raising Harry’s kids, with Ginny, she has not been vilified. It’s them dealing with attachment parenting and step-parents and all these middle-aged issues of what it means to be a step-parent” (qtd. in Shaffi). Rowell admits she was depressed in the space between her two published novels, and that the fan fiction kept her engaged and writing. It may have also provided the impetus for Rowell to write and publish *Carry On*, a *Harry Potter*-esque fantasy novel that deals with the teenage relationship of Simon Snow and Baz at a British school for wizards (Simon Snow is integral to Rowell’s novel *Fangirl*). Perhaps because of the gaps between new publications of *Harry Potter* novels, readers had the space to write back to the series, and also to create new material that would hold them until the next official publication. As well, because *Harry Potter* was published over a ten-year period, from 1997-2007, Anders notes that it was one of the first series in which the characters age as the readers age.

Finally, Anders suggests that the creation of the online Pottermore website provided a new model for e-book sales. Pottermore is an online platform designed for the sales of e-book versions of *Harry Potter*. Rather than buying through Amazon or iTunes, Pottermore creates a direct mode of sale for the e-book version of these books. Yet, Pottermore is also a completely immersive experience, letting users interact with the Sorting Hat and get sorted into Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, or Slytherin, and compete for the House Cup online. As well, Rowling shares original writing on Pottermore, continuing to add to the *Harry Potter* universe. Anders explains that publishers can find new and innovative ways to sell e-books, rather than going through the traditional venues. *Harry Potter* proved that books for young people in the twenty-

first century could be incredibly lucrative, and command a rich, all-ages audience. “YA” was a category – and marketing term – to take notice of.

The influence of *Harry Potter* is still felt in the publishing world, and Guardian writer Alison Flood recently noted an additional impact. She says that recent research from Nielsen Book shows that fiction sales increased in 2015, and thriller novels specifically accounted for 29% of the market. Psychological thrillers – labeled “grip lit” – are driving the growth of the thriller category, and include novels such as Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* (2012) and Paula Hawkins’s *The Girl on the Train* (2015). Female readers between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four are purchasing grip lit, comprising 67% of all sales. Flood notes that women made 60% of *The Girl on the Train* purchases. The women buying grip lit are part of what Flood calls the “Harry Potter cohort,” readers who grew up with *Harry Potter* and are now searching for new compelling literature to take its place. Flood notes that this cohort is extremely influential on the publishing industry, and fueled sales of the *Divergent* and *Hunger Games* trilogies. I fall within the “Harry Potter cohort” and also picked up *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on the Train* soon after they were published. I certainly relate to the importance of finding fiction with a gripping story that I will read all the way through, almost in one sitting, like I did with *Harry Potter*.

Samantha Eades, an editor for Orion imprint Trapeze, told Flood, “Unreliable narrators like Rachel from *The Girl on the Train*, Amy from *Gone Girl* and Clare from *In A Dark, Dark Wood* are our new Ron, Harry and Hermione, with bad husbands, jealous best friends and dangerous next-door-neighbors our new He Who Must Not Be Named.” Eades also notes that grip lit presents “emotional storytelling with a compulsive pull – we as the reader just can’t turn the pages fast enough” (qtd. in Flood). While I do agree that the “compulsive pull” of grip lit certainly bears similarities to the process of reading a new *Harry Potter* book, I’m not sure that

the characters of grip lit embody the same characteristics of those in *Harry Potter*. Rachel from *The Girl on the Train* is hardly a compelling character, and while *Gone Girl*'s Amy is a fantastically written character, I'm not sure it's possible to go so far as saying she's like Harry, Ron, or Hermione. However, it is worth emphasizing that readers who grew up with *Harry Potter* are characterized as voracious readers who are driving the publishing industry in the twenty-first century, both in sales of young adult and adult fiction.

Perhaps as a result of this influence other authors are viewing their work as shaped by the YA market. Two authors recently commented on the process of their publishers determining the shape their readership would take. The first is Marcus Sedgwick, who I would argue is one of the most compelling, and unconventional, writers of YA. Sedgwick is a British author and his novel *Midwinterblood* (2011) was awarded the Printz Award, while *Revolver* (2009) and *The Ghosts of Heaven* (2014) won honor awards. Sedgwick has even forayed into the genre of YA vampire fiction with *My Swordhand is Singing* (2006), a suspenseful, Gothic tale. His books often subvert the expectation that YA novels must revolve around teenage characters. For example, *Midwinterblood* focuses on much older characters. What makes these books YA, then? In an interview with Caitlin White for *Bustle*, an online magazine, Sedgwick explained,

The absolute bottom line – because you have all those arguments about appropriate labels, what is included in YA, and when does a YA book become an adult book? ... But as a writer, it's not how I set out to write a book. I don't set out to say 'I'm going to write a YA novel,' I set out to write a story I think is interesting or has an idea that has gripped or obsessed me... And I don't think readers go around thinking, *Is this book written for me? Was I person this book was designed for?* As a reader you're just looking for something you love, or something you hope you'll fall in love with.

Sedgwick goes on to make note of “the long and necessary” chain between writer and reader, which includes “the agent, the editor, the publishing house, the marketer, the sales department, the book seller, the librarian, etc.” (qtd. in White). It’s here that distinctions between categories are viewed as necessary, as publishers seek to identify who, specifically, will purchase these novels.

Author Margo Rabb, on the other hand, watched with dismay as publishers determined that her “adult book” was going to be categorized as YA. In an article she penned for *The New York Times*, Rabb explained,

When my agent called to tell me that my novel, “Cures for Heartbreak,” had sold to a publisher, she said, “I have good news and bad news.” The good news: an editor at Random House had read it overnight and made an offer at 7:30 a.m. The bad news: the editor worked at Random House Children’s Books...Apparently, I had unintentionally slipped across an increasingly porous border, one patrolled by an unlikely guard.

Agents, editors, and publishers determine which books belong to an adult readership, and which to a teenage readership. In the case of Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, categorizations varied by country. The title was first acquired by Random House Children’s Books in Australia where it was designated YA in order to correspond to Zusak’s previously published novels, all for teens. His YA novels *The Underdog* (1999), *Fighting Ruben Wolfe* (2000), *When Dogs Cry* (2001), and *I Am The Messenger* (2002) had previously been published in Australia before being re-released by international publishers. However, as the manuscript was shared among editors at Random House, they reconsidered branding it as YA and published *The Book Thief* as adult fiction in Australia. President and publisher of Random House Chip Gibson insisted “the strategy was to get readers to read it, regardless of age. Gibson felt strongly that *The Book Thief* was a

title that begged to be talked about” (qtd. in Maughan). This remark indicates a strong suspicion that adults would be more comfortable reading adult fiction than a YA book, and assumes that young adult readers would read “up” if the story were worth reading. Gibson’s comments suggest that it would be much riskier to publish the book as YA and expect adult readers to read “down.” While publication as an adult book in Australia was a specific strategy for that imprint of Random House publishers, outside of Australia, *The Book Thief* was published as YA. Perhaps American publishers viewed YA as a more lucrative category; J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series was drawing to a close, and it is possible Random House speculated that *The Book Thief* would appeal to readers of that series. Bookseller Becky Anderson of Anderson Books in Naperville, Illinois has particularly noted the crossover appeal of *The Book Thief*, and how easy it is to recommend the book to readers of all ages even though it is categorized as a book for teens in the United States. She notes, “*The Book Thief* has been that perfect read – one that crosses over both ways – from adult to young adult and back. New readers to this phenomenal title are coming in all the time, brought in by a never-ending stream of word-of-mouth raves” (qtd. in Maughan).

Certainly, the boundary between YA and adult literature is blurring. Much of the adult fiction that I have read in the last few years could easily be shelved as YA; many novels focus on teenage protagonists and are set specifically in high school environments. Curtis Sittenfeld’s *Prep* (2005) focuses on a boarding school on the East Coast, and follows protagonist Lee Fiora from her freshman year to her senior year. I view *Prep* as a book almost indistinguishable from something like E. Lockhart’s *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* (2009) or John Green’s *Looking For Alaska* (2005), both of which use the boarding school background to great effect. In a similar vein, Marisha Pessl’s *Special Topics in Calamity Physics* (2006) could be

fluidly categorized as YA or adult. The novel focuses on Blue van Meer's senior year of high school. She has settled down in Stockton, North Carolina with her professor father, who moves around the country semester by semester, accepting teaching contracts. He agrees to take a year contract in Stockton so Blue can have an uninterrupted senior year of high school. The content and context of the book, however, makes it possible to imagine it exchanged with a YA title such as *Lucas* by Kevin Brooks (2002), which examines a year in the life of protagonist Cait, who lives on a remote British island with her father, a YA author.

These examples and others reinforce the fact that the YA novel is not an organic, authentic category of literature. Instead, a novel becomes YA when a marketing team, publisher, or editor decides to label it that way. While an author like Rabb first thought that the categorization of "YA" undermined her novel, she has since come to see the categorization as beneficial. Her newest novel, *Kissing in America* (2015), fully embraces the characteristics of the category.

Sherman Alexie has likewise expressed that the YA categorization is positive, and explains, "A lot of people have no idea that right now Y.A. is the Garden of Eden of literature" (qtd. in Rabb). Michael Cart, who co-founded the Printz Award, suggests creating an "All Ages" categorization, which would attract both teenage and adult readers, and Megan Tingley, senior vice president and publisher of Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, agrees (qtd. in Rabb). Perhaps it is more useful to consider "YA" as a market designation that has changed, and will continue to change, over time. If young adult library services librarians such as Margaret Edwards originally included adult books in sections designated for teenagers, then we might see publishers today as making other alterations to the category. Today, we can be sure that publishers view categories as important, especially if we consider the creation of "New Adult"

and the suggestion of an “All Ages” categorization. Do readers want to be told what to read, or, more specifically, what kinds of books to read? Do they need a roadmap to navigate the thousands of books published every year? Are readers implicit in this categorization, or is it their demand that makes distinguishing between categories necessary? If we view YA as strictly a marketing term, then it’s really not so surprising to see adults crossing categorical lines.

Discussions around the Printz-Award-winning books highlight the value of using YA as a marketing term. In recent years, teachers and librarians have criticized the Printz Award for recognizing books that teenage readers do not demonstrate any interest toward. Specifically, *Postcards from No Man’s Land* by Aiden Chambers (1999), *A Step from Heaven* by An Na (2001), and *Kit’s Wilderness* by David Almond (1999) are viewed as inaccessible to teenage readers and a “hard sell” by booksellers and librarians. These arguments have caused Jonathan Hunt to conjecture that some YA, specifically the books recognized by the Printz, are indistinguishable from adult literary fiction (147). Not only do popular books like *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *Divergent* crossover, but so too do literary YA novels. Hunt cites *The Book Thief*, *Octavian Nothing*, and *This Is All* as three specific examples of YA novels that could easily be found in the adult fiction section, and in the case of *The Book Thief*, it has been. Since the publication of Hunt’s article in 2007, I would add Margo Lanagan’s *Tender Morsels* (2008), Rick Yancey’s *The Monstrumologist* (2009), Craig Silvey’s *Jasper Jones* (2009), and Marcus Sedgwick’s *Midwinterblood* (2011) to his list of YA literary novels. These novels may be indicative of the marketing strategies publishers observe.

I find M. T. Anderson’s *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party* (2006) and *Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* (2008) difficult to categorize, and to conceive of as the way I define and experience YA. While leading a workshop

at a conference on YA literature at Louisiana State University, I circulated passages of the *Octavian Nothing*, and other YA novels popular with adult readers, to teachers and librarians, with the title and author removed. *Octavian Nothing* is a two-volume set of historical novels published by Candlewick Press, a Somerville, MA publisher. Anderson is American, and lives in Boston, where *Octavian Nothing* is set. Octavian is a slave in eighteenth-century America at the time of the American Revolution, and he is raised in luxury as part of a great experiment. Formally, *Octavian Nothing* mimics the style of eighteenth-century novels. I read YA extensively throughout my BA in English, but when I encountered *Octavian Nothing* for pleasure reading at the same time as taking an early American literature class, it was more similar to the style of the eighteenth-century novel than to contemporary YA.

After reading the circulated passage, members of the workshop decidedly agreed that *Octavian Nothing* was an adult novel; yet, it was recognized with a Printz Honor and the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. Anderson is known as a children's and YA author, but *Octavian Nothing* is much different from his other novels. Did publishers categorize this historical novel as YA because of Anderson's other YA novels? If so, they would not be offering his readers anything like what they had read before, with vampire fiction *Thirsty* and dystopian novel *Feed*. Do YA awards have a role to play in the categorization of a book? Are these ambitious books more likely to be awarded a YA award than an adult fiction award?

For comparison, take the recent criticism of the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*. Many critics have reacted against a book like *The Goldfinch*, which may read more YA than adult as it spends a considerable number of pages in protagonist Theo Decker's adolescence before jumping eight years into his *new* adulthood (which has little in common with what we might categorize as traditional adulthood). *The Goldfinch* has been

criticized by some reviewers for giving Theo a happy ending, rather than presenting an ambiguous and unclear ending like the ones Graham insists are a trademark of adult literature. Julie Myerson at *The Guardian* even characterized it as a “Harry Potter tribute novel.” Negative reviews from the *Guardian*, *Newsweek*, and *The Washington Post* question its Pulitzer Prize win, and notably, these criticisms use much of the same language as Graham’s *Slate* article.

Perhaps YA is a marketing designation that also appeals to publishers, editors, and agents who hope their authors’ books win awards, which have the effect of increasing the sales and visibility of a novel. Do books with young protagonists have more of a chance to succeed with awards if they are part of a YA category rather than an adult category, as viewed through the reception of *The Goldfinch*? Perhaps publishers, poised where they are in the marketplace, have the best vantage point to view how a book should be categorized.

Conclusion: The Creation of All Ages Literature

Many critics have identified YA literature as an unstable category, or have acknowledged an innate contradiction between the way it is read, written, and marketed and the way it is labeled in the twenty-first century. Many of the articles written on online platforms identify that the influx of adult readers to the category of YA is a result of instability in the developmental categories of adolescence and adulthood in America. In her article for Book Riot, Jensen described contradictions innate in contemporary adulthood as one of the overarching responses by individuals online, specifically on social media, in newspaper articles, and in interviews. But perhaps this is not a new concern. In the first half of the twentieth century, G. Stanley Hall described America as “a nation in adolescence,” which might help to explain the proliferation of novels that were preoccupied by an intermediate state between childhood and adulthood. Novels

such as *Little Women* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* thrived in advance of Stanley Hall's articulation of the developmental stage of adolescence in 1904, perhaps suggesting that America's identification as a country in transition provoked an interest in adolescent narratives. Yet critics still seem reticent to identify America as a nation that has successfully transitioned into adulthood. Rather, many critics are claiming that America is currently experiencing "the death of adulthood." New Adult literature provides an evidence base for the fact that Americans are seeing an expanded adolescence, now defined by the developmental stage "emerging adulthood." Now, adolescence lasts until the age of twenty-five, rather than eighteen, an increase of seven years. In the same way that social and technological contexts extended the length of childhood in the late nineteenth century, now different social and technological contexts are extending the length of adolescence in the twenty-first century. Literature that expresses narratives in transition, or *adolescent narratives*, is once again popular with American readers, and in this case, young adult literature is enjoying increased attention and visibility.

It's worth thinking about the role of the United States in YA literature, since its origins are rooted in American publications. In September 2014, *The New York Times* published an article by American critic A. O. Scott entitled "The Death of Adulthood in America." In the article, Scott remarks that traditional adulthood is no longer represented in TV shows, as "adulthood as we have known it has become conceptually untenable." Scott's fifteen years as a film critic have allowed him to observe that "comic book movies, family-friendly animated adventures, tales of adolescent heroism and comedies of arrested development become the commercial drive of Hollywood, as well as its 'artistic heart.'" Scott also responds to Graham's article, agreeing with her that adults should avoid reading YA, but then retracting his support,

I will admit to feeling a twinge of disapproval when I see one of my peers clutching a

volume of “Harry Potter” or “The Hunger Games.” I’m not necessarily proud of this reaction. As cultural critique, it belongs in the same category as the sneer I can’t quite suppress when I see guys my age (pushing 50) riding skateboards or wearing shorts and flip-flops, or the reflexive arching of my eyebrows when I notice that a woman at the office has plastic butterfly barrettes in her hair.

God, listen to me! Or don’t.

His response to Graham is in service of a larger argument, which examines the state of literature in America. Calling on Leslie A. Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel*, a survey of American literature, Scott reflects,

Fiedler saw American literature as sophomoric. He lamented the absence of books that tackled marriage and courtship — for him the great grown-up themes of the novel in its mature, canonical form. Instead, notwithstanding a few outliers like Henry James and Edith Wharton, we have a literature of boys’ adventures and female sentimentality. Or, to put it another way, *all American fiction is young-adult fiction*. (emphasis added)

Scott’s critique of American pop culture and media that privilege YA narratives is also a critique of an adolescent America; if these are the types of narratives that reflect and engage in the American experience, then Scott views Americans (and America) as exhibiting symptoms of arrested development. If Stanley Hall described America as a nation in adolescence in 1904, can the same be said of America in 2016?

Adult readers admit to crossing categorical boundaries to read YA in the twenty-first century, to find exceptional writing, compelling characters and narratives, and immediacy; however, social contexts have certainly played a role. The identification of a new category of development in the emerging adult, for example, describes eighteen- to twenty-five-year-olds as

still in development, experiencing the weight of student loans, unemployment, and living with parents in adulthood.

Yet, we are also viewing the market influence of the categorical marker “YA” as integral to adult readers’ interest. YA literature generates market value for publishers. As Flavorwire writer Jonathon Sturgeon noted in the title of a December 2014 article, “Are You an Adult Who Reads YA Novels? Congratulations, You Saved Publishing in 2014.” Indeed, sales of YA novels are essentially financing more underrepresented and purchased literature, allowing publishing companies to absorb losses on adult books that are recompensed by YA sales. Even though adult fiction and YA are becoming more and more alike – specifically *The Book Thief*, which is recognizable as fitting under both categories – the label YA does carry a commercial incentive. It can be appealing to be categorized as YA.

The conversation about YA, and its adult readers, is more interesting for what it reveals about the use of categorical and genre designations in the publishing industry. Anxiety about categorization persists in literary conversations. The boundaries between adult fiction and YA may be blurring, but the categorical lines remain distinct. While there are many defenders of YA, they still insist that it is a separate category. While *Harry Potter* had an immense influence on the publishing industry, and was read by both adults and children, the book was printed with alternate covers depending on the target audience. Adult covers were darker, more mature, and lacking the cartoonish characters on the children’s editions. For a novel that was certainly crossing categories, publishers still created a physical separation between the two. YA is a marketing category, one that publishers use both to generate interest in certain stories, and also to continue working within a category that is proven to be especially lucrative.

Are adult readers changing the nature of YA? *Horn Book Magazine* editor Roger Sutton offers the following response through a post on the *Horn Book* website. Sutton's remarks in "Why do we even call it YA anymore?" are in a similar vein as Graham's; he notes the influx of adult readers to the category of YA. However, Sutton suggests that this influx of adult readers is so substantial that YA has adapted to the demands of adult readers and, resultantly, has little to do with actual YA readers. More often than not, comments on blog posts elucidate, provide evidence, and question the original post itself, and here, Sutton presents a different set of implications. He challengingly states, "I think everybody would be better off if we viewed YA as a subgenre of popular fiction for women rather than as a genre for teenaged people" (Sutton). His remark was flagged by several other commenters, forcing Sutton to expand on his limited definition of the reading audience of YA literature,

...I was being provocative, but with a point: I think a large proportion of today's YA fills a reading niche that used to be filled by chicklit and is read by the same demographic. Feminist scholars before me have made the case for all of children's literature being a kind of women's literature, mainly because of who minds the gates, but the current iteration of YA expands the possibility of that definition in that so much of YA is written by women for a largely female audience. (Sutton)

Sutton's remarks ask us to consider YA as a gendered category of literature, one that attracts overwhelmingly female adult readers. His implication is that women readers are not adult readers, and are instead searching out YA instead of the category prescribed for them. While his comments are provocative, they are also interesting, and recall the way that Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* was gendered as for female readers, even though Daly's fan mail suggested that men and women of all ages read the novel. Sutton's comments also recall author Jennifer

Weiner's response to Graham's article through Twitter. Weiner, author of *Good in Bed* (2001), *In Her Shoes* (2002), and *Little Earthquakes* (2004) has been critical of the publishing industry, which she sees as privileging male writers (rewarding them with reviews and coverage) and giving less attention to women writers. Most publicized are her tweets about adult fiction writer Jonathan Franzen. The two authors have a longstanding rivalry, and Weiner has even coined the term "Franzenfreude" to explain "her frustration with the endless praise showered on middle-aged white novelists...while novels by women and reams of female-centric genre fiction are ignored" (Silman). She is familiar with the denigration of certain categories of literature. She responded to Graham's article the day it was published by tweeting, "Dear Y.A., Don't let the bastards get you down! Your friend, Chick Lit." If *Guardian* writer Damien Walter insists that there is a mass exodus of readers from adult fiction, is it overwhelmingly female? Is there evidence that adult readers of YA are predominantly female? I am not able to answer these questions, but extrapolation from the number of female-authored book review blogs, newspaper articles, and tweets after Graham's article point to this perhaps being the case.

Or is there another option to consider in the case of young adult literature? Is it simply a category that has been opened up to readers across all ages? Sandra Beckett notes that the term *allalderslitteratur* (all-ages-literature) was used in Norway and Sweden as early as the 1980s, predating what we have come to call crossover literature (especially in Britain with the publication of *Harry Potter*) (Beckett 7-8). She also notes that Spanish-speaking countries use "libros para todas las edades" as a term that specifies books for all ages. Germany employs three terms to refer to these books, *All-Age-Buch*, *All-Age-Literatur*, and *All-Age-Titel*, which have been in use since around 2002. Beckett also acknowledges use of the term *Bruckensliteratur*, which translates to "bridge literature," and describes books that cross over from young readers to

adults. Beckett speculates the term was coined after the 1979 publication of Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*, an example of a children's book that held much appeal for adult readers. Finally, she notes that the Dutch term *literatuur zonder leeftijd* (literature without age) came into use in 1993 after it was chosen as the title of a journal that reflected the importance of books that appealed to readers of different ages. Perhaps YA is the North American version of "all ages literature," but we don't call it that because YA has much cachet and value in the publishing market. It's worth considering that the category of YA literature is presenting a diverse range of novels in the twenty-first century, which are causing its readership to change quite distinctively. It is possible to view YA as an unstable category, one that is attempting to redefine what it stands for, and seeing a radical shift in its readers in the process.

Conclusion

“Not Just For Teens”: Targeting Teenage and Adult Readers

More than at any other time in its history, YA literature is at the center of literary discussions in the twenty-first century, a focus that necessitates a critical examination of this category of literature. Many of these conversations track adult readers who are purchasing and reading YA novels in staggering numbers; in 2015, a report by Nielsen showed that adults account for 80% of the YA market. Attention is also given to the complexity of the literature, and its growing similarity to adult fiction. A resulting anxiety about the blurring of boundaries between categories of literature has caused writers for numerous newspapers, blogs, journals, and websites to speculate about the future of YA and its diverse readerships. My dissertation contributes to an understanding of how contemporary YA literature is influenced by social and technological contexts in the twenty-first century. My analysis engages with the history of YA literature, which indicates a pattern of change and adaptation in the category as innovations in technology and the impacts of social contexts influence the types of YA novels that have been published over the last 150 years. But while in the past these conditions reinforced YA as a separate category – one that was specifically marketed to teenagers – today new contexts are revealing instability in the way YA is conceived as a category of literature. Who is YA literature for? Adults or young adults? How are agents, editors, and publishers re-shaping YA and its focuses? What literary techniques are favored in the literature?

Young adult literature developed out of social contexts that necessitated a response to the articulation of an adolescent stage of development. Novels published in the late nineteenth century like *Little Women* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* offered literary representations of an intermediate space between childhood and adulthood, although in books that were not

specifically written for an adolescent readership. Instead, *Little Women* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* crossed over child/adolescent and adult readerships. As YA literature continued to develop in the first half of the twentieth century, readerships were still largely homogenous, and not yet divided by age or by gender. Although Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* is now understood as a romance novel for young teenage girls, at the time, males and females of all ages read the novel. YA literature began as a very utilitarian category, one that served the reading needs of an audience of all ages. Even early attempts at a YA voice in publications throughout the 1940s and 1950s attracted a wide audience: *Catcher in the Rye*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *I Capture the Castle*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *A Separate Peace*. It truly wasn't until the publication of *The Outsiders* in 1967, and the subsequent publication of *The Pigman*, *The Chocolate War*, and the problem novels of the 1970s, that the readership of YA started to be composed of teenagers. I would suggest that this young readership was largely emblematic of the category until the publication of *Harry Potter* at the turn of the twentieth century, when adults were drawn once again to the category of adolescent/YA literature. *Harry Potter* was a gateway to YA, and the number of adults that read YA has continued to increase each year.

In this dissertation, I have argued that YA novels in the twenty-first century have changed in response to social and technological contexts, transforming not only the types of books published in this category, but also changing the publishing world. My close examination of Daniel Handler's *Why We Broke Up*, Jaclyn Moriarty's *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens*, and John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* identified four specific attributes embodied by much of contemporary YA literature. These concepts include rich use of intermediality and intertextuality, the creation of digital paratextual

materials, integration of images and graphics, and crossover appeal. Not only do the five primary texts interact with these concepts, but so too do numerous other YA novels. Even as I continue my reading of YA as my work on my dissertation draws to a close, I am still able trace these concepts in literature published as recently as April 2016. For example, Jesse Andrews's *The Haters* (2016) provides rich intertextuality through music references that span genres, categories, and formats. *The Haters* focuses on best friends Wes and Corey who are attending a two-week summer jazz camp. Jazz camp attendees have to audition for one of five bands that are ranked from most skilled to least skilled: the Duke Ellington band, the Count Basie band, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band, the Woody Herman band, and the Gene Krupa band. Wes and Corey make Gene Krupa, along with one of the only girls at the camp. Ash (short for Ashely) is a guitarist, and she convinces bassist Wes and drummer Corey to leave the camp and come on tour with her across the southern United States. Her rationale? "I do like jazz some of the time. But I don't think any of the jazz I like was played by someone who went to jazz camp" (37). References to music and musicians include contemporary bands like The Shins, Animal Collective, and Mariah Carey, while the jazz camp context allows for discussions of jazz greats such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Additionally, the inclusion of graphics and images continues in the newest YA literature. For example, A. S. King's *I Crawl Through It* (2015), a novel that examines the current anxieties teenagers face in the wake of violent school shootings and bomb threats, highlights multimodality. Yet, King does this through the inclusion of a single image in the novel (it was the inclusion of this one image, appearing near the beginning of the book, that influenced my decision to purchase *I Crawl Through It*). The image is of a frog dissection, included in the novel because protagonist Stanzi is obsessed with performing them in her high school Biology classes.

She wears a lab coat everywhere she goes, her protective camouflage from the world, and a buffer for the personal trauma she has faced. King's novel is a work of surrealism, and an image like this helps to root readers in a concrete reality. It also provides symmetry between Stanzi's exposure and vulnerability, and that of the dissected frog.

As well, the creation of digital paratexts continues to proliferate in new YA literature. I would suggest contemporary YA author Rainbow Rowell makes a compelling candidate for a study of paratextual materials, which include her considerable presence on Twitter, her conference presentations and talks, and her *Harry Potter* fan fiction novella. Fan fiction is a body of writing I was unable to address in the scope of my dissertation, yet it constitutes much of the paratextual material created in the twenty-first century. The fact that Rowell not only writes YA novels, but also fan fiction online makes her a compelling YA author to examine in this regard. As well, while Rowell's YA novels appeal to adult readers, she also writes across other categories of literature, such as adult fiction (*Attachments* and *Landline*), New Adult (*Fangirl*), and fantasy (*Carry On*). Her interviews and digital content target several different readerships, and are diverse and engaging. I can imagine the construction of her authorial constellation as ongoing, and perhaps rivaling the presence of both Daniel Handler and John Green.

Finally, novels such as Becky Albertalli's *Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015) and Laura Ruby's *Bone Gap* (2015) are hugely popular with adult readers, indicating the crossover appeal that now characterizes much of the category of YA. *Bone Gap*, for example, won the Printz Award in 2016. The Printz Award routinely recognizes YA novels that appeal more and more to adult readers, those that librarian Jonathan Hunt indicates as infringing on adult fiction, and he notes that Printz winners are often "virtually indistinguishable from the best adult literary fiction" ("Redefining the Young Adult Novel" 147). Fox 2000 recently optioned

Albertalli's novel for a movie adaptation. Adaptations of YA novels often acquire a crossover audience through translation into another medium. New YA novels published in the last year indicate that intermediality and intertextuality, paratextual material, graphics and images, and crossover appeal continue to describe much of YA literature as it is published today.

While these components of YA are certainly backed by evidence from a wide range of YA novels, the category still exhibits an instability, or a sense that it is difficult to pin down specific definitions of YA. The deeper my close examination took me into these five texts, the more indefinable the category of young adult literature appeared. YA has become quite open, malleable, and flexible as a category of literature, and there are not many restrictions on what YA can be. The border between YA and adult fiction appears to be blurring further in the twenty-first century and readers appear to be searching for books that are similar to YA.

For example, I was recently asking my friend, a comics artist located in Ottawa, for new book recommendations and she suggested V. E. Schwab's *A Darker Shade of Magic* (2015), the first book in a new fantasy series targeted at adult readers. Yet, she sold the novel to me as "reading like a YA book." "Like YA" seems to be a descriptor given to adult books that contain the following: 1) narrative drive, 2) readability/ease of reading, 3) dynamic characters, 4) a focus on adolescent and teenage characters. *A Darker Shade of Magic* is not the only adult novel that has been described as "reading like YA". Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Goldfinch* (2014) was derided by critics for its remarkably YA focus and feel, and many thought that it was undeserving of its award. Tartt's is not the only novel that critics have identified as reading like YA. Karen Russell's *Swamplandia!* (2011), Jessica Cocks and Heather Morgan's *The Royal We* (2015), Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See* (2014), Maria Semple's *Where'd You Go Bernadette* (2012) (which, after I finished reading, I was positive was YA),

Curtis Sittenfeld's *Prep* (2005), Carol Rifka Brunt's *Tell the Wolves I'm Home* (2012), Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013), and Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011) and *Armada* (2015) could be interchangeably marketed as YA or adult fiction. Yet, they aren't. While some novels are marketed to *both* adults and young adults, shelved in both sections at bookstores, and given different cover art – Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls* (2011), and Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* (1999) – these novels are not given that treatment. “Like YA” is a valuable evaluative term that might be useful for describing adult fiction that might share a border with YA literature.

When examining definitions of YA literature in the introduction to this dissertation, I noted that Katherine Bucher and Kaavonia Hinton discussed the difficulties of defining YA literature. They asked, “Is it the literature that young adults select on their own, to read? If so, some mainstream adult novels by Danielle Steele or John Grisham might be classified as young adult literature. Or is young adult literature any book that is written specifically for a young adult audience? In that case, consider that highly recognized young adult authors such as Bruce Brooks and Robert Cormier actually became young adult authors because of their publishers” (3).

But what if something else altogether is happening in the twenty-first century? What if YA literature and certain types of fiction are instead growing together and blurring the boundaries between categories? Is adult fiction that “reads like YA” actually YA? If adult books can be shelved easily in either a fiction or YA section, then what is YA really? Is it a truly separate category? Or are we seeing a homogenization of literature written about adolescent characters? While many YA novels are certainly crossing over genres and becoming difficult to categorize, as Scot Smith suggested in his 2007 article for *The ALAN Review*, “The Death of

Genre: Why the Best YA Fiction Often Defies Classification,” at some point every new YA novel cannot be a “boundary breaker.” If implicit in new YA books is that they are breaking boundaries, then maybe we need to reimagine how we view the category of YA.

So why are the categorical designations still in place? If fiction and YA literature are truly becoming more similar, then where does the hesitation come from in dissolving stringent categorical boundaries? While certainly literary critics enforce these boundaries – even Ruth Graham, writer for *Slate* magazine – publishers also have a vested interest in delineating between categories in order to target marketing and sell books to specific types of readers. A category of YA was not necessary in the later nineteenth century, yet what we now would attribute to YA – a focus on a teenage protagonist, a frank and open style, use of vernacular, a first-person perspective, and a strong marketing culture – were present in both *Little Women* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The terminology was not available to readers, writers, and publishers until after World War II, significantly more than fifty years later. Certainly novels were not labeled YA until the twentieth century, yet novels that displayed these characteristics were being published before then. Does the term “young adult” do justice to the literature and its readerships? And more importantly, what are teenagers reading? If only twenty per cent of YA is purchased and read by teenagers, where are teenagers spending their money in the publishing market?

Working on this dissertation has made me aware of the difficulties of examining a category of literature while it is currently undergoing transition, change, and transformation. No new period has yet followed the changes in YA literature noted in this dissertation, unless we consider the evolving focus on diversity as “what’s next” in YA. Many YA novels are simply becoming more challenging, more popular, and more “adult” in nature. They also continue to

respond to changes in social and technological contexts. For example, consider the new collaboration between Australian YA authors Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff, the *Illuminae* trilogy. The first novel was published in October 2015. *Illuminae* is set in the year 2575, and begins on the day that protagonist Kady's planet is invaded. The novel is incredibly experimental and the story is communicated through a variety of unconventional formats – these include “hacked” documents such as emails, schematics, military files, IMs, medical reports, and interviews. The series has already been optioned for a movie adaptation through Brad Pitt's *Plan B Entertainment*. It's an ambitious undertaking, but one that anticipates *future* social and technological contexts and adapts its format and content to suit that. YA can be examined through small pieces of a larger puzzle, although its image continues to shift and exceed its borders under close examination.

“YA literature” is a marketing term in the twenty-first century, one that describes a category of books with a focus on adolescence and teenage experience that generates high revenue for authors and publishers. It has a certain cachet that makes it popular among readers, as well as with journalists, bloggers, and academics. Part of its revenue comes from adaptations to other media, including to movies and TV shows, effectively making YA stories some of the most visible stories in entertainment. There is an argument to be made that writers of YA structure their books in a way that make them inherently “scriptable,” that is, easily adapted into a feature length film. YA novels typically take place over a semester, school year, or summer, limiting the scope and span of the timeframe. Many authors comment on the process of adapting their books to movies (and many are hired as scriptwriters), but few express frustrations when their books do not transition into a visual format. When Sarah Dessen's new novel *Saint Anything* was published in 2015, she expressed her hope through her Twitter feed that it would

be adapted into a movie, after her previous novels *That Summer* (1996) and *Someone Like You* (1998) were combined for the movie adaptation *How to Deal* (2003). Since then, Dessen has not seen any of her novels adapted to film. In 2011, she told Jean Bentley of MTV that she would love for her other novels to be optioned: “I’m always hopeful. I feel like I’m at the prom sitting against the wall waiting for someone to ask me to dance.” Dessen perhaps expresses a sentiment that other YA authors feel but do not articulate, and that attracting a Hollywood producer is another goal of the YA novel.

Is YA targeting a teenage audience in the twenty-first century? Or is a teenage audience secondary in twenty-first century publications of YA literature? Does it matter to publishers whether teenagers are reading these books, or if instead the majority of YA is purchased and read by adults? Surely authors and publishers speak explicitly about teenage readers when marketing YA novels, but once they are on real bookshelves, does it matter who purchases YA books, as long as they sell?

It matters greatly to some writers. Author Margo Rabb’s article in *The New York Times*, outlined in chapter five, indicated that she was greatly disappointed to learn that the novel she had written for adult readers would be marketed as YA. Yet by the end of the publication process, she was grateful for the categorization, especially when it put her in touch with teenage readers. This is not always the case. I had the opportunity to meet one of my favorite Canadian YA authors, Kit Pearson, in 2010 when I moved to Victoria to begin my MA in English. Kit Pearson is perhaps best known for her novel *Awake and Dreaming* (1996), which is set in Victoria by the Ross Bay Cemetery. Pearson based the geography of her novel on the real geography of Victoria, the cemetery, and the neighboring area. She is well known for providing cemetery tours in order to allow readers to visit the physical landmarks that inspired her novel. I

went on one of these tours in October of 2010 when I was twenty-two. The tour attendees were largely skewed to my demographic, made up of women in their 20s and 30s. Pearson could not hide her disappointment that there were no adolescent readers attending the tour and she stated the fact a few times over the course of the one-hour tour. At the end of the tour, I left feeling devastated. I read Pearson's book in 1996, when it was published, and continued to re-read it over the next fifteen years. It remains one of my favorite novels, as do Pearson's many other publications such as *A Handful of Time* (1987), *The Sky is Falling* (1989), *Looking at the Moon* (1991), and *The Lights Go On Again* (1993). Yet, she did not recognize me – or the other women on the tour – as her target audience. We were too old, we were too adult, we were on the other side of the YA/adult border. Most writers and publishers, however, are satisfied that their books target teenager and adult readers, and acknowledge the blurring of boundaries between categories.

Yet, YA is not the only category of literature adapting to contemporary contexts. Shelley Diaz, writer for *School Library Journal*, reflected on the current state and future of young adult literature, and specifically talked to agents, editors, and publishers of the literature to get a sense of the landscape. Perhaps the most interesting finding is that while YA literature is blurring boundaries with adult fiction, middle grade novels are edging into YA territory, covering topics and content that used to be reserved for books recommended for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds. Kiera Parrott, head of *SLJ* reviews explains, "I'm seeing middle grade that blurs the line with themes that are darker and more sophisticated. These stories' characters confront uncomfortable truths about the world around them. It's possible that shifts in YA have trickled down" (qtd. in Diaz). This has led to a sophistication that spans categories for young people, encompassing both middle grades and high school readers, which leads to adults more easily picking up novels

ostensibly written for young readers, but with a maturity and sophistication that can lead to an enjoyable read for adults. Middle grade books that Diaz cites in particular are Alex Gino's *George* (2015) and Kenneth Oppel's *The Nest* (2015). *George* focuses on gender identity through the character of a young transgender girl in fourth grade. Author Alex Gino has noted that while there is not a large focus on transgender narratives in middle grade novels, books such as *Gracefully Grayson* by Ami Polonsky (2014) and *5, 6, 7, Nate!* by Tim Federle (2013) are standouts in the category (qtd. in Hansen). Kenneth Oppel's *The Nest* (illustrated by Canadian Jon Klassen) tackles issues of adolescent worries and anxieties through a Gothic horror middle grade novel resembling Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), another middle grade novel that pushed boundaries (it now resides in the genre of children's horror). The boundaries are blurring on either side of young adult literature, as books for young people have generally become more mature and sophisticated. Faythe Arredondo, teen services librarian at the Tulare County Library in Visalia, CA, believes that rather than "aging up," categories of literature for young people are instead addressing the world as it is now (qtd. in Diaz). Readers are more sophisticated, and the world around them appears to be more mature and complex. Arredondo suggests literature has therefore adapted by becoming more difficult and complicated in response.

Deborah Taylor, coordinator of school and student services at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland, also attributes the recent popularity of YA with adults to the online community that has arisen because of book review bloggers, and websites like Goodreads, Library Thing, BookRiot, and Forever YA. She says, "The rise of the YA blogger has significantly changed how we talk about books and who talks about the books" (qtd. in Diaz). Indeed, YA bloggers publicly discuss and review YA, and there is a wide network of these online platforms for conversations about the literature. *Forever YA* is a website that bills itself as

a “site for readers who are a little less Y and a little more A.” It rotates through writers who write “book reports” about not only the most popular YA novels, but also about TV shows and movies that are adapted from YA books, or have appeal to teenagers. It started in 2009 and now has over twenty-six contributors. If adults have co-opted aspects of the category of YA in online spaces, are teenage readers affected? Discussions in the comments sections of *Forever YA* book reports indicate that adults, not teenagers, are engaging with the content. It might be more likely that publishers send review and advance copies of new YA novels to adult readers who review books online, rather than sending them to teenage readers who maintain book review blogs, or engage in conversations about YA on Tumblr, for example. Publishers might be more interested in this adult response than engaging with teenage readers, meaning early response to new YA might be entirely shaped by adult readers.

Literary agents have also weighed in about the state of contemporary YA literature, and the way it has been steadily adapting to current contexts. A decade ago, much of what was visibly YA was dystopian (*The Hunger Games*), fantasy (*The Mortal Instruments*, *Harry Potter*), or comprised of paranormal love triangles (*The Twilight Saga*). But although the category of YA still contains these themes, it has also matured into a category that highlights literary value and complexity. Josh Adams at Adams Literary insists that today, one of the toughest sells is anything that has “even a whiff of dystopia about it” (qtd. in Corbett). After “flooding the market with as much paranormal as it could stand,” agent Michael Bourret of Dystel and Goderich Literary Management says that the focus has turned to realistic fiction, which has been influenced in part by the popularity of John Green. Molly Jaffa of Folio Literary Management states, “Everybody involved takes YA literature very seriously these days” while Sara Crowe at Harvey Klinger, Inc. adds, “I actually think manuscripts have gotten *stronger*” (qtd. in Corbett;

emphasis in original). Agents are also admitting that they currently prefer to sell standalone novels over trilogies. Laura Rennert from the Andrea Brown Agency says, “Editors are definitely a bit tired of stories that come in threes” (qtd. in Corbett). Adams adds that the trilogy fatigue comes both from editors *and* readers. Rennert also notes that agents are looking for visual elements in YA. She notes, “Teens are so visually oriented. I feel like there’s an opportunity there, especially with multimedia. There are so many different ways you could execute the visuals” (qtd. in Corbett). This survey of where YA is now largely complements my findings in this dissertation.

My research, however, does not present a comprehensive survey of real adult readers who buy and read YA, although it does take a representative sample of adult responses from digital spaces. Nor does my study survey teenage readers who are the “YA” in YA literature. I could anticipate an extension of this research might be a new research project that focuses specifically on reception theory and qualitative data from adult readers of YA. Some research has been done to connect adults’ memories of reading YA novels in their teens. Amy Bowles-Reyer’s (1988) PhD dissertation entitled *Our Secret Garden: American Popular Young Adult Literature in the 1970s and the Transmission of Sexual and Gender Ideology to Adolescent Girls* surveyed adult women about the books they read as adolescents in the late 1970s. Although Bowles-Reyer surveyed the women as adults (all former classmates and alumni of prestigious Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.), she was interested in their reading process as adolescents, including where they read, how they read, and what they read. She found that adults recalled that reading adolescent texts with a focus on sexuality played a role in readers’ own development of sexuality in their teens (228). Bowles-Reyer stated, “The popularity of books like these suggests that the female adolescent readers in my study found them to be both

pleasurable to read and relevant to their lives. They offered the reader a raised consciousness about the female body and its relationship with the social construction of gender” (293). Adult readers could connect their sexual identity to the books they read as adolescents, meaning, perhaps, that they were reading questioningly. They were hopeful about their own growth, and felt optimistic by reading about successful female identity in their favorite books. However, the study was done retroactively, meaning readers’ understanding of their adolescent reading processes might not be as accurate or as authentic as Bowles-Reyer would hope. Still, this marks an early study of adults connecting their reading memories of YA literature in adulthood. A survey of adult readers would involve a focus on reception theory, and would inform the appeal of YA in the twenty-first century.

The next step in future related research might be to ask similar questions about the state of contemporary literary fiction. Examining representations of literary fiction through critics, columnists, reviewers, publishers, and educators would be instrumental in understanding how this large category of literature is perceived in the twenty-first century. How do critics conceive of contemporary literary fiction? What might it offer to readers? It could be useful to understand the purpose of conversations about literary fiction in the twenty-first century in order to understand why so many adults turn to YA. Damien Walter, writer for *The Guardian*, suggests that contemporary adult literature is failing its readers, and it is this failure that has created a mass exodus of adult readers to young adult literature. But is adult fiction actually failing its readers? Walter doesn’t identify specific failures of the literature, as he is more interested in focusing on what YA offers adult readers instead. Is there a connection between changes to YA literature in the twenty-first century and changes to adult fiction in the twenty-first century? Or is there simply more visibility concentrated on the category of YA than on adult fiction?

Finally, an area that was beyond the scope of this study is a qualitative research program that focuses on teenage readers of YA literature. It would be useful to address these five primary texts from the perspective of teenage readers, and seek out feedback from twelve- to- eighteen-year-olds. Do teenage readers find *The Book Thief*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Why We Broke Up*, *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, and *Beauty Queens* worthwhile reading material? Online conversations show that teenage readers respond to these texts using social media platforms, especially Tumblr, but how many teenage readers? And how many in comparison to the adult readers who are also enjoying these novels? What do teenagers think of contemporary YA? At the September 2015 Nielsen Children's Book Summit in Manhattan, a panel of teenage readers actually balked at the term YA. Moderator Stephanie Retblatt asked the teenagers on the panel if they thought a "YA" description drew them toward books. Their answer was an emphatic no (qtd. in Barack). They preferred to think of their reading choices as more broad, and less specifically focused on what publishers defined as YA. So what are teens reading? And if it's YA, what kind of YA? If it's not, what do teenagers' reading lives look like? And where have the teenage readers gone?

Changes in YA literature from the late nineteenth century to today reveal that writers, editors, publishers, *and* readers have created the category of literature, and have continued to recreate it in response to changes in social and technological contexts. YA is an ephemeral category, one that forces readers to identify authors by name rather than by book, as many authors publish a new book a year. These prolific authors have dominated conversations about YA literature in the twenty-first century, and have increased the visibility of YA novels. YA literature continues to expand past the boundaries of its category, responding to the contexts that require many YA novels to become more mature and complex, and perhaps the most visible

category of literature in the twenty-first century. But is the marketing term “YA” likely to last, especially given all of the crossover in the first part of the twenty-first century? In the first part of the twentieth century, a “young adult” category of literature did not exist, yet teenagers still found valuable literature to read. A marketing impulse drives the salability of certain titles, and for now, “YA” is selling the majority of books that focus on teenage protagonists. However, a Calgary branch of the Canadian bookstore chain Chapters recently introduced a new organizational category to sell YA books to adults. Titles such as Becky Albertalli’s *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015), Libba Bray’s *Lair of Dreams* (2015), and Erin Bow’s *The Scorpion Rules* (2015) are advertised under the new, store-created marketing category titled “Not Just for Teens.” Many of the most popular and bestselling YA novels appear on this display shelf, and the marketing approach takes the focus off of the implied teenage reader and redirects it towards the adult reader. Marketing has continuously driven the expansion of and focus on YA literature, and if another term organizes these books in more relevant or interesting ways, books that focus on teenage characters might find a new categorical marker to make book selection more convenient. New categorical labels are not necessarily a certainty, but it is important to consider the possibility that YA could evolve away from its current marketing designation.

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