ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S FANTASTIKA

LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates the representation and narratological function of systemic oppression in the fictional worlds of contemporary middle-grade fantastika novels. This project aims to add further insights to current discussions regarding diversity and social justice literature for young readers. In order to distinguish between the forms of oppression a text critiques and those it accepts as natural and normal, this thesis offers a method for identifying and critiquing the representation of systemic oppression in fictional contexts.

This research deploys Black Feminist criticism in the analysis of over one hundred Anglophone middle-grade fantastika novels published in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century (2000-2019) from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia. Patricia Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination, a theoretical approach to the differing domains of power in a system of oppression, is the foundational framework that informs this project.

This thesis's findings include the ways in which defamiliarization may be used to improve understandings of systemic oppression. A fictional world's ability to construct familiar social structures in new and innovative ways offers scholars the opportunity to analyze and understand the organization, management, justification and experiences of oppression in different contexts. This allows for an understanding of oppression outside of the examples found in the scholar's own particular context. From here, narratological and rhetorical studies of literature can better develop nuanced arguments regarding oppression and oppressed characters.

The conclusion of this project argues the significant necessity of intersectionality theory, both in the writing and reading of literature. Ostensible narratives of social justice risk contributing to systemic oppression when they do not emphasize the harms of oppression in all its intersecting forms. By employing an intersectional approach, this research distinguishes between diverse and progressive texts that still maintain the status quo, and those that promote liberating, systemic upheaval.

Keywords: intersectionality; systemic oppression; children's literature; fantastika

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Introduction

This dissertation offers children's literature critics an academic method for investigating the representation and function of systemic oppression in the fictional worlds of contemporary middle-grade fantastika novels. While previous research in oppression and children's literature has typically focussed on the representation of marginalized individuals and groups, I argue that the study of diverse character representation is not enough to achieve the social justice aims of a liberating upheaval of oppressive social systems. By expanding the analysis of oppression in literature onto the representation of social systems, I propose a means by which to distinguish between the forms of oppression a text may critique and the forms of oppression that same text may accept as a given, in turn naturalizing and normalizing said forms of oppression. I argue that ostensible narratives of social justice, while offering radical social justice potential for some, may ultimately function to maintain the oppressive status quo.

Kimberley Reynolds argues, 'Radical writing for children works to break down stereotypical attitudes to gender, race, class, poverty, ethnicity, nationality, and childhood' (*Left Out* 2). Drawing off Reynolds' thesis, and shifting focus from representations of people to representations of social systems, I argue that social justice writing for children works to critique the systemic oppression of varying social groups (including but not limited to gender, race, class, poverty, ethnicity, nationality, childhood, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability and species) *all at the same time*. By 'at the same time,' I do not mean that social justice writing needs to include every social group, but rather that the critique of one form of oppression must not simultaneously uphold the oppression of another. It would be unreasonable to expect every work of children's literature to engage with every form of systemic

oppression. In my study of contemporary children's fantastika literature, I have found that few texts wholly support or critique a total system of oppression; most texts challenge one form of oppression while simultaneously reinforcing another. Note that a text does not need to end a system of oppression and/or replace it with a more equitable system in order to challenge it, a text's unresolved issues can offer a potential means of constructively engaging readers in thinking about social justice and systemic oppression. Thus, in order for children's literature critics to argue the social justice potential of a children's novel, there is a clear need for a nuanced understanding of systemic oppression and intersectionality. This is what my proposed method aims to offer.

I will begin by outlining previous social justice work in children's literature, which has emphasized the importance of improving the amount and quality of diverse character representation. I will then move into a critique of solely focussing on diverse characters, and argue the value of analyzing social systems of oppression in addition to diverse character representation. This leads to my theoretical approach, including theories of systemic oppression, intersectionality, representation and fantastika literature. I will also outline how my method is situated in the author/reader/text debate, followed by a justification of my primary text selection of fantastika literature for the middle-grade market, and why this area offers particular perspectives and opportunities that texts for other age ranges do not. Finally, I will give an overview of the chapters and findings of this dissertation.

Diverse Character Representation

Social justice work within the fields of writing, publishing, disseminating and researching children's literature emphasizes the importance of improving the

quantity and quality of diverse character representation. The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education released a report that found that 'Only 1% of the children's books published in the UK in 2017 had a BAME [Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnicities] main character' (*Reflecting Realities* 5). To resolve this issue, the report argues, 'Energies must be invested into normalising and making mainstream the breadth and range of realities that exist' (*Reflecting Realities* 9). In response to this report, Aimée Felone and David Stevens opened #ReadTheOnePercent, a pop-up bookshop in London, United Kingdom, which exclusively sold books with Black, Asian and minoritized ethnicity characters (Flood). After leaving their jobs at Scholastic, Felone and Stevens founded Knights Of, an independent publishing house that specifically publishes children's books with diverse protagonists.

In the United States of America, Sarah Park Dahlen and David Huyck analyzed the publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center to identify that half of the characters published in children's books in 2018 were white, while almost a third were animals (Park Dahlen and Huyck, "Picture This"). In 2014, Korean-American young adult author Ellen Oh launched an online protest when the annual book convention BookCon offered a panel of children's literature authors consisting entirely of white men (Charles). Oh used the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks in her protest, which garnered so much popularity that We Need Diverse Books became a non-profit organization with the mission statement: 'Putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all children' (About WNDB). There are now several online resources dedicated to promoting diversity in children's books, including Lee and Low Books' 'The Open Book Blog' about racial diversity (*The Open Book Blog*); Malinda Lo's website on LGBT+ literature (Lo, "Blog"); and *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, a peer-

reviewed, open-access academic journal focussing on diversity in children's literature (*RDYL*). However, these social justice activities are fraught, and while growing they are also continuing to struggle. For example, the blog 'Disability In Kidlit,' which focuses on representations of disabled characters (*Disability in Kidlit*), has recently ceased activity. While most children's literature features white, straight and non-disabled protagonists, social justice activists are working hard around the world to improve the quantity and quality of diverse and inclusive literature for young readers.

Research on the value of diversity in literature is not a new development, and is not limited to the fields of children's texts. Previous research has argued that representation matters because of its role in humanizing marginalized groups. In 1926, W.E.B. Du Bois argued that all media is propaganda, and that the representation of Black people in media propagates sympathy for Black people, humanizing them, and thus 'Negro art' can lead to furthering the rights of Black people ("Criteria" 875). Roughly twenty years later, Simone de Beauvoir highlighted the necessity of accurate and complex representations by arguing that the exclusively stereotypical representations of women create myths about what kinds of people women are socially allowed to be, limiting their identities to a subhuman level; poor representation can have a negative influence on the lived experiences of real women ("Myths" 1265). In more contemporary research, similar arguments continue to be made about how characters, authors and themes can affect the real world. Richard Dyer argues, 'how social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life, that poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination (in housing, jobs, educational opportunity and so on) are shored up and instituted by representation' (*Matter* 1). Negative representations function not

only to dehumanize oppressed groups, but also function to assert the limited social

positions of these groups, justifying their oppression. Rudine Sims Bishop argues

that positive representation in literature means that 'Reading, then, becomes a means

of self-affirmation' ("Mirrors" ix). Positive representation functions to affirm the

existence of the individual reader, constructing their identity as a valued human in

both the text and the world. The oppressed existing on the page affirms that they also

exist in society.

Beyond Diverse Character Representation

　　This thesis argues that the function of diverse representation to humanize

oppressed social groups is important and good, but it is only a first step toward social

justice and liberation. In his 2014 BuzzFeed article, 'Diversity Is Not Enough: Race,

Power, Publishing,' Black children's and young adult fantasy author Daniel José

Older writes of the need for 'systemic upheaval,' arguing:

> We're right to push for diversity, we have to, but it is only step one of a
>
> long journey. Lack of racial diversity is a symptom. The underlying
>
> illness is institutional racism. It walks hand in hand with sexism,
>
> cissexism, homophobia, and classism. To go beyond this same
>
> conversation we keep having, again and again, beyond tokens and quick
>
> fixes, requires us to look the illness in the face and destroy it. ("Diversity
>
> is Not Enough")

Older argues that everyone in the field of children's literature, from writers, agents

and editors, to fans, reviewers and educators, should be involved in resisting

systemic oppression. While Older makes an excellent point, he fails to provide

concrete methods.

Previous research that calls for concrete methods for using children's literature to resist systemic oppression has emphasized teaching the narratives of diverse characters in the classroom. American scholars in the field of Education have argued for the use of diverse children's literature for teaching critical literacy. Following Older's argument, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas argues that educators should 'incorporate multicultural, diverse, and decolonial books for children into our English language arts curriculum' ("Stories Still Matter" 115). Thomas also argues, 'Raising questions about books that erase, caricaturize, marginalize, or present diverse children and families as less than fully human is a critical part of our charge as educators' ("Stories Still Matter" 117). Debbie Reese suggests a prioritization of texts written by authors of the particular social group represented, and an approach to teaching critical literacy skills that enables children 'to read between the lines and ask questions when engaging with literature: Whose story is this? Who benefits from this story? Whose voices are not being heard?' ("Critical Indigenous Literacies" 390). In recognizing that diverse literature is not enough in and of itself, Education research has argued for ways of using the narratives of diverse characters. This important research offers valuable insights on methods for resisting systemic oppression within the classroom, considering not only character representation, but also the reading of these characters' narratives. However, while the focus on character representation has been further developed, the focus is still on the analysis of *people* (insofar as characters are the constructed people of a text's world). If we are to believe Older's argument that diversity is not enough, then the literary study of children's literature requires further research into what causes the lack of diverse character representation: systemic oppression.

Within the field of children's literature scholarship, Michelle Martin has called for more scholars to write 'about groups to which the scholar does not belong' in order to increase research into diverse fiction and underrepresented genres ("Brown Girl Dreaming of a New ChLA" 98, 102). Martin and I agree, and both of us recognize the potential problems of the power dynamic of privileged scholars publishing on diverse groups. Thus, drawing off Martin's thesis, I argue that children's literature scholarship on diverse characters should consider the specific contexts of systemic oppression within which the characters are constructed.

In the study of literary texts, a sole emphasis on positive diverse character representation contributes to a liberalist agenda that ultimately functions to maintain systemic oppression. Positive representation has historically been used to define oppressed groups as legitimate individuals within society, constructing issues of oppression (and its resistance) as a matter for the individual. Within a framework of liberalism, bigotry is the rare and only form of oppression and success is attributed to each individual's personal choices, a position that ignores the existence of systemic oppression (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* 56). Liberalism promotes anti-oppression work that considers people while ignoring the harms of systems. Research that also only considers the representation of people, but not of systems, contributes to this liberalist erasure of systemic oppression: thus, a novel that features positive representations of a diverse set of characters can still construct these characters in ways that conform to and promote the systems that oppress these characters. Children's literature scholars who write of positive diverse character representations, but ignore the context of said characters, risk promoting the liberalist agenda of maintaining the status quo.

Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* (USA 2017) works well to demonstrate the necessity of analyzing the oppressive contexts of diverse characters. This novel features a wide range of different women of differing races, all three-dimensional and each with their own personalities, characteristics and agency in the plot. The protagonist is a dark-skinned girl who uses both magic and hard work to achieve her liberating aims. In theory, this text represents diverse women positively. In practice, all of the women are heterosexual and cisgender and are only constructed as 'good' through their presentation as either a mother or daughter. Despite its otherwise positive representations of women of colour, the text ultimately asserts that women of colour can be legitimate and valued individuals specifically within a heterosexist and patriarchal society. The oppressive fictional world of the text naturalizes and supports similar systems of oppression in the real world. The text thus functions to affirm both (cisgender, heterosexual) women of colour and certain systems of oppression.

Anti-oppression research in children's literary criticism needs to not only consider the representation of people, but also the representation of systems of oppression. Research that argues the quality of diverse character representation, but does not consider the represented systems of oppression in the text, may function to assert that oppressed groups are only valued if they conform to a social system in which other groups are dominant, otherwise they are to blame for their inability to succeed in accessing opportunity. Diverse representation's role in humanizing oppressed groups is important, but in an attempt to construct all individuals as equal, this approach risks a liberal neglect and maintaining of systemic oppression. Zamudio and Rios argue of racism that, 'relying on liberal principles […] works to deny the existence of the structural disadvantage of people of color, while

simultaneously obscuring the structural advantage or embedded racial privilege of whites' ("From Tradition to Liberal Racism" 487). Liberalism's denial of systemic oppression has dangerous consequences for members of oppressed groups. As Davis argues, neoliberalism's inability to recognize the material forces of oppression 'imputes responsibility to the individuals who are its casualties, thus reproducing the very conditions that produce' oppression (*The Meaning of Freedom* 171). Thus, just as 'representation matters' in regards to diverse characters, 'representation matters' in regards to systemic oppression as well. There is a need for research to analyze the representation of systemic oppression; children's literature research should work to place the onus of marginalization and disadvantage not strictly on individuals but also on social systems.

Systemic Oppression

Systemic oppression is the holistic combination of social, political, economic and institutional forms of oppression in all its interlocking and intersecting forms. The hierarchies and norms established and enforced by the chain and circulation of power by social institutions, networks and groups unfairly disadvantage certain social groups socially, psychologically, economically and materially so that access to opportunities are (often invisibly) made more accessible to the socially privileged (Foucault 1975; McIntosh 1988; Crenshaw 1989; Feagin 2006; Johnson 2006; Coates 2011). As bell hooks argues, 'Being oppressed means the absence of choices' (*Feminist Theory* 5); systemic oppression can be understood as the social structures that provide ease or limitations for one's access to opportunities, whether that opportunity be social respect and value or institutional and economic gain.

While Feagin argues that systemic oppression is 'a highly unjust system for creating and extending the impoverishment of large groups of people, such as African Americans, to the profit of other large groups of people, principally white Americans' (*Systemic Racism* 20), this relies on binaries of dominated and dominant, an approach that ignores the complexities of intersectionality. As most individuals are privileged and/or oppressed along varying intersecting axes in a social system, it may be tempting to analyze individuals rather than social systems. This is a debate that preoccupies oppression theorists, who argue about the merits of an individualist or a nonindividualist (social group) approach (Taylor, "Groups and Oppression" 522). While the analysis of diverse individual characters is common in previous anti-oppression literature research, this risks taking a structural approach to identifying forms of discrimination, which is not the same thing as an analysis of systemic oppression (Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" 44). Therefore, I approach the analysis of systemic oppression by understanding varying forms of domination as existing within a matrix.

My analysis of systemic oppression in fictional worlds relies on Black feminist critic Patricia Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination, a theoretical approach to the differing domains of power in a system of oppression. Hill Collins argues that the matrix of domination has four distinct parts: the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power. According to Hill Collins:

> The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary
> domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the
> interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the
> individual consciousness that ensues. (*Black Feminist Thought* 276)

While I analyze each part separately, all four domains of power of the matrix of domination work together simultaneously. Hill Collins' matrix of domination makes a distinction between the bigotry of individuals, and the systemic oppression that exists within a matrix shaped not only by social institutions, but by social ideologies and interactions also. Many scholars only analyze institutions in their studies of systemic oppression (see, for example, Jung and Smith 1993; Hartmann 2004; and Coates 2011), thus explaining why systemic oppression is often called (or confused for) 'institutional oppression.' However, Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination includes a more holistic and intersectional approach to society, enabling it to work well as a framework for studying systemic oppression.

Hill Collins' theories of oppression draw heavily from Foucault's theories of power. Foucault argues that power is not guided by the will of individuals and does not exist within a binary between the ruling government and the ruled people, but is rather a matrix shaped by social institutions ("14 January 1976" 29; *The History of Sexuality* 94). Within a system of oppression, power is not understood as a top-down structure of the dominators and the dominated, but rather 'power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays" (Foucault, "14 January 1976" 29). Within this framework, power always coexists with resistance. However, according to Foucault, various forms of resistance throughout history 'were ultimately only stratagems that never succeeded in reversing' systems of oppression. ("The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom" 292).While Foucault argues that resistance against systems of oppression has limited, if any, efficacy, Hill Collins argues for the benefits of intersectional activism. Outlining a clear history of

progressive social change, Hill Collins asserts that Black women's resistance work, both as acts of survival and as projects of institutional transformation, can redefine the public, private and political (*Black Feminist Thought* 204, 209). Because systemic oppression is a complex matrix, social justice activism must be multifasceted and nuanced; each domain of the matrix of domination needs to be resisted if a society is to successfully achieve the liberating upheaval of oppressive social systems.

Perhaps a helpful way of understanding systemic oppression is to distinguish it from what it is *not*. Take, for example, Hiccup's experiences in Cressida Cowell's *How to Train Your Dragon* (UK 2003). The story begins with a group of Viking boys who are all trying to catch their own dragons to train. The more terrifying and dangerous the dragon, the more impressively strong people consider the Viking (Cowell 34). Hiccup, the son of the Chief of the Hairy Hooligan Tribe of Vikings, is described as 'absolutely average, the kind of unremarkable, skinny, freckled boy who was easy to overlook in a crowd' (29). On the Isle of Berk, where 'Only the strong can belong' (136), Hiccup, who lacks physical strength, is bullied and nicknamed 'the useless' (29). Hiccup experiences intense bullying from his peers, resulting in his social exclusion and, eventually, his expulsion from the Tribe (136). Despite its severe consequences, the bullying and exclusion that Hiccup experiences are not a consequence of systemic oppression. Hiccup is the son of his tribe's chief and is afforded easy access to every opportunity to succeed; meanwhile none of the women on Berk are able to access any of the same opportunities. There are women on the Isle of Berk, but none of them is afforded the opportunity to catch and train a dragon, and therefore they are unable to go through the same institutionally-enforced procedures to prove their worth in a society that only values strength. While Hiccup

fails to prove his worth on Berk, none of the Viking women is afforded the opportunity to prove themselves at all.

Within a liberalist framework, the success of all Vikings in Berk is determined by how strong they each are, and so any women who fail to succeed in society fail because they are not as strong as men. Instead, by analyzing the mechanisms of systemic oppression, we can identify the ways in which Berk's social structures limit women's access to opportunity. At no point does the narrative emphasize the unfair treatment of women in Berk, and when Hiccup teams up with the other Viking boys to save the Isle of Berk, the text thematically reinforces the value of Viking boys and the value of the system that empowers them. While a diversity-focussed analysis may note the poor quality of diverse character representation in this text, by analyzing the representation of systemic oppression in the text's fictional world we can also argue how the text reinforces systemic oppression.

Intersectionality

The intersectional nature of systemic oppression is paramount to my argument. As Hill Collins argues, 'Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression […] they typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else's subordination' (*Black Feminist Thought* 287). Often a text can work well to critique one form of oppression, only to reinforce other forms of oppression. This ultimately fails to resist systemic oppression because, as Audre Lorde notes, 'There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives' (*Sister Outsider* 138). To liberate women, but not people of colour, is to fail to liberate women of colour. Literature that emphasizes the liberation of one group at the neglect or expense of

another fails to work toward the systemic upheaval of social justice, but may instead work to reinforce current paradigms of domination and subordination.

For the purposes of this study, intersectionality is defined as: 'the differential ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other' (Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" 205). As a white, cisgender and non-disabled man, my understanding of intersectionality is primarily drawn from the research and experiences of others, predominantly women of colour. I acknowledge my privilege, and in an attempt to approach this field with respect, my intersectional analyses have endeavoured to 'include attention to historical, cultural, discursive and structural dimensions that shape the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, national and religious identity, among other identities' (Naples, "Teaching Intersectionality Intersectionally" 567).

The concept of intersectionality has its roots in Black feminism, with a specific focus on race, gender and class. While Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with coining the term 'intersectionality' in 1989, she was far from the first person to use this concept. For example, in 1851, roughly one hundred and fifty years prior to Crenshaw's coining of the term, Sojourner Truth gave a speech at Ohio's Women's Convention about the oppression of Black women, later titled 'Ain't I a Woman?' More contemporary to Crenshaw, the Combahee River Collective (1977), Angela Davis (1983) and bell hooks (1984) were all critiquing white-centered feminism and proclaiming the importance of Black feminism before the term 'intersectionality' was coined. However, since the publication of Crenshaw's 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,' the concept of intersectionality

has gained further popularity, and has been used and approached in a variety of new ways.

Intersectionality theory has been employed across a variety of fields and has been used to analyze more intersections than race, gender and class. Yuval-Davis argues, 'the boundaries of [an] intersectional analysis should encompass all members of society' ("Beyond the Recognition and Re-Distribution Dichotomy"159). Intersectionality theory has been employed by scholars of varying social positions to analyze the identity politics and oppressions of a range of social categories, including disability/ ableism and queer identity/ heteronormativity (for example, Beckett 2004; Cantú 2000; Currah 2006; Luibhéid 1998; Manalansan 2006; and Smith and Hutchison 2004). My approach to intersectionality theory follows this tradition, and includes every form of oppression possible within my analytical framework.

There are two key approaches to the use of intersectionality theory. According to Beukje Prins, the constructionist approach to intersectionality is engaged with identity politics and the way 'dynamic and relational aspects of social identity' construct the identities of oppressed people ("Narrative Accounts of Origins" 279). This approach is concerned with the intersectional identities of individuals. While the constructionist approach has its merits, because my study is concerned with the representation of *systems* rather than *people*, I have not engaged with issues of identity politics. Instead, I employ what Naples terms an epistemological approach, which she defines as a 'contextualised and historicized' analytical approach to systems of power and oppression ("Teaching Intersectionality Intersectionally" 570). Instead of analyzing the addition of an essentalized "Black" identity with an essentialized "Woman" identity to argue the identity politics of Black women, the

epistemological approach aims to analyze the constitutive process that occurs at the intersection of racism and patriarchy to identify the ways women of colour are oppressed in a particular context. The key difference here is that the constructionist approach analyses the way social group identities intersect to create particular subject positions, while the epistemological approach analyses the way social systems intersect to create particular forms of oppression. The particular forms of oppression differ across contexts, including the contexts of the fictional worlds of children's fantastika novels.

Representation and Fantastika Literature

It is the aim of this research to provide the necessary abilities to recognize the traditions and conventions of representing systemic oppression in children's fantastika literature. For the purpose of this study, representation is defined as a description that intentionally stands in for an object or type of object. By object or type of object, I mean a recognizable referent, regardless of whether or not it physically exists in the real world. James O. Young argues, 'nothing is a representation of an object unless it can be recognised as standing for the object by someone other than the person (or persons) who intends that it be a representation of the object' ("Representation in Literature" 128). Recognizability is difficult to establish; Louis Marin argues that representation is a 'transmission of knowledge,' but that a writer has no way of ensuring the aesthetic effects of their work on the addressee's beliefs (*On Representation* 160). To ensure recognizability, Roger Scruton argues that writers 'lean on those features of tradition and convention that will enable [their] intention to become clear' (*Art and Imagination* 199). In order to

best understand the representation of systemic oppression in fictional worlds, I will outline the traditions and conventions of fantastika literature's radical potential.

By fantastika, I refer to 'the armamentarium of the fantastic in literature as a whole, encompassing science fiction, Fantasy, fantastic horror and their various subgenres' ("Fantastika"). The term 'fantastika' was coined by John Clute to describe the collective purposes and techniques of fantasy, science fiction, Gothic, horror, and supernatural fiction written after 1800. According to Clute, authors like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Mary Shelley and Edgar Allen Poe wrote 'deeply stress-ridden assays of the new world' (*Pardon this Intrusion* 1) to express their Romantic anxieties regarding the dangers of industrial progress. As Amy Crawford and I argue in a forthcoming publication, 'Early nineteenth century authors transgressed realism in order to portray the anxieties of reality, often blurring the distinctions between the real and the unreal as a point at which to emphasize these anxieties' ("Introduction"). Fantastika literature is not just a collective term for non-mimetic modes and genres; it has a history of transgressing reality for the purpose of re-envisioning it.

Fantastika literature, because it can construct different and non-existent social systems within fictional worlds, is particularly revealing both of the ways in which literature unquestioningly reproduces, and normalizes, systemic oppression; while simultaneously offering an opportunity for critiquing systemic oppression through the new systems of alternative social structures. Fredric Jameson argues that the representational nature of science fiction defamiliarizes and restructures our experience of the present real world in order to prepare our consciousness for innovation and change ("Progress Versus Utopia" 151). In response to Jameson, Jenny Wolmark argues that science fiction allows for the expression of 'radically different forms of social and sexual relations' and therefore it is 'not enough to think

of these significant conceptual organizations in terms of the circularity of "re-invention," or pastiche, since they are operating within a far more dynamic field' of a paradigm shift (*Aliens and Others* 15). I argue that not just science fiction, but all genres and modes of fantastika literature, have radical potential in their ability to not only represent a recognizable object, but through defamiliarization's ability to make familiar objects strange, fantastika literature can offer social justice-related paradigm shifts.

Daniel José Older's *Dactyl Hill Squad* (USA 2018) works well to exemplify the radical potential of fantastika literature. Older's novel is a fantasy alternate history in which the American Civil War is fought riding dinosaurs. The protagonist, Magdalys Roca, is a 'Colored Orphan' who experiences many of the same forms of oppression prevalent in real-world 1863 America. For example, Magdalys and her friends are at constant risk of being kidnapped and sold into slavery. When Magdalys learns that she has the telepathic ability to communicate with dinosaurs, she comes to understand the intelligence and personhood of another species. Magdalys undergoes a paradigm shift, thinking of the dinosaurs not as property, but as individuals deserving freedom and respect. When Magdalys is told she must not travel to a nearby silo, she goes there intentionally, resisting her society's system of oppression so that she can release the Pteranodon trapped inside (Older 160). While Older's novel interrogates the intersectional oppression of people of colour and children, women, the working class, and trans people, his novel also critiques the way these same groups contribute to the oppression of dinosaurs. Older's novel offers a paradigm shift, constructing oppression not as a top down form of domination, but as a matrix of power in which even the most oppressed can contribute to a system of oppression themselves. This text not only emphasizes the

harms of real-world oppression, but in making the familiar past strange by including dinosaurs, and by representing a fictional form of oppression with the oppression of said dinosaurs, Older's text operates within a dynamic field of intersectional social justice.

While fantastika fiction can absolutely work to normalize and contribute to systemic oppression in the real world, it can also be used to educate readers about inequalities and offer solutions to social issues (Yaszek, "Feminism" 537). Karen Coats argues that fantastika literature can enable oppressed readers to 'think toward a future and beyond the conditions of their embodiment and present social environments' (*The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature* 348). The representation of systemic oppression in fantastika literature offers insights into both how social systems limit access to opportunities and how they can be changed to improve access to opportunities for all. As 'the function of art is to do more than tell it like it is—it's to imagine what's possible' (hooks, *Outlaw Culture* 281), fantastika fiction can work well to reflect 'contemporary realities back to us' in order to enable us to think differently (Gay Pearson, Hollinger and Gordon, *Queer Universes* 2-3). Drawing from this, I argue fictional worlds in fantastika literature work well to re-frame our thinking of oppression and offer possibilities for countering the status quo with a radical restructuring of real-world social systems.

While there is a great deal of previous research in oppression and fantastika fiction for the adult market (see, for example: Kerslake 2007; Gay Pearson, Hollinger and Gordon 2008; Mendlesohn 2008; Lavender III 2011; Roberts and MacCallum-Stewart 2016; Young 2016; Schalk 2018), significantly less research has been conducted on the representation of oppression in children's fantastika literature.

Major research in oppression and children's literature significantly prioritizes realist genres, and often ignores fantastika fiction entirely or only offers a few minor examples (see, for example: Pinsent 1997; Clark 1999; Martin 2004; Bradford 2007; Reynolds 2007; Botelho and Rudman 2009; Abate and Kidd 2011; Bernstein 2011; Nel 2017). One potential reason for this, as Dionne Obeso notes, is the significant lack of diversity in children's fantastika literature ("How Multicultural is Your Multiverse?" 31). The prioritization of diversity in literature has meant that fantastika literature is often left out of research on the representation of oppression in children's literature. While Trites (1997, 2004), Oziewicz (2015) and Thomas (2019) do analyze representations of systemic oppression in fantastika fiction, all three scholars specifically analyze young adult novels. Research on oppression in middle-grade fantastika literature has primarily focussed on what limited character representation exists, author identities, and, primarily, the nature of different themes (Wilkie-Stibbs 2002; Blackford 2004; Stemp 2004; Mendlesohn 2009; Nikolajeva 2010; Levy and Mendlesohn 2016). This previous research does not investigate the representation of intersectional systemic oppression of fictional worlds in children's fantastika literature, demonstrating a gap in the field.

> Zoe Jaques argues that children's literature:
>
> has the capacity to provide more than a playful make-believe space that
> is eventually moved beyond or wistfully remembered. Its potent
> complications of the lines that demarcate one form of being from another
> can seep into relations with, and thoughts on, the real as well as fictional
> world. (*Posthuman Children's Literature* 9)

Following Jaques' thesis, I argue that it is not just the representation of diverse characters, but also the construction of new, fictional societies in children's

fantastika literature that can function to either critique or normalize and encourage the continuation of real-world systemic oppression, even in ostensible narratives of social justice. In the real world the specific nature of systemic oppression is context dependent (Twine and Gardiner, "Introduction" 10), I argue this is also true of fictional worlds. Therefore, the represented systemic oppression of a fictional world cannot exclusively be read allegorically or comparatively to real world systems of oppression. Instead, I argue that the defamiliarization of fictional social structures allows an analysis of the specific mechanisms of oppression of a text's fictional world, and offers the radical potential of the social justice-related paradigm shifts that lead to systemic upheaval.

The Author, Reader and Text

While Angela Davis argues that 'Art can function as a sensitizer and a catalyst, propelling people toward involvement in organized movements seeking to effect radical social change' (*Women, Culture & Politics* 199-200), this dissertation does not make claims about whether artists (writers) intend to sensitize or propel, nor does it assume how readers will interpret and react to representations of systemic oppression. The purpose of my text-focussed method is to analyze the ways in which the representation of systemic oppression in literature constructs social systems as unchangeable and unchallengeable, and/or offers a radical re-structuring of social systems so that society may better benefit more social groups.

According to Jack Zipes, the instructional and socializing role of children's literature has been a cultural priority since its inception ("Second Thoughts" 20-21). It is within this framework of the socializing conventions of children's texts that children's literature critics interested in social justice should ask: who does this

socialization benefit? What power systems are maintained by children's cultural texts? How is systemic oppression normalized or resisted during the socializing process of reading children's literature? To answer these questions, the method outlined in this dissertation aims to analyze the ways in which contemporary middle-grade literature functions to instruct and socialize children to either accept or resist systemic oppression.

This dissertation takes a modified intentionalist approach, but only insofar that I have framed each of the primary texts within the convention of children's literature's role of positive socialization. I take the assumption that the authors do not intend to harm child readers, and that publishers recognize a moral responsibility with the cultural texts they distribute. It is not the purpose of my proposed method to assert whether an author intends for a text to be used for social justice purposes or not. I take this position primarily because 'there is little that we can reliably know about [the] intentions of authors, and in any event such knowledge could never match in weight our immediate and determinate knowledge of the text at hand' (Dutton, "Why Intentionalism Won't Go Away" 197).

Nor are my critiques of any text a critique of the author. It is important to recognize that it is very possible, even easy, to avoid being explicitly hateful (for example, racist or sexist), while simultaneously ignoring and even supporting social systems that oppress and privilege (for example, racism or patriarchy). Systemic oppression can create cognitive biases, affecting the conscious writing of authors independently of their stated beliefs (Clemons, "Blind Injustice" 689). Thus, to claim that JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels uphold and maintain systems of heteronormativity is not to accuse JK Rowling herself of being a homophobe. On the other hand, despite JK Rowling speaking out in explicit support of LGBTQ+ people

(@jk_rowling), her actions and work continuously contribute to their oppression. Therefore, 'Authorial intentions are not desirable as a "standard" or "criterion" for assessing a literary text because the text itself will always speak with greater authority than any suppositions or speculations about the author's purposes' (Dutton, "Why Intentionalism Won't Go Away" 196). In taking the assumption that the text is framed with the intention to have a positive socializing role for the child reader, my method of academic analysis works to determine for whom this socializing is actually positive, and whom it may negatively affect.

Despite this project's concern with the socialization of child readers, I have intentionally avoided making claims about how readers may consciously interpret the represented systems of oppression in my primary texts. A problematic recurrence in the field of children's literary criticism is the assumptions of how 'the child reader' will consciously respond to texts. As Malin Alkestrand and I argue, when children's literature 'research depends entirely on textual analysis and has no empirical evidence to support its conclusions about child readers' interpretations of a text, all children and all child readers tend to be treated as a single entity' ("A Cognitive Analysis of Characters" 66). This homogenized child reader is usually constructed with an assumed nationality, race, sexual orientation, and so forth, thus reinforcing a system of hegemony. There is no such thing as 'the child reader,' and to suggest as such would be hypocritical of this study. Furthermore, as Jen Aggleton's empirical evidence suggests, children's literature critics' assumptions about how children engage with texts are sometimes incorrect ("What is the Use" 242). Child readers are as diverse as adults, and thus I cannot make claims about how they will interpret systems of oppressions in fictional worlds.

While it is impossible to argue how each child will interpret my primary texts, this study aims to investigate the ways texts construct particular issues of systemic oppression, and how these representations are either emphasized or neglected. With this text-focussed analysis we can identify each text's implied reader, rather than an actual child's interpretations. Rosemary Ross Johnston defines the construction of the implied child reader by the text as: 'how the text appears to shape the reader' ("Reader Response" 134). I argue that that the majority of contemporary middle-grade fantastika novels construct their readership as active participants in their socialization, engaged in reading in order to shift from naïve to enlightened. It is for this reason that I prioritize in my analysis whether texts emphasize or neglect issues of oppression. For example, a text may represent a staircase but fail to outline issues of inaccessibility, either explicitly or indirectly. The staircase is represented but the ableism is neglected. In doing so, the naïve but engaged reader's socialization includes the normalization of ableist infrastructure. While disabled and other critical readers may question or critique the text, the text itself does not encourage this critique but instead functions to maintain this system of oppression. In recognizing literature's role in shaping and socializing the reader, it is the focus of my method to identify and critique what systems of oppression each primary text encourages the implied reader to accept or critique.

Primary Text Selection

This research draws on over one hundred Anglophone middle-grade fantastika novels published in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century (2000-2019) from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia. Due to the specific narratological emphasis of my research, all of the novels were originally

published in English and written by authors residing in the Anglophone West. Each text analyzed features a fictional world, here defined as: a setting that does not exist in the real world as it is phenomenologically understood, including but not limited to: immersive and portal-quest fantasy worlds, animal societies, alien planets, parallel universes, alternate histories, the afterlife, secrets societies hidden in the real world, and urban spaces of the New Weird.

I make one exception to limiting my text selection to the twenty-first century: J.K. Rowling's first three *Harry Potter* novels. *Harry Potter's* success is attributed as a factor for increasing the popularity of children's fantasy literature, and is believed to have begun a third 'golden age' of children's literature (Levy and Mendlesohn, *Children's Fantasy Literature* 164; Pearson, *The Making of Modern Children's Literature* 7). *Harry Potter's* influence on contemporary children's fantastika literature cannot be ignored, and thus the entire series is analyzed in this dissertation.

I have chosen contemporary 'middle-grade' literature very specifically. I argue that middle-grade literature has a great deal of potential in exposing and challenging systemic oppression at an early age. As outlined above, previous research on systemic oppression in fantastika literature has focussed on literature for the adult and young adult markets. This neglect of literature for younger readers is problematic because, as a variety of empirical studies suggest, systemic oppression has a significant influence on the lives of pre-adolescents. For example, in a 2017 study of over three thousand eleven to nineteen year olds, Stonewall found that over half of LGBT+ young people experience anti-queer bullying in British schools, while eighty-six percent claim anti-queer microagressions are a common occurance (Bradlow, et al., *School Report* 6). Systemic oppression already exists in the daily

lives of marginalized adolescents, and thus there is a need for interrogating and intervening the issues of systemic oppression in the lives of pre-adolescent children. Debra Van Ausdale and Joe R. Feagin argue, 'children as young as three and four employ racial and ethnic concepts as important integrative and symbolically creative tools in the daily construction of their social lives' (*The First R* 26). However, it is not until ages eight through ten that 'children consciously begin to evaluate different groups as being equal' (Raabe and Beelmann, "Dvelopment" 1730). According to Raabe and Beelmann, 'the transition from middle to late childhood (7–10 years) is a sensitive period for environmental influences on prejudice' ("Development" 1731). Raabe and Beelmann further argue that interventions against prejudice are at their most productive between the ages of eight through ten, which includes: 'stronger communication of antiracist norms but also a more direct expression of norms on equality' ("Development" 1731-2). One such form of intervention is the representation of systemic oppression in literature for this age market, and the ways this literature functions to emphasize the importance of equality and anti-oppression resistance.

The term 'middle-grade,' taken from North America, is a publishing category for the purposes of targeting a market of readers roughly between the ages of seven through thirteen (with variation depending on cultural context.) According to editors of major publishing houses, middle-grade novels often tend to be plot driven, with a focus on the external rather than a focus on introspection, the vocabulary and sentence-structure is often (but not always) more accessible than literature for older readers, and rarely do these texts feature age-inappropriate content such as sex, drugs and swearing (Lo, "An Introduction to Middle Grade"). The term 'middle-grade' is relatively new: 'Prior to the mid-1980s, "children's fantasy" meant, roughly, a target

audience of 8 to 15 years old (the age range at which children's fiction has been targeted maps efficiently to the rising school age)' (Mendlesohn, "Fantasy in Children's Fiction" 34). There has thus been a recent shift in understanding children's middle-grade literature, as Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn argue, 'as we entered the 1990s the sense that there was a distinction between children's fantasy and fantasy for teens became stronger, with clear markers separating the teen market from the children's market' (*Children's Fantasy* 161). Levy and Mendlesohn define the difference between middle-grade and teen literature as: 'fiction which recognizes puberty and adolescence, and that which does not' (*Children's Fantasy* 161). Note that characters can be adolescents in middle-grade fiction, age is not a signifier of this category, but the middle-grade text tends to construct adolescence outside of puberty and sexuality.

The twenty-first century has seen significant developments for the middle-grade fantastika novel. Dina Rabinovitch argues that, after the success of authors such as Pullman, Rowling and Wilson, 'We are right in the thick of a golden age of children's literature' ("The Greatest Stories Ever Told"). Within this third golden age of children's literature, children's fantastika literature has undergone three significant changes that make it a perfect genre for analyzing the representation of systemic oppression. First, fictional worlds have become significantly more immersed in the marvellous than previous children's fantastika (Levy and Mendlesohn, *Children's Fantasy* 174). This means that there is a great deal of focus on worldbuilding believable fictional worlds, including the construction of social structures that make up a system of oppression.

Second, 'The child and teen as practical, competent, inventive and assertive disappears in the mid 1980s. It is replaced by a child or teen for whom the emphasis

is on emotional competence and practical dependence' (Mendlesohn, *Intergalactic Playground* 111). Protagonists in contemporary fantastika literature are invested in personal growth and engaging with one another to build community. The left-wing de-individuation of characters in contemporary middle-grade fantastika means that protagonists' emotional and ideological relationships with their societies are of significant importance. The focalizer's relationship with their society significantly contributes to how systemic oppression is constructed in the narrative.

Third, 'Once standing in wide-eyed wonder, children in these fantasies and other more serious tales are now positioned as much more critically aware' (Levy and Mendlesohn, *Children's Fantasy* 176). Middle-grade fantastika may now overtly engage with and critique issues related to systemic oppression, and the protagonists of contemporary middle-grade fantastika can work to actively fight for social justice. Early children's literature constructed difference as being between children and adults, resulting in texts that stressed 'the importance of leading the child out of vulnerable childhood and into productive citizenship' (Vallone, "Ideas of Difference in Children's Literature" 178). In the twenty-first century, children's literature emphasizes the 'failures of adulthood in nurturing, educating or even conversing with contemporary youth' and instead constructs difference in relation to social group categories such as 'class, ability, race, gender or sexual' orientation (Vallone, "Ideas of Difference in Children's Literature" 181-2). It is within this context that I hope that analyzing the representation of systemic oppression can enable children's literature critics to use contemporary middle-grade fantastika literature for social justice purposes.

I chose primary texts from a variety of sources, including library searches, online resources, bookstore promotions, and recommendations from fellow scholars.

A WorldCat online search of juvenile fantasy and science fiction print books published in English between 2000-2019 returned a result of 3,178 novels. This result does not distinguish between the various age markets of juvenile fiction, nor the countries of publication. Furthermore, WorldCat only offers a selective catalogue of the juvenile fiction deemed important enough to house and catalogue in major public and research libraries. Thus it excludes a great deal of literature, including many non-hegemonic voices. However, it is the best resource available for these purposes and, in using these figures, indicates that my study represents roughly 3.3% of the available texts published within my selection parameters.

I have chosen a wide survey of texts to demonstrate the broad applicability of my method for analyzing the representation of systemic oppression in fictional worlds. Please refer to the Appendix of this dissertation for the chart 'The Matrix of Domination Across Primary Texts' for a visual representation of how my corpus is an indicative representation of the genre and the work it does, and how each text performs in relation to the matrix of domination. This chart demonstrates that the matrix of domination is represented in each of my primary texts in a variety of ways, indicating middle-grade fantastika literature's valuable uses for analyzing systemic oppression.

This chart also indicates the country of publication of each primary texts: 5% from Canada, 58% from the USA, 29% from the UK, 6% from Ireland, and 6% from Australia. According to this chart there is no particular or consistent approach between texts of the same country, nor is there a significant difference between texts of differing countries. Because the matrix of domination is represented in a variety of ways across countries, with no clear patterns, I have decided not to do a cross-cultural comparison between the primary texts.

Research Questions and Outline

Each of the three parts of this work is focused on answering a different research question. These questions, in order of dissertation parts, are as follows:

1.   How is systemic oppression represented in the fictional worlds of contemporary middle-grade fantastika literature?

2.   In what ways do rhetorical and narratological strategies further construct systemic oppression in the fictional world?

3.   How does the systemic oppression of the fictional world strengthen or undercut the ostensible themes of social justice in the text?

The first chapter of this work, "The Wonders of WondLa: Systemic Oppression in Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* Trilogy" precedes the three parts of this dissertation. I analyze Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy as a case study, exemplifying my method for analyzing the representation and narratological function of systemic oppression.

The first part of this project employs Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination to analyze the representation of systemic oppression. Chapter Two, 'The Representation of Systemic Oppression: Part One—Institutions,' will analyze the first two domains of power, the Structural and Disciplinary Domains, which focus on interlocking institutions, and hierarchies within institutions respectively. This chapter broadens Hill Collins' theory of the Structural Domain by also including social networks. Chapter Three, 'The Representation of Systemic Oppression: Part Two—Ideologies and Interactions,' will analyze the second two domains of power, the Hegemonic and Interdisciplinary Domains, which focus on social hierarchies and

the every day lived experiences of the oppressed. Again, I broaden Hill Collins'

theory, including social exclusions into my analysis of hegemony.

Part Two of this dissertation considers rhetorics and narratology in the further

construction of systemic oppression. Chapter Four, 'Worldbuilding Systemic

Speciesism,' considers the rhetorical construction of different kinds of fictional

species, and how this relates to the construction of systemic speciesism in fictional

worlds. This chapter relies on a wide variety and combination of differing

philosophies, metaphors and histories to base its arguments. Chapter Five,

'Narratives of Oppressed Heroes,' interrogates classical narratological

understandings of heroes in children's fantastika literature, and identifies the ways in

which intersectional oppression influences and changes traditional plots, actant roles

and focalized narration.

The final part of this dissertation is comprised of one chapter, Chapter Six,

'Themes of Social Justice.' This chapter considers the ways in which the systemic

oppression in a fictional world can function to either support or undercut ostensible

narratives of social justice. Here I identify the ways in which a text's fictional world

may contradict its thematic aims, inadvertently supporting systemic oppression.

The findings of the six chapters of this dissertation not only include a method

for analyzing the representation of systemic oppression in fictional worlds, but also

illustrate the value of doing so. Fictional worlds, such as those of children's

fantastika literature, construct familiar social structures in new and innovative ways,

offering scholars a unique opportunity to analyze and understand the organization,

management, justification and experiences of oppression. From here, narratological

and rhetorical studies of literature can better develop nuanced arguments regarding

oppressed characters within the specific systems of their respective fictional

contexts. By employing an intersectional approach, this research distinguishes between diverse and progressive texts that still maintain the status quo, and those that promote liberating, systemic upheaval. It is my hope that other scholars can use my findings to further the work of children's literature's important social justice potential.

Chapter One

The Wonders of WondLa: Systemic Oppression in Tony DiTerlizzi's
WondLa Trilogy

Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate an academic method for children's literature

critics to use to analyze systemic oppression in the fictional world of a children's

fantastika text. How a text *represents* systemic oppression in a fictional social

context can differ from how the text is *written* to emphasize or neglect the issues

related to systemic oppression. A text can represent a system of oppression but can

fail to engage with or critique it in the narrative, risking inadvertently normalizing

and supporting said form of oppression in the real world. Despite its real-world

consequences, my approach to analyzing fictional world systemic oppression differs

from an analysis of systemic oppression in the real world. An analysis of systemic

oppression in the fictional world of a children's fantastika text should investigate

both represented social systems and the rhetorical and narratological techniques that

shape these representations. For example, the constructed position of a text's

focalizer, specifically their various privileges or specific experiences with

oppression, has a direct influence on the writing of fantastika worldbuilding. To

demonstrate my methods, my opening chapter will take as a case study Tony

DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy (USA 2010-2014).

Tony DiTerlizzi's *The Search for WondLa* (2010)*, A Hero for WondLa* (2012)*,*

and *A Battle for WondLa* (2014) are about a girl named Eva Nine searching for a

place to belong. A science fantasy trilogy which uses the portal-quest structure, the

narrative follows Eva as she journeys across the fictional world of Orbona. In the

story, Eva Nine is trying to establish peace between aliens and humans. She travels with an alien named Rovender, a giant water bear named Otto, and her robot caregiver, named Multi-Utility Task Health Robot, or, more simply, Muthr. The text features clear themes of accepting and connecting with those who are different from oneself, and the story ends with aliens and humans coming together to form one community, followed by several centuries of peaceful diversity and harmony. In theory, this text promotes diversity in a way that is in-line with social justice ideologies. However, while the humans and aliens get along in the end, there are still other systems of oppression that continue to exist. This chapter will explore the systemic oppression of Orbona as an object lesson of the analysis proposed.

This first chapter is in three parts, each part a different step in my method of analysis. I will introduce my approach to analyzing systemic oppression by first investigating the represented social structures that make up Orbona's system of oppression; I will then consider the role of focalization in shaping world building, and in turn the writing of the issues related to systemic oppression; finally, I will investigate the limitations of the text's themes, which promote accepting those who are different while maintaining social systems of oppression. This approach will allow me to demonstrate the value of identifying systemic oppression in a children's fantastika context, how texts are written to emphasize or neglect issues related to systemic oppression, and posit the repercussions of a text that fails to engage with every intersectional system of oppression represented in its fictional world.

Orbonian Systemic Oppression

Orbona's social institutions and groups interlock to construct an intersectional system of oppression. Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination, which she

defines as the 'overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained' (*Black Feminist Thought* 228), allows us to identify the presence of systemic oppression in fictional worlds like DiTerlizzi's Orbona. Primarily, the matrix of domination allows us to identify the ways institutions and ideologies work together in a total social system that privileges and oppresses varying intersecting social groups. While Hill Collins argues there are four domains of power within the matrix of domination (structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal), I argue that not every fictional world represents all four domains of power. Thus an analysis of the representation of systemic oppression in a fictional world involves identifying which domains of power in the matrix of domination are represented in the text.

In DiTerlizzi's Orbona, the structural and hegemonic domains of power work together to construct intersecting systems of oppression based on species, origin, ability and class. The structural domain of power involves the ways social institutions interlock to deny or limit access to opportunities for particular social groups, while the hegemonic domain advances oppressive ideologies regarding said social groups in order to justify their mistreatment (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 203). In my analysis of DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy, I argue that the interlocking of the institutions of education, housing, policing and healthcare works to support or limit access to opportunity, representing hegemonic hierarchies based on species and origin. I then show how this systemic speciesism intersects with systemic ableism through the construction of the interlocking institutions of healthcare and government, and then I demonstrate how this ableism intersects with a system of classism through the institutions of housing and prisons. In each case the hegemonic system justifies the oppression of disabled people through exclusionary

ideologies. By analyzing the ways social institutions and ideologies work together to limit the opportunities of Orbona's social groups, this approach allows me to identify how intersectional systemic oppression underpins Orbona's social structures, limiting the ostensible thematic narrative of the values of acceptance and connecting with those who are different from oneself.

In Orbona, the institution of education constructs a hierarchy between people based on planetary origin. The central plot of the first novel of the trilogy, *The Search for WondLa*, revolves around Eva Nine's search for other humans. When Rovender tells Eva Nine that the The Royal Museum in Solas is where she might learn about humans, her adventure gets its first destination (*Search* 185). At the Royal Museum, Eva is almost killed and put on display among such creatures as sand-snipers, water bears and other beings she encounters on her adventures (*Search* 281-307). Later, when Eva confronts Zin, one of the people who study those on display at the museum, he refers to these species as 'primitive […] homologous life-forms' (*Search* 326). While the privileged people on Orbona, such as the Halcynous, Cæruleans and Arsians, all come from an alien planet, Eva learns that the sand-snipers, water bears and other 'primitive' species are all originally from Orbona (*Hero* 404). The institution of education enforces a hierarchy between the aliens who can learn from The Royal Museum in Solas, and those who are originally from Orbona, who are killed and put on display in the museum. Through an analysis of the structural domain of power, those who can *access* an education and those who *are* an education distinguishes the privileged and oppressed species of Orbona. This is then reflected in Orbona's system of hegemony, in which social discourses construct Orbonian-originated people as less-than due to their perceived primitive nature.

These two domains of power work together to construct a system of speciesism throughout the text's fictional world.

Different alien species prioritize themselves over other (alien and non-alien) species through the interlocking practices of the institutions of housing and policing. The institution of housing functions to keep the different social groups of Orbona physically divided from one another. Other than the capital city of Solas, Orbonian cities lack any species-related diversity. The Halcyonus live in Lacus, the Cæruleans live in Faunas, and other species live in their own cities. The only exception to this is Arius, the Arsian, who lives alone at the topmost tier of houses in Lacus and is an especially respected figure in Orbona for her psychic abilities (*Search* 259). While she lives in Lacus, she is separate from the Halcyonus's social body. The institution of housing's division of species results in a hegemonic system in which each species group prioritizes their own within each city. The institution of policing exemplifies this prioritization; when two Cærulean riders come upon Eva Nine, her friends, and Nadeau, a dying Cærulean, the riders refuse to listen to any explanation as to why Nadeau is dying and immediately point their weapons at Eva Nine, stating, 'We are taking Nadeau and these dirt-burrowers [humans] back to our village, where they shall pay for their cruelty. Their fate is now in Antiquus's hands' (*Hero* 343). There is an automatic assumption here that humans are a lesser-species than Cæruleans, and that Eva Nine and Eva Eight are guilty for crimes they did not commit. When they arrive in Faunas they are almost immediately imprisoned. Here the institution of policing's prioritization of its own people demonstrates the effects of the institution of housing's species-based segregation. Because each alien species prioritizes their own kind, it ostensibly follows that they also value their own kind over other

species. This, I argue, lays the ideological groundwork for prioritizing and valuing aliens over Orbonian-originated people.

Orbona's social system that privileges those from an alien planet has a significant consequence for the aliens born and raised on Orbona. The Land of Orbona's systemic speciesism intersects with a social system of ableism through the interlocking institutions of healthcare and government. The privileging of the mental health needs of those born on the aliens' original planet demonstrates how the institution of healthcare limits access to the opportunity to heal for those aliens born on Orbona. This lack of access to healthcare then limits access to government power. When Rovender's partner and child die, he goes into deep mourning and suffers survivor's guilt and, finding no help from his fellow Cæruleans, feels he absolutely must leave his clan (*Hero* 367). Rovender's community brands him a 'ghost' and an exile, and, without access to help, he turns to alcohol (*Hero* 365). When Rovender returns to his clan to help Eva, Rovender's father Antiquus, the leader of the Cæruleans, asks, 'Our spirit-healing rituals have worked for generations, unchanged from our home planet. So it has always been. Who are you to disavow them?' to which Rovender responds, 'I am not from our home planet. I am from Orbona. […] I left because none of you could heal me' (*Hero* 366-7). The social structure of Faunas provides greater access to the mental health needs of the 'wizened and elderly' elders of the different Orbonian clans (*Battle* 362), more so than those born on Orbona. While Rovender could have accessed political power as Antiquus' son, he loses this access due to the health care institution's ableism. His 'ghost' label further justifies his oppression within the system of hegemony, discursively constructing him as someone who no longer belongs among the Cæruleans. It is in this interplay of power between the institutions of healthcare and government, and the ideologies

regarding ghosts, that Rovender experiences intersectional oppression due to his place of birth and mental health needs.

The systemic ableism of the Land of Orbona is further constructed through its intersection with classism in the interlocking of the institutions of housing and prisons. The infrastructure of Orbona is physically inaccessible for those with mobility impairments. For example, the protagonists reach Lacus by crossing a swaying footbridge, a city that involves a 'bowl-shaped tower […] composed of small globular huts stacked upon one another in a haphazard fashion […] Multiple footbridges […] radiated out from the edifice and connected with others […] Eva counted five of these towers altogether' and inside the towers are spiral stairways (*Search* 224-5; 233). Meanwhile, in Faunas, the prison is only accessible by climbing a rope ladder (*Hero* 351). At no point in the text is the inaccessibility of this infrastructure pointed out or critiqued. While the text neglects issues of ableism, it does represent a disabled character: Antiquus rides a hoverdisk as a mobility aid (*Hero* 347). However, Antiquus, as leader of the Cæruleans, also has class privilege. One of Antiquus' privileges is that he is the primary user of a shuttle that travels between Faunas and Solas so that he may have diplomatic meetings with Queen Ojo (*Hero* 324). Queen Ojo also has her own technological privileges, for example, she is the only person with an automaton driver (*Search* 362). These examples represent government officials having access to the best technologies in Orbona, in turn representing those of the upper classes as having the easiest access between and within spaces. As Antiquus is the token disabled character in the trilogy, there is no representation of disability among the working classes. Instead, DiTerlizzi's text represents systemic ableism and classism throughout Orbonian society, and disability access is only represented for those of the upper classes. For the average Orbonian,

the infrastructure of the institutions of housing and prisons, and the social

consciousness regarding the needs of differing people, all work together to privilege

the non-disabled.

Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy constructs the fictional world of Orbona as a

social system of speciesism, origin-oppression, ableism and classism. The

representation of systemic oppression in this fictional world appears on both the

institutional and ideological levels. Through an analysis of the structural domain of

power, intersectional systemic oppression is represented within the interlocking

institutions of education, housing, policing, healthcare, government and prisons.

These institutions work in relation to Orbona's hegemonic domain of power;

ideologies and ideas support hierarchies based in planet of origin, own-species

prioritization, original-planet healthcare practices and the exclusion of those who

reject these, and inaccessible infrastructure. Systemic oppression exists throughout

Orbona in many crucial ways, bringing into question how the text deals with these

issues in the narrative or neglects them at the expense of the trilogy's supposedly

progressive themes.

Focalization and Worldbuilding

The social position of the focalizer emphasizes or neglects issues related to

systemic oppression in the text's fictional world. I argue that, because Eva is a naive

focalizer, her specific experiences with oppression and her own privileges shape the

writing of the worldbuilding of Orbona. When a fantastika text has a naïve focalizer,

such as in the portal-quest genre or in much of children's literature, the text reveals

information about the fictional society at the same time and in the same ways as the

protagonist learns this information (Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* 1). What this

means, then, is that the experiences of the focalizer shape and limit the text's worldbuilding. While enlightened characters may be able to identify and critique systems of oppression that do not affect them personally, naive focalizers, a common position in children's literature, have a limited understanding of the fictional world's social systems and structures. The naive focalizer's specific experiences with oppression and their own privileges limit what forms of systemic oppression they notice, in turn influencing what forms of oppression the focalization emphasizes and what issues related to systemic oppression are neglected by the text.

In this analysis I employ the cognitive narratological theory of foregrounding. Foregrounding involves any technique used to draw attention to a certain element of the text. There are two key forms of foregrounding, either through rhetorical deviations (for example, repetitions, innovative descriptions, alliteration, et cetera), or through stylistic differences in objects, which involves a specific figure moving against a static ground (Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* 14-15). This process inherently involves a simultaneous neglecting of any non-foregrounded elements of the scene. In a text with a naive focalizer, there are two key factors that limit the foregrounding of worldbuilding. First, the focalized narration emphasizes the systems of oppression that directly relate to the experiences of the focalizer. Second, the text's narration neglects those systems of oppression that do not affect the focalizer. While the narrative may represent systems of oppression, if the focalized narration neglects them, there is a risk that these systems of oppression will become normalized and even supported by the text.

The text's focalized narration functions to problematize the systemic speciesism of the Land of Orbona. Eva Nine, as a human who has made friends with aliens, robots, other humans, a water bear and other indigenous species to the planet,

does not support the prioritization of one's own species that justifies the systemic speciesism of Orbona. The focalized narration foregrounds the illegitimacy of positing any species as superior to any other through repetitions and innovative descriptions that compare characters of differing species. For example, when Eva Nine first meets the Halcyonus aliens, Eva says to Rovender, 'they sort of look like you' (*Search* 231). Rovender is not a Halcyonus, he is a Cærulean, but because Eva is naive about the distinctions of these differing alien species, her comparison of the two constructs the two as more similar than dissimilar. This mode of comparison becomes a repetition in the narrative. When Eva first encounters Cadmus, leader of the humans, DiTerlizzi writes, 'Eva had a hard time understanding all that Cadmus said. In fact, he sounded a lot like Zin, the curator at the Royal Museum of Solas' (*Hero* 62). Eva's lack of prejudice against any one species allows for innovative descriptions of characters across species. Eva's belief in the equality of all species shapes the focalized narration in a way that discredits the hegemonic hierarchies of species supremacy. Through the repeated innovative descriptions that compare across species, the text constructs the characters of varying species as equal. The focalized narration uses this equal construction to foreground the problems of systemic speciesism and critique the social problems of the text's fictional world.

The Land of Orbona's system of oppression based on planetary origin is also critiqued by the text's focalized narration. Eva Nine has a unique psychic connection with the indigenous species of Orbona, such as the water bears and sand-snipers, allowing her to communicate with these species. By repeatedly relating the descriptions of these indigenous species' voices to music, the focalized narration emphasizes the harmony that exists between the varying indigenous species in a way that contrasts sharply with the segregated societies of the aliens. When Eva Nine first

meets her friend Otto, the water bear, she 'heard the song of its voice drift into her mind' (*Search* 89). This song is initially alone, but as Eva comes to encounter others, Otto's song joins a larger chorus, such as when he is later reunited with other water bears and they 'All began to hoot in unison' (*Search* 442). The water bears are not the only indigenous species who sing; multiple other species are described as musical throughout the text. For example, the air-whales also sing: 'From above came the familiar call of an air-whale. Far in the distance the call was answered from others in the vicinity floating high over the forest. Soon a melancholy chorus rang out in the skies' (*Battle* 27). And even the vicious sand-snipers have their own musicality: 'One of the nymphs [infants] clicked and chirped loudly. The mother sniper turned one eye down toward it and chittered back' (*Hero* 36). The musical descriptions of these species' voices repeat throughout the narrative, foregrounding that while each species has its own unique sound they are all a part of the same song. Near the end of the final book, Eva comes to understand this song as 'The voice of Orbona,' featuring:

> The cry of the turnfins […] the creak of the wandering trees, followed by the chittering of the knifejacks, the song of the air-whales, the clicking of the sand-snipers, the swish of the spiderfish […] the song the water bears sang. It was in harmony with everything surrounding them. (*Battle* 391-2)

While each innovative description of musicality is initially unrelated, repetitions throughout the text bring them together, demonstrating their harmony. In a setting constructed with clear social divisions and hierarchies, the music of the indigenous species functions to foreground the beauty of unity.

While Eva Nine's naive focalization contributes to the text's foregrounding of the systems of oppression that directly relate to her own experiences, this also results in the text neglecting the systems of oppression that do not affect Eva. Eva does not understand her own position in the social hierarchy, including how she is privileged. This affects what worldbuilding foregrounds. When Rovender brings Eva and Muthr to the city of Lacas for the first time, the text emphasizes how strange and exciting Eva finds this alien city (*Search* 224-33). There are several pages describing what the city is like and how amazing Eva finds it, foregrounding her sense of wonder. Following this is the brief sentence: 'Rovender appeared anxious as he helped Muthr up the last few steps' (*Search* 234). At no point during the descriptions of travelling through Lacas is Muthr's struggle navigating the many stairs and rope bridges with her single wheel (instead of feet) given any attention. And this brief statement about Rovender helping Muthr is immediately followed by the description of the characters entering a 'cozy, dimly lit home' (*Search* 234). In this scene, Eva is the figure moving against Lacas as the ground, foregrounding her perspective of the city. At the same time, the text underplays Muthr's difficult experiences travelling through Lacas. Even when the text mentions Muthr's struggles, the focalization does not give any time to acknowledge the problem of inaccessibility. The text gives attention to the focalizer's sense of wonder, while the issue of inaccessible infrastructure is simultaneously neglected. Here, a focus on wonder when worldbuilding brings attention away from the consequences of systemic oppression. Eva Nine's non-disabled privilege allows her the opportunity to ignore issues of ableism, in turn leading to the neglect of these issues in the text's focalized narration.

When issues of systemic oppression are directly mentioned in the text, but said issues are inconsequential to the focalizer, the focalizer's privilege allows for

narration that neglects the problems related to the aforementioned issue. For example, during Eva's visit to the city of Solas, the text describes the scene as follows:

> The lanes and sidewalks were packed with all manner of city folk: coachmen driving large feathered beasts of burden through throngs of foot traffic; little ones flying about on floatscooters alongside the Goldfish, begging for change; and the occasional merchants drifting in hoverjunks overhead selling anything — and everything. Eva Nine thought it was spectacular […] Eva noticed the abodes went from large and fantastic to simple gigantic gourds with windows and doorways carved out of them. (*Search* 358-60)

The text gives equal attention to the different kinds of people and buildings in Solas, regardless of what each may indicate about Solas's social structure. Eva's perspective is again foregrounded, and the text only emphasizes her thoughts about Solas being spectacular. The classism that child beggars and different qualities of homes indicate is here neglected; the text foregrounds Eva's sense of wonder and neglects any sense of injustice. When Eva visits the palace of Queen Ojo, the description again foregrounds Eva's sense of wonder:

> The opulent room was gigantic by human standards. Exquisite ornate patterns decorated every centimeter of the walls, which led to an intricate mural that covered the entire ceiling […] Redimus led Eva down a great hallway that was lavishly decorated with objects that clearly showed fine—yet otherworldy—craftsmanship. (*Battle* 337-8, 359)

At no point in these descriptions do Eva or the focalized narration mention the child beggars directly outside the palace walls. While this description foregrounds the

wealth of the Crown, the text neglects issues of classism entirely. Eva's privilege, as a person unaffected by Orbona's class system, allows her to be in awe of the palace's opulence, rather than concerned or even disgusted by Orbona's unequal wealth disparity. Despite being aware of the beggars in Orbona, Eva's naivety about class systems and her own social privilege results in a focalized narration that neglects the system of classism in Orbona. While the text has drawn attention to issues of classism previously, it does not actively emphasize these issues. This allows for a nuanced and subtle worldbuilding of systemic oppression, one that critical readers may notice and interrogate as a means of critiquing Orbona's unequal wealth distribution. Simultaneously, by underemphasizing the important social issues related to class, the text treats this as a less significant issue than, for example, the systemic speciesism represented in the fictional world.

DiTerlizzi's text obscures and neglects the intersectional nature of the systemic oppression in the fictional world of Orbona; Eva's privilege enables the narration to foreground Eva's limited understanding of Orbona's social structures. As a naive focalizer, Eva is only able to emphasize issues that she either experiences or understands. While this allows for active and engaged readers to further interrogate the complex nuances of Orbona's systems of oppression, the narrative only foregrounds some elements of oppression while neglecting social issues that do not affect Eva. This results in a text that emphasizes and critiques certain forms of oppression, while simultaneously ignoring and normalizing others. When a text only critiques some forms of oppression but ignores others it lacks an intersectional approach and thus risks supporting and contributing to real-world systemic oppression.

The Limitations of Theme

The themes of the text are undercut by the representation and function of systemic oppression in the fictional world. The major theme of the *WondLa* Trilogy is the value of accepting and connecting with those who are different from oneself. This theme develops with the progression of the plot: from Eva seeking belonging with other humans, to her learning that the homogeny of her human society is hugely harmful, to her working with other species to defeat their enemy and bring forth a peaceful new world. Despite its utopian conclusion, I argue that Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy fails to engage with the nuances of intersectional systemic oppression, resulting in a thematic suggestion that there are limitations to what kinds of people one should connect with and what kinds of differences society should accept. When a text represents a system of oppression but does not engage with or critique said system, ostensible narratives of social justice risk normalizing and supporting real-world systemic oppression.

In order to identify and critique the themes of DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy, I employ Thematic Criticism as my method of analysis. The main goal of Thematic Criticism is to identify a notional deeper meaning of the analyzed text (Mendlesohn, "Thematic Criticism" 125). Thematic Criticism is the most common approach to interpreting fantastika literature (Mendlesohn, "Thematic Criticism" 125), and therefore it is possible that many readers generally understand DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* Trilogy as a text that encourages embracing social justice ideologies. However, my contention is that this approach can ignore how texts construct fictional societies, and the ways in which this construction establishes or affirms intersectional systems of oppression. I will interrogate how the representation and function of systemic

oppression in Orbona limits the *WondLa* trilogy's theme of accepting and connecting with those who are different from oneself.

The text develops the theme of accepting and connecting with those who are different from oneself in relation to Eva's understanding of Orbonian social structures and the meaning she gives her WondLa. The WondLa always represents Eva's desire to find belonging, but it is initially related to belonging specifically with one's own species as Eva journeys to find other human beings. The WondLa is:

> a small piece of tile or even paneling, possibly a sign of sorts, as it was square shaped. On it was an image (a broken one, since it no longer moved) of a little girl holding hands with a robot and an adult [...] she could see two letters on this worn piece of paneling: *L* and *a*. There was a second, smaller piece of this puzzle, which she had discovered as well. Eva had glued this missing fragment to the top of the panel. It, too, had fancy letters printed on it: "Wond." (*Search* 33-4)

Eva dubs the item her WondLa and, as it is the only item not given to her by Muthr, Eva believes that the WondLa is proof of the existence of other living human beings. She spends the entirety of *The Search for WondLa* travelling Orbona in search of other humans, and repeatedly finds herself feeling lonely as the only human among many different alien species. As Eva visits the species-segregated villages of Orbona, her loneliness reinforces for her that happiness and belonging can only exist in a society of one's peers. At the end of the first novel, it seems that Eva has found belonging with the small group she travels Orbona with: Muthr, her robot guardian, Rovender, her alien guide, and Otto, her giant water bear friend (*Search* 460). However, Eva shifts away from this view when she finally comes upon other human beings. Calling the human society her new 'home,' Rovender replies, 'Eva Nine, a

village of your kind does not necessarily make a home' to which Eva says, 'Of course it does, […] It is where you fit in. Where you find happiness' (*Hero* 54). Having seen the species-segregated villages of Orbona, it is unsurprising that Eva believes that species-based segregation is how the world should be, and how she can find belonging. The text constructs Rovender as substantially wiser than Eva, giving support to the reading that Rovender here is correct, but first Eva Nine must learn the hard way that one can fit in and find happiness with those who are not her kind.

The text reinforces the value of accepting and connecting with those who are different through the negative portrayal of New Attica's enforcement of sameness. New Attica is an exclusive human society where no aliens are welcome, and where the humans have not even heard of the existence of aliens (*Hero* 147-8, 159). In this human society it is the norm to modify one's body in order to meet certain social expectations, including changing one's skin tone to one of a variety of different artificial colours, getting a tail, and having a computer-like device implanted into one's palm (*Hero* 100, 128, 130-1). While such changes suggest a diverse society, instead these changes function to ensure no one ages or appears scarred or disabled (*Hero* 100). When a person does not meet New Attica's high physical standards they are made infertile; only those who meet social norms may contribute more people to the society (*Hero* 182). Those who resist the system of control that enforces this ideology of sameness are exiled to the outskirts of town and labeled as (dirty) Toilers (*Hero* 86), or are deemed corrupt and sent to laboratories that aim to suppress anti-authoritarianism (*Hero* 224-6). The rejection of difference in New Attica demonstrates the harms of a society that does not accept or connect with all kinds of people. While Eva is initially overwhelmed by her sense of wonder and her new feelings of acceptance among her own species (*Hero* 135), she quickly learns of the

many secrets that make this utopia a dystopia, and that a person does not necessarily find belonging and acceptance among their own species. As Eva explains to Rovender, 'I didn't fit in. And it wasn't just the way I looked, Rovee [Rovender], even after I got my new clothes. It was the way I thought. It was the way I thought about the whole world, not just what was going on in New Attica' (*Hero* 299). Eva comes to learn the importance of thinking about the way the world works, and the value of critiquing the structures of one's own society. While Eva's WondLa initially symbolized her desire to find belonging with other humans, her experiences in New Attica teach her that she should accept and connect with people for *who* they are, not *what* they are. Eva Nine leaves New Attica with a new approach to thinking about the world, one that allows her to critique Orbona's species-based segregation, and, in turn, overcome the systemic speciesism of the text's fictional world.

In the final book of the trilogy, *The Battle for WondLa*, Eva's goal of finding belonging changes focus from belonging with those who are the same species as she is, to creating a world of peace and harmony between species. She shifts from looking for belonging from others, to actively making the world a more accepting place. This begins with Eva directly associating the word WondLa with family, and she realizes that she has made a family for herself: 'It dawned on Eva. The picture— the characters all joined arm in arm—the WondLa. "Hailey, Huxley, Vanpa, Otto, and Rovee. They are my family"' (*Battle* 295). These listed characters are, in order, a human, a Mirthian, a human, a water bear, and a Cærulean. Eva has come to directly relate the word WondLa with a family comprised of people of varying species, including Otto, a water bear deemed too 'primitive' for social respect by the other Orbonians. In order to protect her newfound family and create a world where they can be together in peace and harmony, she must stop the evil Arsian named Loroc,

who has been working to pit the humans and aliens against each other. As the non-human Orbona-originating species, such as the water bears and sand-snipers, are not given equal social value, they are not included in the battle for social dominance in the battle for WondLa. Eva Nine, including Otto in her family, does recognize the value of these species, and she connects with and works with these species in order to stop Loroc from taking over Orbona. As they travel toward Loroc together, 'The air-whales sang out and floated toward Eva. *Together. Safe. Strong*' (*Battle* 397, italics in original), and when they battle Loroc, Eva's connection with a sand-sniper, a pillarguard, and flocks of turnfins and treowes allows them all to work together to defeat Loroc (*Battle* 412-31). The Orbonians are unable to defeat Loroc, and Eva is only able to overcome him thanks to her deep connection with the 'primitive' species of Orbona. Through an acceptance of those who are otherwise dismissed, and the relationship that this connection builds, Eva and the 'primitive' species are able to defeat the villain of the narrative. The text's themes are significantly reinforced when Eva's accepting and connecting with those who are different from herself results in her successfully saving the world.

While the text represents Orbona's systems of oppression based on species and planetary-origin in order to critique these systems, it does not challenge or change Orbona's systemic ableism and classism. At the end of the trilogy several epilogues outline how Orbona changes as a society after Loroc's defeat. The first epilogue features the humans and aliens living together in harmony, drinking, talking and sharing gifts with one another, with neither direct no indirect reflection on Orbona's larger social system (*Battle* 445). In another epilogue, hundreds of years have passed, and the aliens and humans are still living together in peace (*Battle* 455). In the final epilogue, non-human Orbona-originated species are scholars studying the

ancient myth of WondLa (*Battle* 462). These epilogues demonstrate the long-lasting change that has been accomplished for the betterment of the varying species of Orbona, but no moment is given to critiquing and changing the systemic ableism and classism that are also inherent in this fictional world. While the text engages directly with both the structural and hegemonic oppression of species and planetary-origin, it gives no critical attention to the structural changes necessary to support and improve the lives of disabled and working class people. This lack of an intersectional approach means that the 'utopian' ending involves ignoring the needs of disabled and working-class people, treating their oppression as a normal, unchangeable part of a preferable world.

The text's failure to engage with every represented system of oppression in its fictional world limits the theme of accepting and connecting with those who are different. While Eva's WondLa slowly changes meaning from finding belonging with other humans to accepting and connecting with those who are different from oneself, the text limits the resistance to oppression to building connections with others. No emphasis is thus given to the necessity of changing social and institutional structures to meet the needs of both disabled and working-class people. The emphasis on species-related difference is a single-tier approach to identity that neglects Orbona's intersectional ableist and classist systems. While Eva becomes deeply connected with those who are different from her, gaining a family of people from a variety of different species, working alongside those considered 'primitive,' and learning of the harms of rejecting difference in New Attica, the text's theme of accepting and connecting with those who are different is undercut by the ways Orbona's system of oppression puts a limitation on who can be fully accepted.

Conclusion

I chose Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* trilogy for this case study because I believe

that these books have the potential to work well to (both formally and informally)

teach readers about various issues related to oppression, and can offer wisdom and

guidance in resisting certain forms of oppression. However, while the books

represent and critique certain forms of systemic oppression, because they also

represent forms of systemic oppression that are not directly critiqued, a lack of an

intersectional approach undercuts the trilogy's ostensible narrative of social justice.

In order for DiTerlizzi's text to have succeeded in its thematic aims it would need to

have engaged in a more nuanced and intersectional understanding of the systemic

oppression of the Land of Orbona. It is not enough to simply befriend those who are

different from oneself. Treating everyone equally on an interpersonal level does not

change or fix institutional structures of oppression. By relying on a liberalist

framework of progress, DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* books assert that equality only requires

the (for lack of a better term) humanization of the Other. In order for a text to

contribute to the aims of social justice, progress needs to be based in forms of social

upheaval that change the nature of social structures in order to make access to

opportunity equal for all.

This chapter has outlined my method for arguing for the representation,

narratological function and thematic relevance of intersectional systemic oppression

in a fictional world. Through my approach I have shown how Orbona's social system

privileges non-disabled and wealthy aliens who emigrated to Earth from their

original planet. I have used Hill Collins' theory of the matrix of domination to

highlight the ways that Orbona's structural and hegemonic domains of power work

together in a system that oppresses social groups based on species, planetary-origin,

ability and class. I have then used the cognitive narratological approach of foregrounding to show how the focalized narration directly engages with both the species and planetary-origin oppressions, but neglects the systems of oppression based on ability and class. Using Thematic Criticism to identify the theme of the text to be to accept and connect with those who are different from oneself, I argue how the *WondLa* trilogy engages with the systemic speciesism and system of oppression based on planetary-origin to support this theme, while the neglecting of issues related to disability and class undercut this theme. While this text has clear social justice themes, because it does not work to critique every intersecting form of oppression represented, it inadvertently works to normalize and support both ableism and classism.

Part One

The Representation of Systemic Oppression

Chapter Two

The Representation of Systemic Oppression: Part One—Institutions

Introduction

The defamiliarization of fictional social institutions allows an analysis of the specific mechanisms of oppression of a text's fictional world. For my analysis of defamiliarized social institutions, I analyze the first two domains of power in Hill Collins' matrix of domination: the structural and the disciplinary domains. In the structural domain of power, oppression is organized through the circulation of power between interlocking institutions and between the nodes of networks (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 276-7). In the disciplinary domain of power, oppression is managed through the chain of power within the bureaucratic hierarchies of each institution (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 276, 280). When fictional social institutions and networks are specific to their fictional world both the organization and management of oppression are specific to the fictional world, allowing for an analysis of the systemic oppression of said text's fictional world.

Kenneth Oppel's *Airborn* (Canada 2004) works well to demonstrate the differences between the structural and disciplinary domains of power. In this text, Matt Cruse does not receive the promotion he expects from the position of cabin boy to junior sailmaker on the Aurora airship because of a system of classism. Instead, the position is given to Bruce Lunardi, the inexperienced son of the airship line's magnate and owner of the Aurora, and a graduate of the Airship Academy (Oppel 51-2). Matt cannot afford this formal education, as he explains, 'Even if I won a scholarship, the Academy training was at least two years—two years during which I would be making no money to send back to my mother and sisters. They relied on

me. Even if the Academy offered me a place, I'd not be able to take it' (200-1). What is occurring here is an interlocking of the institutions of education (The Airship Academy) and travel (The Lunardi Line), which organize oppression in the structural domain of power to unfairly disadvantage Matt by rendering advancement on the Aurora near inaccessible. While Captain Walken *wants* to promote Matt, Otto Lunardi, as the magnate of the Lunardi Line of airships, has the final say. This hierarchy within the institution of travel involves the disciplinary domain of power. In choosing Bruce, with his Airship Academy certificate, over Matt, with his three years of experience, Lunardi gives an opportunity to Bruce over Matt that prioritizes a classroom education over education through experience. Matt responds by thinking, 'A cocky young fool I'd been, assuming I'd be junior sailmaker. Me with no Academy training, and no wealth to help advance me. Of course I'd be pushed aside by the likes of Otto Lunardi's boy' (53-4). Matt accepts his social position with shame, believing that his opportunities for advancement are gone forever and that his only way of staying on the Aurora (which he considers his home) is to work as a cabin boy forever. The disciplinary practices of this bureaucratic hierarchy function to subjugate Matt, making him more docile, more obedient to the system that oppresses him. Systemic classism functions here not only to limit Matt's access to opportunities for advancement, but also to shape Matt's perception of himself, and make him a more disciplined, and thus more obedient and easily controlled, member of an oppressive social system. The systemic oppression of Oppel's fictional world involves both the organization of oppression through interlocking institutions, and the management of oppression within a single institution, both working together in a system of classism.

In this chapter I will analyze the circulation and chain of power within the structural and disciplinary domains of power of fictional worlds in three parts. The first part focuses on the interlocking institutions of the structural domain of power. I argue the ways in which the defamiliarization of fictional institutions allows an analysis of how oppression is organized in the systems of oppression of fictional worlds. The second part of this chapter includes social networks in my analysis of the structural domain of power because both Foucault and Feagin argue for the inclusion of social networks into an analysis of power and oppression (Foucault, "14 January 1976" 29; Feagin, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression* 8). This second part furthers the argument of the first, investigating the ways the defamiliarization of fictional social networks allows an analysis of the organization of oppression in a fictional world's system of oppression. The third part of this chapter analyzes the disciplinary domain of power. I analyze the ways in which the defamiliarized hierarchical structures of each individual institution allows an analysis of the management of oppression in the text's fictional world.

This chapter will focus on the interlocking institutions in Henry H. Neff's *Impyrium* (USA 2016) in order to analyze the structural domain of power. I will consider the fictional networks in the Great Network of Philip Reeve's *Railhead* (UK 2015) and its sequels *Black Light Express* (UK 2016) and *Station Zero* (UK 2018). The School for Good and Evil in Soman Chainani's *The School for Good and Evil* (USA 2013) will be considered as a way of focussing my analysis of the disciplinary domain of power.

The Structural Domain of Power—Part One: Interlocking Institutions

The defamiliarization of interlocking institutions in fantastika literature allows an analysis of the specific ways oppression is organized in the structural domain of power of each specific fictional world. Hill Collins argues that the structural domain of power encompasses how social institutions are organized to reproduce the subordination of oppressed social groups over time, 'One characteristic feature of this domain is its emphasis on large-scale, interlocking social institutions. An impressive array of U.S. social institutions lies at the heart of the structural domain of power' and function to disadvantage oppressed social groups (*Black Feminist Thought* 277). Hill Collins is working within an American framework and her specific examples focussing on Black women cannot be used allegorically or comparatively to understand the structural domain of power of every fictional world. Instead, these theories can be used more broadly to analyze the specific nature of the structural domain of power of fictional worlds. As a case study, I analyze the defamiliarized social institutions that interlock in Henry H. Neff's *Impyrium* (USA 2016) to illustrate the ways in which oppression is organized between interlocking institutions in the structural domain of power of this text's fictional world.

For the purposes of this study, I define a social institution as an organized collection of people who perform recursive practices, based in a set of beliefs (conscious or unconscious), in order to form material, political, legal and or social structures. Each social institution interlocks with the other social institutions of a society, meaning that while they each have their own distinct practices (Martin, "Gender as Social Institution" 1256), they each also work in collaboration with one another to organize oppression. Foucault explains the way oppression is organized by the interlocking of institutions in *The Archeology of Knowledge* where he argues

that in the nineteenth century the institution of medicine was the foremost authority for defining 'madness.' The institution of medicine could not work in a vacuum because its definition of madness had to also work for other social institutions, including the institutions of law and penal law (specifically in relation to excuse, non-responsibility, and dangers to society), the institution of religion (which divides the mythical and the pathological, the supernatural and the abnormal), and the institutions of art and literature (the institutions of which at this time focussed on the interpretation of the artist's tricks of expression) (41-42). Here several different institutions work in an interlocking system in order to create a social system that privileges certain mental conditions and oppresses others. This same interlocking of institutions to oppress particular social groups can also exist in fictional worlds, and, through the defamiliarizing effects of fictional social groups, allows for an analysis of the organization of oppression in fictional worlds.

Fictional social institutions are defamiliarized through their specific elements that make them dissimilar from their real-world equivalents. Malin Alkestrand explains the defamiliarization of fictional world social institutions in her analysis of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, arguing, 'the Ministry of Magic is so different from real-life governments that the latter are defamiliarized; our own world is viewed through the distorting lens of the magical world, which makes us see it in a new light' ("Righteous Rebellion" 122). For Alkestrand, the result of this defamiliarization is an opportunity for a new understanding of real world institutions, specifically the government, and a comparative analysis between the Wizarding World and the real world. She argues, 'the Ministry of Magic becomes a metaphor for institutional abuses of power in general that can be applied to different societies, […] the defence of democratic values can be explored on a more general

level' ("Righteous Rebellion" 123). I take a slightly different position than Alkestrand. Instead of focussing on how the defamiliarization of a fictional social institution allows us to better understand a real-world institution, I focus on how the defamiliarization of fictional social institutions allows us to better understand the way oppression is organized by social institutions in order to establish the structural domain of power. My aim is to study the defamiliarized social institutions of fictional worlds in order to analyze the organization of oppression.

In Henry H. Neff's *Impyrium*, the intersectional systemic oppression of the muir defamiliarizes the social institutions of the fictional world, Impyrium. Despite their significant epistemological differences, Ann E. Cudd, Elanor Taylor and Iris Young all argue that social groups are those oppressed by social institutions (*Analyzing Oppression* 50; "Groups and Oppression" 520; "Five Faces of Oppression" 44). While the features of social groups may be distinctive from other social groups, their differences tend to cut across one another (Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" 40, 45). In *Impyrium*, the muir are non-magical people oppressed by magical people, the mehrùn. The story follows two characters, an albino mehrùn named Hazel Faeregine, the youngest, least liked and (secretly) most magically-gifted member of the royal family; and Hob Smythe, a genius muir hired not only to tutor Hazel, but to spy on her as well. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the ways the institutions of Impyrium interlock to intersectionally oppress Hob Smythe. The institutions of government, education, housing and travel in Impyrium work to limit and control the muir and the working class, enabling the institutions of marriage, religion and housing to further oppress the racialized and children of unwed couples. Hob is a working-class, half-skänder (meaning, biracial), muir son of

an unmarried couple; his intersecting identities are oppressed across different interlocking institutions throughout Impyrium.

In Impyrium, the mehrùn's exclusive rule of the government and great and minor houses of the social elite is historically legitimated. Three thousand years prior to the text's story, a small group of mehrùn defeated an evil demon named Astaroth (Neff 28, 118). After Astaroth's defeat, magic is used to maintain peace between demons and humans to the point that its use becomes institutionalized (98). According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann:

> Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. […] Reciprocal typifications of actions are built up in the course of a shared history. They cannot be created instantaneously. Institutions always have a history, of which they are the products. (*The Social Construction of Reality* 72)

By consistently using magic to manage the human-demon relationship, magic use becomes a pattern that, when repeated enough, establishes a norm. This further establishes an assumption that those without magic are defenceless against demons. The importance of magic use legitimizes the mehrùn's crucial social role for all humans, and their responsibility over the muir, resulting in the institutionalization of magic use (and the magic-using mehrùn) for the purposes of social governance. Impyrium's institution of government is historically constructed to protect all humans from demons, but ultimately results in the mehrùn's social dominance, and the muir's total exclusion from accessing positions of government leadership.

The interlocking of the institutions of government and education establishes a myth that everyone can benefit from Impyrium's social structures. Despite being a muir, Hob is invited to attend an Impyrial college, Impyrium's prestigious schools of

magic (73). In order to receive this invitation, all Hob has to do is complete an entrance exam. While this seems fair in theory, the entrance exam, known as the Provinces, is 'infamously grueling *[sic!]* and competitive' (185). When Hob places first out of five-thousand people in the Provinces (185), he believes that he has accomplished something important, that he is one of 'the best and brightest' and that he is socially valued because he can fulfill the empire's need for administrators (73). According to Patricia Yancey Martin, 'Institutions have a legitimating ideology that proclaims the rightness and necessity of their arrangements, practices, and social relations' which 'is created by elites who benefit from the arrangements and practices they valorize' ('Gender as Social Institution' 1257). Hob believes that the Provinces is a right and necessary practice, unaware that those muir who attend an Impyrial college are treated as a threat and indoctrinated while they are young (73).

The Provinces and Impyrial colleges function to suppress the most brilliant (and thus most threatening) muir and exclude all other muir from accessing knowledge and opportunity. Furthermore, the children of the great and minor mehrùn houses are automatically accepted into Rowan, the best Impyrial college, without needing to take the Provinces (87). This unequal access to education meets Anne E. Cudd's definition of oppression as 'the fundamental injustice of social institutions' (*Analyzing Oppression* 20). The institution of government works to illegitimate any notion of institutional injustice by offering those muir who pass the Provinces a scholarship so they can afford to attend an Impyrial college. But this scholarship is rarely practical for Impyrium's working class. Hob must refuse his offer of admission and his scholarship because he needs to work in a mine to help support his mother and sister (185). Because Hob's family cannot afford for him to not work, he must instead study in a crowded classroom in the impoverished town of Dusk 'where

boys and girls shared pages torn from old textbooks' (45). Hob's lack of access to a prestigious education demonstrates his intersectional oppression as a working-class muir. The institutions of government and education establish the myth that a person like Hob could (and should) access an education at an Impyrial college, while simultaneously limiting his access to this opportunity significantly.

The institutions of housing and travel function to constrain and control the muir and the working class in order to maintain mehrùn domination. If Hob had been able to afford to accept his government scholarship and attend an Impyrial College, he could not have afforded to travel to the Impyrial College because it is located on the other side of the country from Dusk. 'Mobility is limited to those who can afford [train] tickets. As a result, few muir ever journey more than thirty miles from their birthplace. This reduces unrest' (85). This control of behaviour by social institutions results in social inequality, as Cudd argues, a 'social institution sets constraints that specify behavior in specific recurrent situations […] social constraints are unequal when they differentially affect the life outcomes of the individuals subjected to the constraints' (*Analyzing Oppression* 51). Hob's life outcome, meaning his access to education, is constrained both by the institution of housing's segregation of muir and mehrùn and the institution of travel's high cost to limit any working class muir's opportunity to cross the physical distance between muir and mehrùn spaces. If Hob had lived in Impyria and closer to the Impyrial College, rent would have been more than he could ever afford where most buildings are mehrùn exclusive (347). His only option would be to live in the slums of Scrag's End, 'A makeshift city of tents and shacks […] Many hundreds were piled atop one another […] Space was so scarce that the settlement overflowed onto the sea in networks of rafts and houseboats' that smell of 'raw sewage, dead fish, and concentrated humanity' (340). Hob's

opportunity to succeed at an Impyrial college would be constrained by this poor housing, as Debora L. Mckoy and Jeffrey M. Vincent argue, 'housing in poor condition, with amenities in constant disrepair, reduces the quality of children's lives and hinders academic development by impeding their ability to learn or develop good study habits' ("Housing and Education" 130). The institutions of housing and travel here interlock in a system that controls the behaviours of working class muir and constrains the opportunities to become anything other than working-class. These institutions of government, education, housing and travel all work together in a single system of oppression to keep Hob from attending an Impyrial college and the opportunities it would afford him, while affording the children of great and minor mehrùn houses easy access to opportunities.

The institutions of religion, housing and marriage interlock at the intersection of Impyrium's cultural and social structures in order to oppress the muir, racialized and children of unwed couples. Before Hob is recruited as a spy and brought to the Sacred Isle to tutor Hazel, he is forced to live in Dusk, an impoverished town in the Northwest of the Muirlands. Mehrùn do not live in the Northwest, as one baron points out, 'Savages live in the Northwest […] Little muir savages that squat in huts, gobble seals, and worship rocks instead of their empress' (150). In this scene, the baron demonstrates the ideologies of Impyrium's cultural structures, including the negative beliefs about the muir and the religious beliefs about the mehrùn empress. These cultural structures intersect with the institutions of religion and housing; the former dictates who is acceptable to worship, the latter functions to segregate the muir from the mehrùn, forcing the muir to live where it is more difficult to survive. Neil J. MacKinnon and David R. Heise argue:

a social institution is the intersection of cultural structure and social

structure, where cultural structure refers to patterns or regularities in

members' shared beliefs and sentiments; and social structure to patterns

or regularities in behavioral interaction among members of a society.

(*Self, Identity and Social Institutions* 7)

The baron's statement demonstrates the intersection of social beliefs and social

structures to enable the systemic oppression of the muir. This location-based

oppression of the muir has further, intersectional implications for Hob. In Dusk,

Hob's mixed-race skin and green eyes signify him as the child of an unmarried

couple, a skänder man with the white skin of the dangerous country of the Grislands,

and a Hauja woman, with the dark skin typical of Impyrium (71). Because of his

skänder background, the Hauja refuse to acknowledge Hob's success at sitting

'séyu,' their religious rite of passage involving eight days in the wilderness in which

Hob kills a Cheshirewulf and eats its heart (186-7). The shaman (Hob's grandfather)

tosses the Cheshirewulf's pelt on the bonfire and calls him a skänder trickster, and

the warriors of the tribe (Hob's uncles) drive him out of the camp, almost killing him

(186-7). Hob's immediate family is exiled from the tribe and they must live in Dusk,

where there is nothing worse to be than a 'bastard' (52). In contrast, the royal family,

the Faeregines, are all technically 'bastards' because 'Direct descendants of the

empress rarely married or even learned their father's identity. This ensured their

loyalty remained solely to the Faeregines' (31). While calling someone a bastard in

Dusk is considered a slur (52), this term does not carry any weight among the

mehrùn on the Sacred Isle (186). The cultural structures of the Northwest that dictate

beliefs in race and the children of unwed parents here intersect with the social

institutions of religion and marriage to intersectionally oppress Hob as a biracial

'bastard.' The institution of housing also interlocks with this system of oppression because Hob cannot afford to live where he will not be oppressed for his parentage. The organization of Hob's intersectional oppression involves the ways location-specific cultural beliefs combine with the interlocking nature of various social institutions.

The intersectional oppression of fictional social groups, such as the working-class, biracial, 'bastard' muir Hob Smythe in Neff's *Impyrium*, defamiliarizes interlocking social institutions. The defamiliarization of the institutions of government, education, housing, travel, religion and marriage in the fictional world of Impyrium allows for an analysis of the way oppression is organized in the structural domain of power. Oppression is organized by interlocking institutions that have historical grounding, that are legitimated with myths of equal social benefit for all, that function to control and constrain and that intersect cultural and social structures. The intersectional systemic oppression of the fictional social group of the muir defamiliarizes Impyrium's social institutions because said institutions have to use the organization of oppression in ways that are specific to the text's fictional world. The analysis of the structural domain of power in fictional worlds offers insights into how oppression is organized, potentially offering insights into the mechanisms of oppression of the real world.

The Structural Domain of Power—Part Two: Social Networks

The defamiliarization of fictional social networks allows a further analysis of the specific ways oppression is organized in the structural domain of power of each specific fictional world. According to Alexandra Marin and Barry Wellman, 'A social network is a set of socially relevant nodes connected by one or more relations.

Nodes, or network members, are the units that are connected by the relations whose patterns we study' ("Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 11). The nature of nodes, relations and patterns are context dependent. In fictional contexts social networks are defamiliarized, allowing for an analysis of how oppression is organized to exclude. My texts for this section are Philip Reeve's *Railhead* trilogy: *Railhead* (UK 2015), *Black Light Express* (UK 2016) and *Station Zero* (UK 2018).

While Hill Collins' description of the structural domain of power only includes social institutions, I argue the analysis of systemic oppression demands investigating social networks as well. As Feagin argues that oppressive social institutions are imbedded with social networks that perpetuate oppressive hierarchies and inequalities (*Systemic Racism* 36), I include social networks in my analysis of the structural domain of power. I use social network analysis to investigate the relations and patterns formed by the relations of nodes within social networks (Marin and Wellman, "Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 11). This method works well for the analysis of systemic oppression because a social 'network analysis can measure such things as the overall "density" of a network and the relative "centrality" of the various points within it. Centrality measures have typically been used as indicators of power, influence, popularity and prestige' (Carrington and Scott, "Introduction" 4). I use social network analysis to identify the relationship between density, opportunity and exclusion to argue how oppression is organized to both privilege and oppress. Marin and Wellman argue that researchers must choose their method of data collection based on the 'two important dimensions along which network data vary: whole versus ego networks' ("Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 19). I argue, instead, that both of these approaches are useful for investigating systemic oppression in a fictional world. First, in my study of the

socially privileged, I use boundary specification theories to analyze an egocentric network, highlighting the ways in which access to opportunity is influenced by one's social networks. Second, in my study of the socially oppressed, I use theories of dyadic phenomena to analyze whole networks, arguing how social networks are constructed in order to exclude and oppress.

Social network analysis is not traditionally a method of literary study. However, as Marin and Wellman use Romeo and Juliet as examples, constituting a bridge between the Capulets and Montagues in a network of Verona elites in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* ("Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 14), I argue these theories should be applied to other works of fiction as well. The social network analysis of fictional networks differs from the analysis of real world social networks. Freeman argues there are four features of social network analysis that are used in the field: first, structural institutions based on ties linking social actors; second, systematic empirical data; third, graphic imagery; and fourth, mathematical and/or computational models (*The Development of Social Network Analysis* 3). While these four features work well for the analysis of social networks in the real world, the investigation of social networks in fictional worlds is limited to what is represented in the text. The limited representation of networks in fictional worlds means that actors and nodes cannot be interviewed, surveys cannot be conducted, and the complexities of relations are limited to how they are described in the text. This can often mean that there is not enough empirical data to necessitate graphic imagery or mathematical and/or computational models (though, as I demonstrate, graphic imagery may prove helpful.) I argue that analyzing the ties linking social actors within a fictional world can yield results about the nature of systemic oppression in a fictional world.

The analysis of various boundary specifications of an egocentric network can indicate how oppression is organized to benefit the socially privileged. 'Egocentric network data focus on the network surrounding one node, known as the ego' (Marin and Wellman, "Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 20). When the ego is a person with a position of leadership in an institution, the analysis of various boundary specifications may indicate how the ego's social networks organize oppression in the ego's favour. Boundary specifications allow the researcher to decide what *kinds* of nodes to investigate, and thus in turn the kinds of relationships that shape the social network. Laumann, Marsden and Prensky argue that in 'the process of choosing a set of actors composing a network, analysts focus on one or more of three sets of components: actors, relations, or activities' ("The Boundary Specification Problem in Network Analysis" 67). Actors can be 'positional,' meaning they occupy a formal position in a constituted group, such as Rail Marshal Lyssa Delius of the Great Network's Railforce, or 'reputational,' meaning they are an informal knowledge informant outside a constituted group, such as Yanvar Malik after he retires from Railforce but still assists with hunting down Raven (Laumann, Marsden and Prensky, "The Boundary Specification Problem in Network Analysis" 67). The relations approach is concerned with the chain of communication between actors within a population of interest, such as the relations between the artificially intelligent Guardians that claim to have created the Great Network and form its religious institution as gods (Laumann, Marsden and Prensky, "The Boundary Specification Problem in Network Analysis" 68; Marin and Wellman, "Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 12). Finally, the activities approach investigates participants in a specific event or activity, such as the survivors of the terrorist attack on the Great Network's Emperor's trains (Laumann, Marsden and Prensky, "The

Boundary Specification Problem in Network Analysis" 68). These three boundary specifications are not mutually exclusive, and can be used in combination (Marin and Wellman, "Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 12).

In my investigation of Threnody Noon's egocentric network, I argue her privileged accesses to the opportunity to be the Empress of the Great Network can be understood by analyzing her relative centrality in the dense social networks of all three boundary specification components. As a positional actor, Threnody is a member of the powerful Noon corporate family, making her a descendent of the previous Emperor (*Railhead* 78). This in and of itself is not enough for her to become Empress; Threnody is not the natural heir to the throne, and the Emperor's death does not instantly lead to Threnody becoming Empress. A relational approach emphasizes Threnody's experiences with Lyssa Delius, who holds an important formal position in the institution of Railforce as the Rail Marshal; Mr. Yunis of the Imperial College of Data Divers; and with Anais Six, a Guardian. It is Lyssa Delius who chooses who becomes the next Empress, and Threnody's relationship with both Lyssa and Anais Six are significant reasons Lyssa chooses her (*Railhead* 263). Finally, an activities approach places her as a survivor of the historic terrorist attack that killed the Emperor. Her poise after this attack is applauded, placing her as a survivor of interest (*Railhead* 243). Independently, being a Noon, being someone who has met a Guardian, or being the survivor of a historic terrorist attack are not enough for someone to become the leader of The Great Network. By analyzing the combination of boundary specifications, Threnody's central position in all three of these egocentric networks demonstrates the ways oppression is organized to privilege the 'right' actors who have the 'right' relations and have experienced the 'right' activities. By 'right,' I employ Lyssa Delius' own meaning when she explains

to Yanvar Malik, 'If you would report in more often, go to the right parties, meet people, you would probably be *General* Malik by now' (*Railhead* 49, emphasis in original). In order for Yanvar to access opportunity, he must first have the 'right' relations and attend the 'right' activities in his social networks. 'Right' here is used to signify the actors, relations and activities with relative centrality in a fictional world's social network. Within the structural domain of power, oppression is organized to privilege those who are central in the densest networks, and oppress those who are not.

The analysis of the socially oppressed can be better studied with a whole network approach. This method 'takes a bird's-eye view of [the] social structure, focussing on all nodes rather than privileging the network surrounding any particular node' (Marin and Wellman, "Social Network Analysis: An Introduction" 19). A whole network approach allows for an analysis of a total social system, identifying the different networks that exist in the fictional world, including which nodes are part of the densest networks and which nodes have the fewest connections in the fictional world's social network. In The Great Network of Reeve's *Railhead* Trilogy, upper-class humans primarily occupy the densest social networks through institutional affiliations, while the working-class and the non-humans typically have the fewest number of relations between nodes (See Diagram 1).
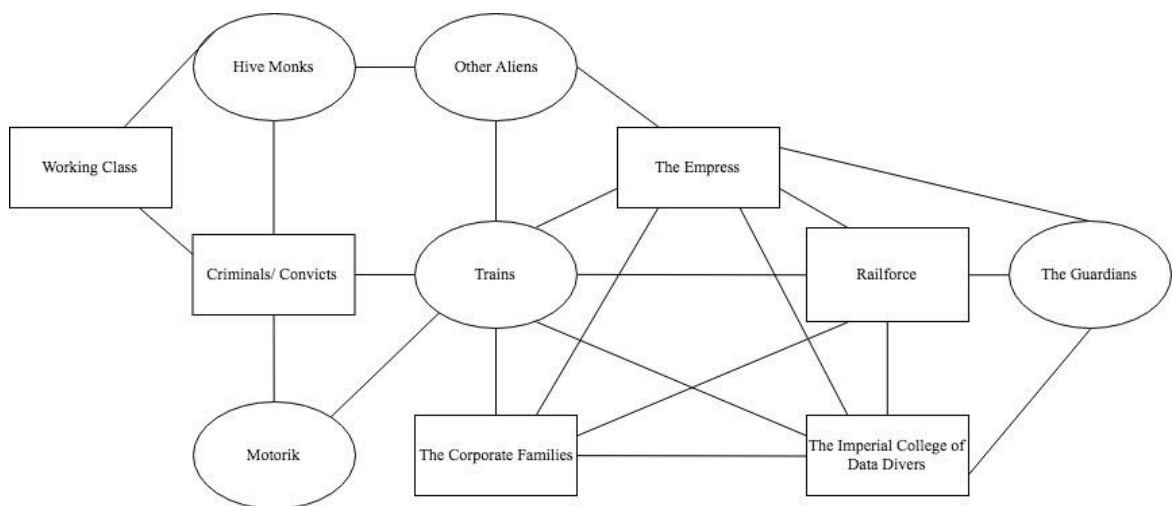
Diagram I: A Whole Network Approach to The Great Network
The above represents the essential nature of this fictional world's whole network without full recognition of the changes that occur throughout the trilogy. Human groups and institutions are represented with rectangles, non-human groups and institutions are represented with ovals and are each explained further below.

Sometimes, being a part of a smaller social network does not necessarily mean that one is socially oppressed, nor does having a large social network mean one is definitely socially privileged. For example, the Guardians, who act as gods in The Great Network to control this entire fictional world, actively choose not to communicate with the majority of people, instead selecting a special few to connect with (*Railhead* 224). Meanwhile the trains, who have a very dense social network, are afforded very little agency and opportunity. Trains are understood in two distinct ways. First, the government, Railforce, the Corporate Families, and the Imperial College of Data Divers are all in a network with the institution of travel, and treat trains as tools within this institution. Second, characters like Zen (a working-class criminal) and Flex (a Motorik) come to accept the sentience of trains, working with trains for anti-authoritarian and resistance purposes. This distinction of seeing a group strictly as an institution's tools or as a collection of people also clarifies why the Motorik are not in a network with the Corporate Families; Corporate Families *use* Motorik as their own tools, but are not in a network with them as people.

Therefore, it is not enough to visualize a whole network and posit density as an indicator of privilege. The analysis of dyadic phenomena, meaning the *kinds* of relations, allows for an investigation into the policies and practices that exclude the oppressed from accessing opportunities. Stephen P. Borgatti and Virginie Lopez-Kidwell argue there are four basic categories of dyadic phenomena: similarities, interactions, flows and social relations ("Network Theory" 44). As these dyadic phenomena are used to analyze the nature of relations between nodes, the study of how nodes are excluded in an oppressive social network should analyze how nodes are dissimilar, cannot interact, can only flow against social rules or laws, and have unequal social relations.

Access to opportunity in a social network may be limited by the dissimilarities in social categories, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of the whole network's nodes. Dissimilarities can be studied as the opposite of the similarities category of dyadic phenomena, which Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell argue 'refers to physical proximity, co-membership in social categories, and sharing of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs' ("Network Theory" 44). Chandni Hansa's experiences as an ex-convict work well to demonstrate how dissimilarities function to oppress in The Great Network. In *Black Light Express*, the midsummer ball is a party for the wealthy and powerful to celebrate the longest day of Grand Central's summer, and it is decorated as an ice-theme (66). The ball presents an opportunity for attendees to network, such as when Rail Marshal Lyssa Delius and Empress Threnody Noon are seen dancing together (67). Many different social groups are not represented as in attendance, including Motorik and Hive Monks, meaning the members of these social groups cannot partake in the opportunities for networking provided by this event. Chandni Hansa is in attendance because she has been hired as a special servant and informant for the

Empress. As an ex-convict, she would typically be excluded from such an event. In the Great Network prisons are freezers, and criminals are frozen until the ends of their sentences (18-19). For a networking event to be ice-themed, attendees are expected to have never experienced the traumas of the prison freezers. Chandni's experiences are described as follows: 'She was wondering if it was all some cruel, elaborate joke […] it had never once crossed her [the Empress's] mind that for a girl from the freezer-prisons all this ice might bring back chilly memories' (67). While Threnody did not choose an ice theme to intentionally exclude Chandni, it is still relevant that the ice-theme of the event upsets Chandni, while the other attendees are able to dance and enjoy the ball. The differing behaviours, attitudes and beliefs regarding ice demonstrates the dissimilarities between ex-convicts and those who are typically invited to this ball. The automatic assumption that everyone will be comfortable with the ice theme suggests that there will be no ex-convicts in attendance. This theme, while not explicitly anti-ex-convict, demonstrates who is assumed to be a part of the networks in attendance, and how these assumptions limit opportunities for certain groups to be able to access opportunities, like attending and enjoying a ball, in The Great Network.

Another kind of relation between nodes involves the discrete events that function to exclude certain social groups from accessing opportunities in the whole network. The interactions category of dyadic phenomena, which 'refers to discrete and separate events that may occur' (Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwel, "Network Theory" 44), typically involves discrete events that create relations between nodes. When investigating systems of oppression, the inverse of the interactions category can be used to identify the ways in which relations between nodes are severed, limiting the opportunities of the oppressed. The Motorik Flex's experiences of oppression are an

example of how the interactions category is used to exclude the oppressed. The planet Cleave is home to many of The Great Network's working class, desperate for employment opportunities. When the corporate families use Motorik robots to clean the flues of their blast furnaces on Cleave, the human workers worry they will soon be replaced entirely. To protect their jobs, the working class humans of Cleave protest against Motorik labour by destroying all of the newly arrived Motorik; Flex is the only Motorik who manages to escape (*Railhead* 181-2). After this event, Flex is not only forced to live in hiding away from the rest of Cleave, but they is forced to hide their Motorik identity whenever they do cross paths with anyone. When the protagonist, Zen Starling, meets Flex, he does not know that Flex is a Motorik, and, further to this, as Reeve writes, 'Zen had never really been sure if Flex was a boy or a girl' (*Railhead* 20). Flex is non-binary and completely androgynous. Later, when Zen needs Flex's help and needs to bring them out of hiding, Flex is told 'You're going to have to look like a human being […] Are you a boy or a girl? […] Male or female? Most people are one or the other, in Cleave' (*Railhead* 184). There's an intersectional oppression here of both Motorik and non-binary people. In order for Flex to access Cleave society and interact with the rest of Cleave's population they will not only need to pass as human but, in order to do so, they must also pass as one of two genders. The events of the anti-Motorik protests, which occur separately from the typical Motorik-interactions throughout the rest of the Great Network, have resulted in Flex's inability to access space in Cleave as themself. This singular and specific event has severed Flex's relation with other nodes on Cleve, in turn limiting their access to opportunity in The Great Network's whole network.

The third category of dyadic phenomena is the flows category, which includes 'things such as resources, information, and diseases that move from node to

node' (Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwel, "Network Theory" 44-5). For excluded social groups, the flow between nodes occurs privately and in secret, and is often against social and or legal rules. The flow of resources from criminals to Hive Monks to the working class creates a black market network on Cleave. When Zen Starling steals something on another planet, he returns home to sell his stolen goods to Uncle Bugs, the Hive Monk (*Railhead* 9-10). The Hive Monks are a 'colony of big brown beetles clinging to roughly human-shaped armature which they'd made for themselves out of sticks and string and chicken bones' (*Railhead* 9). Most humans think the Hive Monks are 'disgusting' (*Railhead* 169), and thus tend to give them a wide berth. Further to this, as one Hive Monk explains, 'No one sees Hive Monks. No one stops us or questions us. We are only Hive Monks' (*Railhead* 212). Not even Bluebodies, Railforce police, are willing to interact with the Hive Monks, allowing opportunity for the flow of goods to and from Hive Monks to be limited to those willing to interact with them, namely, the working class and criminals. While this suggests access to opportunity, it is unlikely Uncle Bugs or another Hive Monk could set up a legal shop because of how humans are otherwise adverse to interacting with them. The Hive Monks are limited in their access to the whole social network because of their species, and are only able to join the whole network through the illegal flow of criminal behaviour.

The final dyadic phenomenon is the social-roles category, which functions to exclude social groups in a whole network based on specific 'perceptions and attitudes about specific others' (Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwel, "Network Theory" 44). As explained above, the trains of The Great Network are used by human-run institutions who are in a network with the institution of travel, but the trains themselves are not considered to be legitimate people who are considered nodes in

The Great Network's whole network. The perception and attitudes about trains are that they are just machines, and their sentience is not given full credit. The trains are lead to believe that 'the lines they ran on had been laid out to carry human beings and information from one place to another' but after learning about the *morvah* alien trains and the Railmaker, 'they started to wonder if it had actually been made for them' (*Station Zero* 199-200).

Initially the trains are led to believe that their only value is to be used for human purposes, affording them no bodily autonomy or agency. When they learn of their origins they reconsider their social roles in the whole network of The Great Network. When the *Damask Rose*, the train carrying Empress Threnody Noon, refuses to follow orders, Threnody cannot believe it, thinking instead that the train has been hacked (*Station Zero* 198). The *Damask Rose* refutes this idea, insisting that trains 'are people too' and that if Threnody does not do what she asks, she and the other trains will 'become uncooperative' (*Station Zero* 198, 203). Threnody comes to learn that the *Damask Rose* 'was not *her* train, of course—if what the *Damask Rose* had said was true, people were going to have to stop thinking of trains that way. Not *her* train any more, but perhaps a powerful ally' (*Station Zero* 203, emphasis in original). Threnody's changing perceptions of the *Damask Rose* indicate the way social roles have historically limited trains in The Great Network. While the underestimation of trains serves as their tactical advantage in war, this is only after a long history of suppression and exclusion. Trains may be connected to the entire Great Network, but they are not afforded a voice or agency. Social perceptions treat them as tools of the Great Network, not nodes in the whole network, and they are only able to become nodes with those who are willing to see them as people.

The *Railhead* trilogy's critique of systemic oppression works well to tackles how social networks function in the structural domain of power. The social networks in The Great Network are complex and constantly evolving. The nature of the social networks of this fictional world is highly affected by the discovery of alien species and the changing perceptions of non-humans like the Motorik and trains. The relations and nodes of these fictional social groups defamiliarize social networks, allowing for an analysis of how oppression is organized in the structural domain of power. First, oppression is organized to afford the greatest ease of access to opportunity to members of the most privileged social groups who have a relatively central position in the densest social networks. Second, oppression is organized to limit or exclude members of social groups who are dissimilar, unable to interact with society or are only able to interact with criminals, and who are not considered people within the dominant social perception. The systemic oppression of The Great Network is constructed through social networks that function to maintain the supremacy of those within a tightly-knit network, and suppress and control all others.

The Disciplinary Domain of Power

While the structural domain of power deals with the interlocking nature of institutions and network nodes, the disciplinary domain of power involves the hierarchies within each individual social institution. The defamiliarization of each institution's hierarchical structures allows an analysis of the specific ways oppression is managed in the disciplinary domain of power of each specific fictional world. Hill Collins defines the disciplinary domain of power as 'a way of ruling that relies on bureaucratic hierarchies and techniques of surveillance' that manages power

relations (*Black Feminist Thought* 280). When the 'ways of ruling' rely on fantastika

elements, the hierarchal structures of an institution are defamiliarized. The systemic

oppression of a fantastika text's fictional world can then be analyzed in the particular

way oppression is managed to discipline those who access the institution, and

support certain social groups over others.

Systemic oppression can be analyzed within the disciplinary domain of power

by identifying three key hierarchical structures of the social institution: first, the

chain of power in the bureaucratic hierarchy; second, the enforcement of (implicitly

and explicitly oppressive) policies; and third, the mechanisms of surveillance,

ranking and punishment. To demonstrate this, I will focus on Soman Chainani's *The

School for Good and Evil* (USA 2013).

Foucault argues that discipline is a 'modest, suspicious power, which functions

as a calculated, but permanent economy. These are humble modalities, minor

procedures' that function 'to "train", rather than to select and to levy; or, no doubt, to

train in order to levy and select all the more' (*Discipline and Punish* 170). In this

context the term 'discipline' does not mean 'punishment' so much as it means

'obedience.' Hill Collins argues that 'Bureaucracies, regardless of the policies they

promote, remain dedicated to disciplining and controlling their workforces and

clientele […] the goal is the same—creating quiet, orderly, docile, and disciplined

populations' of oppressed groups (*Black Feminist Thought* 281). To accomplish this,

surveillance is used to ensure that oppressed groups remain subordinate to more

dominant groups (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 281). According to Foucault,

the use of punishment by a disciplinary institution 'compares, differentiates,

hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*' (*Discipline and Punish*

183, emphasis in original). Those who are unable to meet the norms enforced by the

homogeneity established by the disciplinary domain of power are oppressed in the text's fictional world.

The magical school genre is an example of a kind of children's fantastika text that may primarily focus on one social institution. The School for Good and Evil, in Soman Chainani's novel by the same name, is an educational institution designed to train children to become the heroes, survivors and villains of fairy tales. Children are forcibly taken from their homes to either the School for Good or the School for Evil to begin their training. The children do not get a choice of which school they get to attend, rather this is supposedly based on their inner qualities. The division of students based on which School they attend creates two distinct social groups, the Good (or, Evers), and the Evil (or, Nevers). While the hierarchal structures of The School for Good and Evil have some similarities with the educational institutions of the real world, this magical school's fantastika elements defamiliarize the institution of education, allowing for an analysis of how this institution is structured to manage power and oppression. It is at this school that different social groups face varying levels of privilege and oppression through the fictional institution's chain of power in the bureaucratic hierarchy, the enforcement of (implicitly and explicitly oppressive) policies, and the mechanisms of surveillance, ranking and punishment in a disciplinary system of power.

The School for Good and Evil features a clear bureaucratic hierarchy. The School Master is at the top of the school's hierarchy, and spends all of his time out of sight in a 'silver tower that split the two sides of the bay' between the Schools for Good and Evil where he surveils the students (120). Beneath him in the School's hierarchy are the teachers and the welcoming leaders (a two-headed dog named Castor and Pollox) (80). The School Master's power over the teachers is clear; he

forbids the teachers from attending and interfering in the Circus of Talents so that

students can use the magical skills they have learned during the year (no matter how

violent) without restraint (411-12). This hierarchy allows for a chain of power, which

enables 'the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet' and 'constantly

supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and

absolutely "discreet", for it functions permanently and largely in silence' (Foucault,

Discipline and Punish 176-7). The hierarchy of power in The School for Good and

Evil allows discipline to function at every level of the school, enabling the

surveillance and enforcement of school policies at every level. This means that

policies, including oppressive policies, pervade throughout this educational

institution.

The policies of an institution may not be explicitly oppressive, but can still

function to implicitly enforce systems of power and oppression. The policies at the

School for Good and Evil do not explicitly give more value to certain students over

others, and yet still function to oppress different groups of students and allow for the

domination of certain social groups over others. The policies of segregation and

conformity at the School for Good and Evil function to establish homogeneity and

enforce a wide range of different intersecting systems of oppression. Foucault argues

that the normalization of homogeneity is a great instrument of power that imposes a

measurement of individual differences (*Discipline and Punishment* 184). When

individual differences are discouraged and conformity is enforced, this form of

discipline functions to oppress the atypical. Foucault argues that in a system of

discipline, when one seeks to understand the individual characteristics of a person,

one seeks out those atypical and unacceptable qualities that are oppressed by this

same system (*Discipline and Punish* 193). To fail to conform to homogeneity is unacceptable in a system of discipline.

At the School for Good and Evil, homogeneity is enforced through policies of segregation. Students at the School for Good and Evil are divided into three groups: Good girls, Good boys and Evil students. Good and Evil students are physically segregated from one another, sharing only one class together and otherwise living in separate Schools where they are barred from visiting one another (87). Good and Evil students are wholly discouraged from becoming friends, allies and or romantic partners (175). The School for Good is divided into four towers, two for the male students titled Honor and Valor, and two for the female students titled Purity and Charity (50-51). While some classes in the School for Good include all genders, 'Beautification and Etiquette [classes] are for Good girls only, while Good boys will have Grooming and Chivalry [classes] instead' (89). In the School for Evil, boys and girls learn 'Uglification' together (109-111). In the one class Good and Evil students share, Surviving Fairy Tales, they practice the five rules that separate Good from Evil: 'The Evil *attack*. The Good *defend* […] The Evil *punish*. The Good *forgive* […] The Evil *hurt*. The Good *help* […] The Evil *take*. The Good *give* […] The Evil *hate*. The Good *love*' (157). There is not only a physical separation of Good and Evil students, but a visual and ideological difference between the students of the different Schools as well. This functions to create a homogeneity among Good girls, Good boys and Evil students, in turn making each social group distinct from the other social groups. This is an issue for the protagonists, Agatha and Sophie, because they both share the qualities of the opposite School. Both Agatha and Sophie are rejected by their peers when they first arrive, and neither is truly accepted until they conform to their respective School's norms (82, 414-15, 428). While Agatha and Sophie are

initially both resistant to these policies, the disciplinary system eventually makes them more docile and compliant until they join the homogenous system of their respective Schools.

Students from each school are disciplined to conform to the homogeneity of their respective school. In the School for Good, homogeneity functions to enforce intersectional systemic oppression. The gendered classes in the School for Good support systems of patriarchy, heteronormativity, heterosexism and ableism. While Beautification and Grooming classes seem to be focussed on appearances, and Etiquette and Chivalry classes seem to both focus on manners, these two sets of classes teach very different approaches to being a 'Good' girl and boy. In the Chivalry classes the Good boys learn skills such as sword fighting, while in the Etiquette classes the Good girls learn how to talk to animals (128). This means that, necessarily, boys' grooming focuses more on fitness and athleticism (126), while in Beautification classes girls need to learn how to get a man to trust them so that he might save them from a villain (113). Survival for a Good girl requires a strong man because a Good girl does not learn the skills to protect herself. The explicit focuses of the classes, being appearances and manners, are not obviously oppressive in nature, but the specific mechanisms of each class contribute to an intersectional system of oppression. Furthermore, as appearances and manners are explicitly gendered, the co-education at the School for Evil functions to make access to valued appearances and behaviour within the greater fictional world all the more inaccessible. The Evil girls and Evil boys are unable to learn the differences between beautification and grooming respectively, further allowing for the distinction of the Good and Evil. As Foucault argues, a disciplinary system is essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical, supporting a greater system of power in society

through the submission of forces and bodies (*Discipline and Punish* 222). These lessons teach children that Good boys are more powerful, dominant and valuable than Good girls and Evil students, but only if they are strong and able-bodied; and that a natural pairing is one comprised of cisgender heterosexuals of the opposite sex and same School. The nature of this division does not allow for the existence of transgender and gender non-conforming students, or alternative options for queer students of any kind.

The gendered classes lead to explicitly sexist policies at the School for Good. For example, 'if a girl doesn't get asked to the Ball, then she fails and suffers a punishment worse than death. But if a boy doesn't go to the Ball, he gets half ranks […] A boy can choose to be alone if he wants. But if a girl ends up alone… she might as well be dead' (303). This sexist policy demonstrates a double standard that the protagonist, Agatha, points out as ridiculous and unfair, but no other students notice or challenge it, instead they all conform to the norms of the homogenizing disciplinary system. Good girls continuously worry about gaining the attention and protection of the Good boys, while Good boys like Tedros insist that they have more voice and authority than girls *because* they are boys (453, 468). Moane's definition of patriarchy is a hierarchy in which 'almost all of the major systems of society […] which are hierarchically organized are male dominated' (Moane, *Gender and Colonialism* 28). Systemic oppression is established through implicitly oppressive policies that enforce homogeneity and reinforce oppressive hierarchies and norms. The children of the School for Good are disciplined in the ways of gender roles and hierarchies through the minor lessons they receive in classes on manners and appearances. The non-egalitarian structures of the School for Good work toward supporting the greater systems of patriarchy, heteronormativity, heterosexism and

ableism that exist in the greater fictional world in which the school exists, discipling the students through segregation and conformity to homogenize the students and meet oppressive social norms and hierarchies that shape the students's senses of identity and self-worth.

The policies of a disciplinary system are enforced through surveillance, ranking and punishment. Foucault argues that the disciplinary system coerces through observation in a 'machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct; the fine, analytical divisions that they created formed around [hu]men an apparatus of observation, recording and training' (*Discipline and Punish* 170, 173). Surveillance at The School for Good and Evil functions to ensure the students follow the homogenizing policies, ranking their abilities to do so successfully and punishing those who fail to meet their respective School's norms. Surveillance features at every level, from fairies and wolves that patrol the halls of the Schools, to gargoyles who patrol outside each School to ensure students follow the policies of School segregation, to the teachers during classes, and finally to the School Master who magically surveils every student's rank. After each lesson each student is ranked among their peers rather than graded, these ranks are displayed for everyone to see. This functions as a form of surveillance because students not only respect each other based on their rank, but they self-surveil themselves in order to maintain or improve their social standing. Sophie gains a great deal of popularity teaching Evil students how to be beautiful until the day it is discovered that she has a low rank, and then suddenly no one attends her talks anymore (269). Sophie has a low rank because she is not conforming to the School for Evil's norms. By making the ranks public, Sophie is surveilled by her peers and is pressured to conform. Surveillance functions to ensure homogeneity, and punish those who fail to meet the system's norms.

Ranking functions as an effective means by which to discipline students at the School for Good and Evil. Foucault argues that 'the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate' (*Discipline and Punish* 223). Foucault further argues, 'Discipline rewards simply by the play of awards, thus making it possible to attain higher ranks and places; it punishes by reversing this process. Rank in itself serves as a reward or punishment' (*Discipline and Punish* 181). Students who earn the highest rank, being students who are closest to their School's norms, are awarded the position of class captain, gaining social respect and privileged opportunities (89). This award gratification functions just as well as a low ranking in order to train students to conform to the norms of their respective School (Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment* 180).

When surveillance and ranking fail to make a student conform to their respective School's system of homogeneity, they are disciplined through punishment. Punishment in the School for Good and Evil takes two key forms: humiliation, and failure, and with failure, transformation into a Mogrif (a plant or animal slave). Humiliation varies from teachers embarrassing students in front of their peers, including rude comments (110, 113) and magically affixing an 'F' to rule-breakers's clothing (246); parading resistant students around on a spit (55); to forcibly cutting a student's hair (211); and students making explicitly homophobic comments to one another (207, 220, 231, 368). Each of these forms of humiliation functions to train students to conform to their respective School's system of homogeneity; as Foucault argues, 'The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable' (*Discipline and Punish* 178-9). Those students who are unable to conform fail, and they are punished by being transformed into a Mogrif. The life of a Mogrif is given

absolutely no value, for 'If you aren't good enough to be a princess, then you're honored to die for one,' sacrificing one's life for that of those who succeed in conforming to their School's homogenous system (130). An alternative option for a Mogrif is to 'become a slave for the opposite side,' meaning failed students of the School for Good become wolf guards of the School for Evil, and failed students of The School for Evil become fairy guards of the School for Good (424). Either way, a student who fails to conform to their respective school's system of homogeneity is punished by being transformed into a plant or animal who can either be a slave or die for those who succeed in conforming to an oppressive system of homogeneity.

Despite Chainani's use of queerbaiting to reinforce heteronormativity, his text otherwise works well to critique the disciplinary domain of power. When Sophie tricks Tedros and his army of Good students into attacking Agatha, she steps in and saves Agatha, reverting the roles of Good and Evil students (468-9). In this instance the Good have attacked and the Evil have defended, as Sophie explains to Tedros, 'You and your army invaded a Ball. You and your army attacked a defenseless school. You and your army tried to kill a room of poor students, trying to enjoy the happiest night of their lives' (470). The reversing of roles results in the Evil students becoming beautiful and the Good students becoming ugly. Then, Sophie explains that 'The Evil *attack*, the Good *defend*, […] Now we *defend*' using the policies of the School for Good and Evil to justify ambushing and attacking the students from the School for Good (472). The battle between the students results in the loss of distinguishing characteristics between the differing groups at The School for Good and Evil: 'With rules broken so rampantly, the students began to change from pink to black, black to blue, ugly to beautiful, beautiful to ugly, back and forth, faster, faster, until no one had the faintest idea who was Good and who was Evil' (475). When

Agatha reminds Sophie, 'In the end, Good always *wins*', Sophie tries to re-write her ending by using the School Master's Storian (474-6). Instead, Sophie is horribly wounded and dies (487). Sophie uses her last words to tell Agatha that she loves her, and in response, 'Sobbing, shaking, Agatha kissed Sophie's cold lips' and Sophie comes back to life (487). While this kiss is reminiscent of several famous fairy tales, including Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, pairing the girls in a traditionally romantic narrative structure, the two are then described as 'friends' (488). Chainani's refusal to represent Sophie and Agatha as a romantic couple is an example of queerbaiting, which Judith Fathallah defines as 'hints, jokes, gestures, and symbolism suggesting a queer relationship between two characters, and then emphatically denying and laughing off the possibility. Denial and mockery reinstate a heteronormative narrative' ("Moriarty's Ghost" 491). While the denial of Sophie and Agatha's queer relationship reinstates heteronormativity, their friendship ultimately functions to disprove the foundational belief that 'a princess and a witch can never be friends' (175). While I believe their being *more* than friends would work to better support the text's themes, ultimately this ending still functions to critique the policies at the School for Good and Evil and demonstrate the harms of the disciplinary domain of power.

In *The School for Good and Evil*, the systemic oppression of the fictional world is represented in the hierarchical structures of a single social institution: The School for Good and Evil. This school has a hierarchy involving witches and a talking two-headed dog, policies regarding which genders can learn what kinds of magic, and a magical ranking system that functions to support or punish the students. These magical elements defamiliarize the institution of education, allowing for an analysis of how oppression is managed in The School for Good and Evil's

bureaucratic hierarchy, implicitly and explicitly oppressive policies, and the use of surveillance, ranking and punishment. Surveillance is used at every level of the bureaucratic hierarchy in order to ensure that implicitly oppressive policies are followed, and subjugated populations are controlled. The result is a system of oppression that seeks to discipline, or control, the students of the school, in turn oppressing several intersecting social groups. Those who cannot be disciplined are punished, at best they are humiliated, at worst they are removed from the social system altogether. For the oppressed, survival requires either full subservience or subversive disobedience.

Conclusion

The representation of systemic oppression in fictional worlds involves identifying the way oppression is organized and managed within social institutions in order to limit the ease of access to opportunity for certain social groups. Fictional social groups, network contexts and disciplinary methods all function to defamiliarize fictional institutions. The defamiliarization of fictional institutions, their interlocking nature, their networks, their hierarchical structures, allows for an analysis of the way power is organized and managed in the structural and disciplinary domains of power of a fictional world. In the fictional world of Impyrium, of Neff's *Impyrium*, oppression is organized by interlocking institutions that each work together to oppress the non-magical muir across varying intersecting axes of identity. In Reeve's *Railhead* trilogy, the relations and patterns of the social networks of the Great Network exclude ex-convicts, motorik, Hive Monks and trains from opportunities. In Chainani's *The School for Good and Evil*, oppression is managed through the enforcement of homogeneity. While some fictional worlds may

only represent one of the domains of power in Hill Collins' matrix of domination, in the real world all of the domains of power work together. In my analysis, I have analyzed the domains of power individually in order to outline the particular ways they each contribute to a system of oppression. My analysis of the structural and disciplinary domains is only a first step, and requires a further analysis into the hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power as well.

Chapter Three

The Representation of Systemic Oppression: Part Two—Ideologies and Interactions

Introduction

The defamiliarization of fictional social hierarchies, exclusions and interactions allows an analysis of the specific mechanisms of oppression of a text's fictional world. This chapter is particularly concerned with the ideological mechanisms of the hegemonic domain of power, and the interactive mechanisms of the interpersonal domain of power. In Hill Collins' matrix of domination, the hegemonic domain of power works to justify oppressive social hierarchies and exclusions (*Black Feminist Thought* 284). Then:

> By manipulating ideology and culture, the hegemonic domain acts as a
>
> link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational
>
> practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social
>
> interaction (interpersonal domain). (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*
>
> 284)

The interpersonal domain of power thus involves the way the ideologies of the hegemonic domain of power influence everyday lived experiences through interpersonal interactions that reinforce a larger social system of oppression (*Black Feminist Thought* 287). In a fictional world, the hierarchies, exclusions and interactions may be specific to that world, emphasizing the specific mechanisms that are used to justify oppression and influence the everyday lived experiences of the oppressed.

Jessica Townsend's *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow* (Australia 2017) works well to exemplify the relationship between the hegemonic and interpersonal

domains of power in a text's fictional world. In Townsend's text, children born on

Eventide have a special connection with a magical element called Wunder. When the

Wundersmith, an evil wizard, wants all of the Wunder for himself, he begins secretly

killing children born on Eventide on their eleventh birthdays. The people of the

fictional world of Jackalfax come to believe that these children are cursed. As the

Wundersmith explains:

> Once upon a time you little wretches were a cause for pity and
>
> compassion, having your insignificant lives snatched from you at such a
>
> tender age. But somewhere along the way, the heinous true nature of
>
> humanity kicked in, and people began to see cursed children as
>
> convenient scapegoats. Someone to point the finger at when things went
>
> wrong. (Townsend 357)

The children born on Eventide are not actually cursed, but Jackalfax's system of

hegemony is used to justify treating these children as scapegoats. Klaus

Krippendorff argues that scapegoating functions to maintain the consent of the

oppressed; because the oppressed do not have 'the ability to change a situation that

seems hopeless from their position' they instead use scapegoating to 'replace one

source of oppression with another without solving the underlying problems' (*On*

Communicating 135). According to Antonio Gramsci, the consent of the oppressed is

crucial for the dominating classes to maintain social hierarchies in a hegemonic

system ("Some Aspects on the Southern Question," 173). The protagonist, Morrigan

Crow, is a 'cursed' child and blamed for anything that goes wrong in Jackalfax.

Morrigan is blamed for a variety of issues such as harming and killing animals and

people, ruining food, destroying property, and causing a student to lose his spelling

bee competition (5-9). The people of Jackalfax treat Morrigan poorly, suspicious of

her every word and action, and either pity or fear her. Morrigan's teacher is so afraid of the curse that it 'prevented her from actually sharing the same room with her student. It was a strange and undignified thing, Morrigan felt, to have someone shout Grommish verb conjugations at you from the other side of a door' (10). These interpersonal interactions are not just hurtful, they function to reinforce Jackalfax's system of oppression. Morrigan's everyday lived experience is full of interactions with other people that routinely apply their scapegoating ideologies to oppress her. Morrigan's experiences here demonstrate the ways in which the hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power work together to justify and influence oppressive ideologies and interactions within a greater system of oppression.

In this chapter I will analyze the hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power of fictional worlds in three parts. The first part focuses on the social hierarchies of the hegemonic domain of power to consider how the defamiliarization of hierarchies allows an analysis of how oppression is ideologically justified. In this section, social ideologies are analyzed through a critical discourse analysis. The second part of this chapter includes social exclusion into the hegemonic domain of power. I analyze how the defamiliarization of excluded social groups encourages an analysis of the ways in which social groups are not permitted existence within their society's social consciousness. The third part of this chapter examines the interpersonal domain of power. I analyze how defamiliarized interpersonal interactions fascilitates an analysis of how all three of the other domains of power in the matrix of domination create cognitive biases which are enacted through oppressive cognitive scripts.

In the first part, I will consider the class and colourist hierarchies in Tahereh Mafi's *Furthermore* (USA 2016), the species hierarchies in Suzanne Collins' *Gregor*

the Overlander (USA 2003), and the religious and class hierarchies in R.J.

Anderson's *A Pocket Full of Murder* (Canada 2015). In the second part, I will

examine the exclusion of the Lace in Frances Hardinge's *Gullstruck Island* (UK

2009), agender people in Joan Lennon's *Questors* (UK 2007), the imperfect in

Helena Duggan's *A Place Called Perfect* (Ireland 2017), and loyal and disabled

dragons in Tui T. Sutherland's *Wings of Fire: The Dragonet Prophecy* (USA 2012).

In the third part, for the interpersonal domain of power, I examine the connection

between the hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power by analyzing cognitive

biases in Stephanie Burgis' *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart* (UK 2017), Zizou

Corder's *Lionboy* (UK 2003), Diana Wynne Jones' *House of Many Ways* (UK 2008),

Brandon Mull's *Beyonders: A World Without Heroes* (USA 2011) and Kathi Appelt's

Keeper (USA 2010).

The Hegemonic Domain of Power—Part One: Hierarchies

The defamiliarization of social hierarchies in fantastika literature allows an

analysis of the specific ways oppression is justified in the hegemonic domain of

power. Fictional worlds feature social ideologies specific to the respective fictional

world, resulting in specific social hierarchies in said world. The practices and

discourses that create and maintain the social hierarchies of the fictional world

defamiliarize real-world social hierarchies, allowing for an analysis of the different

ways hegemony is created and maintained to justify oppression. Hill Collins argues

that the hegemonic domain of power 'deals with ideology, culture and

consciousness' with the aim of justifying the practices of the other three domains of

power in the matrix of domination (*Black Feminist Thought* 284). The hegemonic

domain of power involves dominant practices and discourses that 'create and

maintain a popular system of "commonsense" [*sic!*] ideas' that privilege certain social groups over others in a social hierarchy (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 284). The specific practices and discourses that create the social hierarchies of the fictional world emphasize how the common sense ideas and social consciousness of the people of the fictional world maintain consent to a system of oppression.

I will divide my analysis of hegemony into three parts, one for each mode of incorporation that creates a system of hegemony: institutional incorporation, selective tradition and alliance building. Hegemony is then maintained through three mechanisms: dominant practices and discourses, a 'common sense' social consciousness, and the consent to oppression. These three mechanisms are not mutually; rather, they function to reinforce and validate one another in what Karl Marx calls a 'dialectic.' Ernest Mandel explains the dialectical method in relation to economic problems when he argues that 'economic phenomena are not viewed separately from each other, by bits and pieces, but in their inner connection as an integrated totality, structured around, and by, a basic predominant mode of production' ("Introduction" 18). Just as classist economic phenomena are integrated within a singular social structure, so too is this true of other oppressive phenomena within the hegemonic domain of power.

My analysis of the hegemonic domain of power, or hegemony, investigates both how hegemony is created and how it is maintained. First, I consider the institutional incorporation in Tahereh Mafi's *Furthermore* (USA 2016). Second, I examine selective tradition in Suzanne Collins' *Gregor the Overlander* (USA 2003). Third, I focus on alliance building in R.J. Anderson's *A Pocket Full of Murder* (Canada 2015). While each case study investigates a different way hegemony is

created, they will each also investigate the three ways hegemony is maintained within the texts' respective fictional worlds.

For the purposes of this study, I define hegemony from a post-Marxist perspective, in which domination comes from multiple different social points, including class, race and gender (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 139). In this post-Marxist view, hegemony is not understood as a top-down form of dominating power, rather hegemony involves dominant practices and discourses that prioritize and value certain social groups over others. This creates a 'common sense' social consciousness and the consent of the oppressed. From this theoretical position, ideology is analyzed through discourses. Discourses demonstrate particular political and ideological perspectives, and 'the way that people are oppressed within current social structures' (Gee, *Introduction to Discourse Analysis* 1-2; Mills, *Discourse* 118). The 'common sense' ideas created by discourses not only demonstrate the fictional world's ideologies, but also function to maintain social hierarchies.

The analysis of the hegemonic domain of power involves an analysis of how discourses shape 'common sense' ideas regarding social hierarchies. Hegemony establishes a 'common sense' social consciousness concerning the way things are and always have been. According to Gramsci, the feelings of the masses:

> are not the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by "common sense", i.e. by the traditional popular conception of the world. ("Spontaneity and Conscious Leadership" 198-9)

Hegemony is not a set of opinions, but rather defines how the world and reality are understood (Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" 135). Once part of the 'common sense' social consciousness of the people, hegemony does not need to be maintained through force or coercion. Instead, hegemony is maintained through the consent of the masses. In his essay, "Some Aspects on the Southern Question," Gramsci argues that the 'proletariat can become the leading […] and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances' if 'it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses' (173). A system of hegemony is maintained when the 'common sense' perception of the world results in the oppressed consenting to their own oppression. According to Mark C.J. Stoddart, 'consent to systems of domination is produced as people adopt the discourses of class, "race" and gender that circulate' throughout a society (*Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse* 219). Discourses concerning oppressed groups shape how those oppressed groups are understood within the social consciousness, including by those who are oppressed. This results in the oppressed consenting to their own oppression, maintaining social hierarchies.

In Tahereh Mafi's *Furthermore*, the defamiliarization of the institutionally incorporated hierarchies allows an analysis of the ways oppression is justified in the hegemonic domain of power in the fictional world of Ferenwood. The institutional mode of incorporation involves the way a society's modes of material production, known as the 'base,' determines the ideological foundations of said society's institutions, which are a part of the society's 'superstructure.' In Ferenwood, magic is used as the primary mode of material production, making it central for shaping the fictional world's systems of classism and colourism. Magic is used to produce a wide variety of material goods, as the character Oliver explains, 'We turn it into currency.

[…] We build homes, we bake bread, we mend bones. We use magic so carefully you'd think we had none at all' (Mafi 168). Material goods in Ferenwood are not provided in abundance; rather they are limited in a system of classism that directly oppresses Alice, the protagonist:

> Every citizen of Ferenwod was born with a bit of magical talent, but anything more than that cost money, and Alice's family had little extra. Alice herself had never had more than a few finks, and she'd always stared longingly at other children, pockets full of stoppicks, choosing from an array of treats in shop windows. (19)

Finks and stoppicks are forms of currency produced from magic in order to buy material goods also produced from magic, creating Ferenwood's class-based, capitalist economic structure. Marx argues, 'The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness' (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 11). While magic is a natural resource that is harvested from the earth and transformed into usable matter (64), material goods are not freely available because of the way the relations of production constitute an economic structure that justifies colourism in Ferenwood: 'Rainlight was what put the magic in their world; […] it grew their plants and trees and added dimension and vibrance to the explosion of colors they lived in. […] Color, you see, was the universal sign of magic' (25). In a fictional world in which people can have purple or green skin, colour not only functions to signify the abundance and quality of a person's magical talent, but is also used to assume their magical value and position them in Ferenwood's social hierarchy. The social consciousness of Ferenwood has its foundations in the material production of

magic, and the colour-based relations of magical production constitutes a colourist and classist economic structure.

Ferenwood's base, involving harvesting magic and transforming it into usable matter, shapes this fictional world's superstructure, incorporating the hegemonic domain of power through Ferenwood's classist and colourist institutional practices. The institutions of housing, the Surrender and education interlock to justify class and colour-based hierarchies that oppress *Furthermore*'s protagonist, Alice. Alice faces a great deal of oppression in Ferenwood because her skin signifies little magical talent and therefore little social value. Alice's skin is colourless, meaning she 'had no pigment at all. Her hair and skin were white as milk; her heart and soul as soft as silk. Her eyes alone had been spared a spot of honey. It was the kind of child her world could not appreciate' (1). With a base that values colour, the institutions of Ferenwood's superstructure incorporate a social hierarchy based on colour, in turn oppressing Alice for being colourless. The institutions of housing and the Surrender both create and maintain a 'common sense' social consciousness that values a person based on the colour of their skin. The institution of housing emphasizes Ferenwood's valuing of colour: 'the center of town was always a bit of a shock for Alice no matter how many times she'd wandered through […] colors were sharp and bright and endless' (58). With such a clear presence, the value of colour becomes an ideology that is ingrained into the social consciousness at all times, every day. Alice, having no colour, stands out within this setting, marking her as different and of little social value.

The institution of the Surrender also functions to create and maintain a common sense social consciousness that values colour. The Surrender is an important coming of age process that represents an induction into Ferenwood

society: 'At twelve they surrendered themselves and their [magical] gifts and, in return, took on a task—the purpose of which was always to help someone or someplace in need' (81). Children demonstrate their magical abilities and are then ranked based on the strength of their magical talent. The grandest task is given to the child with the highest rank, and with this task comes the highest social respect (78). It is Alice's goal to win the Surrender and gain social respect for the first time in her life (61). But because of her colourless skin, nobody expects Alice to have much magical talent or to do well in her Surrender. Instead, expectations are placed on a more colourful child:

> For Alice-of-little-color, Danyal Rubin was a nightmare. He was the most radiant twelve-year-old she knew […] He had color and he wore it well […] The town was betting on Danyal to win the Surrender this year, because someone so colorful was undoubtedly the most magical. In the hearts of Ferenwood folk, Alice didn't stand a chance. (61)

The common sense social consciousness of Ferenwood places Danyal higher in the social hierarchy than Alice because of his more colourful skin. The Surrender directly functions to rank children, incorporating into Ferenwood society a justification for valuing people based on how colourful their skin is. It is 'common sense' to value colourful people more than colourless people because colourful people do better at the Surrender and are then given more socially valuable tasks. The most important tasks needing completion in Ferenwood and the surrounding countries are all given to and completed by colourful children, justifying the belief that colourful people have the most social value. But for children with little to no colour, this 'common sense' social consciousness justifies their oppression in a system of hegemony. This not only limits their access to social respect, it also

functions to assert their social class: 'Alice had worried all her young life that she'd end up good for nothing but tilling the fields' (64). Winning the Surrender would mean that Alice could access the opportunity to change her social class, while losing it would function to position her near the bottom of Ferenwood's social hierarchy.

The institution of education also functions to create and maintain colourist and classist hierarchies in Ferenwood. While the children of Ferenwood are helped with preparing for their Surrender at school, Alice is expelled from school for responding violently to Oliver when he describes her as 'the ugliest girl in all of Ferenwood' (23-4). Here Oliver employs a common discourse in Ferenwood that treats colour as a signifier not only of social value, but also of beauty. To describe Alice's white features as 'the ugliest' is to assert social discourses that hierarchize the people of Ferenwood based on colour. When Alice is punished and Oliver is not, the institution of education maintains the validity of the discourses Oliver uses against her. Raymond Williams argues that 'The educational institutions are usually the main agencies of the transmission of an effective dominant culture' ("Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" 136). Ferenwood's educational institution transmits a dominant culture that justifies oppression based on skin colour. When Alice is expelled, her working-class single mother is the only person who can prepare her for her Surrender, and so Alice, believing her mother 'didn't seem to care at all' about her success, arrives at her Surrender feeling that 'no one had been around to prepare her for today' (94). Due to the intersections of her colour and class, Alice is at a significant disadvantage at her Surrender, limiting her access to opportunity in Ferenwood.

At Alice's Surrender she demonstrates her consent to her oppression. Alice consciously intends to prove her social worth at her Surrender, but when Alice

performs a dance instead of her magical talent she is not awarded a task at all (102).

Due to the role of magic for material production in Ferenwood's base, the institution

of the Surrender, being an ideological component of Ferenwood's superstructure,

uses magic as a signifier of social value, justifying Alice's low rank and limiting her

access to belonging in her society. By refusing to rank Alice based on her dance, the

institution of the Surrender incorporates into the social hegemony an insistence that

magical talents are the only talents given any social value. While Alice's colourless

skin might suggest that she does not have any magical skills, this is not the case.

Alice not only has magical talent, her magic is incredible powerful. However, Alice

refuses to use her magic, hating it 'Because Alice—no-color Alice—could change

the color of anything and everything but her own colorless self' feeling as if her

magic only 'existed to mock her' (252). As Malin Alkestrand and I argue elsewhere,

Alice's refusal to use her magic at her Surrender 'ultimately demonstrates her

cognitive embodiment of her oppressed intersectional subject position,' and while

Alice consciously believes 'she has social value, she has internalised the ideology

that classifies her colourlessness as a negative attribute' ("A Cognitive Analysis of

Characters" 74).

Alice consents to her oppression by adopting the belief that her colourlessness

lowers her social value, and believing that her colour magic can only be understood

and valued in contrast to her skin. Here colour is valued over magical ability, despite

the necessity of magic in Ferenwood's social structures. While Ferenwood's 'base'

gives foundation to the superstructures' ideologies around magical strength, the way

these systems of oppression intersect with classism and colourism function to make a

very magically gifted individual like Alice consent to the domination of the colourful

and upper-class. The systemic oppression of the working class and colourless in

Ferenwood is here justified by the institutional incorporation of ideologies founded on an economy of material production that places value on colour in a capitalist system.

In Suzanne Collins' *Gregor the Overlander*, the defamiliarization of selective tradition-created hierarchies allows an analysis of the way oppression is justified in The Underland. Raymond Williams defines selective tradition as:

> that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always
>
> passed off as "the tradition", "the significant past". But always the
>
> selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of
>
> past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis,
>
> certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded […]
>
> reinterpreted, diluted or put into forms which support or at least do not
>
> contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture. ("Base
>
> and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" 136)

The selective tradition uses a particular interpretation of history to justify the dominance of the society's practices, meanings and values, thereby creating a hegemonic domain of power. In Collins' text, the human characters use selective tradition to create a social hierarchy in which they are more dominant than the crawlers (giant, sentient cockroaches) of The Underland. The humans remember history in terms of their own strength and innovation, selectively neglecting the long history of the crawlers. This is best exemplified when the crawlers refuse to join Gregor's quest for fear of angering the king of the rats, King Gorger (Collins 155). The humans are angry, especially Henry, who argues that the crawlers 'are the stupidest creatures in the Underland' (156). Henry is rebuked by the older, wiser Vikus, who says, 'Remember you, when Sandwhich [founder of the human society

in the Underland] arrived in the Underland the crawlers had been there for countless generations. No doubt they will remain when all thought of warm blood has passed' to which Henry dismissively responds with 'That is a rumor' (157). It comes as a great surprise to Henry when Gregor says, 'Cockroaches have been around, like, three hundred and fifty million years, and people haven't even been here six' (157). The history of the Underland is selectively reinterpreted so that fact is remembered as rumour, and the longevity of the crawlers does not outweigh the strength of the humans. In the present of the Underland, then, dominant practices and discourses prioritize and value the individual strength of each individual over collective longevity, in turn resulting in an oppressive social hierarchy in which humans and flyers (bats) are at the top, then spinners (spiders), with crawlers at the bottom. Gnawers (rats) are enemies of humans and outside this social hierarchy, though they are understood as incredibly strong and dangerous.

The reinterpreted history of Underland as a selective tradition achieves 'common sense' through social practices and discourses. The discourses of the humans demonstrate the social value of individual strength. While human characters boast of their physical prowess and fighting abilities (42), they also often comment on how weak crawlers are. For example, in one scene Henry and Luxa joke that the only use a crawler would have in battle is as something to throw at their enemies (67). Social practices prioritize the strong and exclude the weak in dramatic ways. In a scene in which the questers sit together for a meal, the crawlers sit away from the humans. When Gregor's toddler sister, Boots, invites the two crawlers, Temp and Tick, to join them it creates 'An awkward social moment. No one else had thought to invite the roaches. Mareth had not prepared enough food. Clearly it wasn't standard to dine with roaches' (154). This practice of excluding crawlers is part of a greater

discourse about which social groups have value; only the strong are prioritized in the Underland's social hierarchy. While the humans maintain their consent to a system that values individual strength over the larger group needs, 'Boots, rejecting social hierarchies, uses food to not only include the crawlers in the team, but to break down the Underland's hierarchy within the group and instead establish a team of equals' (Owen, "Feminist Revisions" n.p.)

While human practices and discourses privilege individual strength, crawlers prioritize collective longevity. The dominance of collaboration as a tactic in the practices of the crawlers emphasizes how the dominance of *individual* strength in the practices and discourses of the humans creates an oppressive social hierarchy. In more than one instance, crawlers risk the few in order for the many to survive. The crawlers' alternative dominant practice allows for each individual crawler to be physically weak and poor at fighting, placing value instead on their role in protecting the larger group and resulting in their species surviving longer than any other. This practice is best exemplified when the questers are being chased by rats across a bridge. Temp, Tick and Boots are the slowest questers and are at the back of the group when the rats catch up to them. While the first questers to get off the bridge begin to cut the bridge down in an attempt to kill the rats, Temp carries Boots across the bridge while Tick 'turned to face down the army of rats alone.' In order to protect the whole group, 'Tick flew directly into the face of the lead rat, causing it to startle back in surprise […] The lead rat sprang forward and crushed Tick's head in its jaws.' While Tick does not have the physical strength to fight even one rat, Tick does manage to slow the rats down enough to save the others: 'Temp collapsed on the bank just as the bridge gave way. Twenty rats, the leader still holding Tick in its teeth, plunged to the river below' (246-7). The sacrificing of oneself for the larger

group is not a dominant value among the humans of the Underland and thus does not create a 'common sense' idea of the fictional world that positions the collaborative as higher in the social hierarchy than the independent. Tick's sacrifice emphasizes how unfair and problematic the humans' justifications for their social hierarchies are by giving evidence to the significant values of those considered less valuable in a system of hegemony.

The third mode of incorporation that creates the hegemonic domain of power is alliance building. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe explain alliance building in relation to colonialism:

> a relation of equivalence absorbing all the positive determinations of the colonizer in opposition to the colonized, does not create a system of positive differential positions between the two, simply because it dissolves all positivity: the colonizer is discursively constructed as the anti-colonized. (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 128)

This discursive construction of identity is also known as 'Othering.' Simone de Beauvoir argues, 'it is not the Other who, defining itself as Other, defines the One; the Other is posited as Other by the One positing itself as One' (*The Second Sex* 27). She explains this with the example of the historical discursive construction of the woman, arguing:

> Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being […] she is nothing other than what man decides […] He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other. (de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 26)

Subject and Other thus exist within a discursive duality; a binary that is, of course, complicated by intersectionality, but exists within dominant social discourses nonetheless.

Social hierarchies are defamiliarized in R.J. Anderson's *A Pocket Full of Murder*, in which alliance building creates social hierarchies through the discursive construction of the Self and Other. In the magical city of Tarreton there are two major religious groups: the Unifying Church and the Moshites. The Unifying Church was established when the various sects of the working class rebelled against the wealthy and demanded the right to practice Common Magic. The right to practice Common Magic was granted on the condition that these rebelling sects join together and become the Unifying Church. This is something one sect, the Moshites, refused to do, subsequently resulting in their oppression (Anderson 68-9). According to Varela, Dhawan and Engel, 'alliances are made by discursively creating similarities and effecting "chains of equivalence" between heterogeneous groups' ("Hegemony and Heteronormativity" 6). The different sects of the working class joining together into the Unifying Church creates an equivalence between heterogenous groups. Within this alliance, membership of the Unifying Church discursively constructs the Self. This has severe consequences for the Moshites. As de Beauvoir argues, 'No group ever defines itself as One [Self] without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself' (*The Second Sex* 26). In the definition of the Self, she argues, 'a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object' (de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 27). The identity of the members of the Unifying Church as Subject is discursively constructed in opposition to the discursive construction of the Moshite identity, in turn treating the

Moshites as less-than. This creates a social hierarchy in which the Sagelords and wealthy nobles of the Arcan race are at the top of the social hierarchy, then the working class members of the Unifying Church, and finally the deeply impoverished Moshites are lowest in the social hierarchy.

Social hierarchies in Tarreton are maintained through the discursive construction of the Self as one who consents to the system of hegemony. The discursive construction of the Other functions within the social consciousness to distrust and fear the Othered group. The Self is discursively constructed as morally superior to the Other through the Self's discursive construction as anti-Other. In this way, the identity of a Unifying Church member is discursively constructed as anti-Moshite. The Moshite are often referred to derogatorily, most commonly as 'dissenters' (68). This term constructs the Moshite as those who disagree not only with popular opinion, but also with authority. The latter connotation is reinforced when a wealthy woman, upon hearing that the police are 'arresting anyone who even looks like a dissenter' responds with 'Someone's got to protect us from the radicals' (153). Moshite difference is understood as criminally dangerous to the social order, leading to the commonly held belief that Moshites are 'troublemakers' (115). To be Unifying, then, is not only to conform to popular opinions and respect authority (as the name would suggest), but also involves maintaining the peace. This discursive construction of the Self as peaceful not only works against the rebellious history of this religion, but also functions to maintain the consent of the oppressed to the social hierarchy. The working class members of the Unifying Church consent to their working class position beneath the wealthier Sagelords and nobles because their identities as anti-Moshite require them to maintain the current social hierarchy. To resist oppressive social hierarchies would be to dissent from a unified society.

A Pocket Full of Murder defamiliarizes the oppressive hierarchies of the hegemonic domain of power through its emphasis of the ways the discursive construction of the Other are inaccurate and unfair. Moshites are discursively constructed in a way that does not accurately reflect their values or behaviour, but rather functions to support social hierarchies. When a member of the Unifying Church says to the protagonist, a Moshite named Isaveth, 'We're respectable folk, and we don't want any trouble' she is also saying that to be Unifying is to be anti-Moshite, to not dissent, be a radical or be a troublemaker (30). This is based on the discursive construction of what it means to be Moshite, rather than actual Moshite beaviour, as Isaveth and other Moshites live in a way that strives to keep the peace (22). According to Richard Jenkins, in a system of oppression the definition of the Other is an 'imposition, by one set of actors on another, of a name and/or characterization that the categorized do not recognize, which affects in significant ways their social experience(s)' (*Rethinking Ethnicity* 55). The members of the Unifying Church impose the discursive construction of Moshites as Other in a way that does not need to be based in fact. Those outside of the social alliance are unable to discursively construct themselves, and so their identities can be constructed in ways that do not align with their actual values or behaviour. With Isaveth as the text's protagonist, a caring and kind girl working hard to take care of her sisters and prove her father has been wrongly accused of murder, the text emphasizes that Moshites are not a homogenous group strictly made up of radicals and troublemakers, in turn defamiliarizing the hegemonic domain of power and demonstrating the harms of justifying oppression.

The defamiliarization of social hierarchies in the fictional worlds of fantastika literature allows for an analysis of the ways oppression is justified by the hegemonic

domain of power. In Mafi's *Furthermore*, the class and colour-based hierarchies are created and maintained by the way Ferenwood's base of magical production gives ideological foundation to this fictional world's superstructures. In Collins' *Gregor the Overlander*, the inter-species social hierarchy allows for an analysis of the ways selective tradition prioritizes a narrow view of history that allows for the discursive construction of certain groups as superior to others. In Anderson's *A Pocket Full of Murder*, the intersectional hierarchy of race, class and religion demonstrates how alliance building functions to define the Self as superior to an inaccurately discursively constructed Other. In each case, the discursive construction of those low in the social hierarchy are unfair, biased and/or inaccurate. Through the defamiliarization of social hierarchies, the analysis of the hegemonic domain of power allows for an analysis of how systems of oppression are justified in fictional worlds.

The Hegemonic Domain of Power—Part Two: Exclusion

The defamiliarization of social exclusion allows for a further analysis of the specific ways oppression is justified in the hegemonic domain of power of fictional worlds. The hegemonic domain of power does not only involve social hierarchies. There are social groups that are excluded from social hierarchies altogether. Outside of social consciousness, these groups are not even permitted existence within social discourses and practices. Gramsci calls them the subaltern, originally conceived as unorganized peasantry with no political consciousness, unable to ever become the dominant group within a system of hegemony ("Some Theoretical and Practical Aspects of 'Economism'" 210-11). Theories of the subaltern, which Ratna Kapur defines more broadly as the 'peripheral subject' (*Erotic Justice* 3), have since

developed to include other voiceless and erased non-normative social groups. The untouchable, unthinkable and unmentionable has been the subject of study within multiple fields of oppression, including postcolonial, queer and disability studies.

In this section I analyze the subaltern in Frances Hardinge's *Gullstruck Island* (UK 2009). I then move into theories of normativity from both queer and disability perspectives. I begin with an analysis of heteronormativity in Joan Lennon's *Questors* (UK 2007) and then I consider the disability theory of 'unthought' in Helena Duggan's *A Place Called Perfect* (Ireland 2017). I bring these two together in a study of normativity and fictional social groups in Tui T. Sutherland's *Wings of Fire: The Dragonet Prophecy* (USA 2012). In each case I demonstrate how the different theories of exclusion from different disciplines can be applied to the analysis of the hegemonic domain of power in the fictional worlds of children's fantastika literature.

The representation of the subaltern in Frances Hardinge's *Gullstruck Island* allows for an analysis of how the exclusion of the Lace is justified on Gullstruck Island. *Gullstruck Island* is about two Indigenous girls, Arilou and Hathin, who, while on the run during the genocide of their people, the Lace, discover how the island's Lost, people who can leave their bodies in order to meet a variety of social needs, were all assassinated at once. In this novel, the Lace are constructed as subaltern. Like the Other, the subaltern is 'defined as a difference from the elite' and 'cannot speak' meaning, they do not have a voice in society (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" 285, 308). Unlike the Other, 'everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern' (Spivak, "Interview" 45). While the Other may be voiceless, unable to access the ability to discursively construct their own identity, the subaltern are also unable to access any other parts of society. The

Other is defined through social discourses; Homi Bhabha argues that social power relations work to define the subaltern as oppressed ("Unsatisfied" 50). In *Gullstruck Island*, the non-Lace believe that the subaltern Lace suffer, go hungry, go missing and are killed by natural disasters because the Lace treat their dead differently than the colonial power, the Cavalcaste. While almost everyone on the island follows Cavalcaste traditions (Hardinge 23), the Lace do not. The Lace do not keep the ashes of their dead in special urns, but rather '*They let the spirits of their dead be torn apart on the winds so they have no ancestors to protect them or give them good luck. They bring everything on themselves*' (46, italics in original). Here the Lace are not just discursively constructed in a way that justifies their exclusion, their exclusion is also tied to their inability to meet the ideologies of the cultural imperialism that dictate how the dead are to be treated.

The Lace are excluded from the island's society after the island is colonized by the Cavalcaste. The Cavalcaste establish their own government, and with it 'a hearty dread of changing or discarding laws, for fear of annoying the ancestors who had invented them' resulting in laws that are often irrelevant to the issues faced on Gullstruck Island, but which also prioritize Cavalcaste traditions and needs, excluding the needs of the indigenous peoples (26). The Cavalcaste religious traditions regarding the treatment of the dead involve placing the urns carrying one's ancestors' ashes in the best places, including the centre of cities (179). As generations die, the land is slowly overtaken by the ash-filled urns of the dead, overflowing into peoples' homes until those people have to move and build new homes further away (179). This results in a disregarding of the indigenous Lace tribe's religious beliefs for the use of particular lands. For example, when the Lace advise the Cavalcaste never 'to build their towns in the Wailing Way, the river valley

between the King of Fans and his fellow volcano Spearhead, for the two volcanos were rivals for the affection of Sorrow [another volcano], and might some day rush together to continue their fight' the Cavalcaste decide to build a great town in the Wailing Way anyway (10). When the Lace sacrifice members of this town to the volcanoes in the hopes of keeping the volcanoes happy and sleepy, in turn hoping to keep the majority of people safe, the Cavalcaste punish the Lace by burning their towns, slaughtering their priests, pushing the Lace to live on the Western coast of the island, and purging the Lace of their Lost (10-11, 6). The Lost are people with the ability to extend their senses beyond their bodies. The Lost meet several social needs, including: communication across the island (81), finding those who are missing (88), warning people of coming storms (88), acting as security, surveilling and helping to apprehend criminals (170), enabling merchants to bargain fairly (170), and drawing maps (302). Pushed to the margins of Gullstruck Island and deprived of the Lost that allow the Lace to communicate with the rest of the island, the Lace are excluded from the rest of the island's society.

The Lace are not trusted by the other people on Gullstruck Island. The island is primarily populated by the mestizo 'blood-soup, a mix of the old tribes […] and the Cavalcaste […] The Lace were an exception, remaining desperately, stubbornly, painfully distinct' (24-5). Within social consciousness, the Lace are the only group separate from the rest of the island and are discursively constructed as dangerous. This construction makes the Lace an easy target for violence. In one scene, a non-Lace man jokingly says to the protagonist, Hathin, 'You, miss, come feed mountain, yes?' (31). While Hathin knows this is a joke, she also knows it comes with centuries of distrust and she fears this will lead to sharper remarks, and, eventually, her unjust imprisonment. When the Lost are all killed on Gullstruck Island, the distrust of the

Lace in the social consciousness makes them an easy group to blame for the death of

the Lost. Hathin and her sister Arilou barely escape an attacking mob with their

lives, and their entire village is killed. The Lace are no longer legally considered

people, justifying their genocide (172). The non-Lace people of Gullstruck Island

readily believe the lie that the Lace killed the Lost (246), and allow for the Lace to

be rounded up and forced into 'safe farms' where 'the greater population will be safe

from them and vice versa' (375). Hathin finds herself surprised at how willingly the

ordinary people of Gullstruck Island are able to believe the lie that the Lace killed

the Lost, and how readily they are to deliver the Lace to the 'safe farms' (246). The

'safe farms' can be understood as prisoner or internment camps. No one believes the

Lace, and no one can advocate for them to the law. The oppression of the subaltern

Lace is the direct result of their social exclusion, leading to their dehumanization

both within the law and social consciousness.

Theories of the subaltern have primarily been applied to the colonized subject.

Kapur extends this analysis to what she terms the 'sexual subaltern,' those who are

oppressed because of the nature of their sexuality (*Erotic Justice* 3). This idea, which

has failed to gain popularity, can be better understood through queer theory's concept

of heteronormativity. Coined by Michael Warner, heteronormativity is a system of

oppression that insists that cisgender and heterosexual identities are the only options

for gender and sexuality identities. 'It testifies to the depth of the culture's assurance

(read: insistence) that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous' (Warner,

"Introduction" xxiii). While heteronormativity is often misunderstood as a theory of

evaluative standards for sexual orientations, this is not at all the case. Instead, there

is an 'assumption that this group [queer people], far from constituting one status

among many, *does not or should not exist*' (Warner, "Introduction" xxv, emphasis

added). Queer people do not have a low social status among other gender and sexual identities, rather they are excluded from the social hierarchy altogether. To be queer is not an option within the social consciousness whatsoever. Within a system of heteronormativity 'there are only two sex categories for people, and that people of the opposite sex should desire each other; to do otherwise is considered deviant' (Scholz, "The Possibility of Quantitative Queer Psychology" 239). There is a discourse here pertaining to morality, and the acceptability of the existence of a particular social group. This form of social exclusion pertains to which social groups exist within the social consciousness, and which are not permitted to exist at all for fear of moral deviance.

The defamiliarized queer identity in Joan Lennon's *Questors* allows for an analysis of how queerness is non-existent within a heteronormative social consciousness. In this novel, the planets of Trentor, Kir and Dalrodia are all in close proximity to one another and the people of each planet are aware of the existence of the other planets. However, there is little to no interaction between the people of the other planets, so when three children, each from a different planet, meet, they have very little knowledge of one another's worlds. Madlen and Cam have no idea that Bryn's world of Kir has dragons, and Madlen and Bryn are ignorant to the fact that on Dalrodia children do not have genders. So after the three of them have met, Bryn asks Cam, 'I'm not sure how to say this tactfully, but I've known you for, what, *hours*, right, and I *still* can't tell […] are you my brother or my sister?' (Lennon 26, italics in original). When Cam replies, 'I'm neither' Madlen makes a 'choking noise' and Bryn responds, frustrated, with, 'No, you don't get the question […] I know this must sound really, really stupid, but — I don't know what sex you are. You know, boy or girl, pink or blue, that sort of thing. To be honest, I really can't tell' (26).

When Cam explains that they cannot have a gender because they are only eleven, the other two respond in unison with, '*What are you talking about?!?*' (26, italics and punctuation in original). In this scene Madlen and Bryn demonstrate cognitive dissonance to the idea of genderless identity, which does not fit within the heteronormative systems of the planets Trentor and Kir. While Cam is not oppressed on their planet of Dalrodia, on Trentor and Kir, 'A person who is neither man nor woman is rendered unintelligible' (Scholz, "The Possibility of Quantitative Queer Psychology" 239). Cam's identity does not exist within the social consciousness of those from Trentor and Kir, resulting in Madlen and Bryn initially finding Cam strange to the point of shocking. The heteronormativity of Madlen and Bryn's worlds, and their cultural ignorance of Cam's world, justifies the exclusion of queer people from their social consciousness and their intense reaction to learning of a social group once unknown to them.

In disability studies, Fiona Kumari Campbell uses the term 'unthought' similarly to queer theory's heteronormativity. Unthought maintains a system of ableism through the exclusion of disability from the social consciousness due to disability's resemblance to human imperfection (Campbell, *Contours of Ableism* 13). Bill Hughes explains this fear of human imperfection further, arguing, 'the [human] body of ableism is a normative construct, an invulnerable ideal of being' that embraces the possibility of perfection as normative, and rejects variation and mortality ("Civilizing Modernity" 22). Any impairment or 'defect' works against this normative understanding of the human body as perfect and immortal, creating a sense of both existential fear and disgust. The 'civilized' normative body is the 'standard of judgement against which disabled bodies are invalidated and transformed into repellent objects […] Through ableism […] disability [has been

structured] as uncivilised, outside or on the margins of humanity' (Hughes,

"Civilizing Modernity" 22). Within social discourses and consciousness, disability

and disabled people are not permitted existence, and human is synonymous with an

unachievable conception of able-bodiedness. Disabled people are not erased

exclusively through exclusion in physical spaces, but also through ableist discourses

that define normalcy, normalisation and humanness (Campbell, *Contours of Ableism*

14). The unthought of ableism is concerned with one's own imperfections, and

excludes those who remind one of this.

The oppression of the imperfect by the perfect in Helena Duggan's Weird

fiction novel, *A Place Called Perfect*, defamiliarizes social exclusion, allowing for

an analysis of the mechanisms and consequences of ableist unthought. In the town of

Perfect, drugs and technology are used to alter people's behaviour and perception of

the world in order to make them 'perfect.' Drugged tea changes people's behaviour

to follow rules and behave in a polite manner, special glasses make everything seem

more neat and beautiful, and secret vacuums remove imagination in order to make

people more compliant. The drugs and technology in this text function to enforce

social homogeneity at a high-quality standard. Those who the drugs and technology

do not work on are unable to meet this high-quality standard and conform to social

homogeneity. The imperfect are segregated to a walled slum in the centre of town,

and the perfect come to forget their existence. This is similar to the construction of

civilized society, as Hughes explains:

> civilising tendencies must be marked by clear corporeal prohibitions and
>
> that certain categories of bodies/minds must be removed from polite
>
> society so that it can realise the hygienic utopia inscribed in the civilising
>
> process. The punitive norm embodied in the hegemonic drive towards an

homogeneous and hygienic culture demands many sacrifices.

("Civilising Modernity" 26)

The perfect of Perfect are not actually perfect. The use of drugs and technology to 'create' the perfect emphasizes the unreasonableness of rejecting the imperfect, and the dangers of discursively constructing normalcy and humanness at an unachievable standard.

In the town of Perfect, the perfect discursively construct perfection through standards of health, civility and obedience. There is no space in the social consciousness for an acceptable level of imperfection. The perfect believe that they are the 'healthiest' in the world (Duggan 37), and exclusively understand rules as strict (60). Those who are unhealthy or uncivil are a threat to the safety and longevity of the perfect. When Violet moves to Perfect, she must take an assessment to ensure she does not have any 'defects,' 'problems' or 'afflictions' that might burden her (55-6). After Violet takes the strange assessment she is diagnosed with 'Irritable Dysfunctional Disobedient Child Syndrome' (64). Here Violet's 'imperfect' disobedience is understood to be directly caused by her 'imperfect' health. Violet must take special medicine in order to achieve her full potential, medicine that functions as a stronger drug than is in the tea (79). Violet is discursively constructed as imperfect because of her syndrome, but this is not actually the case. Violet does not have a syndrome, she is not unhealthy and she is not especially disobedient. The imperfect are those that the drugs and technology do not work on. Just as 'Elimination and/or correction have been the primary social response to disabled people' (Hughes, "Civilising Modernity" 17), so too do those in Perfect try to correct imperfections or eliminate the imperfect from their society altogether. Segregated to the walled slum of No-Man's-Land, the imperfect are literally removed from Perfect.

Through the power of the drugged tea, the Perfect come to literally forget the existence of their imperfect relatives. This literalization of ableist unthought results in the exclusion of the imperfect, defamiliarizing social exclusion and emphasizing the impracticality and harms of unreasonable standards for health, civility and obedience within social consciousness that function to justify the oppression of disabled people.

The theories of heteronormativity and unthought can also be applied to non-mimetic subject positions within fictional worlds, defamiliarizing excluded social groups within the hegemonic domain of power. In the Sky Kingdom on the island of Pyrrhia in Tui T. Sutherland's *Wings of Fire: The Dragonet Prophecy*, only strong and violent dragons can exist within the social consciousness. Just as in a system of heteronormativity in which heterosexual people are deemed normal and natural (Martin, "Normalizing Heterosexuality" 190), in the Sky Kingdom of Pyrrhia, all dragons are considered to be naturally violent. Dragons who demonstrate loyalty or sacrificial heroism are considered strange and unnatural. The protagonists' story begins with Kestral, a SkyWing dragon, training the protagonist, Clay, a MudWing dragon, how to fight. Kestral is frustrated with Clay's poor fighting abilities, saying to him to 'Stop holding back! Find the killer inside you and let it out' (Sutherland 2). Within the SkyWing's context, Kestral believes that Clay, being a fellow dragon, has a natural killing instinct. Kestral uses this as justification for physically harming Clay during training and failing him at the end of the day (6). Kestral is not the only SkyWing to hold this belief, Queen Scarlet of the SkyWings later tells Clay, 'Fighting comes naturally to us [dragons]' (150). Peril, another SkyWing, argues, 'Dragons kill each other all the time [...] That's how we are' to which Clay responds with 'That's not how I am' (236).

Clay's lack of a killer instinct constructs him as an unnatural kind of dragon that does not exist within the social consciousness of the dragons of the Sky Kingdom. He is consistently expected to be something he cannot be, and is frequently mistreated when he cannot meet the social expectations of his fictional world's system of normativity. While Clay comes to proclaim proudly that he lacks a killer identity, the adult dragons he encounters inaccurately believe this makes him strange and unnatural. Dune, one of the dragons that raise him, argues 'It's not natural, that much loyalty in a dragon' (54). Later, when two of Clay's friends are thrown into an arena to fight to the death, Clay begs to take the one's place. Queen Scarlet finds this protective nature 'the weirdest thing' (222). However, Clay's loyalty is not actually unnatural for a MudWing dragon. At the end of the book, Clay travels to the Mud Kingdom of the MudWing dragons and learns that MudWing dragons are naturally loyal to the dragons they are born with as a group survival instinct (291). As SkyWings do not have this instinct, MudWing loyalty does not exist within the social consciousness of the Sky Kingdom.

While Clay is a rather typical MudWing, in the Sky Kingdom his loyalty is viewed as strange and unnatural as a dragon because he is not like the normative SkyWing. The social construction of what identities are acceptable is here problematized by the different biologically determined instincts of different dragon species within different social contexts (an inherently problematic construction of fictional species that I interrogate further in Chapter Four). SkyWing social consciousness does not include MudWing identity, and as such, SkyWing social discourses and practices do not allow for MudWing instincts. Because MudWing instincts are not allowed within the Sky Kingdom's social system, Kestral trains Clay how to fight in a way that does not work for him, resulting in Clay failing his

training and being unprepared for the real violence in the outside world. Clay faces a great deal of harm in the Sky Kingdom while simultaneously believing that something is wrong with him. Just like those who are oppressed by a system of heteronormativity, Clay must go through a slow process of self-discovery in order to accept his different MudWing identity.

Clay is not the only dragon harmed by the Sky Kingdom's system of normativity. The normative dragon is strong and violent, and any dragon deemed physically incapable of being strong and violent is socially excluded in the most extreme ways. For example, when the SandWing dragon Dune is hurt fighting in the war, he is no longer able to fly. 'The fact that he couldn't fly was probably why he was chosen for underground dragonet-minding duty. He clearly wasn't picked for his warm, nurturing personality' (Sutherland 31). Dune is excluded from his society and given a job he is not suited for because of his inability to fly. When Queen Scarlet discovers Dune in the underground hideout, she says, "'I mean, what use is a crippled dragon who can't fly? I'm surprised you haven't killed yourself already, SandWing. But I'll take care of that for you." […] Queen Scarlet snapped Dune's neck" (115). In Pyrrhia, any dragon who does not conform to the system of normativity is not only excluded from the rest of society, but is at risk of being murdered. Non-normative dragons are not considered whole or valuable, justifying their exclusion and even murder.

The defamiliarization of social practices of exclusion allows for an analysis of how hegemony justifies the oppression of non-normative social groups. In Hardinge's *Gullstruck Island*, the Lace are excluded as a subaltern group; the text emphasizes how they are unable to access a voice in their society, and how their dehumanization results in their attempted genocide. In Lennon's *Questors,* Duggan's

A Place Called Perfect and Sutherland's *Wings of Fire: The Dragonet Prophecy*,

social consciousness does not allow for the existence of non-normative social

groups. Agender people do not exist in the social consciousness of the people of the

planets of Trentor and Kir, the imperfect do not exist within the social consciousness

of the perfect of Perfect, and loyal and disabled dragons do not exist within the

social consciousness of the SkyWing dragons of the Sky Kingdom. In each case, the

unacceptability of these social groups within the social consciousness of these

fictional worlds not only results in their social exclusion, but also justifies their

oppression within the hegemonic domain of power.

The Interpersonal Domain of Power

The defamiliarization of oppressive interpersonal interactions in fictional

worlds allows for an analysis of the ways oppression influences everyday lived

experience. Hill Collins argues that 'the interpersonal domain functions through

routinized, day-to-day practices of how people treat one another (e.g., micro-level of

social organization). Such practices are systematic, recurrent, and so familiar that

they often go unnoticed' (*Black Feminist Thought* 287). Interactions within the

interpersonal domain of power should not be confused with bullying or a general

disliking between two conflicting characters. Rather, the interpersonal domain of

power functions through interactions that are based in cognitive biases created and

maintained by a system of oppression. As Joe R. Feagin argues about racism:

> The imposition of white social and economic power occurs in everyday
>
> interactions between individuals and between small groups, but it is
>
> always set within the larger system of oppression that constantly asserts

whites' group interests over those of African Americans and other

Americans of color. (*Systemic Racism* 21)

While Feagin here speaks specifically to systemic racism, this theory of oppressive

everyday interactions can be applied to other forms of oppression as well. The

interactions within the interpersonal domain of power do not simply function to

harm, but also to contribute to a larger system of oppression. In a fictional world,

cognitive biases that affect behaviour result in oppressive interpersonal interactions

that are directly related to the specific system of oppression of that world.

Hill Collins' explanation of the interpersonal domain of power as 'routinized,

day-to-day practices' is very similar to the theory of cognitive scripts. David Herman

defines cognitive scripts as 'the knowledge representations that store […] finite

groupings of causally and chronologically ordered actions—actions that are required

for the accomplishment of particular tasks' (*Story Logic* 90). Ian F. Haney López

argues there is a correlation between oppression and cognitive scripts because

oppressive norms have resulted in people acting 'in definable ways without a

consciously formulated purpose, simply because it is "the way it is done"' and thus

'routinized sequences of behavior eventually come to define normalcy, or more

broadly, reality' ("Institutional Racism" 1723). Haney López argues that racial

beliefs 'constitute unconsidered understandings of race-taken-for-granted, [and are]

consistently relied on, and disrupted, if at all, with great difficulty' ("Institutional

Racism" 1717). David Wellman responds directly to Haney López, arguing, 'These

[cognitive] scripts are not hardwired; they are humanly constructed, historically

specific social meanings interpreted by human actors' ("Unconscious Racism" 61).

The social construction of oppressive cognitive scripts is the direct result of

systemic oppression creating cognitive biases. Cognitive biases are subconscious

prejudicial views about different groups of people; it is in the relationship between institutional structures and oppressive cognitive biases that power hierarchies are maintained (Coates, *Covert Racism* 152). While oppressive cognitive biases may be implicit and subconscious, even a single cognitive bias is capable of 'affecting conscious behavior and exists independently of individuals' conscious and explicit beliefs' about equality (Clemons, "Blind Injustice" 689). In a system of oppression, the mind becomes so imbedded with subconscious cognitive biases, such as stereotypes and prejudices, that even well-intentioned people can do harm (Feagin, *Systemic Racism* 215). Oppressive interpersonal interactions are not always intentional, but can be understood as the result of subconscious cognitive biases enacted through cognitive scripts.

The analysis of cognitive scripts can be used as a method for identifying how interactions between characters demonstrate the oppressive cognitive biases that function within the interpersonal domain of power. These interactions can vary widely in subtlety or aggression. As the hegemonic domain of power acts as a link between institutional forms of oppression and the everyday social interactions of the interpersonal domain of power (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 284), I will consider cognitive scripts that demonstrate the three modes of hegemonic incorporation and the two forms of hegemonic exclusion outlined in the first two sections of this chapter. I examine the relationship between cognitive scripts and the institutional mode of incorporation in Stephanie Burgis' *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart* (UK 2017), selective tradition in Zizou Corder's *Lionboy* (UK 2003), alliance building in Diana Wynne Jones' *House of Many Ways* (UK 2008), the subaltern in Brandon Mull's *Beyonders: A World Without Heroes* (USA 2011) and the non-normative in Kathi Appelt's *Keeper* (USA 2010).

In Stephanie Burgis' *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart*, Aventurine's experiences of violence and humiliation are due to a cognitive script that enforces institutionally incorporated classism in the fictional world of Drachenburg. When Aventurine, a dragon, is turned into a human girl, she seeks out the opportunity to pursue her greatest passion: chocolate. While Aventurine has a keen desire to work as a chocolatier, when she enters The Chocolate Cup chocolate shop she is met with nothing but hostility. The host of the shop stops Aventurine from walking far into The Chocolate Cup, bringing into question the likeliness of her having a reservation because of her perceived social class (Burgis 52). When Aventurine expresses her desire to be an apprentice chocolatier, 'he didn't answer [her]. He was laughing too hard. The whole shopful of humans was laughing with him too' (53). The host then proceeds to pick Aventurine up, carry her outside the shop and drop her on the ground: 'I landed hard on my backside in the middle of the dirty, bumpy stone street' (53). Despite Aventurine being physically hurt by this interpersonal interaction, no one pities or helps her, instead she sees 'every human inside [the chocolate shop] rise to their feet, smacking their hands together in applause for the chocolate guard' (54).

When Aventurine goes to a second chocolate shop, the Meckelhof, she is denied an apprenticeship again: 'you're dressed like a beggar and you stink of the streets, […] Making chocolate is an art, not a craft, so chocolatiers can only come from the respectable classes. […] if you're really lucky, someone may take you on as a maid' (55). In both instances the cognitive script is to question Aventurine based on her appearance, refuse her opportunity without a fair chance to prove her worth, and then humiliate and degrade her without remorse. As a dragon with little knowledge of human society, Aventurine's surprise at the mistreatment she faces functions to emphasize the harms of classism. The biased script functions to assert a social

hierarchy in which social class determines the *kind* of work one has access to, with the working class employed in a craft or service position of the society's base and the upper class having the opportunity to create art as a chocolatier in the society's superstructure. These violent, humiliating and degrading interpersonal interactions function to influence Aventurine's everyday experience as an oppressed member of Drachenburg's working class.

In Zizou Corder's *Lionboy*, the pointing out of Charlie's race is a cognitive script that emphasizes his difference from what is perceived as 'normal' within a selective tradition that understands English people as exclusively white. When characters meet Charlie their reaction is often to point out that he is African, the relevance of which, especially within a fictional world set in the future, Charlie does not understand (Corder 62-3). When Charlie is introduced to another Black character, he is told, 'He is African like you' to which Charlie thinks, 'He may be African […] but he is not like me' (78). This drawing attention to Charlie's race functions as a microaggression. Microaggressions can be understood as 'commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups' (Nadal, "Preventing Racial" 23). The pointing out of Charlie's race is a commonplace behaviour that communicates an acknowledgement of Charlie's difference, his non-whiteness, identifying how he does not meet the norm within a selective tradition within the social consciousness of his society. This is further confirmed when Charlie is asked where he is from: his answer 'London' receives the response, 'London people are white […] Where is your brown skin from?' (99). Charlie's answer of 'My brown skin is from London like the rest of me' does not satisfy the questioner (99). Here, Charlie experiences

both a pointing out of his difference, and a questioning of its origin. At issue here is Charlie and his ancestors' history, and their right to exist in a particular time and place. Within a selective tradition, only white people are remembered as legitimate citizens of England. Black people like Charlie are selectively forgotten from this understanding of 'London people.' There is a cognitive bias against people of colour that results in Charlie being understood as African more so than English. The oppressive interpersonal interactions he experiences demonstrate a cognitive bias that prioritizes the history of white people over people of colour, in turn influencing Charlie's every day lived experience as a person of colour.

In Diana Wynne Jones' *House of Many Ways*, Charmaine's cognitive scripts are of either trust or fear and are based on how normatively human-looking a creature is, demonstrating Charmaine's alliance building in the fictional world of High Norland. Charmaine is not afraid of anyone who appears human like, and she is nothing but polite when she meets her uncle the wizard (Jones 20), the elves (21, 237), the king and princess (133), and Sophie (146). However, when Charmaine meets non-humanlike creatures, she is immediately distrustful and afraid of them. There is an alliance between the human and humanlike that establishes a cognitive bias against the non-humanlike. This results in an oppressive cognitive script of mistreating the Other. For example, when Charmaine first meets a lubbock she takes a nervous sideways step away from it, then decides she does not like it while questioning what it is, and, unable to look at its features, she looks away (53). This is all before Charmaine knows that she is meeting a lubbock, and once she learns this fact, she reacts exactly in the manner she has been taught to deal with the lubbockin: behaving very politely so as to avoid being eaten (54). Later, when she meets a kobold, she flinches, nearly screaming, and her panic does not vanish until after she

sees that the kobold has a human-like face (56-7). There is a cognitive bias here that enables Charmaine to assume that humans and human-like creatures are safe and deserve respect; but the more non-human a creature is, the more they should be treated with caution. This bias is supported by the text when Charmaine learns that Prince Ludovic is a lubbockin attempting to take over the country. Thanks to Charmaine's oppressive biases, her immediate response is to distrust Prince Ludovic and to call on the aid of a fire demon to stop him (243-6). Charmaine's assumption about characters based on their human likeness shapes all of Charmaine's interactions with others, demonstrating her cognitive biases to privilege the humanlike in a social system that Others the non-human. The text's assertion that Charmaine is right to have these biases, because it enables her to instinctively distrust the dangerous Prince Ludovic, risks asserting the validity of cognitive biases and systemic oppression in the real world.

In Brandon Mull's *Beyonders: A World Without Heroes*, intentional silencing functions to enforce the subaltern position of women in the land of Lyrian. When Jason and Rachel go to a Tavern and are served food by a man named Kerny, Kerny asks them how they are enjoying their meal. When Rachel answers that the food is delicious, 'Kerny gave Jason an awkward glance, as if surprised Rachel had spoken first' (Mull 160). Later, in private, Rachel says to Jason, 'I know it isn't your fault, but I didn't like how I was treated in the tavern. People acted like I didn't exist' (164). In this scene, Kerny's cognitive script of being immediately surprised by Rachel speaking, and looking to Jason to clarify this behaviour, demonstrates the exclusion of women's voices from public spaces. The cognitive bias here is against women, resulting in the belief that women do not speak, and that men have a voice over women. In Rachel's acting against this expectation, Kerny reasserts the social

exclusion of women in his surprise and behaviour. In this interpersonal interaction, the cognitive bias against women reinforces social hegemony and the positioning of women as subaltern.

In Kathi Appelt's *Keeper*, the impermissibility of certain romantic pairings functions as part of a system of normativity among the merpeople of this text. When Henri, a human boy, meets Jack, a merman temporarily turned human, Henri immediately feels 'bedazzled' because 'Henri had never seen anyone like him, never seen a face as beautiful as his' (Appelt 224). The two boys meet 'Night after night' until one day 'Henri reached over and took Jack's hand. Jack wrapped his own fingers between Henri's' (224, 226). Soon after falling in love, the boys meet a mermaid turned 'old sea wife' who bars them from being in a romantic relationship, stating sternly to Jack, 'He'd not be your kind' (228). For the 'old sea wife,' the issue here is that the two boys are of different species, and her verbal critique of their relationship functions to exclude inter-species relationships in this text's fictional world. Cognitive biases against non-normative people and relationships may result in cognitive scripts that work to limit or end this perceived deviance. Henri and Jack are separated and are unable to be together again until they are both old: 'In the lawn chair next to him [Henri], just as old and wrinkled as he, sat Jack, his eyes as blue as the sky. They held hands, like they did so long ago' (397-8). Henri and Jack are separated from each other their entire lives because of the interpersonal interactions that excluded their non-normative relationship from their everyday lives.

Interpersonal interactions are oppressive when they function to reinforce a larger system of oppression. While all of the above interpersonal interactions are possible in the real world, their taking place in fictional worlds defamiliarizes them, allowing for an analysis of how interpersonal interactions influence the everyday

lived experiences of the oppressed. Burgis' Aventurine is a dragon-turned-human who expects to receive the opportunity to be a chocolatier, and is then surprised when her access to opportunity is denied because of perceived class. Corder's Charlie is tired of having his racial origins questioned in a future that should have made better human rights progress. Jones' Charmaine has cognitive biases against fictional social groups, and these biases influence her interactions with many different kinds of people. Mull's Rachel goes on an important mission in a magical world, only to find herself without a voice among the people she's meant to be saving. And Appelt's Henri and Jack are denied an inter-species relationship in a system of normativity. In each case, oppressive interpersonal interactions are not simply mean or related to negative personal relationships, instead they are each a result of cognitive biases based in the ideologies of a hegemonic system. Systemic oppression shapes cognitive biases that are enacted in oppressive cognitive scripts of varying levels of aggression. Regardless of the damage caused or intention behind oppressive cognitive scripts, they each function within a larger social system of oppression.

Conclusion

The analysis of the representation of systemic oppression in fictional worlds through the hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power involves the specific ways oppression is ideologically justified by hierarchies and exclusions, and influences everyday interactions. In the seven novels analyzed in the hegemonic domain of power, ideology is inherent within social practices and discourses. These practices and discourses come to create a 'common sense' within the social consciousness that determines where social groups are positioned within a social

hierarchy. If social practices and discourses do not include the option for certain social groups to exist within the social consciousness, then the ideologies of these fictional worlds do not permit the inclusion of these social groups—leading to their social exclusion. These ideologies have repercussions on the ways members of a society treat one another. In the five novels analyzed in the interpersonal domain of power, oppressive interactions are distinguished from unkind or personal conflict-based interactions by their association with the hegemonic domain of power in the matrix of domination. In each instance, the ideological justifications and everyday influences of oppression are inherently related, shaping the specific nature of the represented system of oppression in each text.

Part Two

Rhetorical and Narratological Constructions of Systemic Oppression

Chapter Four

Worldbuilding Systemic Speciesism

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that different *kinds* of fictional species are oppressed in different ways in contemporary children's fantastika literature. The construction of systemic speciesism in a fictional world is dependent on the specific philosophy, metaphor and or history used to rhetorically construct the text's fictional species. The term speciesism has here been adopted from its use for real-world animal rights, in which the term refers to 'prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species' (Singer, *Animal Liberation* 6). While this term has been problematically compared to theories of racism and sexism, I employ it here not for real-world animal rights purposes, but for the analysis of the systemic oppression of non-human persons in fictional contexts. In my study, systemic speciesism is defined as systemic oppression based on one's species, be they a fantastic creature, a talking animal, the posthuman, an alien, a spirit or the undead, or a magical human.

Rhetorical constructions of systemic speciesism in contemporary children's fantastika novels are based in literary traditions of worldbuilding. Mark J.P. Wolf argues:

> the fictional cultures of imaginary worlds often have one or more simple
>
> defining features to quickly establish and position them against other
>
> cultures (for example, in the *Star Trek* universe, the image of Klingons as
>
> warriors, Vulcans as logical, Ferengi as businessmen, and so forth).
>
> (*Building Imaginary Worlds* 182)

While Wolf uses the term 'culture,' his examples are of different alien *species*, and his argument points to the tradition of worldbuilding to simplify and homogenize entire social groups. Wolf later describes this process as 'chunking,' a worldbuilding technique that 'chunks' characters into simplified categories (such as race, species, goodness/ villainy, et cetera) in order to 'greatly help the audience to organize and remember world data' ("The Importance of Overflow" 269). The nature of systemic speciesism in fictional worlds is directly related to the ways fictional species are homogenized by the worldbuilding process of chunking. Each kind of species is 'chunked' in accordance to a particular philosophy, metaphor and or history, in turn constructing both species and speciesism in particular ways in contemporary children's fantastika literature.

Yoon Ha Lee critiques the simplification and homogenization of 'chunking' species in fantastika literature in his novel *Dragon Pearl* (USA 2019). Lee's protagonist, Min, is a fox-spirit living on Jinju, an impoverished planet in the Thousand Worlds where there are many different species, including dragon-spirits, tiger-spirits, goblins and humans. Min and her family of fox-spirits live disguised as humans, hiding their true identities because of lasting prejudice against foxes (Lee 4). Within the biologically determinist social beliefs, Foxes are simplified and homogenized as tricksters who lure and kill lonely travelers. When an investigator discovers that Min and her family are foxes, he points out 'how paranoid the local population will become when they realize that anyone they know could be a fox in disguise' (16). After attacking the investigator and fleeing the planet, Min's adventures are full of humans who assert a biologically determinist view of supernatural creatures. In his construction of Min as someone who does not fit how fox-spirits are understood in an oppressive society, Lee's novel works against a

literary tradition of worldbuilding that limits the construction of fictional species with biological determinism.

Just as each system of oppression in the real world, such as racism, patriarchy, and so forth, has its own particular mechanisms, so too does systemic speciesism. When analyzing the systemic oppression of a fictional world, the nature of systemic speciesism cannot be ignored, even if it has no real-world equivalent, because, as Jaques argues:

> children's fantasy animates and gives a voice to a host of imaginary, impossible and real beings so that drawing boundaries between truth and fiction becomes sufficiently challenging as to question a rigidly hegemonic, humanist ontology (*Children's Literature and the Posthuman* 6).

To understand how fictional species in children's fantastika can challenge, question or reinforce real-world systems of oppression, I have distinguished six specific categories of fictional species: fantastic creatures, talking animals, the posthuman, aliens, spirits and the undead, and magical humans. My analysis considers both the rhetorical construction of each category of fictional species, and how this relates to the specific ways each category is oppressed.

The six categories of species I have identified are not mutually exclusive of one another, and do have some overlap. Take, for example, the oppression the robot, ROZZUM 7134, or Roz, experiences in Peter Brown's *The Wild Robot* (USA 2016). Initially, Roz is an outcast on an island of animals, and is rejected as an 'unnatural' 'monster' (Brown 51-2). It is not until Roz takes care of an orphaned gosling and offers a garden to the local animals that she is accepted for her contributions to group survival (81, 98). When other robots arrive on the island, they attack Roz and the

animals in an attempt to take Roz back to the world of humans so she may be sold as a posthuman slave (227). Roz has become a subject that destabilizes the distinctions between wild animal and inorganic machine, and the other robots attempt to take her off the island in an attempt to control her. Roz experiences the forms of oppression for both talking animals and for the posthuman, but she does so by being understood and constructed in different ways by different groups. It is her rhetorical construction, either as unnatural monster or as posthuman, that relates to the way she is oppressed in this fictional world. The worldbuilding of systemic speciesism is thus directly related to the way the oppressed species is rhetorically constructed in the text.

I have broken this chapter into six parts, one for each of the different categories of species I have identified in contemporary children's fantastika literature. The first kind of species that I analyze in this chapter comprises the fantastic creatures, which I argue are limited in their construction as part of a tradition based in myth and folklore which informs their oppression through biological determinism. The second kind of species is talking animals; I examine how evolutionary Darwinism, when applied to an animal society, becomes a system of oppression based in social Darwinism. The third kind of fictional species is the technological posthuman, which includes both the sentient machine and the technologically-altered human; posthuman oppression involves a lack of freedom and or bodily autonomy that emphasizes the tension between generations, and an anxiety about the future. The fourth section analyses aliens; constructed as an Other Self in competition with other species as the superior Self. In the fifth section I consider the ways spirits and the undead are constructed as metaphors for social sins and anxieties, and how the refusal to engage with these sins and anxieties constructs the oppression of spirits

and the undead as subaltern subjects. Finally, the last section of this chapter considers the construction of magical humans such as witches, and how myths and history regarding the oppression of magical people are directly related to their construction as a fictional species.

Fantastic Creatures

Biological determinism informs the systemic oppression of fantastic creatures in contemporary children's fantastika literature. Biological determinism is a pseudo-science that has historically been used to argue that 'individual characteristics are shaped by genetics and thus are firm and fixed for all groups at all times' (Dennis, "Social Darwinism" 249). It is a trope of fantastika literature to rhetorically construct fantastic creatures with immutable characteristics based on their species and shaped by their mythological or folkloric origins, and or their popular usage in the fantasy genre. As Helen Young argues:

> The tendency to link non-physical with physical traits according to
>
> biological descent and thus reproduce racial logics even when there are
>
> no overt references to a particular real-world culture is common in
>
> Sword and Sorcery worlds, as it is in those of High Fantasy. (*Race* 43)

It has become a trope of contemporary children's fantastika literature to employ biological determinism in the worldbuilding of the text's fantastic creatures and the social systems that oppress them. In fictional worlds, biological determinism is used to justify violence against fantastic creatures, shape cultural practices, inform intersectional oppression, and legitimize (for lack of a better term) dehumanization.

There are two traditions that have historically shaped the rhetorical construction of fantastic creatures in children's fantastika literature. First, it has

become a trope of the fantasy genre for the rhetorical construction of any particular species of fantastic creature to be a direct imitation, adaptation or intentional deviation from its original construction. The fantastic creatures of contemporary fantastika literature can be constructed based on any number of original sources, as Mendlesohn and Edward James argue, the fantasy genre as it is known today has its origins in ancient myths, medieval romances, early modern verse and prose, and a wide variety of sagas, folklore, legends, travellers' tales, and fairytales (*A Short History of Fantasy* 7-11). The differing constructions of species between originating sources allows for some variety in the construction of fantastic creatures in contemporary texts, meaning that not every member of a particular species is the same across all works of fantasy fiction, but ultimately the rhetorical construction of a fantastic creature is often a repetition or response to its traditional construction in the genre. Second, just as originating sources homogenized entire species of fantastic creatures, so too do many contemporary works of fantastika literature. In their original myths and folklore, many fantastic creatures were 'convenient pictorial metaphor[s] for human qualities that have to be repudiated, externalized, and defeated, the most important of which are aggression and sexual sadism, that is, id forces' (Gilmore, *Monsters* 4). While originating sources homogenized fantastic species because these species were treated as metaphors, in contemporary fantastika literature this homogenization is a frequent worldbuilding technique that inherently results in the construction of biological determinism.

When entire species are rhetorically constructed as a homogenized group, biological determinism can be used to justify systemic speciesism. The dwarves in Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black's *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (USA 2003-4) are rhetorically constructed as greedy thieves obsessed with iron who all want to take the

world from humans. As the Lord Korting, leader of the dwarves, explains,

'Mulgarath [the ogre] will […] strip the land bare for us and then we will build a

glorious new forest of ironwood trees. We will rebuild the world in silver and copper

and iron' (DiTerlizzi and Black, *The Ironwood Tree* 340). The dwarves of this text

are rhetorically constructed as a homogenized group that share many similarities to

the treacherous and thieving Swart Alfs of Nordic folklore (Gundarsson, *Elves,*

Wights and Trolls 72-4). While the dwarves place their hopes in the ogre Mulgarath,

instead Mulgarath betrays them, commanding his goblins to enact a genocide against

the dwarves, killing them all (375). Mulgarath later explains in *The Wrath of*

Mulgarath that he killed the dwarves because 'They had their own little dream of a

world built of iron and gold. But what fun would it be to rule a world like that? No, I

want a world of flesh and blood and bone' (473). Mulgarath believes that all dwarves

are the same and want the same thing. Believing that the world he wants is superior

to the world all of the dwarves wanted, Mulgarath is able to validate ogre superiority

over dwarves. His homogenized understanding of the dwarves is used to justify their

genocide. While the text's focus is on Mulgarath's cruelty, rather than on the harms

of biological determinism, the systemic speciesism that results in the genocide of the

dwarves is directly related to their rhetorical construction as a homogenized group.

In some fictional worlds, biological determinism is used to establish social

norms and construct social hierarchies based on the meeting of these norms. In Chris

D'Lacey's *The Erth Dragons: The Wearle* (UK 2015), the social hierarchy of the

dragons is based directly on the construction of dragons in Western myth. In Western

mythology, the dragon is often 'a metaphor for sin' (Gilmore, *Monsters* 162),

specifically as 'an exteriorization of the vices of greed, pride, and presumption'

(Waterhouse, "*Beowulf* as Palimpsest" 31). David E. Jones argues that the dragon

entered human consciousness as 'a composite predator beast' a combination of snakes, raptors and cats, three animals that have had a predator/prey relationship with primates for millions of years (*An Instinct for Dragons* 55). Furthermore, the dragon is an apex predator with an excess of aggression and physical strength. In Chris D'Lacey's text, the Wearle are constructed as greedy, proud and presumptuous, and those at the top of the social hierarchy are those who are the most aggressive and or physically superior. For example, the Veng are a class of dragon high in the social hierarchy: 'It was a general truth that dragons feared nothing except themselves, but if there was one class they cared not to cross, it was the Veng' because 'One only had to look at their ferocious horns or count the battle stigs rising from the backs of their heads to know how intimidating they could be' (D'Lacey 24-5). The Veng are respected not only because they are feared, but because they best fit the definition of the homogenized dragon. The protagonist Gabriel, on the other hand, is low in the social hierarchy and is given little respect. When Grendel admits to Gossana that she is in love with Gabriel because he is gentle, Gossana laughs at her (111). Gabriel is also institutionally limited in his access to courting Grendel because he is a sweeper, 'the lowest of the low' who keep watch on the edge of the domain (44). Not only is Gabriel gentle, but he is physically small, often having to bank out of the way of larger dragons, who have the right not to move for his sake due to social customs that privilege large dragons (240). While Gabriel is smaller and gentler than most dragons, he is still an apex predator defined by his greed, pride and presumption. There is some variation among the dragons, but ultimately they are homogenized in their rhetorical construction. It is this homogenization that not only validates the dragon social hierarchy, giving justification to the belief that the Veng are

biologically superior, but it also functions to oppress Gabriel as a smaller and gentler dragon.

Like real-world forms of oppression, systemic speciesism does not exist in a vacuum, it also intersects with the other forms of oppression in the text's fictional world. The biological determinism attributed to the species as a whole can have differing oppressive consequences along various intersecting axes of identity. For example, in Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men* (UK 2003), the intersectional oppression of the 'kelda,' oppressed as both pictsies and as women, differs from the oppression of the pictsie men. Drawing assumption from their name, the pictsies are based on pixies and the Picts of Northern Britain. This combination works well, pixies 'are consistently believed to have exuberant energy, have a fondness for song and dance, and are always laughing. […] The threat that a pixie represents, most often, is general mischief, and they are commonly presented as a household pest' ("Pixie" 468), while the picts are known for being mysterious and formidable warriors (Hudson, *The Picts* 2). The pictsies, specifically the Nac Mac Feegle clan, are a high-energy and mysterious group of formidable household pests who love stealing, drinking and most of all fighting (Pratchett 113). The Nac Mac Feegle are homogenized with these traits, and within their culture respect is given to the greatest warriors in a social hierarchy that values fighting skills.

The valuing of fighting skills in a social hierarchy differently affects pictsie men and women. While most of the pictsies are men, the kelda is the mother of her clan, giving birth to hundreds of sons and a sole daughter. Her daughter becomes the kelda of a different clan by marrying a warrior of her choice (144). The Nac Mac Feegle woman cannot stay within her own clan because she cannot marry her own brother, and a warrior from a different clan cannot co-lead the kelda's original clan

because the Nac Mac Feegle men would not respect him (144). The social hierarchy that attributes respect based on fighting skills works to justify women leaving their clan rather than the men, in turn functioning to limit the woman pictsie's autonomy. She must leave her home and her family and move to a new clan where she is expected to marry and give birth to the next generation of her new clan. While the kelda is given a leadership position in her clan, ultimately her value is based on her role as wife and mother in the service of men. The way biological determinism shapes cultural practices results in an intersection of speciesism and patriarchy that places violent men at the top of the social hierarchy and limits the freedoms of pictsie women. Pratchett satirizes this patriarchal system when Tiffany, the human protagonist, is attributed the title of kelda, and she realizes she must marry a Nac Mac Feegle. With a human as their kelda, 'None of them [the Nac Mac Feegle] wanted to marry a big girl like her, even if none of them would admit it. It was just the rules' (158). The rules that dictate marriage practices turn against the Nac Mac Feegle men when they realize they have to marry someone they do not want to; this emphasizes the unfairness of a cultural practice that typically functions to oppress the kelda.

Critiques of systemic speciesism are not necessarily critiques of biological determinism. In William Alexander's *Goblin Secrets* (USA 2012), biological determinism is used to construct the goblins of Zombay, and it is the humans' *misunderstanding* (intentional or not) of goblins that results in their oppression. The humans of the fictional world of Zombay believe that 'Goblins never have a home' because 'the sun finds them out and burns up any building they stay in for longer than a day and a night. […] And they're thieves' who steal 'everything' and 'the smallest child in every family, […] And they eat the children they steal' (Alexander

15). This homogenized understanding of the goblins is similar to how goblins began to be understood in Europe during the Enlightenment, in which goblins 'became synonymous with superstitions fit only to frighten the peasantry. For centuries, the goblin had figured in cautionary tales told to children; it was the bogey-man who would steal and devour them if they misbehaved' ("Goblin" 287). The systemic speciesism of Zombay, grounded in biological determinism, results in goblins losing their citizenship because, as one goblin explains, 'We are not legally considered to be persons' (33). When the protagonist, Rownie, befriends the goblins on his search for his missing brother, he comes to learn how the understanding of goblins within the social consciousness has been skewed to justify their oppression. For example, the goblins are not burned up by the sun if they stay too long in one place, but 'would become sunburned' (91). And the belief that goblins steal children is also a misunderstanding of their species; goblins *are* the children they steal, changed from human into goblin, usually intentionally (148). For example, the goblin Patch was intentionally turned into a goblin by his parents; they had too many children, and he, being the youngest, was able to be 'Changed.' The change not only had an economic benefit for the family, but it was also 'Good luck to keep something Changed in the barn. A guardian. A thing to keep other monsters away' (131). The children 'stolen' by goblins are either given away or taken for their own benefit, but this understanding of goblins is forgotten within the social consciousness, constructing them instead as child thieves. The worldbuilding of Alexander's text does employ biological determinism in the rhetorical construction of goblins as a species. The goblins are homogenized as a group because of the way their species determines innate qualities of who they each are. Alexander's text does not critique biological determinism, but employs this worldbuilding technique to critique the way

oppressors can (intentionally or unintentionally) misunderstand a differing social group in order to justify their oppression. While Alexander's text works well to critique systemic oppression, constructing the oppression of the goblins in a way that could be read as an allegory for American racism, ultimately the text upholds biological determinism in its rhetorical construction of fantastic creatures.

The use of biological determinism to promote the acceptance of those who are different ultimately functions to reinforce the oppressive status quo. It is a common trope in children's fantastika literature to rhetorically construct a species using biological determinism, and then present a character of that species who does not fit within this homogenized construction. Typically this character is used to promote themes of accepting those who are different. Ultimately, however, this character functions as an 'exception to the rule,' reasserting the validity of 'the rule' and thus the validity of oppressing the majority of those who fit 'the rule.' Take, for example, the way Grahame the dragon is an exception of his species in DiTerlizzi's *Kenny and the Dragon* (USA 2008). When Grahame arrives in the land of Roundbrook, the humanoid animals living there believe that because he is a dragon he is a 'devil' and 'scourge,' and will ransack the harvest, burn the crops, eat children and destroy homes (DiTerlizzi 6, 47, 85). When Kenny, the rabbit protagonist, introduces Graham to his parents, Kenny's father asks if Graham is trying to trick them into his belly, to which Graham responds, 'Goodness gracious, no […] but I may trick you into reciting a favorite poem' (32). Graham is constantly faced with social expectation based in a biologically determinist view of his species, and he must consistently demonstrate that he is not like other dragons. For example, when Kenny tells Graham that George is coming to slay him, Graham says that he will not fight because 'that was the sport of all my brethren, not me. That's why I am still here

today and they are all gone' (74). Here, dragons are rhetorically constructed as a violent species, and Graham is rhetorically constructed as an exception to the rule.

Graham uses his difference from other dragons to argue his right to live, in turn justifying the oppression of other dragons. Graham's distinction can be understood as a form of enlightened exceptionalism, which in the real-world 'allows for and even celebrates the achievements of individual persons of colour, but only because those individuals generally are seen as different from a less appealing, even pathological black or brown rule' (Wise, *Between Barack* 9). Tim Wise argues that enlightened exceptionalism values those Black people who have 'transcended' their Blackness, but ultimately this view 'still holds the larger black and brown communities of our nation in low regard but is willing to carve out exceptions for those who make some whites sufficiently comfortable' (*Between Barack* 9, 24). At the end of DiTerlizzi's text, Graham and George, having become friends, stage a fake fight for the townspeople, ending with George declaring that Graham has learned his lesson and is no longer a threat (137). Graham is permitted to live in Roundbrook only because he is believed to have 'transcended' his dragon-ness. His exceptionalism, while allowing him to be accepted, ultimately functions to justify the oppression of the unexceptional dragon. The theme of accepting the different cannot work in a context of biological determinism, but can only function to praise the ways the exceptional reassert the status quo of the system of oppression.

It has become a trope of the fantasy genre to worldbuild fictional worlds by using biological determinism to rhetorically construct fantastic creatures. The resulting homogenized notions of entire species are used to justify the systemic speciesism of the text's fictional world. The genocide of DiTerlizzi and Black's dwarves, the hierarchies of D'Lacy's dragons, the loss of autonomy for Pratchett's

kelda pictsie, the misunderstand and resulting loss of personhood for Alexander's goblins and the enlightened exceptionalism for DiTerlizzi's dragon are all justified because of a firm belief and support of biological determinism. The social consciousness of fictional worlds is often shaped by an inherently oppressive belief system that attributes immutable characteristics to entire species based on their biological makeup. While this is an effective and simple worldbuilding technique for rhetorically constructing various fantastic creatures within a fictional world, the inherent result is the rhetorical construction of systemic speciesism.

Talking Animals

When evolutionary Darwinism shapes the rhetorical construction of talking animals, Darwin's theories evolve from the natural to the social, resulting in the worldbuilding of animal fictional worlds that are constructed with the oppressive hierarchies of social Darwinism. Like with the construction and oppression of fantastic creatures, talking animals and their oppression are also constructed within the framework of a pseudo-science: social Darwinism, which 'enshrined the idea of European superiority as a key feature of natural evolution and selection, the association between color (race) and intellectual predisposition had long been a topic for discussion among many European thinkers' (Dennis, "Social Darwinism" 244). While social Darwinism primarily argued the *intellectual* superiority of white people over people of colour, emphasizing the quality of European civilizations over other cultures, animal fictional worlds are often rhetorically constructed within a 'survival of the fittest' framework that defines 'fittest' in one of two key ways. First, 'fittest' can be defined in an evolutionary Darwinist sense, in which social hierarchies reflect the natural food chain or a quality of breeding. Second, 'fittest' can be defined in

social Darwinist terms of civility. As David Rudd argues, 'more modern anthropomorphic animal stories […] exhibit an impulse to control behaviour' ("Animal and Object Stories" 243). Those who are polite, cooperative and contribute to group survival are valued over the violent predator or the strange outsider. Whether 'fittest' is defined in terms of physical or personal characteristics, the fictional worlds of animal stories are constructed as supremacist hierarchies.

In texts featuring multiple different animal species co-existing in the same fictional world, belief in the natural order of the natural world function to support hierarchies of social Darwinism. For example, In *Guardians of Ga'Hoole: The Capture* by Kathryn Lasky (USA 2003) there is a clear hierarchy of species in a natural food chain. When the protagonist, Soren, says he does not eat snakes because he was partially raised by one, another owl, Twilight, remarks 'snakes are a basic owl food. […] What do you mean you don't eat snakes? What owl doesn't eat snakes?' (Lasky 185). Twilight's response demonstrates the belief that it is natural for owls to eat snakes. Even Mrs. Plithiver, the snake who helps raise Soren, believes in this food-chain hierarchy, arguing, 'Show me a rat snake or a bull snake that anyone really loved. […] Don't worry about my feelings. I have no feeling toward such snakes' (59). For Mrs. Plithiver, the life of a snake is worthless if they are not loved by any member of the more superior species, owls, demonstrating her internalization of the Forest Kingdom of Tyto's hierarchal ideologies. The food chain of animals is here used to justify the hierarchy of species in the text, and the belief that the oppression of the physically inferior is natural.

When the animals of a fictional world have magic powers, the 'survival of the fittest' mentality is determined by magical strength. The more magically powerful an animal is, the higher they are in the social hierarchy. This is well exemplified in

Charles de Lint's *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest* (Canada 2013). When the

protagonist, Lillian Kindred, is bitten by a poisonous snake in Tanglewood Forest, a

group of magical cats turn her into a kitten in order to save her life (17). The reason

they turn her into a kitten specifically is so that their 'Father' will not be angry with

them: 'We'll make her one of our own—then he won't mind' (17). As the kitten

Lillian journeys through Tanglewood Forest in the hopes of finding a way to become

a girl again, she is continuously told of 'The Father of Cats,' a black panther who is

described by a crow as 'too big a piece of magic for the likes of you or me' (29). The

Father of Cats' size and magical abilities position him not only as at the top of the

social hierarchy, but as someone dangerous. Not wanting to suffer the wrath of the

Father of Cats, Lillian asks Old Mother Possum for her help; someone who is also

feared by the Forest's animals but who is 'somewise less formidable than him' (73,

31). When Old Mother Possum cannot help Lillian, her only option is to get help

from the Father of Cats. When he learns of Lillian's position he tells her, 'I've

warned my children not to work this magic again, but they didn't listen. You see

what problems it causes? A strong lesson is in order, one they will not forget' (274).

While an argument is made on behalf of the cats who saved Lillian's life, the Father

of Cats still believes 'there is a price to pay' (274). The Father of Cats is not only the

most physically strong and magically gifted animal in Tanglewood Forest, he is in

charge of the way the other cats use their magic, and is in a position to punish those

who do not obey his orders. The magical strength of the Father of Cats reflects the

same ideology as the physical strength of evolutionary Darwinism, functioning to

justify his supremacy in Tanglewood Forest's social hierarchy.

     Animal fantasies that rhetorically construct hierarchies based on genetics and

breeding combine the physical and civil forms of social Darwinism. The

Mesopotamian Blues of S.F. Said's *Varjak Paw* (UK 2003) believe themselves superior because their breeding implies their civility. At the text's climax, Varjak's family refuses to help those they deem inferior because 'We're special. We're Mesopotamian Blues. As for those common cats, […] who cares what he does to them? They're nothing' (Said 210). This belief that Mesopotamian Blue cats are superior to 'common' cats is not based in any evidence and is delegitimised when Varjak leaves home and finds himself desperate for the help of Holly the street cat. As Holly makes clear, 'I don't care how purebred you are, or where you think you're from. […] You're just a pet' (72, 74). Ideologies of superiority and inferiority within cat social hierarchies are not based in who is physically 'fittest;' pets struggle to survive on the city streets regardless of their breeding. The insistence that breeding makes a cat superior, and that the lives of poorly-bred cats are irrelevant, is a rhetorically constructed form of social Darwinism that places emphasis on a physical form of superiority based not in strength but in genetics. The genetics-based superiority of the Mesopotamian Blues allows Varjak's family to believe that they not only have better genetics than the common cats, but that they are more civilized than those who live on the streets. Their belief that the common cats are uncivilized is then used to justify their refusal to support and help them in a time of crisis.

In the prequel to Brian Jacques' *Redwall* series, *Lord Brocktree* (UK 2000), the superior civility of certain species, rather than their strength or breeding, functions to establish a hierarchy among the many animal species of Salamandastron mountain and its surrounding wilderness. The leader of Salamandastron, and ruler of the hares, is Lord Stonepaw, a badger. It is a common belief that 'Badger Lords ain't like the rest of us' and thus their higher status in the social hierarchy than hares is only natural (Jacques 125). When the hare Fleetscut learns of King Bucko the hare, he

exclaims, 'Tchah, the very idea of it, a hare promotin' himself to king, the pollywoggle, an' doubtless lurin' our [read: Stonepaw's] young Salamandastron warriors to his side. Who does he think he is' (99-100). The idea that another hare could lead the hares is not only offensive to Fleetscut, but is seen as a threat to the natural and civil order of their society. While squirrels are lead by Jukka the squirrel and moles are lead by Rogg Longladle the mole, hares like Fleetscut refuse to be lead by a fellow hare because of their belief in the superiority of badgers. It is a point of pride to be lead by a King of the great Salamandastron civilization. Just as social Darwinism constructs white Europeans as intellectually superior to other groups, the social hierarchy of Salamandastron is constructed to support the supremacy of those species deemed the most civilized.

The fear of the strange and mysterious outsider can be used to argue the superior civility of the animal in-group and reinforce an intersectional system of oppression. In the final *Bunnicula* novel by James Howe, *Bunnicula Meets Edgar Allan Crow* (USA 2006), the pets of the Monroe household, Chester the cat and Harold and Howie the dogs, become deeply suspicious of a visiting and silent crow. Chester believes that 'Crows are omens' and that 'as much as one might be tempted to respect their intelligence, one must remember that above all else, crows are crafty' (Howe 3, 64). Initially Harold, the narrator of the text, is disinclined to believe Chester. Chester has a history of being overly suspicious of outsider animals, including the titular character, Bunnicula: 'For years he [Chester] had tried to destroy the bunny, believing he was a vampire' (96). But when the pets realize that Edgar the crow is 'anything but a regular crow' because he 'never makes a sound' even Harold begins to believe the silence is ominous (64, 80). Edgar Allan Crow's outsider status as a visitor to the Monroe home is not enough to condemn him until

his atypical behaviour marks him as a potential threat to the peaceful pet civilization. The pets use their mistrust of the crow as justification for spying on him and accusing him of trying to kidnap Bunnicula. Later, it is revealed that Edgar Allan Crow was wounded when he was young and, because of his injuries, he is now mute (122). In a system of ableism, disability is often understood as a marker of being uncivilized and works to further exclude disabled people from insider status of a social group (Hughes, "Civilizing Modernity" 22). In Howe's novel, systemic speciesism and ableism intersect to rhetorically construct Edgar Allan Crow as an inferior, dangerous and uncivilized outsider from the perspective of the Monroe pets. When the pets learn that Edgar is silent because he is mute, and that he has no nefarious intentions, the text asserts the harms of making assumptions about supposedly strange and mysterious outsiders.

It is perhaps unsurprising that theories of evolution and the order of the natural world have had such an influence on animal fantasies. But when evolutionary Darwinism is applied to societies, the result is a social system of oppression based in social Darwinism. Just as social Darwinism in the real world has been used to justify the oppression of women and people of colour, using pseudo-science to argue the physical and intellectual supremacy of white men, so too does social Darwinism in animal fantasies function to rhetorically construct a system of oppression. In some animal fantasies, beliefs about physical superiority and the natural food chain work to justify the supremacy of certain animals, such as Lasky's owls and de Lint's panther. In other stories, genetics are a justification for both physical and civil superiority, such as Said's Mesopotamian Blues. The civility of certain species over others justifies the supremacy of Jacques' badgers and Howe's pets, demonstrating an intersectional form of speciesism not based in physical superiority, but rather in a

belief of certain species civility and therefore value. The systemic speciesism of talking animals is not simply a representation of the natural world, but a consequence of applying evolutionary theory to social hierarchies.

The Posthuman

Moving on from the biological determinism that oppresses the talking animal, the systemic oppression of the posthuman very specifically does not deal 'with a technological determinism, but with a historical system depending upon structured relations among people' (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 132). In children's fantastika literature, the systemic oppression of the posthuman is based in the structured relations between human adults and posthuman children. The instability that defines the rhetorical construction of the posthuman functions as a metaphor for social anxieties about technology's role in humanity's future. As children are often understood as representing the future, adult anxieties about the future create a tension between generations. N. Katherine Hayles argues that the posthuman evokes terror in its 'dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it' in a future in which 'humans [are] displaced as the dominant form of life on the planet by intelligent machines' (*How we Became Posthuman* 283). When the humans are adults and the posthumans are children, retaliation against being displaced as the dominant form of life involves an intersection of speciesism and aetonormativity in the oppression and control of posthuman children. The systemic oppression of the posthuman in children's fantastika literature demonstrates a desire to control technology by taking away the child posthuman's freedom and or bodily autonomy.

For the purposes of this study I will rely on two very different definitions of the posthuman, considering both equally valid. Victoria Flanagan defines the

posthuman as 'the technologically mediated human subject, whose existence has been transformed through technoscience—either chemically, surgically or mechanically' (*Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* 14). According to Zoe Jaques, the posthuman can also be the anthropomorphized humanoid machine that, 'through their complex autonomy and agency, […] provoke a potent confusion of human-nonhuman boundaries' (*Children's Literature and the Posthuman* 181). Both the technologically mediated human and the humanoid machine are posthuman in children's literature. In both cases, the posthuman is rhetorically constructed as a destabilized subject who functions as a metaphor for social anxieties regarding technology. In order to control or own this destabilized subject, an adult or group of adults play a dominating and disempowering role in the 'construction and shaping of the individual […] as a means of social control' (Mendlesohn, *The Inter-Galactic Playground* 144). Jaques argues that the posthuman in children's literature can simultaneously radically destabilize social hierarchies and 'reinforce hegemonic codes of human dominion' (*Children's Literature and the Posthuman* 5). In the texts analyzed below, adult humans are dominant within each fictional world's social hierarchies, and the posthuman child's oppression functions to either critique or reinforce the dominion of humanity.

The rhetorical construction of the posthuman as having a double nature positions them as having an influence on the direction of their fictional world. The control and oppression of the posthuman functions as an attempt to dictate not only the direction of the fictional world's future, but more specifically the power structures of this future. In Joel Ross' *The Fog Diver* (USA 2015), the posthuman child Chess is created by an adult human named Kodoc, who wants to control Chess so that he can better rule the fictional world of the Rooftop. When humanity covers

the earth in nanites to clean the planet's smog, the nanites 'calculated that because we humans *made* the Smog, they needed to stop us. The nanites turned themselves into the Fog' a white mist that covers the planet (Ross 20). After technology turns against humanity, anyone who spends too long in the Fog dies, everyone except Chess. Kodoc, leader of the Rooftop, put Chess' pregnant mother into a cage and lowered her into the Fog so that Chess would be born as a posthuman:

> The clouds of nanites in my eye helped me see farther, hear more, and move faster in the Fog than anyone else, but they also marked me as a freak. As Kodoc's freak. He wasn't just my enemy, he was my *creator*. Millions of tiny machines swarmed in my brain because of him. […] I was nothing more than a tool he'd crafted to help him find those ancient fog-machines—so he could kill his enemies in the silent rise of white.
>
> (33)

Kodoc believes that Chess does not survive being born in the Fog. In fact, Chess grows up in the slums of the Rooftop where he must hide his posthuman identity.

When anyone sees Chess' 'freak-eye' he is beaten and at risk of being reported to Kodoc (116). This forces Chess to hide his true identity: 'It means I spend every minute lying. That's all I ever do—I pretend I'm normal. My whole life is one big lie' (130). On the Rooftop, Chess is a posthuman living among humans, hiding his true identity because he knows that he has been created to enable an adult's rise to political power. As a posthuman, Chess is:

> a technobiological object that confounds the dichotomy between natural and unnatural, made and born […] the cyborg looks to the past as well as the future. It is precisely this double nature that allows cyborg stories to

be imbricated within cultural narratives while still wrenching them in a

new direction. (Hayles, "The Life Cycle of Cyborgs" 321-2)

Chess is rhetorically constructed as having a double nature involving both his

working-class human child life, and his posthuman identity created very specifically

to oppress those he lives among so that Kodoc can gain wealth and political power.

Chess looks to the past at his creation and to the future at his creation's intended

purpose, both of which are defined by the adult human's attempts to control a

posthuman child. The future direction of the Rooftop is determined by who has the

use of Chess' nanite-related abilities, and thus Chess' freedom is significantly limited

for fear of being treated as either a freak or as a dangerous tool by his adult enemy.

The system that oppresses Chess involves intersections of age, class, and species in

an attempt to not only control his body, but also to control the future of the Rooftop.

When the rhetorical construction of the posthuman destabilizes the distinctions

between the human and the non-human, their oppression functions to ensure the

supremacy of the human over the non-human. This is doubly oppressive when the

posthuman is specifically constructed as a child, as in Pádraig Kenny's *Tin* (Ireland

2018), in which magically animated child-like robots, known as mechanicals, are

slaves to their human masters. The slave machine is a trope of science fiction, as

Isiah Lavender III argues: 'technological consciousness can be denied free will

because it is inherently inferior' (*Race* 61). The inferiority of the mechanical in *Tin* is

reinforced in two key ways. First, 'it was illegal to create adult-sized mechanicals

who were self-aware' because child-size mechanicals are easier to control (Kenny

13). Second, through the ideology that human beings are 'proper,' and the more

similar a mechanical is to a 'proper' human the better a model they are. When Jack, a

mechanical, states, 'I just want to be proper' (22), he is making clear his wish to be

as valued in society as a human being. When the protagonist, Christopher, learns that he is not a proper human, but is instead an advanced mechanical who has been illegally 'ensouled,' the other mechanicals realize that 'Christopher has a soul. He's nearly proper' (89). Christopher as 'the posthuman subject, no longer sustained by the idea of a fixed and unified self, appears to be marked by instability' (Wolmark, "Staying with the Body" 78). Christopher's destabilizing of the distinctions between human and non-human positions him as a subject of awe by his fellow mechanicals, and as a threat by human society. When an ensouled mechanical designed specifically for war accidentally kills someone, the king makes it illegal for mechanicals to be ensouled (206, 180). Christopher is illegal, and while he 'was a very high-grade mechanical, […] he still wasn't proper' (250). In the alternate history of Kenny's text, mechanicals strive to be as like humans as possible, but if they become too similar to humans they are deemed a threat to humanity and are no longer permitted to live at all. At the end of the novel, Christopher argues that mechanicals are 'better than proper' (322), offering what Jaques argues is a 'radical destabilizations of hierarchies of being' (*Children's Literature and the Posthuman* 5). Still, Christopher makes this argument while living in hiding from human society. The hierarchy of this fictional world forces posthuman children to live as slaves for adult humans, constantly ashamed of their inferiority, or permanently live in hiding for fear of being destroyed. Whether as slave or as outlaw, the posthuman child of Kenny's text is oppressed in a way that maintains the supremacy of the adult human.

A posthuman does not need to be a slave to be oppressed in a system of adult human control. In Steven Bohls' *Jed and the Junkyard War* (USA 2016) the posthuman is denied agency in order to maintain adult human supremacy. This novel is set in a fictional world that is one giant junkyard, where machines called

dreadnoughts live on the outskirts of human societies and kill any humans they come across. At the conclusion of the novel, the protagonist, Jed, learns that he is a gilded relic, a highly advanced machine of war built by the dreadnoughts in their attempts to overthrow the humans. As Lyle, leader of the dreadnoughts explains, 'You are my greatest creation. The gilded relic of gilded relics. You and I are destined to be together. To purge the junkyard. To build a new world. A golden world. A *gilded* world. This is *your* purpose' (Bohls 273). In this moment, Jed learns that the only reason he exists is to help achieve the aims of others. While Victoria Flanagan argues that the posthuman body can be a site of agency and empowerment, if villainous and or powerful individuals in fiction use technology unethically to create the posthuman, posthuman child characters 'are victims of circumstance, rather than empowered advocates of technological progress' (*Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction 5,* 17). Despite learning that he has a great deal more potential than he knew (277), Jed is not empowered as a posthuman because he is not free to do as he pleases, and he never has been. As his father explains, 'We took you [from Lyle] to protect you. Once we found out what Lyle was going to do with you, we couldn't let that happen. […] So we took you away from everything. Away from the war' (282). Jed learns that he has had to live in hiding his entire life, unaware that he is not human, in order to keep humanity safe from the dreadnoughts. Jed is not given any choices about his own life by dreadnoughts or humans alike, but is instead treated as a dangerous threat to human superiority. In the junkyard, the posthuman child is denied autonomy so that adults (whether posthuman or human) may manipulate him to either maintain or subvert social hierarchies of adult human supremacy.

Often the oppression of the posthuman is a direct result of the failings of adult humans. For example, in Eoin Colfer's *The Supernaturalist* (Ireland 2004), the

posthuman children of Satellite City are created by adults in their pursuit of scientific advancement, oppressing both children as involuntary test subjects, and the non-normative adults they become. When Doctor Ferdinand Bartoli performs gene-splicing tests on infants in an attempt to create a superhuman, he instead creates a series of mutations, specifically the arresting of physical development (Colfer 38). Lucien Bonn, better known as Ditto, had his genes spliced by Bartoli and now, at twenty-eight years old, looks like he is only six. Ditto leaves the Bartoli institute with no compensation, entering into a dystopian world as a posthuman known as a Bartoli Baby, where he faces frequent humiliation and underestimation because of his child-like appearance. Ditto's experiences of oppression meet Farah Mendlesohn's definition of the dystopian genre for young readers: 'the adults have fucked up and you are going to suffer' (*The Inter-Galactic Playground* 145). Doctor Ferdinand Bartoli 'fucked up' Ditto's genes, and now Ditto suffers as a posthuman in a dystopian world. Furthermore, Ditto's genetic transformation has given him special powers, such as the ability to see invisible creatures and heal people just by touching them.

Ditto is forced to keep his powers a secret because he 'knew what happened to Bartoli Babies who admitted to having gifts. They were moved to another wing of the Institute and observed twenty-four hours a day. They were medicated, injected and interrogated for as long as Bartoli could hold on to them' (166-7). Ditto must lie about the full extent of his posthuman identity in order to keep himself safe. When he is hired as a paramedic it is as an act of tokenism: 'that particular hospital made a big deal of hiring a Bartoli Baby' (57), suggesting that most Bartoli Babies are unable to find decent employment. As Flanagan argues, a fictional text with:

body modification rarely depicts such modification as voluntary for child

or adolescent subjects. In the context of body modification,

child/adolescent characters are routinely depicted as disempowered or

subordinated subjects. (*Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction*

17)

Adults decide how children's bodies are modified, not the children themselves

(Flanagan, *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* 17). Ditto faces a great

deal of social subordination as an adult after his body is modified without his

consent during childhood. The systemic oppression of children in Satellite City has

lasting affects on the posthuman, and the adults they grow to become.

In some texts, the posthuman is rhetorically constructed as a subject liberated

by their inorganic body. Yet, in children's fantastika, a system of aetonormativity

may function to limit the liberation of the posthuman child so as to serve adult

purposes. Londinium, of Emma Trevayne's *Flights and Chimes and Mysterious*

Times (USA 2014), is a steampunk alternate universe where everyone is a

posthuman. In Londinium, every person undergoes mechanical alterations because

the unbreathable smog creates a 'sickness, for the privilege of industry' which

necessitates doctors putting 'new lungs into infants before they might draw their first

breath' (Trevayne 88). No one is completely organic, and inorganic material is added

so that the people of Londinium can survive the poisoned air. In this sense, becoming

a posthuman liberates the subject from the sickness of the air. However, the Lady

who leads Londinium's desire for a perfect child results in a social hierarchy that

favours the organic. The more mechanical one is, the lower they are in Londinium's

social hierarchy. At the bottom of the hierarchy are 'unthinking' automata, which are

'good only for the shipyards' (112), then magical creatures who are often outside of

society but are regarded with awe because 'the gods built the first ones. Now they build each other' (75-6), then automata like Beth, who 'you'd think she was entirely human […] she has a soul' (86, 133), and finally humans with mechanical alterations. When the protagonist, Jack, arrives in Londinium from our own world, he is treated as if he is perfect. The Lady who leads Londinium adopts him and gives him 'Parades and flags and cheers' (170). While Beth, an automaton with a soul, was also once adopted by the Lady, she was 'not good enough' and was cast out and made homeless (86). When the evil Lorcan replaces Jack's organic arm with a mechanical arm, the Lady does not want Jack anymore because 'He wasn't perfect anymore. Not whole' (208). Jack's experiences demonstrate the way Londinium's social hierarchy functions to reinforce the dominion of the organic. Jennifer Gonzalez asks, 'This cyborg appears more trapped by her mechanical parts than liberated through them. [...] to what degree can this cyborg be read as a servant and toy, and to what degree an autonomous social agent?' ("Envisioning Cyborg Bodies" 269). In Londinium, the Lady perceives a child as a person if they are wholly organic, but as soon as the child has mechanical parts, the child is nothing more than a servant or toy to be thrown away. Posthuman children have no say in the direction of their relationship with this surrogate mother. While Jack, in losing his arm, may find some physical liberation by receiving a new mechanical arm, as a child his mechanical liberation leads to his ostracism from the adults of the social elite. The intersectional systemic oppression of the posthuman child can involve the way the inorganic can simultaneously liberate and lead to oppression.

When children are posthuman, their subjectivity as both human and non-human destabilizes the future of humanity, functioning as a metaphor for social anxieties regarding not only children's futures, but for the future of the human

species. In order to ensure the survival and supremacy of the human species, the posthuman must be controlled or owned. In children's fantastika literature, where posthumans are children, their oppression involves an intersection of speciesism and aetonormativity. Whether as Ross' freak-eyed, Kenny's mechanical, Bohl's gilded relic, Colfer's Bartoli Baby or Trevayne's automaton, the posthuman child is oppressed in order to maintain the supremacy of the adult human. Whether as a slave or as a child denied autonomy, the systemic oppression of the posthuman emphasizes the tensions between generations and the philosophical and existential fears regarding what it means to be human, and what the future will look like for humanity. By destabilizing definitions of humanity, these texts work to critique narrow boundaries of identity, and break down social hierarchies that posit one group as supreme over any other.

Aliens

Like the posthuman, the rhetorical construction of aliens and their oppression is also a response to philosophical and existential fears regarding the supremacy of human beings. The systemic oppression of or by aliens often involves the social erasure or exclusion of the Other Self. The alien is a metaphorical Other who is also a Self (Monk, *Alien Theory* xv). There is only room in an oppressive society for one Self. Among humans, the Other, by definition, is understood as an object and *not* a subject; Self is defined in opposition to the Other (de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 27). The human Other is *not* a different Self. The alien, however, is an Other who is *also* a Self. The aliens are a new entity in their own right (Kerslake, *Science Fiction and Empire* 24). In a fictional context with aliens there are (at least) two fundamentally different Selfs in one fictional world. This creates a problem for the defining of the

Self. In this context, the Self is no longer defined in opposition to the Other, but rather in *comparison* with the Other Self. This naturally leads to the question: which Self is (physically, psychologically, intellectually) superior? Unfortunately, this is not a question that can ever be answered because the aliens are so fundamentally Other that they are, at least in part, unknown and unknowable (Monk, *Alien Theory* 71). Unable to fully understand and compare with the Other Self, the Self defends its superiority through a system of oppression that does not permit the Other Self to exist within the Self's social system.

The systemic speciesism of and or by aliens involves maintaining the superiority of the Self while ensuring the exclusion of the Other Self. At times I use the terms Self and Other Self, rather than human and alien, because some texts involve aliens oppressing other aliens, and aliens (Self) oppressing humans (Other Self). The exclusionary nature of Other Self oppression is dependent on whether the alien/ Other Self is (mis)perceived as inferior, as a threat, or whether the aliens perceive themselves to be superior to humans. The rhetorical construction of the human and alien as superior or inferior to one another 'enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforce relations of dominance and subordination' (Wolmark, *Aliens and Others* 2). When the Self (mis)perceive themselves to be superior to the Other Self, oppression may take extreme forms so as to deny the Other Self personhood and even life. When the Other Self is (mis)perceived as a threat to the Self, the Self pre-emptively retaliates through institutional practices and or violence. When it is unclear which Self is superior, the result is war.

When humans perceives themselves to be physically, psychologically and or intellectually superior to aliens, the alien Other Self is taken full advantage of, and

oppressed to the point of being denied personhood. In T.J. Wooldridge's *Silent Starsong* (USA 2014), the humans (mis)perceive themselves superior to aliens, justifying their enslavement of a Naratsset alien. In the distant future, on the planet Cordelier, Kyra Starbard's family buys her an alien slave named Marne. When Kyra meets Marne, he is locked in a small cage while her father negotiates Marne's price (Wooldridge 11, 14). Upon buying Marne, Kyra's father tells her, 'He's yours' (15), making clear that Marne is Kyra's property. While Kyra befriends and sympathizes with Marne, the rest of her family treat him like an animal: 'His cage was on the other side of the room, and he wanted nothing to do with it, though the adults had thought he would sleep there…like a dog' (21). There is a clear division of free humans and enslaved Naratsset aliens in Wooldrdge's text in a way that constructs the alien as an oppressed Other Self. Isaiah Lavender III argues that slavery has historically resulted in the dehumanization of the slave, and that science fictional constructions of slavery 'recontextualize captivity narratives' so as to 'relocate in time the observation or experience of bondage as a cultural norm' (*Race* 54-5). For the Starbard family of Cordelier, the supremacy of the human Self is so significantly established that the enslavement of an Other Self is a cultural norm. The humans of Wooldridge's text (mis)perceive themselves to be superior to aliens, and they maintain this supremacy by enslaving the alien Other Self. Marne's experiences of bondage, and feeling like he is treated like an animal, demonstrates the harms of slavery as a cultural norm and functions to critique not only slavery, but the concept of one Self being superior to another Self.

When humans fear that aliens may be a superior Self, they may retaliate against aliens by using institutional structures to force the alien into a subordinate position. In Philip Reeve's *Larklight* (UK 2006) the Royal Xenological Institute is

where scientists 'study anomalous specimens of unearthly life' (Reeve 131). Here the alien named Ssilissa is imprisoned and studied because of her 'aptitude for Alchemy [...] If her unknown race [species] were all as quick as her at calculating courses through the aether and grasping the fundamentals of the chemical wedding, it might spell danger for the Empire' (137). Ssilissa and several other alien species are imprisoned and studied at the Institute because of the fear that each of their species' Self may be superior to the human Self, and thus a threat to human society. The institution of scientific study not only functions to maintain the dominant position of the human Self in the text's fictional world, but also the human's colonial empire. Patricia Kerslake argues that colonization in science fiction demonstrates the Self's 'uneasiness with the unknown' (Kerslake, *Science Fiction and Empire* 17). Ssilissa the alien, as a metaphor for the fear of the unknown Other Self, is oppressed because of the human fear of the unknown's potential and the human Self's need to maintain superiority.

In much of children's fantastika literature, it is not the alien who is oppressed, but rather the alien who is the oppressor. Just as the humans who perceives themselves as superior to aliens use extreme tactics of oppression, so too may the alien Self use extreme forms of oppression against any (mis)perceived inferior Other Self. In William Alexander's *Ambassador* (USA 2014), an assassination attempt against the ambassador of Earth reveals a larger issue of genocide across the galaxy. When Gabe Fuentes is selected as the new ambassador of Earth, he learns that the alien species known as The Outlast have been taking over the planets of other alien species (Alexander 75). After Gabe survives several assassination attempts, he comes to learn that 'The Outlast intends to be the only sentient species left standing when the universe collapses. They believe that the end of one cosmos will lead to the

birth of another, and that the next one can be shaped by whoever is still around when it happens' (144). The Outlast believe that their Self is superior to every other Self in the universe, and enact world-wide genocides across the universe in order to ensure their Self's supremacy. While Gabe is initially led to believe that The Outlast are the ones attempting to assassinate him, he comes to realize that it is a species of alien called the Kean who are trying to kill him. The Kean are on the run from The Outlast, and they attempt to assassinate Gabe because they need ice to survive and they cannot ask Gabe for Earth's ice in case he declined and revealed their position to The Outlast (212). If the Kean are successful in assassinating Gabe, they can take Earth's ice without being accused of taking 'guest gifts without local permission. Ports and docking rights would close to us' (215). The Kean are acting in desperation because they are fleeing The Outlast, and in their attempts to survive they cannot risk diplomacy with Earth's potentially hostile ambassador. Gabe is almost assassinated not because his Self is deemed inferior to the alien Self, but rather as a result of The Outlast Self's attempts to ensure their supremacy over the Kean Self. The Outlast's violent oppression of the Kean demonstrates the harms of genocide, and Gabe's agreeing to help the Kean, despite their assassination attempts, functions to assert the importance of helping the oppressed.

When the Other Self is (mis)perceived as potentially superior to the Self, the Self may retaliate as an act of defence. In K.A. Applegate's *The Ellimist Chronicles* (USA 2000), the Ketrans of the planet Ket are attacked because of the way they are misperceived as a threat. The Ketrans play virtual reality games in which they act as gods, influencing the lives of the game characters. When another alien species, the Capasins, discover this game, they are unable to understanding it: 'some species don't know the difference between games and reality. These aliens are here to

exterminate us because they've seen our games and believe them to be real […]

They're here to annihilate what they believe to be a race of murderers' (Applegate

89). The Capasins attack the peaceful Ketrans as an act of defence. As Ziauddin

Sardar argues, the otherness of the alien may result in the Self's gaining a sense of

self-defence ("Introduction" 6). The Capasins enact a genocide because of their fear

of the potentially superior Other Self. Both the Ketrans and Capasins are a metaphor

for the misplaced fear of the unknown Other Self; the oppression of the Ketrans by

the Capasins is the result of this fear.

　　　In K.A. Applegate's *Remnants* series (USA 2001-2003), different species fight

for superiority. When the Earth is destroyed in *The Mayflower Project* (2001), the

remaining humans travel through space to find a new home. In the second book,

Destination Unknown (2001) the humans are attacked by an alien species known as

the Riders (Applegate 81-4). Later, Four Sacred Streams, a member of a third

species, The Children (or the True Children of Mother), explains that they are all on

a spaceship called Mother, and that his species were slaves living in exile who have

returned to fight for superiority (*Them* 115-6). The fight among the species is not

only a fight for the superiority of the Self, but is 'a three-way contest for control of

Mother' (*Them* 162). Only one Self can exist in the same space on Mother, so all

three species must fight for superiority. While The Children and humans are

momentarily able to work together, the Clan Council of the Riders make an

agreement: 'Destroy the humans and Mother would restore the world as it should be,

the world of the Riders' (*Nowhere Land* 23). In this series, the Other Self is a

metaphor for the harms of racism, xenophobia and colonialism. The Riders' refusal

to work with the humans, and the resulting struggles the human refugees face in their

attempts to survive, demonstrate the harms of social systems that exclude other

Selfs. In this oppressive social system, only one Self is permitted existence, resulting in serious harm for all other Selfs.

When an unknowable alien threatens the human's definition of Self, systemic oppression functions to establish the superiority of one species by excluding the other. Sentient species of different planets struggle to co-exist when the existence of the one threatens the existential definition of the other. The systemic oppression of Wooldridge's Naratsset, Reeve's Ssilissa, Alexander's Kean and Applegate's Ketrans and The Children, function to establish the physical, psychological and/or intellectual superiority of one planet's species over another's. In each case, species from another planet act as metaphors for the Other Self and the harms of Othering other Selfs. When two Selfs compete for supremacy, the resulting system of oppression is one that seeks to either institutionally silence or permanently eliminate the competition, excluding the Other Self from social membership entirely.

Spirits and the Undead

Spirits and the undead are subaltern subjects, and their systemic oppression functions to displace focus away from the failings of the elite and to deny spirits and the undead access to social membership. Spirits and the undead are rhetorically constructed as metaphors of 'a wide range of cultural, political, and economic anxieties' (Dendle, "The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety" 45). The specificity of a spirit or undead character's metaphorical meaning is highly changeable depending on context, as Joni Richards Bodart argues; 'We can use vampires as a metaphor and a language to talk about the problems we have to deal with in our world, and when the problems and the language change, so do our vampires' (*They Suck* 2). Regardless of the anxiety the spirit or undead are a

metaphor for, their systemic oppression reflects an extremist response to the problems they represent. In children's fantastika literature, the anxieties represented by spirits and the undead are not often dealt with through nuanced or healthy methods, such as through open communication or democracy. Instead of engaging and dealing with a (perceived) social problem, said problem is denied existence by silencing and excluding the spirits and or undead as those that represent it.

My analysis includes both spirits and the undead because of the historical changing of 'funerary beliefs [that] depict clear associations between the physical dead and the spiritual dead. This leads in turn to the idea of the revenant, or undead being, that could be trapped on earth after death' (Beresford, *From Demons to Dracula* 194). Spirits, like ghosts, zombies, vampires or ghouls, can be defined by their destabilizing the distinctions between the alive and the dead. The various species of spirits and the undead have been metaphors for a wide variety of social, cultural, political and economic anxieties. Spirits and the undead have been metaphors for 'death and corruption' (Frost, *The Monster with a Thousand Faces* 79), AIDS, homosexuality and or homophobia (Stableford, "*Sang* for Supper" 79), sexual taboos (Beresford, *From Demons to Dracula* 122), unspeakable secrets (Berthin, *Gothic Hauntings* 19), fascism and the loss of individual identity (Zani and Meaux, "Lucio Fulci" 107), and the dangerous spread and consequences of capitalism and consumerism (Canavan, "We *Are* the Walking Dead" 432). Spirits and the undead are also:

> end-of-the-world metaphors, including infectious disease, biological
>
> warfare, euthanasia, terrorism, and even rampant immigration […]
>
> metaphor[s] for enslavement […] racial inequality and imperial injustice
>
> […] the dominance of the white patriarchy, the misogynistic treatment of

women, the collapse of the nuclear family, and the unchecked violence of

[war]. (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 26, 47, 95)

As a metaphor for any of the above anxieties, the very presence of a spirit and or the

undead in a fictional world is an embodiment of some kind of significant social

problem. While spirits and the undead are often blamed and oppressed for the

problems and anxieties they represent, the issue at stake is not always the undead's

fault. As scapegoats, spirits and the undead are not permitted social membership in

fictional worlds; they do not belong in either the land of the dead or of the living,

and thus they do not belong anywhere.

In Jonathan Stroud's *Lockwood & Co.: The Screaming Staircase* (UK 2013),

the oppression of the undead functions to displace focus from the social problems

that give the undead reason to return to the land of the living. Here the ghost is a

metaphor for injustice, and no justice is found in their treatment. In the text, Psychic

Investigation Agencies work to rid England of ghost hauntings. The priority is not to

understand or help those with unfinished business, but to destroy them. The

protagonists, psychic agents who exterminate ghosts, recognize that ghosts can have

a variety of different reasons for 'coming back,' but do not usually spend any energy

investigating these reasons (Stroud 19). Almost all ghosts are destroyed as quickly as

possible, as one agent, George, explains, 'It's a plague. People don't care about the

stories behind them. They just want them gone' (189). The institution of government

interlocks with the institution of Psychic Investigation Agencies in the endeavour to

remove ghosts. The government sets nightly curfews and lights ghost-lamps to ward

off ghosts (67), while The Department of Psychical Research and Control

(DEPRAC) is a government police agency that oversees the policy and practices for

ghost destruction (153). When Lockwood and Co discover that Annabel Ward,

whose ghost they had previously failed to destroy, was murdered by John Fairfax, the Chairman of Fairfax Iron, DEPRAC forbid Lockwood to tell the newspapers about Fairfax's crime. Lockwood explains that they are 'talking about a very powerful family here, and one of the most important companies in England. If their top man were exposed as a murderer and scoundrel, there'd have been terrible repercussions' (431-2). While the text emphasizes the harms of murder, the fictional world's newspaper reports on Lockwood and Co's destruction of ghosts at Fairfax's home of Comb Carey Hall instead (429-30). Annabel Ward returns as a ghost *because* she was murdered, but the issue of murder is given less relevance in the fictional world than the issue of ghost hauntings. DEPRAC's refusal to allow Annabel Ward's story to be focussed on, and their policies that focus on destroying ghosts immediately, work to silence the undead and exclude them from society. The oppression of ghosts here functions to displace focus away from the crimes of England's elite, and maintain the status of the rich and powerful.

In Tahereh Mafi's *Whichwood* (USA 2017), the undead are rhetorically constructed as a metaphor for the harms of forgetting and neglecting important, spiritual cultural practices. In the fictional world of Whichwood, the needs of the undead go unheard so that the superstitious can justify neglecting their responsibilities and accepting blame for their poor behaviour. The protagonist, Laylee Layla Fenjoon, is a mordeshoor, a magical person tasked with cleaning and burying the dead. Before the dead are buried, their spirits are unable to enter the Otherwhere, and so they must wait as ghosts in the land of the living. Laylee is the only human they can speak to. Laylee's job is crucial and mandatory, and thus the people of Whichwood 'seldom paid for the work she did […] when the dead were delivered to her door, she had no choice but to add them to the pile. The people of

Whichwood knew this and too often took advantage of her, sometimes paying very little, and sometimes not at all' (Mafi 11). The spirits of the dead have to wait a long time to be buried because Laylee is forced to work alone. When Laylee works to the point of almost dying, the spirits become enraged that 'the only human with whom they could interact […] the only living person to care what happened to her people when they passed on' is so terribly taken advantage of (210-11). In response to this, the ghosts steal the skins of the living in a failed attempt to reconvene with the people of Whichwood (227-9). Rather than listening to the undead, the people of Whichwood declare that the responsibilities of a mordeshoor are too much for Laylee. The Whichwood Elders come to Laylee's home to end her mordeshoor business, and the magistrate of the court sentences Laylee to lose her mordeshoor magic (248, 329). Instead of the people of Whichwood recognizing their failing to fairly support and help Laylee in her work as a mordeshoor, and in turn continue the necessary cultural practices that meet the needs of the undead, Laylee's sentencing means the undead will be left without someone to enable them to enter the Otherwhere, and without a representative in the land of the living. The needs of the undead are unheard both on the streets and in the courts because the superstitious living are unwilling to step out of their comfort zones, do what is fair and responsible, and acknowledge their past failings.

In Shane Arbuthnott's *Dominion* (Canada 2017), spirits are rhetorically constructed as a metaphor for social anxieties concerning the global and environmental crimes committed in the sourcing of fuel. In the fictional world of the British Dominion of Terra Nova, spirits are harvested from mysterious fonts and used to fuel machinery. The spirits are put into iron cages that burn and suffocate them, silencing their voices and taking away their agency (Arbuthnott 28, 46). There

are a wide variety of differing machines that the spirits fuel, from small robots called servitors, to airship engines, to 'floating islands [that] held the homes and strongholds of people so rich they no longer had to set foot on Earth' (32). The systemic oppression of the spirits involves their murder or enslavement so that human beings can enjoy industrial progress. Further to this, there is a strong belief that talking to spirits will drive a person mad, something that is termed 'spirit touched.' It becomes illegal to talk to spirits, and those who become spirit touched are imprisoned (125). By making it illegal to talk to spirits, spirits are made voiceless in the fictional world's society, oppressing them as subaltern subjects. When the protagonist, Molly Stout, meets a spirit named Ariel who is desperate to talk to her, she is initially afraid that the spirit will trick and influence her (61). But Molly learns both to accept the spirits as people and that her 'people have been enslaving and murdering my kind [spirits] for hundreds of years. The number of us who have been killed is too high to count' (261).

After Molly's father no longer allows her to live in their home because she is spirit touched (166), Molly agrees to help Ariel try to save the spirits. In their adventures, Molly comes to learn that Charles Arkwright, the leader of Haviland Industries, the company responsible for starting spirit harvesting, has been alive for hundreds of years (292-3). The systemic oppression of spirits displaces social focus away from oppression and toward the joys of industry, allowing Arkwright to secretly escape death. As metaphors for the people and planet harmed by the sourcing of fuel globally, the spirits are silenced so that human beings can enjoy the progress of industry without considering the harms they inflict. As subaltern subjects, the spirits are unable to voice their pain, break free of their iron prisons, or in any way resist their oppression and survive. It is in the absolute subjugation of

spirits that the humans are able to easily ignore the personhood of spirits and instead enjoy building their entire society on their oppression.

In Justin Somper's *Vampirates* (UK 2005), vampires are denied social membership, oppressed within a system of hegemony that pushes them to the margins of society. In the text, vampires are rhetorically constructed as metaphors for the socially deviant, and their oppression represents the mistreatment of those who do not meet cultural norms. The novel is set in the year 2512 off the coast of Australia after the ice caps have melted and the majority of the planet is covered in water. When Grace Tempest finds herself on a ship of vampire pirates, or vampirates, she learns of the existence of their species for the first time. They explain to her that their ship is 'a safe haven—for outsiders, for those of us forced, or drawn, to the very edges of the world,' hidden from a world in which they have been 'maligned' and 'demonized' (Somper 160, 252). One vampirate, Lorcan, explains that on land he was forced to live in 'terrible places, places of darkness such as I hope you'll never see. But I'm safe now. This ship is my harbour' (134). While among the living the vampirates are demonized for their need to drink the blood of the living, on their ship they are able to find a method that is as humane as possible. The vampirates only drink blood once a week from well-kept, voluntary donors (236). This solution is unavailable on land among the living because vampires are exclusively understood as dangerous and villainous. Vampires are excluded within a system of hegemony, unable to join society and forced to live as outcasts at sea.

In Jodi Lynn Anderson's *The Ever After* (previously published as *May Bird and the Ever After*) (USA 2005, 2014), the social hierarchy of the afterlife realm of Ever After privileges the dead, and denies social membership to other kinds of spirits. When the protagonist, May Bird, enters the land of the dead, she is told, 'there are

four kinds of inhabitants in the realm. Ghosts, Specters [*Sic!*], Live Ones like yourself, and Dark Spirits' (Lynn Anderson 102). The term 'Specter' refers to those who were once alive, while neither Ghosts or Spirits were ever alive. In this fictional world's social hierarchy, Specters believe themselves to be superior to Ghosts and Spirits, and treat these other two groups of spirits with little social value (96). The Dark Spirits are feared more than they are respected, but are still excluded from society: 'The Dark Spirits—poltergeists and goblins, ghouls, demons, that sort—live in South Place. They're not allowed in the Upper Realm, but they sneak up from time to time' (102). The Ghosts, on the other hand, are treated with the least amount of social respect or value. On her adventures, May befriends a Ghost named Pumpkin. As a metaphor for fears related to the loneliness of death, Pumpkin is a shy, friendless being scorned because of his species (147). May comes to learn that Specters believe Pumpkin is stupid, cowardly and ugly simply because he is a Ghost (224, 253). When May goes on her adventure to try to escape the Ever After, Pumpkin is commanded to join her, and when he tries to refuse he is silenced (135). Pumpkin cannot express what he wants to do, but must do as he is told in a society that does not afford him a voice. Later, a Specter offers to help May in exchange that she give him Pumpkin as payment (207). In this fictional world, Ghosts are treated as objects to be controlled and owned rather than as autonomous subjects. The systemic speciesism of the Ever After pushes spirits like Ghosts to the bottom of the social hierarchy, where they are denied full membership to their society. Pumpkin is not treated like a person in the Ever After, he is a subaltern subject made voiceless by a system that privileges certain types of spirits over others.

Spirits and the undead can be rhetorically constructed as metaphors for a wide variety of different social anxieties. Whether the anxiety is a metaphor about

injustice, a loss of culture, crimes against the planet, social deviants or the loneliness of death, the rhetorical construction of spirits and the undead as fictional species is as subaltern scapegoats. The systemic speciesism that oppresses spirits and the undead does not functions to solve whatever anxiety they represent, but rather to cover up a social shame and anxiety. To give voice or space to the undead is to give power to that which causes anxiety. The systemic speciesism of Stroud's ghosts, Mafi's spirits, Arbuthnott's spirits, Somper's vampirates and Lynn Anderson's Ghosts all result not only in social exclusion, but in severe silencing. Yet the social issues they each represent are often exacerbated rather than solved by their oppression. Treating the undead as a scapegoat does not solve social, cultural, political, or economic anxieties.

Magical Humans

In my study of *contemporary* children's fantastika literature, magical humans are rhetorically constructed as a re-writing of how witches have been traditionally constructed in literature, folklore and myth. Historically, witches have been written as evil women who have sold their souls to the devil, often based on a misunderstanding of the witches persecuted in Western Europe and North America in the Early Modern period. Here I do not argue that the magical human of contemporary children's fantasy fiction, such as witches, wizards, mages, warlocks, enchantresses, shamans, or sorcerers, are necessarily similar to real-world pagan witches; rather I argue that in contemporary children's fantastika literature, fictional magical humans are rhetorically constructed as a response to the ways witches have been rhetorically constructed and understood historically. In contemporary children's fantastika, magical humans do not become magical, rather they are born magical,

and are thus here posited as a separate species than non-magical humans. While
Maria Nikolajeva argues that in children's fantasy literature being a magical person
is often empowering ("Development" 57-8), in some fictional worlds it is illegal to
be a magical person, sometimes under penalty of death. As magical humans in
contemporary literature are rhetorically constructed as a re-writing of how witches
have been constructed historically, the systemic speciesism that oppresses magical
humans in contemporary texts is based in myths that offer a limited understanding of
the persecution of witches historically, often in ways that are similar to the
persecution of witches in Early Modern Western Europe and North America. In the
examples I have found, magical humans are discursively constructed as a threat, they
are hunted down and, if caught, they are executed.

Historically, literature, folklore and myth have offered a limited understanding
of the persecution of witches. Previous constructions of witches have demonstrated
that it was generally understood that in the Early Modern period there existed a mass
panic regarding witchcraft, leading to 'social exclusion and cynical exploitation, […]
a phenomenon characterized by persecution, bigotry, irrational hatred and violence'
(Nenonen and Toivo, "Challenging" 1). What is often forgotten or unknown is that
'such panics were relatively rare' and 'a considerable number of the accused, often
the majority, were acquitted' (Nenonen and Toivo, "Challenging" 1, 6). Literature,
folklore and myth have greatly exaggerated the persecution of witches, establishing
into the Western social consciousness a better understanding of witch oppression
than of the witches themselves. On a very general level, the witch, often female, is 'a
historically powerful figure who is feared because of her supposed magical abilities,
pact with the devil, and heretical activities' (Wallraven, *Women Writers* 39). The
magical power of witches and their construction as evil and heretical makes them a

threat to a system of power, justifying their oppression. In a Post-Enlightenment context, witches are almost entirely remembered as pagans and/or women who were unfairly persecuted (Hutton, "Witchcraft" 191-3). It is the persecution itself that has come to define the witch, specifically the illegality of witchcraft, and the subsequent hunting and execution of witches. The justifications for oppressing witches in Early Modern Western Europe and North America, including the understandings of witches as evil, heretical, pagan, and dangerous women, are the same justifications for oppressing magical humans in fictional worlds.

Historically, witches were believed to gain their magical powers by making pacts with the devil. In contemporary children's fantastika literature, witches are often born with their magical abilities, and have no association with evil forces. Regardless, magical humans are often still discursively constructed as evil, and it is this construction that justifies their oppression. For example, in the fictional world of The Star Lands of Claire Legrand's *Foxheart* (USA 2016), people are 'taught all their lives to be suspicious of the unusual. But they told themselves that most of the witches had been killed, and that the Wolf King was even now hunting those who remain' (Legrand 2). The execution of witches is justified because they 'had been deemed evil' (13). This discursive construction of witches as evil is not based in evidence, instead it is a belief that the Wolf King fabricated in order to maintain his power: 'the Wolf King had sowed in the hearts of humans distrust and fear of witches […] He taught them false truths about witches, but no one still lived who knew the real truth and would speak it' (90). The discursive construction of witches as evil in The Star Lands is similar to the writings about witches in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, which systemized the belief that witches were evil because they had a pact with the devil, providing a justification for witch hunts

(Roper, *The Witch* 27). The belief that witches had a pact with the devil began in

1480 when the Inquisition argued in a papal bull that pagans had sold their souls to

the devil in order to become diabolical witches (Jones and Pennick, *A History of*

Pagan Europe 205). Since then, witches have been discursively constructed as evil

in literature, folklore and myth so as to justify their persecution, a construction that is

also used to justify the oppression of witches in The Star Lands of Legrand's

Foxheart. While the magical humans of Legrand's text have not made a pact with the

devil, their rhetorical construction is a response to historical and literary

constructions of witches as evil, and works to rewrite this idea. The good, magical

people of this text who fight for peace and freedom demonstrate a direct response to

historical constructions of witches, and an effort to rewrite magical people in a more

positive light.

In Michael Dante DiMartino's *Rebel Genius* (USA 2016), magical humans are

considered heretics, threats to the system of political power in the Zizzolan Empire.

In this novel, certain artists have psychic connections with magical animals called

Geniuses, and together the two of them can cast spells. When the artist emperor of

the Zizzolan Empire, Nerezza, feels threatened by a more powerful artist, Ugalino,

she 'began killing off Geniuses […] She began to see every artist as a potential

threat' (DiMartino 118). Like the witches of the Early Modern period, the magical

artists of the Zizzolan Empire are deemed a threat by the Emperor. And just as it was

illegal to be a witch under penalty of death, 'Nerezza made it illegal for artists to

have Geniuses […] if a Genius flew into a child's life, it meant a death sentence for

both' (9). When Emperor Nerezza succeeds in wiping out most Geniuses, she

establishes herself as the most powerful artist in the Empire, changing her title to

Supreme Creator Nerezza (5). This title has a religious connotation, giving her a

goddess-like status. Ronald Hutton argues that a distinguishing feature of the Early

Modern witch trials was that 'the Europe of medieval western Christianity is the only

region in which witchcraft has been regarded as an organized heretical religion,

owing allegiance to a cosmic power of evil locked into a struggle with the true deity

and his true church' ("Witchcraft" 202-3). Within real world history, witches were

constructed as heretics, a threat to a religious system of power. This conception of

the witch's heresy, and the threat it poses to a system of political power, has

contributed to the historical construction of witches in literature, folklore and myth.

In *Rebel Genius*, the discursive construction of artists as heretics is used as a

justification for the systemic oppression of magical humans in the Zizzolan Empire.

Nerezza's construction as a genocidal dictator functions to rewrite the rhetorical

construction of magical humans not as heretics, but as resistance fighters, rebels with

a just cause.

The understanding of Early Modern witches as pagans may explain the

association between magical humans and nature in Cressida Cowell's *The Wizards of

Once* (UK 2017). The Wizards of the Wizard Wild Woods live in the woods and are

oppressed by the colonizing, industrial Iron Warrior Empire. The Iron Warriors kill

all wizards on sight, burning up the forest the Wizards live in and destroying the

Wizard way of life (Cowell 178). Queen Sychorax, queen of the Iron Warriors,

justifies the oppression of wizards by arguing, 'We are civilisation. We are progress.

Look at us. Look at our weapons, our clothes, our tapestries, our furniture. You

Wizards, in comparison, are barely better than animals' (230). Wizards are

constructed as less than Warriors because they dwell in and associate with nature and

the natural world. Historically, witches have been constructed in literature, folklore

and myth in relation to real-world paganism, which is also associated with nature.

Paganism is a 'Nature-venerating religion which endeavours to set human life in harmony with the great cycles embodied in the rhythms of the seasons' (Jones and Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* 2). The Wizards of Cowell's novel are definitely in harmony with nature. Xar, the protagonist, is friends with 'five wolves, three snowcats, a bear, eight sprites, an enormous giant called Crusher, and a small crowd of other Wizard youngsters' and they all live together in the forest (23). Historical constructions of witches have involved the expectation that they 'understand nature because they used natural substances in their craft. More simply, however, because their meetings, rites and revels were clandestine, they had to be held well away from centers of population, in meadows, woods or mountains' (Hutton, "Witchcraft" 195). The oppression of the Wizards of *The Wizards of Once* as uncivilized, wild forest-dwellers emphasizes the unfair negative associations between witchcraft and paganism in historical constructions of the witch. By rhetorically constructing the Wizards as having a deep and meaningful relationship with nature, Cowell's text rewrites the historical witch and reconstructs magical humans with positive associations between magic and the natural world.

The wild witch of the early modern period has often been associated with powerful women, resulting in a historical construction of witches as oppressed by a system of patriarchy. In Jasmine Richards' *The Book of Wonders* (USA 2012), both women and magical humans are oppressed by the power-hungry sultan of Arribitha. The sultan fears women, hunting them because, 'Before he came into power it was women who were the most skilled in magic' (Richards 31). There is an intersectional oppression of magical girls, whose power is considered the most threatening to Arribitha's system of power. When the protagonists, Zardi and Rhidan meet a magical medicine woman named Sula, they ask her 'If you have magical abilities,

why didn't Shahryār [the sultan] have you killed, like he killed everyone else?' to which she responds 'I live because I hid. Because for years, I denied who I was. I still hide' (131). In Arribitha, women cannot express their magical abilities openly for fear of being executed. Historically, witches are often constructed in literature, folklore and myth as women. However, in the real-world, this association has been less clear. While Hutton acknowledges that the image of the witch is 'one of very few images of independent female power that traditional European culture has bequeathed to the present' he also argues 'the majority of those accused [of witchcraft] in the early modern period were male' ("Witchcraft" 194).

One possible explanation for the association of witchcraft with women is that while men were known to learn magic from books and teachers in a controlled environment, 'Women seem to have been, by contrast, regarded as natural repositories of magical power and knowledge, less regulated, more spontaneous and more dangerous' (Hutton, "Witchcraft 195). The wild magic of women of the Early Modern period was considered more dangerous than that of men, not only to non-magical systems of power, but also to patriarchy. This image of the dangerous magical woman has been propagated by cultural texts, such as literature, folklore and myth, establishing a literary tradition that emphasizes the connection between magic and women. In order to maintain a patriarchal system of non-magical power, such as that of Shahryār's in Arribitha, female witches are doubly oppressed in an intersectional system of oppression. Richard's text, in rhetorically constructing the protagonist as a magical girl resisting an evil man in order to save her sister, rewrites the construction of the witch from an evil woman to a woman resisting evil. It is in Zardi's fight against the intersectional oppression of both women and the magical

human that this text is able to emphasize the problems of historically associating women's power as evil, and redefine this power as a source for good.

In many works of contemporary children's fantasy fiction, magical humans have little to no interaction with non-magical humans because they choose to segregate themselves from the rest of the world due to the belief that non-magical humans are inferior to magical humans. In Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Witch* (USA 2011), the inferiority of the non-magical is specifically considered a moral and intellectual inferiority. In the novel, magical humans are called 'Leopard people,' non-magical humans are called 'Lambs,' and Leopard people who come from Lamb families are called 'free agents.' Sunny, the protagonist, is a free agent who comes to learn that there is nothing worse in the world than a Lamb. Lambs are described as: 'idiots' (Okorafor 18), twisted and superstitious (78), 'Lambs think money and material things are the most important thing in the world. You can cheat, lie, steal, kill, be dumb as a rock' if you have money (81-2), and 'Lambs are on a constant, unrealistic, irrational, and unnatural quest for perfection' (98). Meanwhile Leopard society is described as a 'high society' (98); a place where free agents can lose their Lamb-like ignorance (18). The segregation from Lambs is enforced through magic. The central space of the Leopard people is called Leopard Knocks, which can only be accessed by using magic to call up one's spirit face, something only Leopard people can do (66). The moral inferiority of the Lambs makes them dangerous, resulting in Leopard people having to live in hiding (56). This trope suggests that magical humans are better off without non-magical humans, a decision that is justifiable in relation to the perceived history of the persecution of real-world witches in literature, folklore, myth and culture. Even in texts in which magical and non-magical humans rarely interact, the perceived historical oppression of the

magical can still function to shape the lived experiences of the text's characters, and construct their fictional world.

Historically, witches have been constructed in literature, folklore and myth in direct relation to the persecution of witches in Early Modern Europe and North America. This historical magical human in cultural texts and memory has traditionally been rhetorically constructed as devil-worshipping, heretical, pagan women. Contemporary children's fantastika literature has taken these historical constructions and rewritten the rhetorical construction of the magical human in resistant response. Magical people have been re-written in various ways, including Legrand's good witches, DiMartino's resistance fighters, Cowell's nature-connected wizards, and Richards' intersectional feminists. When magical humans find a way to live in peace, they often do so in a way that involves a self-segregation from the inferior non-magical. In works like Okorafor's *Akata Witch*, it is non-magical humans' moral and intellectual inferiority that makes them dangerous. In each case, the rhetorical construction of the magical human not only shapes the systemic speciesism of each text's fictional world in a specific way, but that oppression is a response to the historical construction of witch persecution. By re-writing the rhetorical construction of magical people in contemporary children's fantastika literature, so too is the oppression of witches historically critiqued.

Conclusion

The analysis of systemic oppression in the fictional worlds of children's fantastika literature needs to consider all social groups represented in the text, including those fictional species that do not exist in the real world. Non-mimetic fictional species have here been divided into six clear categories: fantastic creatures,

talking animals, the posthuman, aliens, spirits and the undead, and magical humans. Each category of fictional species is rhetorically constructed in different ways, in turn resulting in differing methods of worldbuilding systemic speciesism. Each method of worldbuilding employs a particular use of philosophy, metaphor and or history in its construction of systemic speciesism.

The worldbuilding of the systemic oppression of fantastic creatures and talking animals employs philosophies of historic forms of scientific racism. The rhetorical construction of different fantastic creatures and their oppression is based in biological determinism, often in ways that function as metaphors for particular ideas. The fictional worlds of talking animals are constructed within the dynamics of social Darwinism, placing value on those animals who demonstrate superiority either physically or through their civility.

The rhetorical construction of the posthuman and aliens involve a combination of philosophies and metaphors. Posthuman philosophy rhetorically constructs the technologically mediated human and the humanoid automaton as metaphors for social anxieties regarding the role of technology in shaping the future. The attempt to overcome social anxieties about technology and the future is represented as adult humans attempting to own and control posthuman children in an intersectional system of aetonormativity and speciesism. Philosophies of the Self function to rhetorically construct the extra-terrestrial alien as a metaphor for an Other who is also a Self, resulting in a system of speciesism that involves competing to be the most dominant Self.

History also has a role to play in the rhetorical construction of fictional species, often in a way that engages directly with the tropes of the genre. Spirits and the undead have historically been metaphors for social anxieties, and in contemporary

texts this continues to be true. Oppressed as subaltern subjects, sprits and the undead are silent scapegoats for social problems that are not properly resolved. The rhetorical construction of magical humans also involves history, though this species is a re-writing of how witches have been constructed and persecuted in literature, folklore and myth historically. The systemic oppression of the magical human works to resist the historical persecution of witches, both in the real-world and in cultural texts.

The worldbuilding of systemic speciesism differs across categories of species. While there are exceptions to the 'rules' outlined in this analysis, tropes of children's fantastika genres have generally resulted in particular uses of various philosophies, metaphors and histories. The thirty-two texts investigated in this chapter demonstrate the way the value of understanding the particular philosophies, metaphors and histories used to rhetorically construct fictional species so as to understand how each species is oppressed. When analyzing the systemic oppression of a fictional world, it is important to note the particular ways different categories of fictional species are rhetorically constructed if this analysis is to be wholly intersectional.

Chapter Five

Narratives of Oppressed Heroes

Introduction

The systemic oppression of a fictional world constructs privileged and oppressed heroes differently. The privileged hero of children's literature is often constructed as innocent and empowered, able to access opportunity and gain temporary power and agency. The oppressed hero is neither innocent nor empowered; without any social respect they are often forced to do what they must for the sake of survival. Maria Nikolajeva argues that all children are oppressed ("Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature" 227), and thus all heroes of children's literature are oppressed heroes. Vanessa Joosen furthers this theory, arguing that it is often the 'childism [of adults that] is often what moves the story forward' in children's novels ("The Adult as Foe or Friend?" 208). The oppressed hero of my argument must be intersectionally oppressed. Due to the ways the hero is oppressed other than by being a child, oppressed heroes do not evoke the carnivalesque; they do not reverse established social power systems and do not gain empowerment or independence. Instead, the oppressed hero's plot, synthetic construction as actant, and meaning-making as focalizer are all specifically influenced by each hero's respective social system of oppression.

Who gets to be a hero in children's literature is an important question that requires further investigation. John Flanagan's *Ranger's Apprentice: The Ruins of Gorlan* (Australia 2004) explores this question. The protagonist, Will, is told that his father died a hero, and so, in his classist social system, he naturally assumes that his father was a knight (Flanagan 11). When his mentor, Halt, informs him that his

father was a sergeant, Will is disappointed. Halt tells him: 'Don't judge a man's quality by his position in life, Will. Your father, Daniel, was a loyal and brave soldier. He didn't have the opportunity to go to Battleschool because he began life as a farmer. But, if he had, he would have been one of the greatest knights' (276). Because of his social class, Daniel is denied access to the opportunity to become a knight. While Halt does not judge Daniel for this, Will's assumption that his hero father would naturally be a knight provides evidence to the way classism shapes social consciousness in the fictional world of Araluen. While Halt is a famous war hero, Daniel is all but forgotten after his death. Flanagan's text points to a social issue that is recurrent in children's fantastika literature, in which heroes are historically privileged, and oppressed heroes are frequently under-represented and rarely understood.

One of the most common ways children's fantastika literature has traditionally valued the socially privileged is by rewarding heroes with social mobility. Often a narrative will end by crowning the hero, or awarding them a social position of respect and or prestige. Emily Rodda's *Deltora Quest* series (Australia 2000-2002) reinforces the valuing of the socially privileged in the conclusion of the hero's journey. When the Lord of Shadow takes over the Land of Deltora, Lief, the son of a blacksmith, is called to find the missing gems of Deltora, and rebuild a magical belt that can defeat the Lord of Shadow. Accompanying him on his quest is a working-class man named Barda, who tells Lief he wanted to 'go alone on the quest for the gems' much sooner, but Lief's parents 'believed that you should be given the chance' (Rodda, *The Forest of Silence* 85). After a girl named Jasmine joins Barda and Lief and the three succeed in fixing the Belt of Deltora, they learn that Lief is 'the true heir of Deltora' and his blacksmith parents have been the royal family in hiding all

along (Rodda, *Return to Del* 540). While Barda could have fixed the Belt of Deltora much sooner, and the terrible reign of the Lord of Shadow could have been much shorter, the opportunity to save Deltora is given to the prince. The narrative ends with Lief taking his place on the throne, emphasizing this social mobility both as something Lief earned by being a hero, and as a desirable reward for his efforts. At no point does the narrative emphasize that Barda was denied access to the same heroism that justifies Lief's social mobility. Instead, Barda is described as 'the big man kneeling so silently beside him [Lief]' (*Return to Del* 546). Rodda's text employs a common tradition of children's fantastika to ultimately reinforce the value of the upper class, and the submission of the working class.

The oppressed hero of children's fantastika literature is not afforded the opportunity to embody innocence and hope, nor are they empowered as saviours. To investigate this further, I analyze the oppressed hero of children's fantastika literature in three parts. First, I consider the hero's journey of the oppressed hero. I argue the hero's journey of the intersectionally oppressed hero deviates from Campbell's hero's journey. Second, I explore privileged and oppressed heroes and helpers according to Propp's theories of the Dramatis Personae, arguing that privileged and oppressed actants navigate access to heroism differently. Whether or not characters have any social privilege affects their ease of access to certain opportunities, including the opportunity to become a respected hero. Lastly, I examine how the oppressed hero's perspective influences the text's meaning through focalized narration. Typically in children's fantastika the protagonist is the hero, and I show that their point of view is influenced by their embodied position within a system of oppression.

My analysis of the hero's journey of the oppressed hero will include Roshani Chokshi's *Aru Shah and the End of Time* (USA 2018), Oisin McGann's *The Harvest Tide Project* (Ireland 2004), Isobelle Carmody's *Little Fur: The Legend Begins* (Australia 2005), Mira Bartók's *The Wonderling* (USA 2017), Stefan Bachmann's *The Peculiar* (USA 2012), Wesley King's *Dragon's VS. Drones* (Canada 2016), Kekla Magoon's *Shadows of Sherwood* (USA 2015), Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* (Ireland 2001) and *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident* (Ireland 2002), Joshua Khan's *Shadow Magic* (UK 2016), and Frances Hardinge's *A Face Like Glass* (UK 2012). My analysis of the synthetic construction of heroes as actants will include Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (USA 2005), Anne Ursu's *The Real Boy* (USA 2013), and Adam Rex's *The True Meaning of Smekday* (USA 2007). My analysis of focalized narration includes Laurence Yep and Joanne Ryder's *A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Humans* (USA 2015), and Holly Black and Cassandra Clare's *Magisterium* books *The Iron Trial* (USA 2014) and *The Bronze Key* (USA 2016).

The Oppressed Hero's Journey

Systemic oppression affects the plot of a children's fantastika novel with an intersectionally oppressed hero, shaping the hero's journey differently than the hero's journey of a privileged hero. The hero's journey is the plot of the hero narrative, a pattern found in hero myth narratives and popularized by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). In children's literature terms, this plot may be better understood as a coming of age, a part of the 'bildungsroman' genre. Maria Nikolajeva argues that 'all children's literature can be labeled as bildungsroman' (*The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* ix). Mikhail Bakhtin defines this

as a genre concerned with the formulation of the hero (*Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* 37), and it can be mostly understood as relating to 'the personal development of the protagonist' ("Bildungsroman (development novel)"). This is a universalist approach to the field of children's literature that does not hold true for all works of children's literature (see, for example, Peter in Barrie's *Peter Pan* or Alice in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.) For the privileged and oppressed hero, this 'personal development' involves significantly different processes. The hero's journey of the privileged hero allows the hero to access personal and spiritual growth as an empowered saviour. For the oppressed hero, the hero's journey allows the hero to gain a more intimate understanding of their own oppression (often through direct experiences of oppression), and their personal growth involves their learning how to navigate their identity in a society that oppresses them.

For the purposes of this study, I will primarily limit my analysis of the hero's journey to the areas identified by Maria Nikolajeva in *Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*. Nikolajeva argues that Campbell's hero's journey 'corresponds exactly to the "basic plot" of children's fiction' and argues what 'traits of this hero have been inherited by the characters of children's fiction' (28). I will investigate the specific areas of Campbell's hero's journey that Nikolajeva posits are a part of the 'basic plot' of children's fiction by analyzing: the call to adventure in Roshani Chokshi's *Aru Shah and the End of Time* (USA 2018), the refusal of the call in Oisin McGann's *The Harvest Tide Project* (Ireland 2004), the supernatural aid in Isobelle Carmody's *Little Fur: The Legend Begins* (Australia 2005), the crossing of the first threshold in Mira Bartók's *The Wonderling* (USA 2017), the road of trials in Stefan Bachmann's *The Peculiar* (USA 2012), the meeting with the goddess in Wesley King's *Dragon's VS. Drones* (Canada 2016), the woman as temptress in Kekla

Magoon's *Shadows of Sherwood* (USA 2015), atonement with the father in Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* (Ireland 2001) and *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident* (Ireland 2002), the ultimate boon in Joshua Khan's *Shadow Magic* (UK 2016), and the return in Frances Hardinge's *A Face Like Glass* (UK 2012). In each instance I argue how the systemic oppression of the fictional world influences the hero's journey, altering it in a way that differs from the hero's journey of the privileged hero.

It is often more difficult for an oppressed hero to access the opportunity to be called to adventure than a privileged hero. Joseph Campbell argues that the call for adventure can take multiple different forms:

> The hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure, […] or he may be carried or sent abroad by some benign or malignant agent, […] The adventure may begin as a mere blunder […] or still again, one may be only casually strolling, when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths of man. (*Hero* 53-4)

This is not necessarily the case for the oppressed hero. For example, in Roshani Chokshi's *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, Aru and her sister Mini are initially refused their adventure because they are girls. When Aru lights the Lamp of Bharata, she awakens an ancient demon named the Sleeper and risks the end of the world. Almost immediately, a talking pigeon named Subala arrives looking for one of the five Pandava brothers, arguing that only these male warriors can light the lamp (Chokshi 21). When Aru informs the bird that she lit the lamp, he responds, 'Well, then, we might as well let the world end' (21). Subala, nicknamed Boo, takes Aru and her sister to the makara Guardians to determine what to do. The makara are the ones who decide whether or not to send Aru and Mini on their adventure, but when they

see that the Pandava brothers have reincarnated as sisters, the makara Urvashi says, 'it must be unanimously agreed by the Guardians in residence that we believe they are semidivine. *I* do not believe. And if they're *only* children, they shouldn't bother' (56). Aru and Mini are initially denied their call to adventure both because they are girls and because they are children. The only way the makara Guardians will agree to allow Aru and Mini to go on their adventure and try to save the world is if they are 'Claimed' by their respective divine fathers (56-7). The 'Claiming' is a process in which statues of the gods either claim or kill the person being tested. Despite the fact that only a reincarnated Pandava can light the Lamp of Bharata, Aru and Mini are only able to be called to adventure after they go through a life-risking process that confirms that two girls can be warriors.

Aru and Mini's initial exclusion here directly contradicts Clémentine Beauvais' argument that 'The child as symbol is mighty because it "owns" the only thing that the adult does not: the future' (*The Mighty Child* 57). The child is mighty because of the time they have left, and the opportunity time gives them to change the world (Beauvais, *The Mighty Child* 19). If oppression is defined by a lack or difficult access to opportunity, then Beauvais' concept of the child being mighty because of how time provides the opportunity to change the world does not always apply to intersectionally oppressed children. Time does not provide opportunity for all children equally. Aru and Mini have difficulty accessing the opportunity to be accepted as warriors, more so than they would if they were men, because they are very specifically not believed to be mighty. When their respective godly fathers claim them as Pandavas, Urvashi responds, 'Perhaps it means the gods do not wish the world to be saved' (71). The makara Guardians eventually call the heroines to

adventure, but in their reluctance to do so they emphasize how much more difficult it is for girls to access opportunity than their grown and male counterparts.

If offered the opportunity of an adventure, the oppressed hero may not refuse the call to adventure, but may instead actively pursue it. Campbell argues, 'Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or "culture," […] a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest' (*Hero* 54-5). The adventure of the oppressed hero may not be a giving up of one's own interest, but rather the opposite, a means by which to pursue one's own interest. This is exemplified in Oisin McGann's *The Harvest Tide Project*. The protagonists, Taya and Lorkrin, are a shape-shifting species called Myunans. When Lorkrin steals his Uncle Emos's transmorphing quill, an illegal tool for shapeshifting objects, and then loses it when the character Shessil Groach accidentally puts it in his bag and flees from the Myunan children, Taya and Lorkrin have no choice but to pursue Groach in their attempts to get the quill back (McGann 34). For Taya and Lorkrin, retrieving the dangerous quill is not only about avoiding severe punishment from their uncle, it is also within a social context in which their species is treated with fear, unease and suspicion: 'there were many places where Emos was not welcome. He had become accustomed to staying out of the way of people' (91). In the wrong hands, the transmorphing quill could be used to justify the further oppression of not only their uncle, but their entire species. Taya and Lorkrin pursue a dangerous adventure, facing life threatening situations head-on, because of their personal and social investment in returning the transmorphing quill to their uncle. On multiple occasions adult characters try to refuse Taya and Lorkrin their adventure; for example, when their family friend Draegar finds them, he 'suggested they start back towards Uncle Emos's farm. The shape-changers had tried to object, but his tone had

left scant room for argument' (130-1). Instead of allowing their adventure to be refused on their behalf, Taya and Lorkrin get away from Draegar and continue their pursuit of Groach and the quill. Oppressed as children and as Myunans, Taya and Lorkrin cannot afford not to pursue their adventure, and they actively choose to work hard on this adventure in pursuit of their own interest. For the intersectionally oppressed child hero, the refusal of the call to adventure may not be an option; to refuse the work required is to risk further oppression.

The oppressed hero may not be provided with supernatural aid, and may have to entirely rely on their own abilities in order to accomplish their task. Campbell describes this third step in the hero's journey as an encounter 'with a protective figure […] who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass' (*Hero* 63). In Isobelle Carmody's *Little Fur: The Legend Begins*, the intersectionally oppressed hero is not offered any protection or helpful amulets from the supernatural aid she encounters. When a group of humans begin burning down trees, Little Fur, a creature who is half elf and half troll, goes to The Sett Owl for help in stopping the humans and saving the trees. The Sett Owl is a magical being described as 'more than owl' (Carmody 71). When Little Fur asks the Sett Owl for help, the Sett Owl refuses to do more than give Little Fur directions to ask someone else for help, a mysterious ancient power a great distance away (70). Maria Nikolajeva argues, 'The overwhelming majority of fantasy novels feature ordinary children temporarily empowered through a magic agent' ("Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature" 230). Little Fur is not temporarily empowered by a magic agent, she is not provided an amulet or any kind of supernatural aid. Despite her telling the Sett Owl, 'I can't stop the tree burners, Sett Owl. You know I can't. I am not a hero' the Sett Owl tells her 'I cannot give you any power to save your

wilderness' (67, 68). The Sett Owl believes that 'Neither troll nor elf would normally make such a journey' and so Little Fur is left with nothing more than the Sett Owl's belief that 'The sum is greater than its parts' (64, 71-2). Without supernatural aid, Little Fur must rely on her own abilities as she makes a dangerous journey she openly states she is unprepared for. With only her own skills and the generous help of others, the intersectionally oppressed hero is at greater risk of harm than the privileged hero.

The crossing of the first threshold can function as a means by which the oppressed hero can find freedom and liberation. Oppressed within their own context, crossing the first threshold carries the hope of a better life elsewhere. Campbell describes crossing the first threshold as 'a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown' leading to dangers and risks (*Hero* 76). In Mira Bartók's *The Wonderling*, Arthur and Trinket, humanoid animals known as groundlings, face dangers and risks when they escape from Miss Carbunkle's Home for Wayward and Misbegotten Creatures. However, their crossing of the first threshold, the wall keeping them within their prison-like orphanage, is an act of rebellion in the pursuit of freedom and liberation. As Trinket explains, 'Better to fall and die [climbing the wall] than stay here the rest of your life!' (Bartók 106). The escape over the wall is described as: 'Amidst their fellow groundlings' wild happy cries, the two friends sailed over the Wall to the great Outside' (107). While Campbell argues that, 'The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored' (*Hero* 71), the oppressed groundlings are neither content nor proud to remain within their bounds, and instead cheer in support of escape. The

crossing of the first threshold functions not as an entering into the dangerous

unknown, but rather as a hopeful pursuit of the potential of the unknown.

The second stage of Campbell's Hero's Journey is called 'Initiation.' For the

oppressed hero, every step of Initiation reinforces the hero's oppressed social

position. Initiation begins with the road of trials, where, according to Campbell, the

hero 'must survive a succession of trials' (*Hero* 89). This stage of the hero's journey,

while it may involve some failure, involves 'a multitude of preliminary victories,

unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land' (*Hero* 100).

In children's literature, this part of the adventure typically evokes the carnivalesque;

because children in Western society have no voice or social power, positioning them

as heroes reverses the established social power system and grants child heroes

temporary empowerment in their acts of strength and bravery and in their

independence from adults (Nikolajeva, "Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's

Literature" 227). However, this is not necessarily the case for the intersectionally

oppressed hero. For example, in Stefan Bachmann's *The Peculiar*, Bartholomew is

not able to reverse the established social power system. Bartholomew is a

changeling, also known as a peculiar, half-human and half-fairy, a creature rejected

by both human and fairy societies. Throughout the course of Bartholomew's hero's

journey, he is entirely reliant on the adult human character, Mr. Jelliby. On their

adventure, Mr. Jelliby makes all of the decisions on where the two should go,

including the decision to go to the Goblin Market to get supplies. Here, Mr. Jelliby is

able to purchase weapons needed for the adventure while Bartholomew is refused

service and barred from the shops because he is a changeling (Bachmann 278). In

The Peculiar, the oppressed hero's road of trials does not involve a carnivalesque

reversal of social power systems. Bartholomew is not empowered but is instead

entirely dependent on the adult human Mr. Jelliby, in turn being forced to follow through with Mr. Jelliby's plans to stop Mr. Lickerish instead of Bartholomew's need to save his changeling sister. Here the needs and voice of the human majority are given significant precedence over those of the oppressed changeling minority.

One reason there is not a carnivalesque reversal of power structures in *The Peculiar* is because Bartholomew, like many intersectionally oppressed children, is not viewed as a child in the first place. When his changeling sister, Hettie, is kidnapped, Bartholomew ventures into his oppressive society to find her. Immediately he is attacked by a human stranger who calls him a 'devil boy' (Bachmann 223). In this instance, Bartholomew is defined as something evil, as someone lacking the innocence that has come to define childhood. Maria Nikolajeva argues that child heroes are often based on the Wordsworthian Romantic child; it is the child's innocence that gives them the ability to conquer evil ("Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature" 232). Bartholomew is not viewed as an innocent child, and is thus not viewed as one who could conquer evil. In fact, Bartholomew is not viewed as a child whatsoever. The stranger who attacks Bartholomew continues, saying, 'this ain't no child. This is one o' them changelings, it is' (226). In this instance, Bartholomew, a child, is adultified, discursively robbed of the identity of a child. Adultification in the real-world is a form of racism that dehumanizes Black children by robbing them 'of the very essence of what makes childhood distinct from all other developmental periods: innocence' (Epstein, et al., "Girlhood Interrupted" n.p.). Adultification has a history in children's literature; according to Robin Bernstein, the innocence of childhood in children's literature has been historically raced as white (*Racial Innocence* 4). In *The Peculiar*, Bartholomew is adultified in much the same way as a Black child. According to Phillip Atiba Goff, et al., the

dehumanization of people of colour in the United States of America has rendered the 'category of "children" less essential and distinct from "adults." This may also cause individuals to see Black children as more like adults or, more precisely, to see them as older than they are' ("The Essence of Innocence" 527). This adultification of Black children means that 'Black children would be seen as less innocent as well as older than their other-raced peers' ("The Essence of Innocence" 528). Whether because they are Black or because they are changelings, viewing intersectionally oppressed children as less innocent functions to maintain the power of the privileged. In *The Peculiar*, Bartholomew cannot access a carnivalesque reversal of age-related power structures because he is also oppressed as a changeling. The adultification of Bartholomew as a changeling functions to maintain human power and limit the oppressed hero's access to empowerment and agency.

In the oppressed hero's journey, the three most significant symbolic figures of the Initiation, the Goddess, the Temptress and the father, are often represented by those who have more systemic privilege than the protagonist. As Campbell's descriptions of these symbolic figures are inherently sexist, I will instead employ Nikolajeva's (still heteronormative) definition of the first two as 'a friend or an opponent of the opposite sex who initiates a turning point in the protagonist's life' (*Rhetoric of Character* 29). The relationship the oppressed hero has with this friend, opponent and or father (here changed to: adult figure of authority) functions to reinforce the oppression of the hero. For example, in Wesley King's *Dragon's VS. Drones*, the dragon Vero acts as a friend to the protagonists. In the fictional world of Dracone, dragons and humans are at war. Dree, daughter of an ex-dragon rider who lost his job when the war began, lives in destitute poverty while secretly befriending a dragon named Lourdvang. When incredibly powerful drones suddenly appear in

Dracone, they attack both humans and dragons alike. Dree comes to realize that 'The drones destroyed the poor districts, […] The outside towns and villages. They never touched the downtown core or the palace' where the upper-class live (King 228). In an attempt to protect both the working class and the dragons, Dree, her friend Marcus, and Lourdvang try to build their own drone, but the drone they build is not powerful enough to stop the other drones. Their only option is to power their drone with the Egg, a magical source of dragon power. They believe the Egg is with the Flames, the most powerful and vicious group of dragons, unharmed by the war with the humans and by the attack of the drones. When Helvath, leader of the Flames, refuses to help the protagonists, Vero, another Flame, secretly tells the heroes that the Egg was last seen in the town of Toloth (191). Dree and her friends are not only unable to stop the drones without the help of the Flames, but they are unable to get the help of the Flames without a member of this group to support them. Vero's position of authority among the Flames gives her access to knowledge that few others have, and she uses this knowledge to help the heroes save Dracone, something they could not do without Vero's help. Dree cannot save her home herself, but must instead ask those with more privilege for their help. Dree's position as an oppressed child is reinforced by her reliance on Vero as the symbolic friend.

In Kekla Magoon's *Shadows of Sherwood*, Robyn Loxley's symbolic opponent is the sheriff of Nott City, Marissa Mallet. In this gender and race-bent science fiction re-telling of the Robin Hood legend, Robyn steals from the rich to help the poor in a city that limits access to resources. Robyn's primary theft in the text is medicine. While the wealthy citizens of the Castle Districts are immunized from the sickness caused by stingbugs, the working class have to chew on bitterstalk in order to avoid getting seriously ill. When the governor, Ignomus Crown, takes over the

city, 'The Notting Wood, once public land, had been declared private government property. Citizens from most counties—all but the Castle District, it seemed—were not to enter the woods anymore without permission' (Magoon 106). Notting Wood is the only place the working class can access bitterstalk and so, without access to Notting Wood, their only option is to buy medicine from a clinic. However, the doors to the clinics do not open unless a person has an InstaScan Tag (218). Most of the working class do not have Tags and thus cannot enter the clinics to buy medicine, and those that do cannot afford it (45, 212). With the help of her friends Scarlet and Merryan, Robyn sneaks into a local clinic and steals the stingbug antibiotics (292-3). She leaves a note, signed, so that no one else gets arrested for something she did. Not long after, the police arrive at a camp where many of the homeless and working class live: 'The MPs [police] are down there tearing the whole place apart. They're looking for anyone with stingbug meds and threatening to arrest everyone else, until Robyn turns herself in' (319). In this moment, Mallet tries to tempt Robyn into giving up her resistance work for the sake of the people she is trying to help. However, as an intersectionally oppressed hero, Robyn cannot afford to be tempted. Robyn understands the corruption of the Nott City police from first hand experience, and she knows that turning herself in will not help the working-class people of Nott City in the long run. Unlike a privileged hero, who may seriously consider a temptation to stop fighting or pursue other opportunities, Robyn, as an intersectionally oppressed hero, does not have the option to be tempted. Instead, Robyn has to work hard to out-manoeuvre her opponent in a way that does not deviate from her heroic pursuits.

In Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*, Holly Short's atonement with an adult figure of authority is with her boss, Commander Root. This atonement functions to reinforce

Holly's oppressed position. While not technically a child, as an elf 'a centimetre below the fairy average' she functions as a child stand-in much as Bilbo Baggins does in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Holly is a LEPrecon of the fictional world of Haven, 'an elite branch of the Lower Elements Police,' and is the 'first female officer in Recon's history […] Recon was a notoriously dangerous posting with a high fatality rate' (Colfer 33, 32). Holly believes that her boss, Commander Root, does not think Recon 'was any place for a girlie' (32). When Holly is a fraction of a minute late for work, Root screams at and reprimands her despite others still not having shown up to work (35-37). Root explains to Holly:

> You are the first girl in Recon. Ever. You are a test case. A beacon. There
>
> are a million fairies out there watching your every move. There are a lot
>
> of hopes riding on you. But there is a lot of prejudice against you too.
>
> The future of law enforcement is in your hands. (37)

As the first and only female officer, Holly's actions do not just reflect poorly on her, but also on her entire sex. Holly must succeed not only for herself, but for all other women as well. When Holly is kidnapped by Artemis Fowl, she works hard to save herself and prove her value as a female officer. According to Campbell, the atonement stage of the hero's journey 'consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id)' (*Hero* 120). Holly cannot abandon her 'self-generated double monster' but must instead rely on this part of her identity as she fights to prove both her worth, and the worth of women. She cannot be humble, she must be bold. When she is finally free from Artemis, her atonement with Root is not just for her own sake, but for the sake of women's futures as LEPrecon officers. In *The Arctic Incident* it is revealed that, because Holly was kidnapped by Artemis:

her position as Recon's first female officer had been under review. The

only reason she wasn't at home watering her ferns right now was that

Commander Root had threatened to turn in his own badge if Holly was

suspended. Root knew, even if Internal Affairs wasn't convinced, that the

kidnapping had not been Holly's fault, and only her quick thinking had

prevented loss of life.' (14)

As an oppressed hero, Holly's atonement functions not only to atone for her own

mistakes, but to ensure the future of her entire social group. Root's important role,

not only in supporting Holly, but in turn supporting women's potential futures as

LEPrecon officers, emphasizes Root's social privilege as a man, and Holly's

oppression as a woman.

For the accomplishment of the aims of the adventure, what Campbell titles The

Ultimate Boon, the oppressed hero is often able to solve a significant problem but is

rarely able to solve the bigger issue of the systemic oppression of the fictional world.

Kelen and Sundmark argue, 'The most potent image of child rule in the western

world is that of the Christ-child—the infant who is king […] the embodied fact of

the future and as the possibility of redemption. The child is the one who will be

savior. More mundanely, children are the hope of the future' ("Where Children Rule"

2). However, the oppressed hero is very limited in how much redemption and

salvation they can bring. In Joshua Khan's *Shadow Magic*, the protagonist, Lily, has

a very limited ultimate boon because women are not allowed to use magic. Despite

being the ruler of Gehenna, when Lily is caught by her uncle practicing magic in

secret, he explains to her that should she ever be caught, she will be burned at the

stake because it is believed that 'Men can control magic but women can't' (Khan

136). Regardless of her political power, Lily is oppressed within the patriarchal

structures of her society. But when Lily learns that her uncle is the person who killed her parents and brother, she uses magic to stop him from raising an army of the undead and taking over the world. Afterwards she gives the credit to Gabriel, a boy she very much dislikes. When later asked why, she explains, 'If they knew I was using magic, they'd all seek to destroy me' (308). Even though Lily later returns to practising magic in secret, she is denied the opportunity to be recognized as a hero by her society because she is unable to end the systemic oppression of magical women in Gehenna. While the problem of identifying and catching her family's killer is resolved in this ultimate boon, the bigger social problem of patriarchy remains intact.

Not all oppressed heroes are able to return home at the end of their adventure. While Perry Nodelman defines the plot of the generic children's story as 'home/away/home' (*The Pleasures of Children's Literature* 193), this is not always the case for the oppressed hero. Often the oppressed hero is not able to return home, but must make a new home for themselves elsewhere. Marek C. Oziewicz describes this as a 'freedom track' narrative, in which 'social justice is not immediately remediable and protagonists must leave their communities' (*Justice in Young Adult Speculative Fiction* 209). This kind of ending is exemplified in Frances Hardinge's *A Face Like Glass*. In the underground world of Caverna, the drudges are an oppressed working-class group who work to keep Caverna's resources running. When the hero, Neverfell, learns of the oppression in Caverna, she divides the alliances between the upper class families so that the drudges can lead a successful rebellion (Hardinge 444-7). When the rebels are chased from the palace, cut off from their home in the Drudgery and contained in a set of passages, 'within an hour, all four hundred of them had disappeared' (478). Neverfell, her friend Zouelle and the drudges escape

from Caverna through a secret passageway into the Overground (485). After inciting

a rebellion, Neverfell *cannot* return home, but instead makes a new life for herself in

the Overground. The final stage of Neverfell's oppressed hero's journey is influenced

not only by systemic oppression, but by an inability to end oppression in the text's

fictional world. While no evidence of this is specifically provided, the text ends on a

note of hope that the Overground will be a more liberating space.

There is no one single hero's journey of the oppressed hero. Systemic

oppression influences each step of the hero's journey of the oppressed hero, in turn

shaping the plot of diverse texts. But this influence is dependent on the specific

system of oppression of the fictional world, and the hero's intersectional identity

within that social system. While the oppressed hero may have some similarities to

the privileged hero, certain steps of their hero's journey may be influenced by

systemic oppression. Unlike the privileged hero, the intersectionally oppressed child

hero is not always able to find empowerment in a reversal of power structures.

Instead, oppressed heroes may have to navigate a system of oppression as they do

what they must in order for themselves or their loved ones to survive. Agency and

empowerment are denied to heroes like Aru in *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, Little

Fur in *Little Fur: The Legend Begins*, Bartholomew in *The Peculiar*, and Dree in

Dragons VS. Drones. For the heroes who do have agency, such as Taya and Lorkrin

in *The Harvest Tide Project*, Arthur in *The Wonderling*, Robyn in *Shadows of

Sherwood*, Holly in *Artemis Fowl*, Lily in *Shadow Magic*, and Neverfell in *A Face

Like Glass*, agency is used to willingly risk further oppression and even death. The

coming of age, or bildungsroman, in each of these texts is less about personal

spiritual growth, as is the case for the privileged hero, and is more about navigating

one's identity in a system of oppression in order to ensure survival. This (largely

spatial) analysis of the oppressed hero's journey demonstrates the value of analyzing

child characters in children's literature not only as symbols of hope for the future,

but also as people 'here and now, while they are children, and to understand, accept

and recognize children and their life worlds *in their own right*. Children are not here

merely or first of all to become adults' (Qvortrup, Corsaro, and Honig, "Why Social

Studies of Childhood?" 4, emphasis in original). The oppression of the present

should never be forgotten or ignored for the sake of the hope for the future.

Privileged and Oppressed Dramatis Personae

The synthetic construction of the intersectionally oppressed hero in children's

fantastika literature is influenced by the systemic oppression of the text's fictional

world. By synthetic, I refer to James Phelan's 'synthetic dimension' of character,

which relates to how characters are semiotic and textual constructs, rather than

mimetic representations or thematic symbols (*Reading People, Reading Plots* 2).

The systemic oppression of the fictional world determines who has access to the

social respect of the position of the hero. When heroes are privileged within their

fictional world, the text constructs a narrative that naturalizes the fictional world's

system of oppression. When heroes are oppressed in their fictional worlds, there is a

distinct difference between the construction of their role in the fictional world and

their narrative function in the text. I understand narrative function within Propp's

theory of the Dramatis Personae. Propp argues that heroes, as synthetic dimensions

of the text, are archetypal figures (known as actants) with a specific role within the

narrative. Other characters, such as helpers and villains, perform their own roles.

Propp identifies two different kinds of heroes: those who seek someone or

something, and those who must save themselves (*Morphology of the Folktale* 36-37).

While privileged heroes may be recognized as heroes *within* the fictional world, this may not be the case for oppressed heroes. Privileged heroes have an easier access to heroism than oppressed heroes in their respective fictional worlds; oppressed heroes often have to work against their societies in order to save their societies.

My analysis of the synthetic construction of the hero as actant will begin with a brief overview of the hero/helper structure. I will then analyze an example of a privileged hero: Percy Jackson in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (USA 2005). From here I will move on to an analysis of the synthetic construction of two oppressed heroes: Oscar in Anne Ursu's *The Real Boy* (USA 2013), and Tip in *The True Meaning of Smekday* by Adam Rex (USA 2007).

This analysis involves identifying how characters are constructed as actants, as understood by Propp's theory of the Dramatis Personae, and comparing their narrative function with how they are treated and understood in their fictional world as either privileged or oppressed. Peggy McIntosh defines privilege as an unfair advantage, an easier access to opportunity that suggests that the domination of one social group over another is natural ("White Privilege and Male Privilege" 2-3). When characters are privileged in their fictional worlds they may have easier access to the opportunity to be a socially recognized hero than characters who are oppressed in their fictional worlds. It is a liberalist myth of oppression that those who work hardest gain the most social benefits. Heroes are not exclusively rewarded for their heroism because of their efforts, but also because of their social group identity. As Rodney D. Coates argues, privilege is the myth that 'individual effort and not group identity accounts for the unequal distribution of rewards, liabilities, and status' and social group identities 'no longer thwart upward mobility by those who "really" try. The perception is that differences in outcomes, which may seem to favor whites and

males, actually reflect the fair and just outcomes of a meritocracy based upon individuality' (*Covert Racism* 11-12). When a text's hero is privileged in their fictional world, the text risks naturalizing systemic oppression because the hero appears to be rewarded for individual effort, rather than social group identity. This erases the consequences of systemic oppression. As Alison Bailey explains, 'one of the functions of privilege is to structure the world so that mechanisms of privilege are invisible—in the sense that they are unexamined—to those who benefit from them' ("Privilege" 112). When heroes of a narrative are oppressed in their fictional worlds, their heroism is less easily accessed than if they were privileged. The oppressed hero must work against mechanisms of systemic oppression, in turn emphasizing how the systemic oppression of fictional worlds afford opportunities to characters differently.

Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* demonstrates a clear example of a privileged hero as understood within classical narratology (see Campbell's hero's journey in part one of this chapter). Percy Jackson is called to adventure, he overcomes many trials, he accomplishes his goal and in doing so saves the world, so the end features his return home as a recognized hero. While Percy's role as a hero is interesting, the different opportunities afforded to him as opposed to his helpers, Annabeth and Grover, demonstrate Percy's privilege in a system of oppression and the ways systemic oppression is naturalized by Riordan's text.

When Percy is called to adventure by Chiron, he is allowed to bring two helpers with him on his quest. Propp defines the helper as one who is of use for the hero, and is at the command of the hero (*Morphology* 50). The decision to choose his helpers is entirely Percy's to make, affording him full agency, and he chooses his friend Grover, a satyr who has sworn to protect him, and Annabeth, a beautiful girl

with far more knowledge and experience than Percy (Riordan 134-47). On their

quest, Percy, Grover and Annabeth work as a team to cross America, fighting

monsters along the way to the Underworld.

When Percy, Annabeth and Grover arrive in the Underworld they are no longer

treated as a team of equals. Hades initially only speaks to and acknowledges Percy,

and when Annabeth finally speaks up, Hades speaks to her for the first time saying,

'Do not play innocent with me, girl. You and the satyr have been *helping this hero*—

coming here to threaten me in Poseidon's name' (312, emphasis added). In the only

instance in which Hades addresses anyone other than Percy, it is to reaffirm that

Percy is the hero and Annabeth and Grover are only the helpers. A few moments

later Annabeth and Grover argue about which of the two of them will sacrifice

themselves for Percy and his mother (316). Later, Percy is the only one to ascend to

Olympus and meet the other gods. Zeus recognizes Percy's heroism, but when Percy

mentions Grover and Annabeth, Zeus does not acknowledge Percy's statement (343).

While all three are celebrated as heroes by their peers at Camp Half-Blood (354), it

is only Percy who is given the voice, role and recognition of a hero by the fictional

world's leadership. In this first *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* novel, Percy is situated

as higher in the fictional world's social hierarchy than Annabeth and Grover.

Unlike his helpers, Percy is given access to the opportunity to be a socially

recognized hero in his fictional world. Percy is recognized by the gods, both of

Olympus and the Underworld, for his heroism. While Annabeth and Grover both

demonstrate courage, skill and hard work, they are not afforded this same

recognition. Percy, as the son of one the most powerful gods, Poseidon, has more

social privilege than Annabeth and Grover. This privilege is not problematized at any

point in the narrative. Instead, because Percy is both the hero of the narrative *and* of

the fictional world, the text naturalizes the system of oppression of Percy's fictional world.

The functional roles of heroes in their narratives are not the same as their social rolse in the context of their fictional worlds. Analyzing the difference between these two roles in a text is a method by which character can be used as a site for identifying systemic oppression in a fictional world. When a hero is not privileged in their fictional world there may be a distinct difference between their role in the fictional world and their narrative function in the text. While the privileged hero is often expected to be a hero, the oppressed hero is not expected to be a hero, and their heroism works outside of social norms. For example, Oscar, in Anne Ursu's *The Real Boy*, constantly works to prove his worth despite his inability to meet social expectations. In the land of Aletheia, no one expects Oscar to be capable of being a hero because of his disability. While "Disability in Kidlit" argues that Oscar is autistic (Duyvis, "Review"), in the text, characters understand Oscar without this diagnosis, saying things like, 'you're that odd little hand Caleb has' (Ursu 30) or 'you're not quite right, are you?' and even describing him as 'simple' (47). Oscar's social role is neither as hero nor helper; rather, he is tasked with doing the work that is 'too menial for a magician's apprentice' (2). Because of his disability, Oscar is only given the social role of the helper's helper and is afforded little-to-no social respect. Oscar's job is to help Wolf, the apprentice to the magician, Master Caleb.

Oscar's access to social respect is so limited that he attempts to take lessons from his friend Callie on how to be better with people. Upon attempting this, Oscar 'felt stiff everywhere. Even the syllables felt stiff on his mouth. The only thing worse than being odd was trying desperately not to be' (104). Later, when the villagers find out that magical trees have been cut down, Oscar asks if this hurt the trees, to which

he is responded to with stares. Oscar realizes this 'was not a normal thing to say, it was not a normal thing to think, but Oscar thought it anyway, and he needed someone to answer' (192). These are only two of multiple instances in which Oscar is made to feel very aware of the fact that he is atypical within his social context. When Oscar discovers dolls made out of the wood of the fallen magical trees, he thinks back to the many instances in which others have pointed out his differences, and he thinks about:

> the feeling, always of living in a different pocket of air from everyone
> else, not knowing how to break through it. And this, the aloneness,
> pressing down on his chest, the most constant company of his life […]
> And then he understood [..] *I am made of wood*. (203-4, italics in
> original)

The systemic ableism of Alethia has lead Oscar to the conclusion that he is not human. This has an incredible effect on Oscar's sense of self-worth; he believes there is 'something wrong' with him, that he 'wasn't made right' and that, like him, 'nothing he wanted was real' (210). Oscar does not believe he deserves happiness or safety, leading him to reject the companionship of others and put his life in harm's way. Oscar's access to the role of a hero is extremely limited by the way systemic ableism has affected his sense of self worth. Instead of believing that he is capable of affecting social change, he believes that he is not capable of doing anything of value. While the privileged hero is often strongly encouraged to take this role, as an oppressed hero Oscar is deeply discouraged from believing himself capable of anything of worth.

Not only does Oscar come to have a very negative understanding of himself, but his understanding of his role in his society is affected as well. When he is offered

a chance at a better life he refuses to leave, believing, 'this was what he was made for. And what would happen to a boy made of wood if the magic that bound him failed? What would happen to him out of the arms of the forest, away from magic, with nothing around him but emptiness?' (217). Oscar's understanding of a 'normal' person is one with freedom and agency, and Oscar, having never had much agency in the first place, believes he is not entitled to any at all. Oscar's loss of self-worth results in him believing that his only value is in serving the town, sacrificing everything for the sake of others.

When a monster attacks the town, the citizens expect Master Caleb to be the one to save them, not Oscar (192). Oscar discovers that Master Caleb is responsible for harming the balance of magic in Aletheia, inadvertently creating the monster (221). Master Caleb occupies two different positions: socially he is the hero, while his narrative function is as the villain. When Oscar confronts Caleb for cutting down magical trees, Caleb responds, 'Who says I have, Oscar? *You?* My dull little hand? Have you told anyone your theory? Do you think people will believe you? […] if you ever speak of this, to anyone, I will turn you out and leave you in the plaguelands. All you have to give is your loyalty' (222). This scene reinforces for Oscar that he is 'dull' and has no voice in society, destroying the last of his sense of self-worth. Rejected both by the Master he once idolized, and the community he tries to help, Oscar has almost no access to the opportunity to be a hero. In order to save the society that rejects him, Oscar abandons his life in Aletheia and feeds the earth starved of magic with the items of Caleb's shop. He is able to summon the monster attacking the town and lead it out of the land, nearly sacrificing his own life in the process (281-305). Oscar is never given the opportunity by his society to be the hero; he must act heroically not only outside of the expectations of those directly in power

over him, but also against the social expectations of his society's system of oppression. In taking on the narrative role of hero, Oscar demonstrates that social expectations regarding disabled people are inaccurate and unfair. The distinction between Oscar's narrative role as hero and social role as the helper's helper emphasizes the systemic ableism in Aletheia.

While Oscar's heroism is an act of self-sacrifice in a society that has rejected him, this is not the case for all oppressed heroes. In Adam Rex's *The True Meaning of Smekday*, Tip takes on the role of hero by actively and defiantly resisting her world's system of oppression. When an alien species known as the Boov invade Earth, the Boov implement several tactics to literally take peoples' homes away from them. For example, 'the Boov just showed up on your doorstep, no warning, and kicked you out. Or maybe you'd find one already in your garage, eating things, […] And like a stray cat, he was there to stay' (Rex 62). When Captain Smek, the leader of the Boov, declares that humans and Boov cannot exist in peace and so the Boov 'generously grant you Human Preserves—gifts of land that will be for humans forever' (63), a hose enters Tip's house and 'pulled itself over Mom's head and half swallowed her, down to the waist. […] and she sailed into the air; she sailed *away*' (51-2). In a world colonized by aliens, Tip finds herself alone and defenceless. But, instead of submitting to the Boov, she resists Boov control and tries to make her own way to the Human Preserves so that she can find her mother. She must call herself to adventure; no one encourages her to save her mother. She makes the decision to be a hero herself, and pursues this goal in direct resistance to her oppressors.

As an oppressed hero, Tip quickly learns that she needs the help of a more privileged helper. Almost immediately upon starting her adventure, Tip is attacked by the Boov and her vehicle is damaged (12). Soon after, Tip meets a Boov named

J.Lo who offers to fix her car and 'argued, pretty persuasively, that I was a lot less likely to get shot by any more Boov if I had one of their own for an escort' (65). In order for Tip to survive her adventure, she needs a helper who has access to social privilege in her fictional world. While a privileged hero usually has the freedom and agency to choose their helpers, Tip is not in a position to refuse J.Lo. Tip does not have any agency in choosing her helper, instead she must accept the help of a member of her oppressors. This hero/helper divide functions to assert Tip's oppressed position in this colonized fictional world, in which Tip cannot be a hero unless she has a member of the social group oppressing her to act as her advocate.

As Tip and J.Lo adventure together, they gain the opportunity to learn about each other's species, including differences in gender, family structures, and religion (77, 165-7, 179). J.Lo comes to learn that his previous perceptions of humans have been incorrect: 'Before we came, Captain Smek and the HighBoovs tells us that the humans needed us. That the humans were just like the animals, and that we could to make them better. Teach them. We were told that the humans were nasty and backwards. […] I am thinking I am very sorry' (149-50). The only person who can help Tip does not initially view her as his equal based on the social group category of species. While most heroes have to prove their skill and worth *as a hero*, Tip has to prove her skill and worth *as a person*. In resisting Boov oppression and asserting her role as hero, part of Tip's relationship with her helper involves advocating for her entire species, and teaching him the basics of valuing her as a person. As Tip works against Boov society in her adventures, her relationship with her helper emphasizes the harms of oppression, specifically colonialism, and the value of understanding those who are different from oneself.

The privileged hero of classical narratology is called to adventure by a dispatcher, someone who represents the hero's society, and who assert's the hero's social privilege by believing the hero is capable of heroism. But when a hero is oppressed, their society does not support their heroism. For heroes like Ursu's Oscar, systemic oppression lowers expectations and society works to discourage, rather than encourage, heroism. Oscar is not treated like a hero when he goes to stop the monster from attacking Aletheia, instead, he acts as a hero despite social expectations that he do otherwise. For heroes like Rex's Tip, systemic oppression results in the loss of agency and personhood entirely. Tip's heroism is an act of resistance to the oppressors who view her only as an animal in need of being controlled. In both cases, it is the contrast between the hero's social role and their narratological role that emphasizes their oppression. Instead of being able to take on the mantle of the privileged hero of classical narratology, oppressed heroes must resist social expectations and assert their role as hero.

Embodied Focalization

A focalizer's cognitively embodied subject position within a social system of oppression contributes to meaning making in a text. The term focalizer refers to a first-person or third-person limited narrator, embodied in the perspective of a particular character, which in turn shapes the way the narrative is told and the issues that are foregrounded. There are textual differences between oppressed and privileged focalizers, primarily, an oppressed focalizer shapes 'meaning making' differently than a privileged focalizer. In the telling of the narrative, the foregrounded consequences of systemic oppression are directly related to how the focalizer cognitively embodies their privileged or oppressed social position. The

systemic oppression of the fictional world has an influence on the focalizer's cognitive embodiment, in turn influencing the narration of the text.

My analysis of how the cognitive embodiment of oppression influences focalized narration involves an analysis of foregrounding in two steps. First, I consider foregrounding and the privileged focalizer in Laurence Yep and Joanne Ryder's *A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Humans* (USA 2015). Second, I will analyze foregrounding and the oppressed focalizer in Holly Black and Cassandra Clare's *Magisterium* books, *The Iron Trial* (USA 2014) and *The Bronze Key* (USA 2016).

My approach to theories of cognitive embodiment follows the same central arguments made my Malin Alkestrand and myself in our paper, "A Cognitive Analysis of Characters in Swedish and Anglophone Children's Fantasy Literature." We argue that there are two major theories of cognitive embodiment. First, 'integrative mental states, prototypical bases of categories, scripts and schemas, conceptual thinking and other embodied forms of cognition are all based on how the body affects thinking' (Alkestrand and Owen, "A Cognitive Analysis of Characters" 67). Second, as the mind is 'not in the heads of solitary thinkers but rather in socio-communicative activities unfolding within richly material settings' (Herman, "Storytelling" 308), cognitive embodiment should not be understood as biologically determinist, but is rather constructed by the specific circumstances of one's social context. It is reasonable to argue that cognitive embodiment is also constructed by a society's specific social system of oppression. From here I posit that focalization is affected by whether or not the character is privileged or oppressed by the system of oppression of their fictional world. Following the same method Alkestrand and I have outlined, 'each character's cognitive embodiment of their intersectional subject

position is analysed in relation to their specific fictional contexts' ("A Cognitive

Analysis of Characters" 67).

Worldbuilding is affected by whether or not the focalizer is privileged or

oppressed, and often the latter, through cognitively embodying their oppression,

better highlights issues of systemic oppression. Systemic oppression shapes the

cognitive embodiment of the focalizer; through theories of foregrounding, the

cognitive embodiment of the oppressed focalizer affects worldbuilding, enabling a

particular perspective on the fictional world. In the first chapter of this dissertation I

analyzed Tony DiTerlizzi's *WondLa* Trilogy, arguing how Eva Nine's focalization is

affected by her privilege. Here, foregrounding theory is used to identify how Eva

Nine's naivety and privilege affects worldbuilding. Foregrounding involves any

technique used to draw attention to a certain element of the text. This can be done in

two key ways, either through rhetorical deviations (for example, repetitions,

innovative descriptions, alliteration, et cetera), or through stylistic differences in

objects, which involves a specific figure moving against a static ground (Stockwell,

Cognitive Poetics 14-15).

The foregrounded element of Lacas is how wondrous it is; this is because the

world building of the text is shaped by the focalizer's sense of wonder. What is not

foregrounded is Muthr's inability to access space or any comprehensive

understanding of systemic ableism. If Eva Nine had a physical disability, or if Lacas

was described from the perspective of Muthr (with her single wheel instead of feet),

the figure would be incapable of moving against the ground, causing a disruption

that would then foreground the ground's inaccessibility and, in turn, the systemic

ableism of Lacas. While this argument is only speculative, what it demonstrates is

how neglect (the opposite of foregrounding, meaning, what is *neglected* by the text)

indicates systemic privilege. When a focalizer neglects an issue of systemic oppression it is likely because said issue does not affect them.

Neglect is a common technique for constructing systemic oppression in the focalized narration of the portal-quest fantasy. In Laurence Yep and Joanne Ryder's *A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Humans*, neglect is used to not only deny the perspective of the oppressed, but to construct their oppression as justifiable. When Miss Drake, a dragon, gets a new pet human named Winnie, Miss Drake takes Winnie to Clipper's Emporium, a magical shop in the clouds. Winnie's trip from her world to the secret world of fantastic creatures constitutes a portal-quest; her journey marks 'the transition between this world and another' (Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* 1). Upon their arrival, the first-person narration first describes Britomart, the security guard, who has a 'massive body' and wears a 'chain-mail shirt. She had raised her battle-ax to her shoulder, ready to swing at the slightest provocation' (Yep and Ryder 37). Britomart is unquestionably strong and formidable. When Miss Drake notices a group of kobolds at the entrance to Clipper's Emporium, they are described as the 'nastiest little kobolds I'd ever had the misfortune to meet. They only reached as high as her [Britomart's] kneecaps, […] Small as they were, the pack of them could still give Britomart a hard time' (37-8). This description of the kobolds asserts the biological determinist construction of fantastic creatures that I outline as a trope of the genre in Chapter Four. The kobolds are nasty because the focalized narrator says they are. As Farah Mendlesohn argues, the character journeying into another world, in this case Winnie, cannot 'question the primary narration because there is no evidence against which they can test the veracity of their sources' (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 7).

The focalized narration from Miss Drake's perspective is intentionally biased, neglecting alternative views about the kobolds so as to assert 'the *unquestionable purity* of the tale' which 'holds together the shape of the portal-quest narrative' (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 7). At no point are the kobold's intentions described, nor does the narration ever sympathize with the kobolds. When Miss Drake attacks the kobolds, singeing the hair on the kneecaps of one of them, the focalized narration describes the scene as: 'The big baby screeched as if I was actually barbecuing him instead of giving him a dragon's beauty treatment. […] the pack of bullies shoved one another to get out of my way. […] Britomart was chuckling' (40). Even while the kobolds are being attacked the narration neglects their position. While the kobolds have not actually done anything to give Britomart a hard time, and thus their being attacked is unprovoked, the focalized narration constructs Miss Drake's attack as wholly justifiable.

The negative descriptions of the kobolds, even as they run for their lives, asserts the moral justification of Miss Drake's actions against them. As Farah Mendlesohn argues:

> modern portal-quest narratives are hierarchical: some characters are
> presented with greater authority than others—authority that is intended,
> destined, or otherwise taken for granted—and this hierarchy is frequently
> encoded in speech patterns and the choice of direct or indirect speech.
>
> (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 6)

One way to assert the hierarchies of the portal-quest fantasy world is for the privileged focalized narrator to neglect the needs, experiences and perspectives of the social groups they oppress. Miss Drake's cognitive embodiment of her systemic privilege enables her to feel superior to the kobolds, and justified in asserting her

superiority over them. The neglect of the privileged focalizer functions to normalize social hierarchies, silence the oppressed, and contribute to systemic oppression.

In Black and Clare's *Magisterium* series, Callum Hunt foregrounds issues of systemic ableism as a disabled focalizer. When Callum and his peers arrive at the Magisterium for the first time his peers remark on how wondrous they find it. While Callum agrees, he also finds his 'leg felt stiff from the long bus ride and he knew he would be moving slower than ever. He hoped it wasn't a long walk to where they were supposed to sleep' (Black and Clare 62). Here, Callum's stiff leg is foregrounded as the figure moving across the Magisterium as ground. The students go immediately to their rooms and soon to bed. The next morning Callum 'limped toward the door, hoping fervently that this wouldn't be a long walk' to the cafeteria (74). In the third book of the same series, *The Bronze Key*, Callum travels to another institution run by the same secret society of mages who run the Magisterium, the Collegium. The entrance to the Collegium is a long spiral staircase and Callum's immediate reaction is to swallow hard, 'It would have been a long walk for anyone, but for him, it seemed impossible. His leg would be cramping by the time they got halfway down. If he stumbled, it would be a very scary fall' (16). The repetition of Callum's foregrounded leg and the use of the word 'long' to describe Callum's experience of the inaccessible infrastructure is a motif throughout the series that brings to attention how Callum embodies his disability.

Callum's disability is also foregrounded whenever someone assumes that Callum is as physically able as they are or they forget about his disability, and Callum is forced to remind them of what he can and cannot do. For example, when Callum is accepted into the Magisterium, his father tells him to run, something Callum has to remind his father he is not physically able to do (*Iron Trial* 44). When

Tamara and Callum are making plans to rescue their kidnapped friend, Aaron, she suggests climbing up the rafters of the building, and again Callum has to remind someone of what he is physically incapable of doing (258). At other points, people make prejudicial assumptions regarding Callum's abilities, which leads to Callum's explicit exclusion. For example, in one of Callum's classes his teacher tries to exclude him from the lesson, saying, 'Call, I'm sorry, but I think you better stay here. With your leg, I don't think it's safe for you to do this exercise' (236). An assumption is made here about Callum's abilities without any discussion with Callum on the specifics of what he is able to do. Every time Callum has to navigate other peoples' assumptions, whether they be his own family, his close friends, or complete strangers, the text not only emphasizes Callum's disability, but also foregrounds the systemic ableism of the fictional world. The repetition of Callum clarifying his abilities functions to foreground the way ableism influences others' assumptions, and in turn influences Callum's interpersonal interactions in a system that oppresses him.

If cognitive embodiment is reliant on both the body and the social context, then Callum's cognitive embodiment is dependent on the interaction of his impaired leg and his society's inaccessible infrastructure, normative assumptions and interpersonal interactions. From here, Callum's thinking, including his fears and hopes in regards to the inaccessibility of long walks, or his ability to accomplish particular tasks, are shaped by his experiences of systemic ableism. This, in turn, shapes the focalization of the narrative, resulting in the worldbuilding of this fictional world to be from the perspective of the cognitively embodied position of an oppressed focalizer.

Children's fantastika literature can normalize and even justify social systems of oppression through focalized narration that neglects the perspectives and needs of the oppressed. When focalizers are privileged, their privilege can limit the narration in ways that disregard or fail to notice issues of oppression that do not affect them. For example, Yep and Ryder's Miss Drake's privileged focalization risks normalizing and even justifying oppression. The opposite is true when the focalizer of the text is oppressed, instead, issues of oppression are specifically foregrounded in the narration. For example, DiTerlizzi's Eva Nine is non-disabled, and her embodiment of her non-disabled privilege enables her to neglect the issues of inaccessible infrastructure in Lacas. Meanwhile, Black and Clare's Callum does not have this privilege, highlighting the systemic ableism of his fictional world in ways that Eva Nine does not. The worldbuilding of a fictional world's system of oppression can thus be highly influenced by whether or not the focalizer is privileged or oppressed. The ways in which the focalized narrator neglects or foregrounds issues related to systemic oppression can contribute to whether the text works well to critique or support social systems of oppression.

Conclusion

The systemic oppression of a fictional world may have a direct influence on the texts' narrative, especially if the hero of the narrative is oppressed. The text's narrative structure (plot), narrative functions (character roles) and narrative telling (narration) may all be influenced by the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. When the hero of the text is privileged, the text risks naturalizing systemic oppression. When the hero of the text is oppressed, the text may have the opportunity to emphasize the systems of oppression of the text's fictional world. In

this regard, the representation of oppressed protagonists matters because it changes the way a story is told. Diverse representation offers alternatives to the traditional plot structure of the hero's journey, the way actants are constructed as synthetic constructs of the text, and what elements of worldbuilding are emphasized by the focalized narrator. The social positions of characters within the contexts of their fictional worlds shapes meaning in the text, in turn shaping the way the text normalizes or critiques systemic oppression.

<u>Part Three</u>

Themes of Social Justice

Chapter Six

Themes of Social Justice

Introduction

The systemic oppression of a fictional world can either support or undercut a text's ostensible themes of social justice. When intersectional systemic oppression is foregrounded in the narrative, it plays a functional role in supporting the text's themes of social justice. When systemic oppression is neglected in the narrative, or is constructed as an un-interrogated set of norms, the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world undermines the text's attempted themes of social justice. In some cases, the systemic oppression of the fictional world serves a positive purpose: it represents the very problems the text aims to critique, and gives the hero(es) of the text a difficult context in which to work. In other cases, the supposedly positive ideologies that the text may be aiming to purport can be undermined by the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. While a text may feature themes of social justice, when intersectionality theory is applied to these texts it becomes clear that the text's themes of social justice are only applied to select characters. When a text's themes of social justice are undermined by the fictional world's system of oppression, the text can fail in its potential ideological purposes, and can even be read as hypocritically ignorant and problematically supportive of real-world systemic oppression.

Social justice is here defined as any method of active resistance to social injustice and systemic oppression, or active work making access to opportunities equally accessible for all social groups. A text can have clear social justice themes, and yet fail to implement them successfully. For example, in Garth Nix's *Mister*

Monday (Australia 2003), the protagonist, Arthur Penhaligon, is brought to the House to overthrow the villainous leadership. Arthur is shown the problems with the hierarchy in the House, witnessing the harms it inflicts on his friend Suzy (191-6). However, at the end of the novel, when Arthur defeats Mister Monday and takes his place, all he does is set up a new hierarchy. Included in this hierarchy are members of the old hierarchy in new positions, such as Dusk becoming Noon. This means he reshuffles but otherwise maintains the power of privileged members of this hierarchy (406). While Arthur offers Suzy a promotion so that she is no longer oppressed as an Ink-Filler, he makes her an assistant, rather than giving her an equal place among those previously in power (407). This final hierarchy maintains much of the power of the privileged, and while it offers some opportunity to the oppressed, this access to opportunity is not equal. Arthur then promptly leaves the House, in turn leaving Suzy to work as an assistant for her oppressors. While this ending does result in some social change, ultimately it does not actively work to make access to opportunity equally accessible for all social groups.

The three parts of this chapter will each analyze one of three central and common areas of social justice presented in contemporary children's fantastika literature. I analyze the themes of: anti-oppression, pro-diversity, and pro-resistance respectively. In each section, I compare two texts. In the first text of each section, systemic oppression functions to support the text's theme of social justice. In the second text of each section, systemic oppression undercuts the text's supposed theme of social justice. In each case, my thematic analysis utilizes intersectionality theory in order to show how the represented systemic oppression of the text's fictional world supports and or undermines the text's ostensible themes of social justice.

In the first section of this chapter, on themes of the harms of oppression, I compare Linda Sue Park's *Wing and Claw: Forest of Wonders* (USA 2016) with Kieran Larwood's *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear* (UK 2016). The second section of this chapter deals with the gains of diversity and equality as seen in a comparison of Rick Riordan's later books in *The Camp-Half Blood Chronicles*, specifically *The Heroes of Olympus* series (USA 2010-2014) and the *Trials of Apollo* series (USA 2016-2018), with *The League of Seven* trilogy by Alan Gratz (USA 2014-2016). And in the third section of this chapter, on themes of resistance, Frances Hardinge's *Mosca Mye* duology (UK 2005, 2011) is compared with JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (UK 1997-2007).

The Harms of Oppression

Anti-oppression themes in children's fantastika literature can be supported or undercut depending on how this theme relates to the intersectional systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. Intersectionality theory is paramount to my argument; while the text may critique the oppression of one group, it may in turn support the oppression of another. When anti-oppression themes are not applied to all social groups in the text's fictional world, the text's themes are contradicted by its represented systems of oppression. When themes regarding the harms of hate, supremacy and oppression are only relevant for a limited range of social group identities, the text can also function to reinforce the real-world systemic oppression of those social groups not supported by the text.

Anti-oppression themes should not be confused with anti-bullying or pro-kindness themes. Since its bourgeoisie origins, children's literature has been used to socialize children into respectable adults through texts that rationalize social

hegemony and affirm the status quo (Zipes, "Second Thoughts on Socialization" 20).

Texts with themes that promote the civilizing of the young do not necessarily engage

directly with the harms of systemic oppression. As the texts already analyzed in this

dissertation have demonstrated, even the most brutal harms of oppression, such as

slavery or genocide, are represented in contemporary children's fantastika literature.

This section of this dissertation analyzes texts that engage directly with the harms of

oppression. According to Kimberley Reynolds, today, 'children's literature

contributes to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture by, for instance,

encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives

and so prepare the way for change' (*Radical Children's Literature* 1). In texts with

anti-oppression themes, the harms of social hegemony and the status quo are

emphasized, and the aims of the characters function to survive within oppressive

contexts. When the oppressed characters fighting to survive perpetuate their own

system of social hegemony, the text's anti-oppression themes are contradicted by the

text's represented system of oppression.

In this section I compare Linda Sue Park's *Wing and Claw: Forest of Wonders*

(USA 2016) with Kieran Larwood's *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear* (UK 2016). I

argue that the former text's anti-oppression themes are supported by the represented

system of oppression, and the latter text's anti-oppression themes are undercut by the

represented system of oppression in the text's fictional world. I have selected these

two texts because their similarities make them ideal for comparison. Both novels

were published in 2016, the former in the United States and the latter in the United

Kingdom. Both novels are fantasies featuring talking animals with human-like

intelligence. And in both novels the anti-oppression themes are represented through

the harms of slavery and supremacy, albeit in very different ways. In the former text,

slavery is a part of an intersectional system of speciesism, xenophobia and classism.

In the latter text, slavery is a new issue brought about by an external group, while the

free are controlled by a hegemonic system of classism, patriarchy and ableism. The

different ways anti-oppression themes are portrayed in these two texts demonstrates

the importance of intersectionality theory in the analysis of children's fantastika

literature.

The systemic oppression of the fictional world of Obsidia supports the anti-

oppression themes of Linda Sue Park's *Wing and Claw: Forest of Wonders*. Park's

novel is about a boy named Raffa Santana who moves to the dangerous city of

Gilden to work as an assistant apothecary. Part of his work as an assistant apothecary

is to help use a magical vine to give animals human-like intelligence and speech.

When Raffa learns that the purpose of making the animals intelligent is to 'free

people for more noble employment, while animals take over the most odious and

drudging of tasks,' Raffa initially believes this is 'an astonishing idea' (Park 198).

But Raffa learns of the harsh treatment of the animals, specifically the ways they are

physically harmed and forced into labour, and he comes to understand the atrocities

of slavery and the importance of freedom.

In Gilden, Raffa learns of Obsidia's intersecting systems of xenophobia and

classism. When Raffa arrives in Gilden he meets Trixin, who lives in Gilden's slums:

> The slums had begun as camps for survivors of the Quake, especially
>
> those who had arrived in Obsidia from elsewhere […] Over the
>
> generations, some families […] had been able to move out and establish
>
> livelihoods. But many more remained sunk deep in the poverty Raffa
>
> saw now. (124)

Gilden has a history of refugees, known as 'Afters,' arriving into the city and being forced into an almost inescapable poverty. There are many institutional structures that make Gilden's slums so difficult to leave. For example, Trixin works as a second assistant in pickles and jams in the gated area of the Commons, the area of Gilden where the wealthiest live. One day, Trixin misses her chance to get through the gates to the Commons because she is busy helping her siblings, which means she will instantly lose her job. To break into the Commons, she must sneak through a secret tunnel, the entrance to which is in an inn reserved exclusively for Commoners. On the other end of the tunnel, she is intercepted by police and arrested (126-42). Trixin's access to work is difficult, in turn making her access to freedom from poverty difficult. The institutions of housing, public accommodation, and police all interlock in an intersectional oppression of refugee descendants and the working class. Raffa witnesses the ways Trixin is oppressed, enlightening him of the harms of oppression of which he was once ignorant.

In order for Raffa to comprehend the systemic speciesism of Obsidia, he must first regard the intelligent animals as people. Raffa befriends several intelligent animals, including a bat named Echo and two racoon cubs named Twig and Bando. When his (human) friend Kuma explains that her bear friend, Roo, has been taken, Raffa refers to Roo as 'your bear' to which Kuma responds with, 'She's not *mine*. Any more than Echo is *yours*' (262, emphasis in original). This surprises Raffa, and he realizes:

> that in his fondness for Echo, the bat had come to feel almost like a pet. But like Roo, Echo wasn't tame; he could leave whenever he chose. As much as the thought pained him, it also served to deepen his wonder that a wild creature was spending time with him. (262)

In this moment, Raffa not only learns to attribute personhood to the animals, but he also comes to recognize the value of each animal's agency. From this understanding, the taking away of this agency can be viewed as doubly atrocious. Raffa can understand the systemic oppression of Twig and Bando as equally, if not more harmful, than the systemic oppression of his fellow humans, Trixin and Kuma.

The systemic speciesism in Obsidia involves the enslavement of intelligent animals. Infant animals are dosed with the infusion that gives them human-like intelligence. They are then separated from their mothers and forced to live in cramped sheds (256). The mothers are only kept alive in order to wean their babies until they are fully grown (266). Not only are the infant animals dosed with infusions that make them calm and docile, but they are sometimes locked up with a raptor to be intentionally harmed so as to test healing infusions (268, 284). The separation of the infant animals from their mothers, and their subsequent physical torture, results in the animals constantly living in a state of fear and panic. The combined use of infusions and fear results in well-trained intelligent animal slaves. The intelligent animals must do as they are told, and they have no freedom or agency whatsoever.

The harms of animal slavery are emphasized in the way systemic speciesism intersects with the systemic xenophobia and classism of Obsidia. Initially, the use of infusions to give animals intelligence is justified as a means of alleviating the harms of classism, and providing new opportunities for employment. Raffa is lead to believe that the infusions are a good thing, and the animals will be used to solve a great many social and economic problems. When he discovers that the animals are secretly being kept in incredibly poor conditions, and are often intentionally harmed by a raptor, he simultaneously learns another dark secret: the intelligent animals are not being trained to improve the economy, they are being trained to attack the Afters,

who have been living in Obsidia since the quake as refugees (282, 300). The enslavement of animals is used as a justification for ridding Obsidia of the Afters in order to maintain the supremacy of the Commoners. The differing systems of oppression in Obsidia, specifically xenophobia, classism and speciesism, all function to maintain the dominance of Commoners over every other social group.

The text's themes of the harms of oppression are supported by the intersecting systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. The text emphasizes the mistreatment of Twig and Bando, the racoons, and Roo, the bear, as devastatingly and unjustifiably terrible. The protagonists, especially Raffa and Kuma, become friends with the intelligent animals, and align all of their empathy and loyalty with said animals. The intersection of speciesism with xenophobia and classism has two clear functions. First, it emphasizes the harsh problem of the supremacy of any social group over any other, specifically, in this case, Commoner-supremacy. The supremacy of Commoners over Afters has resulted in an intersecting xenophobia and classism that has trapped refugees and their descendants in poverty. Additionally, the supremacy of Commoners over animals has resulted in the enslavement of intelligent animals. Secondly, if the enslavement of animals for the purpose of attacking Afters is represented as so terrible, then it follows that the attacking of Afters is also terrible in and of itself. Commoners who want to harm the Afters intend to do so through unethical means, the enslavement of intelligent animals, and so said Commoners must be unethical people. If the belief that Afters should be attacked comes from those who would enslave animals, then it follows that this belief is unethical. The harms of all three systems of oppression, speciesism, xenophobia and classism, intersect with one another in order to support the anti-oppression themes of the text.

The systemic oppression of the fictional world of the Five Realms, the rabbit kingdoms of Earth's future, undercuts the anti-oppression themes of Kieran Larwood's *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*. Larwood's novel is about a young anthropomorphic rabbit named Podkin, the son of Lopkin, chieftain of the Munbury warren. When the Gorm, rabbits who have been infused with living iron, attack Munbury, Podkin and his siblings flee for their lives. Podkin's father is killed, making Podkin the new chieftain, and his mother and aunt are captured by the Gorm and forced into slavery. Podkin, now the leader of his warren, is responsible for finding a way to save his mother and aunt from slavery. In the world outside his warren, the Gorm have turned the Five Realms into a place of fear, full of refugees in hiding who will do anything, no matter how vicious, to survive. Podkin comes to learn of the importance of his society's traditional warren-structures, and the harmful consequences of those like the Gorm who use violence to enact change.

The Gorm are the primary threat in Larwood's novel, and it is their harmful behaviour that is most criticized by the text. The Gorm were once grey rabbits of the Sandywell warren, but after digging up magical, living iron, the rabbits transformed 'into something else. Something evil and unnatural. […] This wasn't a rabbit any more. If it ever had been, it was now something else entirely' (Larwood 10, 18). In the traditional, all-natural society of the Five Realms, the descriptions of the Gorm as unnatural and no-longer-rabbits functions to establish them as counter to what is normative, and therefore good. It follows that the Gorm's actions are, by definition, unnatural and unethical. When the Gorm explain that they are attacking warrens and enslaving rabbits in order to create a society of Gorm supremacy, Podkin responds, 'But that's just wrong, […] Who says that being Gorm is the right way? Why should you get to take us all over, just because you've got that stupid iron armour?' (265).

Podkin's arguments, and the text's demonstration of the harms of the Gorm's enacted ideologies, function as a critique of the harms of oppression, namely slavery and supremacy. The text's anti-oppression themes are very specifically related to the actions of the Gorm, emphasizing the value of the traditional rabbit warrens before the Gorms tried to change the Five Realms.

The natural and traditional warren-based society of the Five Realms involves an intersectional system of classism, patriarchy and ableism. Each warren is lead by a chieftain: 'the rabbits inside are organized around their chieftain. He is the leader of the tribe, just as his father was before him, and his son will be after. Between him and his wife, all the warren decisions are made, all the arguments settled and all the feasts and festivals organised' (6). The chieftain, and his family, are not only in charge of their warren, but are also among the highest social class in the warren. For the chieftain and his family, money is a non-issue: 'Podkin didn't know much about money and what it was worth. He was a chieftain's son, and everything he'd ever wanted had been his without having to pay for it' (160). Chieftains and their families live easy lives free from financial worry, and those who follow the leadership of their chieftain live humble but comfortable lives in their warrens. Those who live outside of a warren and free from chieftain control, however, must fend for themselves, some even having to steal just so they can survive. When Podkin and his siblings go to Boneroot, an underground town full of refugees hiding from the Gorm, they are kidnapped by two older rabbits named Quince and Mister Shape. Podkin is forced to steal money for the older rabbits so they can afford to survive. In Boneroot, Podkin learns of the harsh realities of needing money, and the difficulties of life outside of his warren.

Only male rabbits can be chieftains in a system of patriarchy. Podkin's sister, Paz, believes she should be the next chieftain because 'I'm the eldest. I do what Father and Mother tell me. I go to all my lessons' while arguing that Podkin is lazy (15). Paz's argument seems only to have been presented in order to dismiss any feminist critiques of the text; the narrator justifies the patriarchal hierarchy by arguing, 'it was tradition, fair or not, that the first son took over' (14). Despite Paz repeatedly demonstrating her physical and intellectual superiority over her little brother, ideologies of male superiority supersede evidence of female ability in the Munbury warren's oppressive social hierarchy. Even outside of the Munbury warren, patriarchal ideologies and practices persist. When Podkin and his siblings escape from Quince and Mister Shape, Podkin is unhappy to learn that Paz has been learning how to fight in secret (181). When Podkin begins learning how to fight so he can defeat the Gorm, he finds himself deeply annoyed at his sister's superior fighting skills (227). Podkin's training becomes specifically centred around superseding the skills of his sister, as his trainer, Crom, says to him: 'keep trying like you did today and you'll be the one whacking her on the head soon enough' (230). The text actively promotes ideologies of male superiority; Paz's training in fighting is not only designed specifically around improving the skills of her brother, but does so at Paz's expense. When the rabbits set up a plan to infiltrate the Gorm, the male rabbits take the lead, and the female rabbits, including Paz, stay behind to keep watch (247). At no point is Paz's exclusion emphasized, interrogated or critiqued in the narrative; instead, the text's focus is on the all-male fighting team, in turn normalizing patriarchal hierarchies. No matter the skills of the women of the Five Realms, in a system of patriarchy, only the contributions of men are given value.

In a novel in which the title character is explicitly impaired, one might assume themes of disability and the harms of ableism would feature. This is not the case in *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear* because of the way classism intersects with ableism. As the son of a chieftain, Podkin is respected, and his one ear marks him as distinctive. As the wise Brigid explains to Podkin, having one ear will 'do him a favour in the long run. Nobody'd be as interested in telling stories about a normal rabbit' (92). While Podkin is here distinguished from the norm, it is framed in a way that makes him special and unique enough to become a legend. This is not the case for Crom, a soldier of the lower classes. Crom, desperate for money, becomes a hired sword, but because he is blind nobody wants to hire him (172). When Podkin needs to hire a fighter to stop Quince and Mister Shape, he is told that the little money he has can only afford 'A blind soldier rabbit for an afternoon' (165). Of all the hired swords, Crom is the cheapest specifically because he is blind, despite his expert fighting abilities. While Podkin and Crom become close, at no point does the narrative emphasize the injustice of treating Podkin's one ear as something that makes him a legendary hero and Crom's blindness as something that makes him a forgotten outcast. Instead, Crom is lucky to have the opportunity to align himself with Podkin, the son of a chieftain, allowing him to escape his life of social exclusion.

The text's themes of the harms of oppression are undercut by the intersecting systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. When the Gorm attempt to control the Five Realms, their actions, including overthrowing warrens, killing chieftains and enslaving prisoners, are all framed as obviously evil. When the rabbits control the Five Realms, their actions, including the structuring of institutions and ideologies around systems of classism, patriarchy and ableism, are framed as traditional and, in

contrast with the Gorm, good. While Podkin explicitly asks, 'Who says that being Gorm is the right way?' (265), Paz's concerns that being a male chieftain is not necessarily the 'right way' are not only unheard but become invalidated by the ways Podkin is given easier access to legendary heroism. Podkin is able to prove his worth in a patriarchal system that supports his endeavours, while characters like Paz and Crom must support and follow Podkin in order to pursue their interests. The text's failure to interrogate and critique the intersectional system of oppression in the traditional structures of the Five Realms results in a contradiction against the text's themes of the harms of oppression.

When a text has themes of the harms of oppression, but fails to consider all intersecting forms of oppression, the systemic oppression of the fictional world can contradict the text's central ideas. Further to this, when a text critiques certain forms of power as harmful, and uplifts other social structures as a better alternative, the text risks supporting oppressive systems of oppression. In Linda Sue Park's critique of slavery and supremacy in *Wing and Claw: Forest of Wonders*, the intersections of speciesism, xenophobia and classism function to affirm the harms of the supremacy of the Commoners in Obsidia. Kieran Larwood's failure to critique the harms of intersectional systems of classism, patriarchy and ableism undercuts his critique of supremacy and slavery in *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*. When a text with anti-oppression themes only critiques the harms of certain forms of oppression, the propagation of other forms of oppression undercut the text's central ideas.

Diversity and Equality

Texts with pro-diversity themes are supported by the systemic oppression of the fictional world when the text celebrates difference, and undercut by the systemic

oppression of the text's fictional world when diversity is approached through liberalist colourblind ideologies. When the character's social group identity plays a functional role in their characterization, such as ways the specifics of their ethnic or cultural background are relevant to who they are as a person, their identity is represented in contrast or relation to the system of oppression of the text's fictional world. Sandra Hughes-Hassell argues, 'multicultural literature can act as a counter-story to the dominant narrative about people of color and indigenous peoples' ("Multicultural Young Adult Literature" 214), and thus literature featuring any kind of oppressed social group can function to resist the systemic oppression of the real world. When a character's social group positions are identified, but play no role in distinguishing the character from characters in other social groups, the system of oppression in the text's fictional world is naturalized. While a text may have a diverse cast of characters, if they are diverse in name alone the text fails to celebrate social group identity outside of those who assimilate to the dominant culture.

In this section I compare Rick Riordan's later books in the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* series, specifically *The Heroes of Olympus* series: *The Lost Hero* (USA 2010), *The Son of Neptune* (USA 2011), *The Mark of Athena* (USA 2012), *The House of Hades* (USA 2013), and *The Blood of Olympus* (USA 2014) and the *Trials of Apollo* series: *The Hidden Oracle* (USA 2016), *The Dark Prophecy* (USA 2017), and *The Burning Maze* (USA 2018), with *The League of Seven* trilogy by Alan Gratz: *The League of Seven* (USA 2014), *The Dragon Lantern* (USA 2015), and *The Monster War* (USA 2016). These texts, written by white American men at roughly the same time, have a great deal in common. Both *The Heroes of Olympus* series and *The League of Seven* trilogy are about a group of seven racially diverse children with extraordinary powers, set in an egalitarian fictional world that celebrates Ancient

Rome, as they work together (despite being told they are destined enemies) to fight

monsters and resist oppressive adults. I have included the *Trials of Apollo* series

because it is set in the same fictional world as *The Heroes of Olympus* and expands

on its worldbuilding. In Riordan's text, the different social group identities of the

characters are explored in depth and celebrated, while in Gratz's text the characters'

races are mentioned but unexplored in an assimilationist white-dominated society.

The success or failure of the different approaches to diversity taken by these texts

demonstrates the value of the authentic representation of oppressed social groups as

counter-stories resisting systemic oppression.

Rick Riordan's *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* is about the adventures of

demigod teenagers prophesied to save the world. The protagonists are the children of

either Ancient Greek or Ancient Roman gods, though in this text the gods of the one

culture are the same as the gods of the other; for example, Zeus and Jupiter are the

same god in different forms. The heroes are given near-impossible tasks as they

come to learn of their godly heritage, and the special powers they get depending on

who their godly parent is. In coming to understand their Ancient Greek or Ancient

Roman godly backgrounds, the characters not only refuse to forget or lose their

human heritage, but come to celebrate their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds

as well. In the *Heroes of Olympus* series, the seven demigod heroes of the Prophesy

of Seven include: Percy Jackson, the white son of (Greek) Poseidon; Annabeth

Chase, the white daughter of (Greek) Athena; Piper McLean, the Cherokee daughter

of (Greek) Aphrodite; Leo Valdez, the Latinx son of (Greek) Hephaestus; Jason

Grace, the white son of (Roman) Jupiter; Hazel Levesque, the Black daughter of

(Roman) Pluto; and Frank Zhang, the Chinese son of (Roman) Mars. The heroes are

also joined by Nico DiAngelo, the white son of (Greek) Hades; Reyna Avila

Ramírez-Arellano, the Puerto Rican daughter of (Roman) Bellona; Gleeson Hedge, the satyr; and Festus the automaton dragon/ flying boat. The two most significant characters in *The Trials of Apollo* series include the bisexual god Apollo, turned into a white mortal teenager named Lester Papadopolous, and Meg McCaffrey, the white daughter of (Greek) Demeter. In both series the characters come to learn not only their own identities, but the value of the identities of the other demigods as well.

The Ancient Greek and Roman gods are terrible parents, who all abandon their demigod children on Earth and offer little to no help during the demigods' adventures. As Sarah Annes Brown points out, the gods are 'negligent, callous, and unjust' and often are the root cause of many social issues in the text's fictional world ("Pantheons in Children's Fantasy" 200). The goddess Rhea describes the ideologies of the gods as 'imperialist Eurocentric' with a system of 'patriarchal institutional oppression' (Riordan, *The Hidden Oracle* (henceforth: *HO*) 245, 247). The gods of Olympus have a clear social hierarchy: 'farm animals, then demigods, monsters, and minor deities' with the more major deities at the top of the social hierarchy (*HO* 140). As Apollo makes clear, 'Mortals aren't that important' (*HO* 214). The demigod children are very aware that their parents do not fully value them. When Jason Grace is killed in battle, Piper McLean tells Apollo, 'You don't care because you're a god. […] You're using us to get what you want, like all the other gods' (Riordan, *The Burning Maze* (henceforth: *BM*) 311). The system of oppression of Olympus gives very little value to Mortals, resulting in a great deal of neglect of their secret mythological society on Earth.

While Olympus is an oppressive, hierarchical society where the gods live without much concern for those on Earth, the secret mythological societies of monsters and demigods are very egalitarian. The children of the Ancient Greek gods

learn about and hone their abilities at a summer camp for demigods called Camp Half-Blood, while the children of the Ancient Roman gods learn about and hone their abilities in a secret town and camp called New Rome. Both societies are populated by mythological creatures and demigods, and in neither society do characters face sexism, racism or homophobia. Women and men are given equal access to opportunities for leadership, and of the seven heroes of the Prophesy of Seven, Annabeth Chase is considered by the other demigods as 'the de facto leader of the quest' (Riordan, *The House of Hades* (henceforth: *HH*) 8). In New Rome, Frank Zhang realizes 'Nobody at camp, not once, had made fun of him for being Asian. Nobody cared about that' (Riordan, *The Son of Neptune* (henceforth: *SN*) 371). When Nico DiAngelo comes out as gay to Jason, he worries what the other demigods will think of him. Jason realizes that Nico has internalized the homophobic ideologies of Nico's life outside of the demigod camps, telling Nico that if he came out to everyone, 'you'd have that many more people to back you up and unleash the fury of the gods on anybody who gives you trouble' (*HH* 292).

Characters who are not demigods are also included in this society. For example, Gleeson Hedge is brought as the 'adult chaperone' for the seven heroes of the Prophesy of Seven (Riordan, *The Mark of Athena* (henceforth: *MA*) 1), and Festus, the automaton dragon, is given a crucial role in defeating the main villain (Gaia in the UK editions, Gaea in the US editions) (Riordan, *The Blood of Olympus* 463). Unlike in Olympus, where there is a clear hierarchy and system of exclusion, on Earth there is an attempt to maintain peace within a hierarchy of violence. Those mythological beings who support peace live in equality with the demigods, while the more vicious and malevolent species are fought into exile or submission. Within the demigod social spaces of Camp Half-Blood and New Rome, there exists a diversity

of social group identities who can equally access opportunities and exist freely and openly.

In their egalitarian societies, the demigods of Camp Half-Blood and New Rome are free to explore and celebrate their diverse identities. This is true for several characters, including Frank Zhang and Leo Valdez, but for the sake of time I will focus on only one example: Piper McLean. While Piper's mother may be a Greek goddess, Piper does not focus on her demigod identity at the expense of her Cherokee identity. When she is coming to terms with her demigod identity, she focuses on how her father taught her there are a 'Lot of similarities between Greek and Cherokee' cultures (Riordan, *The Lost Hero* (henceforth: *LH*) 110). Piper takes a great deal of pride in being Cherokee, and actively wants to change people's racist perceptions of indigenous people (*LH* 233). When leading Apollo and Meg on a quest, she tells them, 'I'm not doing the stereotypical Native American tracker thing. […] if any of you find the need for spiritual guidance on this quest, I am not here to provide that service. I'm not going to dispense bits of ancient Cherokee wisdom' (*BM* 142-3). Piper actively critiques any potential racist beliefs the two might have, celebrating her Cherokee identity by proving her worth outside of playing a stereotype. When Piper decides to wield a Cherokee blowpipe as her weapon of choice, she is asked if it is 'Greeky' and she happily responds, 'No, they're not Greeky. But they are Cherokee-y' (*BM* 131). Piper celebrates her Cherokee identity by incorporating it into her Greek demigod adventures. Her human Cherokee identity and her demigod Greek identity can coexist in a celebration of her specific social group identities. This celebration of Piper's Cherokee identity, in combination with the celebration of other characters' differing social group identities, functions to support the text's pro-diversity themes by emphasizing the value of difference.

Despite the fact that the demigods live in an egalitarian society mostly neglected by the gods, the gods do instil certain expectations on occasion. The celebration of diversity is represented when characters resist the gods' expectations in order to cooperate with those who are different. For example, originally Camp Half-Blood and New Rome are kept separate because the Roman demigods are lead to believe that the two coming together will cause a war (*MA* 150). When the two groups have to work together to fulfil the Prophesy of Seven and save the world, they must actively resist the expectation that they will go to war with one another instead of cooperate with one another. Sarah Annes Brown argues that the first series of the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles*, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, offers a 'model for a more complex and self-critical response to finding oneself caught up in a clash of civilizations' ("Pantheons in Children's Fantasy" 203); this is developed significantly in the *Heroes of Olympus* and *Trials of Apollo* series.

When Percy and Annabeth fall into Tartarus, they meet the Titan Iapetus, who Percy had fought previously. Percy had erased Iapetus' memory, convinced him the two were friends and that Iapetus' name was Bob. In Tartarus, Bob is gentle and kind, and helps Percy and Annabeth a great deal. Percy is forced to confront his assumptions and prejudices against monsters and the Titans, especially when Bob worries that he is biologically determined to be evil. Percy tells Bob, 'I think you can choose, Bob, […] Take the parts of Iapetus's past that you want to keep. Leave the rest. The future is what matters' (*HH* 459). By affirming Bob's agency to construct his own identity, Percy gives a self-critical response to his complex relationship with someone of a differing social group identity. Percy and Annabeth are able to resist the expectation that they should fight Bob, and instead they work to cooperate with

him in Tartarus. In resisting the expectations of those highest in the social hierarchy, the characters function to assert the text's themes of equality and diversity.

In *The Trials of Apollo*, Zeus casts Apollo out of Olympus and forces him to live as a mortal teenage human named Lester. As Lester, Apollo is slowly humbled as he comes to learn of the value of those with social group identities outside his own. When he has to go to war with his ex-boyfriend, Emperor Commodus, he is joined by demigods and monsters alike. Apollo finds himself realizing that he values both the demigods and monsters, and that this is something new: 'When I was a god, I would have been delighted to leave the mortal heroes to fend for themselves. […] But as Lester, I felt obliged to defend these people' (Riordan, *The Dark Prophesy* 283). After the battle, Apollo especially mourns the death of Heloise the griffin, 'Gods wouldn't normally mourn the loss of a griffin, or a few dryads, […] The longer I was mortal, the more affected I was by the smallest loss' (*BM* 49). By confronting a god with the problems of the hierarchies of Olympus, and by having him feel positively about those once deemed beneath consideration, the text demonstrates the benefits of treating those of all social group identities as equally valuable. The pro-diversity themes of the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* are constantly emphasized and supported in the text through the acknowledgement and celebration of difference.

In *The League of Seven* trilogy, the systemic oppression of the fictional world of the United Nations of America undercuts the text's pro-diversity themes. The United Nations of America is an alternate history of 1875 America in which a mysterious 'Darkness' has fallen over the oceans, cutting off European colonizers of the Americas from the rest of the world. After a desperate struggle, the Europeans are welcomed into the Six Nations of Indigenous America as the seventh tribe, the

Yankee tribe. In this fictional world there is no ill-will directed at the Yankee colonizers by the Indigenous, and there is also no human slavery, giving the false impression that this is an almost perfectly egalitarian alternate history of America (Gratz, *The League of Seven* (henceforth: *LS*) 95-6). This construction of America's alternate history ignores the oppressive nature of colonialism in a deeply disturbing way. Instead of colonial oppression, the biggest issue in this fictional world is the mysterious 'Darkness,' and the threat that it might consume the United Nations of America as well. In order to keep the 'Darkness' at bay, seven heroes must fight giant monsters called Mangleborn whenever they appear. The heroes each fit a particular role, they are all children of different backgrounds, and they each have their own magical abilities and/or advanced technological tools to help them in their adventures. The protagonist, Archie Dent, is the invincible Yankee 'strongman', and he is joined by Hachi, the Seminole 'warrior' with a team of tiny automaton animal helpers; Fergus, the Scottish/Yankee 'tinkerer' with electricity powers; Clyde, the Afrikans (Black) 'hero' owner of a giant steam-powered machine man; Kitsune, the Japanese 'trickster' with the power to create illusions; Gonzalo, the blind Texian (Hispanic) 'law-bringer' with a sentient gun; and Martine, the Karankawan 'scientist' with superior intellect and technology. This league of seven heroes, under the leadership of the corrupt Septemberist Society, learn to 'embrace what makes you special' and that 'What makes you a monster is what's in your heart, […] Not what you look like' (Gratz, *The Dragon Lantern* (henceforth: *DL*) 78, 240). Despite the obstacles that might tear them apart, the team work together to protect the United Nations of America from the monstrous Mangleborn and the 'Darkness.'

While *The League of Seven* trilogy has a diverse cast of protagonists, it does not function as a counter-story to dominant narratives about oppressed social groups,

but instead naturalizes the dominance of oppressive social groups and affirms the assimilation of oppressed groups into the dominant culture. If 'One of the key goals of counter-storytelling is to give voice to the lived experiences of groups that have traditionally been marginalized and oppressed' (Hughes-Hassell, "Multicultural Young Adult Literature" 219), but the lived experiences of oppressed social groups are *not* given a voice in the text, then the text does not function as a counter-story but rather as a colourblind narrative. Colourblind ideology has historically been associated with race, or perhaps more clearly, 'not seeing race.' Here I apply this theory to other oppressed social groups as well. Originally, 'colorblindness represented a radical and wholly unrealized aspiration, the hope that *de jure* racial subordination might be suddenly and thoroughly dismantled' by not 'seeing' race, when in reality all it has done is preserve the racial status quo (López, "Colorblind White Dominance" 101). While the refusal to 'see' a person's race may be intended as a progressive refusal to perceive difference as negative, colourblind ideologies are a part of liberalism's refusal to acknowledge the existence and power of institutional structures of racism, allowing for said structures to remain intact. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues:

> this new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the
>
> maintenance of the racial order. […] color-blind racism serves today as
>
> the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system […] it aids
>
> in the maintenance of white privilege. (*Racism Without Racists* 3-4)

When the race of a fictional character is 'equated to skin color or ancestry, nothing more. […] the core claim is that race has nothing to do with social practices of status competition and subordination' (López, "Colorblind White Dominance" 103). The systemic oppression of the United Nations of America is neglected by the text's

narrative, and in this way colourblindness can be understood 'not [as] a prescription but [as] an ideology, a set of understandings that delimits how people comprehend, rationalize, and act in the world' (López, "Colorblind White Dominance" 100). The limited understanding of the world due to a liberalist colourblind ideology results in a failure to relate each character's social group identity to the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world, undercutting the text's themes of equality through the unacknowledged ways the characters are oppressed.

The colourblind representation of America's Indigenous tribes in *The League of Seven* trilogy results in a lack of distinction between the specific cultures of the differing tribes, and instead relies on stereotypes. Of the Indigenous protagonists, Hachi is Seminole and Martine is Karankawan, and while these different tribes are named, no other distinctions are provided in the characters' characterizations, such as differences in language, belief, clothing, and other cultural customs. Further to this, little distinction is made between Indigenous and Yankee cultures, suggesting that when the Yankees became the seventh tribe of the Americas, the Indigenous in turn assimilated to Yankee culture. One of the few examples of an Indigenous-specific cultural practice is the 'strangely dressed' warriors called Dog Soldiers, who 'each wore a feathery headdress that looked like a turkey had exploded on their heads' (*DL* 194). This description is not a celebration of difference; the description of the Dog Soldiers makes a joke and mockery of an important cultural custom. The only other clear distinction between the Indigenous and the other races of the Americas is that the Indigenous are represented as inherently more violent. Throughout the trilogy the different Indigenous tribes are in conflict, often fighting with one another, and by the third novel: 'The Cherokee and the Muskogee are at it again. So are the Choctaw, Pawnee, and Illini. The Council of Three Fires has declared war on the Cree, and the

Iroquois are invading Acadia' (Gratz, *The Monster War* (henceforth: *MW*) 241). Note that in this description, not a single other race is mentioned to be in conflict with anyone. Maureen Trudelle Schwarz argues that the depiction of 'violent, lawless, impetuous' Indigenous people is a stereotype that dates to the late seventeenth century, and the stereotype of the Indigenous person as a 'bloodthirsty savage for whom war was a way of life' is 'by far the single most popular stock stereotype of Native Americans to date' (*Fighting Colonialism with Hegemonic Culture 62,* 93). The colourblind representation of the Indigenous fails to represent and celebrate diversity, instead naming two protagonists of particular tribes without attributing this naming with any meaning. The lack of any celebration of Indigenous cultures is instead replaced by old and harmful stereotypes, both homogenizing and dehumanizing the majority of the non-Yankee characters in the United Nations of America.

The most oppressed group in the United Nations of America are the Tik Toks, robots who have been built as the country's slaves. While the text states the value of freedom, it fails to represent the harms of slavery, depicting instead a colourblind representation of the named slave. One of the primary characters of the trilogy is Mr. Rivets, Archie's own Tik Tok. Mr. Rivets is described as having 'a friendly working-class look' and being Archie's 'nursemaid, his teacher, his guardian, his best friend' (*LS* 45, 169). In reality, Mr. Rivets is Archie's slave, who is told he is valued but is left out of the adventure so often that his saying, 'I'll just wait here for you then, shall I?' becomes a motif of the trilogy (*MW* 63). Mr. Rivets is a wind-up machine, meaning that Archie must wind-up a key in his back to keep him running. When Jesse James, an outlaw FreeTok, leader of the 'Self-Determinalists—machine men who refused to do the work they were programmed for' kidnaps Mr. Rivets, he

changes Mr. Rivets' programming to allow him not to follow orders, and moves Mr.

Rivet's wind-up key to within reach so that Mr. Rivets can be independent (*DL* 153,

169). While Mr. Rivets is in awe of the fact that he is now 'a *self-winding machine*

man' (*DL* 169, emphasis in original), he does not take this as an opportunity to be

liberated from slavery. Despite Archie's refusal to acknowledge that Mr. Rivets was

ever a slave, Mr. Rivets still proclaims, 'I wouldn't think of leaving you, Archie.

Master Archie' (*DL* 171). Mr. Rivets becomes a trope of racist fiction, the smiling

slave, happy in his servitude:

> Stories about the harsh realities of life during slavery and Jim Crow have
>
> been passed down from one generation to the next within the Black
>
> community, and they are the basis on which vehement objections are put
>
> forth to the smiling slaves [found in fiction]. (Thomas, Reese and
>
> Horning, "Much Ado," 12).

The construction of Mr. Rivets as a smiling slave not only contributes to a racist

history of erasing the harsh realities of life during slavery, it suggests that the white

masters of said slaves (such as Archie) were never cruel to or dehumanized their

slaves. This construction of slaves and slave owners further contributes to the

naturalization of white dominance, creating a false narrative that white people have

always been the 'best' (most dominant, kindest) throughout history.

　　　　While the work of the FreeToks to liberate the slaves is represented in the

text, including Harriet Tubman appearing to help the Tik Toks use the Underground

Railroad (*MW* 121-26), the harms of slavery are never emphasized. Instead, the only

enslaved character given any focus is represented as happy with his servitude.

Furthermore, while Black people are represented in this text's fictional world, none

of them are slaves, living instead as equals with the Yankees and Indigenous in a way

that erases the history of Black oppression in the United States. Mr. Rivet's lack of resistance to his own oppression, and his support of his Yankee master, functions to support the status quo of the United Nations of America.

Of the seven heroes in the League of Seven, over half could be described as disabled. In each case, the disability of the character functions to make the character superhuman, in turn dehumanizing them. For example, Martine is described as a stereotypical autistic person. She is extremely intelligent, significantly more than any other character, and 'She didn't understand emotions, or sarcasm, or humor, and rarely spoke. And when she did speak, it was usually to say something so blinking strange that it stopped you in your tracks' (*DW* 179). Martine's atypical qualities frequently confuse the other leaguers and sometimes cause moments of collective discomfort. The way that Martine is described is often dehumanizing, such as when Archie thinks that she has a robotic voice: 'She talks an awful lot like Mr. Rivets' (*DW* 62). At one point she is literally compared to the Mangleborn monsters: 'maybe why Martine was so alien, if she was able to think the same way the Mangleborn did' (*DW* 284). When the disabled are viewed as monstrous they 'reveal the limits of social integration […] Each of these characters—everyday monsters—becomes undecidable and ambiguous resisting any enduring attempt at correction and therefore symbolises a transgression of law' (Campbell, *Contours of Ableism* 162). No character tries to get to know Martine, or tries to find ways to make Martine feel included in the league. Instead, she is treated like the group weirdo, and feared whenever she is comparable to the monsters they fight. While the United States was meant to be a land of opportunity, the disabled are not able to integrate into the United Nations of America's society, and their differences are not celebrated but instead treated as something in need of correcting.

When the systemic oppression of the fictional world is resisted by diverse characters, and they are able to celebrate their differences freely, the pro-diversity themes of a text can be successful. When the diverse characters assimilate to the dominant culture of an oppressive social system, the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world undercut's the text's pro-diversity themes.

Resistance

Themes of resistance in children's fantastika literature can be supported or undercut depending on whether the characters are resisting an intersectional system of oppression or if they are resisting a specific oppressor. When the text's characters engage directly with the harms of specific social structures and fight to change the structures of society, the text's pro-resistance themes are constructed in direct relation to the fictional world's system of oppression. When the text's characters are engaged directly with the actions of a particular oppressor, and ignore the social system that enables said oppressor to gain power, the defeat of said oppressor may not result in a change to the fictional world's oppressive social structures. The focus on an oppressor, rather than on oppression, can place blame for all social ills on one individual (and their followers), and can risk not only excusing the oppressive behaviour of 'good' characters, but can also ignore (or even affirm) the oppression of other characters. By neglecting the intersectional system of oppression of the fictional world, a successful resistance of an oppressor without a resistance to an intersectional systems of oppression, can risk affirming the systemic oppression of certain social groups. With certain social groups still oppressed, the acts of resistance cannot be deemed a total success, undercutting the pro-resistance themes of the text.

In this section, I refer back to Hill Collins' theories of the matrix of domination. Hill Collins argues that each domain of power in the matrix of domination can be resisted; I apply Hill Collins' arguments to my primary texts in relation to the contexts of each text's fictional world. I will work my way backward through her domains of power, beginning with the resistance to ideological forms of oppression (the interpersonal and hegemonic domains of power), followed by ways of resisting institutional forms of oppression (the disciplinary and structural domains of power.) I am working my way backward because a change in the fictional world's institutional and political leadership is often constructed as the primary end-goal in the narratives of resistance I analyze, regardless of whether the focus is on an intersectional system of oppression or a specific oppressor.

Below I compare Frances Hardinge's *Mosca Mye* duology: *Fly By Night* (UK 2005) and *Twilight Robbery* (UK 2011), with JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (UK 1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (UK 1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (UK 1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (UK 2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (UK 2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (UK 2005) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (UK 2007). I have chosen to compare these two sets of texts because of their similarities and differences. Both feature rule-breaking protagonists, in both resistors have teachers and resistance begins with an education. Finally, in both texts resistance is successful when the resistors combine trickery and violence. There are two key differences between these works by Hardinge and Rowling. Hardinge's novels focus on a resistance to harmful social structures, and its anti-resistance themes are related to the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. Rowling's novels focus on resistance to a harmful oppressor, while its

resistance themes are undercut by the systemic oppression of the text's fictional world. The differences between these texts functions to emphasize the value of resisting all intersecting forms of a system of oppression, rather than just resisting a specific person or group of oppressors.

In Frances Hardinge's *Mosca Mye* duology, *Fly By Night* and *Twilight Robbery*, anti-resistance themes are supported by the systemic oppression the characters resist. Hardinge's text is about a rebellious girl named Mosca Mye and her adventures as the secretary of criminal poet Eponymous Clent in a fictional world called the Realm. In both texts, Mosca, her vicious goose Saracen, and Clent become involved in resisting unequal and oppressive laws and leaders. In *Fly By Night* the characters resist both the official government of the city of Mandelion, and the power of the Stationer's Guild, *Twilight Robbery* sees the characters resisting the laws of the city of Toll, and the power of the Locksmiths Guild. In both cases Mosca must also resist ideologies associated with the religion of the Beloved. Mosca is an oppressed character who must work with other oppressed characters in a collaborative effort to subvert and resist the interlocking institutions of government, guilds and religion that oppress them.

The Realm has been without a ruler for decades, while Parliament argues over who is the rightful king or queen. The people of the Realm have become divided because each city pledges its allegiance to a different potential ruler. While the country goes without an official ruler, the guilds take control: 'in their heart, nobody *believes* in the kings or queens any more. The Realm is held together by the guilds, and everybody knows it' (Hardinge, *Fly By Night* (henceforth *FBN*) 227). Each guild controls a different part of society. For example, the Locksmiths officially function to ensure security, but with their unmatched skills in picking any lock they are also

the leaders of crime. Meanwhile the Stationers are printers and bookbinders, but any text without their seal is burned, allowing them total control of all knowledge in the Realm.

One set of knowledge in the Realm is the religion of The Beloved; everyone in the Realm follows this religion and to do otherwise is punishable by death. This religion shapes the ideological oppression in the Realm in the way that it determines the value of each citizen. The Beloved are saints, and there are so many of them that they each get a few hours sacred to them per year. People are named according to the Beloved whose sacred hours they are born within, and individuals are believed to share the traits of their particular Beloved.

In the Realm nobody *ever* lies about their name. Mosca Mye is born during the sacred hour of Goodman Palpitattle, He Who Keeps Flies out of Jams and Butterchurns, and is thus mistrusted because people born during this time are believed to be 'villainous, verminous and everywhere that they're not wanted' (*Twilight Robbery* (henceforth *TR*) 79). While in most cities this means that Mosca becomes 'used to seeing noses wrinkle and gazes chill when she admitted to her name' in the city of Toll Mosca faces severe loathing (*TR* 87). Toll oppresses those born under 'bad' Beloved more so than other cities in the Realm: only those born under 'good' Beloved may live freely during the day; those born under 'bad' Beloved can only leave their homes at night, under the control and harsh treatment of the Locksmith Guild.

Mosca resists ideological forms of oppression by refusing to conform to oppressive social roles. Hill Collins argues that those who are 'actively engaged in changing the terms of their everyday relationships with one another' (*Black Feminist Thought* 288) resist the oppression of the interpersonal domain of power in the

matrix of domination. Mosca resists ideological oppression by refusing to conform to the Realm's binaried gender roles. For example, while girls are not allowed to be formally educated, and so girls are not expected to be able to read, Mosca actively and regularly reads and writes (*FBN* 3). When she tells someone she is Clent's secretary, she is told 'You don't look like one. Secretaries are men' to which Mosca replies 'I'm different—I'm secretary to a poet' (*FBN* 253). When Mosca approaches a chapman selling cheap books and asks him if he has any books about the Book Riots her father was involved in, the chapman responds, 'Bit bloody for a lass— wouldn't you like a nice ballad about Captain Blythe like the other girls?' Mosca resists the patriarchal social role of an ignorant and romance-obsessed girl by stating, 'I don't mind blood. I like books with gizzard and gunpowder in 'em' (*FBN* 203). Mosca's ability to read not only enables her to resist gender norms and take up work otherwise only available to men, it also gives her the opportunity to point out these gender hierarchies and work to change social ideologies regarding women. Mosca actively engages in changing the terms of her everyday relationships with other people through her reading and writing skills, resisting the patriarchal oppression of the Realm.

When Mosca is forced to live in Toll-by-Night, the city of Toll after sunset with everyone born during the sacred hours of 'bad' Beloved, she has to resist the ideological oppression of the nightfolk. In Toll-by-Night, Mosca meets several dangerous people. In response, Mosca calls out their conformity to oppressive ideologies about the nightfolk: 'The Committee of the House—are they right about us? We nightfolk, are we just a bunch of cheats and bawdy-baskets and sheep-stealers, all just waiting to stick a knife in each other's backs?' (*TR* 267). Throughout her time in Toll-by-Night, Mosca risks her life to help others, including rescuing

Beamabeth from her kidnappers and getting Mistress Leap enough money so that she and her husband can pay their way out of Toll before they are murdered (*TR* 431). Mosca refuses to conform to the behaviour believed of a nightfolk or of a person born during the sacred hour of Goodman Palpitattle. By refusing to conform to social roles expected of her Beloved, Mosca actively demonstrates that everyday relationships do not need to be confined to limited and oppressive social roles.

In the Realm, the interlocking of the Stationer's Guild with the religion of the Beloved means that knowledge and ideology are heavily controlled in an oppressive system of hegemony. Hill Collins argues that resistance to hegemony involves two key components: first, learning to 'not believe everything one is told and taught' and second, 'constructing new knowledge' (*Black Feminist Thought* 286). Radicals resist the Realm's system of hegemony through the rejection of previous knowledge and ideologies and the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and ideologies. In Mandelion, the radical Hopewood Pertellis runs a secret school where he teaches children the harm caused by the country's law and leadership, while using the children to write radical propaganda criticizing the Realm's unequal law (*FBN* 1398-40, 149). Pertellis becomes a hero to the children of Mandelion, in turn altering social ideologies of what it means to be a hero. When the radicals take over Mandelion, other cities make it illegal to trade with Mandelion in an attempt to starve them out. Instead, this harms the little towns in the surrounding area, 'And so some people had decided that life might be better in Mandelion itself and had tried to flee to join the rebels' (*TR* 11). The city of rebels becomes a haven for those oppressed by unequal laws. Mosca perfectly exemplifies Hill Collins' argument when Brand Appleton, who is hoping to become a radical, points out that Mosca is breaking the law by standing on the grass, and Mosca responds, 'radicalism is *all*

about walkin' on the grass' (*TR* 302). Pertellis and Mosca both resist the hegemonic domain of power by resisting previous knowledge (that the law is equal and good) and disseminating new knowledge (that the law is unequal and bad, and those who break the law are heroes.)

Hill Collins argues that resisting the oppression of the disciplinary domain of power involves working from inside institutions in order to keep the institution itself under surveillance, in turn working to 'find innovative ways to work the system so that it will become more fair' (*Black Feminist Thought* 281-2). Mosca uses her knowledge from working as Lady Tamarind's spy to help the rebels of Mandelion. While she does not initially agree to spy for Lady Tamarind in order to work the system from the inside, she does end up using her insider knowledge to help those resisting Mandelion's unfair government. It is because of Mosca knowledge that the rebels learn that the printing press responsible for spreading so much radical propaganda in Mandelion is being used by Lady Tamarind in order to control the Duke (348-9). Mosca is able to warn the rebels that the evil Birdcatchers are heading to Mandelion on a large ship, and that the Watermen who protect the coast have 'been sent to "delay" the Locksmith troops that she [Lady Tamarind] knew were waiting upstream' (350). Mosca's warning allows the rebels the opportunity to fight the Duke and protect the people of Mandelion. When Clent releases a ballad about the highwayman Captain Blythe, describing him as heroic, Blythe becomes 'the darling of the people' of Mandelion to such an extent that 'the people of Mandelion will not be ruled by anyone but their famous Captain Blythe and his gang of radical reprobates' (*FBN* 419). As all written documents are approved by the Stationer's Guild, Captain Blythe gains his position of respect from within the Stationer's Guild's institutional practices. Blyth re-works the system from this interior position

by challenging the Duke to a test of pistols, arguing, 'I stand for the rights of the people he robs and oppresses, and will risk my body for my cause' (*FBN* 393). Blythe makes clear that he represents the common citizen, and that he is resisting not only the government, but also the oppression the government maintains. The combination of Mosca's insider knowledge and Blyth's institutionally-reinforced position of heroism work to keep the government of Mandelion under surveillance and work to resist the leaders of Mandelion's institution of government. By defeating Lady Tamarind and the Duke, the rebels are able to work the institution of government in a way that more fairly treats the common person of Mandelion.

Resistance to the oppression of the structural domain of power involves wide-scale social movements, revolutions, wars, and social reforms that result in system-wide upheaval (Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 277-8). These forms of resistance are usually slow and gradual, but can on the rare occasion also occur quickly after a social protest of significant magnitude. The rebels of Mandelion exemplify the more slow and gradual form of structural resistance when they use floating coffeehouses to hold their meetings. In Mandelion, those who wish to practice activities outside of the law do so on the river, beyond the law of the Duke: 'The coffeehouses of Mandelion criss-crossed the river to escape the shore laws, so that customers could speak freely. Here sedition and wild conspiracies bubbled like the coffee-pots' (*FBN* 146). The radicals are not the only ones to bend the law by occupying the river, the citizens of Mandelion also use the river to sell products usually controlled by the guilds, including medicine, weapons and books (*FBN* 317-18). These practices create a culture of resistance among the people of Mandelion, functioning to support a social movement that allows Mandelion to eventually become known as the 'rebel city.'

Resisting the systemic oppression of the nightfolk of Toll-by-Night by overthrowing the government involves a much faster form of social upheaval than in Mandelion. It is the law of Toll that one must pay a toll to enter the city and leave the city (*TR* 66). The toll to leave Toll is more expensive for nightfolk than dayfolk: 'Paying your way out of this town at night costs twice what it does by day, and with our taxes there's no way to save money' (*TR* 161). In order to help the nightfolk escape toll, Mosca sets a plan into motion in order to convince the mayor to change the law that a toll must be paid to leave Toll. Toll is a city built on a tilt on the edge of the Langfeather river, and the people of Toll believe if a boy named Paragon, known as 'The Luck of Toll' for having the best name in the city, stays in Toll, the city will never fall off the ridge and into the river (*TR* 76-7). Mosca employs the help of a radical named Laylow to help rescue Paragon from the Locksmith's captivity, and bring him out onto a bridge as a threat to leave Toll and kill everyone in the city. On the bridge, Paragon shouts out, 'Now… everybody… make the gates be open!'

When Paragon calls for a change to the law by ridding the gates of their tolls, 'All eyes rose to the mayor, […] He bristled, and gave a sharp nod. The small group of guards at the end of the gate end of the bridge boggled, then set about cranking up the portcullis' (*TR* 509). Once this is done, the nightfolk immediately pack their belongings ('the even more resourceful did the same but with other people's belongings') and leave Toll (*TR* 511). When Paragon then leaves Toll himself, the remaining citizens of Toll rush out of the city, leaving both the mayor and the Locksmiths without a people to rule (*TR* 513). When the entire citizenship of Toll leaves the city, it functions as a large-scale social protest to staying within the city's borders, functioning as a complete social upheaval of Toll's system of government.

Mosca's plan to use the Luck to change the law of Toll's toll enables the nightfolk to find liberation from Toll's system of oppression.

The intersectional system of oppression in the wizarding world of JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series undercuts the text's themes of resistance. The *Harry Potter* novels are about a boy named Harry Potter, who learns on his eleventh birthday that he is a wizard, and he leaves the non-magical (Muggle) society in order to study magic at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry learns that Voldemort, an evil wizard, not only killed Harry's parents (and tried and failed to kill Harry), but intends to take over the wizarding world under an ideology of pure-blooded witch and wizard supremacy. Working with his friends, especially Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, Harry fights against Voldemort and his followers. When Harry and his friends defeat Voldemort, the series ends with the line 'All was well' (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (henceforth *DH* 759). However, there are many social issues in place that have not been resolved by defeating Voldemort, namely the social exclusion of Muggles and the systemic oppression of magical creatures, both of which are a part of the same intersecting system of oppression that enabled Voldemort to rise to power. For many, all is decidedly *not* well in the wizarding world at the conclusion of the seventh *Harry Potter* novel.

Voldemort and his followers believe that witches and wizards born to magical parents are the most supreme social group in the world, and that all other social groups should be subservient to 'pure-blooded' witches and wizards. Resistance to the oppression of the interpersonal domain of power involves challenging supremacist ideologies in whatever form they may take. One method of demonstrating an ideology is through the use of slurs, such as 'Mudblood,' which is used to refer to witches and wizards born to Muggle parents (Rowling, *Harry Potter*

and the Chamber of Secrets (henceforth: *CoS*) 115). Ron explains that some pure-blooded witches and wizards 'think they're better than everyone else' while 'the rest of us know it doesn't make any difference at all. Look at Neville Longbottom—he's pure-blooded and he can hardly stand a cauldron the right way up' (*CoS* 116). Hagrid agrees with Ron, adding that Hermione, a muggle-born witch, is highly-skilled (*CoS* 116). Whenever Draco Malfoy, whose family is in league with Voldemort, calls Hermione Granger a Mudblood, the 'good' characters are immediately outraged. The first time Harry hears the word, Fred, George and Ron all attempt to attack Draco (*CoS* 112). Draco Malfoy's use of Mudblood as a slur is a form of oppression within the interpersonal domain of power in the wizarding world, and the Weasley brothers' violent reaction to this interpersonal interaction functions as an act of resistance. Fred, George and Ron's refusal to allow Draco to use this anti-Muggle-born slur without consequence is an attempt to change the everyday interactions between witches and wizards of differing blood-status.

Anti-muggle-born ideologies in the wizarding world are a byproduct of the wizarding world's hegemonic system of anti-muggle ideologies. As Maria Nikolajeva argues, 'Power hierarchies in the series are unequivocal. Wizards are superior to non-wizards' ("Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature" 228). Those who resist anti-muggle-born ideologies do not necessarily resist anti-muggle ideologies. Furthermore, these same characters may reinforce anti-muggle ideologies. For example, when Ron first learns of the Muggle sport football, he argues with muggle-born Dean Thomas about it because 'Ron couldn't see what was exciting about a game with only one ball where no one was allowed to fly' (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* 144). Ron's insistence that wizarding culture is superior because it features magic is a frequent occurrence throughout the *Harry*

Potter novels from many different characters. Arthur Weasley's fascination with Muggles' ability to get 'along without magic' (*CoS* 43) stems not from admiration, but, as Farah Mendlesohn argues, 'patronizing curiosity […] This complete ignorance is plausible only if considered in terms of segregated and imperialist hierarchies, in which it is the norm that those who regard themselves superior are oblivious to the lives of those they control' ("Crowning the King" 302). The ideology that Muggles are inferior to witches and wizards supports the systemic oppression of the Muggle-born. If Muggles are inferior to witches and wizards, then it ostensibly follows that those born of Muggle parents are inferior to those born of magical parents. While Hermione functions to demonstrate how unfair and untrue this ideology is, even her friends tend to uphold a hegemonic system of anti-muggle ideology, contributing to the system of oppression that reinforces Voldemort's ideologies of pure-blooded supremacy.

The ideology that witches and wizards are superior to Muggles functions only to support the ideology that pure-blooded witches and wizards are superior to muggle-born witches and wizards. When Voldemort's followers attack the Quidditch World Cup, Draco warns Hermione that Voldemort's followers are attacking Muggles, and thus they are also a threat to her (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (henceforth *GoF*) 122). Here Draco makes clear that Voldemort and his followers believe that Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards are both equally inferior. Instead of arguing that attacking *anyone* is unacceptable, Harry argues, 'Hermione's a witch' (*GoF* 122). Harry does not resist anti-Muggle ideology, rather he resists the ideology that Muggle-born witches and wizards are equals with Muggles, in turn asserting the right of witches and wizards to be higher than Muggles in the wizarding world's social hierarchy. As Marcus Schulzke argues,

'Many characters tacitly accepts their anonymous power over events in the Muggle world without feeling any duty to inform the Muggles about events as significant as civil war' ("Wizard's Justice and Elf Liberation" 112). While many 'good' characters actively resist ideologies that muggle-born witches and wizards are inferior to pure-blooded witches and wizards, they still maintain the social hierarchies that reinforce these oppressive ideologies.

Voldemort and his followers' ideology of pure-blooded supremacy is a part of an intersectional system of oppression that also oppresses non-human magical characters in the wizarding world. Characters who actively resist Voldemort still contribute to the supremacy of witches and wizards over other non-human magical people in a system of hegemony. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* Molly Weasley has Harry and Ron 'de-gnome' her garden, a process that involves pulling gnomes out of their homes, swinging them 'in great circles like a lasso' in order to 'make them really dizzy so they can't find their way back to the gnomeholes' and then letting the gnomes go so that they fly 'twenty feet into the air and landed with a thud in the field over the hedge' (*CoS* 37). The gnomes are forcibly removed from their homes so that the witches and wizards in that area can claim full ownership of the land, treating gnomes as nothing more than pests. Worse than this, witches and wizards use house-elves as slaves. While initially the text implies that the practice of having a house-elf as a slave is done only by followers of Voldemort, namely the Malfoys and their ownership of Dobby in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, in later texts it becomes clear that sympathetic characters use house-elf slaves as well. Even the hero, Harry, gets a house-elf slave, Kreacher. Instead of releasing Kreacher from slavery as an act of resisting magical human dominance over other magical creatures, Harry keeps and *uses* Kreacher as his slave.

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* Harry resists Voldemort by commanding Kreacher to spy on Draco Malfoy (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (henceforth: *HBP*) 421). Kreacher tells Harry, 'Kreacher will do whatever Master wants […] because Kreacher has no choice, but Kreacher is ashamed to have such a master' (*HBP* 421). Kreacher's unhappiness and lack of agency are made very clear to Harry, but Harry demonstrates no sympathy for Kreacher, instead Harry is pleased to have a way to resist Voldemort and spy on Draco. The oppression of the gnomes, house-elves and other magical creatures asserts the dominance of magical people over other social groups in the wizarding world. Harry's focus on resisting Voldemort, rather than resisting Voldemort's ideologies of witch and wizard supremacy, means that Harry can contribute to the system of hegemony that upholds Voldemort's power.

The primary form of resistance portrayed in the *Harry Potter* novels is resistance to institutional oppression, especially from the institution of government. Alkestrand argues that the represented resistance in Rowling's text is 'righteous' because the institution of government 'is portrayed as corrupt and unscrupulous' ("Righteous Rebellion in Fantasy" 117-8). Harry first learns that the wizarding world's government, the Ministry of Magic, is unjust when the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, sentences Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, to be kissed by a dementor and have his soul removed (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (henceforth *PoA*) 389). Sirius, innocent of his accused crimes, is sentenced to a fate worse than death without being given a fair trial. In order to save Sirius, Harry and Hermione, at the instruction of Professor Dumbledore, help Sirius escape (*PoA* 393, 414-15). When Harry and Hermione save Sirius, 'This act of subverting the power of the highest officials in the Ministry of Magic is a radical statement of

the duty of ordinary people to take a stand against abuses of power' (Schulzke, "Wizard's Justice and Elf Liberation" 115). A little over a year later, the Ministry of Magic abuses its power again when Dolores Umbridge is employed as the Defence Against the Dark Arts professor at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in an attempt to control Dumbledore and his supporters, and suppress the belief that Voldemort has returned. When Umbridge refuses to allow students to learn how to use defensive spells, Harry recognizes that this will only function to aid Voldemort, and limit the abilities of Hogwarts' students in resisting Voldemort. When he argues this point to Umbridge, she says, 'you have been informed that a certain Dark wizard is at large once again. *This is a lie*' (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (henceforth: *OotP*) 245, emphasis in original).

In order to resist Voldemort, Hermione decides the students at Hogwarts should resist Umbridge and learn defensive spells in secret (*OotP* 332). When Umbridge learns of this plan, she instates a new rule at Hogwarts, Educational Decree Number Twenty-Four, which prohibits students from having 'Student Organizations, Societies, Teams, Groups and Clubs' (*OotP* 351). When Harry is asked by his peers what they will do, he says simply, 'We're going to do it anyway, of course' (*OotP* 354). The students title their group Dumbledore's Army, and, according to Tracy L. Bealer, 'in learning to resist Umbridge, the students, and in particular Harry himself, are also learning how to successfully fight Voldemort' ("(Dis)Order of the Phoenix" 178). With the skills learned in Dumbledore's Army, Harry and his peers are better able to resist Voldemort when he takes over the Ministry of Magic and, in turn, the entire wizarding world. While Harry and his peers are resisting the Ministry of Magic's abuses of power, their primary purpose for doing so is in order to defeat one specific oppressor, Voldemort.

Despite what they might say, Harry and his friends in Dumbledore's Army do not fight Voldemort for the sake of everyone in the wizarding world. When Hermione first proposes starting Dumbledore's Army, she argues the group should be for 'anyone who wants to learn' (*OotP* 332), and yet the only people she invites are human witches and wizards (*OotP* 337-8). No magical creatures are invited to learn. Given that the Code of Wand Use in wizarding law means that 'No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand' and any creature seen holding one is arrested (*GoF* 132), Dumbledore's Army has an opportunity here to resist social hierarchies of speciesism. Not even their friend Hagrid, a half-giant who was expelled from Hogwarts at thirteen years old and who would benefit greatly from learning new magical spells prior to the war against Voldemort, is invited to join Dumbledore's Army. Bealer argues, 'the D.A. and the Order of the Phoenix itself are important not just because they make their members better wizards, or because they are engaged in the fight against evil, but because they institutionalize and strengthen interpersonal bonds, loyalty, trust, and love' ("(Dis)Order of the Phoenix" 184). The institutionalized bonds are exclusive to those between magical humans, in turn functioning to further separate magical humans and magical creatures.

The focus on defeating Voldemort is at the expense of neglecting the systemic speciesism in the wizarding world. Griphook the Goblin makes clear the failure of magical humans to support magical creatures when he argues 'As the Dark Lord becomes ever more powerful, your race is set still more firmly above mine! Gringotts falls under Wizarding rule, house-elves are slaughtered, and who amongst the wand-carriers protests?' (*DH* 488-9). Despite the fact that Harry, Ron and Hermione intend to manipulate Griphook for their own gains, Hermione responds, 'We do! […] We protest! And I'm hunted quite as much as any goblin or elf,

Griphook! I'm a Mudblood!' (*DH* 489). There are two issues with Hermione's response: first, Hermione's endeavours to protest the enslavement of house-elves has stopped after she received more condemnation than support from her peers (including Harry and Ron), and second, that she believes muggle-born people are as oppressed as non-human magical creatures. When Hermione begins S.P.E.W. (The Society for the Promotion of Elvish Welfare), Harry and Ron only agree to wear S.P.E.W. badges to keep Hermione quiet (*GoF* 239). Meanwhile Fred, George and Hagrid outright refuse to support her, believing that it is in the nature of house-elves to be enslaved, and that Dobby is a 'weirdo' for wanting freedom and payment (*GoF* 239, 265). While Hermione's peers might argue they are fighting Voldemort for the entire wizarding world, when Hermione asks them to help end the enslavement of house-elves, 'Many regarded the whole thing as a joke' (*GoF* 239). Farah Mendlesohn argues, 'the fact that house-elves absolutely cannot free themselves, but must be freed by others, creates a dynamic in which all justice must be offered from above, rather than taken from below' ("Crowning the King" 306). The house-elves are unable to resist their own oppression, while the witches and wizards who have the ability to fight for their freedom refuse to do so. Instead, resistance against Voldemort takes priority because resisting Voldemort ensures the status quo for magical people is maintained, including their domination over all other social groups in the wizarding world.

When Harry and his friends defeat Voldemort, their successful resistance against a specific oppressor is portrayed as a significant change to the wizarding world. While the immediate threat to muggle-born witches and wizards is overcome, the system of oppression that enabled Voldemort to gain influence and power remains fully intact, including a hierarchy over non-human magical creatures and

Muggles. While Brycchan Carey argues, 'By defeating Voldemort, Potter and his allies pave the way for future improvements to the working conditions of house-elves, and perhaps, to their eventual emancipation' ("Hermione and the House-Elves Revisited" 171), no evidence of this is provided in the text. During the fight against Voldemort, Ron mentions that the house-elves are in the Hogwarts kitchens, and Harry responds, 'we ought to get them fighting' (*DH* 625). While Ron disagrees, wanting to save the house-elves instead of ordering them 'to die for us' (*DH* 625), both characters demonstrate an us/ them dichotomy in which the fight against Voldemort is *for* witches and wizards, and *not* for non-human magical creatures. Harry's willingness to use the house-elves as slaves is further demonstrated when, after defeating Voldemort, Harry thinks, 'whether Kreacher might bring him a sandwich' and decides he has 'had enough trouble for a lifetime' (*DH* 749). Now that Harry is done fighting Voldemort, he is done fighting entirely, and thus will not be fighting for the rights of house-elves but will instead be relaxing while he uses his own slave house-elf to bring him food. Nineteen years later, Muggles stare curiously at Harry and his family as they make their way to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, which Nikolajeva argues suggests that 'Wizards are obviously still superior to Muggles, and no questions about possible cooperation are ever raised' ("Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature 238). While Voldemort's death means 'All was well' for Harry (*DH* 759), at the conclusion of the series the system of oppression that enabled Voldemort to rise to power is still very much in place in the wizarding world.

The defeat of an oppressor does not necessarily liberate all people equally. In ostensible narratives of social justice with themes of resistance, the systemic oppression of the fictional world should be challenged in all its intersecting forms.

Otherwise a successful resistance may function to support the status quo and naturalize particular social hierarchies. In Hardinge's *Mosca Mye* novels, social hierarchies are resisted in order to successfully liberate the oppressed, while in Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, an oppressor is resisted and certain social hierarchies remain intact. A successful liberation does not only involve resisting the ways one group is oppressed, but also how all social groups are oppressed. Otherwise the resistor may themselves become the oppressor.

Conclusion

While it is good when authors attempt to write novels with social justice themes, when the mechanisms and consequences of systemic oppression are not properly understood or engaged with, the text can risk supporting the very issues it may be attempting to critique or critiquing the very topics it may wish to support. When fiction with anti-oppression themes, such as the harms of oppression and domination, do not consider the ways systems of oppression intersect, and/or do not support all intersecting social group identities, the text risks critiquing one form of oppression in favour of another. When fiction with pro-diversity themes, such as the value of multiculturalism, do not represent and celebrate the specific distinctions between differing groups, the text risks supporting the oppressive status quo. When fiction with pro-resistance themes, such as the importance of fighting corrupt leaders, represents successful liberation for some, but not all, the text risks affirming who it is acceptable to oppress. Only when themes of social justice involve justice for all intersecting social group identities can texts be sure to function in favour of resisting real-world systemic oppression.

Conclusion

I argue that the liberating social justice potential of any text is reliant on the way it represents systemic oppression. In this dissertation I have analyzed over one hundred contemporary middle-grade fantastika novels to propose a method for analyzing intersectional systemic oppression in fictional worlds. Ostensible narratives of social justice need to emphasize the harms of oppression in all its intersecting forms. A critique of some forms of oppression, while ignoring or supporting others, ultimately functions to support the status quo. As the field of children's literature continues to argue for the social justice potential of diverse literature, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the field by arguing for the importance of analyzing the representation of intersectional systemic oppression in children's literature.

As the nature of intersectional systemic oppression is context dependent, it is not enough for literary scholars to study diverse character representation without considering the contexts in which said characters exist. Any analysis of systemic oppression involves interrogating the specific interlocking mechanisms of power within a matrix of domination. In fictional worlds, such as those in children's fantastika literature, familiar social structures such as institutions, networks, institutional and social hierarchies, social exclusions and interpersonal interactions, may be constructed in unfamiliar or alternative ways. When familiar social structures are made strange, or defamiliarized, this allows an analysis of the way oppression is specifically organized, managed, justified and experienced in the particular context analyzed. Once a scholar understands the specific nature of oppression represented in the text, in all its interlocking and intersecting forms, they are then able to better argue the text's strengths and limitations regarding its liberating social justice potential.

But it is also important to remember that the systemic oppression of a fictional world also has rhetorical and narratological effects on the text. For example, there are a high number of children's fantastika novels that feature species that do not exist in the real world, resulting in the construction of social systems of oppression that also do not exist in the real world. The rhetorical construction of systemic speciesism involves particular philosophical, metaphorical and historical approaches to the text's worldbuilding. Thus, the systemic oppression of a fictional world has a direct influence on the writing of the text. This is especially true when the protagonists of the narratives are oppressed themselves; the hero's journey, actant construction and focalization are all affected by whether the hero is privileged or oppressed. Just as there is a social value in diverse characters, so too is there literary value in oppressed characters.

When literary research analyzes the quality of diverse characters outside of the contexts of said characters' systems of oppression, this research risks contributing to a liberalist agenda that places the onus of marginalization on individuals rather than social systems. When assessing the social justice potential of a children's novel, my research provides clear methods for analyzing the various mechanisms of the represented system of oppression in a text and determining whether the text interrogates and critiques systemic oppression in all its interlocking and intersecting forms. When ostensible narratives of anti-oppression, diversity and resistance are not intersectional, rather than critiquing systemic oppression these texts risk contributing to it.

If the first step in determining the liberating social justice potential of a children's novel is to analyze the way it represents systemic oppression, the second step is to determine what to do with these findings. Further research is required into

the way the teaching, reading and writing of systemic oppression in children's

fantastika literature can contribute to the promotion of human rights and various

methods of social justice activism. In the meantime, I hope that the research of this

doctoral project will be used to further current social justice research in the field of

children's literature, adding greater consideration to the value of middle-grade

fantastika novels, and placing a stronger emphasis on intersectional analyses of

systemic oppression.

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Appendix

The Matrix of Domination Across Primary Texts

Key: "•" denotes the representation of the particular domain of power in the fictional world of the given text.

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
Alexander, William. *Ambassador.*	USA	●	●	●	●		●
Alexander, William. *Goblin Secrets.*	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Anderson, Jodi Lynn. *The Ever After.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Anderson, R.J. *A Pocket Full of Murder.*	Canada	●	●	●	●	●	●
Appelt, Kathi. *Keeper.*	USA					●	●
Applegate, K.A. *Remnants: Destination Unknown.*	USA				●	●	●
Applegate, K.A. *Remnants: Nowhere Land.*	USA			●	●	●	●
Applegate, K.A. *Remnants: The Mayflower Project.*	USA		●			●	●
Applegate, K.A. *Remnants: Them.*	USA			●	●	●	●
Applegate, K.A. *Animorphs: The Ellimist Chronicles.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Arbuthnott, Shane. *Dominion.*	Canada	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bachmann, Stefan. *The Peculiar.*	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Barnhill, Kelly. *The Girl Who Drank the Moon.*	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Bartók, Mira. *The Wonderling.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Black, Holly and Cassandra Clare. *Magisterium: The Iron*	USA			●		●	●

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
Trial.							
Black, Holly and Cassandra Clare. *Magisterium: The Bronze Key.*	USA	●		●		●	●
Bohls, Steven. *Jed and the Junkyard War.*	USA	●			●		●
Brown, Peter. *The Wild Robot.*	USA				●	●	●
Burgis, Stephanie. *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart.*	UK	●		●	●		●
Carmody, Isobelle. *Little Fur: The Legend Begins.*	Australia		●			●	●
Chainani, Soman. *The School for Good and Evil.*	USA			●	●	●	●
Chokshi, Roshani. *Aru Shah and the End of Time.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl.*	Ireland	●		●	●		●
Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident.*	Ireland	●		●	●		●
Colfer, Eoin. *The Supernaturalist.*	Ireland	●		●	●	●	●
Collins, Suzanne. *Gregor the Overlander.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Corder, Zizou. *Lionboy.*	UK			●	●		●
Cowell, Cressida. *How to Train Your Dragon.*	UK	●		●	●		●
Cowell, Cressida. *The Wizards of Once.*	UK	●		●	●		●
D'Lacey, Chris. *The Erth Dragons: The Wearle.*	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
De Lint, Charles. *The Cats of Tanglewood Forest.*	Canada		●	●	●		●
DiMartino, Michael Dante. *Rebel Genius.*	USA	●		●	●		●
DiTerlizzi, Tony and Holly Black. *The Spiderwick Chronicles:*	USA			●	●	●	●

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
The Ironwood Tree. The Spiderwick Chronicles: The Completely Fantastical Edition.							
DiTerlizzi, Tony and Holly Black. *The Spiderwick Chronicles: The Wrath of Mulgarath. The Spiderwick Chronicles: The Completely Fantastical Edition.*	USA			●	●	●	●
DiTerlizzi, Tony. *A Hero for WondLa.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
DiTerlizzi, Tony.. *Kenny and the Dragon.*	USA	●			●		●
DiTerlizzi, Tony. *The Battle for WondLa.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
DiTerlizzi, Tony. *The Search for WondLa.*	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Duggan, Helena. *A Place Called Perfect.*	Ireland	●		●		●	●
Flanagan, John. *Ranger's Apprentice: The Ruins of Gorlan.*	Australia	●		●	●		
Gratz, Alan. *The Dragon Lanturn.*	USA	●				●	●
Gratz, Alan. *The League of Seven.*	USA	●				●	●
Gratz, Alan. *The Monster War.*	USA	●				●	●
Hardinge, Frances. *A Face Like Glass.*	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hardinge, Frances. *Fly By Night.*	UK	●	●	●	●		●
Hardinge, Frances. *Gullstruck Island.*	UK	●	●	●		●	●
Hardinge, Frances. *Twilight Robbery.*	UK	●		●	●		●
Howe, James. *Bunnicula Meets Edgar Allan Crow.*	USA					●	●
Jacques, Brian. *Lord Brocktree.*	UK	●	●	●	●		●

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
Jones, Diana Wynne. *House of Many Ways*.	UK		●	●	●		●
Kenny, Pádraig. *Tin*.	Ireland	●		●		●	●
Khan, Joshua. *Shadow Magic*.	UK	●		●	●	●	●
King, Wesley. *Dragons VS. Drones*.	Canada	●		●	●		●
Larwood, Kieran. *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*.	UK	●		●	●		●
Lasky, Kathryn. *Guardians of Ga'Hoole: The Capture*.	USA		●		●	●	●
Lee, Yoon Ha. *Dragon Pearl. .*	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Legrand, Claire. *Foxheart*.	USA	●		●	●		●
Lennon, Joan. *Questors*.	UK					●	●
Mafi, Tahereh. *Furthermore*.	USA	●		●	●		●
Mafi, Tahereh. *Whichwood*.	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Magoon, Kekla. *Shadows of Sherwood*.	USA	●		●	●		●
McGann, Oisín. *The Harvest Tide Project*.	Ireland	●		●	●	●	●
Mull, Brandon. *Beyonder: A World Without Heroes*.	USA	●		●		●	●
Neff, Henry H. *Impyrium*.	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nix, Garth. *Mister Monday*.	Australia		●	●	●		●
Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*.	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Older, Daniel José. *Dactyl Hill Squad*.	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Oppel, Kenneth. *Airborn*.	Canada	●	●	●	●		●
Park, Linda Sue. *Wing and Claw: Forest of Wonders*.	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
Pratchett, Terry. *The Wee Free Men.*	UK	●		●	●		●
Reeve, Philip. *Black Light Express.*	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reeve, Philip. *Larklight.*	UK	●		●	●		●
Reeve, Philip. *Railhead.*	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reeve, Philip. *Station Zero.*	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rex, Adam. *The True Meaning of Smekday*	USA	●		●		●	●
Richards, Jasmine. *The Book of Wonders.*	USA	●		●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Heroes of Olympus: Blood of Olympus.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Heroes of Olympus: House of Hades.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Heroes of Olympus: The Lost Hero.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Heroes of Olympus: The Mark of Athena.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Heroes of Olympus: The Son of Neptune.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *The Trials of Apollo: The Burning Maze.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *The Trials of Apollo: The Dark Prophecy.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Riordan, Rick. *The Trials of Apollo: The Hidden Oracle.*	USA		●	●	●		●
Rodda, Emily. *Deltora Quest: Return to Del.*	Australia	●		●	●		●
Rodda, Emily. *Deltora Quest: The Forest of Silence.*	Australia	●		●	●		●

Author and Title	Country of Publication	The Structural Domain of Power: Institutions	The Structural Domain of Power: Networks	The Disciplinary Domain of Power	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Hierarchies	The Hegemonic Domain of Power: Exclusions	The Interpersonal Domain of Power
Ross, Joel. *The Fog Diver*.	USA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.	UK	●	●	●	●	●	●
Said, SF. *Varjak Paw*.	UK				●		●
Somper, Justin. *Vampirates*.	UK			●		●	
Stroud, Jonathan. *Lockwood & Co.: The Screaming Staircase*.	UK	●		●		●	●
Sutherland, Tui T. *Wings of Fire: The Dragonet Prophesy*.	USA	●		●		●	●
Townsend, Jessica. *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow*.	Australia	●	●	●	●		●
Trevayne, Emma. *Flights and Chimes and Mysterious Times*.	USA	●		●		●	●
Ursu, Anne. *The Real Boy*.	USA	●		●	●	●	●
Wooldridge, T.J. *Silent Starsong*.	USA	●		●		●	●
Yep, Laurence and Joanne Ryder. *A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Humans*.	USA		●	●	●		●