TEACHER IDENTITY, ADOLESCENCE AND READING:
THE CULTURAL AND PSYCHIC USES OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT

Using the lens of psychoanalytic theory, this dissertation explores the ways in which reading young adult literature in a social environment can foster a productive engagement with preservice teachers' desires, fantasies and anxieties in learning to teach. Set in the context of a Faculty of Education at a Canadian university, this qualitative study investigates, first, how the practice of talking about reading in a social environment can inspire preservice teachers to engage with the challenges of learning to teach. Secondly, this thesis considers how the reading of young adult literature enables readers to theorize their past in relation to their projected futures, and therefore, to complicate the typically unquestioned relation between adolescence and adulthood.

In focusing on the psychic and cultural life of reading, this study explores the identifications and attachments that two reading groups of Bachelor of Education students held in relation to four works of young adult fiction. Students learning to teach inarguably occupy a psychically awkward zone, a difficult mental space that is further complicated through the interaction of personal histories, past educational experiences and projected anxieties and desires. In this study, the readers illustrate the depth of their literary identifications through strategies of projection and introjection, transferential attachment, idealization, linguistic displacement, and various excursions into memoried space. Through such strategies, these preservice teachers are able to explore the challenging nature of power dynamics in the classroom, the cultural meanings of teacher identity, the relationship of sexuality to literary engagement, the significance of student refusal and failure, the certainty of fallibility and regression in educational life, and the ways in which teachers express their expectations concerning adolescent behaviour.

RÉSUMÉ

En utilisant la théorie psychanalytique, cette thèse explore les manières dont la lecture de la littérature jeunesse dans un environnement social peut favoriser un engagement productif avec les désirs, les fantasmes et les angoisses des etudiants en formation à l'enseignement. Situé dans le cadre d'une Faculté de l'éducation dans une université canadienne, cette étude qualitative examine, tout d'abord, comment la pratique de parler de la lecture dans un environnement social peut inspirer les futurs enseignants à s'engager avec les défis de la formation à l'enseignement. Deuxièmement, cette thèse examine comment la lecture de la littérature jeunesse permet aux lecteurs de théoriser leur passé par rapport à leur avenir projetés et, par conséquent, compliquer la relation généralement incontestée entre l'adolescence et l'âge adulte.

En se concentrant sur la vie psychique et culturel de la lecture, cette étude explore les identifications et les attachements émotionnels que deux groupes de lecture d'étudiants au baccalauréat qui s'est tenu dans le cadre de quatre œuvres de littérature jeunesse. Les élèves apprennent à enseigner occupant une zone psychiquement maladroit, un espace mental difficile qui est encore compliquée par l'interaction des histoires personnelles, des expériences éducatives passées et les angoisses et les désirs projetés. Dans cette etude, les lecteurs illustrent la profondeur de leurs identifications littéraires à travers des stratégies de projection et introjection, l'attachement transférentiel, l'idéalisation, le déplacement linguistique, et diverses excursions dans l'espace mémoire. Grâce à ces stratégies, ces futurs enseignants sont capables d'explorer la nature difficile de la dynamique du pouvoir dans la classe, les significations culturelles de l'identité de l'enseignant, la relation de la sexualité à l'engagement littéraire, l'importance de refus de

l'élève et de l'échec, la certitude de la faillibilité et de régression dans la vie éducative, et les façons dont les enseignants expriment leurs attentes concernant le comportement des adolescents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Preface: The Problem of Beginning(s)

All our stories are about what happens to our wishes. About the world as we would like it
to be, and the world as it happens to be, irrespective of our wishes and despite our hopes.
(Phillips, 1998, p. xiii)

In the beginning of his treatment concerning the methodological questions

involved in staking an official 'beginning,' Said offers the following quote: "Every writer

knows that the choice of the beginning for what he will write is crucial not only because

it determines much of what follows but also because a work's beginning is, practically

speaking, the main entrance to what it offers" (Said, 1985, p. 3). The uncomfortable truth,

however, is that in practices of writing beginnings are never beginnings at all, but

arbitrary positions and sublimations along a continuum of time and space that,

inescapably, function as no more than catalysts for the practical framing of language,

which itself always moves as an already-mediated and forever-faltering, though

necessary, endeavour. As the analysand enters the analyst's office, the story starts off

where the ramblings begin: We have to start somewhere, so why not here? For Brooks

(1984), "The analysand always has a story to tell the analyst," but since (and due to the

arbitrary and vagrant nature of beginnings), "links are missing, chronologies are twisted,

the objects of desire are misnamed," it is necessarily "a story that is not good enough" (p.

227). As Said inquires: "Is the beginning the same as an origin? Is the beginning of a

given work its real beginning, or is there some other, secret point that more authentically

starts the work off?" (p. 3). While I certainly do not propose that the search for an

'authentic' beginning is possible, or even desirable, in the course of writing a dissertation,

I will, in the introductory section that follows, demonstrate the ways that this study of

teacher identity and reading experience is connected to, and intersected through, the life of its writer. In my various commitments to the participants in this research study, I trace my own (admittedly fractured and selective) histories and uses of reading, in the hope that doing so will allow the readings of others to emerge as part of a shared narrative that has already begun, and is likewise nowhere near completion. What follows is therefore a gesturing towards the "secret point(s)" of this dissertation's beginning.

Chapter I: Introduction

This study investigates the use of book club pedagogies in the context of teacher education, and the ways in which young adult literature can foster a productive engagement with preservice teachers' desires, fantasies and anxieties in learning to teach. Through shared engagements with fictional adolescence, the undergraduate participants in this study form a series of attachments and identifications with the texts they read, which enable them to work through[i] the psychical challenges involved in becoming a teacher. In this dissertation, I explore how, in their readings, students learning to teach are "torn into" theorizing the complex life of teacher education.

In reading we touch the navel; that part of the dream that Freud (1900/1999) in *The Interpretation of Dreams* appreciates as thoroughly inaccessible and uninterpretable, "refusing to be unraveled" (p. 341), and which Lacan (1998) describes, in relation to the unconscious, as an "unrealized ... world of shades" and an "ultimately unknown centre" (p. 23). In reading we touch the navel, though this is invariably a touching that does not know, or rather, that does not know that it knows. In touching the methods and the contents of the unknown unconscious, reading is a gamble and a risk that stirs up and around the conscious self, mixing elements in a sort of psychic cloud that might just as easily dissipate to nothing, as come crashing in bellows of thunder and lightning. For many, reading is a way of forgetting and escaping, though it also endures as a significant technology of memory and remembrance. In reading we forget where and who we are; in reading we can't help but remember. As Strong-Wilson (2008) writes, since "memory and forgetting are strongly linked" (p. 79), in the reader's relation to their history of reading, "voluntariness and involuntariness are intertwined" (p. 87).

Reading often depends on an elusive psychical nihilation—just ponder for a moment the following meaning of 'catachresis,' through which "every change in meaning," metaphorical or otherwise, and which we invariably encounter in experiences of reading, "is founded on forgetting an old meaning" (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 189). Reading arranges, displaces, shifts and moves. And though reading is also an undeniable pleasure, this is a pleasure that, as Barthes (1975) repeatedly maintains, "is not certain" (p. 52; p. 64). For Lacan (1998), "Many readings are perverse, implying a split, a cleavage" (p. 47)—I know very well (says the reader), but all the same [*je sais bien, mais quand même*]; no matter whether we adequately name our desires in reading, "one runs after it all the same" (p. vii). In reading, we sometimes suspend our knowledge of self, and despite such vacillating impulses and suturing throes—which cannot help but signal desire and pursual, remnants of another time and once-posited-as-(im)possible futures— reading remains for many a taken for granted and humdrum thing. As we sit on the toilet, flipping through the pages of any book at all, reading appears simple and non-consequential, which may seem to run counter to the point I am making: that reading is a serious and thought-full enterprise (though I also admit that it sometimes appears as a type of fleeting etherealness). Perhaps, though, I'm making a whole lot of noise over nothing. After all, can't a simple sentence like "I stole a book" stand straight up on its own?

Yes and no. Yes, "I stole a book" is nothing more than an indication of subject-verb-object. As readers in a world of shared symbolic objects, I admit that we obviously need the rules and the structures created through and allowed by the seemingly-unwavering nature of syntax and morphology as it functions in text. For legibility and

communication to occur at all, there must be some semblance of stable, proper ground on which to rest one's enunciatory-interpretive foot: "Nature provides … signifiers, and these signifiers organize human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them" (Lacan, 1998, p. 20). But despite such appearances of safety and security, a reader is always positioned on the overhang, overlooking a dangerous precipice; the reader strays as every reading prompts new tangents and awakens old imaginings. Such promptings are similar to what Barthes (1981) describes as the affective element of *punctum* in the photographic viewing experience. For the viewer, the *punctum* is that rare, often inexpressible, detail that attracts—and "pricks"—the viewer, and through such attraction, disturbs the order of the scene, which may otherwise be seen as rationally 'framed.' So while the answer to the above question is *yes*, it is also thus doubled by a necessary *no*, since when read by the reader, this statement of fact merges through multiple folding and fluctuating psychic trajectories (involving past experiences, past readings, past "pricks," past and present future imaginings, past and present desires, meanderings, anxieties, idealizations, obsessions, etc.). So, in the seemingly banal act of reading and writing the phrase "I stole a book," I therefore awaken my own memories and past attachments of reading experience, as such words might potentially touch the lives of other readers as well.

And of course, these ideas are not new. Though in an era of increased standards and accountability in educational and curricular affairs (Taubman, 2009), it needs to be restated that there is "no doubt … what reading is: rewriting the text of the work within the text of our lives" (Barthes, 1985, p. 101). On this note, I will, in the pages that follow, share certain examples from my own past, to help illustrate the ways that reading is

always a cut against the grain. In using autobiographical writing as a way to question the

psychical dynamics at play in reading, I follow in the tradition of numerous curriculum

scholars—such as Casemore (2008); Miller (2004); Ng-A-Fook (2012); Pinar (1994); and

Pinar and Grumet (1976), among others—who have worked with autobiographical

writing as a way to provoke "a curriculum-lived-as-migrancy, one in continual transit, of

departing, returning, thinking back, and writing forward" (Ng-A-Fook, p. 181).

I Stole a Book

To be sure, it is no coincidence that I have chosen the phrase "I stole a book" to

unveil this excursion. The relations of stealing and reading (taking and feeding, seizing

and searching, poaching and eating) have always seemed to me a fitting and fruitful

arrangement. They are, due to their shared stakes in the meanings we make from the

world we are in as a matter of course, suitable and compelling bedfellows. A 'good

read'—which like a 'good feed' (Robertson, 2001) is bursting, stuffed and filled with

contradictory desires, which may pain the reader just as well as they please—*must* disturb

and provoke, as the reader and the text simultaneously displace the foundations of one

another's balance, and upset and approach what we take as our limits (whether those of

the body and mind, the self and the other). The reader is an unwitting, unruly thief, who

steals from the text, but knows not what she steals, or that she even steals at all. The

reader's mind necessarily wanders.

I will start here with an incident when I was seven or eight, stealing a chocolate

Pep from the corner store … Or maybe the time, after using the word 'virgin' indiscreetly

in the third grade, I was forced by the teacher to look up its meaning in the dictionary and

share my stuttered appraisal with my classmates … There was the embarrassing moment

when reading silently, in grade four, that I laughed so hard that a fart escaped, stealing

the silence and failing to listen … No, I would rather begin with the walk I took at about

the same young age to a public library in Winnipeg, where the matter of walking four or

five kilometres alone seemed a virtually undoable, unparalleled achievement. Entering

the library, I went up the stairs to the reference section, as if I was climbing the keep of a

castle, and started thumbing through, in my memoried image, an exaggeratedly large,

illustrated, leather-bound dictionary. I thumbed (as might somebody hitchhiking, trusting

his ride) to the entry on the heroine and patron saint Joan of Arc. I don't remember

exactly what drew me to her title, but I was certainly captivated by her story, her armour,

her age, her visions, her burning. And oddly, what should have been no more than a

transitory encounter has stayed with me as what Strong-Wilson (2008) refers to as

"touchstones": "experiences with story that have created indelible impressions …

[which] usually stem back to memories of early childhood" (p. 79). This moment sticks

in my head; it has taken up permanent residence, claimed a spot of my psychic geography

for its own, increasingly pronounced and prominent as the years go by. It has also,

undoubtedly, clouded and condensed other memories, whether those of a contradictory or

similar nature. There's a reason, in ways no doubt mostly unconscious, that this particular

memory repeatedly strays in mind. As Kelly (2004) has so beautifully framed such a

straying: "Between the lines of my vitae … is a series of movements" (p. 153).

     As a teenager, I used to be a bit of a biblioklept. It was partly the drive to acquire,

a question of boredom, the thrill of the chase, and most probably a matter of habit as well.

To this day, I sometimes get nervous and paranoid in bookstores, thinking there are eyes

that are trained on me alone. I don't know what came first, my fascination with literary

theft or my obsession with the literary figures of Jean Genet. I took off running with *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1963) and rapidly worked my way through his novelistic oeuvre. In *Our Lady*—from the first line ("Weidmann appeared before you in a five o'clock edition, his head swathed in white bands, a nun and yet a wounded pilot fallen into the rye one September day like the day when the world came to know the name of Our Lady of the Flowers" (p. 61)) to the last ("I once saw a pimp who had a hard-on while writing to his girl place his heavy cock on the paper and trace its contours. I would like that line to portray Darling" (p. 318)), I was totally enchanted and knotted in place, since I'd never read anything that was quite so aggressively obscene, while simultaneously beautiful and tender. In Genet's writing, I treasured the crude and brazen sexuality, the recurrent details of theft, the care for poetry and accidental objects, and the fetishization of an underworld life. I may have been a naïve reader, but Genet remains one of the few authors whose works have made me shiver and whose words I literally felt in my bones, and in the variously stubborn imaginings I (consciously and unconsciously) proposed for my future self. In reading Genet, I was seized with passion, and felt as a 'seduced reader,' taken away and captured astray in a sort of 'literary possession' (Wilson, 1999). As Wilson has written, "Seduced readers desire not the writer … but something more. They want what the writer has: his desire for writing" (pp. 1-2). And who knows? Perhaps it is only because of my reading Genet at a young age that the words that I write today are consistently marked by poetic tensions. When I say that the practice of reading is a potentially dangerous, life-altering thing, I am therefore in no way embellishing.

At age 15, I was caught shoplifting from a bookstore in Victoria, B.C., the city that I then called home. The details I recall from this incident are few; but that I wore a t-

shirt with the emblazoned words *Pet Cemetery II: Raise Some Hell,* and that I stuffed two or three books down the front of my pants, unwittingly literalizing an unconscious, embodied erotics of reading. An important part of reading is always about physical presence, regardless of the text one engages. The body is always there, slippery and forever evident. Even when ostensibly trapped in the life of the mind (when reading a book or when writing a poem), the body interrupts and it asks for an answer. "Reading," as Massumi (2002) notes, "however cerebral it may be, does not entirely think out sensation" (p. 139). Think of the cough that refuses to stop, the fluttering eye, the pursed lip, the reader who taps and bites at his nails, the reader who strokes his chin as in thought, the hunger that pulls you into the kitchen, away from the books and torn from the words. What is more, the questions that are posed by the body may come from an elusive, unnameable elsewhere, using the body as a sort of sordid mouthpiece: those places secreted and hidden, the unconscious recesses, the past as it plays through the screen of the present, and the present when read through the screen of the past—each vying, each interrupting, each stealing the clap of the other's thunder.

At 17, in an Edmonton mall, I found myself once again under the combined force of two brutal thumbs: the law and my own desirous drive to steal, though this time I focused on compact discs. Upon being caught, I seized the rhythm from the title of one of the CDs I'd tried to shoplift—Chuck D's *The Autobiography of Mistachuck.* Spontaneously reading myself in and through this rollicking moniker, I told the police my name was Garrod David Chastacar, a pseudonym that sounds as fake as it does annoyingly prim and theatrical. Not surprisingly, they didn't believe me; in retrospect, my story was impulsive, ludicrous, and altogether brash and unreasonable. Though I

certainly got caught up in what I took to be the necessity of this fiction—giving myself, among other details, a birthplace (Brandon, Manitoba) and a birthdate (one day before my own)—I knew things would probably end poorly, yet clung to the insane hope that my story was strong enough to contain what it obviously could not control. I (or rather, the character of Chastacar with whom I momentarily identified myself) was strip-searched three times in one night, hosed down like a dirty sow, laid on a metal cot wearing nothing at all, and sent—pseudonym intact—to juvenile detention.

As individuals, we read ourselves through the words we impart on experience. But words necessarily falter and fail, and can never measure up to the task that we give them, or perhaps they measure only too well, and it us who cannot fit; it is this fact—a fearsome, discomfiting reminder of the "precariousness of the signified" (Britzman, 1995, p. 153)—that best speaks the limits of desire, both in the context of teaching, thieving and reading. As Ellsworth (1997) relates, since "I never 'am' the 'who' that a(n) … address thinks I am", or "the who that *I* think I am either," "*all* modes of address misfire in one way or another" (p. 8). Similarly, For Barthes (1981), "'myself' never coincides with my image" (p. 12). After two nights in juvenile detention, acting a part for which I was thoroughly unprepared, I came to my senses and realized the fact that, admittedly, I am the kind of person who has to learn most things the hard way.

The point of bringing this story up in the present context is not simply to illustrate the fact that I am intimate with the meaning of the verb "to steal," but that the phrase "I stole a book" births multiple memories, whose readings and wanderings function as apt— if also tangential—illustrations of the myriad ways that texts and readers can potentially interact. Texts of all kinds—and along with Willis (1990) I use the term 'text' broadly, to

describe "the very material of our daily lives, the bricks and mortar of our commonplace understandings … what we wear, hear, watch and eat" (p. 13)—invariably inscribe themselves on the lives of their readers. A text is also an interminably unbounded thing; I thus take a cue from Said's (1985) description of Nietzsche's vision of what a text anticipates: "an invitation to unforeseen estrangements from the habitual, an occasion for unconditional voyages into what Conrad so aptly called the 'heart of darkness'" (p. 9). As readers, we accumulate and cast off our subjectivities through various, intentional and unintentional, interactions with texts and textual forms. As beings in a world of shared, social meaning, we cannot help but be thus affected. Reading *is never* a simple thing; in fact, it is more like swallowing oneself than it is like swallowing medicine.

As should be obvious from the above reminiscences—which seem to me like past lives, indicating the ways "that the personal is already a plural condition" (Salvio, 2007, p. 4)—I understand the problem of reading not only as a space of powerful possibility, and "an interesting and productive location for thinking about thinking" (Sumara, 1998, p. 209), but also as a category of interpreting and imagining that moves well beyond the printed page. It is in this light that we can speak of *reading* identity, *reading* a film, *reading* memory, *reading* desire and *reading* our dreams, as we also might speak of *reading* in a more traditional sense, as along with a book or story. And of course, such readings are never still and discrete; they intersect with each other in a manner similar to how the conscious mind tries to read itself: an unfolding that "is always an interpretation of lived, remembered, and projected experiences" (Sumara & Davis, 1998, p. 78), which also include the emotional energies in remembered projections and projected rememberings.

In the above examples, I gesture to moments of reading (in connection with thieving) from my own past, while such gesturing itself also functions as a reading and layering of personal experience. Though the aforementioned categories of reading may differ qualitatively, they do so only inasmuch as the reader is grappling with a different sort of textual form, and since every form brings its own set of conventions that the reader will meet with diverse expectations, textual form always mediates, in part, the scope and the strategies of any possible reading. For Sumara (1996), "because all texts are particular forms that are historically, culturally, and politically effected and situated, the experience of engaging with *this* form rather than *that* form means participating in one complex set of relations rather than another" (p. 1).

The Problem of Reading

In thinking of reading as a 'problem,' I am consciously signaling, as Wolfreys (2000) suggests—through reference to the *OED*—that the terms of any reading are always far from stable. Part of this instability stems from the fact that etymologically, the meanings associated with the verb 'to read' "are numerous, its origins, appropriately, obscure" (p. vii). If taken as a verb (and pointing to its earliest Teutonic and Sanskrit foundations), reading suggests a number of possibilities: "acts of deliberation, consideration" (p. vii), notions of "prediction, of foretelling or foreseeing" (p. viii), "to leave a mark or otherwise impress upon something," "an act of decoding something which has been left behind," "a performative event." If taken as a noun, however, Wolfreys illustrates that the word 'read' also refers to the stomach of an animal— "the belly of the beast" (p. viii)—an encounter with/in the entrails of an unknown other (and which I like to consider a disguised reminder of the pre-memoried space of the womb).

For Wolfreys, this latter definition of reading, in the ways it relates the stomach's digestion to acts of interpretation, forcibly estranges us—steals us away—from our assumed cultural understandings of what reading is and the work that it does. As he phrases it, there is undoubtedly a sense of discernible "aporia between the 'read' (of the animal) and the 'reading', between the 'reading' and what is 'read," which suggests that "it is in this space that readers find themselves, placed via the event of reading within the body of the text to be deciphered" (p. viii). And if what is encountered in acts of reading is not only the text itself, but the reader as emplaced in relation to the text, it is no surprise that we often get lost in our readings, and that readings often lead to places unintended by either the author or the reader. It is therefore also no surprise that, in educational institutions, the possibilities of reading (limitless as they are) are often stabilized and regulated, and though Wolfreys notes that such stabilization of meaning is always "to perform the reading with a degree of violence" (p. vii), this is a violence that is actually indispensable for the crafting of consequence from words on a page. The important question here is whether such stabilization takes up the role of a standard (a kind of flag to rally around and rein in desire), since, as Taubman (2009) makes clear, we should always remain vigilant of the ways that, unavoidably, "Standards lead to standardization" (p. 116).

The problem of reading is thus a problem which demands that multiple meanings be simultaneously sounded and signified in a kind of interpretive cacophony. As Wolfreys notes (2000), "The structure to be read is not only spatial and rhythmic; it is also temporal and polyvalent" (p. viii); such an (il)logic, it seems, is inescapable in reading, as there is always something left over, and there is always a remainder left

floating or drowned, and questions unanswered or left unfound. For Britzman (2006a), in reading, "We mean something beyond what is said, and this excess returns to unsettle meaning" (p. viii). Following from Britzman's (1998a) iteration of Freud's understanding that, since education inevitably "interferes" with the psychic and social development of the learner, "the best education can do is less harm" (p. 9), it seems necessary to ask whether there are ways to encourage reading experiences that "recognize and repair its own harm" (p. 9), and which can help to make readers aware of the functions of violence, forgetting and loss in interpretive acts.

In introducing the idea of interpretive violence, I am not necessarily signaling that the reader intends any conscious malevolence, but rather, that the existence of transferential attachments in relation to literature implies that the reader can never be fully aware of the consequences of reading and textual analysis. Since we always read beyond the present context of our reading, we inevitably strip from the text any sense of stability, innocence and isolation. While I call this movement violence, it could just as easily be referred to as a kind of love.

If understood in relation to identity formation, this question of violence can also be seen as a questioning of the ways in which practices of reading are inherently ambivalent and malleable: while they can potentially encourage a "proliferation of identifications" (Britzman, 1995, p. 158; Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 120) that articulates and anticipates the ways in which reading is always about exceeding and "risking the self" (Britzman, 1995, p. 163), they can also bring about a limiting of the very possibility for such multiplied identification. While reading can certainly be about individual experiments with identification, opportunities for opening indeterminate social relations,

and the creation of spaces for thinking about one's capacity for knowledge and ignorance, it can also remain a reproduction of normalcy, a "repetition of sameness" (p. 163), and a disavowal of uncertainty and difference. There is therefore a significant tension that exists between reading experiences that question, and reading experiences that reproduce social norms. As Sumara, Davis and Iftody (2006) emphasize, though literary encounters in teacher education can certainly be used as "opportunities for cultural transformation" (p. 65), if structures are not put in place that help students to realize the diversity of individual reader's responses, "normalizing discourses" are likely to govern the ways that texts are read.

Overview of the Present Study

As a transferential activity, reading provides "a fantasy space to replay unfinished business" (Radford, 2007, p. 130), though—as with all encounters with fantasy—the imaginative flights that reading proposes also influence the reality in which it is otherwise embedded. In fact, as Robertson (1997) makes clear, "Fantasy may be treated as a source of evidence in its own right" (p. 82). The 'authenticity' of fantasy can therefore feel real, just as the non-fantastic can appear as delusion. One of the spaces in which the interpretive problem of reading is frequently enacted—both as psychic activity and "embodied action" (Sumara, 1996)—is that of the educational institution. In these spaces, necessarily constructed of socially contested meaning, "neither readers nor literary fictions can escape their prior histories of interaction in the world" (p. 112). What this circulation of "prior histories" (and also prior future imaginings) implies is that, for both teacher and student, the internal dynamics of reading enable the conditions for potentially meaningful social interaction. When the reader is a preservice teacher, the

psychical dynamics of reading have significant epistemological implications for the reader's developing sense of authority and self in the classroom, consequences that will eventually impact on the students who fall under their care and the curriculum of their classroom environment. While the focus of this study is teacher identity, the methodology is structured around reading. The principal questions that this study endeavours to answer are as follows:

> 1) In relation to a teacher's emergent occupational identity, how does the practice of talking about reading in a social environment enable preservice teachers to engage with the challenges of learning to teach?

> 2) For preservice teachers, how does young adult literature allow them to theorize the relation between adolescence and adulthood? What kinds of identifications do they make with the adolescent, and adult, characters?

> 3) How does young adult literature allow readers to theorize their past in relation to their projected futures?

In this study, I organized two reading groups composed of preservice teachers, and looked at the interpretive approaches that these readers pursued in their readings of young adult literature. The undergraduate students who participated in this study read four novels of fictional adolescence (which I describe in greater detail in chapters five and six): 1) *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson, tells the story of Melinda Sordino, a young adolescent who is sexually assaulted at a summer party leading up to her first year of high school. This novel is unique in the ways it presents its protagonist's strategies for coping with trauma, and the fact that adolescent resistance (in the form of silence and artistic expression) is shown as being able to potentially frustrate the stability of adult authority;

2) *Sprout*, by Dale Peck, describes the narrative of an adolescent boy (named Sprout), who identifies as gay and who moves with his father from New York to a small town in Kansas after his mother dies of cancer. Sprout develops sexual relationships with two other boys, as he is also prompted by an English teacher to compete in a statewide essay-writing contest; 3) *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins, is a science fiction (or speculative fiction) novel that revolves around the character of Katniss Everdeen, who lives in the dystopic nation of Panem, which is divided into twelve districts ruled by The Capitol. Katniss is entered into The Hunger Games, which is an annual event in which two adolescents from each district compete in a fight to the death; 4) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie (2007), is a semi-autobiographical account of the author's adolescent experiences, and is told from the point of view of Junior, who lives with his family on a poverty stricken Indian Reservation in Washington State. As Junior decides that he wants to transfer to an off-reserve high school that caters to an exclusively white population, much of the novel revolves around Junior's negotiation of his identity in the context of these drastically different settings.

In reading adolescent fiction, the interplay of *adolescence* and *adulthood* presents an opportunity for discussing the ways in which a teacher's past is always caught up—transferentially—in their present educational experiences, and how an educator's adolescence persists deep into the territories of adulthood, either as warning, desire, trauma, anxiety, or some other form of unarticulated psychical energy. Interestingly, thinking about this "requires adults to implicate themselves in how adult desire … structures educational imperatives and the construct of child [and adolescent] development" (Britzman, 1999, p. 388). 'Growing up,' or becoming an 'adult,' is thus not

so much a developmental triumph, as it is a learning to tolerate the culturally acceptable limits and expressions of desire and thinkability. As such, and to avoid "casting the adolescent in the risky role of the not yet adult" (Gilbert, 2007, p. 48), I follow Gilbert's move—after Kristeva (1990)—of conceptualizing adolescence as an open structure and a "psychic relation," rather than a discrete and inalterable stage in a preformed developmental plot. For the movements of reading, this relation implies that we must maintain a certain curiosity towards the fact that ostensibly 'adult' practices of reading and interpretation are forever "inhabited by the memories, fantasies and experiences of adolescence" (Gilbert, p. 48). We never read in only one way.

As every 'adult' reader was once considered by themselves and others as an adolescent—and since preservice teachers, though they may be young, are entering a profession whose official discourse is positioned ostensibly against the "psychic relations" of adolescence—there is a unique 'structure of feeling,' a "complex array and disarray of … desires, and commitments toward social life" (Britzman, 1992, p. 252) that emerges when teachers read young adult fiction, a literary category that allows readers to tap into the unfinished qualities of their own adolescence, iterated through the lens of contemporary concerns. In these spaces of reading, there is thus an obvious tangle of identification, with readers caught up in the ways their adolescence is still being lived, while also pursuing, throughout the course of their university studies, an educational discourse of self-development that progressively points forward, often unproblematically so. In part, then, this study is an exploration into the teacher's potential uses of reading experience and young adult literature in the crafting of their professional self, and the losses, the movements of mourning, that this crafting inevitably requires. Though "in the

text, as in dreams, there is no entrance" (Cixous, 1993, p. 81), this study examines the

negotiations of reading through the establishment of a social structure—the literature

circle, book club, or reading group—where practices of reading and textual interpretation

are made public, and the emotional effects of reading, though irretrievable in full, are

partially articulated through language.

In this study, shared experiences of reading are symbolized through informal and

spontaneous discussion, which is a manner of 'capturing' the literary encounter that is

markedly different from that which is normally employed in schools (i.e. via the conduit

of writing). Therefore, before moving on to the next section, in which I conduct a review

of the various literatures that inform this study as a whole, I need to make a further point

concerning the ways in which practices of reading and writing, in relation to matters of

presence, absence, permanence and impermanence, have traditionally been contrasted. As

de Certeau (1984) remarks, there exists—at least in the context of the Western world—a

historical tendency (which finds its roots in Judeo-Christian theological practices, where

the power to determine the place and the meaning of text is traditionally given only to a

privileged few) to over-valorize practices of writing, compared to those more firmly

centered on reading and orality, in a type of "scriptural imperialism" (p. 169). For de

Certeau, who allows that there are obvious differences between reading and writing,

"What has to be put in question is … not this division of labor (it is only too real), but the

assimilation of reading to passivity" (p. 169), which equates the reading subject with the

quality of an empty vessel, who can be filled and prompted to knowledge and action only

through their encounters with the words of—more culturally valued—others. In essence,

since the physical nature of the written text achieves for writing an aura of permanence

and presence, this view rests on the belief that reality is something invariably *written* into existence. In this light, reading is simply a conduit, a path on the way to legitimation and fulfillment. In the context of schooling, for example, we generally only assess the efficiency of practices of reading through its visible corollary in productions of writing. Reading, in this view, is a passive, thoroughly fleeting and impermanent affair. Unlike writing, whose processes of assembly can be easily standardized, measured and disciplined, reading retains an utter inability to be adequately codified or captured in full. The problem here is that, unless it is measured through responses in writing, there can be no rubric for reading.

Counter to the above tradition, the present study is an attempt to reassert the various means through which we *read* our realities into existence, and how, since much of this reading takes place through trajectories of unconscious desire, its appearance as impermanent is actually a ruse, and an effect of the fact that—in relation to the unconscious—we are always strangers to ourselves (Kristeva, 1991). In fact, the conceptualization of writing as permanent, and reading impermanent, evades the ways in which writing can also be thought of as a type of eliminatory purgation: as the residue of the *acts* of reading, that which is invisible in textual production. Ironically, in its hauntingly invisible nature, reading actually captures (and disperses discreetly) the sense of permanence attributed to writing. Though "it does not keep what it acquires, or it does so poorly" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 174), this characterization as "poorly" should be read as an indication of the fact that "reading has no place" (p. 174), and that its traces are often illegible, scrawled in a language only read and readable by the unconscious; indeed, it is from this perspective that Lacan describes the unconscious *as a reader*. As reading stays

and strays with/in the reader, and plays in the unconscious self in ways unpredictable and unknown, reading therefore possesses—in the life of the reader—the most immeasurably permanent permanence.

In this study, I avoid positioning the practices of reading and writing as necessarily opposite or contradictory, since the point is not simply to valorize one (using it as the measure of worth) at the expense of criminalizing the other (making it into a hidden, transitory vice). What is more, their relation should not be thought of as simply linear or unidirectional, but instead, as looping and mutually regenerative. To return once again to de Certeau (1984), since "language must continually conceal the structuring work of division beneath a sym-bolic order," its "plurality is originary," as the difference that inheres between reading and writing "is constitutive of [language's] terms" (p. 133). Each therefore contains within itself the kernel of the other, and is only made possible through the other, with the other as a possibility.

Over the course of this dissertation, and using the lens of psychoanalytic theory, I explore the meanings produced in the convergence of teacher education, young adult literature and social experiences of reading. In the next chapter, I review the various literatures—both empirical and conceptual—that inform the directions of this study. I explore the implications of psychoanalytic theory for educational thought, the ways in which cultural studies can inform our experiences of social reading, the complexities involved in thinking through the terms of teacher identity, and the predominant theoretical frameworks that have been employed in the study of young adult literature. In chapter three, I provide short descriptions of the readers in this study, and detail the various methods I used to collect my data as well as the methodological approaches I

employed in my strategies of data analysis. In chapter four, I look at the ways in which

the preservice teachers articulate their individual understandings of teacher identity, and

the dynamics of teaching, learning and reading. In chapter five, I provide my own

interpretation of the first two novels, *Speak* and *Sprout*. I then look to the meanings that

the participants, in their group meetings, develop around these narratives, and the ways in

which these meanings involve their desires and fantasies as preservice teachers. In

chapter six, I turn to *The Hunger Games* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time

Indian*, where I focus at length on the psychical dynamics of reader transference and

projective identification. In chapter seven, the conclusion, I offer—as a counterpoint to

the problem of beginning(s) emphasized in the preface—an analysis of the ways in which

narrative endings can be interpreted in the context of reading experience.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In approaching this dissertation, I have my theoretical *groundings*: theories, theorists and conceptual frameworks to which I repeatedly return, and who offer entrance into the disciplinary fields through which this study circulates. To understand the function of what I mean by a theoretical grounding, it is helpful to visualize the practices of passage, movement and stabilization that the ground—as a physical reality, and in relation to the one who encounters its uncertainties—can be thought of possessing in everyday life. As with desire, it "is where we start from and what we go with" (Probyn, 1996, p. 62). Following from the ways in which the ground functions as a kind of skin— "a fragile container" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 53)—the reader, who is always a perambulator in fields of emotional inheritance, can choose to plumb the depths or to fly in the clouds; the ground thus serves as an entranceway and a place to begin the cutting. In crafting this cut, the reader needs to follow the path of their particular interpretive requirements: as Marcus (1998) describes such an undertaking, there is a need to "follow the thing" (cited in Petchauer, 2009, p. 948), which suggests that, in studying such a transverse topic as reading, the reader should hardly be satisfied with resting in a single disciplinary field, and should endeavour to include with their readings a broad and diverse body of scholarship.

In describing and linking the expeditions that I've taken as a reader engaged in theories of identity, teaching, learning, reading and literature, I use the following conceptual divisions as a way to structure this literature review, and to provoke an operational grounding of thought:

A) Psychoanalysis and the Emotional Dynamics of Teaching and Learning;

B) Readers and Texts;

C) Theories of Identity and Subjectivity; Teachers and Readers;

D) Misrecognition and Representation in Children's and Young Adult Literature.

Psychoanalysis and the Emotional Dynamics of Teaching and Learning[ii]

In enunciating some of the key challenges that psychoanalytic theory brings to the field of education, I draw from a number of thinkers (many of whom work in a Canadian context) who position themselves in the place where psychoanalysis and curriculum studies meet. Most notably, I turn to the work of Deborah Britzman, whose prolific scholarship focusing on the encounters of psychoanalysis and education has long informed my own excursions into this area of thought. I here approach psychoanalysis as a type of tool for thinking, agreeing with Felman (1987) that, "one can use theories … only as enabling metaphorical devices, not as extrapolated, preconceived items of knowledge" (p. 11). Though I employ a variety of psychoanalytic concepts throughout this dissertation, the ideas that I focus on in this chapter are the unconscious, resistance, transference and desire.

To begin with, it should also be mentioned that this theoretical foray into the circulations of emotion and desire is motivated by my own persistent anxieties in teaching; revealing themselves through the appearance of a number of psychic and physical symptoms—night sweats, disturbing dreamscapes, stuttering, isolating paranoia, dizziness, and recurrent insomnia, which demonstrate, as jagodzinski (2004) puts it, "the way our libidinal bodies never stop 'writing themselves' as we proceed along the unknowable paths of our destiny" (p. 25). I therefore first became interested in studying the implications of psychoanalysis as a way to understand my personal disquiets (or at the very least, to put their

tremors in words). In their virtually unintelligible though always-insistent manner, my body

and psyche seemed to be working together to question why I chose to return to high school as

an adult, why I desired to be in a place where I was neither restful nor secure. As an

adolescent, school was often a place where I felt as a stranger to my own emotions, and

despite the fact that I can hardly imagine myself in any other field than teaching, teaching is a

vastly unpredictable and frightening proposition, which Taubman (2009) describes as

"psychically tumultuous and potentially both ecstatic and maddening" (p. 2).

The Unconscious. The fundamental premise of psychoanalysis is that the human

psyche is composed of both conscious and unconscious elements, and thus can in no way be

regarded as simply "coterminous with consciousness" (Freud, 1923/2003, p. 105). This riddle

of human existence, which works to obscure the relation between conscious intention and

unconscious desire, implies that as subjects, we can have no certainty when it comes to our

mental faculties, or why we do things the way we do. As Freud describes them, the processes

of the unconscious—"the realm of memory traces of things" (1917/2005, p. 216)—are

timeless (since nothing disappears), admit no contradiction, doubt, or negation (1925/2005),

contain "a compulsion to repeat" (1914/2003), and being in themselves "unknowable," "are

discernible to us only under the conditions of dreaming and neurosis" (1915/2005, p. 70) and

through the uncertain mediations of language. As such, the unconscious itself can never be

known or interpreted in full. As Robertson (1997) elaborates, it is therefore our capacity for

speech and language production that often "performs as a vehicle through which unconscious

effects are established" (p. 81).

Since the unconscious—which despite the reality of its functions, is nevertheless "a

theoretical construction" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 40)—is "the domain of drives, independent of

language" (p. 39), and works as a storehouse for past events and a lifetime of disavowed knowledge, the terms of the unconscious and the veilings of repression are also inextricably linked. Though, while Kristeva (1982) notes that, "the theory of the unconscious presupposes a repression of contents" (p. 7), it is important to bear in mind that repression—which "always leaves its trace in the present" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 45)—does not mean erasure, but rather, the productive "work of turning away" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 68). As Granger (2010) reminds us, "Our old ideas do not cease to exist simply because we adopt new ones: they keep demanding to be heard" (p. 227). In relation to educational affairs, and the ways that emotions and anxieties "slip into our pedagogy uninvited" (Salvio, 2007, p. 7), "the repressed psychic events of teaching and learning … return to haunt education in the form of its contested objects: as conflicts, as disruptions, as mistakes, and as controversies" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 19). The motivations of teachers and learners are therefore never as straightforward as they might initially appear, as the unconscious—"itself a kind of *unmeant knowledge* that escapes intentionality and meaning" (Felman, 1987, p. 77)—draws from the past as it also confusedly signals towards a desired future.

Freud's structural theory of the psychical apparatus divides the functions of the human mind into three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. While the role of the unconscious id—which "harbours the passions" (Freud, 1923/2003, p. 116)—is permissive and "wholly amoral" (p. 144), "it is the ego that consciousness attaches to" (p. 108) and which "tries to be moral" (p. 144), mediating the realm of the unconscious through a variety of protective, defensive mechanisms. What is important to recognize here is that, though the id and the ego are often thought to be in opposition, Freud makes the point that "we must not forget that the ego is part of the id, albeit differentiated from it in a special way" (p. 128).

What Freud is getting at here is that, despite the persistence of the id to allow the passions passage to conscious life, "the id cannot experience or undergo any external pattern of events except via the *ego*, the sole representative of the external world that it possesses" (p. 128). In such occasions where the unconscious, which "steps in precisely when we are not aware of it" (Britzman, 2009a, p. 82), makes itself apparent—for example, in the oblique disguises of dreams, forgettings, parapraxes (slips of the tongue) and fantasy—the workings of the unconscious id (through a strange and nonsensical grammar) continue to interfere with the representations of its holdings, as the ego consistently works to censor that which conscious life cannot abide. For Britzman (1998a), "while the unconscious is something one cannot know directly, its workings interfere with what is taken as direct experience and with what is valued as intentionality" (p. 7). Though there is no absolute correspondence, there is therefore a link between the conscious and the unconscious, and that link is unavoidably language—a fallible but necessary technology of human expression: "unconscious representations are distinct from verbal representations but capable of being associated with them" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 48). Since the inception of psychoanalysis, including its characterization as a 'talking cure,' using methods of 'free-association' which allow patients to approach—albeit indirectly—unconscious affective memory, words have served as an indispensable tool for accessing the processes of the unconscious mind.

The construction of the superego, which is positioned predominantly but not totally in the unconscious, emerges from the fact that there is a portion of the ego itself that is "less firmly and clearly connected to consciousness" (Freud, 1923/2003, p. 119). Since, as children, we are immediately surrounded by various "higher presences" (p. 126), who we can't help but admire and fear—most notably, our parents, but also those figures who stand

in loco parentis: teachers, religious authorities, and other adults in positions of influence—the superego internalizes the role of such figures, and commonly presents itself (throughout the life cycle) through feelings of guilt, inadequacy, shame and humility. The superego is thus that part of the personality structure that judges and prohibits the full expression of passions, drives and fantasies, forbidding the realization of censured actions. The superego therefore works in stark opposition to the id, as the ego tries to effect—in conscious, waking life—a compromise between such structures.

Resistance. In this context, the challenge for education is a recognition of the psychoanalytic belief that emotion and cognition do not simply work in concert, or operate on parallel planes, but are themselves confusingly inseparable and, as they interfere with each other, also mutually (il)legible. Though education might wish to be deliberate, masterful, conscious, and rationally incremental in its efforts, the inevitable twists and turns of unconscious emotionality ensures the collapse of such intentions. As a different kind of objective—one that accepts vulnerability and uncertainty in pedagogy—the psychoanalytic "making of emotional significance through the bringing together of affect and cognition" (Pitt & Brushwood Rose, p. 334) recognizes and tolerates resistance to knowledge as an indispensable part of learning, and indeed, of the human condition. The role of the teacher is therefore not one of ensuring "the transmission of ready-made knowledge" (Felman, 1987, p. 81), but instead, to encourage new conditions for knowledge production, and to remain "as an intermediary who becomes a fixed point of support and confidence and who permits the individual to find his capacities for play and for construction" (Kristeva, in Guberman, 1996, p. 38).

For educational theorists working with psychoanalysis, the instabilities and obstacles of conflict, anxiety, and psychic interference are always already the preconditions for any act of learning whatsoever. "For there to be a learning," Britzman (1998b) remarks, "the ordinary must be disrupted. Resistance to learning and its defences against learning are just the necessary beginning" (p. 54). This idea that conflict and anxiety are necessary for learning, and that 'not learning' is intimately tied to 'learning' (whose tropes of movement and innovation are often obsessed with the forward-leaning pressures of progress and betterment), can sometimes be difficult to accept. In the encounter of learning, the introduction of (new) knowledge will often be felt as a violence and a threat, and met with what Lacan has termed our 'passion for ignorance': "the paradoxical desire not to know what one already knows, the passionate work of denial and disavowal" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 65). That accidents, epistemological detours, displacements, parapraxes, hesitations, mistakes, forgettings, ambivalences, and misunderstandings can actually be viewed as a productive piece of our encounters with knowledge, and that "affect can be understood both as a form of resistance to and the grounds of possibility for knowledge" (Pitt & Brushwood Rose, 2007, p. 332), is indeed a challenge to theories of learning that operate on the assumed existence of a world of emotions as separate and distinct from that of cognition.

The inextricable linking of knowledge and resistance is therefore an indispensable measure in the movement that learning entails, and which establishes the difficult fact that the feeling of learning itself will often be far from comforting. When students and teachers enter educational spaces, they are met with the strategic securities of a discourse already formed, at times in direct opposition to the feelings and desires they claim as their

own, and as an important part of who they are. "*Who I am*," as Evans (2002) notes of the teacher's self, "is continually negotiated (consciously and unconsciously) within the rippling social fabric" (p. 21). This dynamic relation of power, which Britzman (1992) describes as being part of a struggle "between the structures of institutions and the structure of feelings" (p. 252), is often encountered as an experience of antagonism, aggression, surrender and loss.

In the classroom, we live in what Hampton (1995) describes as "an ocean of emotion" (p. 47), a moving swell of psychical energy through which we variously vacillate in ways that necessarily provoke uncertainty, ambiguity and disguise in our social relations, troubling our assumptions of linearity and correspondence between the time of education and the time of learning. Unequivocally, spaces of education *are* spaces of belated learning, as spaces of learning *are* spaces of affect, where the movements and sometimes-simultaneous stasis of such emotional provocations as boredom, shame, guilt, anxiety, confusion, curiosity, spontaneity, and surprise (among countless others), rub insistently against love, hate, desire, and the troubling persistence of bodies in the classroom. These are bodies that touch and get touched, and bodies that we all too often forget about, "as inevitable as they are inevitably denied" (Silin, 1999, p. 101). But along with this forgetting—this problematic passion for ignorance and turning away—there is also always a return, as invariably, teachers have met these ghosts—these "skeletons in the classroom closet" (Provençal, 2008)—before: as children stuck into rooms with other children, rooms that typically made no sense; as university students and instructors taking up—and sometimes resisting against—"the habitus of the academic" (Probyn, 2005, p. 49); and as student teachers in paradoxical spaces of interpretation, risk, observation and discomfort. As Britzman (2003) notes of this strange

return, "because teachers were once students … their sense of the teacher's world is strangely established before they begin learning to teach" (p. 1). In spaces of schooling, then, not only do the temporalities of learning move forever back and forth, but our histories also catch up with us while remaining elusive and intangible—an uncanny and slippery simultaneity of ineffable presence and disquieting absence.

Transference. If we accept that "learning is a problem, but it has to do with something other than the material of pedagogy" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 5), the passage that knowledge travels through affect is inevitably related to the psychoanalytic formulation of *transference*, where histories of authority, schooling, love and hate collide, and in which, "unexpectedly, new experiences conjure old ones" (Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 117). Put simply, transferences are "new editions of old conflicts" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 761). For Freud, transference is positioned as an analytic dynamic, a symbolization, a relation and an obstacle, and as Kennedy (2010) describes it, "transference is a process of the actualization of unconscious wishes and desires linked to childhood experiences … [that] reemerge and are experienced as immediate" (p. 191). It is through transferences—which "arise spontaneously and inevitably in all relationships" (Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2006, p. 249)—that the history of our emotions can be regarded as a "history of layers … full of shifting strata, fragments of living reality, absences more than presences, a mutilated yet still living past" (Kennedy, p. 181). Since transferences operate through tattered bits of memory that have unconsciously attached themselves to feelings, we invariably bring to teaching an emotional history of unresolved learning. For psychoanalysis, memory is not simply the recording of a past event that remains forever behind us, "but a malleable immanence that never stops developing" (Kristeva, in Guberman, 1996, p. 137).

For spaces of education, the energies of transference impact the teacher and the student through the emotions each projects toward the other, in which emotional strategies encountered in past figurations of love and authority reemerge in present relations, which suggests—again—that learning is motivated by something other than conscious objectives; "emotional ties," as Farley (2007) puts it, "do not rest in the realm of intention" (p. 429). In the emotional expectations each brings to the present, but which have their origins in experiences of the past, old and repressed conflicts are brought to "the screen of current pedagogical desires" (Britzman, 2006a, p. 113). The past catches up to the present in a way that the teacher can neither avoid nor fully recognize, and where "what is transferred to the new encounter is not the content of the old relationship but the dynamical force of affects—including the resistance to the relation" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 34). And so, if we take into account the transformative energies of transference (in the form of love and hate projected by the student onto the teacher and the knowledge they represent), and countertransference (in the form of love and hate projected by the teacher onto the student and the developmental vulnerabilities they represent), the idea of the temporality of education as something linear is necessarily disrupted, as is the dream that emotions will never interfere, "the unrealizable fantasy of smoothly functioning teaching" (Taubman, 2009, p. 195). "Education is," as Britzman (2009a) states, "our transference playground of love and hate" (p. 131), in which our reactions to learning are often delayed symptoms and displacements of agitated memory, which telegraph from unresolved histories the symbolic communication of unconscious and migratory wishes. Furthermore, as "we cannot know the destination [of pedagogy] prior to going there," and "going there" always involves a "detour through the other" (Britzman, 1998b, p. 58), the

obstacles of transference are not only unavoidable, but are also a necessary part of that which educates, which is not simply the presence of another person, but the emotional and often troubling experiences of human relation and knowledge creation.

Desire. Admittedly, at the heart of this dissertation is an approach that takes unabashed pleasure in the psychoanalytic framing of the all-too-human qualities of ambiguity and contradiction: that while endeavouring to think what cannot necessarily be thought we are drawn close up to the limits of intelligibility itself. The insistence of emotions necessarily ensures that pedagogical thought always contains within itself a division that remains unspoken, thus preserving in teaching, learning and reading "a margin of surprise and of the unknown" (Kristeva, in Guberman, 1996, p. 123). The affective and social framing of educational spaces is shot throughout by that which cannot be thought in solely cognitive terms, and though essentially nonrational, the vicissitudinous transferences of love and hate are a necessary condition for any sort of knowledge production. For Sameshima and Leggo (2010), "there can be no teaching, no learning, no pedagogical relationship without love" (p. 65), which, Doug Aoki (2002) remarks, brings its own "unbearable horror" (p. 23), since love always contains within itself an ambivalence: the potential to be transformed to hate and disgust. The feeling of love is a reminder that we are not complete—in ourselves—as human subjects, and that we forever remain dependent on others for validation and self worth. It is in this sense that love, as Pitt (2003) reminds us, "represents a kind of state of emergency for the emerging subject" (p. 74), and since we are all forever emergent, we forever live in love's emergency, which inevitably distracts from considering education as a terminable and intelligible task. "Love," write Liston and Garrison (2004), "makes us vulnerable and that

vulnerability invites loss and grief" (p. 2). For Kessler (2004), dealing with the issue of change in education (and every instance of learning brings a degree of change) is one of learning how to grieve effectively, and only when we learn how to let ourselves grieve can we appreciate loss "with a sense of completion and fullness that allows us to love again next time" (p. 152).

Though bodies in education cannot help but touch and be touched, love is often feared in its relation to the erotic, whose qualities of irrepressible romance and passion have compelled numerous theorists (Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2006; hooks, 1994; Johnson, 2005; Khayatt, 1999; Liston, 2004; McWilliam, 1997; Robertson, 1994, 1997; Silin, 1999; Simon, 1995; Weber & Mitchell, 1995) to think of pedagogy itself "as an erotic field" (McWilliam, 1997, p. 230), where fantasies of love and control (O'Quinn & Garrison, 2004; Taubman, 2006) circulate interminably. For Johnson (2005), "no matter how much a teacher tries to downplay her sexuality … her position of authority is attractive" (p. 136). However, though it may be the case that libidinal relations are persistent and ever present in all human activity, the erotic qualities of learning should never be simply equated with the constitution of sexual gratification. "Rather," Simon (1995) informs us, "what is signaled by [the erotic] is a cathexis which produces the teacher as a source of possible pleasure" (p. 97). Since learning is often prompted through the relational space where knowledge is communicated—and where bodies are present— knowledge itself is often intertwined with, and mistaken for, the erotic.

Since "silence and suppression does not mean that desire is absent," Cohler and Galatzer-Levy (2006) encourage a recognition of desire as a central classroom dynamic, and they note that to repress a dialogue on this point only serves to "deny the possibility

that we might use desire appropriately in enriching teaching and making learning more meaningful" (p. 244). "In the end," these authors caution, "there may be no greater danger for education than silence" (p. 258); since desire itself can assume many forms, from the erotic to the violent and aggressive, it is only if educators acknowledge the inherent ambivalence of such energies—an "ethical web" (Matthews, 2007, p. 189) of love and hate—that they can create in the classroom "an ethos of love," rather than simply "an economy of results" (O'Quinn & Garrison, 2004, p. 103).

Now, of course, as we cannot take such terms for granted, it is important to enunciate here what I mean by desire, especially as both learning and teaching occur at "a time when desires are rehearsed, refashioned, and refused" (Britzman, 2003, p. 221). In her discussion of the inevitably uneven development of the psychic self, Kaplan (1984) notes how desire "learns to speak softly, disguise itself, turn itself into its opposite, become temporarily forgotten, [and] pretend that its longings come from somewhere else" (p. 128). Though I realize that such a characterization may confuse more than clarify, I am nonetheless thinking of desire as an inherently "slippery term" (Briton, 1997), as changeable and alterable (Todd, 1997), and in the manner articulated by Probyn (1996), who emphasizes its qualities of movement, its thirst for difference and improvisation, and its deeply transformative potential. I am thus seeking a compromise between conceptualizing desire, on the one hand, as something that is utterly unknowable, and on the other, as a force that can be felt and mobilized. As Gorton (2008) remarks, taking her cue from Ahmed (2004), since it "is always 'in progress'" (Gorton, p. 4), and therefore impossible to capture and define in full, "instead of asking what desire

is," or where it originates, "it is more productive to ask, what does desire do? How does it create surfaces and boundaries? How are 'we' shaped by its affects?" (p. 7).

Similarly, although I agree with the Lacanian formulation that the subject's desire is always the other's desire and the desire of/for the other, and that "the unconscious is," therefore, "overflowing with *other people's desires*" (Fink, 1995, p. 9), my concern is with tracing the measures by which desire itself is materialized, and thus, in questioning the ways that it moves through speech: "excessive performances … that are in part retrievable, knowable, and identifiable because they may be traced through language" (Robertson, 1994, p. 20). The question here, then, is not "whether desire is expressed in learning relationships," since its presence is taken as a given, "but rather *how* desire finds expression and in what ways its unconscious force plays out" (Farley, 2007, p. 427).

As a final point, I should also emphasize that desire itself necessarily remains unsatisfied, and that its changeable, mutable nature works to reflect this very fact. As soon as an object of desire has been accomplished, captured and defined, the object suddenly loses its allure, which suggests that the object itself was never the actual object of desire, but only a screen for the thrill of the chase, and a temporary substitute for a previously disavowed object; paradoxically, "the desired object is never the one we want" (Wright, 1999, p. 63). Stiegler (2009) describes this loss well:

> Everyone has had this experience, and in truth has it ceaselessly, whether
> consciously or not: one desires or waits for or considers an object, a good, a
> being; then the object, the good, or the being, being there, effaces itself, becomes
> indifferent, even oppressive, disgusting, eclipsed—nothing. (pp. 26-27)

Similar to the way in which desire necessarily fails to meet its object, language also falls short of being able to express our desiring feelings. As Wright (1999) proposes, readers must themselves "struggle with the failure of language to deliver what it seems to promise" (p. 4). This jolting awareness of a glaring lack at the heart of desire's relation to the human faculty of language—and which, in relation to the unconscious, is "precisely the discovery that human discourse can by definition never be entirely in agreement with itself" (Felman, 1987, p. 77)—makes clear for the reader the uncanny nature of language's failure and insistent misfiring: that even though it is all we have to catalogue the world, "because our signifying systems cannot be taken literally" (Wright, p. 63), it necessarily fails in this task.

As a technology of representation, the failure of language to adequately index desire is also related to an epistemological lack that underlies the educational enterprise: since knowledge is fueled by desire (the desire to know) and relayed through language, it must also remain necessarily incomplete. Though the fact of such incompletion is hardly cause for despair, it nevertheless signals a paradoxical burden that Felman (1987) describes as "the Freudian pedagogical imperative: the imperative to learn from and through the insight which does not know its meaning, from and through the knowledge which is not entirely in mastery—in possession of itself" (p. 96). It is through this interminable interplay of knowledge and ignorance that Freud has referred to education as one of the three "impossible professions" (along with governance and medicine), a grouping that Britzman (2012) describes as "vulnerable to their impressive desires, demands, and condensations of the developing emotional world" (p. 275).

In the following section of this literature review, I look to the ways in which the study of the social relations of reading can be theorized through the interdisciplinary lens of cultural studies. Since, as discussed above, our faculties of language forever fail to meet their intended target, there is a similar failing in readers' engagements with literary texts, composed—as they are—of language. This failing, however, as with the inadequacies of language and knowledge, does not necessarily imply an undesirable outcome, but only that the search for literary meaning remains an interminable endeavour.

Readers and Texts

An important aspect of this study is the question of how the cultural and psychic productions of literary meaning are mediated through the simultaneously private and public context of a collaborative reading community. As a "community of practice" (Devlin-Glass, 2001; Hill, 2005)—a term which designates an informal gathering whose members use the substance of their shared experiences to engage with issues of collective concern—such spaces of communal textual understanding make manifest the ways in which reading itself is a liminal act, which always occurs "in between an intensely private, inward experience" that is nevertheless unceasingly "inseparable from a social world" (Flint, 2006, p. 516). As with Fuller's (2004) description of "textual communities," reading groups function as "an arena in which the politics of language and power can be actively engaged and negotiated within a group" (p. 8). In this section of the literature review, I consider how theorists in a variety of intellectual fields have conceptualized the informal structures of shared reading, and how discussions that are ostensibly centered around a particular material cultural object (such as a book) can

enable readers to move back and forth between the text of the book, the texts of others, and the texts of their own lives: an intersubjective performance that Long (2003) describes as a form of "creative cultural work," which "enable[s] participants to articulate or even discover who they are: their values, their aspirations, and their stance toward the dilemmas of the world" (p. 145).

With this focus on the workings and movements of culture, I am indebted to the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies, and its concern with "how knowledge, texts, and cultural products are produced, circulated, and used" (Giroux, 1994, p. 3). Though the concept of 'culture' remains complex and in a state of indeterminacy, I find it helpful to go back to its early usages as "a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals" (Williams, 1983, p. 87). While the contemporary range of 'culture' certainly applies to more than just practices of an agricultural nature, there is still a sense that, in many of its uses, it retains a tendency towards preservation, invention and custody. Though the most widespread everyday use of the noun is in relation to the works and practices that emerge from creative, intellectual and artistic enterprises, Williams describes how while certain fields (such as Archaeology and Anthropology) have traditionally defined the work of 'culture' as being concerned with material production, others (such as History) have more often used it to refer to signifying practices or symbolic systems. In Williams' own work, however, instead of opposing the relations of material and symbolic production, he looks to the ways in which such processes are actually interconnected. As he sees it, while this cross-disciplinary definitional inquiry may include arguments that "are fundamentally opposed as well as effectively overlapping … these arguments cannot be resolved by reducing the complexity of actual

usage" (1983, p. 91). Along with Williams, I agree that the field of cultural production—in which reading practices are necessarily implicated—*may certainly* involve processes of both a material and a symbolic nature, an understanding that looks to adequately address what Hall (1980) describes as "the dialectic between social being and social consciousness" (p. 63), or that "between conditions and consciousness" (p. 72).

  For the paradigm of cultural studies that I am here recounting, which finds its roots in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) of the 1960s and 70s, the scope of the concept of 'culture' can be defined as including:

> *both* the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence; *and* as the lived traditions and practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied. (Hall, 1992, p. 63)

Following from the above, it is clear that 'culture' itself is anything but static, and that it always emerges—differently situated and newly mediated—through the interrelated movements of texts, individuals, and social experiences of production and reception. "Texts," as Towheed (2011) explains, "cannot be analyzed outside the systems that surround them" (p. 10). For Johnson (1986), this movement can best be represented in a diagrammatic fashion, in what he titles a "circuit of the production, circulation and consumption of cultural products" (p. 46), for which I will use the shorthand designation of *cultural circuit*, and which "capture(s) the ways in which social relations of power, cultural forms and human subjectivities are intertwined" (Kelly, 1993, p. 8). Drawn in a circular fashion, each movement of the cultural circuit is distinct, though also depends on

that which it precedes and follows, and since the circuit as a whole has no beginning or end, no single movement is more privileged than any other. The four turning points of the circuit are: (1) the conditions of production; (2) texts and cultural commodities (along with considerations of form); (3) the conditions of reading and reception; and (4) the impact of/on lived cultures and social relations (Johnson, 1986). Importantly, as Towheed notes, "Texts are commodities and readers are consumers who [choose] to engage with particular literary works from a range of other material objects" (p. 4). Most notably, this cultural circuit is significant not only for the stress it places on "understand(ing) specific conditions of consumption or reading" (Johnson, p. 47), but also because, as a model for cultural inquiry, "it demands a holistic mode … which takes into consideration all four elements" (Hoechsmann & Low, 2008, p. 26). Along with Radford (2007), though I do not return to this circuit "in a didactic way" (p. 16), it remains an overarching heuristic through which I develop my understandings of cultural production, form, readership, and reading effects. Therefore, as the psychic life of a text moves continuously—and often indistinguishably—back and forth through the person of the reader, the cultural effects of reading are similarly positioned and conditioned by questions of being, consciousness, access, power and authority.

As cultural studies persistently questions the traditionally hegemonic equation of 'culture' with 'high' or 'authentic' culture (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), it also works to interrogate the assumed attributions of cultural capital to particularly privileged practices of reading: namely intellectual, solitary and silent. As Willis (1990) contends, it is often in "the informal realm of leisure" (p. 11) and its frequent associations with popular cultural forms, that symbolic creativity is affectively linked to the possibilities of a

hopeful, subjective resistance, "even if this potential [is] not necessarily interpreted to lead to radical, social change" (Saukko, 2003, p. 5). For Long (2003), in her ethnographic study of women's book clubs in Houston, Texas, the reading groups she works with are characterized as decidedly "counterhegemonic" (p. 219), since they straddle the boundaries of public and private, individual and social, and raise the issue of how reading as a collaborative practice can be construed as a socially productive and intellectually rewarding activity—apart from the imperatives of educational institutions. For the participants in Long's study, their social experiences of reading are "quite literally productive," and as they read and discuss their readings with each other, they engage in a "process of remaking themselves in dialogue with others and with literary texts" (p. 22).

In her historical overview of the various ways in which reading practices have been represented and imagined in visual art and other cultural forms, Long (2003) identifies two conspicuously related and recurrent events: "the ideology of the solitary reader" (p. 16) and "the historical invisibility of reading groups" (p. 31). As she argues, the overrepresentation of solitary readers and writers, engaged in tasks of intellectual concentration and scholarly philosophizing, overdetermines the 'legitimate' and 'authentic' nature of reading as a thoroughly cerebral and self-contained affair. Through the interpretive lens of the solitary reader, the cultural practice of reading becomes located "securely in the realm of private life" (p. 16), which bestows an over-excessive degree of privilege to the ostensibly affectless categories of rationality, cognition (as opposed to emotion), alienation, and the mind (as opposed to the body), all of which involve some degree of "suppression of the collective or social nature of reading" (p. 2).

Through this disavowal of reading's social and embodied qualities, the historically privileged—and virtually archetypal—image of the serious, solitary reader is also unavoidably that of the disembodied male, wrapped up totally in the life of his mind, which leads Long (2003) to identify, in this ideological trend, what she classifies as a series of "gendered opposition of images of reading" (p. 7). When the solitary reader is identified as a woman, she is often engaged in readings of a thoroughly escapist and narcissistic nature. As men are generally represented to be involved in their readings as serious thinkers and scholars, women are typically shown to be reading only for the ephemeral purposes of diversion and entertainment. For Twomey (2007), the history of women's reading has generally been positioned "away from the political processes of society and outside the public sphere of learning and knowledge production" (p. 399).

As the solitary, male reader represents a form of cultural hegemony in the history and the study of reading and literacy, the presence of social forms of reading has also been rendered "all but invisible to academic analysis" (Long, 2003, p. 8). As Devlin-Glass (2001) notes, the phenomenon of collaborative reading has been largely under researched in literary studies, and when made visible, its very visibility is typically "sneered at" (p. 571). Despite the fact that reading unquestionably necessitates a "social infrastructure"—in the form of the family and the school (since no one teaches themselves to read without some degree of influence from others)—a noticeable absence has nevertheless persisted in relation to groups of readers, a gap which Long argues has contributed to a general disregard for the productive and complex qualities of social reading, and a tendency to discount such readings as intellectually insufficient. The question concerning the social context of reading is therefore always framed through the

lens of ideology and cultural hegemony, and thus in relation to notions of "power, access, and knowability" (Burwell, 2007, p. 295), in which reading both shapes and is "shaped by … the contexts in which it is made to happen" (Swann & Allington, 2009, p. 262). Importantly, as it contains within itself the potential for both expression and subjugation, the concept of power is here regarded as inherently relational and contextual, and it is in this light that, as Twomey (2007) confirms, "The double-edged sword of literacy … both promises and restricts" (p. 400).

Over the past couple of decades, there has been an undeniable increase in the number of people participating in book clubs and other forums of public reading (Barstow, 2007; Long, 2003; Rehberg Sedo, 2003), and as Burwell confirms (2007), the demographic swelling of this popular endeavour has also been followed by an upsurge of academic interest in the study of reading communities. Though such interest is typically ambivalent—as book clubs are "alternately vilified for lowering taste through mass consumption and celebrated as a sign of flourishing literacy" (Burwell, p. 282)—there is nonetheless a growing acceptance for alternative modes of literary identification in the public sphere, identifications which are often at odds with formal literary and critical analysis. Frequently linked to the considerable influence that Oprah's Book Club has had on popular literary culture (Chabot Davis, 2004; Farr, 2005; Hall, 2003; Kaufmann, 2004; Rooney, 2005), such alternative approaches have tended to include a recognition of affective and empathic identification with character's lives, relations which often operate across racial, class, and geographic divides. As Long notes, the majority of readers in book clubs in North America are middle-class, white women, and many of the books they read are set in far off, exotic locations. The cultural reception of Azir Nafisi's *Reading*

Lolita in Tehran (2003), which remained on *The New York Times* bestseller list for seventy weeks, and whose massive sales can be largely attributed to readers in book clubs (Burwell, p. 290), offers a prime example of the problematics that may be involved in such reader identification.

In Nafisi's autobiographical novel, readers are introduced to a group of Iranian women who develop a clandestine reading community, through which they furrow out "little pockets of freedom" (Nafisi, 2003, p. 25) amidst an otherwise hostile political and cultural environment. For Burwell (2007), though Nafisi's text is described as a "complex memoir" (p. 283), the dangers involved in North American readers' widespread empathic identification with this story lies in the fact that as "First World readers continue their troubling hegemonic fascination with an imagined other" (p. 282), reading itself might function as a reiteration of the assumed political and cultural superiority of Western society.

Against this view, however, Chabot Davis (2004) argues that even though there persists a tendency for certain readers' responses to be self-indulgent, cathartic, and colonizing, there also remains the possibility for such textual interactions to elicit "a radically destabilizing empathy," which is described as "an emotional experience that could encourage anti-racist coalitions by fostering a self-reflective alienation from white privilege" (p. 401). As with other modes of emotional provocation, such a radical, empathic destabilization might actually work to decenter the reader's identity from their otherwise privileged position in reading, allowing the reader to theorize the ways in which reading is always a risking of self (Britzman, 1995, 1998a), rather than simply a form of self-affirmation. For Twomey (2007), the potential provocations of "reading club

pedagogy" consist of the ways in which reading itself can be conceptualized "as a negotiated relational practice able to provide a re-imagining of the social world" (pp. 398-399).

For this present study, the question of empathic identification remains important, especially insofar as fictional accounts of adolescent life often rely on some degree of emotional identification, and the reading of fiction (actually, any reading whatsoever) always involves an engagement with the words and lives of others—always susceptible to overdetermination, always vulnerable to indifference. In every experience of reading, the question can be posed as to how the reader colonizes the text, and the construction of fantasy and the possibility for emotional destabilization. For the participants in this study, it will thus be important to question what uses they make of their emotional responses. For Britzman (2012), "Encounters with adolescence, as both lines of development and emotional situation, as both symptom and object relation, and as both mental constellation and mode of response take us to the heart of phantasies of learning to teach with others" (p. 273).

Apart from the study of book clubs as reader-initiated interpretive communities, there have also been a number of researchers who have employed methodological practices of collaborative reading in their exploration of the dynamics of literary engagement in occupational, community-based and educational settings. For Blackburn and Clark (2011), a literature discussion group at an LGBTQ youth center enabled participants to use books "as a springboard for talking about the impact of homophobia in their lives" (p. 234). Rather then engaging these adolescent readers in discussions explicitly centered on the issue of homophobia, the use of literature allowed an oblique

entrance into what would eventually emerge as a highly productive and empowering community. Through a sustained practice of collaborative engagement, these authors note how readers were able "to bring worlds together across texts and into contact with our own worlds to make ideologies more apparent in our discussions" (p. 246). In posing the question of how the conversations that transpire in book groups differ from those that take place in the classroom, Hippisley (2009) remarks that classroom discussions—due to myriad institutional and curricular pressures—are typically constrained in scope, and often do not allow students access to the various pleasures that can be "derive[d] from reading the full text within [their] own social and personal world" (p. 224). In their study of a department of human resources book club, Bonner and Tarner (1999) found that spaces of shared reading in the workplace offer a point of convergence between readers' personal and professional lives, an exchange that—while providing a variety of inter- and intra-personal benefits—enabled participants to develop collective and informal strategies for combatting workplace stress.

Following in the tradition of reader response theorists such as Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) and Iser (1975, 1978)—who, in "challeng[ing] the formality of the literary experience" (Twomey, 2007, p. 400), share the view that "meaning is not something in the text or the reader" (Sumara, 1996, p. 110), but is actually evoked through the reader's interpretive moves—numerous educational researchers have employed the structure of the reading group (where teachers meet and read together) as a method of inquiring into the potential relations of reading and occupational identity (Clark, 2001; Florio-Ruane, 2001; O'Connell Rust, 2002).

In her research into the uses of communal reading, Kooy (2003, 2006a, 2006b) investigates the ways in which book clubs composed of novice teachers can function as productive, storied spaces for the development of occupational skills, knowledge and identities. As she notes, "The book club allows [teachers] to read and use stories as heuristics and explanatory devices for making sense of their worlds in a social, relational, [and] safe context" (2006a, p. 662). As with Sumara (1996), who recognizes the implicitly relational nature of "horizontal reading[s]" (p. 91), through which readers engage with themselves and with others both through others and through other texts, Kooy (2006b) appreciates the ways that "the text, when read in the company of others, calls us to ourselves" (p. x). Likewise, through the use of literature circles, Strong-Wilson (2008) emphasizes the importance of stories in teacher formation, describing "a context … in which practicing teachers had the opportunity to engage and re-engage with literature as readers and learners" (p. 88). In developing a space for preservice teachers to respond to filmic representations of pedagogical life, Robertson (1994, 1997) examines the uses of a social structure of reading in teacher formation—what she calls a "social text" (1994, p. 89) and a "performative inter-textual field" (p. 153)—and identifies the conditions through which collective interpretation can enable readers to transfer to the group setting "urgent unresolved business having to do with formations into teaching" (p. 149). Significantly, Robertson repeatedly recognizes the ways in which preservice teachers use texts as transitional objects: "That is, readers transfer onto *their experience of* representational forms important unfinished, ongoing business pertaining to emergent identity" (p. 18).

While this section of the literature review has explored the social relations of readers and texts, the following section investigates the various meanings I assume in relation to questions of identity and subjectivity, paying special attention to the subjects of adolescence and teacher identity formation. While informed by the insights that have been enunciated in the first two sections of this review, the implications of psychoanalytic theory and reading experience will here be further developed, especially insofar as they help to inform a productive theorization of the emergent self.

Theories of Identity and Subjectivity; Teaching, Adolescence and Reading

As much of the theoretical discourse in teacher education is concerned with the concept of teacher identity, I here explore the notions of identity and subjectivity as they pertain to this particular study. While I first interpret the variety of meanings that accompany these terms, I then—through the lens of psychoanalysis and Kristeva's theory of revolt—attend to the implications of attachment and identification in reading experience. I then move on to discuss the notion of teacher identity, after which I explore the cultural meanings of adolescence, emphasizing the ways in which adolescent identity can be read in relation to the Kristevan notion of abjection.

Identity and Subjectivity. As this dissertation is concerned with the movements of selves through texts, educational histories, spaces of collaborative analysis, adolescence and adulthood, it is necessary that I here outline theories that focus on the intersections of identity and subjectivity, especially insofar as they may play themselves out in the peculiar contexts of reading, adolescence and teaching. The search for self-definition and identity is also one of the central characteristics of most young adult literature. Though at times employed interchangeably, the terms of identity and subjectivity are here

understood as distinct and dissimilar, though also as inescapably intertwined. As Coats (2004) phrases it, in her Lacanian analysis of children's literature, identity "refers to the more public, social presentation of the self—that part over which we have the most control" (p. 4), or rather, that part of the conscious self over which we assume (often erroneously) that we may preserve "the most control." Since the conscious self—in its various iterations of identity (cultural, gendered, sexual, occupational or otherwise)— never operates alone, but always alongside the unconscious and libidinal energies of emotions and drives, control of the self should really be understood as uncertain, unfinished attempts at semblance and coherence.

For Coats (2004), identities are themselves performative, and composed through an unending sequence of attempts at identification, through which "we take on the gestures and languages of those whom we identify as desirable and ideal" (p. 5); and of course, if we take the unconscious into account, our conceptions of "desirable" and "ideal" may not always be in agreement or compatible. The important point here is that identity—if understood as a series of identifications—is itself necessarily constituted in desiring relation to the social world, a relation composed of the self and the other, and whose objects of desire are unavoidably narcissistic while simultaneously externally dependent. Rather than an internally isolated event, narcissism is here construed as inherently relational. In this acknowledgement of a social world that precedes and informs what we make as identity, it becomes clear that identity is actually "not identical to itself," but if understood as the enactment of an imperfect performance, is "only a possibility in relation to another" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 83).

Since identities *are* identifications, the assumption of our various identities is thus an important way though which we communicate our identifications, similarities and differences with others, and it is through this singular, seemingly individualized, fashion that identities are invariably, multiply voiced: for each and every listener, in each and every moment, identities speak a slightly different language. As Britzman (1998a) describes this polyphony: "Many positionings are possible: identification of, identification with, identifications against, over-identification, and so on" (p. 83). Despite the traditional understanding of identification as automatically signifying a positive and consistently corresponding relation—which Zembylas (2003) refers to as a formulation "of particular experiences ... thoughts, attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and values" (p. 107)— the relations of identification are always potentially ambivalent. They can swing to and fro, and as they lean one direction they can just as easily lean another. It is here worth bearing in mind, then, that since "individuals are composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3), no identificatory performance—whether that of a teacher or reader—is ever "in full possession of itself" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 164).

This understanding of identity as a contingent, cultural construction, and as primarily composed through performance, discourse and repetition—rather than as a preexisting, inevitable, unalterable, archetypal element of the human condition—is also a fundamental claim of queer theory. As de Lauretis (1994) contends, "sexual identity is neither innate nor *simply* acquired," but dynamically positioned and structured through projections of/in fantasy that are "private and public, conscious and unconscious … culturally available and historically specific" (p. xix). For Butler (2006), who writes about the ways in which gender performances come to embody the reality of the very

identities they apparently represent, identities of all kinds are themselves regarded as "tenuously constructed in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (p. 191). While it may seem that such a claim makes of human agency an impossibility and farce, since every attempt at asserting one's identity can therefore be regarded as "an imitation without an origin" (p. 188)—as no more than a copy and a stylized simulacrum—"the reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*, that is, as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed" (p. 201). If identity is but an effect, then that effect need not necessarily be. Since every mimetic act is itself slippery, partial and imperfect, and can thus be reversed, perverted, cut short, sped up or slowed down, to consider identity *as* effect, therefore "means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary" (p. 201). In fact, it is only when identities are recognized as contingent and constructed that we can begin to think seriously about the ways our actions and fantasies, and the actions and fantasies of others, are complicit in the production and regulation of normalcy, and through such thinking, "confound the intelligibility of the apparatuses that produce identity as repetition" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 81).

In counterdistinction to identity, subjectivity is here taken to represent the underlying psychological structures on top of which identity is built; if identity is a kind of mask (whose presence is often unquestioned), a person's subjectivity is that which the mask covers. While identities may be seen as layers of identification, which at their core are irredeemably contingent and imaginary formations that nevertheless structure what we take as the reality of our social fabric, subjectivity—or "the condition of being a

subject" (Britzman, 2003, p. 71)—represents the "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). While identity refers to the ways in which our actions and our uses of language can be seen to mark out our identifications with others, subjectivity "is more than identity" (Coats, 2004, p. 5), as it describes our "sense of being in the world" (O'Loughlin, 2009, p. 61) apart from—though obviously still conditioned by—our social and cultural relations. Importantly, our subjectivities—as a "sense of being"—both shape and are shaped by the identities we enact in our everyday lives. "It is a movement," Coats affirms, "between that which we control and that which controls us" (p. 5). As such a movement involves the trappings of language, and is thus (in)formed by demands that may initially appear as external, subjectivity is also necessarily characterized by that which language can never capture in full. When Butler (1997) refers to the paradox of "subjection" as a "fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that … initiates and sustains our agency" (p. 2), she enunciates the difficult fact that every human subject, in their path of becoming, is involved in a process of finding *and* creating, and of facing the arrangements of agency and subservience, on the fine line (forever folded) between subjectivity and subjection. Because subjectivity represents the condition of being a human subject, and the self *is* the subject, I use the terms of selfhood and subjectivity interchangeably.

In Kristeva's writing, this folding, fine line of the subject is best articulated in the ways that the self—as a speaking being—is envisioned as always in process/on trial; for Kristeva, questions of subjectivity must necessarily be posed alongside questions of language. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Kristeva articulates subjectivity as

made through what she refers to as a "signifying process." McAfee (2004) describes this signifying process as "the ways in which bodily drives and energy are expressed, literally discharged through our use of language," and that, when situated in this process, "our signifying practices shape our subjectivity and experience" (p. 14). Changes in the ways we use language thus also establish a transformation in "the *status of the subject*—his relation to the body, to others, and to objects" (McAfee, p. 15). As we use language—as we put it, and are ourselves put, 'in process'—we are thus already caught up in a system of meaning through which our bodies, affects and feelings are always invariably implicated. Within this signifying process, Kristeva identifies two modalities of articulation, or dispositions of enunciation, which find themselves in perpetual "dialectical tension" (Keltner, 2011, p. 19): "the semiotic" and "the symbolic." The semiotic—which "[cuts] up the corporeal and social continuum as well as that of signifying material" (Kristeva, p. 40)—involves the extra-verbal ways in which bodily energy invariably seeps through language, and is therefore more readily associated with unconscious discharges and a "drive-governed basis of sound production" (Barrett, 2011, p. 10). The symbolic—"a social effect of the relation to the other" (Kristeva, p. 29)—is related to conscious attempts to "express a stable sign system" (McAfee, 2004, p. 17), and is thus firmly focused on the rules of grammar and syntax, and ensuring an erasure of ambiguity.

Importantly, however, such attempts at erasure can never be actualized in full, and the process at work in Kristeva's conceptualization of heterogeneous human signification (or what she calls the work of *signifiance*) is actually constituted through the interplay—or "dialectical oscillation" (Oliver, 1993, p. 9)—of the semiotic and symbolic modalities:

"Because the subject is always *both* semiotic *and* symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 24). As "the two modes … are not completely separate" (McAfee, 2004, p. 17), each continually upsets the equilibrium, or disequilibrium, of the other. Such phases of language and being are therefore far from strictly dichotomous or dualistic, and just as the unconscious can only be interpreted through its conscious effects, the semiotic can be sensed in the way it discharges itself into, and energizes, the symbolic. Without the semiotic and its transgressions, the symbolic and its limits would have no meaning. Subjectivity, for Kristeva, is therefore composed of this very vacillation, and for humans as speaking beings, the challenge is to accept the limitations imposed by the symbolic, while simultaneously—in admitting the semiotic its unpredictable discharge and irruptions (which exist in language regardless)—figuring ways to transgress the potentially stultifying strictures of symbolically obsessed expression. To relate this back to the above discussion of identity, I largely position the construction of identity in relation to the symbolic, while I locate the movements of subjectivity in this negotiation between the semiotic and symbolic.

It is through viewing identity and subjectivity as a discursive, dialectical practice of human relationality, that Robertson (1994) acknowledges the place where "psychoanalytic and poststructuralist ideas conjoin" (p. 56). As she describes it, this gathering consists in their shared argument "that identity constitutes a practice of discourse, and that patterns in identity construction may be read or interpreted through texts written and spoken by individuals" (p. 56). Though psychoanalytic theories focus

more closely on the significance of an individual's earliest experiences, and how the memories of such experiences persist in their continuing identity formation, poststructuralism situates its efforts on material practices and social relations. It is thus through studying the movements of language, which are "always borrowed," that psychoanalysis and poststructuralism recognize the fact that all representational strategies, whether or not they are related to identity formation, "retain the lingering flavors of others who have come before" (Silin, 1995, p. 137). Symbolic and discursive representations of identity, as real and authentic as they may feel, are therefore never the thing in itself. Even though it is language that "causes the subject to come into being," it is also through language that we can most fully approach a sense of our lost psychic objects, a (mis)recognition which often appears in the seemingly simple acknowledgement "that something has been lost, and we desire to get it back" (Coats, 2004, p. 2). As I contend throughout this dissertation, it is through experiences of reading that individuals can best approach their lost objects of love and hate. As Grumet (1998) articulates it: "Reading invites us to recuperate our losses. As we enter into the fictive world and emerge from it, we experience the opportunity to reconsider the boundaries and exclusions that sustain our social identities" (p. 27).

Lost Objects, Reading and Revolt. In psychoanalytic theory, we are who we are in large part because of our lost objects of love and hate, which play a major role in determining the character of our attachments, and the directions of both our desires and disgusts, and whose origins inevitably lead back to childhood experiences of attachment, trauma, and initiations into language and symbolic reality. In all experiences of reading, the reader's subjectivity is engaged in a desiring production, whose passage can best be

characterized through de Lauretis' (1994) description of Freudian desire: "as an activity of fantasy aimed at repeating a past experience of satisfaction, and hence dependent on an internalized, primary, and absent object" (p. 222). It is thus desire that compels a reader forward in their readings, searching for a past pleasure that can never again be fully attained, and whose search for meaning therefore remains interminable. There is, however, even in this very interminability, a sense of pleasure; "there is," as Cixous notes of reading, "always *the feeling* that something has been found again" (Cixous and Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 98). Even though our lost objects must necessarily remain elusive, the feeling of reading provides pleasure in this search, which often leads back to the influence that stories from our childhood (both those we have read, and those we tell ourselves about ourselves) assume in our psychic lives. For Granger (2011), "The psyche 'makes' its objects, and its relations with those objects, partly in the world and partly through fantasy. The stories we tell ourselves … embody those objects and relations" (p. 228). Our lost objects are therefore *who we are,* since we have created them as much as they have created us; they are our necessary though fragmentary companions.

For the child reader, as Thacker (2000) notes, the experience of entering into "the narrative of his or her own life" is uncannily similar to the experience of entering into "the fictional discourse of book-reading," as both involve processes of "constructing a self through the … force of stories in which the reader can perform the role of author" (p. 7). "Children," as Coats (2004) reminds us, "are constructed by the texts they encounter" (p. 10), as they also construct these texts through the interminably inconstant fabric of their psychic and social selves. As "being a self entails having a story" (Silin, 1995, p. 46), readers repeatedly make their way back—in ways both conscious and unconscious—

to childhood stories and experiences of reading. Since the only way the world comes to have meaning "is through the stories we are told" (Coats, p. 1), it is to the strategies, pleasures and reenactments of their earliest encounters that adult readers are often trying to return. Even if the substance of the stories themselves have changed, it is the affective nature of these stories—the lost objects of reading experience "that attach themselves to unconscious processes that have material effects" (p. 1)—that adult readers are forever trying to recover: a doubling of ideational and affective content that Strong-Wilson (2008) describes as the reader's "memories of stories and his or her attachment to those memories" (p. 71). And like all stories (and memories), they are defined as much by what they say as by what they also leave out: "they are full of projections, desires, disavowals" (Owen, 2010, p. 268). To relate this discussion of lost objects back to the relations of identity and subjectivity, our identifications in reading often represent indirect attempts to express and approach the unknowable nature of our subjective self.

Though this picture of reading may appear depressive in its focus on loss and suspended desire, it is nevertheless part of the human condition that a child's acquisition of the capacity to read for themselves makes them responsible for reading the world from the viewpoint of an isolated individual. While the responsibilities of reading bring definite pleasure, they are also accompanied by "bodily and communal losses": "once he learns to read, reading will rarely be a situation where he is cuddled close to the body of another, receiving the words through another's voice as he simultaneously receives her smell, her touch" (Coats, 2004, p. 59). The significance of our stories—those we read or are told as children and adolescents, and to which we return as adults—is therefore as

fundamental to our developing sense of subjectivity as our relationships with our parents and other primary caregivers.

Importantly, however, in recuperating certain aspects of our past experiences of reading, it is not simply a matter of reminiscence or repetition, but instead, of renewal and displacement, of questioning and dissolution (Kristeva, 2000, 2002a). In reading, we invariably access—often unexpectedly—forgotten and sometimes disavowed aspects of our self, which makes it hard to discern the actual object of reading, a difficulty that works to dissolve—or abject (Kristeva, 1982)—the boundaries delimiting subject and object. There is also, therefore, in the act of reading, a revolt against the boundaries of self, and since, for Kristeva (2000), "happiness exists only at the price of revolt" (p. 7), this movement guarantees for the reader a certain pleasure and jouissance (even though it may be tinged throughout with the pain of uninvited awareness). Boundaries that may otherwise seem stable and secure—those of the singular body, a linear history, or an object of desire—are thrown into question and torn at the seams. For Kristeva (2000, 2002a)—who ascribes to revolt an etymological meaning of transgression, timelessness, repetition, working-through and displacement—the space of revolt is theorized as a searching, desiring transferential return, where memories, forgettings and childhood dramas are paradoxically renewed in the context of "an untenable conflict" (2002a, p. 6), which may involve a range of different scenarios. Under the sign of revolt, Kristeva includes a variety of cultural, developmental, and literary transgressions, which resemble what Gilbert (2007) calls: "fights with authority in all its guises, experiments with language that re-imagine the reach of narrative, the fashioning of sexual identities, and conflicts over tradition and heritage" (p. 54). Thinking about reading as a potential form

of revolt—and the ways that it works to bring "new figures of temporality to the fore" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 9)—thus allows us to think differently about what Radstone (2007) calls "the psychical life of time" (p. 19). Also, the focus that Kristeva (2000) places on revolt as a "sign of life" (p. 10) and a necessary reaction to "the automation of humanity" (p. 7), rescues reading from being inaccurately perceived as a standardized, homogeneous and fully legible affair. Revolt and desire are therefore inextricably linked, as the returns that are incited through revolt involve a dissolution of the boundaries of self (and thus between the self and other), similar to that which is experienced by the subject engaged in the context of desiring production.

In her concern for thinking about revolt in the Freudian, analytic sense—as a "return toward the invisible" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 10) of memory, language, and the unconscious—and thus as a type of blind, unsure and experimental modification and displacement of past experience, Kristeva also looks to the lives and the works of authors described as "figures of revolt." While she considers the writings of Sartre, Aragon, Barthes and Freud, she also turns to the analytic, mythical figure of Oedipus, who she characterizes not only as a "figure of revolt," but also as "one of *failure*" (p. 76). For Gilbert (2007), "The Oedipal narrative is a story of passion, but it is also a story of loss and its compensations" (p. 53). Since the Oedipal object—through which incestual transgression and patricide stand symbolically for "the task of leaving one's parents behind to invent new selves" (Gilbert p. 54)—is "an object forever lost and sought" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 76), the pursuit of this object invariably ends in failure, since one cannot murder one's original objects of desire (even if such murder is symbolic) and simultaneously presume their reappearance in future guises: "In reality, there cannot be

an absolutely satisfying other" (Kristeva, 2007, p. 720). Symbolic murder, in this sense, must maintain a degree of finality. Yet—since "the oedipal [is] permanent in all humans," who must each "live through the oedipal as a child and then see it repeated in various metamorphoses throughout his/her life" (Kristeva, 2000, p. 12)—recuperative (and murderous) indiscretions repeatedly return. It is through this paradox—that murder can be both symbolically definitive *and* symbolically indefinite (making the failures and disobediences of life resurrectable)—that Oedipal revolt, and indeed all forms of revolt in the Kristevan sense, constitute a "fragile success" (p. 77). This paradox, moreover, persists is practices of reading. Significantly, this simultaneity of renewal and failure bestows on the figure of revolt a certain capacity for "the secret of what we call sublimation" (p. 78): the ability to transform failed experience into a space of new meaning. Every reader must therefore sublimate to some degree, and as we will see throughout the course of this dissertation, adolescent protagonists in young adult literature are often constructed as figures of paradox and revolt.

       Teacher Identity. The "secret" of sublimation, which is frequently associated with creative and artistic endeavours, also implicates itself in the ways in which past educational experience can be mobilized in the context of teacher education. If we take revolt to imply, along with Kristeva, a type of blind reworking and displacement of past experience, then the psychical confusions of reading might potentially allow for preservice teachers to upset their preconceived notions of teacher identity. The question of what constitutes a teacher identity is inevitably posed anew every time that the figure of the teacher is named, a recurring designation that, despite its apparent banality, leads to a constant confusion "composed of multiple, often conflicting identities" (Danielewicz,

2001, p. 3). For students in teacher education, the texts of teacher identity can indeed be difficult to decipher, as they are composed through a combination of past educational experiences, a displacement of parental and childhood dynamics, and a variety of often-incompatible cultural representations. Moreover, such texts can never be read in isolation, as they "cannot be separated completely from the texts of gender, love and sexuality" (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 110), along with those of authority, adulthood, knowledge and curriculum. "The struggle to erect a coherent version of teaching selfhood," as Robertson (1994) describes it, "involves an unconscious, complex, ongoing, unfinished, interrelated and meaningful deployment of social resources in which [the teacher] is immersed—material that includes … stories and figurations of teaching lives" (p. 8). It is therefore important to recognize the fact that the teacher self is a constructed spectacle, and though recognizing its "historical contingency … avoids the problematics of normalizing teacher identity" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 108), it also describes a barrage of divergent psychic and social demands. For Robertson, such an identificatory construction "involves responding to and negotiating ongoing semiotic provocations that come at all times and from all quarters" (p. 8), each of which vies for authority and influence in the determination of what it means to be a teacher. And though the challenges of naming the self as teacher may be highly symbolic and representational—"just one more imaginary identification layered over the originary ego" (Taubman, 2006, p. 27)—such fantasy formations nevertheless lead to real, material consequences.

The process of assuming an occupational identity always carries with it a certain degree of risk, for though naming the self as teacher may allow access to educational environments and discourse, if teachers take themselves "for teachers in some fixed

sense, as opposed to provisionally," the adoption of such an identity may require them "to assume aspects, qualities, stances, and other identities that [they] take as their own but that require [them] to repress other feelings, urges, impulses, and desires" (Taubman, 2006, p. 27). Since, for psychoanalysis, repression never simply implies erasure, there is always the possibility that repressed desires may reemerge in distorted, destructive form. Though "no teaching identity is … singular or without contradictions" (Britzman, 2003, p. 223), it is nevertheless an unavoidable fact that, in taking up a teacher identity, one typically suppresses other "aspects of the self" (Britzman, 2003, p. 27).

However, while such suppression may potentially lead to violence and violent forms of self-abnegation, if handled appropriately it may also enable a type of productive psychical negotiation, akin to the process of mourning, initiated in "the reaction to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person" (Freud, 1917/2005, p. 203). Far from being a process that occurs only in relation to an actual person, mourning can therefore also emerge in relation to the loss of an ideal. In our discussion of teacher identity, such ideals and "abstractions" may include the over-idealization of education as a heroic calling, and fantasies of rescue and devotion, each of which will necessary be compromised in the context of the social reality of schooling. As Granger (2011) describes it, "the mourning of abstract losses [is] a natural component of the learning process" (p. 183), and since "we suffer a loss even if what we gain … is what we have long desired" (p. 182), the question of becoming a teacher should perhaps be here considered as a way of considering one's psychical losses while avoiding the trappings of overly melancholic identification. While the related psychical processes of mourning and melancholia both result from the loss of a love-object (whether a part of

the self or another person), the work of successful mourning "involve[s] knowing what one has lost … [while] melancholia originally meant, to a certain extent, not knowing" (Butler, 2004, p. 22). Importantly, however, since "when we lose someone, we do not always know what it is *in* that person that has been lost" (p. 21), there will always remain a degree of knowledge in mourning that remains enigmatic and hidden. Though they may appear distinct, mourning and melancholia are therefore interrelated processes that contain within themselves a kernel of the other as a real possibility—as knowledge and insight always masks its own blindness and ignorance, ignorance and blindness likewise arrange themselves around structures of knowledge. In the context of teacher identity, it is important to realize that, while becoming a teacher may entail certain "necessary losses" (Viorst, 1986), it may not always be possible to describe such losses in detail. The point here, then, is "to begin understanding [the] complexities [of loss] without flattening them, and to work with rather than against them" (Granger, p. 183).

For those engaged in the transitions from student to teacher—a passage demanding interpretation that may leave us temporarily disoriented—one of the most fruitful and evocative metaphors for describing this ambiguous space of movement and flux is Alsup's (2006) figuration of what she titles a "borderland discourse." For Alsup, as the teacher's identity is described as a "weaving together … of various subjectivities" (p. 41), which emerge from the confluence of multiple discursive sites and lived experiences, the work of teacher education is best envisaged as a site for the symbolization of psychic and cultural "dissonance" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996, p. 67): "an opportunity to build a bridge between … bodies of knowledge and experience" (Alsup, p. 42), or theory and practice, and which therefore circumvents the tendency to

privilege one set of discourses over another. The construction of a "borderland

discourse," which is consciously positioned in the space "between identity positions or

situated discourses, and is [thus] a space of continual becoming rather than an endpoint

culminating in a singular identity construction" (p. 7), is valuable in its capacity to inspire

preservice teachers to recognize the ways in which "the intellectual, the corporeal, and

the affective" (p. 6) are all caught up in the process of becoming-teacher. Rather than a

space of absence or nothingness, the borderland is a site of productive ambivalence that

challenges the idea of a unified subjectivity, and a way "in which to experience a richer,

fuller, and more complex understanding of self and other" (p. 15). The provocations of

such a discourse take seriously Probyn's (1996) claim that we are always "in the midst of

becoming-other" (p. 9).

What is especially significant in Alsup's (2006) theory is the idea that, while a

borderland necessarily exists between the poles of student and teacher, it is the act of

deliberately dwelling within this liminal space that gives it a symbolic, and therefore

usable, reality. To activate the terms of a borderland discourse, Alsup proposes a method

of writing and photo-elicitation that enables preservice teachers to tap into the

metaphorical possibilities inherent in their position as students on the margin of teaching.

Borders, however, are also geographical and cartographic realities, and though they exist

as theoretical constructions of the contemporary geo-political landscape, their existence

nevertheless implies a variety of material conditions that are often far from ideal. From

the crossings of the Rio Grande, to the innumerable refugee settlements around the globe,

borders can at times create conditions of violence whose material realities are dire and

disastrous. There is something about borders that invariably awakens feelings of suspicion and defense. There is something about borders that makes foreigners of us all.

Adolescent Identity. Through a border of a different sort, the passage from adolescence to adulthood can also be described as a transition from one foreign country to another, whose alternate poles invariably generate, in the individual being, a sense of inescapable strangeness towards one's self. This strangeness emerges most palpably through the fact that the dominant discourses surrounding adolescent development—which "wed [young people] to lock-step states and conditions dependent on categories and bracketing" (O'Quinn, 2004, p. 52)—are often ideologically constructed as a kind of absolutist common sense, which makes it hard to find a reflection of oneself within such definitions, or to speak about adolescent life in any other way. As Richards (2008) describes this challenge: "If young people are routinely construed as other, often constructed as irrational, as biographically ensnared within bodies beyond their control, then whatever they may have to say is always already disqualified as 'temporary,' as hormonally tainted" (p. 12). Put simply, the dominant paradigms of adolescent identity are remarkably overdetermined, often paying little or no reference to the actual existence of adolescence as a lived reality. It is here worth noting that, although I am exploring the cultural meanings of adolescence and adolescent identity, I am doing so from the vantage point of the participants in this study; therefore, I am concerned with how the figure of the fictional adolescent imposes itself on the adult, and the consequences of such imposition in the context of learning to teach.

In this study, I look closely at the terms of adolescent identity for two main reasons. Firstly, as young adult literature focuses on adolescent life, it is important to

describe the values, contestations and cultural meanings that representations of this age can be said to signify. Secondly, when encountered in relation to the particular circumstances of learning to teach, "the complex of adolescence," which Britzman (2012) characterizes "as figure, situation, object relation, and drive to know and as subject to displacements, reversals and substitutions" (p. 275), presents itself "as a crisis to adult identity" (p. 277). Since teachers, finding themselves in educational spaces, invariably reencounter their internal conflicts and psychical defenses, and are thus reacquainted and "subject to their adolescence" (p. 274), the experience of reading young adult literature can potentially symbolize such subjection. Both teaching and reading, then, if thought of as arrangements of memory (Farley, 2009), bring the teacher/reader back to experience the emotional structures of their adolescence.

Lesko (2012), in her recently revised *Act Your Age: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, looks at the various ways that—throughout recent history—adolescence has been produced as a means to contain and delineate societal fears, desires, and uncertainties. Lesko is here in agreement with Spacks (1981), who contends that, "Examining views of adolescence in our cultural past helps us to understand the views we hold in the present," and moreover, "to understand that they are only views" (p. 9). In questioning the various epistemological practices that have created and work to maintain our contemporary understandings of adolescence, Lesko examines a wide variety of cultural discourses and systems of ideological reasoning. From Recapitulation Theory, the ideas of G. Stanley Hall and The Great Chain of Being, to Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts of America, colonial systems of social hierarchy and surveillance, and the masculinizing nature of contemporary education, Lesko confirms the ways in which

numerous cultural and political technologies—which here refer to the "complex of mechanisms through which authorities … shape, normalize, and make productive use of human beings" (p. 15)—have often used the figure of the adolescent as a marker determining structures of normality/abnormality, rational/irrational and civilized/savage. The ways in which adolescents' actions are represented in the public sphere, as Spacks argues, "always remind us of … society's divisions," and through such reminders "encourage adults to define themselves as other" (p. 292). As a kind of "cultural switching station" (Lesko, p. 70), adolescence has often been viewed as the crucial point in the movement from animality to humanity, and where individuals (as well as races and cultures) either remain arrested in states of childish dependence and savagery, or go on to attain superior, adult selves of a more fully developed nature.

In her work, Lesko (2012) writes of four "confident characterizations," which she describes as the prevailing discursive constructs that effectively obscure our ability to think differently about the shapes and consequences of adolescent identity. Firstly, young adults are generally presumed to be 'coming-of-age' into adulthood, which positions adolescence as a period of constant becoming and emergence, and thus, as "portentous, uncontrollable, and naturally occurring" (p. 3). In this view, adolescent attitudes and lives are framed as within a condition of continuous development, against those structures of the adult world that are otherwise assumed as developed and definitive, and just like the figure of the student teacher, to situate an identity in a state of incessant development is to essentially name it as unfinished, dependent, and reliant on (adult and expert) others for definition and cohesion. In this assessment, if "adults are people who *are*, adolescents *will be* in the future" (p. 111), which condemns adolescence to an "expectant time" (p.

112), in which "the end of the … story is primary" (p. 113); though "the past may have significance" it is "*only the future*" (p. 113), the time of the adult, which matters. Importantly, although I have described identity—in my own formulations—as necessarily contingent, unfinished and incomplete, these characterizations hold true for the figure of the adult *as well* as the adolescent.

Secondly, Lesko (2012) contends that adolescents are often represented as completely submissive to the power of their hormones, a move that firmly declares the source of adolescence to reside in hormonal change, and therefore "grounds adolescence in biology," with "the teenaged body as its destiny" (p. 3). While it is obvious that, as Matthews (2009) puts it, "the physiological force of puberty and the presumption of new sexual and physical limits do pose a distinct set of conflicts" (p. 68), adolescents are nonetheless typically represented as prisoners of their own bodies, whose often-unpredictable instabilities overwhelmingly determine their multiple states of mind. Thirdly, adolescents are constructed as emphatically "peer-oriented," an assumption which positions them against the individualized nature of the fully developed adult. Lastly, adolescence is "signified by age," and though Lesko admits that such a point may appear somewhat obvious and tautological, if "adolescence is made in and through the passage of time" (p. 4), young people are invariably stuck in a temporal position of utter passivity, "imprisoned in their age as absence and suspended outside historical time" (p. 111). From the status of the above "confident characterizations," it is no surprise that even though our understandings of adolescence may be produced by a variety of observable, cultural practices, they nevertheless persist as virtually uncontestable facts of individual and social development. It is in this context that Spacks (1981) has described

adolescence as constituting "an idea masquerading as a fact" (p. 6). It is also no surprise then, as Waller (2009) argues, that adolescence is often conflated with madness, perceived "as a period … beyond the innocent, fantastic beliefs of childhood but not yet governed by adult rationality and intellect" (p. 75).

In suggesting that we begin to think differently about adolescent life, in ways not inevitably wedded to ideologically driven developmental plots, Lesko (2012) proposes a variety of conceptual moves, largely informed by postcolonial, feminist and poststructural theory. Arguing that adolescent growth and change should be thought of as recursive and contingent, rather than linear, unidirectional and cumulative, Lesko indicates the necessity of looking to specific contexts, and local actions and attitudes of adolescents, "without the inherent evaluation of steps, stages, and socialization" (p. 183). Though she writes about the particular context of "the queer child," Stockton (2009) also suggests a similar move: "to prick (deflate, or just delay) the vertical, forward-motion metaphor of growing up, and [to] do so by exploring the many kinds of sideways growth" (p. 11). By its very existence, this idea of "sideways growth" is antithetical to the prevailing "confident characterizations" enunciated above. As such, it represents a theory of "remade adolescence," which allows for "the contradictions of being simultaneously mature and immature, old and young, traditional and innovative" (Lesko, p. 184). It also represents a philosophy of temporality that is based on the possibilities of time as a folding construct, where past, present and future are theorized through relations of coexistence, and thus, "as holding seemingly opposing identities *simultaneously*" (p. 184). Clearly, the consequences that follow from such a vision of time also necessitate a blurring of the traditional boundaries separating the categories of adolescence and

adulthood, no longer envisioned as discrete and independent, but instead as mutually irreducible, each embedded within the other.

It is from this position of mutual irreducibility that Polmear (2010), writing from a psychoanalytic point of view, theorizes adolescence as a trafficking both forward and backward, and whose movements of detachment and attachment, though inaugurated in the teenage years, continue through an individual's lifespan. The push forward comes from the lingering nature of the Oedipal conflict (which is never really resolved), and describes a "need to detach oneself from the potentially incestuous love object now that the young person has a physically mature body capable of sexual intercourse and violent aggression" (p. 50). Indeed, this difficult knowledge of maturation—which emerges in the adult as fear, envy and desire, and which symbolizes "the terror of incest or patricide" (p. 50)—is often projected onto the figure of the adolescent from multiple sites in their surrounding culture. In young adult literature and popular culture, for example, it is often the case that the actions of adults signify their desire to do one of two things to adolescents, which together represent the terms of a kind of passionate jealousy: to bed them or to kill them (or both). As Polmear describes it, the adolescent also experiences a series of "regressive pulls," which "come from the need to mourn and give up … childhood love objects by revisiting them and letting them go" (p. 50).

It is this movement back and forth—from cathecting, to relinquishing and mourning, to recathecting—that moves Kaplan (1984) to describe adolescence as "the conjugator of childhood and adulthood" (p. 14). While it can be tempting to read such movements as reestablishing the zone of temporal passivity referred to by Lesko (2012), there is an important feature of psychoanalytic theories of adolescence—namely,

narcissism—which ensures that the adolescent is never perceived simply as a figure of passivity, but instead, as an active builder "of boundaries that separate me from not me" (Grumet, 1998, p. 27), and in which "the past is revisited, remembered, [and] revised" (Kaplan, p. 99). "In adolescence," Flynn and Skostad (2010) write, "features of narcissism are ever-present" (p. 83). For psychoanalytic discourse, the emergence of narcissism, far from being an undesirable occurrence, is actually "an absolutely necessary prerequisite to the possibility of loving or being able to perceive others," and involves "the possession of an internal self that allows us the possibility of connecting externally or, in other words, of having a relationship" (Boldt, 2006, pp. 154-155). Far from being "a passive recapitulation of the past" (Kaplan, p. 16), or a silent waiting for the future, adolescent narcissism—where the adolescent subject is self-invested as an object of affection and libidinal energy—thus provides a necessary and active space of self-revisioning and productive mourning: a "time of separation, a time of rebellion" (Crutcher, 1996, p. ix), characterized by "a clash between the past and the future" (Kaplan, p. 99). Moreover, as such psychical clashes—construed as they are in the timeless unconscious—defy linear logic, they are best considered as a type of "dip[ping] into the past" (p. 99), through which the adolescent "churns up the inner life" in their need to "reconcile … with the future" (p. 117). In Kaplan's theory, the emphasis is therefore placed on the adolescent *as conjugator*, rather than *as conjugated*.

Adolescence and Abjection. In response to certain developmental psychoanalytic theorists, such as Erickson (1994), who view the process of "adolescing" as "conclusively complete" (p. 155) when the individual successfully subordinates their original identifications with childhood love objects to new kinds of identification, I am here

interested in exploring the ideas of those theorists who challenge this "repudiation of the adolescent who lives on in the adult" (Gilbert, 2007, p. 47). For while adolescence inaugurates distinct "developmental tasks [that] must be satisfied in order to leave childhood behind" (Matthews, 2009, p. 68), it nonetheless remains true that, if we posit it as a psychic relation, "adolescence does not go away" (Gilbert, p. 60). As Britzman (2012) contends, "there is no final goodbye to adolescence. Adolescent tendencies are eternal and, and for the adult, unconscious" (p. 278). Following Britzman and Gilbert, then, I here turn to Kristeva's (1990) theorization of adolescence as an "open psychic structure," which, when discussed in relation to her theory of abjection, provides a meaningful interpretation of the ways in which adolescence is often framed as the necessary outcast of adulthood. In this view, the figure of the adolescent cannot be thought apart from "the world of interests, ideals, institutions and authority figures both old and new, that work to contain it" (Matthews, p. 68).

For Kristeva (1990), to theorize adolescence as a psychic relation, rather than simply as a bracketed category of age, is to take seriously the relations, attachments and detachments that structure the world in which adolescents live, and the ways in which adolescent psychic development functions not so much as a measurable unit of individual growth, but instead, "as a relation that, more often than not, takes the form of a hierarchy with the adult standing in as a measure of achievement and maturity" (Gilbert, 2007, pp. 50-51). For the adolescent, situated "in the aftermath of the oedipal stabilization of subjective identity" (Kristeva, p. 8), psychic motivations are characterized most powerfully, as previously mentioned, by a searching desire for new love objects, a general questioning of previously unchallenged identifications, and a corresponding

reduction of superegoic constraints. As a form of Kristevan (2000) 'revolt' (with the passionate, though failed, figure of Oedipus as its primary figure), the task of conceiving new selves—in "a time of reopening and rethinking questions of identity" (Coats, 2004, p. 142)—often materializes in the form of 'risky' behaviour that can appear contradictory and harmful. In this search, the adolescent invariably develops new means of symbolization, which, when observed through "the eyes of a stable, ideal law" (p. 9)— I.e. parental authority—is usually determined to represent a structure in threat, and a structure of 'crisis.' In this determination, however, what is especially significant is the fact that, rather than the adolescent being reliant on adults for psychological support, it is "the adult" who, in fact, "needs the adolescent" (Gilbert, p. 47). In this relation of dependence, the adolescent is needed as the (fluctuating, irrational and abject) Other, infused with a variety of flexible and seemingly-semiotic energies, against whom adult resilience (presumed as symbolic and stable) is typically measured. Significantly, from the point of view of the adult, the adolescent is always measured in retrospect: "what the adult perceives in the adolescent must pass through the memory of their own maturation" (Matthews, 2009, p. 63).

As an individual who has already ostensibly 'matured,' there often persists, in a variety of cultural contexts (from rites of initiation to the construction of legal classifications), a desire on the part of the adult to maintain a strict division between the categories of adolescence and adulthood, enacted through various strategies of boundary-maintenance. For Phillips (1995), who writes in relation to boundaries:

If the aim of a system is to create an outside where you can put the things you

don't want, then we have to look at what that system disposes of—its rubbish—to

understand it, to get a picture of how it sees itself and wants to be seen. (p. 19)

In the context of adolescent identity, it is therefore worth asking: What are those things,

bodies, ideas, words, theories, and emotions that are pushed to the side, abjected and

excluded in the name of function, method and 'adult' order? Like the scratched-out word,

this is an absence that leaves a trace repressed that continues to circulate, as the symbolic

processes of imaginary consolidation always leaves evidence of that which it expels in

that which is left behind. If, as psychoanalytic theory suggests, we elude what we cannot

bear to know and "we are what we excrete" (Phillips, p. 74), then abjected knowledge

necessarily forms an important part of who we are.

As Keltner (2011) describes it, Kristeva is not so much concerned with

demarcations of identity, but with their breakdown and fluidity, and how these bleeding

borders lead "to a place of radical ambiguity, where the structural order of subjects and

objects does not hold" (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 33). With reference to Kristeva's

"mutual but irreducible" (Barrett, 2011, p. 3) structures of signification—the semiotic and

the symbolic—the important thing to here bear in mind is that the symbolic order is an

inevitably fragile location, what de Certeau (1984) might call a "sieve-order" (p. 107);

since the semiotic always travels through language (despite its origins in the drives),

neither mode of signification can ever be experienced as discrete.

From this fascination with the ways in which 'orderly' modes of subjectivity are

predicated on the prohibition and expulsion of that which is taken as improper, unclean,

and unreasonable, Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection—in its depiction of various

material processes of expulsion related to "corporeal waste" (p. 70), such as vomiting, bleeding, molding, defecation and decay—elucidates the psychical strategies of separation that are necessary for the human subject to successfully establish the borders between the ego and its surrounding world, the self and its other. Though Kristeva understands the earliest moments of abjection as pre-oedipal, through which the child separates from its mother, it is also a process (like the Oedipal conflict) that reemerges throughout an individual's life. As a part of the history of the individual, the abject comes prior to any real distinction between subject and object, and "is the means by which the subject is first impelled towards the possibility of constituting itself as such—in an act … of revulsion of that which can no longer be contained" (Burgin, 1990, p. 115). For the young child, in separating from its mother and establishing itself *as* a 'self,' it simultaneously rejects, and abjects, a part of itself as well; "Repelling, rejecting; repelling itself, rejecting itself" (Kristeva, p. 13). Abjection, Barrett (2011) notes, thus "prevails as a process of attraction and repulsion necessary for the performative production of language to occur and for any … object of desire to emerge" (p. 71). In order for the subject to encounter the world of objects as a place of possibility, he or she must first endure a type of abjection that, even though it works to establish the self, also thoroughly destabilizes the idea of the self as fullness or whole.

Any rejection of the other thus always involves a rejection of the self, and in this way, "abjection is ambiguous from the start" (Barrett, 2011, p. 95), and insinuates, for the subject, a process that consists both of self-disruption and self-constitution. For Kristeva (1982), since "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, [and] I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself,*" I am turned literally "inside out, guts

sprawling" (p. 3). For Ahmed (2005), "It is not that what is abject is what has got inside

from the outside; the abject turns us inside out as well as the outside in" (p. 102).

Abjection thus signals a severe confusion of boundaries, and unlike the Freudian

repressed, it does not disappear from consciousness only to return later, but remains as a

constant challenge to the fragile borders of self: "from its place of banishment, the abject

does not cease challenging its master" (Kristeva, p. 2). Indeed, since the abject also "calls

into question the boundaries upon which [society and the subject] are constructed"

(Oliver, 1993, p. 56), abjection signals the depths of a narcissistic crisis that, alarmingly,

was always already there to begin with.

As Coats (2004) points out, though Kristeva never explicitly links her

conceptualizations of adolescence and abjection, they are "structurally and logically

compatible for several reasons" (p. 142). In the first place, as abjection signifies an

ambiguous and troubling foment—whether cultural, political, physical, or psychical—it

is easy to see how the energies associated with adolescence might be regarded as

terrifyingly abject, and thus disavowed and expelled by representatives of 'civilized,'

adult society. "Trying to become adult without becoming adulterated" (p. 142),

adolescents invariably question the validity and universality of the cultural scripts of the

adult-centered symbolic order. For Jenkins (2011), as the symbolic remains forever

inhabited by the abject's ghostly presence, the abject insinuates itself doubly: "Both as

energy contrary to dominant values and as evidence that a fixed, exclusionary construct

of order cannot be maintained" (p. 69). From this view, the "borderland figure" (Wilkie-

Stibbs, 2006) of the adolescent-abject serves as a threatening reminder that the adult

world is not complete in itself, nor can it imagine itself as any more fully developed than

that of the adolescent. Such a reminder also emphasizes the fact that, although they may exclude themselves as much as they may themselves be excluded, adolescents are of this world, and even though they may be construed as different, this 'difference' is inevitably shared by all. Therefore, where the abject insinuates itself, the boundaries of subject and object fail, as do the margins protecting the privileges of intergenerational exclusionary identity.

While this sustained discussion on the movements of identity and subjectivity has here been taken up in the contexts of reading, teaching, and adolescing, I will now turn to the field of criticism surrounding the study of young adult literature, in which, unsurprisingly, questions of representation and identity are paramount.

Misrecognition and Representation in Children's and Young Adult Literature

The field of young adult literature is often construed as contested terrain: *not quite* literature in-and-of-itself, yet *not quite* children's literature either. In fact, young adult literature shares many of the liminal qualities often assumed about, and attributed to, adolescence. As James (2009) describes: "the terms 'adolescent' and 'young adult fiction' are themselves open to interpretation given that both can be seen as social constructs" (p. 5). While young adult and children's literature do possess certain similarities—the most glaring of which is that, while "the intended audience of the texts are defined by their presumed inability to produce such books … for themselves" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 5), the majority of purchasers and authors of such books are adults—it also remains true that, as Waller (2010a) notes, since "adolescence presents a whole new set of meanings that cannot be opposed in simple terms to either the child or the adult … a child at six does not represent the same set of meanings as a teenager" (p.

282). While this claim can also be extended to ludicrous lengths—since a forty-eight year-old's "set of meanings" might arguably differ from a forty-one year-old's, so might a six year-old's differ from an eight year-old's, and mine from yours and yours, etc.—at the very least, the cultural expectations and physiological changes that an adolescent faces are markedly (though certainly not irreducibly) different from those of a child or an adult. However, though adolescents (along with their animal and mutant equivalents) are the invariable protagonists of all young adult literature, there are a number of ways in which, because of their similarly positioned conceptual locations, questions that are raised regarding the figure of the child in children's literature remain important when considering the figure of the fictional adolescent.

As a 'type' or 'category' of literature (and as an inter/trans-genred discipline, I am here purposely avoiding the term 'genre'), I appreciate Stephens' (2007) broad delineation of the field: "The label 'Young Adult' refers to a story that tackles the difficult, and oftentimes adult, issues that arise during an adolescent's journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice that holds the same potential for literary value as its 'Grownup' peers" (pp. 40-41). Invariably, questions and constructions of identity are here understood as the central theme of young adult literature (Yearwood, 2002). The missing fragment of Stephens' above description, however, is the often-unrecognized position that is occupied by the adult; a position that, were it to fall absent, would signify the fact that the adolescent in young adult literature, like the child in children's literature, is predominantly "an empty category … filled up with anxieties, desires, [and] hopes" (Owen, 2010, p. 256). Significantly, this position need not necessarily be inhabited by an actual adult in the narrative itself, but instead by the

indications of a "hidden adult" (Nodelman, 2008) implied by the author, who "keep[s] present but leave[s] unsaid … a variety of forms of knowledge—sexual, cultural, historical—theoretically only available to and only understandable by adults" (p. 206). The majority of young adult literature therefore revolves around questions of knowledge and control, and often refers to the overall relational context between adolescent and adult, both inside and outside the text.

Similar to Christensen's (2003) argument that the variable nature of the "sign of the child" (p. 237) in children's literature—and its multiple appropriations by adult characters, writers and researchers—ought to remind us of "the difference between representations of childhood/adulthood and actual childhoods" (p. 238), it is important that theorists of young adult literature think about the uses that are made of 'the sign of the adolescent,' and the nature of the relationship that such a sign possesses to adolescence as a lived reality. As Nodelman (2007) contends, children and adolescents, "alive and embodied in their multifaceted individual ways," cannot help, through their undeniable and (in many ways) indefinable realities, to "interrupt the narcissism of our work" (p. 10)—that of educational, cultural and literary theorists. Moreover, as Richards (2008) points out, since the figure of the fictional adolescent is typically presumed as adrift, and in need of being rescued and guided to safety by those occupying the "settled and stable" (p. 15) locus of adulthood, it is essential to pose the question of whose interests their narratives serve, and to look at the ways in which the selection, provision and circulation of fictional adolescence works to establish relations of dependence between a variety of adult figures (including authors, teachers, librarians, educational researchers, parents, publishers, distributors, etc.) and adolescent readers. As Rose (1992)

argues in relation to children's fiction, we should therefore inquire into how such texts function, at the (quite possibly unconscious) behest of the adult, as "a front … for what is most unsettling and uncertain about the relationship between adult and child" (p. xii), or as is often the case in young adult literature, "between the individual adolescent and the institutions that shape her or him" (Trites, 2000, p. 23).

It is here worth discussing the main argument in Rose's (1992) seminal work, *The Case of Pater Pan: Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, as it has proved formative, and formatively divisive and controversial, in the fields of children's and young adult literature: "lauded by some, castigated by others, and misunderstood by many" (Rudd & Pavlik, 2010, p. 224). Setting out to "trace the fantasy which lies behind the concept of children's fiction" (Rose, p. 1), Rose looks to the cultural and historical reception of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, as a particularly troubling and illuminating illustration of the relationship between children's literature, childhood and adulthood. In this text, Rose argues that the figure of the child functions as a discrete ideological container in an unbalanced system of intergenerational cultural meaning; in the negotiation of such meaning, much young adult and children's fiction uses images and imaginings "of real children to create the appearance of reality" (Lefebvre, 2007, p. 88). While it is not necessarily a problem that ideology and fantasy (both of which are necessary and inevitable in relations of cultural production) shape what we take as reality, when such dominant constructions operate *as* reality and truth—what for Newland (2009) is the recreation of a "pseudo reality" (p. 19)—they may become dangerously "imposed on others," and regarded unquestionably "as claims of knowledge" (Owen, 2010, p. 269).

When our ideas about others blind us to the sometimes-contradictory realities of others' lives, our ideas themselves therefore need to be questioned as inherently problematic.

The central claim of Rose's (1992) work is that "children's fiction is impossible" (p. 1), which is (obviously) not to say that it cannot be written, but that the child of children's fiction, who is typically presented as innocent and asexual, "is a construct … allowing adults to disavow their own lack of completeness" (Rudd, 2010, p. 290). Consequently, Rose argues—through a psychoanalytic lens—that "other than the one which the category itself sets in place" (Rose, p. 10), it is impossible for there to be an actual 'child' who exists behind the category of 'children's literature.' Despite the fact that adults are "inevitable and inextricably implicated in both the production and reception of texts for young people" (Flynn, 2010, p. 97), the ambiguity of 'children's literature' "is striking for the way in which it leaves the adult completely out of the picture" (Rose, p. 12). As Jones (2006) asks: "Is it literature written *by* children or literature written *for* children?" (p. 304, my emphasis). Since the apostrophe signals possession, the relation of producer and consumer is far from straightforward; just as 'young adult literature' is at times referred to as 'literature for young adults,' there is a strange disconnect in this notion of literature, whether construed as possession or gift.

For Rose (1992), the category of 'children's literature' therefore acts as "a decoy or a foil" (p. 137) for the fact that, while children are secured and framed at the center of particular narratives, such narratives are predominantly concerned with the question of what it is that "the adult desires … in the very act of constructing the child as the object of its speech" (p. 2), where desire "refer[s] to a form of investment … which fixes the child and then holds it in place" (p. 4). Therefore, what is impossible in children's fiction

is actually the relationship between child and adult. While the consequences of Rose's argument—that the implied readers of books written for children are always projections of fantasies constructed by adult desires—may be threatening to the sensibilities of many, Nodelman (2008) wittily suggests: "Rose might well be right simply because so many people want her to be wrong" (p. 162). Since the polymorphously perverse child of Freudian discourse "looks remarkably, threateningly precocious: sexual and aggressive" (Stockton, 2009, p. 27), it is no surprise that many adults may be quick to deny the idea that one of the reasons why they persist in imagining children idealistically—through a veil of purity and asexuality—is to guarantee the stability of their own measures of maturity and rationality. In this view, if adults succeed in persuading children that they are actually as innocent as those mythical figures they encounter in text, then adults themselves can continue to repress disturbing aspects of their own disavowed sexualities.

While Rose (1992) contends that the central dynamic of children's literature is one of ideological, generational and psychic colonization, Waller (2010a) poses the question of whether "this power exchange [must] always signal a problematic moment" (p. 279). Or, in other words, she inquires whether there are ways in which the "impossibility" of children's fiction can render new relations possible. For Owen (2010), while this question may appear strange, it is not foreign to queer theory, which is explicitly "concerned with those lives that do not follow the normative developmental sequence, those lives that have undertaken a different process of cohering and ordering the self" (p. 259). Since impossibility is here framed as "a condition of existence" (p. 258), it therefore becomes conceivable to imagine impossibility as a space of reinvention and pleasure, rather than emptiness and despair: "ways of growing that are not growing

up" (Stockton, 2009, p. 11), but instead of polymorphous, experimental and 'sideways growth.'

Though of course, the typical impediments to acknowledging such 'sideways growth' in young adult fiction are those of power and ideology; "adolescent fiction," Lefebvre (2007) strongly contends, "is about relationships of authority" (p. 83). While Trites (1998, 2000) argues that questions of power and repression are necessarily linked to discursive structures, she also emphasizes the ways in which young adult literature simultaneously empowers and represses adolescents. Through inserting themselves in the symbolic patterns of social relation, figures of fictional adolescence often discover the ways in which power operates both within and upon the subject: "teenagers are repressed as well as liberated by their own power and by the power of the social forces that surround them in these books" (2000, p. 7). In Lacanian terms, Trites describes how in order to secure their maturity, adolescents in young adult literature must murder—in true Oedipal/symbolic fashion—"the parent who represses their power," and whether or not such a parental figure is an actual, a substitute, or an imaginary construction, such a figure must be rebelled against "so that [the adolescent] can fully enter into the Symbolic Order" (p. 83). This initial act of rebellion, however, must eventually be compromised in the face of social reality, and it is through this concession that, Trites argues, such literature functions didactically: as "an Ideological State Apparatus, an institution that participates in the social construction of the adolescent as someone who must be repressed for the greater good" (p. 83). For McCallum (1999), such ideological underpinnings are often inferred in the interaction between a text's implied and actual readership. While the position of the implied reader describes "a subject position

inscribed in and by the discourse of a text as a specific conceptual and ideological

position" (p. 9), and may certainly influence the views that actual readers adopt, they do

not determine such views in any kind of absolute way. Once again, this is a description

that acknowledges the flexible and contradictory nature of power and authority in young

adult literature.

Such contradictions are nowhere more apparent than in representations of gender

and sexual identity, a fact that compels Altman (1995) to consider the ways in which

desire and punishment in young adult literature are often metonymically linked to

displays of inequitable gender stereotypes. In many books for young readers, the sexual

desires of adolescents are controlled through a discursive emphasis on punishment and

repression, which tends to be described as the direct consequences of promiscuous (or

otherwise outlawed) sexual behaviour (Trites, 1998). As James (2009) notes, gender and

sexuality are often conflated with representations and symbols of death, which in many

cases operate as a form of warning and punishment; such literary cautions can be seen in

such examples as "the trope of woman/death; the eroticizing and sexualizing of death;

and the ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed in association with

these representations" (p. 4).

In relation to young adult literature, psychoanalytic theory offers a suitable lens

through which to approach the at-times disturbing qualities of the human psyche. In

positing the existence of admittedly disquieting features of the human condition—

including the death drive, the repetition compulsion, the abject, the unconscious, the

semiotic, the uncanny, mourning, melancholia, narcissism, trauma, ambivalence, desire,

repression, negation, problematic attachments, faulty memories, projection and

introjection, transference, emotional instability, and the failures and limits of language—the use of psychoanalytic discourse opens up lines of questioning that might otherwise remain unexamined. For example, Hoyme (1988) notes that within the inner life of parents in children's and young adult literature, there is often an unexplored ambivalence—an "abandoning impulse"—that reveals itself in feelings of aggression, disgust, resentment and indifference. For Hoyme, what this impulse implies is the troubling fact that "all parents sometimes experience the wish to be free from the burdens and constraints of childcare," which leads them to "resent the child whose living presence frustrates that wish" (p. 33). Though such a premise is clearly disturbing, Hoyme argues that parental ambivalence is nevertheless widespread, and that the fact that we generally remain ignorant of its existence implies that, "as a tribe, we do not want to know about it" (p. 45); we are therefore unconsciously willing to repress the existence of such difficult knowledge.

While the "case for complementarity" (Kidd, 2004) may be more obvious between children's literature and psychoanalysis—especially given their emergence in the same historical era, and the fact that Freud "fashioned psychoanalysis not only as a science, but also as a form of literature with children as its principal characters" (p. 127)—the texts of young adult literature can also be considered "as manifestations of psychoanalytic structures," while psychoanalysis, in turn, can offer insights into the ways in which young adults may potentially be interpellated and "constructed by the texts they encounter" (Coats, 2004, p. 10). Since, as Coats describes, "one of the key features of young-adult fiction is its currency, its absolute synchronicity with the concerns of the audience to whom it is marketed" (p. 138), such novels offer a unique glimpse into

generationally specific 'structures of feeling,' which, in Williams' (2009) assessment, offer a kind of bridge between symbolization and the irrecoverable (or that which cannot be symbolized). Such 'structures of feeling'—a deliberately contradictory concept—are things with which we unconsciously identify, because we can feel their immaterial and affective grammar, yet as they are "woven into common sense" (Zembylas, 2002, p. 194), we cannot name them as that which we know because we cannot step outside of their thrall, a type of "paradox having to do with both the ineffability of feeling, and its materiality" (Robertson, 1994, p. 20).

Such qualities of ineffability, which necessarily play with the movements of a reader's memory, allow for young adult literature—and literature in general—to approach the uncanny as a possible symptom of reading. As numerous authors note (Gooding, 2008; Robertson, 2001; Trites, 2001; Waller, 2010b), children's and young adult literature often contain some sense of doubling and a strange return, which can be understood both as an indication of Freud's repetition compulsion—"the need to cast off and then retrieve objects of desire or fear" (Waller, p. 305)—and of the uncanny, which describes a strangeness that is nonetheless known, intimate, and familiar. For Freud (1919/2003), the uncanny, which in its original German—*Das Unheimliche*—translates literally as 'the unhomely,' "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (p. 123), and "goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (p. 124). It relates to the home as a place of origin and deep familiarity, though, through its negative prefix, -un, also indicates the movements and returns of psychical repression; the unknowable nature of an alien force. The uncanny, in the way that it figures a return of the repressed, is most upsetting when encountered as a kind of

"unintended repetition" (p. 144) of a past event (or its emotional content), where that which is re-encountered, in necessarily distorted form, makes one frightened, regardless of whether the original encounter was frightening or not. Though the uncanny moment is always an encounter with memory, since its content remains disguised, as in a dream, its relation to the original experience that forms the memory is not always recognizable as such. It is this sense of mis-recognition that gives the uncanny its eerie feeling; it wanders as an unknown memory, a lost and forgotten object, an abandoned part of one's self that continually (failingly and hopelessly) seeks its way home. For readers of young adult literature, the experience of encountering fictional narratives of adolescent life will often prompt feelings of eerie recognition; uncanny encounters with memory whose content remains disguised and unidentifiable, insinuating an inevitable and haunting division of the threatened human subject.

<p style="text-align:center">…</p>

In this literature review, I have mobilized a variety of intersecting conceptual resources, with the overall aim of elucidating the multiple dynamics at work in the study of reading, teacher identity and young adult literature, as interrelated psychic and cultural phenomena. In the following chapter I provide brief descriptions of the participants in this study, and I explore the various methodological approaches I assumed, the methods I used in my processes of data collection and data analysis, and the categories that I adopt in framing the subsequent presentation of my research findings.

Chapter III: Methods and Methodology

Theorizing Methodologies

This study examines the use of book club pedagogies in the context of learning to teach, and the manner in which young adult literature encourages a productive engagement with preservice teachers' desires, fantasies and anxieties. Along with O'Loughlin (2009), I agree that teachers "need to be experts in coming to know, rather than containers and dispensers of received knowledge" (p. 36). For teachers, however, the act of dwelling in such an indeterminate stance—where knowledge and culture are construed as "activity, unfinished and incomplete" (Giroux, 1994, p. 303)—involves a challenging engagement with ignorance, which places the teacher at odds with the prevailing cultural myths that demand that teachers have all the right answers all of the time (Britzman, 2003), and that, in the language of the Lacanian formulation, they be the "subject supposed to know." As Silin (1995) notes, engagements with ignorance that run counter to this myth accept the idea of knowledge as "a structural dynamic" rather than a discrete and recognizable entity, as ignorance itself is understood as activity rather than a place of emptiness. For the present study, since the effects of reading and reception "cannot be assumed a priori" (Dimitriadis, 2009, p. 65), the textual interpretations pursued in sites of collective response (such as the reading groups in this study) should be seen as the enactment of a productive ignorance, through which we can potentially question the scripted identities—those of human development, occupation, culture, etc.— we all too often take for granted.

As we take up the issue of ignorance in relation to the interminable and fractured nature of readers' responses, we also invariably involve the place "where learning breaks

down" (Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 119), and here, it is important to recognize that to investigate learning at its most flawed and vulnerable (which is another way of saying at its most receptive to difference and indecision), "might also allow for different kinds of insight into learning itself" (p. 119). As with the reading groups in this study, sites of shared engagement with literary works also function to engender what Alsup (2006) refers to—in relation to teacher education—as "borderland discourse." As previously mentioned, this is discourse "in which there is evidence of integration or negotiation of [the] personal and [the] professional … at the borders of various subjectivities or senses of self" (p. xiii-xiv). Through experiences of enhanced affect (Noddings, 1996), the enactment of such discourse effectively problematizes our presumed notions of identity formation, as well as the historically dominant traditions in teacher education, many of which unfortunately promote a type of "anticipatory deskilling" (Ginsburg, 1986, 1988). As Miller (1990) describes them, such traditions of professional deskilling include "conceptions of curriculum as product, of research as prediction and prescription, of teaching and learning as a series of measurable skills" (p. 2). This current study, with its methodological commitments to the indeterminate nature of educational and reading experience, and its knowledge of the unconscious motivations at work in all our words and actions, therefore assumes none of the above determinations of stability and linearity.

This dissertation is concerned with the necessarily unstable movements of desire in reading experience, and though such movements cannot be captured in full, since "language is the elaboration of desire" (Robertson, 2001, p. 199), I am interested in theorizing the means through which desire finds expression in language and how, when readers are in the company of other readers, its unconscious force is elaborated.

Importantly, and in relation to desire's capacious elaborations, this study adopts a methodological estimation of reading practice as "historically variable and physically conditioned" (Littau, 2006, p. 2). While reading is often constructed as an intellectual affair of logical abstraction and ideational manifestation, it is also a sensuous and passionate encounter, one in which the corporeal self is always caught up (McWilliam, 1997): "the book has a body … but so does the reader" (Littau, p. 2). As Littau argues, aside from certain feminist and phenomenological/existential approaches, the affective nature of reading experience has generally been regarded by the history of theories of reading as dangerous and reckless, despite the fact that "the history of the reader as a sensuous figure is much longer that the conception of the reader as solely a sense-maker" (p. 157). One example of such historically sensuous traditions is that of reading aloud, which actually has a much longer history than the form of reading we generally encounter today, which can best be characterized by the typically dispassionate practice of reading "silently, with our eyes only" (p. 2).

It is here worth taking a pause to explain the terms of methods and methodology as I am applying them in the context of this study. 'Methodology' refers to the philosophies, values, and political commitments that a researcher brings to (and creates in) the field, and "draws attention to the fact that the tools and approaches (methods) that we use to make sense of reality are not mere neutral techniques" (Saukko, 2003, p. 25), but are epistemologically embedded within particular ideological positions and priorities, which in turn directly or indirectly affect the very reality under consideration. Broadly speaking, this study is informed by qualitative and interpretivist approaches to knowledge and knowledge production, which "presuppose meaning is constructed via the interaction

between humans or between humans and objects" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 17).
According to this research paradigm, meaning itself is created through various
interpretive processes (of which reading is one) and thus does not—and cannot—exist
independently of the inter- and intrapersonal human relations through which such
processes occur. "Interpretivists," as Tillman-Healy (2003) relates, "take reality to be
both pluralistic and constructed in language and interaction" (p. 732). The category of
'methods' refers to those ways of gathering information through various techniques,
procedures, and practices, which researchers use to deliver responses to the actual
research question. Since not all research methods are compatible with the interpretivist
tradition, the choice of which methods to apply is therefore linked to the kind of research
that is being pursued. For Cheek (2005), each method and technique, "as a set of material
interpretive practices, creates its own subject matter" (p. 649). As Segall notes, "Any
study is always more than the sum of its methods" (p. 28), and though the concepts of
method and methodology certainly differ, since they ought to remain congruent and in
consistent dialogue, we can look at neither in isolation from the other. A researcher's
methodology must therefore be shot through their entire research project.

  This process of thinking through research, however, is often far from linear, and
along with Pryke, Rose, and Whatmore (2003), I think of research as a productive and
circular endeavour, one that involves "reflecting, mulling over, [and] speculating," in a
"continual honing of thinking crafts to be employed and shaped further through research"
(p. 4). Bearing in mind Gallop's (1984) suggestion that "interpretation is always the
exercise of power" (p. 305), and Crang's (2003) recognition of the fact that the colonial
history of interpretation and research "has often been a 'violent' process" (p. 141), I

strive to avoid such acts of interpretive violence through the use of a recursive and reflective methodology. Since methodology is the bridge that links my epistemological, ontological, and philosophical positions to my methods of research, "it is important to remember [that I will continue to travel] this bridge throughout the research process" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 6).

The methodology that I take up in this research is therefore informed by: 1) The field of cultural studies, with "its emphasis on studying the production, reception, and use of varied texts, and how they are used to define social relations [and] values" (Giroux, 1994, p. 301); 2) theories of psychoanalysis, which are distinguished most importantly through their postulation of the unconscious and its emotional effects, and whose implications for psychical life I turn to myself in reflexive fashion, as well as towards my participants; and 3) theories that look to reading and educational experience as unstable sites of multiple and dialogic co-construction (between reader and reader, teacher and student, reader and self, reader and textual form, etc.).

Research Questions

In this study, which investigates the psychic and cultural uses of young adult literature, I use the following research questions as a kind of hermeneutics: as entry devices and as methods for interpretation. Though these questions have already been stated in the introduction, before I move into a discussion of my particular methods of data collection, it is important that they here be reiterated:

1) With regards to a teacher's emergent occupational identity, how does the

practice of talking about reading in a social environment enable preservice

teachers to engage with the challenges of learning to teach?

2) For preservice teachers, how does young adult literature allow them to theorize

the relation between adolescence and adulthood? What kinds of identifications do

they make with the adolescent, and adult, characters?

3) How does young adult literature allow readers to theorize their past in relation

to their projected futures?

As the above questions illustrate, reading is here understood as an activity that

acknowledges multiple psychical passages: through generations, occupational

identifications, and past, present and projected desires. Though I certainly admit to the

fact that every reading is always "bound up with inwardness" (Birkerts, 2007, p. 4), my

use of book club pedagogies is also a gesture towards a style of reading that invites the

physical world of the social as a potentially and psychically "foundation-shaking event"

(p. 15). As I see it, the act of engaging socially with a text that has previously been read

individually is necessarily a form of re-reading, which always involves a risk to the

stability of the ego and its multiple defensive strategies. For Birkerts, re-reading "forces

us to let go of the idea of the text as static, or stable, in its meanings, and of ourselves as

simple translators of written signs into contents" (p. 16), a fact which remains true both

for the individual who reads again on their own, as for the individual who re-encounters a

text in the company of others. If, "in going back to a book we can't help reconnecting

with our prior subjectivities," a return that ensures that as we re-read, "we are not just

seeing the text in front of our eyes" (p. 16), there is an uncanny sense that, in encountering the responses of other people, we are likewise encountering ourselves— both those instances of ourselves that we have already met (and we consciously think we know), and those instances not consciously elaborated. This is undoubtedly a fearful proposition; to see some fraction of oneself in another is both to admit to our knowledge of self as partial and delayed, as it is also to admit to our knowledge of self as deeply implicated in the texts we read (and how and when we read them). As we read, we thus wander "in all directions" (p. 3), and through "at least two times, two places, and two consciousnesses" (Scholes, 1989, p. 7). In reading with others we invariably mess with ourselves; if the completion of a narrative's interpretation is recognized as impossible, interminable and forever delayed, coming to interpret in the context of others requires that we "pervert time" (Brooks, 1982, p. 299) in social acts of "clock-teasing" (Brooks, 1987, p. 340). The time of the book is therefore always incomplete; as the first page signals a continuation, the last is but a mere pause, a suspension that, as with the act of talking, can feel like a "sexy delay" (Stockton, 2009, p. 63).

Since reading is here understood as an activity that performs inchoate dramas involving the reader's unconscious and conscious memories, which can themselves "never really be fixed" (Sumara & Davis, 1998, p. 78), the relation of temporality and reading necessarily involves the mutable movements of memory, which are themselves more often feelings of "emotional veracity" (Carpenter, 2003, p. 6) than measures of reason and logical sense. Following from Sumara (1997), this drama involves a lesson from the field of hermeneutics: "In order for something new to be formed, there must be a recreation of prior experience" (p. 239). For Silin (1995), this interplay of past, present

and projected selves is best encapsulated through the Kierkegaardian method of understanding backwards while living forwards; that "it is our interest in the not-yet that frames our re-searches into the past" (p. 46). If understood as a form of "re-searching," reading attributes to the present the quality of an optimal scene for interrogating the self (which nonetheless involves the timeless unconscious); rather than a space of stasis and indecision, the present of reading is actually an existential moment of choice and vision, of finding and creating.

In what follows, I will introduce the BEd students whose literary encounters form the basis for this study's findings. I will then describe the particular methods of data collection and analysis I employed in this study, which explores the cultural and psychic uses of young adult literature.

Research Participants

To begin this research project, I first had to seek permission from the Research Ethics Board at McGill University. Within my application for ethics approval, I outlined the purposes and expected values and benefits of my research, how I anticipated disseminating my results, the various strategies I planned to undertake in recruiting participants, the oral scripts I would employ in the recruitment process, the research methods I planned to use, the potential harms and risks associated with my project (of which there were none), and the ways in which I would protect the privacy and confidentiality of my participants. I received official ethics approval for the period of September 2011 to September 2012 (see Appendices A and B for the participant consent form and official ethics approval).

As I began the process of recruiting participants in the Bachelor of Education program at McGill University, I was working as a teaching assistant for two courses where I hoped to locate a number of readers who might be keen to participate in the study: EDES-366, *Literature for Young Adults*, and EDEE-325, *Children's Literature*. As I attended these courses regularly in my capacity as teaching assistant, I had established a good rapport with the students, and I hoped to be able to use this familiarity to my advantage. In short, I wanted to ensure for these readers that they would also get something out of the research process, and that the process itself would be enjoyable.

While I certainly felt a little bit nervous in presenting myself as a 'Researcher,' I hoped to use such disquiet as a means of personally prompting a strategy of authentic reflexivity towards my own, particular position in the research process, which might "directly and bravely [address] the researcher's indecisions, tensions, and fantasies toward the researched" (Gemignani, 2011, p. 702): asking myself repeatedly, Why might you feel anxious? What do these tensions represent? How do you see yourself in others? What might these attachments mean? These moments of anxiety encouraged me to inaugurate my first method of data collection, *The Researcher's Journal*. Though I will describe this document in detail in the next section, it here arose from "the need to recognize that researchers are entangled in fantasies of their own" (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram & Tincknell, 2004, p. 56). In this introductory presentation, I stressed the fact that all of the texts would be provided to the participants free of charge.

In my preliminary projections on how this study might eventually unfold, I envisioned one reading group of five to six readers. Though I had planned to use Crang and Cook's (2007) suggestion to over-recruit by twenty percent, to "allow a margin for

non-attendance" (p. 94), I received a much higher level of interest than I initially

anticipated: between the two classes, there were thirty students who expressed a desire to

be part of the study. Though the night before these talks I nursed the worry that perhaps

nobody would be interested, I found myself in the fortunate (if also untenable) position of

having *too many* participants. I therefore decided to establish two groups of readers, and I

sent out emails to all those students who expressed an interest, thanking them for their

time, and asking them to provide me with tentative schedules of availability. Of the thirty

students who were initially interested, only eighteen got back to me, and since I still had

too many readers to work with, I didn't see the need to follow up with those who didn't

respond. Of these eighteen, ten followed through until the project's completion. One

student who wasn't in either class, but whose friend was part of the study, contacted me

via email and asked whether he could join one of the groups. I was more than happy to

oblige. In the end, I was able to work with eleven readers, whom I divided into two

reading groups. The sample of research participants I was working with can therefore be

described as a "convenience sample," which is characterized by a process in which

"researchers select a respondent who happens to be available and willing to participate in

the research project and whose general characteristics fit the research study's general

goals" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 55). As all of the readers were currently enrolled

in the Bachelor of Education program at McGill, and therefore hoped to become teachers,

they all fit the needs of my study. In what follows, I provide a short description for each

of my participants, protecting their identities through the use of pseudonyms.

Samantha: Though Samantha decided to participate in this study while enrolled in *Children's Literature*, I actually first met her when she was a student in *Literature for Young Adults*, which I taught as a part-time instructor in 2010. Born and raised in a small town in Montreal's North Shore, at the time of this study Samantha was 23 years old, and a third year student in the Elementary Education program. However, despite being educated as an elementary teacher, Samantha thought there was a good possibility she might eventually teach at the high school level. Before entering the Faculty of Education at McGill, Samantha took classes for one year in the Child Studies program at Concordia University. Samantha was trilingual, speaking English, French, and Italian, and was raised Catholic, attending an Italian language school from a young age. Samantha's early experiences of reading included a family culture of storytelling, many instances of which involved her father, who was born in Italy, telling stories and proverbs in Italian. Though she was unenthusiastic about reading in high school, Samantha later developed a strong interest in philosophy. Her previous teaching experiences included working as a substitute teacher at a private school, and as a private one-on-one tutor.

Rhiannon: Rhiannon had been friends with Samantha since grade three, and was also raised in the North Shore. Describing this friendship, Rhiannon said: "We've done all our schooling together. We have totally different approaches. We think differently; we compromise; we argue about things. It's really, it's good." Like Samantha, Rhiannon transferred to the Elementary Education program from Child Studies at Concordia, and though she signed up for this study while taking *Children's Literature*, she was also a student I first met while teaching *Literature for Young Adults*. Though Rhiannon was raised by her mother (who she described an avid reader), and her early experiences of

reading were portrayed as voracious, she described to me how, through most of her schooling, she had no interest in reading whatsoever, a distaste that she traced back to a particularly humiliating educational experience: "It was terrible, and uh, when you'd read out loud, she'd laugh at you if you'd mispronounce a word, and basically since grade two, I made sure I never read a book again." Rhiannon trained competitively as a figure skater from the ages of 5 to 15, and also used to work as a skating instructor.

Sasha: When she expressed interest in participating in this study, Sasha, who was 22 years old, was enrolled in both classes where I worked as a TA. She was in the fifth and final year of the Elementary Education program, and her previous educational experiences included working at a summer camp for children with special needs, and volunteering as a teacher in Tanzania. Originally from Toronto, Sasha was raised in what she described as a "traditional" Jewish family, and though she wanted to move back to Toronto, she was not exactly sure what level she wanted to teach, and in fact, she even thought she might pursue a degree in Law. While Sasha's mom was an elementary teacher in an Orthodox Jewish school, both her sister and her dad were lawyers. Sasha's earliest memories of reading were those of being read to in bed, though she admitted that in both elementary and high school, she developed a "bad association" with reading, and it was only since she'd been in university that she'd been able to say to herself, "Okay, I need to sit down and read a book for pleasure." When I met with Sasha, she had already completed two of her longer placements as a student teacher, one at a school for deaf and disabled students, and one where all her students were coded with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). Sasha was a competitive hip-hop dancer, and often considered the fact

that children are kinesthetic learners. As she put it: "I just like doing anything where you're moving."

Megan: Originally from Ottawa, Megan grew up in a Presbyterian family, considered herself "spiritual," and sang in church choir every Sunday. She had sung her whole life, and used to participate in classical competitions. Megan, who was 20, was described by her family as "wise," and an "old soul," and she in turn described them as being extremely supportive; as she said of her parents: "They're probably my biggest fans." Though officially in the third year of the Elementary Education program, as she spent two years in Concordia's Early Childhood Program, it was Megan's first official year at McGill. While at Concordia, Megan did two placements at the McGill daycare. She had also worked as a camp counselor every summer since she was 16. As a young child, and even on a recent road trip, Megan's mother read regularly to both Megan and her two siblings, and she described her mother as "an avid reader." "She's crazy," she went on to say, "The library has an entire shelf for her." Megan enjoyed creative writing, and participated in Slam Poetry events. She volunteered for Education Beyond Borders, and was active in student government as a member of EdUS (Education Undergraduate Society).

Mark: As previously mentioned, Mark was not registered for either of the classes in which I worked as a TA, but he was a good friend of Megan's, and after hearing her talk about the books we'd be reading, he was excited to take part in the study. Mark, who was 22, was in the fifth and final year of the Secondary Education program, and had teachables in English and History. While he wanted to teach students in the upper grades of high school, Mark was also interested in working overseas, a desire that stemmed from

his own experiences studying in a semester-abroad program, "learning history on location." Since his mom had a major in English Literature, reading was highly valued in Mark's family. Originally from Toronto, Mark was remarkably insightful about his upbringing; "I was extremely lucky," he related, "I had parents that encouraged me to do everything. I played dozens of sports. I did the music thing. My parents were big travellers … I'm very aware of how privileged my childhood was." As a high school student, Mark was heavily involved in extracurricular activities, both in and out of school: he played music and sports, created a film blog, wrote articles for a local paper, and in the winter break, he still went back to coach the hockey team at his old high school. This inclination to spend time helping students was also something that Mark carried into his placements as a student teacher, where he volunteered as a coach and created a glee club. Though he found much of the Faculty of Education's coursework redundant, Mark placed a huge value on his field experiences as a student teacher. Mark had worked for a summer camp since the age of 15, first as a counselor, then as director, then managing the operations of the entire camp (which had 200 campers between the ages of 7 and 16). While at McGill, Mark showed his solidarity with a variety of political causes: he supported the MUNACA (McGill University Non-Academic Certified Association) strike, took part in a number of student protests against rising tuition costs, and spoke as the undergraduate representative at a faculty-wide teach-in.

Amanda: Amanda, who was 20 years old, came from the South Shore of Montreal, and was raised in a bilingual family. She was a student in Elementary Education, and her "dream job" was to work as a teacher for the *Cirque de Soleil*, a job that might afford both opportunities for travel and an immersion in the arts. Amanda described her

adolescent self as "shy" and "reserved": "I wasn't a rebellious teenager. I followed the mainstream. I handed my homework in on time. I did everything right." Amanda's early educational experiences revolved around her training in classical ballet, which she had been studying since the age of four. For the past three years she had been teaching ballet, and before that she spent seven years as an assistant teacher. Amanda completed her first placement as a student teacher in a kindergarten class in the same school she attended as a young child. Since she was dyslexic, it took Amanda a long time to become interested in reading, though she did remember that her mom tried to promote this interest through playing the *Harry Potter* books on tape. Though reading used to feel as a chore, "Now," as Amanda described, "it's more of a luxury. I like to read as for fun on the side."

Bridget: Bridget was 18 years old, and from a small town about an hour outside of Toronto. As she was the youngest of the preservice teachers involved in this study, and enrolled in the Secondary Education program, it was no surprise that she worried about her age in relation to her future teaching: "I'm pretty young," she told me, "so I probably have the same perspective as a lot of students that are there, which kind of worries me, like I think that I'm almost too much like them." Bridget wanted to teach students with special needs, and had previously worked with autistic children and as a counselor at a special needs camp. She also used to volunteer, after school, in a grade one classroom. Though she was the first person in her family to go to university, Bridget's earliest memories of reading involved her mother "consistently" reading to her, a relationship that kindled an early love for literature. Though she described herself as "an occasional reader," Bridget was also quick to emphasize that, in relation to this study, "I really

wanted to do this so I would have to … immerse myself in a book. It's something that I really want to do."

Farrin: Farrin, who was Persian, moved to Canada from Iran twelve years ago, and grew up in Toronto. She was twenty years old, and though Muslim, described herself as more culturally active than religious. Farrin was in the Secondary Education program, and wanted to be a teacher from a young age. Her various educational experiences included teaching the piano to young children, volunteering as a teaching assistant in elementary and middle schools in Toronto, and while she was in high school, Farrin helped establish an afterschool tutoring program, which catered to the needs of 25 Persian students who were recent immigrants to Canada. Farrin had also worked in summer camps, was part of the Youth Advisory group at the Toronto Public Libraries, and volunteered at a school for children with special needs. As an adolescent, Farrin characterized her relation to school as one of comfort and "kind of a sanctuary." "School was my second home," she described, "and my mom sometimes said my first." Farrin was also quite passionate about theatre, and during the course of this research, I saw two productions where she played a major role, one as director and the other as stage manager. In terms of reading, Farrin said that she had always "been a bit book nuts," and when she was a young child, she "read anything and everything."

Calandra: Calandra, who was 29 years old and from Montreal, had a previous degree in English literature and was emphatically passionate about reading, in which she found a strong connection to identity formation: "I always understood myself best through texts." Before returning to university in the Elementary Education program, Calandra worked in the hotel industry for five years, and then became employed as the branch manager of

customer service at a TD bank. Calandra spoke Greek fluently, attended Greek language school, and was a practicing member of the Greek Orthodox Church. Though she described her adolescence as a "rollercoaster," her "best memories" were of reading, and she actually used to meet up with her friends in the public library after school, where they'd read texts by authors such as Joyce and Shakespeare. As she described this time, "Even though we had no idea what the heck we were reading, we still wanted to outdo each other, because we'd heard these were great intellectual classics." Though she didn't tell her teachers about this secret pastime of hers (when I asked her if she shared these readings, she said "Are you crazy?") Calandra admitted, "they suspected." She actually had one memory of a teacher saying to her: "I loved your paper. I thought it was brilliant. If you don't go to university … to become a writer, I will hunt you down and kill you." As a young child, Calandra's mom read to her every night, and every time she asked for a gift, it was invariably a book. "It was a thrill to get a book," she related to me, "It was amazing." Calandra had also worked previously as a private tutor.

Tegan: Tegan, who was 19, from Montreal, and fluently bilingual, was in her first year of the Secondary Education program, with a teachable in English. She hoped to teach at the upper levels of high school, and worked for a catering service and as a bartender at a hotel. Tegan was an artist (designing tattoos for her friends), a writer of poetry who loved photography and rugby. She also baked cheesecakes, was involved with Education Beyond Borders, and in the future, wanted to travel and volunteer overseas. Tegan loved teaching, and as a high school student she used to volunteer in her old elementary school. While in CEGEP, Tegan was involved in running various information sessions for the LGBTQ Safe Space. As a teacher, Tegan believed that literature could provide a positive

link to discussing issues of sexuality in the classroom, and as she put it, "Sexuality needs to be spoken about because these kids need to know." Tegan described herself as a voracious reader, with a particular interest in fantasy, and who "like[d] to get invested in the story." Tegan was no stranger to the idea of collaborative reading, and she described how she and a group of friends once printed out a story from a fan fiction website and read the entire narrative together.

Yasmin: Yasmin, who was 30 years old, transferred into the Elementary Education program after doing one year of Child Studies at Concordia. She moved to Canada in 2001 from Pakistan, where she had already completed a Bachelor's Degree in Home Economics. Yasmin was a practicing Muslim and spoke four languages: Urdu, English, Arabic and French. A self-professed "shopaholic," Yasmin had spent the past summer working in a daycare, but did not find the experience all that positive. Although by the end of the summer she began to like the job, she found the fact that she "had to change a lot of diapers" quite depressing. During her first placement as a student teacher, though Yasmin didn't experience any discrimination herself, she found it to be an "eye open[ing]" experience, since, as she put it, "I don't see people of my colour." Yasmin's father was in the Pakistani army, and as a young child, she attended a school reserved for children in military families. Yasmin often felt that other members of her direct family, who worked in the fields of engineering and commerce, gave her a hard time for wanting to be a teacher, mostly because of the salary. Though Yasmin's mother read fiction, she also found it to be "a waste of time," and while Yasmin was growing up, reading not directly associated with school or religion was actively discouraged. As she admitted to me, "I'm kind of a black sheep of the family," and back in Pakistan, "A lot of people

make fun of me, that I read novels … and they call it, oh, 'She must be in her home reading *novelty*.' Instead of 'novels,' they call it 'novelty.'" Yasmin was also often emotionally affected by the books she read; in describing the past few years of her reading experience, she said, "I cried a lot, 'cause I read *The Kite Runner*, and I literally thought that I'm going to have a heart attack."

Methods of Data Collection

Following Low (2011), this study paid attention to the fact that "processes of interpretive inquiry around human interaction and meaning-making need to be as dynamic as possible" (p. 4). It is in response to this call for a dynamic methodology that I employed the following methods of data collection:

1) The Researcher's Journal

2) Individual and Paired Interviews

3) Reading / Focus Groups

The Researcher's Journal. While conducting this study, I kept a journal (which could also be referred to as 'fieldnotes') that I used as a means to capture my own fleeting and often-tangential thoughts throughout the research process. While I do not quote from this journal directly, it nevertheless represents a heuristic of self-disclosure, through which I strived to maintain an important degree of reflexivity and imaginative speculation (and therefore, it could perhaps be better referred to as a form of inquiry rather than a method). Since I repeatedly asked my participants to reveal their thoughts, it was important to "hold myself to the same disclosure risks … that I expect[ed] them to take" (O'Loughlin, 2009, p. 228). Since "different forms can qualitatively change how we understand phenomena" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 230), I at times also described my

feelings in poetic and lyrical form, using such moments of artistic expression as a means to think differently, and sometimes unexpectedly, about the sites and subjects of my research. To "use my own life as a site for inquiry" (Chambers, 2004, p. 1) admittedly entails certain risks. However, researchers both bring *and* create their selves in the field (Reinharz, 1997) and it is imperative that certain spaces exist where the research lens is turned inwards, in recognition of the "unexpected yet powerful presences" (Gemignani, 2011, p. 701) of emotional reactions in the research process. And regardless of whether or not such inner movements are fully acknowledged or represented in the final product, while interpreting their data a researcher is also always involved in reading themselves, and performing, through the data, "a genealogy of the self through personal memory work" (Robertson, 1994, p. 61). As Acker and Feuerverger (2003) note, "The emotions evoked in the researcher are an important part of the research" (p. 50). As with reading, teaching, and learning to teach, research itself is therefore an emotional endeavour, and one in which the researcher may sometimes be unsure as to where they themselves stop, and where the research—a mutually accomplished story (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002)— begins.

Interviews. When preparing for the interview process, it is essential for the researcher to take stock of their emotional investments, and the ways such investments may unconsciously influence the research as a whole. As Thrift (2003) suggests, though research is undoubtedly a cognitive and organizational enterprise, it "is also about the act of imagination, about thinking the powers and limits of the bodies around you" (p. 106). For researchers in the field of education, as with teachers, the act of travelling back to spaces of schooling (even if such travel is through dialogue alone) may often awaken a

variety of unsettled questions, whose language has yet to be fully articulated. "Just

walking into a school," Britzman (2003) points out, "perhaps only smelling a whiff of

lunch from the school cafeteria can animate old unresolved conflicts … [and] return one

to old feelings as if they had never left" (p. 15). When conducting my interviews, there

was sometimes awakened in me some sense of a lingering and restless past.

       Throughout this study, I also took care to be attentive to the possibility of what

Robertson (1994) calls "'*the uncanny moment'* in research" (p. 55), where my own

history—as an undergraduate student and student-teacher in the Faculty of Education at

McGill University—might seem to in some way repeat itself through the responses of my

participants. Though such emergences are unavoidable, to be aware of the ways in which

I might see myself while hearing others, I could therefore also remain sensitive to "the

effect [that] doing research [has] on the *researcher*" (Acker & Feuerverger, 2003, p. 60).

       In this study, I conducted one preliminary interview with each participant, which

ranged in length from twenty-five minutes to two hours. Since, as Ezzy (2010) writes, a

good qualitative interview is more a "good romance" and "communion" than a site of

conquest and control, I entered these conversations with "an openness to, [and] a

dependence on" (p. 164), what the interviewees themselves would have to say. I also took

care to conduct the interviews in a relaxing and relatively neutral environment, where

both the interviewee and myself would hopefully be able to feel comfortable. Since my

office space in the Faculty of Education was shared with two other graduate students, and

lacked the lived-in qualities conducive to constructing a welcoming environment, I

thankfully was able to use my thesis supervisor's office. I also made sure to have a

variety of beverages and snacks on hand. I recorded these interviews using my IPhone,

and was thus able to seamlessly transfer the audio recordings to my computer when I returned home. I also made digital copies of these recordings, which I stored in a separate location for safekeeping.

Working within the framework of a qualitative methodology, these preliminary conversations can best be defined as semistructured, in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview, as described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), is "a particular kind of conversation between the researcher and the interviewee that requires active asking and listening" (p. 94). The in-depth interview is thus an active site, and a partnered process of meaning-making, where ideally, the degree of division between the two participants is minimal. Such interviews are also "issue oriented" (p. 95), which implies that the researcher focuses the interview around a select group of topics, poses questions, and then serves as an active listener. The interviewee should also be afforded multiple opportunities to pose their own questions.

Though I relied on the use of an interview guide (See Appendix C), which included a series of questions and potential areas for discussion, I also made sure to give my participants the time and space to respond in their own individual fashion, allowing the course of the conversation to at times be dictated by their interests, rather than solely my own. The point here was to give the interview a semistructured design, and to permit the conversation to flow as freely as possible, allowing for tangents and the potential emergence of unexpected topics, while also intentionally avoiding the practice of leading my participants to "preferred responses" (Segall, 2002, p. 29). I also used this guide as a checklist at the end of each interview, as a means of ensuring that the central subjects had all been covered.

In these interviews, I began by posing a series of non-threatening, demographically oriented questions, which Crang and Cook (2007) describe as "grand-tour" questions, which "ask the interviewee to outline the general characteristics of the place and/or social networks which she/he is involved in" (p. 69). Most importantly, the point of these questions is to establish a sense of initial rapport, allowing both the interviewer and interviewee the time to relax, and to help combat any nervous energies that may have been brought into the meeting. As the interview can be an anxious occasion, it is important to start with a series of simple questions—what, who, when, where and how—which typically shouldn't require much effort in the way of deliberation. After these initial questions, I endeavoured to investigate a number of broad areas, which included: student teaching experiences; educational histories; reasons for wanting to become a teacher; hopes, anxieties, and aspirations as an educator; memories of reading; the question of reading in educational environments; memories of adolescence; preconceptions of young adult literature; and cultural understandings of what it means to be an adolescent and what it means to be an adult. In framing my inquiries, since I tried to avoid the use of directive questions—"those which imply that you have already made up your mind about the answer" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 72)— I made sure my questions were open-ended, encouraging responses beyond the yes-no variety. Where possible, I solicited my participants to provide examples from their own experiences.

In these interviews, I also asked the participants to metaphorically describe—or metaphorize—what they understood as the meaning of reading experience, linking "the abstract with the concrete or the tangible, the theoretical or philosophical with the

narrative" (Alsup, 2006, p. 150). Quite simply, I asked my participants to choose an image, a symbol, or a metaphor that they felt best represented their experience of reading. Following from this, I also paid close attention to the ways in which the participants employed metaphorical tropes throughout the course of this study. As Duffy (2009) notes in her analysis of Ricoeur's work, the important thing to recognize about metaphor is the way it can be used to effect a mimetic re-interpretation of reality, which implies a definition of metaphorical description as "a form of language that 'imitates' and 'recreates' reality" (p. 72). Temporally speaking, metaphor is a narrative movement that simultaneously travels through the past and the future, investing the speaker with "a transformative power to open up new horizons and new ways of interpreting the world" (p. 74). The semantic creations implied in metaphor therefore function not only as indications of what people have already experienced, but also as suggestions of possibly new meanings and projected interpretations of reality. As Alsup writes, "Metaphors are not just creative ways to describe experience; they affect and influence that experience by changing how we perceive and understand various events, situations, and people" (p. 147). By asking my participants to metaphorically reinvigorate the meaning of reading, I was thus inquiring into what they considered the possible meanings that reading might have, even if they had not witnessed such meanings to date. The participants were also asked to describe teaching in a similar fashion. In my interpretation of such metaphorical constructions, I look to Ricoeur's (1984) challenging questions—"What do metaphors conceal? What do metaphors reveal?" (p. 104)—as a way of investigating the dynamics of unconscious concealing that exist in our efforts at conscious revealing. Throughout this study, what I find most interesting is not so much what the participants say about the

novels, but instead, how they use the novels to say something significant and sometimes surprising about themselves.

The second, and final, interviews were conducted after all of the group meetings had been completed. In these meetings, I looked to elicit from my participants some indication of how taking part in this study had potentially changed the ways they looked at reading, young adult literature, adolescence, adulthood, teaching, learning, and learning to teach. I then inquired into what types of understandings my participants might have developed during this study that I hadn't necessarily anticipated. These interviews were also paired, and while the first interviews consisted of a discussion between myself and one other participant, these final interviews allowed for a greater degree of conversation amongst the participants themselves. Since these readers had gotten to know each other quite well over the course of this study, the atmosphere of these final discussions was markedly less hesitant and formal. In fact, in these latter discussions the readers seemed to take their cue from the group sessions, in which they often allowed themselves to meander away from the initial prompts and questions. As the interpretivist tradition understands cultural meaning as "constructed in language and interaction" (Tillman-Healy, 2003, p. 732), I view these paired interviews as an effective extension of my initial methodological commitments. Similar to the first interview, I asked my participants to metaphorically describe our shared experiences of reading, which might help to indicate the ways in which reading, when approached as a collaborative activity, is imagined differently from reading that is viewed as simply a solitary experience.

Reading Groups. The reading groups met a total of four times, with each discussion centered on a different text, and ranging in length from forty-five minutes to

an hour and a half. Though I've chosen to refer to these groups as "reading groups," they could also be labeled "literature" or "response circles," the latter of which Cherland (1995) describes as "small groups of students, all of whom have read the same work, all of whom are willing to share some of their thoughts and responses to it" (p. 46). The difference, here, however, is that the participants in this study were framed primarily as readers, rather than as students, which implied that they were taking part in these group meetings for pleasure, rather than for the purposes of assessment. While the informal nature of these reading groups was similar to that of book clubs, they were not self-initiated, and should likewise not be characterized as "a naturally occuring conversation" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 166), which represents an important difference between this study and ethnographic investigations into reader-initiated book clubs. As "a public forum for negotiating meaning in the company of others" (Cherland, 1995, p. 46), these reading groups could also be described as "focus groups," which are researcher-initiated situations, "in which groups of people meet to discuss their experiences and thoughts about specific topics with the researcher and with each other" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 90). Such groups—whose genealogy originates in psychotherapy and market research— differ from interviews, since data is generated in a socially dynamic context, where participants "are not merely responding to questions posed by a researcher but … also *responding to each other* and the group dynamic as a whole" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 166).

    Since I realized that the environmental context of these meetings would play an important role in helping my participants to feel comfortable, I tried to find locations that had some degree of natural light and good acoustics. I organized the meetings in a

building on campus known as "the coach house," which was across from the Faculty of

Education, and had a large meeting space with comfortable couches and movable

soundproofing room dividers. I also provided food and beverages for these meetings, in

which I assumed the role of moderator, where my job consisted of "facilitat[ing] a free

exchange of ideas while keeping the group members somehow 'on track'" (Crang &

Cook, 2007, p. 95). Though I tried to let the conversations proceed as naturally as

possible, I remained sensitive to the issue of power relations in social groups, and so at

times interjected with the purpose of encouraging as wide a variety of viewpoints as

possible.

As with interviewing, "the first rule of moderating is to think through the meeting

beforehand" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 99), and it was to this end that I created a topic and

question guide (see Appendix D), which helped me to facilitate the group discussions in

an orderly way. In this guide I included key passages, themes, character names and other

points of interests, though I generally allowed the conversations to flow as organically as

possible, only referring back to the guide in (admittedly rare) moments of silence. As

with the interviews, I began each meeting with a "grand tour" question, which asked the

participants what they personally thought of the book. Though I had read each of these

texts a number of times, I generally tried to remain silent about my own opinions and

interpretations, adopting a "curious-but-uninformed" role, where my overall aim was "to

appear naïve on the topic but attentive in running the group" (p. 99). Though at times it

was tempting to join the conversation as a participant, I did the utmost to maintain a

balance between "detachment and interest" (p. 101).

Data Analysis

After all of the interviews and group meetings had been successfully conducted, I immediately began the process of transcribing the recordings. As I agree with Steedman (1992), that "the organization of texts, the arrangement and ordering of documents … is itself an act of interpretation" (p. 14), I decided to complete the transcription work myself, and to transcribe the data as verbatim and whole as possible, rather than only those sections I assumed might prove rich for later analysis. While transcription may be hard and often mind-numbing work, I concur with Bird (2005) that, "fundamental to the concept of transcription is its ontology" (p. 227), which suggests that the attitude a researcher adopts toward the activity of transcription greatly affects their handling of the data throughout the life of the research project. As Bird puts it in the title of her article, I eventually "stopped dreading and learned to love transcription." Since the act of transcription "is not passive" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 303), and should actually be viewed as an interactive, interpretive activity, I also came to realize that an important part of this interpretation would result from my embodied interaction with the words of my respondents. I would hear their pronouncements, mumble them over to myself in stuttered breath, and in typing them down give them sound and flesh, inhabiting their rhythm through the whole of my body. I literally *felt* their words, transforming and reconditioning their shape through my touch, and in this way I embraced the inevitably "constructive role" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 514) of the researcher in this part of the research process: "I am therefore in the text, but rather than being explicit, I am hidden; I am like a ghost" (p. 511). All told, I transcribed 22 hours (or 1320 minutes) of interviews for this

study, and 12.5 hours (or 750 minutes) of reading group meetings, for a total of 34.5

hours of audio recording, which resulted in 1088 pages of written transcription.

As indicated in the preceding pages, since data collection and data analysis are

fluid, interactive and "iterative processes" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 307), the act

of interpretation begins long before the formal stages of data analysis. As Pitt and

Britzman (2003) contend, "There can be no moment in research that gives birth to

interpretation even as we must use narratives as the force of interpretive research" (p.

759), which suggests that while all interpretation is partial and unstable, language—as "a

primary way we learn to know and not to know ourselves" (Silin, 1995, p. 138)—persists

as both our method for understanding this partiality, and its cause; "voice data is always,

inevitably, in *deficit*" (MacLure, Holmes, Hones & MacRae, 2010, p. 495).

For Rose (1992), psychoanalytic practice draws attention to the fact that language

is always more than simply a tool for communication, and given that there is a necessary

difficulty in language—that there is something that "cannot be spoken in what is actually

being said" (p. 16)—psychoanalysis also focuses our attention on the ways that

documenting the voices of others requires more than techniques of recording and

transcription. Indeed, "An interpretive effort is necessary because words always express

relationships, span contexts larger than the immediate situation from which they arise,

and hold tensions between what is intended and what is signified" (Britzman, 2003, p.

35). This need for interpretation is all the more essential when dealing with experiences

of reading, which I here qualify as "contradictory space[s] of psychic reality [where] one

knows and does not know at exactly the same time" (Pitt, 1998, p. 549). Though I agree

with Owen (2010) that, "our experiences with books are more or less impossible to

gauge," and "marked by narrative decisions that inevitably simplify, distort, misrepresent" (p. 269), I would also argue that accepting this knowledge as partial and contingent does not necessarily imply that it loses importance. "In talking," Owen posits, "we are always faced with the limits of language and representation, the limits of our perspective and positionality, the limits of what can be known about each other" (p. 269). When we read, as when we talk, the text remains misunderstood both by ourselves and others, and the point of interpretation can thus be construed as a way to come to terms with this misunderstanding; or rather, a way to understand how we bear to proceed despite such misunderstandings.

At issue here is the crucial question of how to symbolize the emergent nature of reading experience, and how to construct the analytical categories through which I could locate and represent the central themes, patterns, ideas, and concepts in my data. Of course, qualitative analysis is a creative, emergent and interpretive enterprise, rather than one of finding preformed meaning, and so what is really at issue here is the question of how to "reconfigure this data, to look at it much more carefully and critically, and to perhaps recontextualize different parts so as to be able to see new themes and patterns" (Cook & Crang, 2007, p. 133). In the first place, the act of reading necessarily involves the existence of a transferential structure between reader and text (and reader and self), where the reader is positioned as "a participant in a living transferential drama" (Felman, 1985, p. 31), and as with psychoanalytic transference, the reader must contend with "not only what is said," but also "what the discourse intends, its implications, how it would work on him" (Brooks, 1987, p. 344), and likewise, how he/she would work on it. In this view, reading occurs through a process of "productive activation," where meaning is

shaped and situated "within the reading formations that regulate the encounters between texts and readers" (Bennett, 1983, p. 8).

Along with Robertson (1994) and Radford (2007), I turn to Bennett (1983) and Felman's (1985) understanding of the "reading effect," which Bennett also refers to as a "meaning effect." These interpretive efforts are similar to Brooks' (1987) consideration of the erotically dynamic nature of reading, where form is understood as a production of desire, "as something that is not inert but part of a process that unfolds and develops as texts are activated through the reading process" (p. 340). For Bennett, the interaction of reader and text is characterized as "occurring between the *culturally activated* text and the *culturally activated* reader," and is structured by "the material, social, ideological, and institutional relationships in which *both* texts and readers are inescapably inscribed" (p. 12). The main point here is that the contingent nature of reading is related not only to the variability of the desiring reader, but also to the variable qualities of the text itself, which are activated "as a result of its particular inscription within the … relationships that distinguish specific reading relations" (p. 15). The text, therefore, has no "meaning effect" before it is constituted as such within a particular relationship of reading; a "'reading effect' … does not preexist the 'reading formation' in which it is constituted" (p. 14). For Felman, a "reading effect" is defined "as a lived experience, [and] an 'impression'" (p. 170), which can be judged "by the quantity and intensity of the echoes it has produced" (p. 143).

As Robertson (1994) suggests, such "echoes" of reading experience—which we can here attach to "the reading effect"—relate to "the concept and practice through which movements of desire may be registered and interpreted through language" (p. 13). In

relation to how the reader responds to text, such effects are indicated through "repetition, condensation, displacement, ambivalence, metonymy, metaphor, [and] daydreams," which all signal towards "unresolved tensions or historical contradictions animated into and produced within language through the experience of reading" (p. 13). Radford (2007) adds to this list of affective response the qualities of "detour," "exhilaration," "semantic repetitions, free associations, and symbolizations of meaning through word images" (p. 33). As I read them, these qualities of the "reading effect" are uncannily similar to those associated with dreaming, and since the dreamer can never relate their experiences of dreaming from within the dream itself, their responses—which serve to illustrate the difficulties involved in recounting reading experience—are always mediated through knowledge, time, the conscious mind, ego defenses, and most importantly, language.

"Whatever we remember of a dream when we wake up," Freud writes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2003), is "not … the real dream process but just a façade that hides this real process," which differentiates between the "*manifest* dream content" and the "*latent* dream thoughts" (p. 20). It is on the basis of these similarities between the interpretive energies of dreaming and reading that I will turn briefly to Freud's (1900/1999) strategy of analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where I take up the idea of reading and dreaming as related processes of the intermediate region between illness and real life—what Freud has referred to in *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through* (1914/2003) as the *Zwischenreich*—that which is "both artificial and a piece of real experience" (Brooks, 1987, p. 343), and whose virtual nature appears as much like a dream as it does a literary text. The suggestions that Freud makes for interpreting dreams may also, therefore, be put to use in interpreting reading experience.

Dreaming and Reading. In reading, we fringe the unconscious, which Freud

(1920/2003) titles the "Empire of the Illogical" (p. 23); where oppositions are treated as if

they are identical, nothing is brought to an end or forgotten, and "past, present and future

are strung together on the thread of … desire" (1908/2003, p. 29). Though it may initially

seem strange to link together experiences of reading and dreaming, that which is most

playful and inventive in the dream work also persists in practices of reading, despite our

tendency to think of reading solely as a matter of the intellect. As I have argued thus far,

in reading "we spark up not just our intellect, but also our emotional and our dreaming

selves" (Birkerts, 2007, p. 21), which give us access (albeit mediated) to our unconscious,

and "present[s] what cannot be understood but is nonetheless felt: our wishes, our fears,

our comic missteps, our enigmas, and lost history" (Britzman, 2009b, p. x).

For Freud (1900/1999), as we sleep, the censoring strategies of our conscious

mind are relaxed, which allows the dream—always a type of wish-fulfillment—to

function as a "royal road to the unconscious," accomplishing its representational drama

through "the dream-work," which uses such methods of distortion as dream-condensation

and dream-displacement. This transformation—from latent dream-thoughts to manifest

dream-content—exemplifies the fact that the dream always hallucinates, and that, as it

"replaces thoughts with hallucinations" (p. 43), the essential element of the dream-

thought may be disguised so well that it does not immediately appear to be present in the

dream at all.

When I refer to the psychical work of reading, I am thus doing so in relation to

Freud's theory of dream work, and rather than referring to the work of conscious

decoding or interpretation, I suggest that the affective "effects" of our readings represent

a desire for wish fulfillment, whose "unconscious wishes are always alive … ever stirring, never dying" (Freud, 1900/1999, p. 362). And just as "in different contexts the identical dream-content might conceal a different meaning" (p. 83), the "meaning effects" of reading experience materialize in relation to particular individuals, inimitable life histories, and specific times and places. Though certainly not identical, in this framework the reader's textual object (necessarily misunderstood and latent) is metonymically linked to the dream-thoughts, as the representation of a dream's contents is likewise linked to the representative nature of a given reading's "meaning effects" (which are not *in* the text or the reader, but emerge through their interaction). Belonging to *both* and *neither*, the meaning involved in such "meaning effects" reveals neither the singular character of the text nor the singular character of the reader (though these dispositions are certainly implicated), but instead, the meaning of their relation, always contingent and provisional.

In the transformation from latent to manifest dream, though the dream's representational content—including characters, words, environments, situations, etc.— may be greatly distorted, the dream's emotional content remains unchanged, which is why there is so often a puzzling sense of incongruence between what happens in a dream and the feelings that are stimulated in the dreamer. Because of this lack of correspondence, there is always a part of the dream that refuses to be unraveled and "has to be left in the dark" (Freud, 1900/1999, p. 341). This is the "dream's navel," whose existence ensures that the work of interpretation is never complete or "without any gaps" (p. 96), and that there will always remain, in the dreamer's relation to their dream, some

degree of uncertainty between affect—which is always "justified" (p. 300)—and representation.

For Freud (1900/1999), the task of analyzing dreams necessarily "lead[s] into the dark" (p. 331), since interpretation takes place once the dreamer is awake, and leads from the dream-content back to the dream-thoughts, whereas the dream work moved in the opposite direction. Freud himself admits, "it is highly unlikely that these paths are passable in both directions" (p. 346). What *is* likely, however, is that when it comes to matters of the psyche, "nothing is arbitrary" (334), and that when the dream is put into words, the words themselves enact a displacement, and the presence of strange semantics, nonsensical tangents and grammatical inadequacies, are "linked by association to the content they replace … which may itself in turn be the proxy for another" (p. 335). Through paying attention to the particular arrangements of words, and interpreting as meaningful "the nuance of the verbal form," along with various "faults of expression" (p. 334), Freud designed a theory of rhetorical analysis that treated missteps as "sacred text[s]," and which can also be used to help us read through the otherwise indecipherable nature of reading experience.

Though reading and dreaming are far from equivalent, they nevertheless both involve desire and wish-fulfillment—as "the dream is always seductive" (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 71), so, too, is the read—and in their analyses, are similarly troubled by the impossible task of full and sufficient interpretation; for both experiences, "we garble [the text] in our attempts to reproduce it" (Freud, 1900/1999, p. 334), inevitably revising the original experience. For both occasions, then, the nature of such 'garbling' reveals something significant about the unconscious nature of the dreamer's and the reader's

relation to the text, the dream, and their own experience. As Kristeva's understanding of revolt includes an emphasis on movements of "return/turning back/displacement/change" (p. 5), the act of reentering and revisioning sites of reading and dreaming, despite our tendency to disarticulation, cannot help but tender opportunities of revolt, which in turn incite a radical re-questioning of the past. For Birkerts (2007), "Reading infiltrates … not just … the active imagination, but … the very structures of our awareness" (p. 21). Along with Kristeva, I am therefore "seeking experiences in which this work of revolt, which opens psychical life to infinite re-creation, continues and returns, even at the price of errors and impasses" (p. 6).

In analyzing the data for this study, I made sure there was no rushing through the initial process of coding. In wishing to sit slowly with the data for as long as it took to arrive at the themes I would be using for further discussion, I opted not to use any of the available software for qualitative data analysis. Instead, I read through the transcripts repeatedly, sounding out the phrases of my participants, with all their stutters, gaps, hesitations, wild insights and brilliance. This process of coding was therefore a messy affair, with notes in the margin, coffee rings on the corners of pages, and various preliminary colour-coded categories, which were mostly discarded, merged or transformed in some otherwise significant way.

After this long process of reading, I coded the transcribed interviews and group discussions according to the following categories:

Teaching. As Samantha (one of the BEd students) described in our discussion of the explicitly sexual nature of *Sprout*, "I've heard of worse, but there were pretty graphic points, so in terms of that, *I was also torn into, how, like how do you teach it*, and when is

it appropriate or not?" While the preservice teachers in this study often addressed questions regarding the suitability of these novels for a classroom environment, I became intrigued by the idea of why and when these readers felt *torn into teaching* in their discussions of reading and their reminiscences on adolescent life. Very often, these readers used the present in reading to elaborate memories that helped to articulate future desires. And to construct these identifications as a tearing is quite obviously to imply a sort of laceration, a violent rip in the fabric of one's self and social identity, and therefore, it is also a reminder that this fabric of identity is never really a solid piece at all, that it becomes what it is only through an infinite process of collage, division, disagreement and rupture. In this formulation, to read is to be torn into the future through an encounter with the past in the present of reading.

In this section of my coded data, I therefore included all talk about the relations of identity and teaching, and even though the readers may have used the novels' plots, settings and characters as their focus for discussion, such talk also surely resonated back to their particular individual situations, and as groups of similarly situated readers. Of course, the questions I am here asking revolve around the idea of how reading young adult literature in a social environment—where the text itself is the main topic of discussion—enables readers to work through their various identity-related concerns. How do readers use these books to experiment with, shape and articulate their teaching selves?

Generations. Since all of the novels that form the basis of this study are concerned with adolescent life, and have been written for an assumed adolescent audience, this second section of my coded data looks to engage with my participants' interpretations of generational difference and intergenerational conflict. Quite often, the

readers in this study defined their readings against those of a projected, generationally-opposed other, as apprehensions were repeatedly not voiced personally, but instead displaced to the figure of the younger reader. When this happens, I am interested in determining why these readers felt the need to displace their own apprehensions, and also, through the maneuverings of such displacements, how they described the terms of what it means to be an adolescent and what it means to be an adult.

Emotions, Identifications & Attachments. As human subjects, even though our lost objects of love and hate must necessarily remain out of reach—despite our desires to return to their fold—since we have created them as much as they have created us they are our necessary though fragmentary companions. Since such objects—which include the individuals, memories and emotions we consciously and unconsciously associate with adolescence and schooling—remain elusive, one place we can locate their affective vitality and libidinal persistence is through the identifications, misidentifications, passionate attachments, transferences and hostilities a reader expresses towards a given text. As with the dream, the read is self-centred, and since reading relations are invariably transferential, the question here is: What are they transferential towards? Why this and why that, and why this as opposed to that? "In psychoanalysis," Phillips (1998) writes, "we treat … objects of interest as clues and cues, as commas that look like periods" (p. 8).

Though I have here presented three key thematics that I identified in the process of coding my data, my presentation of the data is organized into three chapters, the first of which focuses on the participants' responses in their interviews, and the second and third which look at the substance of the group discussions. The reason I have chosen to

present my data in this fashion, rather than separating their responses thematically, is

because these two environments offer markedly different avenues for reader response. In

the former, the emphasis is on the participants themselves, while in the latter, the focus is

ostensibly on the texts. Though, as we will see, the readers often used these texts to

express things about themselves that might have otherwise been left unarticulated.

Chapter IV: The Reader is Torn into Teaching

In a collection of interviews published in book form as *Revolt, She Said* (2002b), Kristeva illustrates the ways in which reading can sometimes be experienced as psychical violence. In reference to the author of *Maldoror*, she relates how "Lautréamont experiences [an] intensity when he *reads* Shakespeare, an act of appropriation that exposes the violence in Shakespeare's language as well as the violence in the act of reading" (p. 123). (This "act of appropriation" is ambivalent, since the question of who or what is being appropriated (reader or text), and who or what is the agent of appropriation, is left unanswered.) When asked by the interviewer, Philippe Petit, to further qualify her use of the word *violence,* and whether every act of representation necessarily entails an experience of psychic brutality, Kristeva articulates her thinking as follows:

> In revolt there is violence, there is destruction, but there are also many other elements. I like the term revolt because of its etymological association with return, patience, distance, repetition, elaboration. Revolt is not simply about rejection and destruction; it is also about starting over. Unlike the word "violence," "revolt" foregrounds an element of renewal and regeneration. (p. 123)

Similarly, the readers in this study used their discussions surrounding young adult literature as a means through which to initiate a series of revolt-ing acts, and a way to question, return, create distance towards and repeat one's self, while simultaneously elaborating future projections (at times contradictory), whether in relation to their occupational field or their imaginings of fictional adolescence. Though identifications experienced in the service of creating—or in response to—representational works, such as those of young adult literature, may be felt as a kind of violence, such violence is itself

far from the whole story. It is therefore in regards to the potential that violence contains, which like any other human passion or intensity is intrinsically inconsistent, unpredictable and variable, that I will here be exploring the theme of being *torn* into thinking—and thus questioning—the terms of identity in times of transition and change. As Samantha noted, when talking about young adult literature, she is often "torn into" thinking through questions like, "How do you teach it, and when is it appropriate or not?"

For every reader engaged in the scene of reading, there are at least three temporal vectors—which are typically intertwined and thus impossible to unravel in full—that the course of revolt-ing thinking follows, and which are repeatedly illustrated in the language my participants use in articulating their responses to literature and the experience of reading: a) the feeling of *being torn into*; b) the feeling of *being torn out of*; and c) the feeling of *being torn between*.

With the feeling of *being torn into*, which is always a kind of imminent, anticipatory birthing and delivery, the critical emphasis remains on the temporal space of futurity; the time that is yet to arrive. Such a feeling is most typically expressed through projected desires and fantasies, hopes and fears, which emerge from the play of self—which always includes one's past and one's past readings—forever emergent in the superficially present and immediate moment of reading (the time that we generally recognize as *now*). The emphasis here is therefore on the concept of emergence, and the ways in which an emergent self and emergent occupational identity can potentially be seen as inherently—and fundamentally—changeable; or, on the other hand, as a kind of inevitable fate. In reading, we are *torn into* ourselves (through the framing of desire and fantasy through psychical strategies such as introjection and projection), some elements

of which we will become and some of which we will not. Put simply (though this is not a simple idea), because the future is still to come and we never know where we are going in full, it is the temporal space with which we can most comfortably—which is not to say fearlessly—experiment, and it is also the space where most of us, at least partially, locate our feelings of hope and fear.

For the feeling of *being torn out of*, the emphasis rests on the reader's backward glance in reading, whether the personal history referred to is recent and seemingly well defined, or related to years long past and thus retaining indefinite and movable features (readers often refer to the latter as a kind of "flashback"). In reading, we are *torn out of* ourselves as we read through the script of personal history, framing the words we encounter against the backdrop of our past. The emphasis here is therefore on the work of memory, which itself is always coded according to one's present circumstances of reading, one's desires for the future, as well as to whether the passing of one's past lives (experiences fantasized, dreamed and actually lived) have been successfully, or unsuccessfully, mourned (as a psychoanalytic concept, the process of mourning is described in chapter two). However, even if the process of mourning has been successfully resolved, it is worth remembering the ways in which our past "persists as a psychical echo" (Granger, 2011, p. 185), and always confusingly so; for just as the echo reverberates into an infinite space of an obscure future, it is also impossible to figure out entirely the complexity of the echo's origins, that place from which it has been torn. Even if we trace the initial sound vibration, or the primary traumatic event, it remains an impossible task to determine the multiple variables that have built up the echo. Just as we do not know where we are going, we also do not know where we have been (indeed, we

do not know our parents, but only some very small part of who they are), and while the

future may be our projected space for experimentation, the past is our space which

experiments with/in memory; for Phillips (1998), "no one chooses their parents, but

everyone invents them, makes what they can of them" (p. 4).

The feeling of *being torn between* persists in the space of the present (endlessly

torn between the past and the future). While often experienced as a rending and a certain

laceration, this feeling is also most surely encountered in dreaming, reading and the

sexual encounter (Cixous, 1993). "In dreams," Cixous writes, "the feeling of foreignness

is absolutely pure" (p. 80), as we find ourselves "crossing the frontiers to the other world

[that of the unconscious] without transition, at the stroke of a signifier" (p. 81), "using all

the available means of transport, using your own body as a form of transport" (p. 64). In

such experiences, we are torn between that which we were and that which we will

become, vacillating on the fault lines of past, present and future desire. As we are left

admittedly dazed, we may find ourselves imagining the self, the world, and the world of

received ideas otherwise. There is, moreover, a compromise that such experiences

achieve between, on the one hand, a discouraging feeling of not being able to adequately

penetrate or interpret some aspect of our own existence, knowing that some part of us is

slipping away, which at the same time invites an experience of pleasure, wonder and awe,

often hallucinatory and always disorienting. Described in this way, such experiences—

which invariably hold the potential for establishing a burgeoning "counterpoint to

certainties and beliefs" (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 223)—are also, as Phillips (2012) writes of

sex and sexuality, experiences "that are not subject to understanding, or which

understanding has nothing to do with, or is merely a distraction from" (p. 62). We are

thus torn between the elusive poles of sense and nonsense, which is where the vast majority of meaningful learning occurs.

Of course, the challenge of feeling torn between involves the impossible question (impossible because it remains unanswered) of how to make something meaningful and satisfying from the often untold circumstances of our lives—which involves trying to interpret the subjective importance of what we are given, both in the sense of where we come from and where we imagine ourselves to be going. While characterizing experiences of dreaming, reading and sex as conceptually and psychically similar might appear to some as a dubious displacement—from the vagaries of the unconscious mind, to the measured and measurable calculations of the conscious intellect, to the body's biological necessities—what I here want to stress is the way that each of these experiences—experiences of potential revolt—also represent an unbidden, unconscious return; a *return of* the repressed and forgotten, and a *return to* a space of questioning and not knowing. Caught up in such a return, the reader, as with the dreamer, is constantly torn and "situated between numerous temporalities" (Kristeva, in Guberman, 1996, p. 207), where "reading consequently becomes more than a process of comprehension or mentalization" (p. 227). "There is," as Phillips (2012) puts it, "a difference between reading something intelligible and reading something that has a powerful effect; between words as procurers of experience and words as consolidators of knowledge" (p. 59). In reading, since the play of memory in language is often experienced as a kind of flooding of feelings and images that are rarely (if ever) articulated, this return should really be seen as a *return through*, rather than a *return to* or *of*. Therefore, even though I have classified as separate the above emotional and experiential categories of feeling

temporally torn, they are never experienced discretely; such is the challenge of life, a

challenge that is also the challenge of reading. In practice, what this movement means is

that, as we will see in the following pages, the readers very often transfer themselves—

through language—from the present of reading, to their past experiences, to the

implications they imagine such readings may hold for their future pedagogical

endeavours.

The next three chapters proceed according to the following organizational plan:

In this chapter (chapter four), I look at the ways in which, in their interviews, the

preservice teachers framed their ideas concerning teacher identity, and the dynamics of

teaching, learning and reading. Though these interviews may seem a detour from the

conversations surrounding young adult literature (the main focus of this study), these

interviews (both individual and paired) serve as a space for the participants to

communicate their desires and fantasies as educators and readers, and provide important

context for the discussions that follow. While it may partly be a result of the context for

our meetings (it comes as no surprise that when you assemble preservice teachers in a

Faculty of Education, their thinking invariably touches on teaching and learning), much

of the conversations that arose as a consequence of this study focused on the ways in

which literature might be approached in the classroom, the anxieties of teaching, and the

possibilities for provocative thinking that young adult literature might bring to an

educational environment. In these interviews, the readers parsed out their understandings

of what it means to read as a teacher, which were often set against experiences of reading

which privilege enjoyment and pleasure. In imagining the literary responses of projected

others (their future students), these preservice teachers framed their entry into the

profession in terms of desire and fantasy, which I interpret through reference to the psychoanalytic constructs of narcissism, negation, love and aggression.

In chapter five, I look at the participants' socially articulated responses to the first two novels, *Speak* and *Sprout*, to which I also provide my own interpretations. In relation to *Speak*, reading is described as a kind of technology of teaching, and—more so than the other novels in this study—*Speak* is explicitly framed in terms of the lessons it teaches its readers. The participants were also drawn into judging the protagonists' actions (or inactions) in terms of whether or not they meet their personal *potential*, judgments of character that I read as problematically signaling the types of expectations these educators may hold for their future students. Since both *Speak* and *Sprout* deal explicitly with questions of sex and sexuality, I also explore how these readers characterized the promises and the challenges of including such content within the English Language Arts curriculum. In responding to *Sprout,* these readers discussed the inability of preformed categories of sexual identity to adequately represent the fullness of sexual desire. Though such thinking is challenging, it inspired these readers to assess the significance of trepidation and not knowing in relation to identity formation.

In chapter six, I explore the reading groups' responses to *The Hunger Games* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and again, I provide my own interpretations of these novels as well. Though these readers continued to frame their understandings of these novels in relation to the potential of the adolescent protagonists, many of the characters in these latter novels were also cast explicitly as teachers. In such casting, the readers in this study projected their desires, anxieties and fantasies about teaching onto the characters' lives, imagining themselves in place of the characters, and

the characters in place of themselves. Through such strategies of projective identification, the readers also partitioned their literary attachments in terms of love and hate; in effect, they split their loyalties, investing their hopes in certain characters, while projecting their anxieties onto others.

Reading as a Teacher; Reading for Pleasure

In articulating their individual responses, the preservice teachers often framed their understanding of the activity of reading as a dichotomous affair. As Calandra told me, when describing the ways that she read in preparation for our first group discussion, "For *Speak*, I started reading it as if I was reading for a class … I was just looking for themes, analyzing characters. I went into literary analysis mode." In the first place, then, Calandra here describes the category of *reading as a teacher* (or *teacherly reading*), which involves thinking pedagogically and didactically about the texts in question (how they might be *used* in the classroom), consciously exercising—through the guise of the literary critic—the language of educational studies (through terms such as assessment, competencies, professional development, etc.), and employing various strategies of formal interpretation to uncover a deeper (i.e. hidden) meaning in the text, taking it for granted that there is something to be found, usually associated with the author's intentions. Moreover, as Calandra related, this pursual of literary analysis is approached "from the point of view of a teacher *and* a student." "After the first meeting," Calandra noted, "I didn't really pay any attention to any literary devices, or anything like that." Importantly, though the readers regularly use strategies of literary analysis in their discussions, this is also the manner of reading that many of the participants described as having worked to turn them away from literature early on in their educational lives. For

this reason, this category could also legitimately be called *reading as a student*. What is most interesting, however, is that even though this mode of reading seems easy to classify at first glance, it is confused by the fact that, as a consequence of this study, the readers came to recognize the relational dynamics of teaching and learning as often confusing and contradictory.

Secondly, there is the experience of reading that we might call *reading for pleasure* or for enjoyment's sake, and which, unfortunately, is typically regarded as less serious, less robust and less worthy of study than formalized practices of reading. This is the kind of reading that most openly touches our emotional lives, though surely, emotions play a role in all of our readings, regardless of the ways that we name such experiences. For Calandra, as mentioned above, "After the first meeting, when I realized that everyone was so informal and what not, I kinda … just read it for fun, and … I didn't really pay any attention to any literary devices, or anything like that." While it may not have been the explicit purpose of this study to foreground those practices of reading that take enjoyment as its primary object, many of the participants revealed that this is precisely why they appreciated the experience of reading in an informal, social environment; that for too long in their educational lives, they had been approaching literature much too seriously, and had neglected the ways that reading can be pleasurable and meaningful in and of itself, whether or not it fulfills some larger, institutionalized purpose.

The Relational Play of Narcissism

In her interviews, Tegan had numerous things to say about the feelings involved in reading as a teacher. In describing our discussions, Tegan "felt like we were on a staff committee," and far from this being meant as a disparaging remark, she explained how

this collective approach actually helped to underscore the fact that "you need to get into the mind of the book before teaching it." While getting "into the mind of the book" can mean any number of things—for example, to manipulate the mind's inner workings as well as to allow that the mind is a place where we all sometimes get lost—such an environment of public interpretation allowed, for Tegan, a careful, teacherly reading: "I was reading this book, like really trying to read it, to see the themes, to see what I could get out of it, and what I could, like, get students to get out of it." In this context, a teacherly reading involves imagining reading as a generous affair; reading not only for one's own purposes, but also for those of one's future students.

However, to simply call such a reading generous neglects the play of narcissism involved in fantasizing the responses of imaginary, projected others. It is here worth emphasizing the fact that, in psychoanalytic discourse, the emergence of narcissism, far from being an undesirable occurrence, is "an absolutely necessary prerequisite to the possibility of loving or being able to perceive others," and involves "the possession of an internal self that allows us the possibility of connecting externally or, in other words, of having a relationship" (Boldt, 2006, pp. 154-155). Put simply, as narcissism always implies a relation, it is never only just about the self, and for the teacher, the only way to develop meaningful relationships with one's students is to first focus, narcissistically, on one's own desires and needs; the development of a teacher's narcissism is therefore a necessary task. "To try to see beyond the self," Boldt writes, "is to try to understand the fact of our own narcissism, of our own transference, and to refuse to assume that we know the meanings of others' lives" (p. 157). The question here, then (and though the evidence of such narcissism may appear slight), is whether Tegan tries to engage such an

understanding, or simply acts narcissistically without actually questioning her own intentions; or, in other words, does she use her narcissism well? As Bersani and Phillips (2008) understand it, narcissism is only ever a patently damaging force in our resistance to it: "We are at our most controlled (and controlling) in our regulation of narcissistic desire" (p. 98). It is our resistance, and our failure to communicate with the abject reminders of our own narcissism, that works to shut down the relational possibilities of teaching, and that might also compel us to ignore the existence of others. Though it is true that teachers should have a sense of the learning objectives they wish to accomplish in relation to the literature they introduce to their students, it is also necessarily productive for teachers to interrogate the motivations that frame their desires for their students to "get" a discrete 'something' out of the text; to, in other words, "recognize how student differences can be erased by the teacher's projections" (Britzman, 2006a, p. 109).

While focusing on the question of what we "could … get students to get out of" a literary text might, on the one hand, look at how a teacher invites her students to "get" something out of reading on their own terms, such a focus might also be read as an attempt to forewarn the teacher about, and to help defend herself against, her students' potential interactions with the text. In this context, to "get" something "out of" a literary work is to encourage one's students to interpret or learn it in a 'correct' and 'legitimate' manner, and according to the whims of the teacher. The consequences of such demarcations of interpretive legitimacy are well defined by Phillips (2012), who describes how, "Getting and not getting it keep us in the fold; there is a me who can get it, and an it to be got" (p. 38). Through drawing sharp boundaries between "getting it"

and "not getting it," reading as a teacher here acts as a mechanism of ego defense, guarding against the ideas of others. Such a warning, however, will typically miss its mark, since the assumptions we make about the interpretive activities of others will always be influenced by the fact that, as teachers, there are certain interpretations we would prefer our students to make, and others that we simply could never anticipate. As Pitt (2003) reminds us, "our pedagogical efforts set into motion experiences the outcomes of which we cannot predict and often enough do not want" (p. 114).

Tegan, however, appeared to understand the changeable nature of interpretive activity, as she framed her teacherly readings through the use of maternal metaphors. In describing her experiences of reading as a teacher, Tegan said it felt like an "out of body experience," where she was seeing the text and the character's actions "almost more like a maternal figure," an approach that she characterizes as markedly different from that she might have taken in her adolescent years. Whereas, in her adolescence, Tegan might have said about a fictional adolescent character, "Oh yeah, I feel you," the fact of becoming a teacher compelled her to now read differently and more like a mother: "I sympathize with them, and I kind of pity them, and I hope that they're gonna grow into something, you know, better. Something more confident." As we will see when we look at the group discussions, these preservice teachers often framed their responses in terms of whether the adolescent characters were believed to be reaching their *potential*, which is an admittedly loaded term for a teacher to employ. As Tegan characterized it, the members of her group were not only "discussing [the books] as teachers, but also as people who were once adolescents," by which she meant they could "go from both perspectives":

Sometimes we would really refer to them as teachers. We'd be like, "I would

introduce this to my class in this way." And then, all of a sudden, we would

switch to, "Yeah, I remember feeling like this. I remember going through this" …

It opened your eyes to how you could teach, and how you could read, because you

don't have to teach all the time as a teacher. You can also teach from experience.

You can teach from your adolescent years as well.

Admittedly, while this concept of "teach[ing] from experience" might hinder a

teacher's ability to recognize the desires of others (if they assume that their own

adolescent experiences can be taken as representative of adolescence as a whole), Tegan

used this moment in her group's reading to illustrate the fact that, even though her future

students' responses to literature might be markedly different from her own, they are no

less valid for being so. As she explained:

My thoughts on a lot of these books changed completely after the discussion … It

shows you all the different ways that you can look at things. And it shows you

that your way of looking at a novel is not necessarily, is never gonna be the same

way that every student is gonna look at a novel … and that's a very important

lesson to learn.

As Tegan continued later on, "Your students … while you're teaching them,

they're also, in that sense, your equals. They're allowed to have, like, they can come up

with different ideas about the books." While this appears a simple enough idea—that

different people will have different interpretations of the same text—unless a teacher

comes to recognize the influence of their own narcissism in their practices of teacherly

reading, such acceptance will remain hard to accomplish. Tegan, however, seems to have

reached an understanding that allows for a student's refusal of a teacher's ideas. "If they don't want to listen to you," she explained, "they're not going to. And you're not going to be able to teach. And that's what you want to do." Elsewhere, in relation to classroom situations where students may seem to refuse (and thus not understand) the descriptions of sexual encounters in young adult literature, Tegan suggested that even though "the kids would've, kind of like, laughed at it, and probably not seen to be taking it seriously … I think they would have, in the end." As Britzman (1998a) writes, Tegan's comment suggests that, since it can never be assumed that "the time of education" can "set precisely the time of learning," "education does not solely reside in the teacher's efforts" (p. 4). Of course, such thinking is not always valued in teacher education, where, as Taubman (2009) describes it, "What counts is what is demonstrated" (p. 184). "The time of learning," he continues, "is the time of providing the right answer. It is the time of stimulus and response" (p. 184).

In Boldt's (2006) formulation, Tegan's approach to teacherly reading can thus be characterized as the expression of "an ethical and narcissistic love," which:

> is one that consciously and actively reminds itself that others have their own being, that their needs may be different and even contrary to our wishes, that they have legitimate claims to forging identifications and attachments different from our own or those we would choose for them. (p. 155)

The Work of Negation

Since reading young adult literature invariably brings the adult reader back to their own adolescence, Farrin believed it could be a good way for teachers to remind themselves of the desires of adolescent others, "to remember those things, instead of

getting lost" in the occupational imperatives of teaching (and whether or not it reminds us consciously, there is always the influence of the transference). In Megan's retelling of her experience reading Sherman Alexie's book, and identifying with the character of Junior, she was reminded of "the distrust between student and teacher," and "feeling like teachers are not part of this world." While reading, she even had a "*flashback* to rating my teacher on rateyourteacher.com," a rating that she admits, embarrassingly, was "nasty, terribly nasty." Strangely, instead of perhaps criticizing the student she was, Megan exclaimed in laughter, "I'm a terrible teacher." That she renders this exclamation in present tense is indicative of the fact that, for students learning to teach, separating the student they were from the teacher they are to become is a difficult psychic task. In many ways, preservice teachers are grappling with their present tense—not yet teacher, not quite student—as an altogether and uncomfortably illegible encounter.

For epistemologies of teaching to adequately encounter what de Lauretis (2008) calls "the enigma of now" (p. 4), we must first recognize that for the *now* to be read, we can only "sustain the impact of the real" (p. 9) in reworkings of our earlier experiences; and through reference to a type of double temporality that Freud titles *Nachträglichkeit*, commonly referred to in English as *deferred action*, *retroaction*, or *afterwardsness*. In this formulation, the meaning of a repressed memory may remain silent until revived at a later date, and thus, as Freud writes, "a memory [can arouse] an affect which it did not arouse as an experience" (cited in de Lauretis, p. 7). In all probability, Megan did not think of herself as "a terrible teacher" when she left her "nasty" rating, and so the fact that the self-critical affect of doing so was felt in a flashback while reading—a kind of atemporal psychic shock—implies that the meaning that was given to this memory had

been significantly reworked in the present moment, a moment of reading while learning

to teach. While all memories only have meaning—indeed, are only formed *as*

memories—insofar as they relate to the present context of remembering, that Megan

located—and criticized—her present self through her past actions is an indication of a

type of reparative function, whereby the guilt Megan felt in rating her teacher was

expressed by imagining/placing herself in her teacher's place. By taking on the teacher's

bad rating, Megan gave herself, as teacher, a "nasty, terribly nasty" rating. If "true

reparation," as Segal (1991) notes, "must include an acknowledgement of aggression and

its effect" (p. 92), then it is obvious that the effect of Megan's aggressive rating was felt

most clearly (and perhaps only!) in her present self, and as part of her emergent

occupational identity. Moreover, the fact that this story of reparation was told in relation

to reading is no accident. In reading about the character of Junior, and feeling torn

between identifying with the adolescent protagonist while also evaluating their

behaviour, Megan enacted a similar confusion between judging herself as a student, while

also becoming a teacher.

For Farrin, the group discussions were especially meaningful in the ways they

allowed for multiple perspectives to be simultaneously voiced, a simultaneity that was

occasionally enunciated from the fractured perspective of a single person (a fracture that

most clearly appears in the supposed boundary between teacher and student). As she told

me, the discussions "helped in terms of putting things in perspective, and seeing them as

a student might see them, but still as a teacher," an interpretive practice which enabled

her to question the ways in which the roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners

are typically viewed as inevitable and unalterable: "It makes me wonder," Farrin

explained, "whether we're in classrooms all the time, and we've kinda had to put, not a

barrier, but … a different level between us and our students, and how that changes our

perspective and, in that way, our thought process." As Farrin succinctly stated, the ways

in which we approach the texts that we read, and the "perspectives" that we assume of

ourselves in relation to that which we read—whether as teacher, student, adolescent,

adult, etc.—invariably affect the thoughts we have about such texts, as well as the

"thought process" we allow ourselves to proliferate, whether that of impassioned

inquisitiveness, or rational didacticism.

   If we consider the mental process of negation—"a defensive move that signals the

partial rise to consciousness of something that cannot (yet) be tolerated fully by the

conscious self" (Granger, 2011, p. 86), and which usually takes place when the speaking

subject communicates the content of an unconscious wish in negative form—it is

significant that, before Farrin qualified the distance between teacher and student as at "a

different level," she described it as "not a barrier." As Taubman (1990) explains,

questions of distance and identity in pedagogical relations are intimately connected:

> When teachers ask how close they should be to students they are not only asking,
>
> "Who am I in relation to these students or this student?" and "Who are these
>
> students or who is this student in relation to me?" They are also asking questions
>
> about what they want from students and what students want from them. These are
>
> questions of identity and intention. (p. 121)

For Farrin, the fact that she formulated this question of distance, first as negation, signals

the difficult nature of the identity work that was taking place, and the confused and

confusing character of her intentions. If it is "not a barrier" that exists between teachers

and students, then at the same time it very much is, and the use of negation here served to distance the speaker from this inevitable conclusion. "To demarcate a field or body," such as that of the teacher and their teaching, "is to say what is left out as well as what is kept in" (p. 124). In Farrin's formulation, what is left out of the body of the teacher is that of the student, which for the preservice teacher (the student teacher) is a contradictory construction, for which the use of negation seems an almost inevitable consequence. Since the popular discourse of teaching is often constructed as a labour of love and devotion, it can be hard for those learning to teach to consciously admit to their feelings of hesitation, anxiety and ambivalence. An important goal of teacher education can therefore be seen as providing a space to contain a preservice teacher's uncertain emotions about teaching, from which she can then symbolize—and potentially work through—her various and challenging hesitations and anxieties.

In describing her educational past, Samantha also used a strategy of negation, coupled with that of repetition and projection. If we think of negation as a "procedure whereby the subject, while formulating one of his wishes, thoughts or feelings which has been repressed hitherto, contrives, by disowning it, to continue to defend himself against it" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 261), then the work of repetition serves to emphasize the degree of psychic disturbance that the negated statement endeavours to defend the conscious mind against. When I asked her about the teachers she recalled from her past, Samantha exhaled loudly and exclaimed, "Ahhh, I wanted to kill most of them," a statement whose symbolic violence and aggression—especially since we can never control the desires of others—points to the dangers inherent in her own teaching practice. As a teacher, Samantha certainly knew, either consciously or unconsciously, that—since

she felt this way about her own teachers—she could very well become the object of her own students' murderous desires; and murder, of course, is the ultimate act of negation, defending against the wish for a love that is so overwhelming it appears (or is feared as) impossible. It is always a murderous situation to love somebody and not to have that love returned.

After speaking briefly about the rare breed of teachers she didn't want to kill—about one in particular she said, "I loved him," since "he made us feel like he believed in us"—Samantha returned the conversation to the ones she wanted to kill, those teachers who did not return their student's love: "I think back and I'm just like, 'Oh my god. They were just so miserable.' Why were they teaching? But yeah, so some teachers were terrible. *They didn't want to be there. They did not want to be there. They did not want to be there teaching us*." By repeating herself three times in an almost identical fashion, Samantha articulated some pretty serious negation, which—since she invariably communicates her own anxieties in her interpretation of the behaviour of others—can also be read as a form of projection: "the ejection into the outside world of something which the subject refuses in himself" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 356). That her teachers did not want to be there to teach disrupted Samantha's fantasy of how a passionate educator should interact with her students (elsewhere she told me "I love children … I've always been passionate … I'm drawn to high school"), while it also served as a reminder (defended against through the work of negation) of the ways that her own teaching practice could potentially fail to miss its mark.

While it is obvious that, for Samantha, the work of teaching will fulfill some kind of reparative function (both reparative for herself and, we can assume, her future

students), what is not so obvious is that this particular work of reparation functioned in relation to an unenunciated love-object: those teachers she wanted, and wants, to kill (the fact of communicating past desires surely indicates that such desires—necessarily unfulfilled, since we can assume Samantha is no murderer—continue to circulate). As Laplanche and Pontalis define it (1973), the Kleinian concept of reparation is a "mechanism," which is often inspired by feelings of anxiety and guilt, "whereby the subject seeks to repair the effects his destructive phantasies have had on his love-object" (p. 388). For Samantha, the prospect of becoming an object of her students' potentially murderous desires (putting herself in the place of those teachers she wanted to kill) was part of how she construed the work of being an effective educator; even if she is there for her students (meaning that she wants to be received as their object of love), the challenging fact about the relational dynamics of education is that it always remains a possibility that the students will not be there for their teacher. In fact, they might even prefer that their teacher were dead.

Love and Aggression in Teaching

Far from Samantha being the only one in this study who expressed feelings of aggression in relation to teaching and learning, many of the BEd participants employed metaphors of hostility and assault when speaking of their educational pasts and their experiences as student teachers, experiences which are often described simultaneously with reference to feelings of love and care. As Britzman (2003) writes about the conflicts inherent in preservice teachers' identity work, forged through the context of their own educational histories and their desires to either emulate or resist (to idealize or reject) the strategies they observed in their own teachers:

Oftentimes, student teachers feel split between identification with the teacher's role and disassociation from the teacher's function as authority. It is from this contradiction of wanting to become a teacher but not necessarily wanting to step into the role of a cruel authority that one crafts what will become in retrospect, a teacher's identity. (p. 4)

In education, it seems the imperative to love (and be loved) and the desire to injure (and be injured) are conspicuously linked. Though these two extremes—aggression and love—may seem at first glance to be in opposition to one another, it is important to remember that, in true ambivalent fashion, our desires to love and our desires to hurt often stand side by side; as Taubman (2006) reminds us, when theorizing the psychic life of teaching it is necessary to consider "the possibility that the desire to love and be loved and the desire to control or exert power are intimately related" (p. 22). In describing the untypical behaviour of one of her favourite teachers, Calandra characterized expressions of aggression as potential signs of deep affection:

I had a teacher, my English teacher … stop me in the middle of the Math exam, and said, "I loved your paper. I thought it was brilliant. If you don't go to university to … become a writer, *I will hunt you down and kill you.*' And I go, "Sir, this is my Math exam," and I lost my train of thought … so I'm gonna flunk out of Math. But, *it was very sweet.* He was a very to-the-point guy, and I miss him … He threatened me, for real.

By allowing that a teacher's love can be transformed into a murderous threat (and no matter how playful, a threat of murder—as in children's war games—always contains aggression as a real possibility), Calandra effectively construed education as a site of

psychic vulnerability; where the teacher's and the student's emotional lives are open to the influence of the other, both in love and aggression, and in murder and tenderness. For Sasha, the teacher's condition is a site of tremendous responsibility: "You have [your students'] lives in your hands."

As Farrin proposed, "I think the biggest challenge is to get [the students] to want to do the learning, instead of trying to force it down their throats," which made it appear, though it was certainly not Farrin's first choice as a teacher, as if learning is often achieved through a process akin to *foie gras* force feeding, where the goose is stuffed with more food than they might naturally eat in the wild, and more than they would voluntarily eat under typical domestic conditions. While Calandra described the approach that her past teachers took towards reading as "just taking something that I love and beating me over the head with it," Yasmin remembered being "bombarded with homework," an image that sets up the student as an often unwilling victim of a teacher's curricular demands (as military attack). Under such circumstances of psychic brutality, it is no surprise that the relationship of teaching and learning is often represented as a violent encounter, "point[ing] to the possibility that while the raw use of force may be prohibited today, the human desires that fuel and find release in such violence remain" (Taubman, 2006, p. 26).

This abuse, however, rather than being qualified as simply working in one direction—as hostility directed only towards the figure of the learner—is also felt by these participants in their work as student teachers. In his transition from student to teacher, Mark expressed an anxiety around "finding a balance" and "not having a safety net," which implies that, as with the tightrope-walker, a solitary unintended mistake

could have irreversibly fatal consequences. As Barber (2004) writes, the tightrope-walker

is involved in "an intricate dance … in which the artist is always painfully aware of

making gestures in tension with death" (p. 108). Since Mark characterized teaching as

always "a tight rope to walk," the stakes of pedagogy here include the pressures involved

in taking a risk, and the no less challenging obligations to get such risky work right

(which, of course, is an altogether idealistic impossibility, since there is no such thing as

correct pedagogy). Both Sasha and Farrin described this same transition as "nerve-

wracking," a phrase which communicates an intense level of psychical stress that can also

feel like a form of punishment. Significantly, the question we can here pose is, for what

offences are these teachers being punished? Or, more accurately, in that the punishment

seems to appear in absence of crime, for what do they fear they are being punished?

As Rhiannon explained, when it comes to "teaching, basically, *you have to love

it*," which unequivocally positions the teacher as needing to conform to an institutional

imperative to love, and a duty to care and desire as a kind of occupational obligation.

Above all else, and according to the fantastical insistence ubiquitous in representations of

teaching in literature, television and film, *the teacher must love*, regardless of the costs

and consequences. "While fantasies about loss and control of authority and about loving

and being loved swirl in the psychic life of teachers, they also circulate," Taubman

(2006) writes, "in the public imaginary of teaching and schooling" (p. 21). Perhaps, then,

this fear of punishment is really a fear of not being able to so conform, of knowing that

the affective demands of teaching exceed a teacher's sanity and psychical limits.

Along with Britzman (2006a), we can all surely recall "from the childhood of

[our] education … an army of crazy teachers" (p. 130) forced into early retirement and

medical leave under conditions of burnout and stress. For Megan, since it is such a "never ending" and "high stress" profession, there is in teaching a feeling of impending and inevitable sadness: "it's kind of … always a little bit sad," and "it's almost inevitable, even if you are an excellent teacher. There is just so much to do with that job, and you can never, like, you're always needed." Yasmin also spoke of the seemingly inevitable frustrations involved in the transition from student to teacher. While working as a student teacher, Yasmin described her demeanor as "calm and patient and smiling all the time." As "a real teacher," however, she admitted while laughing, "I wouldn't be smiling all the time. I know that for sure. For sure."

As a carrier of devotion (and as a member of a profession where loving appears compulsory), the teacher therefore also comes to be positioned as a willing, and capable, victim of abuse. Rhiannon noted how, in teaching, "You roll with it, you try to look confident," and while the concept of *rolling with the punches* implies a flair for drama, slapstick, and the theatric arts (in making a punch look authentic, the actor rolls into and out of the approaching fist), it also suggests a sense of acceptance and complicity in violence enacted on the self. From this perspective, teachers must physically and psychically sacrifice themselves in the impossible pursuit of pedagogical success. While such complicity might work to fulfill the needs of a masochistic narcissism, it is certainly a problematic fact when taken as an unconscious imperative of the teaching profession.

Building on the theme of aggression, Farrin noted that her first experience of teaching, when she was only sixteen years old, "felt like a battle," though interestingly, the battle she spoke of was not between students and teachers, but instead, between herself and another instructor, fifteen years her senior. Though they were theoretically in

the same position, Farrin described how the other instructor assumed that, because of her age and experience, she could exercise her authority broadly, capturing Farrin in the same disciplinary net as the students. This circumstance of unequal authority is one that is paralleled in many of the situations these participants described as student teachers; as Farrin declared, "we just kept getting into these battles, *which I guess is normal*." Though this declaration of normalcy may be understood as illustrating the lack of enthusiasm that some educators have for cooperative teaching, we might also read it as an acknowledgement of the inevitable circulations of authority and power in the classroom, which are necessarily linked to desire, the unpredictable nature of transference, and the passionate defense of libidinal positions. In fact, though many of the above descriptions may seem infused with a language of excessive and unnecessary violence, it is a fact that learning (and learning to teach) is never a peaceful affair. As Britzman (1998a) notes, "People do not give up their libidinal positions easily, and when encountering differences," whether in terms of pedagogical style (between teachers), or claims to knowledge (between students and teachers), "they seem to work hard to assert their own continuity" (p. 10). As with the participants in Robertson's (1994) study, through this declaration of normalcy, Farrin thus communicated "a recognition of the aggression and violence that comprises part of the passionate realm of pedagogical relationality" (p. 281).

Before moving from this theme of aggression into a discussion of these participants' more mundane descriptions of teaching and learning, I'd like to first look at Yasmin's extended metaphorical description of what education entails, in which she offered a surprising link between education and terror:

> I see teaching as … bringing equality and peace … I was watching videos from
> soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they were crying and like, 'Why
> did we do that? Why did we do this?' and then I don't know if you have seen the
> video, there is an American … there was this guy who has some deformities,
> 'cause somebody adopted him, an American woman adopted him … from Iraq,
> and he was born when there were a lot of explosions, so she went and she, and the
> guy can sing beautifully, you know, so … I think looking at Asia, Middle East, I
> see education as a powerful tool.

In bridging the gap between violence, on the one hand, and artistic expression and hope
on the other, Yasmin here articulated a vision of education as carrying the potential for
peace and change, but also, as caught up—inextricably tangled—in a world of violent
contradiction. From the crying soldiers to the disfigured musician, Yasmin communicated
a desire for education to surpass, and somehow manage and solve, the devastating
consequences of poverty, war and human suffering. Since this task is uncertain and
difficult (and in its Sisyphean nature links to the idea of education as an *impossible
profession*), her hope was also shot throughout with an unmistakable pessimism. And in
fact, since the demands that Yasmin here places on education are altogether unattainable,
how could it be otherwise? When we imagine teachers as individuals engaged in
metaphorical battle, or of education as an endeavour embroiled in countless wars, we
might then ask ourselves: Can the war end? For whom is the war being fought? What are
its battles? Are student teachers soldiers in training, or a class of spies or prospective
traitors at the brink of switching allegiance? For the preservice teachers in this study,
regardless of how they position themselves, their anxieties about entering the classroom

undoubtedly signal a need to pursue what Taubman (2006) calls "the difficult work of working through the fantasies of love and control" (p. 31).

The Work of the Metaphorically Mundane

For many of the preservice teachers, their descriptions of teaching appeared as metaphorically mundane, as commonplace, everyday, typical and to be expected. As with any discursive understanding of human experience, however, it is important to pose the question of what kind of work is being done through language, and of what the speakers hope to accomplish—what fantasies they are keeping alive—by framing their understandings of teaching in predictable and conventional ways. As Phillips (1998, p. 32) frames the distinction between the conventionally mundane (or what he calls our "duties") and our libidinal attachments in reading (our "affinities"), the structures we use to support our "official" educations are often constructed at the expense of—thus rendering illicit—our otherwise "unofficial" nourishments.

For Farrin, school was imagined as "kind of a sanctuary," and a shelter from which to protect oneself (and one's students) from the potentially destructive influences of life outside of the educational institution. Obviously, while such an idyllic understanding works to construct a fantasy of school as a place held apart from the rest of human society, it also ignores the ways in which learning itself is a site of conflict, and schooling an experience where human desires converge in ways often hostile and violent. "In the context of the classroom," Salvio (2007) writes, "who we are to one another often gets confusing. Teaching and learning are themselves occasions for getting muddled up" (p. 43). For teachers learning to teach, to disavow such muddling is also to disavow the ways in which education is always a messy encounter, and as Britzman (1998a) notes,

"for there to be a learning there must be conflict within learning" (p. 5). To fantasize schools as sanctuaries seems to disregard the inevitably conflictual nature of the educational encounter.

While Calandra referred to the pleasures of teaching as "watching lights go on" and "opening a lot of doors," Farrin suggested that learning can be understood in relation to the brightening of "the light bulb." The striking thing about both the figure of the light bulb and door is their seemingly comprehensive and systematic nature; even though a door might be ajar and a light bulb dimmed, doors are typically considered open *or* closed, and light bulbs, on *or* off. If a light bulb is turned on, we can safely assume it was previously considered off, as the action of opening a door only makes sense if the door was previously closed. As Farrin related, the greatest pleasure she experiences in teaching her students—which she referred to as "the dawning of the understanding"—is "working with them on it, and working and working, and *that moment where you can clearly see that they understand it*." Even though Farrin's formulation acknowledged the difficult work that teaching requires, at the same time it refused to admit to the ways in which, oftentimes, the work of the teacher is simply not enough.

This notion of absolute clarity is also similar to Rhiannon's fantastical thinking, that "to be able to teach [is] to be able to *soar into the minds of others*." While such soaring may imply a productive sociality, it may just as easily represent a problematic symbiosis. If we understand learning as a psychical conflict, then it is hard to imagine how a student's "understanding" could ever be clearly seen or soared into; in fact, such clarity is impossible, both from the perspective of the teacher, as well as from that of the student. For Farrin, Calandra and Rhiannon, imagining the effects of teaching as fully

accessible and discernible—which ignores the invisible, unconscious influence of the human psyche on its conscious representations, and the fact that much of how and what we learn happens in misunderstood, belated time—evades the nature of educational influence as an often regressive and contradictory affair. As Britzman (1998a) reminds us, "To act as if education is or even should be a site of continuity and a movement toward resolution," such as we can see in the closing or opening of a door, "shuts out consideration of how discontinuity, difference, and learning might be the conditions of passionate subjectivity" (p. 28). If preservice teachers don't see the effects of their teaching as obvious, and obviously progressive, will they be taken as a kind of failure? In teacher education, can we move past this logic of the mind as an eminently calculable thing? Are there ways in which preservice teachers can allow for an understanding of teaching's effects as invisible, misconstrued and intolerable? Can teaching still be a pleasure if the gratification of such pleasure is not immediate, definable or necessarily forthcoming?

In her initial interview, Calandra provided another image of teaching that allows for a bit more nuance than that which is involved in the action of "opening … doors": "Planting. Gardening. Gardening, you plant seeds, you water, you sun, and they do the rest." Though imagining education as part of a cycle of fertilization and germination requires that particular elements be present, the ways in which such elements interact can take a variety of forms. No matter where a seed is planted, there is always the possibility that it will be blown from one field to another. And just like the baby, plants are not spontaneously self-creating; the form they will eventually assume is dependent on a

number of variables, many of which are unpredictable. This particular image of

Calandra's seems to be in agreement with Britzman (1998a), who writes that:

> Education is best considered as a frontier concept: something between the teacher
>
> and the student, something yet to become. The work of learning is not so much an
>
> accumulation of knowledge but a means for the human to use knowledge, to craft
>
> and alter itself. (p. 4)

When Calandra noted, "they do the rest," she acknowledged the fact that, when it

comes to the burdens of learning, "Something from within must pressure the learner"

(Britzman, 1998a, p. 42). As with the gardener, a teacher is only important insofar as they

create the conditions for learning, allowing for the fact that much of what takes place in

the classroom might at first be misunderstood, or interpreted as failure. Along these same

lines, Tegan described a significant pleasure in teaching as being able to help her students

achieve, perhaps through a corridor of conflict and disquiet, what she called *a movement*

towards happiness:

> ... to see them get closer to where … they're gonna be—not really end up at,
>
> because you don't ever really know where you're gonna end up, you can always
>
> change—but just being able *to see them move towards happiness*. … And, one of
>
> the best things I find about teaching, one of the most pleasurable things, is seeing
>
> a student realize that they love something about the world that they didn't have
>
> before.

Interestingly, Tegan also admitted that when she speaks of a *student*, she is not only

referring to an isolated piece of the pedagogical relation: "the teacher I always find is a

teacher/student, and never just a teacher, so it's … almost like it's a balance … If the

teacher is too high up, and the student is too low down, the balance is gonna break." For Tegan, it seems that education is therefore a place of contested history, where the social and psychic interact and conflict, and the teacher's history as student is always caught up in their present pedagogical situation.

To position the teacher as someone who enables a movement towards a better place, rather than someone who ensures the exact nature of such a place, is also, as Mark characterized it, to see the teacher as "the guiding person on the outside." For Mark, this understanding of teaching's inside and outside is conceptualized through reference to ideas of *tightness* and *looseness*. For *loose teaching*, the "good path" that Mark described is one that feels "less about learning the material to write a test for a grade, and more about just learning for the sake of learning, knowledge, and actually understanding the concepts, rather than just regurgitating it back up for an exam." In relation to reading, such a loose practice involves providing students with "that space to just read what [they] feel," "with as little influence as possible," and allowing them "time … to get into reading individually." *Tight teaching*, on the other hand, is practiced by those teachers who see themselves as "presenters of knowledge," rather than as "facilitators," and who "put [their students] in this very limited box."

For Sasha, teaching was described as an occupation where it is hard to avoid "getting bogged down," which is another way of saying *getting stuck*. And for teachers who approach their profession *tightly*, putting their students in one kind of box and keeping themselves in another (and whether or not such boxes are created out of a sense of love or hostility), there is the danger of getting stuck in what Robertson (1997) refers to as "fantasy's confines" (p. 91). Whether the fantasy is one of devotion, of becoming a

fearless teacher, of seeing school as a sanctuary, of peering faultlessly inside the student's mind, of perfectly measuring learning, or of loving without also wanting to hurt, "The fantasy straps into place the discourses that mark the place of the subject in [teacher] education, and it deserves to be disquieted" (p. 92). While this chapter has looked closely at the structures of desire and fantasy that framed the entry of these preservice teachers into the profession of teaching, in the next two chapters I examine the preservice teachers' reading groups, and look at the ways in which fantasies of teaching are disquieted, questioned and/or strengthened.

Chapter V: *Speak* and *Sprout*

In relation to the development of teacher identity, the following two chapters focus on the question of how these readers felt torn into teaching in their discussions of reading about adolescent life. In discussing their reading experiences, the readers in this study often used young adult literature to elaborate memories that helped to articulate future desires: to read is to be torn into the future through an encounter with the past in the present of reading. And as psychoanalysis posits the psyche as a fractured and multidimensional thing, where various structures (of memory and forgetting; love and hate; the id, the ego, and the superego; conscious and unconscious thought; the drives and their biological imperatives) merge interminably, indistinguishably and apart from conscious intention, we can therefore state that identity work is always a splitting of the self—and an act of compromise against necessarily uncertain knowledge. The issues that I am here examining therefore pose the question of how reading in a social environment—using the text as the object of focus—enables readers to work through their various identity-related concerns, using these books and discussions as a means to experiment with, shape and articulate their teaching selves.

In addition to looking at the readers' responses, I also offer my own descriptions and analyses of the books that were used in this study. As Grumet (1998) notes, since teachers are often in the powerful position of being able to assign value to ideas and objects simply by pointing at them, "the presentation of any text" should thus be considered as "the presentation of a world worth our notice" (p. 25). It is from this knowledge of the power embedded in textual selection that I understand that, as a researcher, the texts that were used in this study necessarily assumed a decisive influence

on the character of my participants' responses. While I chose the first two books—*Speak,* by Laurie Halse Anderson (1999), and *Sprout,* by Dale Peck (2009)—I therefore decided that my participants would choose the last two, which ended up being Suzanne Collins' (2008) *The Hunger Games*, and Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

Since I frame this study as straddling the fields of teacher education, young adult literature (and literary criticism) and cultural studies, it is essential that I pay attention to these texts—along with the participants' readings of them—as significant moments in the cultural circuit (Johnson, 1986). Importantly, since I recognize that "the text that critics have on the desk before them may not be the same as the text that is culturally active in the relations of popular reading" (Bennett, 1983, p. 16), the purpose in presenting my own interpretations is not to overdetermine the meanings that will be gleaned from these texts by the participants in my study, but to provide a gloss of the types of understandings that I have developed in my readings of these fictional works, and of the critical literature surrounding them. As textual form mediates understanding, it is here worth emphasizing the fact that, although they are exemplary illustrations of young adult literature, the encounters that the readers had with the following novels are in no way arbitrary, but emerge in a specific time and place, and in response to specific texts. Since I do not aim to make any inflated claims for generalizability in this study, it is necessary to admit that the substance of my participants' responses are, in no small way, determined by the substance of the texts they read. "The function of interpretation" Kristeva writes, "is similar to an analytical situation" (Guberman, 1996, p. 207), and as psychoanalysis can

be considered as "a way of reading texts" (p. 187), I approach these books with an awareness of the interpretive insights afforded by psychoanalytic thought.

In this chapter and the next, I explore the ways in which the participants in my study articulated their various anxieties, enthusiasms and questions about teaching in the context of the young adult literature reading group. As with any investigation that looks at the intricacies of reading experience, it must be reaffirmed that what is presented here is by no means illustrative of the totality of reading experience, nor is it attempting to capture such complexity. Instead, I am merely pointing to the glimpses of teacher identity that emerge when preservice teachers engage in informal dialogue around particular instances of young adult literature. For the purpose of lending coherence and organization to my interpretations, I structure the participant's responses according to the order in which the books were read. In this chapter, I look at the participants' responses to the first two books, *Speak* and *Sprout*.

Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson

While employed as a Special Education high school English teacher from 2008 to 2009, I had the privilege of being able to construct my own curriculum, and the main factors I had to consider were: that the texts I chose to use hadn't already been used by teachers in the lower grades; that the school owned a class set; and lastly, that the narratives themselves would capture the interests of my students—who were in grades ten and eleven—yet remain within their vocabulary range. Anderson's *Speak* seemed a perfect fit, and it was also my first introduction to contemporary young adult literature. Though the fact that it was first published in 1999 makes it arguably not as "contemporary" as the other texts in this study, since "contemporary" is obviously a

matter of perspective, I hoped it would still do well to capture the mood of contemporary

adolescence in 2012. When I taught the course *Literature for Young Adults* at McGill, in

2010, 2012 and 2013, this book was also among those that I had my students read.

    Speak tells the story of Melinda Sordino, a young, intelligent girl with an acerbic

wit, and who, as we learn in the latter half of the book, was raped by an older boy at a

summer party leading up to her first year in high school. Immediately after the rape,

Melinda staggers back into the house where the party is taking place and tries calling the

police, though unsure of what to say, she is silent. The police do show up, however, and

as no one else knows what happened to Melinda, she is blamed for breaking up the party.

As the school year begins, Melinda finds herself ostracized from all her old friends, who

don't bother asking her what happened, and as she tries to navigate the perils of high

school life, she withdraws further into herself, and copes with her alienation through

strategies of silence and separation. Tannert-Smith (2010) points out that Melinda's last

name, Sordino, is actually an anagram for "indoors," and since Melinda spends much of

the first half of the novel unable to articulate—even to herself—her traumatic experience,

much of the narrative can therefore be read as a process of self-examination, which

involves "looking inside for the story that speaks" (p. 408).

    As readers, though there are a number of obvious indications that something

extremely traumatic has happened to Melinda, we only discover the details through a

series of flashbacks that occur in the book's second half. For McGee (2009), it is

Melinda's silence that is the book's real focus, "as she struggles with exactly the same

sorts of things she felt upon calling the police: whether she can talk to someone, how she

can talk, and exactly what she would say" (p. 173). In her struggle to voice her

experience, Melinda develops a number of coping strategies, the first of which involves

an understanding of the variable nature of silence itself, "and the difference between

being silent and being silenced" (O'Quinn, 2001, p. 54). Though Melinda's silence is

often interpreted by those who surround her (both the adults and her peers) as a simple

refusal to speak—and thus as an absence and emptiness—the uses and meanings of

silence are actually as varied as the uses of meanings of speech; it can "resist, refuse,

postpone, divide, connect, conceal, and protect" (Granger, 2011, p. 241). As Granger

articulates, silence "can buy us time, hold in abeyance what we cannot yet speak, until we

are willing and able to tell it" (p. 241). It is Melinda's capacity to remain silent, in spite

of the various "incitements to discourse" (McGee, 2009) that surround her, which lends

Speak a certain potential for innovative and liberatory thinking.

While *Speak* certainly falls within the "problem novel" category of young adult

literature (Miskec & McGee, 2007), it also pushes beyond such boundaries, especially in

the ways that it questions the typical—often unproblematized—structure of the

"empowerment narrative," which generally follows a swift trajectory from "lost identity

[to] found empowerment" (McGee, 2009, p. 174). Anderson's novel is truly unique in the

ways it allows Melinda to explore the complex means through which power is enacted on

the voice and the body of the teenager, and the methods of adolescent resistance that can

potentially frustrate the stability of adult authority. For Latham (2006), *Speak* should

actually be read as "a queer novel," since it literally and figuratively presents "a view

from the closet … [that] questions and subverts dominant heterosexist assumptions about

gender, identity, and trauma" (p. 371), while Melinda's performative strategies—of

which her uses of silence are one—enact a tension between disclosure and secrecy that,

"paradoxically, serve both to suppress her voice and to help her recover/discover a voice with which she can speak the truth" (p. 369). Though usually considered as a marker of sexuality, the assertion of 'queer' can also be read as "an anachronous self-relation" (Stockton, 2009, p. 6), and thus, as insinuating a "sense of being out of sync" (Thomas, 2007, p. 330). Queer, in this regard, refers to "thinking that becomes curious about identifications and about how identifications constitute desires" (Britzman, 1998a, p. 81). While for Ahmed (2006), "To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things" (p. 565), Aaron (2009) describes how "queerness in its radical, oppositional formation defies the essentialism of being attached to an object [and] resides instead in a dynamic, in a desire, in an economy" (p. 71). For Melinda, the oddness of her performative strategies lends her a markedly queer veneer.

While Melinda uses her bedroom closet as a place to shelter her true feelings— she often hides there and places her mirror against the wall, facing away from her—the janitor's closet at school becomes a space "which she appropriates as her own hiding place" (Latham, 2006, p. 372), and which she decorates with art and posters as a kind of "unconventional" and "ephemeral archive." In Latham's view, it is Melinda's "queer coping strategies" (p. 380) which enable her to perform and transform the meaning of her traumatic experience, thus recovering her ability to speak, and ultimately, recreating her identity. Not coincidentally, it is also in the janitor's closet that Melinda eventually faces her attacker once again, this time silencing him by holding a shard of broken mirror against his throat.

While *Speak* can be seen as a powerful story of an adolescent's 'coming to voice,' McGee (2009) also troubles this reading of Melinda's story as simply one of liberation,

since, despite the time that Anderson gives Melinda to get there, and the numerous instances that Melinda points to language's inability to capture the meaning of a traumatic event, she invariably speaks her trauma in a way that turns the title of the book into a demand, "an imperative verb" (p. 182), and which reduces her words to an act of confession. Rather than turning to Ivy, one of her old friends who didn't fully abandon her, or David Petrakis, her lab partner with whom she develops a friendship, Melinda turns to Mr. Freeman, her male art teacher. As McGee argues, this eventual turn to adult authority reinforces the culturally hegemonic, regulatory discourse surrounding the legitimate expression of adolescent voice, which enforces the position that "a fellow peer simply does not bear 'truth' the way an adult will" (p. 181). Interestingly, Anderson (2005) herself also points to the ways in which adolescents will—and indeed should—speak their experiences to adults: "I have been in a unique position," she writes, "as have many YA authors, of becoming a sort of mother/father confessor for this generation" (p. 53). While Anderson is here specifically referring to the fact that numerous readers have contacted her over the years to unburden themselves of a painful experience, or to solicit advice, such an adoption of the role of confessor inescapably speaks to the ways in which young adult fiction, and the figure of the adolescent, can at times operate as a vessel for the projection of adult fantasies concerning adolescent life. For O'Loughlin (2009), such projections "represent a manic attempt to deny the unknowledgeable history of … [the adult's own] subjective experience and unnamable desires" (p. 83).

Though they often remain unacknowledged, adults contain within themselves inner losses that are directly related to their own adolescent experiences, and which are awakened and/or displaced in the reading of young adult literature; what Natov (2003)

writes of the adult's relation to childhood can potentially also apply to adolescence:

"Behind the fractured adult a child hides, estranged from his or her own history" (p. 3).

As Keroes (1999) notes, "the images a society invents of itself influence as much as they

reflect its anxieties and aspirations" (p. 3), and there is therefore always something

conspicuous about having adolescents, in young adult fiction, come to make decisions

that "adults would most like to hear" (McGee, 2009, p. 173). Though *Speak* deals with

some admittedly difficult issues in unique and often progressive ways, I too agree with

McGee that the ending suffers from being too tidy, too straightforward, and too

exclusively representative of adult desires, and where the figure of the adolescent—used

for ends other than their own—suffers as a consequence of these distinctly adult-initiated

rhetorical demands.

Using Reasonable Bodies as Neutral Containers: Responding to Speak

The participants in this study, when reading in the company of other preservice

teachers, often employed strategies of ego talk, where linearity and conscious intention is

key. In general, the use of such talk is an attempt by the speaker to make it seem as if

they are fully in control of what they say and—when *reading as a teacher*—to imagine

that one can fully control the effects of pedagogical practice. And even though these

teachers know that, realistically speaking, the actual nature of students' knowledge will

remain forever foreign to their teachers, this fantasy of control, and desire for

omniscience persists, perhaps as a way to deny and disavow the unavoidably unsure

elements of the learning relationship. Since, as Tegan admits, "You feel like a teacher

watching these kids" (by which she means the characters in young adult literature), we

can likewise recall Megan's conclusion that teaching is always accompanied by feelings

of imminent and inevitable sadness. That this sadness must in some way be maneuvered—through mechanisms of negation, disavowal, projection, idealization, displacement, etc.—is certainly no surprise: the emergent quality of a teacher's occupational identity necessarily demands a compromise between fantasies of control and devotion, on the one hand, and knowledges of failure and fear on the other. However, as this study suggests, though these compromises will remain interminable and in flux throughout a teacher's career, they can nevertheless be approached and articulated through shared experiences with young adult literature.

The psychical weight of this compromise can also at times inspire the reader—in trying to sustain and protect the ego's fantasies of fulfillment—to approach the text as a neutral and affectless object, as something that can be held under the reader's control. As Mark explained, and though he saw *Speak* as "a good introduction … for kids into the, you know, meaning behind text and looking at the little symbolism," he "kind of just felt neutral about it." To feel neutral about something, which seems to also neuter the text, might be a strategy that teachers use when disavowing some of the more powerfully and unsuspectingly destabilizing effects of their reading experiences; and of course, to neuter an object is also to do it violence, and to render it powerless and palpably less virile. Often, in framing such texts as neutral containers and tools for teaching—and here we should realize that to define something as neutral or neutered is also to imagine it as safe, since it can no longer unpredictably pierce the psyche or the body—these readers repeatedly theorized the ways in which these books could be safely *used* in classroom scenarios.

Such a rhetorical move—talking about texts in terms of their "use" and positioning texts as tools—appeals to the universal human desire for some sense of control over our shared and often-unpredictable surroundings. What we must here realize, however, is that even if a tool is assumed as neutral, tools are actually complex structures. So, even though—in exclaiming that a text can be used as a tool—a teacher disavows their own influence, distancing the choices they make from the relational consequences that follow, a tool's use is never so simple. Against such a disavowal, and in the language of the philosophy of technology, I agree with Winner (1986) that tools are never neutral, but, since they inevitably tolerate particular movements and disallow others, have a number of qualities (ethical, political, psychical, etc.) built in. For though the tool, seemingly immobile and passive without the endowment of human touch, may appear as naturally innocent as a rock or a blade of grass, it shapes and enacts a disciplinary pressure both on the tasks at hand and on its users; in actuality, "the doer is transformed by its acts" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 206). The tool motivates certain decisions that might otherwise have remained unthought; for (as the popular expression goes) not only is it true that hammers do not work well with screws, but when you walk around carrying around a hammer, everything starts to resemble a nail. If a teacher tends to think of a text as a tool, it can be hard to think of it otherwise. If the tool sculpts, even in some small way, both the task at hand and its users, then a curriculum of reading that regards knowledge as—in its essence—something commodifiable, and as eminently measurable, also composes its claims on the learner as a specified type of inert body. To put it simply, something is skewed in this process that separates the learner from the psychically unstable qualities of their learning. However, if we aim to work against such separation,

the meanings attributed to a reader's accomplishments should be determined by more than simply the visible and measurable results of their reading.

For Farrin, who described *Speak* as "definitely a book I would use in the classroom," she characterized its pedagogical value through its ability to "create points of comparison," and its capacity to function as "a discussion opener." Specifically, Farrin defined the seemingly safe[iii] nature of Halse Andersen's text through its particular narrative structure, and the way in which its plot is revealed: since the fact that Melinda has been raped is not divulged until halfway through the novel, such exposition is described as "a good way to not shock the reader." The appearance of this strange phrase—"to not shock the reader"—makes it clear that while there is a definite danger that the reader may always be shocked, such shocking is not what Farrin wishes to achieve in her own pedagogical practice. In this view, through what Farrin referred to as a narrative "kind of working backwards," Halse Andersen has created a text through which teachers can effectively imagine themselves as being in control of their students' reactions, holding their hands and guiding their thoughts as they navigate structures of difficult and perilous knowledge.

While it is obvious to see how such a narrative structure might lend itself easily to pedagogical application (since the teacher knows what the students do not), it also suffers from giving the teacher a false sense of power and control, encouraging them to disregard the fact that, when it comes to textual content and form, teachers can never presume the nature of their students' reactions. However, perhaps it can also be argued that the teacher *needs* this sense of control (as false as it may sometimes be), without which the relational dynamics of pedagogy might suffer from seeming too excessively uncontained; does the

teacher need the student to need them, just as the student needs the teacher to know? For Samantha, who declared, "Maybe it's a good thing that we figure out only later on in the story that it was rape, so that you get more kids to actually relate early on and not get thrown off," the text was imagined as a kind of carnival ride, in which the passenger needs to be securely shut in to fully experience—while continuing to breathe—the thrall of being tossed about.

Like a roller coaster, the text here offered its readers a sense of dangerous thrill, though a thrill that was coupled with the knowledge and hope that security is (almost) absolutely guaranteed; while it is a fact (especially true with young children) that we all need help to learn, the teacher's fantasy here appears to reside in the desire to act as an effective container for a student's potential anxieties in reading and learning. What we must consider, then, are the ways in which human desires for caring and holding are undeniably related to capturing and suppressing, all of which can further be linked to the psychoanalytic notion of containment. Curiously, containment can itself be read as simultaneously hostile and consoling. In the language of Kleinian psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, the theory of "container-contained," which is "linked … with the origins of thinking and the capacity to learn" (Youell, 2006, p. 21), and first arises through the dynamical relationship of the mother/baby/breast, can also be expressed in the framework of the analytic encounter: the job of the analyst is to perform a containing function in relation to the analysand's articulations of fear, anxiety, emotional transference, desire and fantasy. In the context of this study, the question is what the teacher hopes to accomplish by holding their students' anxieties in a type of suspension—whether, on the one hand, they allow their students to make meaning, or on the other, whether they make

meaning on behalf of their students, obliging the adoption of particular readings at the inevitable expense of others. In other words, in what ways does the teacher act as a container for the student, and the student as a container for the teacher? While both possibilities definitely persist (both teachers and students inevitably make use of the other, in ways both caring and hostile), it is nevertheless worth inquiring into the uses of containment we make of our students.

Since part of the teacher's job may be to hold—to contain—the student's anxieties, fantasies and fears, Pitt (2003) makes a provocative claim surrounding the "teacher's capacity to tolerate being used by students" (p. 115). In her thinking (from a chapter aptly titled *The Use of the Teacher*), which theorizes the movement between object-relating and object-usage, Pitt turns to Winnicott, who writes, "the object, if it is to be used, must necessarily be real in the sense of being part of a shared reality, not a bundle of projections" (Winnicott, cited in Pitt, p. 122). In teacher/student relations, while projective identification may serve as the initial way that a subject uses/relates to the other, if the subject is to eventually relate to the other in a world of shared experience, this initial use (and the object relations produced in this interaction) must be made useless and destroyed. Through such destruction (which is also an act of disillusionment and creation), wherein "the subject … lose[s] the object as it functions for the self alone," the subject can then newly relate themselves to the object (the other person) through the creation of what Pitt refers to as "shared world-making" (p. 123). Strangely, this tolerance that Pitt communicates is a tolerance of the destruction of an other—which is really only a part of the self, in the guise of an other, created through the movements of projective identification—which allows for the other to be approached, and relatable, on

their own terms. For teachers and students alike, if we are to eventually treat each other as real people with real desires that may be different from our own, learning to relate to the other in a manner that allows for the circulation of desires that may not be simply projections of the self is understandably difficult, though necessary, work.

For Youell (2006), "Teachers are not—nor should they be—'therapists', but their relationships with the children they teach have enormous reparative as well as developmental potential" (p. 2). As I understand it, this potential involves the ways in which teachers can act as a container for their students' emotions, and while the relationships of teaching and learning might (and perhaps should) at times feel like a reparative achievement for the teacher, were the student to function as a similar container for their teacher's emotions and anxieties, because of the power imbued in the figure of the teacher there is a danger that the teacher's fantasies might be taken as all too necessary and real. In short, if the teacher's interpretation of a text is taken as compulsory fact, the student—unable to experiment with meaning—is clearly at a disadvantage.

In relation to the character of Melinda in *Speak*, the readers in this study are repeatedly drawn to categorizing her "potential" (which is a question they also pose in relation to many of the other fictional characters), and inquiring into whether her actions sufficiently match their expectations for adolescent behaviour and development. In many cases, this taxonomy of expectation prompts these readers to think about the meaning of "potential" in relation to their own educational pasts. By looking at how these preservice teachers define "potential," and what they expect of these adolescent characters, we also get a glimpse into what they will, most probably, expect of their future students. As it is typically easier to project desires and fantasies onto a fictional character, as opposed to a

real person, engagements with literature can offer a space for teachers to articulate anticipatory desires that might otherwise remain unconscious and unsymbolized.

As Bridget described Melinda: "She's hilarious. She's awesome. I was laughing the whole time." Yet, while she obviously admired this character, she also admitted to thinking, "You can do so much better," which indicates an obvious degree of dissatisfaction. "When you see her grades," Bridget continued:

> If you guys think of yourself as a teacher, or think of yourself back in high school, and you knew these people who were extremely smart, these people who had so much *potential*, and they would do poorly in school, and you're like, "Whoa, what just happened? You're way smarter than me. Like, why did you get a worse mark than me?"

As Bridget phrased it, the interrelated efforts to "think of yourself as a teacher," and to "think of yourself back in high school," are directly connected (and torn) through the present of reading—the moment of *now*. Though she started with the character of Melinda, Bridget employed her reading in the construction of a conceptual and temporal bridge, which allowed her to survey her past as a student, as she also considered her future as a teacher.

On this question of potential, Tegan followed Bridget's lead in working her way through memory, and interpreting how past experiences might also influence future endeavours:

> *It makes you see*, now that you're reading it later on, why teachers say that to you sometimes—"You have so much potential"—and I remember one year, when I was a teenager, and someone said that to me, and I'd be like, "Shut up! No, I

don't! Leave me alone!" I remember I had a math teacher sit down with me one

day, and she's all like, "Look, we're gonna talk about this. We're gonna get you

to be good at math." And I was just like, "No, you're not. I suck at math. I hate

math." And next year, I was awesome at math. So, like, *it just shows*, when you're

reading, you're like, "Oh, this is why they did that." You know what I mean?

Like, they saw I was struggling, and that I could do a lot better, so they came to

help me out with it. So *it just shows*, as a teacher, maybe you should approach it

in a different way, so you don't piss off your students.

As Tegan began this reflection on the uses and problems of characterizing students in

terms of "potential," she was "[made] to see"—by personifying a book that she had

previously read as an adolescent (a conclusion we can draw from her admission that her

most recent reading is "later on")—that the practice of framing students in terms of an

assumed potential is an ambivalent prospect at best; for just as its intended goal of

student success may be achieved, it may just as easily backfire, unintentionally "pissing

off" the student ostensibly in need of support. Importantly, Tegan also recognized that,

just because a student is initially frustrated, this does not mean they are necessarily

ignoring their teacher's advice; indeed, as adolescent development in no way follows a

linear or predictable trajectory, much learning happens in belated time. While Tegan

appeared to have been fortunate in her described encounter with a math teacher, the

consequences of this encounter compelled her to recognize that her immediate reaction to

this teacher's advice was one of hostility and defense. For Tegan, this experience of

reading, and her subsequent engagement with similarly situated readers, allowed her to

formulate an important lesson regarding the precarious nature of teacher-student

interactions, and to begin to question the fantasies of possession and identification that teachers often-unknowingly project on their students. What is important to note, though, is that such fantasies will not go away, and they are also not necessarily undesirable, since they often perform the crucial function of allowing the teacher to identify with their student's needs. However, even though teachers invariably read their students through themselves, such reading must also acknowledge the possibility that the student might always get "pissed off," since the student *is not* actually the teacher.

In reading as a teacher, the readers in this study often described the texts of young adult literature themselves as teachers, since they provided a variety of "lessons" that could be used by adolescent readers and teachers alike. For Rhiannon, while *Speak* was "very much a lesson for teenagers," it was also one "for us future teachers," and as teachers read the behaviours of fictional teachers, they learn to evaluate which methods and attitudes appear effective, and which fail to meet their mark. While, for Sasha, Melinda's actions (or inactions) provided, "A lesson of what not to do, in the beginning, and then look at what she accomplished at the end, after talking … and getting through it," Tegan interpreted the actions of the ineffectual teacher, Mr. Neck, as a negative example of teaching that "gives a lesson to you … as a teacher, not to do that." "It shows why," she continued, turning the lens on her own future teaching, "if you're teaching it to a class … you have to be sure not to be acting like Mr. Neck." In a strangely self-referential fashion, and speaking in terms of "lessons" learnt, the representation of teachers in *Speak* here provided a lesson to teachers on *how to teach*, and *how not to teach*, the book they were currently reading.

While the readers in this study phrased their reading in terms of "lessons," they also often described what the text taught them in terms of what it "showed" (as in Tegan's description above), thus characterizing reading as a neutral act of revealing and display (the text itself is personified), rather than invention and creation on the part of the reader. Again, however, as with Melinda's "potential," the social practice of communicating the lessons learnt from fictional characters functioned as a means for preservice teachers to articulate their typically silenced anxieties, fears and desires in teaching.

As readers, when speaking of fictional characters, we can generally be far more critical of their actions and desires than we could ever be about our own. Taking seriously the implications communicated through the transferential relations of reading, it is clear that readers often substitute parts of themselves, or those they love and hate, in place of the characters they read, imagining themselves in the characters' lives, and in this way, internalizing their triumphs, missteps and misdeeds. From this point of view, criticizing or praising fictional others can operate as a way to criticize or praise oneself (or a version of self that is loved or hated) without harm, or to split off and distribute (though processes of introjection and projection) parts of our psyche into characters that are loved, and characters that are deeply despised.

In the phenomenon of splitting, as Youell (2006) notes, "All that is good is invested in the loved [other], and all that is bad is invested in the hated" (p. 29). Moreover, when reading these characters into our lives, it is always much easier to hate a character that possesses qualities that we hate in ourselves, than it is to admit that we hate such qualities when they exist in personal and intimate immediacy. As Granger (2011)

writes that, "We are attached to our theories. We *are* our theories, and *our theories are us*" (p. 188), we must also concede that we are deeply attached to those characters with which we identify—that we *are* those characters and that *those characters are us*. However, since Granger also illustrates how, "if our good theories are part of us, so are our bad theories, which persist despite our rejection of them" (p. 188), we are also those characters with which we would rather not identify, as they also most certainly persist in us. In the context of this study, the reading of fictional teachers can therefore illuminate the categories of teachers these readers want to be, as well as those which they fear they may unwillingly become. As Mark related, in reading about fictional teacher-student interactions, "you don't always want to play the what-ifs" (by which he implied the dangers involved in the reader taking liberties, reading something into the fictional relationship that may not necessarily be there), since "to play the what-ifs" may be to admit that "what-ifs" are more in the mind (and the unconscious) of the reader, than in the actual content of the text. The truth is, however, that readers cannot help but "play the what-ifs"; it is indeed their fate in reading.

Many of the "lessons" learnt from *Speak* can be characterized as queries of the conscious kind, meaning their pedagogical value was seemingly immediate and linked to observable effects. However, despite their apparently straightforward nature, in order to look at the work that these narratives were performing, it is worth exploring—in detail—the ways in which such lessons were described. Speaking of two of the minor teacher-characters in this book, Ms. Keen and the Hairwoman, Tegan related how, although Melinda "didn't dislike these teachers," and "didn't think that they were terrible," she just "didn't identify with them" to the extent that she identified with Mr. Freeman, the art

teacher. Although "she didn't have a great relationship with them," Tegan drew the conclusion that "this didn't mean they were terrible teachers." Tegan then explicitly described how, "for future teachers," this textual example provided a lesson of how even though "you can be a great teacher, you can be super enthusiastic, or you can have really cool hair that some of the kids might like … not all of them are going to … relate with you, and that's not necessarily your fault." In describing the ways that, despite their best efforts, teachers will not always be able to identify with every student who falls under their care, Tegan assuaged some of the more demanding, ethical anxieties associated with the responsibilities of teaching. Through underscoring imperfection as a general human condition, she nuanced the role of the teacher. Moreover, because of the way in which *Speak* here functions as a textual intermediary, Tegan was able to admit to the existence of anxieties in the classroom, while simultaneously maintaining a comforting distance from her own teaching practice (which was both implicated *and* disassociated in her repeated use of the pronoun "you").

Continuing to draw from the examples in *Speak*, Tegan also acknowledged that she "liked how [Mr. Freeman] went through a bit of an emotional turmoil" himself, "which goes to show, you know, everybody goes through it … you're gonna go through it, and the kids go through it, and it just makes it more easy to relate to everyone." From this straightforward description of the fact that every participant in the learning relationship possesses an emotional life, Tegan then illustrated a scene from her own educational past, where she witnessed a teacher experience an emotional turbulence similar to Mr. Freeman's:

I remember my teachers in high school, one of them, my friend was like, 'What's wrong, miss, what's wrong?' and she's like, 'No, I'm fine, I just feel sick.' And then my friend walked away, and she's all like, 'Tegan, I don't feel sick, I'm having a really bad day.' And we ended up developing a really good relationship, and I'm still friends with her now. So, yeah, it just shows that like, you know, everyone's human, that you don't need superhuman powers to be a teacher.

Departing from the confines of the text, Tegan was inspired to articulate a memory from her own educational past, which then encouraged her to formulate a seemingly simple fact—that teachers are humans—which, although it is obvious, functions as a crucial reminder. Sometimes, the most obvious facts of our existence and our occupational lives, since we invariably take them for granted, are the things we most easily forget.

In her group discussion, Bridget also moved into a similar memoried space, where the reader, in their present of reading, draws from the past to articulate future concerns:

My favourite teacher in high school … she was having difficulty conceiving, and she was teaching us about reproduction … and she cried [in front of] our entire class, and … I don't know if that was one of the best examples of a teacher, but it was really refreshing to see that. It was the first time that I'd really looked at a teacher and been like, "Whoa. You're a person."

As a reminder of a teacher's person-hood, this example resonated in the context of Bridget's reading because of the emotional bond that is formed between Melinda and her art teacher. Interestingly, Bridget then moved back to the text, illustrating, as McGee (2009) notes, the ways in which the pressure for Melinda to speak can be read as "an

imperative verb" (p. 182). "I think," Bridget remarked, "Mr. Freeman did a really good job":

> He allowed Melinda to come to him, and didn't force her to talk, to tell him everything. He was always like, "Well, I'm here if you need me, but I'm not gonna make you do anything," which I found the principal and the guidance counselor, sort of just shoved her into something, and they're like, "Speak," and she was like, "No."

To the realization that a teacher's curriculum might at times interfere—unwittingly—with the psychical life of teachers and students alike, Bridget linked the suggestion that the imperative to disclosure in educational spaces should best be guided by virtues of patience and care. For the English language educator, where assignments involving reflection and the forging of personal connections to text are common practices, such a lesson is surely of great consequence. For teachers, it is an insight of no small importance to recognize that a question posed to a student, whether in the context of a classroom assignment or an informal conversation, is never a simple matter. All questions have their hidden histories and possible futures, and when posed by teachers, have the potential to be damaging and psychically tumultuous. As Tegan wrapped up this lesson: "It really shows you that you can never force someone to do something unless they're ready," and "especially with adolescents":

> If *you're* going through a hard time and *you* don't want it to be fixed right away, it's very unlikely that someone is going to be able to convince *you* to do that … People can help *you*, but trying to shove it down her throat isn't gonna work …

> Like, if *I* was gonna be sad, *I* was gonna be sad until *I* was ready to be happy
>
> again … *You* can't expect to perform miracles.

Looking at the above pronouns that Tegan employed—switching seamlessly from "you," to "her," to "I," back to "you"—it is obvious that there is significant identity work that is here taking place, and that Tegan was experimenting—though language—with understanding the ways that her past as a student is inextricably involved in her future as a teacher.

At one point, in playing what he referred to as the "devil's advocate" (meaning to read beyond what's taken for granted—a devilish act), Mark raised the question of whether Melinda could be read as a lesbian character, and whether part of the shutdown in her communicative capacities might be linked to the question of sexual identity. This conversation, which Tegan described as "a really unexpected … read," while it may be interpreted as problematically interrogating Melinda's behaviour in a manner that draws attention away from her sexual trauma, also enabled the readers to have an honest and open discussion about sexuality and sexual desire. In response to Mark's original query, as to whether Melinda might be gay, Megan replied provocatively, acting devilishly to the devil's advocate, "Perhaps you could, but maybe it doesn't really matter." On this latter point, Tegan agreed, remarking, "You can almost … just see … that her sexual orientation isn't specified, which is cool. You know what I mean? It's just showing"— and again, the use of the word "showing" signals a kind of lesson—that "no matter what sexual orientation she is, she's going through this. She's still a teenager … I don't think it really matters … if she's gay, if she's straight, if she's bi, if she's trans." As a lesson to teachers, this particular conversation allowed these readers to problematize the fact that

educational procedures often require the (sometimes verging on obsessive) labeling of

students' behaviours, attitudes, proclivities and desires. From practices of psychometric

assessment, measures of adolescent development, coding, grades and behavioural

taxonomies, labeling often reveals more about the needs and anxieties of the labeller than

about the actual subject who is labeled. As Bourdieu (1984) remarks about the discursive

work of taste, labeling also "classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (p. 6). For Sasha,

"That's a good lesson in and of itself … It doesn't matter if you're gay or not."

As a way of personally connecting to this informal lesson on sexual identity, and

arguing for the importance of sex education (which in the context of Quebec remains a

contentious issue and a persistent challenge to educators at the high school level, who are

asked to introduce sex education across the curriculum, often without being given the

adequate tools or training to do so), Tegan introduced a scene from her own past:

I went to a Catholic school, and I remember we had a sex ed. teacher, and that

was big, that we had a sex ed. teacher. And she was really cool, and she would

only come in once a month, but we all loved her. She was super open-minded, and

then once, she did this activity, and she was like, "Okay, we're gonna go around

and I want you guys to say what your ideal man would be." And it was all girls,

so I remember a few of us, because … we had lesbian friends, we had gay friends,

whatever, like we wrote it down on the piece of paper, we were like, "You should

really not specify the gender that you're talking about, just because it might really

ostracize some people in the class." And so she actually came back the next class,

and she's like, "I'm so sorry, like I didn't even think about it. I feel like I should

have. I feel terrible. We're changing it from now on." But that's really rare … but
it really helped.

In this anecdote from her own past, Tegan revealed an important lesson, not only
about the fallibility of educators, but also about how teachers might admit—both to
themselves and to their students—the nature and consequences of their mistakes. For
teachers involved in the language of educational discourse, which tends to favour ideas
associated with progress, innovation, knowledge, knowing, and deliberate, conscious
intention, to wander instead into the space of failure, error, regression, ignorance, the
unconscious, forgetting, unfamiliarity, boredom, anxiety and not knowing, is to
invariably risk one's authority as an educator. However—as these readers admit—
teaching, good or bad, needs good risking. To consider that what one does not know can
be our space for thought, is to realize that the pedagogical accident and the grammatical
stumbling is often more productive and revealing than the teacherly sure foot.

For these readers, teaching is described as a potentially passionate and fearful
experience, and one in which we may encounter ourselves at our most naked, vulnerable
and abandoned. "Mistakes and misunderstandings," Britzman (2006a) suggests, "are not
the outside of education but rather are constitutive of its very possibility" (p. 43). As
O'Loughlin (2009) describes it, this above conversation is a good example of teachers
engaged in the process of "coming to know, rather than [acting as] containers and
dispensers of received knowledge" (p. 36). What is important to recognize here is that
this act of "coming to know" actually involves a productive engagement with ignorance,
which places the teacher at odds with the idea that figures of pedagogical authority need
to have all the right answers all of the time. As Silin (1995) notes, psychoanalytic

engagements with ignorance accept the idea of knowledge as "a structural dynamic" (p. 123), rather than simply a discrete and recognizable thing; ignorance is therefore understood in a similar fashion, as activity rather than emptiness. These particular textual interpretations, pursued in sites of collective response, can therefore be seen as the enactment of a kind of productive ignorance, which can potentially inspire readers to question the scripted identities—such as sexuality, adolescence, or being and becoming a teacher—which are all too often taken for granted.

As mentioned previously, in many of the teacherly lessons these readers drew from *Speak*, there is evidence of pronoun shifting and grammatical displacement, a movement in language that potentially signals an instability, or psychical unease, in relation to a speaker's various identities. As an example of such disturbance, we can turn to an exchange that engaged the question of teaching "troubling content," which was initially prompted by Sasha's comment that, "You just hope you have the right teacher teaching this kind of stuff." In response to this assertion, Tegan suggested:

I feel like whenever *you* start off a book that has a problem such as this, you could always say at the beginning, "There is some troubling content in it, and if you feel the need to talk about it, please do." … I know teachers who did that … [and] whenever *they* did that, it would make *you* feel a lot better about reading the book … Because if *you* don't know *they* sympathize, and *you* are actually having an emotional connection with this book, and then *you're* afraid to bring it up in class, it would make it very uncomfortable. So, *I* don't know. That would be the way *I* would approach it, anyways, just like, give *them* forewarning, let *them* know that *they* can bring it up in class, or in *your* office hours.

As a preservice teacher, Tegan was here immersed in what Alsup (2006) refers to as "borderland discourse," which Britzman (2006b) characterizes as "a strange geography charted anew by each participant" (p. xi). "Within borderland discourse," as Alsup describes it, "there is evidence of contact between disparate personal and professional subjectivities, which can lead to the eventual integration of these multiple subject positions" (p. 6). Moreover, "Such integration through discourse is vital for the developing teacher, who must negotiate conflicting subject positions and ideologies while creating a professional self" (p. 6). In the above quote from Tegan, we have evidence of a speaker fluctuating between various subject positions; at one moment a student, and in the next a teacher, a movement which is all the more complicated because she was speaking about teachers from her own educational past. For students learning to teach, the knowledge that the position they will eventually be occupying is equivalent to that of their former teachers requires more than simply placing a Mr. or a Mrs. before their last name. This work is most definitely psychical in nature, and thus engages the hidden life of the unconscious, with language functioning as its—albeit incomplete—conscious measure. As Alsup makes clear, this "borderland" work takes time and should be encouraged by teacher educators. With Tegan, however, the fact that such shifting exists is evidence itself that this work is being done. By communicating their interpretations with similarly situated readers, the participants in this study were therefore given the opportunity to unconsciously explore what it feels like to be a teacher, and what it means to be an educator of others.

As a representation of an ethically effective educator, the character of Mr. Freeman, in particular, offered these readers a way to think through the complexities of

learning to teach. At numerous points in the novel, Mr. Freeman was seen to patiently observe Melinda: "He gets to know her," Amanda remarked, "and he watches her." Samantha qualified Mr. Freeman's ability to push Melinda's creative capacities as the mark of successful pedagogy. As she put it, "He was very attuned to her needs … 'cause he knew … [what] would work with her, and where she was, and how she had developed already." This idea of education as a matter of timing and tuning is one that Ted Aoki (2005) repeatedly returns to in his writing, thinking through the ways in which teaching can be characterized as indwelling between two worlds: that of the student and teacher, and that of the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived. "When two strangers meet," he declares, "two worlds meet. How is it when two worlds meet?" (p. 219).

In this meeting of worlds, Aoki (2005) draws attention to the ways in which teaching is often felt as a kind of tension, as the teacher is called to maneuver the rhythms and measures of the pedagogical encounter. As Farrin described Mr. Freeman's capacity to interpret Melinda's moods: "He reads into her"; unlike the pedagogy of reading and "working backwards," which is how Farrin characterized the novel's structure (and which affords the teacher a sense of control), Mr. Freeman gives consideration to the unknown—and inevitably tensioned—qualities of his relationship with Melinda. In Aoki's understanding, the notion of "indwelling dialectically" and "living in tensionality" is "a mode of being that knows not only that living school life means living simultaneously with limitations and with openness, but also that this openness harbours within it risks and possibilities as we quest for a change from the is to the not yet" (p. 164). For Farrin, the practice of reading through Mr. Freeman's interactions with Melinda operated "almost like a wake-up call," a description which then begs the question: What

exactly is this call waking these readers up from? And further, what kind of dream is the teacher-reader dreaming before being awoken, before being torn out of sleep?

In the next section of this chapter, and in continuing to encounter the ways that these readers felt torn into teaching, I look at the discussions of the preservice teachers that emerged from their reading of Dale Peck's *Sprout*. If, following Farrin's description above, the representation of teaching relations in *Speak* operates as a kind of "wake-up call," then its melody is relatively easy on the ears; the readers were generally affirmed in their previously held beliefs regarding the positive effects of teaching. Though Melinda's story remains unfinished (as readers, we do not actually know the substance of her final disclosure), we can assume that she is on the appropriate path to recovery, and therefore, that opening oneself up to the judgment of an adult educator is the correct response to an adolescent's traumatic experience. In *Sprout*, however, the quality of this awakening into thinking about teacher identity is definitely of a ruder kind, as the affirmations of adult authority in this novel are not so immediately forthcoming. Using Taubman's (2004) categories, the difference between *Speak* and *Sprout* is similar to that which exists between "rude" and "reasonable bodies." While "reasonableness" is about "disguised control" and "self-congratulatory restraint" (p. 24), "the life of the rude body" is about "uncontrollability"; "It resists, subverts and eludes control or domestication or easy analysis" (p. 25). As a "rude body," *Sprout* operates as a challenge to teachers, and as these readers were torn into teaching in a most unsettling fashion, the text draws considerable attention to the expectations (about reading, adolescence and teaching) that educators bring to young adult literature.

Sprout, by Dale Peck

Sprout is unquestionably a queer novel, a queerness that relates not only to its subject matter but also to the ways it relentlessly works to disrupt (as it simultaneously performs) various literary tropes historically associated with the representation of gay characters in young adult fiction, as well as those found in young adult literature more generally. This novel was first brought to my attention at a graduate conference where I presented a paper on Ellen Hopkins' *Crank*. One of my fellow panelists told me that I'd probably enjoy *Sprout*, which, as he put it, concludes with all the other characters ending up queerer than the gay protagonist himself.

In numerous instances throughout the book, Dale Peck plays with the ways in which characters who identify as gay have typically been put to use in literature aimed at young adults, and who, until the past ten years or so, were often represented as secondary characters appearing as foils for heterosexual protagonists, and who were usually killed off or driven out of town; their lives were generally reduced to devices of conflict and plot. As Banks (2009) argues, the message to be taken from such stories "is hard to miss: LGBT characters are most useful if they're dead and gone" (p. 35). Thankfully, LGBTQ characters are now afforded primary-character status and generally get to live through the entire course of a novel's narrative, and while there are certainly numerous problematic representations that continue to circulate, contemporary readers are more challenged to understand such characters "as [full] human beings with thoughts, desires, and interests that may mirror their own and that are not necessarily silenced by novel's end" (p. 35). What is more (though certainly not in every instance), queer characters are also increasingly defined by a broad range of characteristics that push well beyond their

narratives of "coming-out," and while the process of coming-out is invariably an important piece of a young queer person's life, it is now generally recognized as not the only—or most significant—part of their life story.

Sprout begins with the well-established trope of an adolescent moving to a new town and a new school—which we see in Speak, as well as countless other young adult novels, including the pop culture behemoth that is Twilight—and which sets the stage well for dealing with questions of conflict, anxiety, crisis, and a larger search for identity. Daniel Bradford, who goes by the name of "Sprout," has been uprooted from his hometown of Long Island, New York, and brought by his father to the decidedly desolate terrain of Buhler, Kansas. While the state of Kansas is widely known for its conservative views regarding homosexuality (a fact that is brought to the reader's attention on numerous occasions), it is also the place that Dorothy, in The Wizard of Oz, departs from for a land of enchantment: "We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto." For Sprout, however, whose narrative starts in the Midwest, enchantment and strangeness exist alongside the banality and obscurity of Kansas' landscape.

The book begins with an admission of sorts: "I have a secret. And everyone knows it. But no one talks about it, at least not out in the open" (p. 3). Like Speak, Sprout revolves around the question of self-disclosure, and begins by framing its plot as a type of confession and revealing. Though as we soon discover, this is a confession that is creatively perverted through the protagonist's growing awareness of the impossibility surrounding any definitive knowledge of self, and of "the ways in which telling a story may simultaneously function as a means to know ourselves and a resistance to self-knowledge" (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013, p. 217). While Sprout is certainly the

story of an adolescent's journey "toward identity" (Stephens, 2007, p. 41), which as we will recall is one of Stephens' definitional frames for understanding young adult literature, the very idea of identity is repeatedly problematized, rather than proffered as a thing to be found and grasped, or as a symbol of subjective stability. The character of Sprout toys with this notion of a secret throughout the novel, and plays with the reader's multiple expectations regarding such questions of disclosure: his secret *is not* that he is gay, it *is not* that his mother has recently passed away, it *is not* that he first had sex in grade seven with Ian Abernathy, the school jock, nor that he maintained a purely sexual relation with him for a number of years (and mostly in the school's janitor closet, a space of enclosure also seen in *Speak*). Indeed, while these facts are part of Sprout's story, there is a deeper secret that refuses disclosure, a "tension between self-expression and self-knowledge" (Brushwood Rose & Granger, p. 217), which frustrates all attempts at full disclosure and orderly interpretation. By the novel's end, both Sprout and reader are left uncertain as to what this secret actually entails.

On their way into Buhler, a town that was chosen seemingly at random, we learn that Sprout's mom had only recently passed away from cancer, and that her premature death had prompted his father's unilateral decision to move away from Long Island. For the first half of the book, we encounter Sprout as intimately attached to his dictionary, which we later learn was his mother's, and which she considered her favourite book. Sprout often turns to his dictionary—an obvious "transitional object"—as a way of distancing himself from reality, while also as an instrument for interpreting reality (and reality's pitfalls), and for understanding how the meaning of words and their subjective reality often do not correspond. One telling example of this non-correspondence is when

Sprout looks up the definition of "boyfriend," for which he finds no suitable connection to his own circumstances.

Sprout's father, who we meet as a highly depressed alcoholic, is also represented as having a unique sense of decoration: while he covers their trailer home with layers of tight-fitting, wild vine (which as they grow, have a tendency both to hold things together and to work their way into the skin of the structure to which they adhere), he also put on display in front of their home dozens of stumps that are laid out in such a way that their roots point towards the sky. Since these stumps are numbered and set out in a grid-like fashion, they operate as a kind of public archive and a catalogue of grief. While the vines can be seen as an attempt to cover over and camouflage the Bradford family's grief, and the empty, motherless shell that is their home, the stumps—in contradictory fashion—are a public display of such grief, and an endeavour to arrange a symbolic ordering to the indecipherable nature of mourning. When set against each other, the notion of the sprout and the stump also create a strange friction, potentially symbiotic.

When Sprout's father looks through the cache of their home computer and finds a history of gay pornographic websites, he throws Sprout's dictionary through the computer screen, and though he eventually is supportive, when he first confronts Sprout about his sexuality, he nastily says, "Hey. You're a fag. I'm a drunk. Nobody's perfect," which he soon follows with, "Just promise me you won't tell anyone. I don't want to have to identify my son at the morgue" (p. 72). Through this affront, Peck alerts the reader to the phobic and offensive ways in which gay characters have traditionally been represented in young adult fiction: as all too often linked with death, disease and depression.

At Buhler High School, Sprout soon becomes acquainted with a number of individuals: Ruthie, who he quickly befriends, and who helps him to dye his hair a bright green; Ian Abernathy, who publicly teases Sprout, calling him "Long Guyland;" and Mrs. Miller, who recruits Sprout for the statewide essay contest, and who is not afraid to use obscenities or get drunk in front of Sprout during their numerous writing sessions. The question of what the subject of this essay should be runs through the whole novel, and while Sprout initially writes stories about Ruthie, then decides he wants to focus on his sexuality (a plan that is originally discouraged by Mrs. Miller since she doesn't think the judges would react favourably to such a topic), he ends up writing about his secret, whose content remains ambiguous. As Sprout clearly attributes a high degree of importance to the issue of choosing a subject for this essay, he is spurred on by questioning the blindness and insight of narrative itself. In many ways, he seems to be asking, "What do we … use stories to do or not to do?" (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013, p. 226). Mrs. Miller and Sprout's father soon develop a romantic relationship, spurred on by their shared eccentricities and their mutual interest in drinking. In front of them both, Sprout admits to having sex with Ian Abernathy, and as he relates the story of their first sexual encounter to the reader, which took place during an unsupervised afterschool detention, it began with Ian bullying Sprout in a play of physical roughhousing, and led to Sprout performing fellatio on Ian: "I labored at something that both of us knew the name of, but had never connected with real life" (p. 93).

From this sex scene that is described in fairly ambiguous language, we cut straight into a chapter that begins with Sprout confessing, "The first time I did it, it hurt. A lot. The second time I did it it hurt even more, because I had a rash from the first time, which

broke open, and bled" (p. 95). These descriptions continue on for the rest of the page,

until we learn that Sprout is actually describing the process of dying his hair, rather than

that which leads Sprout to call the reader a "pervert," exclaiming, "Get your mind out of

the *gutter*!" (p. 96). This play on the reader's expectations is significant, because though

Sprout explicitly states that he is not talking about sex, Peck is well aware that his

manner of delivery is constructed in such a way that sex will be the only thing on the

reader's mind. Through Sprout's convoluted conveyance of sexual imagery, this scene is

both *about* and *not about* sex at the exact same time. It is also in this chapter that we

become aware of the fact that Sprout—through the trail of green dye that smudges every

surface he touches, from school desks to Ian Abernathy's baseball cap—literally leaves

his mark everywhere, and just like his father's stumps are a show of grief that mask

another form of grief, these marks are a literal staging of material abjection and

unconventionality, which along with Sprout's bright green hair (a deliberate target on his

head), push even further the abject irregularities that remain unsaid in the public realm,

including the fact of Sprout's homosexuality. Throughout this novel, words and

appearances are shown to operate in a similar way—masking, through their stolidity and

seeming stability, that which cannot be expressed in language.

We soon meet the character of Ty, with whom Sprout develops an immediate

friendship, which later turns into a sexual and romantic relationship. Curiously, when

Sprout meets Ty, he neglects to make any further mention of his dictionary, which seems

to suggest that Ty is able to fill the void otherwise occupied by language. Indeed, with the

introduction of Ty the book's pacing also picks up speed, and at times even seems to lose

its own train of thought, which reminds me of the "textual energy" referred to by Brooks

(1982) in relation to the reader's desire, described as "always … on the verge of premature discharge, of short-circuit" (p. 296). When Ty and Sprout first meet in the forest on Sprout's property, their "courtship" is precipitated by antics of chase and aggression, which like most other actions in this novel, mask some other, less socially acceptable behavior. As Ty's mother left his family when Ty was quite young, and which provoked Ty's twin brother, Hollis, to commit suicide, Ty has since been raised by his physically abusive and religiously bigoted father. Ty often has huge bruises all over his body, and knowing he's a victim of abuse, teachers often make concessions for his disruptive behaviour.

As they wander together through the barren fields of an ostrich farm, Ty strikes on the idea of digging a large hole, an act which, through its utter purposelessness, allows Ty and Sprout to create a space of meaning out of what would otherwise undoubtedly be considered a void and an absence. In a world where the norms of romance have been dictated by the limiting nature of compulsory heterosexuality, Ty and Sprout create their own standards of courtship—"making a space that was ours" (p. 165), as Sprout puts it— which looks remarkably unlike their heteronormative surroundings. As Sprout relates, "the fissure opening up in the earth's skin seemed to promise so much" (p. 164); it was a safe place to explore their limits.

There are many ways to interpret the meaning of this hole, though what is most important here is that each meaning is connected to its unsaid obverse, its disguised double; an absence and emptiness that simultaneously constitutes a space of fullness, meaning and desire. The hole, just like the rectum (the ass-hole), can be seen either as a place of desire or a place of danger and filth. The work is described as "sweaty and

close," and while digging the hole, "There was a lot of wrestling. There was a lot of lying next to each other after wrestling. There was a lot of lying next to each other" (p. 165). Sprout sees in the very unclean and useless nature of this work a kind of temporary social permit, which allows forbidden desires to flourish because the work—digging a meaningless hole—is so implausibly banal. Their bodies would touch "in ways they could've never done in another context, but which was innocent here—*clean*—precisely because we were so dirty. Because we were digging a hole, and that's all we were doing" (p. 165). However, as with the above hair-dying scenario, digging a hole *is not* all they are doing (while at the same time, of course, *it is* all they are doing). While they could leave such things unspoken for the time being, after the hole is dug, and while Sprout tries to comfort Ty in a moment of grief over his dead brother, Ty explodes with indignation: "I'm not gay, Daniel. Dammit, I'm not! I'm not!" (p. 173).

Complicating Sprout's emotional and hormonal landscape, Ruthie and Ian start dating, and though Sprout seems to have moved past his feelings for Ian, or at the very least replaced them with his affections for Ty, the advent of this new relationship confuses Sprout's attempts to separate his past sexual relations with Ian from feelings of love: "as if maybe something more had gone on between us than an activity we carefully shielded from ourselves" (p. 199). As if answering to this call of uncertainty, Ty soon kisses Sprout while they are stuck up a tree, evading the clutches of a neighbour's St. Bernard. Though Ty is well aware of Sprout's sexuality—"I know that! I know you're *gay*" (p. 205)—he still considers himself heterosexual—"'I'm *not* gay!' he practically shouted, and then he grabbed me and kissed me" (p. 205)—and while it may be easy to write this denial off as a simple case of repressed sexuality, it also begs the question of

why we ask the question of categorical sexuality in the first place. What makes a boy

gay? Is it simply the fact that he kisses (or wants to kiss) another boy?

The next day, Ty and Sprout take a road trip in Sprout's father's car, and on the

way there (though *there* is itself an uncertainty) they drink a bottle of liquor that they find

in the back seat (along with used condom wrappers, which they presume belong to

Sprout's father and Mrs. Miller). While Sprout is driving (and drinking), Ty pulls out a

gun, and for the next few pages, there is a real feeling of drunkenness in the text itself,

and as readers we get lost, as it is almost impossible to keep up "with all the shaking and

skittering and bouncing" (p. 218). There is, in this text, obvious indications of a kind of

"forepleasure" that is played out in narrative form, and which suggests "a whole rhetoric

of advance toward and retreat from the goal or the end, a formal zone of play … that is

both harnessed to the end and yet autonomous, capable of deviations and recursive

movements" (Brooks, 1987, p. 339). As the characters play with each other, the text plays

with the reader and the reader with the text, through "delay[s], displace[ments], and

deviat[ions]" (p. 340).

They run out of gas, and stopping along the Arkansas River, Ty and Sprout set up

a shooting range composed of cell phones that had been taken from Mrs. Miller's

collection of confiscated objects. Their preparation for shooting reads as foreplay, with

the gun as a sexual intermediary: "He dropped the bag of cell phones and adjusted

something in his pants" (p. 225); "A part of me was glad for the distraction of the gun,

since without it I wasn't sure what else we might do" (p. 226); "I touched the gun barrel,

which was still warm from where it'd been tucked into Ty's pants, then shoved it in

mine" (p. 227); "He was stiff against my body, and I *hope* you don't think I mean his

arms and legs" (p. 229). In fact, when it turns out that Ty hadn't even loaded the gun, he and Sprout immediately start making out, in an erotic scene with equal tones of aggression and sexual desire (rendering the two virtually indistinct): "I … kissed him with some screwed-up mixture of anger and desire that made me wish I could eat him instead. Chew him up into little pieces … [and] take him inside of me, so he could never get away" (pp. 231-232).

When they finally lay down to make love—which is a moment described sacrilegiously, as if "God … [had] laid out this nuptial bed for his two favourite sons" (p. 232)—Sprout declares that he's "lost his virginity," despite the fact that we know he'd already had sex with Ian Abernathy, which is now simply described as "some half-assed groping in the janitors' closet" (p. 232). This section of the book is especially surprising for the candid nature in which Sprout speaks of sex: "it turns out that one of the things about sex is that once you've done it you want to do it again and again" (p. 236).

In the following weeks, though Sprout and Ty continue to have sex, they require a place with more "horizontal amenities" (p. 239), and with this end in mind, Sprout introduces Ty (and the reader) to a space that he's named the "nidus," which refers to the Latin word for 'nest.' Though it can be read as simply a collection of leftover family furniture stored under a plastic tarp in the woods, the nidus remains a strange and difficult space to describe, and an even harder space to imagine, given its surreal and amorphous qualities, which can best be understood in reference to the maternal energies of the Kristevan semiotic. For Kristeva, the signifying process is comprised of two interrelated modes, the symbolic, "an expression of clear and orderly meaning" (McAfee, 2004, p. 15) that is here embodied in Sprout's father's stump catalogue, and the semiotic, which

relates to the ways in which feelings and drives are represented in language and other signifying structures, of which environmental architecture and geography is certainly one.

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva (1984) locates within the semiotic nature of the drives a relation to the Platonic *chora*, which denotes "an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (p. 25). Following from Plato, who describes the *chora* as a "receptacle and nurse, that is, what the universe is before and as anything exists" (McAfee, p. 19), Kristeva introduces the concept of the *chora* as a primary psychic space, which belongs to each person before they develop a clear indication of the borders between self and other. The *semiotic chora* is thus related to the mother's body, and "is the space in which the meaning that is produced is semiotic: the echolalias, glossolalias, rhythms, and intonations of an infant who does not yet know how to use language to refer to objects" (p. 19). The *chora* is therefore not purely the space where language *fails*, but is the space where language is *not yet*, where language is *yet to become*. Indeed, the Kristevan *chora* is not really a space (or a space of language) at all, but an articulation and a rhythm that itself precedes the very idea of language.

For Sprout, the nidus represents an attempt to journey back to the semiotic chora, back to a space and a feeling of organic and indecipherable rhythm, movement and growth. Though such a journey is itself impossible, Sprout's nidus, which he constructed out of the furniture from their old house that wouldn't fit in the trailer and covered with plastic sheets, is a way for Sprout to inhabit the loss that is his mother, without rendering such an absence fully symbolizable. Sprout admits that he had named the "nidus" on November 17, his mother's birthday. It is obscure and otherworldly. Sprout describes this

space as "self-contained" and womblike, where "moisture had collected," along with "a healthy coating of mold and mildew," and where "four years of fallen leaves mulching on the roof contributed their own dark shadows" (p. 241). There was "darkness and decay" in this hallucinatory space, yet there were also the traces of a "purposeful consciousness" (p. 241). Trees could be found sprouting through sofas, and the tubeless TV held "a single fat book" in its empty shell: Sprout's dictionary, which originally belonged to his mother. In this space of non-language, there is nevertheless the germ of language, though "moisture-soaked" and made almost organic, "swollen like a spoiled can of food" (p. 242). The smashed out computer was also there, though with flower petals and beetle shells glued to the keyboard, and a single nest resting inside its monitor. "As if to form a ring of protection" (p. 243), a garrison of moldy books surrounded the space, while a half dozen framed pictures were made obscure through the collage-like addition of bird bones, twigs, broken dishes, beer bottles, and other detritus of domestic living. The fact that Sprout introduced sex into this sacred space—which he describes as his "own version of bruised knuckles" (p. 246)—suggests that though he was certainly well aware that he was making *something* as he was constructing the nidus, this *something* was left indeterminate and changeable. As Sprout acknowledges, "you don't have to know the *name* of what you're doing to do it" (p. 249), which is similar to the point he made while engaged in retelling his initial sexual encounter with Ian.

After a few months in this self-described "shagpad," Ty and Sprout grow increasingly intimate, and Ty proposes that they run away together, a suggestion that he brings up in Carey Park, which is a well known cruising spot in the Buhler area. While sitting in their car, Sprout changes the subject abruptly when he spots a man staring at

them from across the parking lot: "He's here for *us,*" he tells Ty, "*you—and—me*" (p. 257). Both Sprout and Ty are shaken by the presence of this man, a fear which prompts Ty to wonder, "Is that what happens to you? When you're gay?" (p. 257). For Sprout, the way in which Ty phrased this question leads him to understand that, despite their intimacy, Ty is still unsure of his sexuality, a fact that leaves Sprout frightened. When Ty and Sprout later run into Ian and Ruthie in the janitors' closet, Ruthie asks point blank, "Are you in love or what?" and even though Ty screams "Yes!" Sprout answers in a fashion uncharacteristic for all that we've come to know about his personality: "Um, *duh*. We're just fucking" (p. 261). As he speaks these words, Ty runs away and never returns. Ruthie then grabs her stomach and tells Sprout she is pregnant.

Broken and distraught, Sprout has no idea where Ty has run to, or even if he's still alive. It is under these conditions that Mrs. Miller drives Sprout to the statewide essay contest, and tells him—as he clutches his dictionary once more—that if he wants to write about his sexuality, he has her blessing, as she's now come to see that, despite the consequences, sexuality only serves to repress when kept secret, and not when revealed. In response, Sprout takes off his baseball cap, showing that he's cut off his hair and left it uncoloured, which is something he had not done since moving to Kansas. In this movement, Sprout reveals the fact that he longer feels the need to obscure or repress his own desires (or his knowledge about the utter uncertainty of sexual life). Sprout begins his essay with the words, "I have a secret. And everybody knows it but me" (p. 277), and while his hair isn't the secret, neither is the nidus, the trailer, his dad's drinking, his mother's death, or his sexuality. As Rey (1982) notes, the act of writing can potentially work to make the writing subject's "own splittings signify to him, and even submit them

to representation without his knowledge" (p. 305). The secret is, at the novel's end, disclosed as something uncertain and indecipherable, unquestionably related to the ways the unconscious interferes with the conscious mind—at times compelling us to act against our stated intentions—and the interrelation that the orderly, symbolic mode of signification has with the drive-obsessed semiotic. As "the unconscious cannot be put into words" (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013, p. 222), we are never one mode without the other:

> There was some part of myself I didn't know, something about my character I didn't understand. Something that might've been the thing to make me fail Ty at the crucial moment, but then again something that might be the one thing that he could hold on to. (p. 277)

While *Speak* may have ended on an ostensibly reassuring note, it is uncertain whether *Sprout* holds the same promise. What *is* certain, however, is that the character of Sprout has developed a deep sense of self-authenticity (which is not necessarily self-awareness) throughout the novel, which remains true even if the growth that is made is forward into ignorance.

Taking the Trip of the Rude Body to a Place of Not Knowing: Responding to Sprout

There is no universal read; even though parallels can be drawn between the participants' responses in this study, what is especially striking are the various moments where their ideas and readings did not agree, or where the readings themselves suggest an unease. In the context of *Sprout*, these divergences are unusually conspicuous; though, because of the informal framework of the reading group discussion, these conflicts never functioned as obstructions to thought, but conversely, as prompts for thinking.

Interestingly, the readers themselves notice this potential; however, instead of referring to the discussion at hand, they typically frame it in relation to future pedagogical application, which yet again references the uses of reading as a tool. For Samantha, while *Sprout* was described as "a really powerful tool," she also asked, "What's the limit? How far do you get [your students] to talk about a certain issue?" In admitting that, "It's difficult to tell where the line should be drawn," Samantha posed the question of what educators should do with the fact that all pedagogical tools are invariably slippery. Though teachers may associate particular tools with particular ends, since tools may always surpass or bypass their intended use, how do they manage to think about tools in the context of their actual application?

As Tegan characterized the promise of using a book such as *Sprout* in the classroom:

> It's like there are people with different opinions, and it's almost nice to just … talk about it. Even if you all agree, it's still good to talk about it, because there are some things that some people do not understand, or some things that haven't been touched upon before, or some things that some people don't even know exist … You should be able to have conversations about—open conversations about it—as long as you don't become offensive and cruel.

By emphasizing the need to talk, *even if everyone agrees*, Tegan construed the English Language Arts classroom as a place for the negotiation of ideas, even if such negotiation seems at first glance unnecessary, or is at times difficult or unfamiliar. "Talking," Phillips (1995) writes of the analytic encounter, "changes the way things look" (p. xii). While, when things are difficult and unfamiliar, the time for discussion seems all the more

crucial, sometimes—due to the risk of unpleasantness, and even is everyone seems to agree—the need for such crucial conversation is ignored. When it comes to topics like sexuality, death and desire, the at-times uncomfortable nature of such matters may make it easier to acquiesce to silence, than to admit that one is unsure or uncomfortable. For Tegan, "sexuality needs to be spoken about because *these kids need to know*"; it's a topic that "needs to be touched upon in the class." In relation to the readers in this study, we can turn this statement around to impress on the context of teacher education: As students learning to teach, what do these readers *need to know*, and what breeds of knowledge and thinking remain difficult, unfamiliar, or prone to acquiescence?

In relation to the subjects of adolescent sexuality and gay identity, Mark described *Sprout* as providing a "jumping-off point" to "spark your sex ed. conversation." As on the edge of a "jumping-off point," such readings position the reader (and the assumed adolescent) as facing an abyss that fringes the unknown, while the use of the word "spark" acknowledges the potentially fiery and inevitably passionate nature of adolescent sexuality in particular, and sexual desire more generally. As Phillips (2012) describes it, sexuality is one of the categories of human experience "that [is] not subject to understanding" (p. 62). "There are," he writes elsewhere, "no experts on love" (1995, p. xi). This impossibility of expertise, while it encourages some to defensively assert their proficiency in the face of a knowledge that cannot be known, can also feel as a terror: "we are, in a sense, terrorized by an excess of feeling, by an impossibility of desire" (p. xii). For the teacher (and for the student learning to teach), as with the psychoanalyst, the challenge here is "how to learn not to know what he is doing and how to go on doing it" (p. xiv), or in other words, how to have "the courage of one's own naivety" and to

wonder "whether there are versions of not getting it that are not merely the binary opposite of getting it" (Phillips, 2012, p. 38).

For Farrin, the presence of such unknowability prompted her to ask: "I don't know … in a classroom discussion, where that would lead, right?" And it is in this sense that an engagement with literature, and its "unknowable multiplicity of interpretations" (Phillips, 1995, p. xvi), is always a perilous prospect. "It's almost," Farrin continued, "like our fear of the parents starting to call in, and the principal getting upset." If the teacher doesn't know where an idea will lead, how can the teacher expect to remain an expert? While Farrin admitted to the fearful quality of being unaware, she also proposed that the teacher can act as a kind of magician: "I think it's good to have such a book up your sleeve, to give it to individual students who might need it, right? Even if not in a classroom setting." While we can imagine the magician surreptitiously pulling a handkerchief or gold coin out of his sleeve (which prompts the question of who, in the context of school, such magic is directed towards), such imagery also brings to mind a clandestine peddler of porn, drugs or stolen goods, opening their overcoat to reveal those things that—though they may not be permitted in plain sight—still have a market, still fulfill a need, and still have an audience. For preservice teachers, it is often difficult to understand how one is supposed to be able to reach one's students, while simultaneously heeding to the pressures that are placed on a teacher's abilities to authentically connect with readers and their unanticipated readings; how can a teacher be simultaneously responsible and answerable to students, parents and administrators, especially when the needs and desires of such persons may at times be in conflict? Must they necessarily act clandestinely?

In response to Farrin, Rhiannon presented a provocative challenge to how we might approach the teacher's fear of censorship in the classroom:

> If we always say, you know, parents and censoring, the message is never gonna be delivered. We're never gonna be ever giving them the books to read. So, how are they ever gonna know, if they're always scared about it? I don't know. It's a risk-taker, but … I think it's a necessary one.

While this challenge introduced the idea that teachers should put their student's needs above those of parents and administrators, it also raised the question of when and why teachers might presume the hostile responses of others, and also, what such presumptions may say about those who preemptively assume the insecurities of others. In essence, it is here worth asking about the existence of projective identification in pedagogy: When do fears of censorship in the classroom—rather than reflecting the contextual reality—operate as mechanisms of psychical defense, as a way for teachers to deflect, and project onto others, their own anxieties surrounding the unpredictable nature of difficult texts? While we may be prompted to ask—When are our presumptions about the intolerances of others a projection of our own insecurities and phobias?—there is an obvious problem with this question; because the answer is most definitely *always*, the problem in this question lies with the *when*. This is simply the necessary work that projective identification does. A more apt line of questioning may be: What work do our presumptions about other people's intolerances do for us? What do such presumptions protect us against? And further, what would it look like to use our presumptions about others to notice what they defend against for us?

Speaking about his recent experiences as a student teacher, Mark illustrated the complexities involved in such projections:

Because … it's an extremely Catholic school … the majority of the demographic are Catholics … it's a very … Western European background. It's Greek, and Italian, and Spanish, which, you know … not only is religion an extremely important part of it, but it's also really paternal. *So parent's views are obviously going to sift down a lot more than, maybe, other cultures*. So, I think, and I've seen it … we're doing social issue conversations now and just, it wouldn't, *you wouldn't get past the first ten pages with them*.

What is especially striking here is that Mark's understanding of the school's "paternal" sensibilities—as "*obviously* going to sift down"—was immediately followed by an indication of comparison, hesitation and apparent contradiction: "than, *maybe*, other cultures." What the presence of this *maybe* communicates is that there is a chance that the cultural and religious backgrounds of *every* student, in *every* school, may harbor a similar pressure. And, we may ask, if this is the case, and if the pressure is all pervasive, can a teacher ever really hope to "get past the first ten pages" of a difficult text?

On the question of including representations of queer adolescence in the high school curriculum (especially representations, as in *Sprout*, that do not position gay and straight identities as strictly binarial opposites), Megan worried, "That's something that would be like PHHHHH [sound of a bomb exploding] for a high school student." By assuming that young adult literature may have the potential to destroy the classroom fabric, and to explode the unquestioned assumptions of normalcy that invariably circulate in the pedagogical everyday, Megan raised a challenging concept: Since a bomb in the

classroom leaves no one untouched, teacher and student are equally at risk of psychical death and disfigurement. On the issue of the danger that a teacher might face by including *Sprout* on their curriculum, Sasha more directly made the following point about the private school she attended as an adolescent: "You'd get *murdered* if you brought out a book like that." If this—the possibility of murder—is the unspoken assumption that teachers at-times project on the intolerances of others, it is understandable that Farrin's plea—to use a text such as *Sprout* as a necessary "risk-taker"—may be all too readily ignored, or simply discounted as too perilous to consider.

Though it's a different kind of censorship, the readers in this study frequently—as with Mark's assumption that his students wouldn't "get past the first ten pages"—presumed that certain of their students (typically boys) would outright refuse to read. While Calandra wondered if "girls would receive [*Sprout*] better than boys," Farrin noted, "Cause there's a lot of stream of consciousness about feelings … boys would just [set it] aside, [saying], 'I don't want to read this.'" In the teacher's eyes, a student's refusal is a dangerous thing, since much pedagogy operates on the often-unspoken assumption that the student will invariably acquiesce to their teacher's demands. In fact, as a student's refusal can be said to represent an explosion of classroom power, perhaps Megan's sounding of a bomb in the classroom should really be read as the fear of a student's refusal. However, as with any defensive or phobic act, it is here again necessary to ask: What does such refusal mean? What work is it doing for the student who refuses? And, since this refusing student exists only in the imagination of the reader, what work does an assumption of student refusal endeavour to protect the preservice teacher against?

In problematizing the hidden meanings of student refusal, Tegan offered a curiously provocative interpretation:

> Even if they only read the first ten pages … let's say they read up to the part when he comes out as gay … Even if they shut the book and don't read it anymore, because they don't want to after that point, it would still get them thinking, and it could start that road to thinking about it.

By presenting the possibility that a student's refusal to read might not necessarily mean a lack or cessation of thought, Tegan illustrated well the ways that talking about reading in a social environment can inspire readers to pursue trajectories of thought they may have otherwise left unarticulated.

In responding to Tegan's alternative assessment, Mark actually reformulated, or clarified, his original thinking on student refusal: "Just because they would put it down," he considered, this "does not, wouldn't stop me from teaching it." "Because," he continued, "you almost want them challenging you, so that you can clarify things, so that you can, like, expose them to stuff they traditionally wouldn't …" And at this point, Mark restated his original intention: "I didn't mean to come across like I wouldn't teach it because … they wouldn't want to read it. I would actually think that's almost better, because you're getting them mad about it, you're getting them wanting to learn more." Significantly—and regardless of whether or not Mark was previously implying that he would or would not be able to teach a book that his students refused to read—Mark interpreted the existence of anger in the classroom as potentially representative of a student's desire to learn. By positing that the existence of anger can prompt a student's thirst for knowledge, the idea of a bomb in the classroom takes on new life, as the

potential realignment of classroom dynamics positions the teacher as able to teach *through*, rather than *despite*, the circulation of students' emotions. That this theorization of teacher identity, and the possibilities of provocative pedagogy, was initiated through a discussion of young adult literature reveals the extent to which reading and the pursuing of open-ended discussion can operate as a means to formulate—and problematize— teaching desires and their projected afterlife. For the readers in this study, their future teaching practice will undoubtedly be marked by these conversations.

As with *Speak*, these readers also discussed the "potential" of the adolescent characters in *Sprout*, and questioned whether or not they succeeded in matching their expectations as adult educators. As Bridget found that "at the beginning of the book [Sprout] was … so much different that he was mid-book to end," she described where he ends up as "kinda less witty" and "a little more like 'duh … OMG," which implies that Sprout's level of intelligence and language devolved throughout the course of the novel. As Bridget remarked, "I don't like that that happened." Since, as readers of adolescent literature, we are used to characters clearly finding themselves by the novel's end, this sense that the character of Sprout undergoes a type of regression is a change that is hard to accept. As with the typical imperatives of educational discourse, the movement that is here assumed as beneficial is unquestionably one of forward movement, and not of regressive tendencies.

This assumption was also shared by Megan, who, though she "really enjoyed the writing at first … thought Sprout got weaker as a character," a palpable transformation that she found "more and more disappointing." For Megan, Sprout underwent a change that threw her expectations of adolescent narratives into question. "I was waiting for the

chapter," she admitted, "where you're like, 'Okay, this is where it all ties together, and I just felt more like it just fell apart." In Megan's understanding, as Sprout became less sure of his intentions and capable of confidence, he literally came apart as a person, just like the threads of Peck's narrative. Even though, as Sprout grows into a deeper sense of self-understanding he realizes that life is not simply a question of binarial divide (of knowing *or* not knowing), as a reader, Megan interpreted this nuanced ability for self-reflection and understanding as a lack of confidence. Since sureness was here construed as the mark of a strong and reliable character, for students learning to teach, it is important to ask the question of how we interpret our students' gaps in knowledge. If a student requires a moment of regressive thinking, is this necessarily a sign they are falling apart? What function does this assumption of necessary forward movement play in a teacher's vocabulary of learning and student engagement?

Though teachers may characterize themselves as committed to accepting a program of differentiated learning in the classroom, for the readers in this study, their unmistakable annoyance with characters who stray from the path of acceptable development (and who can thus be described as "rude") put the nature of such commitment in question. Or, as a more generous assessment, such readings allowed these readers to symbolize feelings of ambivalence through the lens of young adult literature, ensuring that there was a distance between their readings and their own teaching practice. In reading the reactions of these readers to the character of Ruthie—to whom we are first introduced during Sprout's first day of school in Kansas, and who undergoes a transformation from spunky, witty pre-adolescent, to sexually provocative, pregnant

teen—we can notice the passionate stakes that are involved in the expectations teachers place on their students. For Tegan:

> I thought she was so awesome, and then it came to that after-summer scene, I was like, 'What?' Like, I didn't think she was gonna be a model and want to be an actress. I was like, 'What is this?' … I was kinda sad about that.

Through admitting her sadness and irritation, Tegan—who later said of Ruthie, "I was just annoyed, I was pretty annoyed"—was able to acknowledge the identifications that readers have with their subjects of reading, while also accepting that, when her expectations of adolescent development remained unmet, she felt a certain disillusionment. And, as disillusionment signals the moment when a fantasy is met with the pitfalls of reality, or a dream is cut short as we are thrown back into the world of conscious intention and apparent lucidity, this is also the world of educational rationality and measurable objectives. However, disillusionment is also a necessary measure; as Pitt (2003) declares, "The capacity to tolerate disillusionment enlarges our hopes for the future … because both the past and the present can be more fully experienced, and wishes can be distinguished from reality. Our capacity to think begins with our tolerance of disillusionment" (p. 91). For preservice teachers, the ability to negotiate between institutional imperatives and personal fantasies represents a significant psychical challenge, a challenge that will inevitably continue to resurface throughout their teaching careers.

While Bridget admitted that Ruthie "seemed to lose all of her ambition … which kind of was disappointing," and later said "she just sucks," Megan stressed the fact that "you just kind of give up on her." Sasha then followed this declaration of lost faith by

declaring that as soon as Ruthie begins seeing her boyfriend, as readers, "You're like, 'You're cut,'" as if her story no longer matters and she could be simply erased from the script. And notably, as Sasha explained, Sprout has a similar reaction: "I think that Sprout, too, I think that's when he butt her out." If we think of passion and desire as composed of a fiery psychical energy and a burning biological drive, it is fascinating to note how Sasha described Sprout's response to Ruthie's newfound sexual curiosity through an action of extinguishment and termination. As these readers negotiated their attachments and identifications to the assumed potential of fictional adolescent characters, they symbolized the pressure to succeed that adults invariably place on younger generations, and that teachers habitually place on their students. The message that is here communicated is that, if you do not succeed, you will be "cut," you will be "butt out."

As with *Speak*, these preservice teachers also described the difficult and often-ambiguous negotiations of personal identity in *Sprout* in terms of being torn into thinking about teacher identity and lessons learnt. Yet again, the trajectory that many of these lessons follow involved being taken from the text through a tour of the self, which then helped these readers to deliberate and articulate future desires. Due to the sexually explicit and unequivocally queer nature of much of what happens in *Sprout*, and the unabashed descriptions of adolescent desiring bodies, much of the discussion surrounding this book revolved around questions of adolescent sexuality and sexual identity. For Calandra, even though much of *Sprout* made her feel "a little uncomfortable"—and that sexual identities may be "a weird thing to be discussing … in [an] early high school grade"—by interrogating her own ambivalent reactions, she also found herself, as she put

it, "questioning my views of normal." Describing such ambivalence as a sign of being "torn" (which is the word she actually used), Calandra thus reflected on the nature of her own apprehensions in theorizing adolescent sexuality in the context of the high school classroom. Samantha, who described the topic of sexual identity as "something that needs to be addressed early on," also related how, even though she "heard of worse … there were pretty graphic points" in the novel, and "so in terms of that," as she articulated her apprehensions, she "was also torn into" thinking through questions such as, "How do you teach it, and when is it appropriate or not?"

Through the characters of Sprout, Ian, and Ty, the readers in this study tackled the question of what exactly it means to be gay, and whether a character should really be described as gay simply because they've engaged in sexual intercourse with a member of the same sex. As a book that is therefore framed as a teacher of complicated lessons concerning sexual identity, by "break[ing] down that stereotype" and "break[ing] down the common misconceptions about sexuality," *Sprout* was described by Samantha as being able to "deliver the message that we don't necessarily have to … it doesn't have to be that [Ty]'s gay." While the readers accepted the possibility that, just because Ty does not admit to being gay this does not necessarily mean he is repressing his sexuality, Farrin believed "it can also be read as different stages of coming out," which we can relate to the psychoanalytic understanding of human development as following an uneven trajectory. As Britzman (2009a) writes, such development "is uneven because we are born too soon and become responsible for a world we have not made" (p. 44). For adolescents, their development often follows an uneven path, as their desire for self-

expression and actualization comes into conflict with their desire to incorporate themselves into a world of meaning that appears to exist preformed.

Allowing for the idea that adolescence should best be thought as a time for experimentation and trying out various identities, Farrin seemed to think about *Sprout* in terms that are similar to Kristeva's (1990) writing on adolescence as "an open psychic structure" (p. 9), in which, "The frontiers between differences of sex or identity, reality and fantasy, act and discourse, etc., are easily traversed" (p. 9). For Farrin, since Ty, Ian and Sprout may find themselves in "different stages of coming out," the open structure of adolescence allows for movement between identities—sexual or otherwise—that need not necessarily be fixed, defined or permanent. One can always become what one was, as one can also become that which one is not yet. Though such fluidity may be read by some as a mark of schizophrenic catastrophe, it is important to note that "this structure … can be called a 'crisis' structure only through the eyes of a stable, ideal law" (p. 9), only by those interpretations that require adolescence to follow a strict and forward-moving developmental path. Fortunately, this is *not* how our lived relations to identity work, whether we're speaking of the movements made by a teacher, a reader, an adult, or an adolescent.

Though discussions of sexual identity are certainly supposed to form some component of teacher education, this important conversation about human development, identification and social attachment can sometimes be seen as lacking. Depending on the classes a student takes, the reading lists for these classes, their chosen subject area, the professors' imperatives, etc., there is always the chance that a preservice teacher in the final year of their degree might declare, as Sasha did: "I've never had a class that talked

about sexuality." Since this "never" most certainly must not be true, we can here assume

one of three things: that Sasha did not recall when sexuality was discussed (which means

it must not have formed a significant part of any of her classes); that Sasha was

repressing any knowledge of sexuality (which seems unlikely, given her openness to the

sexual content of *Sprout*); or, that students and professors alike considered sexuality—a

subject that easily prompts misunderstanding, confusion and disavowal—and despite its

persistent presence, as a topic too difficult, painful or uncomfortable to engage with in the

context of the classroom. Given this potential absence, it is interesting to note the ways in

which, when given the space for unevaluated, informal dialogue, these preservice

teachers used young adult literature as a means to work through their knowledge (and

anxieties) about sexuality in relation to adolescence and teaching, and the places in which

their knowledge is lacking.

In talking through the various sexual encounters that Sprout has in the book, Mark

declared:

> The thing I found interesting was this connection between his sexual encounters
>
> and violence. First with Ian, the first time in the detention … the roughhousing …
>
> that leads to his first sexual encounter, and then the same thing with Ty. The
>
> roughhousing, the fighting, that turns into wrestling, that turns into, um, sex. So, I
>
> thought that was an interesting connection to make, the relationship between pain
>
> and violence and sex.

Though Sprout's initial erotic encounter with Ian Abernathy began as a violent bullying

that progressed to sex—where, as Sprout puts it, "I labored at something that both of us

knew the name of, but had never connected with real life" (Peck, 2009, p. 93)—it is

significant to note the ways in which the readers engaged with the confusing and ambiguous nature of this scene.

Because of the elements of violence in this sexual encounter, and though Sprout definitely had sexual desires for Ian, it is left unclear whether the sex should be considered consensual or, since Sprout was initially pushed to the ground by Ian and held in a headlock, whether it should instead be read as rape. Tegan offered a way to think through the confusing elements in this scene:

> Maybe he himself doesn't really know … if he was consenting or not … Yeah, it did feel that way [like rape], 'cause for a while he seemed very much, like, worried. And I wasn't sure if he pressed against his back when he was giving him the "Indian sunburn," and he was just like, "I was just trying not to think about it," but then, at the same time he was like, "I can't avoid his eyes." Like, some parts of it seemed very, like, he wanted to do it. Other parts seemed like he really didn't, so … *it's almost like he himself was torn.*

And as readers, we too are torn, since we cannot with any certainty confirm whether the sex was consensual or not. Unlike the scene in *Speak* where Melinda was raped, Peck's narrative leaves much undetermined, and since we are dealing with sex—about which there is much that remains emotionally uncertain—this representation is rendered all the more confusing; the distinction between hostility and emotions of love can at times be hard, or perhaps impossible, to even begin to unravel.

Since Sprout's relations with Ty hold more of an emotional certainty than his relations with Ian, and are also undoubtedly closer to something we may call love, Bridget reminded the readers in her group:

> But later on [Sprout] mentions that he lost his virginity to Ty, and not to Ian … so
>
> maybe it wasn't his choice? But then he continued to do it as well, but then …
>
> that doesn't necessarily mean that it was consensual the first time.

While this discussion of consent in no way obscures the fact that *rape is rape*, it does
give us a glimpse into how preservice teachers read through the at-times confusing nature
of adolescent intention and sexuality. For Bridget, as she wondered whether Sprout
maintains that—regardless of previously having had sex with Ian—he remained a
"virgin" until sleeping with Ty, it was hard for her to understand how Sprout decides to
define his (loss of) virginity. There is a gap in her understanding; though, as Tegan's
above comment illustrates, perhaps this gap in the reader's reactions reflects a gap in
Sprout's understanding of his own intentions.

In Mark's interpretation of this scene, he chose to pursue a method of reading that
we may call performatively *queer*. "I actually read it backwards," Mark admitted, "the
opposite way." This admission of *reading backwards* (by which Mark implies rereading)
is a strange one to make, because it suggests that there is also a way to *read forwards*,
and as with many of the assumptions that we have already seen in these readers'
discussions, the performative pull towards thinking in terms of linearity and forward
movement—along a straight line—is often equated with beneficial progress and terms of
'successful' development. "The first time I went through it," Mark described:

> I though it was consensual, well not necessarily consensual, but that he still kind
>
> of accepted it, and was okay with it. But the thing that made me go back and read
>
> it was later … when he and Ian had this brief encounter and Ian's trying to justify

that first time by saying, 'You wanted it' … and then Sprout responds, saying,

'Yeah, well so did you.'"

This movement of *going back* in reading, to consciously pursue a rereading that changes

a reader's presumed orientation to a textual object (Ahmed, 2006), is also what Mark

understood as "opposite," as a reading that is turned on its head to reveal a different

interpretive species. Even though, rather than focusing on the question of consent, Ian is

here confirming Sprout's possession of gay desire, the point that Mark was trying to

make is that a moment of confusion in his own understanding of the book's events is

what prompted him to "go back" and take "the opposite way." As a teacher reading about

adolescent life, and as an adult interpreting adolescent intentions in relation to sex and

desire, Mark developed and proliferated alternative trajectories of reading, allowing for

the fact that the clock of reading can always be turned on its head and made "opposite,"

and that, in reading as a teacher, one can always go "backwards" into the past—both the

(inevitably intertwined) past of the text and the past of the self.

What *Sprout* thus offered these preservice teachers is a space not only to talk

about what they do and do not know about adolescent and sexual identity, but more

importantly, a chance to recognize the fact that—when it comes to sex and sexuality—

there are things that they do not know, and perhaps, that cannot themselves be known.

The implications for such knowledge (or non-knowledge), while they will help these

readers to more fully appreciate the complexity of adolescent identity, might also affect

the approaches they take, and the attitudes they hold, towards moments that might have

initially seemed like regression or failure in their students' learning, or in their own

capacity to teach. Since neither Ty nor Ian ever label themselves as gay, despite their

capacity for homosexual desire, these readers came to acknowledge the position of "questioning" as a type of potential sexuality, one that pushes—through persistent curiosity—against the binaries of straight and gay, or even the firm fluidity of bisexual. For people who consider themselves as "questioning," the point is that they do not know, nor is there necessarily a need for them to reach the position of knowing or being known. Megan first introduced this idea when discussing the ambiguity of Ian's desires: "I didn't think he was gay," she said, "I just thought he was just really curious, I guess." As the hesitancy of this "I guess" mirrors the hesitancy of Ian's desires, this validation of sexual uncertainty is a lesson that asks of the preservice teacher to consider a relation towards their students that "exceeds affirmation and risks ambivalence" (Gilbert, 2006, p. 33).

As Megan further articulated the terms of learning about this risk: "The character of Ian, I think is really good for that, because you don't really know if he's gay, or if he's bisexual, or if he's straight and just experimenting. Like … is that okay? Can you experiment?" Significantly, it was left unclear as to whom these questions were posed, and also, who was presumed to be asking them. Was Megan asking these questions herself? Was she wondering whether posing such questions might be permissible in the context of the high school classroom? Was she imagining herself as a young adolescent, inhabiting the role of the questioning student, questioning the validity of questioning? Having been posed in the social context of the reading group, however, Tegan took up this line of thought, and answered: "Questioning is a whole sexuality. Like, there's just questioning, like *you can be questioning.* That's okay." Surprised by this affirmation of sexual inquisitiveness as a potential state of being, Bridget exclaimed, "It's a sexuality?"

and then, she effectively answered her own question, while also admitting to a previous

gap in her knowledge: "Oh, is that like LGBTQ? I was always wondering about the Q."

As a teacher who is obviously invested in openly discussing the implications of

sexuality in the English Language Arts classroom, Tegan took it upon herself to clarify

Bridget's answer, and in doing so, affirmed the importance that such discussions can

have in the context of school:

> Questioning, queer … but it's not the same thing. It's two different ones, but it's
>
> also like when you say "Queer," a lot of people think … "Ha. You're gay." It's
>
> like, "No, no." Like, some people see queer as a separate sexuality, some people
>
> see queer as an umbrella term. It's very different for everyone. *Yeah, see what I*
>
> *mean? We're having this conversation*. So, it's great to talk. I think that would be
>
> great … like you said, especially with Ian, to show kids, you're questioning?
>
> That's okay. Like, you don't need to force yourself to find a label, to find a set
>
> anything. Questioning can be said. You're allowed to question.

As an educator and as an educational researcher, I have to admit that every time I read

over this above account, I get heart palpitations and chills. It strikes me as an immensely

valuable lesson, to think that, as a result of their reading and their subsequent discussion,

these preservice teachers experienced an open and honest conversation about the

potential varieties of adolescent sexuality, and moreover, that the conversation itself was

predominantly self-generated. As Tegan put it, "We're having this conversation," and

since such dialogue happened once, we can also assume it might happen again, whether

in the staff room, in the classroom, or in these readers' later engagements with literature.

In their reading of *Sprout*, the readers in this study were repeatedly torn into thinking about the uncertainties of adolescent sexuality and desire. Through thinking about the generative possibilities of confusion—both in adolescent life and in reading experience—Calandra's description of *the nidus* (the strange, ephemeral location that Sprout constructs as an archive to his mother's life, and also, to his enduring love for her), which she then related to the colour of Sprout's hair, is especially apt:

> I just saw it as a symbol for his mind; it's all cluttered, and amidst all that there's fresh signs of life, things constantly growing and sprouting out everywhere. And I just thought it was interesting that they chose to focus on his hair as being green, which is connected to his head. It's like life coming out of his head, ideas sprouting out of his head. I don't know what to make of it really …

For Calandra, and she was certainly not alone in her assessment, though she didn't "know what to make of it," the nidus, which can be said to represent the most ambiguous setting in the novel, is also an environment that allowed her to think of the adolescent's capacity for imaginative, unpredictable and uneven development. So, though it is certainly true that, for many of the readers, they at times felt frustrated by the text, this frustration and ambiguity also acted as a prompt for deeper thinking and analysis—or as Calandra put it, "a good opportunity for dialogue." It is therefore interesting to compare this sense of frustration to the feelings of unbridled and palpable enthusiasm that all of the readers expressed for Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, which is where we begin in the following chapter.

Chapter VI: The Hunger Games & The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Unlike their relationship to Melinda and Sprout, the readers in this study repeatedly worked to cast characters from *The Hunger Games* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* as teachers. For these readers, the work of such casting involved negotiating a deep sense of attachment and identification through a space in which they also set about engaging their fantasies and anxieties as teachers. By investigating the ways in which various characters were imagined as teachers, we are able to examine the complex psychical dynamics through which these readers theorized their individual and collective understandings of teacher identity.

The Hunger Games, by Suzanne Collins

Before providing a synopsis of Collins' book, it is important to first locate it within the wider cultural context in which it circulates. Unlike the rest of the books in this study, *The Hunger Games* is now part of a major movie franchise, with its first installment appearing in 2012, while this study was already underway. Unlike *Speak*, which was also adapted to film (starring Kristen Stewart of *Twilight* fame, years before she became known as Bella), *The Hunger Games* can legitimately be called an entertainment industry unto itself, with multiple forms of marketing and cultural commodities exposing the brand to a wide population, including clothing, jewelry, video games, and even a Barbie doll based on Katniss, the main character. Indeed, Collins' work has taken on a life extending far beyond the book itself, though importantly, the fact that the franchise originated in book form has not been forgotten. When the movie first opened in Montreal, there were times that it seemed like half the people walking around the city had a copy of Collins' book tucked into their handbags and purses. *The Hunger*

Games is also the first book in a trilogy, and is often sold in a box set containing all three books.

Though this study focuses on the first installment in the trilogy, and only on the written work, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind that a reader's understanding of a text is always mediated in relation to their surrounding social fabric, and while the reading groups were meeting to discuss this book, the fact of the movie and the trilogy weighed heavily on their minds; it was apparent that, for many of the readers, the book represented but the first piece of a much larger literary and cultural endeavour. As a work of popular culture, it is also essential to bear in mind Mitchell and Weber's (1999) suggestion that "popular texts wouldn't be popular unless they managed to tap into the particular desires of many readers" (p. 167)—"the writer's appetite has to incite the reader's appetite" (Phillips, 1998, p. 6)—and it is therefore through an awareness of the ways that "good stories satisfy a craving" (Robertson, 2001, p. 209), that I endeavour to locate the qualities of desire and craving that readers exhibit in relation to Collins' text.

In *The Hunger Games*, which can be classified as a work of young adult dystopian fiction, readers are drawn into the world of Panem, a country which is located in the remains of a much-transformed North America, divided into twelve districts controlled by a wealthy capitol. As a form of annual punishment for an earlier rebellion against the Capitol's supremacy, each district must supply two adolescents—one male and one female, from ages 12 to 18—to enter the Hunger Games, where tributes must fight to the death, and only one can emerge victorious. *The Hunger Games* is narrated from the point of view of district twelve resident, 16 year-old Katniss Everdeen, who ends up volunteering herself for the games when her 12 year-old sister, Primrose, is

chosen by lottery as her district's female tribute. Peeta Mellark, the son of a baker, is

chosen as the male tribute for district twelve, and the one memory that Katniss has of

Peeta is when he threw her a piece of bread when she and her family were starving, an act

of rare generosity that has placed her forever in his debt. As a young girl, Katniss was

taught how to hunt by her father, who was killed in a mining accident in the coalmines of

district twelve. As her mother developed a severe and immobilizing depression following

her father's death, it was left to Katniss alone to ensure her family's survival. While

hunting for food, Katniss honed her skills as a hunter and an archer in the forests

surrounding district twelve.

Once Katniss and Peeta are confirmed as tributes, they are transported to the

Capitol along with Haymitch Abernathy, the only tribute to emerge victorious from

district twelve. While Haymitch is hardly ever described without alcohol on his breath or

a bottle in hand, he stresses the importance of soliciting sponsors from the Capitol's

wealthy population, who can bestow upon the tributes life-saving gifts (in the form of

food or medication) while they are fighting for survival in the outdoor arena. While

preparing for the games, Peeta and Katniss become friends, a relationship that is

nonetheless tainted by the knowledge that one of them might eventually have to murder

the other. As part of their training, each of the tributes is ranked by the gamemakers in

terms of their potential for survival. While showing off her skills as an archer, Katniss

grows weary of the process and fires an arrow in the judges' direction, purposely missing

them only by inches. While Katniss believes she'll be punished for such an act, she is

actually awarded the highest ranking out of all 24 tributes, higher even than a group

known as 'The Careers,' who come from the relatively privileged districts geographically

closer to the Capitol, and who have perfected their skills for battle and survival from a young age.

While the Hunger Games serve as a punishment for the districts, they also serve the purpose of entertainment in the Capitol, as the games are broadcast live on television, and viewed as a sort of sport. As part of a publicity campaign, each district's tributes are given a stylist, and Katniss and Peeta are paired with Cinna, who decides to craft, for the pair's first public appearance, a costume that appears covered in flames, as if it is burning. It is from this public presentation that Katniss becomes known as "the girl who was on fire." The television host Caesar Flickerman also interviews the tributes, and it is during this interview that Peeta admits he is in love with Katniss, which leads the audience to regard the couple as a pair of "star crossed lovers."

In the first day of the games, nearly half of the tributes are killed, and while Katniss relies on her skills as an archer and hunter to survive, after a few days she partners with a tribute from district eleven, 12 year-old Rue, who reminds Katniss of her sister. Though Peeta teams up with The Careers, a move that Katniss resents and interprets as proof of Peeta's betrayal, when he is given the chance to kill Katniss, he instead saves her from the others. Rue, however, is soon killed by another tribute, who Katniss promptly kills with an arrow.

Building on the audience's awareness of Peeta and Katniss' love, an unprecedented rule change is soon announced, which states that if two tributes from the same district remain alive at game's end, they will both be allowed to emerge victorious. When she hears this change, Katniss immediately starts searching for Peeta, who she eventually finds, wounded and emaciated. As she nurses Peeta back to health, Katniss

plays up the idea that she herself is also in love, and solicits a number of gifts from her sponsors. When the couple (a little unsurprisingly) remain as the last two tributes, an announcement is made, stating that the rules have once again been changed back to their original terms, and that only one tribute will be allowed to remain alive. Rather than kill each other, Katniss concocts a risky plan, which involves both her and Peeta ingesting a poisonous berry, which were they to swallow, would kill them both on the spot. Since the Capitol's punishment requires victors as well as victims (as the Capitol's leaders feel that retaining even a small degree of hope will discourage future rebellion), the gamemakers retract their last change, and both Katniss and Peeta are allowed to leave the arena alive. The novel ends with Haymitch warning Katniss that she has now become a political target, and with Katniss' admission that her feelings for Peeta were only a ploy for survival, leaving Peeta brokenhearted and resentful.

Though there are numerous themes in this novel that are worth exploring, and are pedagogically useful from an educator's perspective (from social class to propaganda, popular culture and reality television), the two that I focus on in my own thinking are those of intergenerational conflict and the question of desire and the adolescent body. Since the pool of tributes for the Hunger Games are chosen from youth aged twelve to eighteen, this process of selection—referred to as "the reaping"—can be viewed metaphorically, as equivalent to other coming-of-age rituals, or adolescent rites of passage. In such rituals, similar to the cultural institutions of compulsory education, the adolescent is often constructed as a figure to be manipulated, tested, ranked and eventually graduated into adulthood. In the districts of Panem, all degree of autonomy is taken away from adolescents, who are literally made pawns in the pursuit of adult-

centered ideological, cultural and political ends. Even though the adults in the districts also lack autonomy, their very survival depends on the sacrifices made by their adolescent counterparts. As with Lesko's (2012) consideration of the cultural constructions of adolescent life, adolescents in *The Hunger Games* are condemned to an "expectant time," and kept in a totally passive temporal position, dependent on the choices of others for their very material existence. While it could be argued that Katniss bucks such a trend—through the fact that she alone provides for her family, makes the choice to sacrifice herself in lieu of her sister, perform her romance with Peeta and deliberately manipulate the rules of the game—she only does so from within a larger framework that is controlled by the wishes of adult desires, "rejecting the … system, which had already rejected [her]" (Lesko, p. 168). As Katniss admits of the Capitol's power, "the Hunger Games are their weapon and you are not supposed to be able to defeat it" (Collins, 2008, p. 358).

As with Lesko's (2012) framework for understanding contemporary educational institutions, the Hunger Games "are based upon adult authority over youth, with teenagers usually understood as passive recipients of adult rules, knowledge, and resources" (p. 177). In this view, the choices that Katniss makes are not really choices at all, but the dangerous moves of a desperate individual, and just like school, the games are a "complete trap," a structure that "control[s] the majority of a teenager's life and ... that is outside personal choice and control" (p. 176). As Katniss describes her lack of agency, "All I can think is how unjust the whole thing is, the Hunger Games. Why am I hopping around like some trained dog trying to please people I hate?" (Collins, 2008, p. 117). In this book, adolescence is thus presented as performance, as empty gesture, as war, and as

a type of competitive sport, a point that Katniss emphasizes in saying "it's not fair to present us as a team and then lock us into the arena to kill each other" (p. 71).

In *The Hunger Games*, adult fear of adolescent desire and strength is coupled with a powerful envy of adolescent vigor and the adolescent body. Again, turning to Lesko's (2012) historical study, the adolescent body—"endlessly divided and described" (p. 75)—has often been "the site of diagnosis, prescription, and action" (p. 75), techniques of control prompted by a typically-unspoken desire and fear, directed towards the power and powerful potential that adolescents themselves are assumed to represent. While being prepared for her public unveiling, Katniss describes the makeover she's forced to undergo:

> This has included scrubbing down my body with a gritty foam that has removed not only dirt but at least three layers of skin, turning my nails into uniform shapes, and primarily, ridding my body of hair. My legs, arms, torso, underarms, and part of my eyebrows have been stripped of the stuff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting. I don't like it. My skin feels sore and tingling and intensely vulnerable. (pp. 61-62)

Turned into an object of consumption, it is no surprise that Katniss feels vulnerable, and indeed, through transforming her flesh into a thing of categorical perfection to be observed and lusted after, if the establishment of psychic vulnerability is not the primary purpose of such an exercise, it is certainly a significant outcome. By rendering the adolescent body as a site of control, the gamemakers have established the central location for an enduring process of subjugation.

Much of the language that is used in this novel also suggests—at times obliquely—the fear and desire surrounding the subject of adolescent sexuality, and a tension that persists between the pleasures of spectacle and control. "The reaping" is itself just a slip of the vowel away from being pronounced as 'the raping,' and when Katniss refers to her sister as "little duck" (p. 15), it is hard not to read this otherwise endearing description as a portentously phrased 'little fuck.' In fact, this 12 year-old's entrance into a highly regulated developmental stage is also inevitability an entrance into a climate where the adolescent body is established as a site of incurable adult control; in this reading, the only two cures for adolescence are adulthood and death. Katniss herself describes her sister's physical vulnerability, and her need for rescue, in terms of the lack of cohesion suggested by an ill-fitting garment, as if her body isn't quite ready for the demands of adolescence: "I see the back of her blouse has become untucked and hangs out over her skirt. It's this detail, the untucked blouse forming a ducktail, that brings me back to myself" (pp. 21-22). As Barthes (1975) inquires, "Is not the most erotic portion of the body *where the garment gapes?*" (p. 9). As "it is the flash itself which seduces," Primrose's untucked blouse signals not only a child's disorderly dress, but also an uncomfortably seductive "staging of an appearance-as-disappearance" (p. 10).

Since much of the novel seems obsessed with food, and many of the characters are constantly battling against what seems an inevitable starvation, it is no surprise that the subject of hunger occupies a large part of the plot. However, rather than simply reading hunger as a biological and corporeal concern (though this hunger is certainly real), I also want to interpret the energies of hunger as they relate to psychic satisfaction: both bread *and* roses. Hunger and desire are thus necessarily coupled terms, and each

time the question of hunger appears in this novel, it is important to ask, Hunger for what? To satisfy which desire? Whose desire? Notably, while hunger itself is described positively, as encouraging perseverance and strength—Katniss says The Careers are weaker than she is because "they don't know how to be hungry" (p. 208)—satiated hunger is characterized as potentially uncontrollable, harmful and violent. As Katniss notes of her intimacy with Peeta, it is "the first kiss that makes me want another" (p. 298), and when the gamemakers lay out an array of food, Katniss describes how, "Feasts always result in fatalities" (p. 279). In the arena of the Hunger Games, it is only when Katniss begins to perform desire—to secure some degree of control over the situations in which she appears desirable—that she is truly regarded by the Capitol as dangerous. As "the girl who was on fire," Katniss therefore flips the script of hunger on its head, and in the world of entertainment in which she is embroiled, she develops an awareness of the ways in which harnessing the hunger of others can be a measure of power and control.

The Transferences of Teacher-Casting: Responding to The Hunger Games

As Wilson (1999) asks, "What, or who, is it we desire when we read?" (p. 226). While the obvious answer to this question is never only one thing—"when I'm reading Henry James," Phillips (1998) writes, "I may be reading pornography" (p. 31)—it still stands to reason that when caught in a reading, especially when caught in a read through which they are fully seduced and enthralled, readers are invariably desiring subjects. As a young adult novel that plays with ideas of intergenerational manipulation and adolescent desire, *The Hunger Games* offers a unique opportunity through which we may encounter the transferential and projective desires that preservice teachers enact upon the literary scene of adolescence, the literary subjects of adolescents, and their generational others.

Through discussing the characters in this text, these preservice teachers were torn into thinking about their present and future desires in teaching. As previously mentioned, the readers in this study repeatedly worked to cast the characters in *The Hunger Games* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* as teachers. Through positioning the character of Katniss as a teacher—who, we may recall, after the death of her father and her mother's mental breakdown, is forced to literally adopt the role as her family's breadwinner—we can see the conflicting characteristics at work in these readers' associations with the category of *teacher*. Likewise, through casting the character of Haymitch as a teacher, these readers engaged themselves in discussing the fallible nature of the teacher's character.

For Samantha, who referenced the internal dynamics of the Everdeen family, Katniss' mother "should have been a teacher," an attribution which, while it imagines the position of the teacher as correctly belonging to an adult, also conceives of the family relationship in terms of students and teachers. There are those who teach, and there are those who learn; and while those who teach are active subjects who possess control over the fate of their family, those who learn are definitively passive, and exist solely at the whims, and through the efforts, of others. As Samantha phrased it, when Katniss' "father died, she had to take over" as the family's "caregiver, who was the one … giving … rather than taking from." In this formulation of teaching, then, the teacher is the "caregiver" who "take[s] over" the responsibilities of past caregivers, and—in the language of sacrifice—gives rather than takes. For Samantha, the classroom exists as a space that can be theorized through the lens of power, duty and responsibility.

Through this transfer of power in the Everdeen household (from father-coalminer to daughter-hunter), Amanda related how Katniss "kind of became the man of the house," a gendered assessment of familial power that is immediately countered by Samantha, who asserted, "I still felt that she was very feminine." Calandra also agreed with this understanding: "I thought she was very feminine, too. She was very motherly … towards Prim, so she had that motherly instinct." As Tegan noted how "Katniss herself becomes a teacher to Rue in the Hunger Games," Katniss—as teacher/hunter *in loco parentis*—was also understood as shouldering this connection between caring and teaching out of the family and into the games themselves. In constructing Katniss as a teacher, and as a "man of the house" with "motherly instincts," these readers identified the sometimes conflicting, and typically gendered demands associated with being a teacher.

Though teaching, as a profession, has historically been associated with clichéd ideals of the feminine and mothering—such as caring and affection—such ideals are at-times in conflict with others more readily associated with masculine structures—discipline, authority, and power. Of course, these teachers in no way meant to suggest that caring is necessarily a feminine trait, nor that authority can only be assumed by men, but, in a field that has historically been occupied by mostly women, preservice teachers—regardless of whether they identify as men, women, or otherwise—must somehow work through the means to symbolize the inherent conflicts of these historically-informed cultural narratives. At the very least, noticing this conflict—through the lens of young adult literature—*as contradiction*, may provide teachers with a space to begin questioning the flawed logic that lies behind, and works to maintain, such gendered and gendering assumptions.

The readers in this study also repeatedly framed Haymitch Abernathy, the past victorious tribute from District Twelve who acts as a mentor for Katniss and Peeta, as a teacher. In wondering why Haymitch developed the melancholic propensity to drink as much as he does, Samantha suggested that, since he has had to witness his trainees dying year after year, and because, as a past victor of the Games, "he had to commit murder," his drinking may best be thought to represent a coping mechanism for the psychical stress he has had to repeatedly endure. Through interpreting these readers' responses to Haymitch's depressive behaviour as a projection of their own anxieties in teaching, this character may thus be considered as a teacher who is "suffering from a history of their teaching" (Britzman, 2006a, p. 128). Indeed, any teacher who witnesses a similar tendency to universal failure among their students may develop a similar, and equally detrimental, strategy of psychic survival. Such strategies of survival, moreover, typically appear as a response to symptoms characterized as illness or breakdown (we can here think of teacher burnout), and as Britzman writes of "the teacher's illness," it "communicates a strange understanding" (p. 127). The teacher, in their teaching, relives and reinvigorates past traumas, anxieties, relationships and triumphs.

In a cruel twist of fate (or rather than fate, the imperatives of the culture in which they exist), when Haymitch faces his first successful experience as a mentor—as Katniss and Peeta make it out of the arena alive—he finds that, rather than there being reason to rejoice, his students will simply be taking his place in training future students to die. As Rhiannon explained, upon winning the Games, Katniss "knows her fate is gonna have to be to train other people"; as the teacher is the one who trains their students for physical and psychical survival (which in the case of this novel most certainly means death), the

teacher is here understood as the one who bears responsibility for murder. As Samantha laughed—exclaiming, "Poor girl!"—she captured Katniss' miserable fate well: to be a teacher trapped in a terrible system of surveillance, inequality and squandered potential.

While the mortal stakes described in *The Hunger Games* are obviously far removed from the discourse of standards and accountability in educational assessment, we can nevertheless read the responses of these readers through the lens of Taubman's (2009) understanding of the psychical effects of high-stakes testing, which the majority of these teachers will have to endure at some point in the course of their teaching practice:

> Keeping us under constant surveillance, [tests] make us vulnerable to centers of control beyond our reach, and, providing the illusion of objective accountability and meritocracy, they reduce education to right answers and information. Perhaps most important of all, high stakes tests erode the autonomy of teachers, for if tests determine the curriculum, and if tests tell us what is important to know as a teacher, and if these tests are fabricated by centers of control beyond the reach of teachers, then the teachers' passions, commitments, and wisdom count less and less. (p. 53)

For Calandra, since "the characters were kind of on all the time," the emotional pressure of "the game … wasn't just in the arena; it was outside of the arena as well." Cast as a drama of students and teachers caught up in a system of "constant surveillance" and measurement—"Everybody," Calandra suggested, "was just watching what they were doing"—the Hunger Games can in fact be read as an allegory for the modern educational institution, where "relentless surveillance … leads to negative emotional consequences"

(Perryman, 2007, p. 174). In this light, to speak of the tributes, as Samantha did, as

"people being abused by a system," is to simultaneously consider the deleterious effects

that a teacher's expectations may have on their students' happiness. From a discussion of

the anxieties that Peeta and Katniss face in the arena, Samantha declared how, as

teachers, "I think that we're less than aware of how much we're influenced by what

people expect of us." "I feel," she continued, "like teenagers are struggling with the fact

that they have to be something they might not necessarily want … but because they've

understood that's what's expected, that's what … would be desirable." As Peeta and

Katniss frame their love as a ploy to attract more sponsors, Samantha wondered about the

negative consequences that may befall students who define their desires according to

externally engendered expectations. And of course, in relation to the imperatives of their

educational institutions, teachers may find themselves—and their desires—captured and

compromised by a similar unspoken obligation.

   Interestingly, and notwithstanding his propensity to act inappropriately, it is

Haymitch's vulnerability as a teacher that drew many of these readers to feel towards him

a sense of compassion and trust. As Megan put it, "He's a total drunk, but you kinda trust

that he's got the right mindset." In trying to understand why, despite their apprehensions,

they have such feelings of love for Haymitch, the participants in this study used this

character to theorize the values they associate with being a committed educator. For

Farrin, who stated, "He *has to have* some redeeming quality," Haymitch—*as teacher*—is

positioned as necessarily requiring a modicum of favorable features; he *needs* these

qualities, and despite any evidence to the contrary, he "has to have" them. As Tegan

related, her unflinching affection for Haymitch appeared as unexpected and surprising: "I

love him, but it's weird. Like, you don't know why you love Haymitch." As teachers,

these readers loved Haymitch because he reminded them of their own desires and

anxieties, and through this love, they appeared to be formulating a type of professional

solidarity. In fact, the affective kinship they felt for Haymitch is similar to the loyalty one

might imagine displayed between members of the same family.

For Mark, the confidence we place in Haymitch appeared to develop from the fact

that, against all odds, he believes in his students' survival and their potential for success:

> 'Cause he clearly … does want them to win. He clearly does. Maybe he didn't
>
> start out that way, or expected them to die right away, but he has obviously made
>
> an investment. He obviously has cared more about these two than previous
>
> experience would suggest.

Though his previous experiences, in which he repeatedly encountered death and student

failure, might make it likely for Haymitch to give up hope, the fact that he believes in

Katniss and Peeta—as Megan put it, "He has faith in them"—endeared these readers

deeply to this otherwise imperfect mentor. As with Mr. Freeman in *Speak*, it appears that

Haymitch's fallible nature—which reminded these readers of their own vulnerability in

the classroom—allowed them to develop a transferential sense of attachment to Haymitch

and his burdens. Though, as Mark suggested, "none of his qualities should be

redeeming," Haymitch stands—as an educator burdened under the weight of his own

educational past—as an idealized object of love, who, through the religiously inflected

terms of belief, faith and sacrifice, allowed these readers to theorize the hazards and

vulnerabilities of transference and attachment in the classroom. As "it is difficult to

engage … perilous knowledge head on" (Robertson, 1997, p. 91), these readers engaged

this textual fiction as a means to tackle such knowledge obliquely.

In Britzman's (2006a) assessment, the drama of transference-love involves

"projections of one's infantile attitudes, demands for love, modes of loving, helplessness

and disappointments with the self, and fears of punishment" (p. 132). Through the

character of Haymitch, these readers interpreted their own transferential attachments to

Katniss, who, for them, existed as a literary fantasy of the ideal student. As Taubman

(2009) relates, "fantasies, whether pleasing or disturbing … support and sustain our

understanding of reality, the sense that somewhere it all means something" (p. 147), or,

as with Katniss, the sense that students can indeed be taught, and that through teaching,

students will learn. For Tegan, who noted, "It's interesting to see that someone has faith

in [Katniss], and then, that this also encourages us to have faith in her, too," faith is

something contagious that inevitably multiplies. As teaching is always a relational

enterprise—"In schools, people are in relation to one another" (Evans, 2002, p. 179)—

these teachers here theorized the fact that, for the teacher to have faith in their students,

the students must first have faith in themselves. As Sasha noted, when Katniss and Peeta

"showed more potential in the Hunger Games, [Haymitch] showed more interest in them.

He's like, 'Alright, they can do this.'" In Sasha's appraisal, the faith that Haymitch

displays towards his students is a direct result of his students' efforts, a relational

calculation that she brought to bear on the ways in which structures of belief in the

classroom potentially circulate and multiply. Sasha continued:

> He taught them as a teacher. When kids don't put in any effort, it's very hard to
>
> … keep getting motivated to teach them and want to help them. And I think what

he's showing is, like, "Look, you're putting in effort, you're showing me you

have potential. I'm giving all I got."

While Haymitch is thus willing to sacrifice himself for his students, such sacrifice

remains dependent on whether or not his students achieve what he deems to be their

potential. As in *Speak* and *Sprout*, the phrasing of a teacher's expectations in terms of

student potential signals the ways that a teacher's demands can encourage as well as

stifle. Salvio (2007) describes the terms of this balance (or misbalance) well:

> While we may have the best intentions when offering students our insights,
>
> orientations in taste, advice, recommendations or academic material, we may very
>
> well be sabotaging the possibilities for working with them to cultivate … their
>
> own internally persuasive voices, voices that can counter the larger cultural
>
> imperative to order, sameness … narrowing the scope for representing and
>
> respecting otherness. (p. 53)

As with any teacher, Haymitch invariably places himself at risk by putting his

faith in Katniss and Peeta. The following exchange clearly illustrates the dangers

involved when it comes to circulations of emotional attachment in the classroom:

> Megan: He's also burned out. … he's had so many students, so many, you know,
>
> fail on him. … You're gonna become an alcoholic.
>
> David (me): You're gonna get burnt out.
>
> Mark: Your kids are gonna die of awful murderous deaths.
>
> Tegan: I also like, I like how he doesn't coddle them at all, though. You know
>
> what I mean? He doesn't coddle them at all. He doesn't want to. He doesn't seem
>
> tempted to coddle them.

Megan: He doesn't want to get attached.

Mark: Yeah, exactly. He's clearly hesitant on making an investment in them, because he knows, most likely, what the end is gonna be.

Tegan: Or at least one of them is gonna die.

Mark: Exactly.

Tegan: I love Haymitch.

"If," as Georgis (2013) suggests, "we read stories not for what they say but for what they psychically perform" (pp. 1-2), the story contained in the above exchange is certainly a performance of psychical depth. In this brief scene, these readers moved from a discussion of the psychical consequences of student failure for the teacher, to possible symptoms of teacher burnout, to the ways that teachers protect themselves from becoming too emotionally attached to their students, to the lethal dangers of transference-love, to a professing of love for a fictional teacher. In this instance, Haymitch is loved not so much for what he does or says, but for how his behaviours inspire a psychical performance of teacher identity. Through this discussion, these preservice teachers were able to—indirectly, through a fictional text—articulate their own fears of attachment in the classroom, and in doing so, develop strategies of thought that might help to keep them aware of the potential effects of emotional investment. What is left unclear, however, since, "Fantasy that organizes teaching as a dream of love blocks some significant tensions from consciousness" (Robertson, 1997, p. 84), is whether these teachers were able to consider love, devotion and sacrifice in the classroom apart from the fantasies that help to sustain teaching as a structure of idealization and illusion—"not confusing," Taubman (2009) writes, "self-sacrifice with professional dignity" (p. 149). When it

comes to understanding the implications of fantasy and idealization in the classroom, "while being aware of them is one thing, expecting one's self to live up to them is something else altogether" (Bibby, 2011, p. 139).

As Bibby (2011) emphasizes, "Thought, thinking and affect are inextricably bound together and anchored fast in the unconscious—a place we cannot follow" (p. 98). For the above considerations of Katniss and Haymitch as teachers, the links that these readers made to their own professional practice was typically indirect and oblique, and thus represents the stirrings of desire at the unconscious level: the desire to make a difference in the lives of their students, the desire to teach, the desire to sacrifice, the desire to love and be loved. At the more purely conscious level, however, these readers made numerous assessments regarding the use of *The Hunger Games* in the English Language Arts classroom, assessments that were typically less insightful than those that emerged in their discussions of Haymitch and Katniss. As Yalom (1989) notes of the context where meaning ensues: "the more we deliberately pursue it, the less likely are we to find it" (p. 13). By comparing these two types of responses, we can notice the ways that, when preservice teachers draw formal connections between literary (or filmic, televisual, documentary, etc.) texts and their own teaching, such practices may actually actively avoid the desire to problematize their emergent occupational identity.

For Samantha, who offered the first assessment along these lines, the pedagogical potentials of this book were obvious and immediate:

> If I would teach this book … obviously, for me, it's like a given, like ethics, morals … it's all about testing individuals at their darkest moments … what they're really made of, how strong they are … So for me, it was all about … your

true colours, what really came out when people were at their darkest moments.

And yeah, totally like ethics and morals, and you could just go far with this. Of course, it's quite true that Collins' novel offers its readers much to think about in terms of ethics, morality and social relations. However, the majority of such thinking is patently obvious; as Samantha admitted, "It's a given." What Samantha seemed to be implying is that the ethical lessons in this book are easily accessible; they have only to be discovered and revealed. While teaching about ethics in times of crisis and danger is certainly a laudable pedagogical objective, the ways in which Samantha framed this possibility appears exaggeratedly preordained; as such, this is an example of pedagogical potential where the teacher presumes all solutions beforehand.

For Mark, this book appeared as a necessary and inevitable tool for teaching. "I think it's extremely relevant," he noted, "You can use … like teaching-wise, man, it is rich with content. You can bring up present stuff. You can bring it up as a comparative novel to past stuff … Yeah, *as a teacher,* it's a great book." As with Samantha, Mark emphasized the fact that this book is rich with potential, but as he illustrated, this is a potential that is framed by the teacher alone. Megan agreed with Mark, noting, "It's a perfect book for teaching … It just flows, like you can't put it down, so obviously that makes it good for … any kid in the class." On this latter point, Sasha concurred that the pace of the story works well to seduce and capture younger readers: "That's a great thing for kids … to get them really into a book." "It's exciting from the start," Farrin noted, "which is definitely helpful when you're taking something into the classroom, where you know that the kids will stop reading it if the first twenty pages aren't page-turners." While I certainly agree that the pacing of Collins' text makes it a thrill to read, the ways

in which these teachers latched onto this aspect as a means to define a "perfect book for teaching" illustrates one of the central anxieties facing preservice teachers: that the students will not read, and that they will choose to refuse the text. By providing their students with a text that captures their interests immediately, the teacher (at least in theory) is able to avoid the disquieting moments of rejection and refusal in the classroom.

When it comes to imagining scenarios of student engagement, teachers invariably draw on their own experiences of being, or failing to be, engaged in school. As such, imaginings of student refusal can here be understood as transferential defenses against previous insecurities; as Pitt and Britzman (2003) explain, transference is a process "where one makes sense of new situations through the imperatives of older conflicts" (p. 759). Along with Tegan's understanding of faith in the classroom, transference is also contagious and self-multiplying; it invariably wants to influence and affect others. And, as it creates its own justification, it can also be hard to identify—transferential desires generally appear as necessary and beyond refute. In describing the social effects of transference, Frosh (2002) makes a similar claim: "Transference is an escalating phenomenon: once the self imposes it on the other, it tends to create its own reality, so that the other comes to act in line with what the self expects" (p. 90).

While every teacher will certainly have to deal with various instances of student refusal throughout their career, to assume that students *need* to be captured (and thus seduced) in their learning is a problematic and suspicious educational motivation. As I have written elsewhere (Lewkowich, 2010), though seemingly negative emotional attitudes, such as boredom and disinterest, may be avoided and maligned by teachers, to malign those things that we do not know is to hastily stifle alternative judgments,

disregarding the potentially productive nature of those behaviours which may initally appear unfamiliar. In essence, if teachers preemptively assume the existence of student refusal, they miss the opportunity to engage with ideas that they themselves have not created; this assumption therefore reflects a desire *not to know*, which numerous theorists (Felman, 1987; Silin, 1995; among others) have described through our "passion for ignorance," which Britzman (1998a) characterizes as "the paradoxical desire not to know what one already knows, the passionate work of denial and disavowal" (p. 65). Since, "For a teacher to assume that students do not want to learn seems to be an irrational act" (Bibby, 2011, p. 87), teachers should therefore be hesitant when lauding a text as a "perfect book for teaching." Who, they might consider asking themselves, does such perfection serve? How are we using ideas of perfection to defend ourselves against the unknown? And lastly, what pedagogical forms do such constructions of perfection inspire?

As a way of closing this discussion of *The Hunger Games*, it is important to stress the fact that while readers may read with a conscious intent, there remains that kaleidoscopic part of reading that cannot be identified—the part that most surely relates to unconscious desire and phantasy. In our responses to reading, as with dreaming, we can only ever approach such desires obliquely, and through the imperfect conduit of language. At the end of Collins' novel, Katniss and Peeta are faced with an arbitrary set of changes to the rules of the Games. At the Games' outset, only one tribute is allowed to emerge as victorious; then, the rules are changed to allow for two tributes to remain alive, given they are from the same district; once only Katniss and Peeta remain, however, the previous change is rescinded; then, when Katniss and Peeta threaten to kill themselves,

the rules are once more reverted back to allow them both to live. While such arbitrary and unstable directives represent the degree to which the lives of the tributes (and by extension, the population of their home districts) are literally at the mercy of the Capitol, this shifting also represents the vulnerability of the Capitol itself—and the fact that regimes of power are inextricably dependent on those they control. As Samantha declared, by putting the rules themselves into question, and forcing the gamemakers to backtrack on their previous change, Katniss "becomes a threat … to the whole order."

In relation to the context of the classroom, the teacher is forever left unsure about the actual effects of their pedagogy, which, as we have seen in the above illustration of teachers' anxieties surrounding student refusal, provokes much of education to be directed by a fundamental insecurity, which "the drive for control, certainty, prediction, efficiency, and expediency" (Taubman, 2009, p. 170) works to mask. As Salvio (2007) considers, "Perhaps we cling to goals of mastery and excellence because lodged in the ordinary are those intimate truths that belie our most profound vulnerabilities" (p. 7). However, even though Taubman characterizes, "Intolerable [as] thinking that does not match … that which is deemed to constitute learning" (p. 193), I wonder if there can there be an educational thinking apart from strategies of avoidance, and that allows for uncertainty and indecision. As Taubman asks: "What if real education happens when something doesn't work?" (p. 195).

Responding to the Capitol's indiscriminate rule changes, and as a way to further her own understanding of the text, Calandra narrated a story that humorously combines a method of memory and identity-work:

I just saw it as a display of power, like control. Yeah, we'll change the rules and

there's nothing you can do about it … But you know what it reminded me of?

When I did my stage, a lot of the little kids were asking me to play tag when I was

monitoring in the yard … like, "Come play with us." And I'm running around in

high heels in the play yard, and I saw a lot of them, when I would get close to

catching them, they would go to the fence, and they would just cry out, "Safe!"

And I'm like, "Oh yeah, I forgot about that rule." So, I let them chase me, and

after awhile I'd go to the lawn, I'd say, "Safe." And they're like, "No. There's no

safe for you." And I was like, "Excuse me?" And they'd go, "No. There's no safe.

There's no such thing." And then, you kind of feel childish by going, "But you

did it. Why would you change the rules?" So, they kind of changed it so they're in

control of the game, and … it's to their advantage.

In relating this momentary episode from her time as a student teacher at the elementary

level, Calandra illustrated the ways in which the encounters of power in/and pedagogy

are never absolutely definable. In this story, as the locus of power and vulnerability

shifts, it is also difficult to decipher whom Calandra imagined in the place of Katniss.

The locus of power in pedagogy, according to Calandra, rests not with the teacher, nor

with the student, but in the relations they develop through encountering one another;

power is a shared and pliable thing, and as soon as it appears to be grasped it can just as

easily be revoked. For Calandra, this recognition of vulnerability—"That there's no safe.

That there's no such thing"—allowed her to consider the ways in which her identity as a

teacher, rather than being something pre- or fully formed, is shaped through the dynamics

of conflict and encounter; teacher identity is thus imagined as shifting, and as something

that can always be potentially remade, reinvented and (in Kristeva's estimation of the term) revolt-ing.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie

This book, which is a semi-autobiographical account of the author's adolescent experiences, is told from the point of view of Arnold Spirit Jr., also known simply as "Junior," who lives with his family on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington State. The novel is illustrated by Ellen Forney, whose humorous artwork functions to "satirize stereotypes" of Native Americans (Kertzer, 2012, p. 51), and "propose a communal space governed by the hope that all viewers will share Junior's perspective, and laugh with him" (p. 67).

The story begins with Junior describing the multiple ways in which he is physically fragile and peculiar: he was born with an excess of cerebral spinal fluid in his oversized skull, ten extra teeth, he has "lopsided" eyes (one near- and one farsighted), unproportionally large hands and feet, is abnormally skinny, stutters with a lisp, and frequently suffers from seizures. Junior's best friend on the rez is Rowdy, who, similar to Ty in *Sprout*, is physically abused by his father and often covered in bruises. Like the majority of the people who live on the reservation, Junior's family is extremely poor, a point that is emphasized when Junior's father is forced to shoot the family dog, because they can't afford the costs of seeing a veterinarian. As Junior puts it, "A bullet only costs two cents, and anybody can afford that" (Alexie, 2007, p. 14). The issues of poverty and social class serve as a reminder, throughout the novel, that Junior's options on the reservation are limited by circumstances that are almost totally out of his, and his community's, control.

On his first day in Wellpinit high school, Junior encounters his mother's maiden name in his high school geometry textbook, which prompts him to realize that he has been handed the exact same book that his mother used at least thirty years in the past. Angered by the fact that his school can't even afford new textbooks, he throws the book at his teacher, Mr. P, and ends up breaking his nose. Though Junior is suspended, Mr. P (who is white) visits his student, and encourages Junior to leave the reservation, "to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope" (Alexie, 2007, p. 43). Though Junior is nervous about such a transition, and despite the fact that most days he'd have to figure out how to travel the twenty-two miles on his own, he decides that he wants to transfer to Rierdan, an off-reserve high school in a neighbouring town that caters to an exclusively white population. Though his family is supportive of Junior's decision, Rowdy feels betrayed, and after he insults Junior—calling him a "retarded fag" (p. 52)— and punches him to the ground, Junior departs for Rierdan with the knowledge that "[his] best friend had become [his] worst enemy" (p. 53).

Though Junior has some initial difficulties in figuring out the social conduct at Rierdan (for example, that physical violence is rarely used to resolve conflicts), he eventually begins to enjoy himself, forming a relationship with a popular, attractive girl named Penelope, and a friendship with an avid reader named Gordy. Junior also joins the basketball team at his new school, and the first time they play against Wellpinit, his old team wins after Rowdy knocks Junior unconscious. The second time the two teams play, even though Rierdan wins, Junior is saddened after seeing the defeated looks on his old schoolmates' faces. Throughout the novel, Junior faces a number of personal tragedies: his grandmother is run over by a drunk driver; Eugene, a family friend, is shot and killed;

and his newlywed sister dies in a fire with her husband. All told, Junior writes that by the time he'd turned fourteen, he'd already been to forty-two funerals. At the novel's end, Junior and Rowdy reconcile and promise to keep in touch no matter where the future takes them.

As Hoogland (1997) suggests, "Novels which develop ambiguous relationships among the binaries they imply seem to be more useful in providing a forum for exchange and communication regarding … questions about identity" (p. 41). Since Alexie's novel presents Rierdan and Wellpinit as culturally, racially, and economically binarial, with Junior caught in the middle of both worlds (thus belonging to both *and* to neither), it is interesting to note how the identities and actions of various characters are more ambiguous and complex than these rigid societal binaries might otherwise suggest. For example, though Junior's father often leaves his family for days on end, getting drunk and spending most of the household's money, there is still no question that he is a devoted father, and despite his faults, he is probably the most positive parental figure out of all the books that comprise this study. In his first day at Rierdan, a student named Roger publicly humiliates Junior by telling an extremely racist joke. Though Junior acknowledges that Roger remains "a little bit racist" (Alexie, 2007, p. 129), he nonetheless surprisingly develops a friendship with Roger, saying of his behaviour that, "It wasn't racism, not exactly. It was well, I don't know what it was" (p. 181). To encounter such nuance in young adult literature in relation to a character that has racist attitudes, no matter how benign, comes as a bit of a surprise, though throughout the course of the novel, Junior also realizes that, even though they may go against his own

conscious intentions, he also seems to entertain distinctly racist fantasies. In describing his crush on Penelope, Junior emphasizes only her multiple qualities of whiteness:

> She was wearing a white shirt and white shorts, and I could see the outlines of her white bra and white panties. Her skin was pale white. Milky white. Cloud white. So she was all white on white on white, like the most perfect kind of vanilla dessert cake you've ever seen. I wanted to be her chocolate topping. (p. 114)

Obsessed with the idea of enveloping himself in Penelope's whiteness, Junior turns to Gordy for advice, who in turn explains how white girls are often privileged in the mainstream media, and typically assumed to possess more worth than their overtly racialized counterparts. When Junior inquires into what this means for his own situation, Rowdy replies, "I think it means you're just a racist asshole like everybody else" (p. 116).

There are also a number of occasions in this novel where attitudes toward death involve moments of communal laughter, rather than solemnity and sadness. At his grandmother's wake, Junior notes how, in his community, "When it comes to death, we know that laughter and tears are pretty much the same thing" (Alexie, 2007, p. 166). Soon after Junior finds out his sister has died, he becomes convinced that his father is going to get into an accident while driving to pick him up from school. When his father finally arrives, Junior explodes in laughter: "I laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed" (p. 204). Such an unexpected response to an unimaginably distressing situation outlines the ways that, in this novel, emotional responses do not always emerge in a strictly logical fashion, and indeed, may sometimes run counter to their surrounding events.

As Felman (2007) suggests, since it troubles the boundaries of common sense and literal meaning, humour can at times constitute a tremendous "assault on knowledge" and "assault on power," and if laughter is seen to represent "a sort of explosion of the speaking body," the act of laughing "becomes an explosive performance in every sense of the word" (p. 124). In relation to Junior's illustrations that are found throughout the novel, Kertzer (2012) describes Alexie's comedic approach as a form of indeterminate, shifting and "risky laughter," where the reader is actually given the choice to laugh with *or* against Junior. In spontaneous and unrestrained laughter, there is always a tendency towards slippage that allows for the possibility of bodily missteps and linguistic blunders, all of which are variously uninvited materializations of the unconscious mind.

In Alexie's story, there are multiple points where Junior describes his body as a site of release and explosion, which works to problematize the body's relation to the external world and its multiple sites of knowledge and power. As mentioned above, Junior's body is itself a condition of excess and surplus; he has too many teeth, his limbs extend too far, and his head is oversized. It is as if his body is already too much for the world. Junior also vomits at many points in the novel, and when he confides to his coach the fact that he throws up before every basketball game, his coach nonchalantly replies, "Some people need to clear the pipes before they can play. I used to be a yucker. You're a yucker. Ain't nothing wrong with being a yucker" (p. 180). While in most cases, it would seem that excessive vomiting might be an indication of an underlying medical condition—and since Penelope is actually revealed as bulimic, it is not as if Alexie is unaware of such a disease—in Junior's case, this act of expulsion is a fact of existence, and a way to ready himself for the uncompromising challenges that the world presents.

As a figure of excess, perhaps such purgation is also a way for Junior to present an always-compromised version of himself in the face of a world that demands he fit into categories for which he is never fully appropriate. As a commentary on adolescence, Alexie appears to be critiquing the cultural tendency to demarcate categories of adolescent abjection and excess—whether emotional, physical, semantic, artistic—as unnecessary, temporary and redundant, relegated to the trash bin of everyday life. Interestingly, since Junior vomits at both sites, such qualifications appear true for both Rierdan *and* Wellpinit, which implies that such demands are not necessarily culturally exclusive.

Junior and Gordy also discuss the erotic qualities of reading and learning, which seems to suggest that—even though such knowledge would serve no purpose in a system of rational epistemology—these characters remain open to the otherwise useless, abject and 'fleshy' propositions of literature and educational life. Early in the novel, Junior admits his passion for masturbation, and while he describes the hours he spends in the bathroom with photos of naked movie stars, he also acknowledges that it is more than just the curves in human bodies that make him feel aroused, but also geometrical shapes in general: "isosceles triangles make me feel *hormonal*" (Alexie, 2007, p. 25). In describing his theory of the emotional life of reading, Gordy proposes to Junior the idea of "approach[ing] each book … with the real possibility that you might get a metaphorical boner at any point" (p. 97).

In Gordy's theory, the practice of reading should ideally involve a habit of rereading that acknowledges the different categories of meaning that can, at times unexpectedly, emerge from any given text. As he describes this practice, "You have to

read a book three times before you know it. The first time you read it for the story. The

plot. The movement from scene to scene" (Alexie, 2007, p. 97), which is similar to the

practice of "reading for the plot," as described by Brooks (1984). For Brooks, "Plot … is

the design and intention of narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction

or intent of meaning," which relates to the ways that, as readers, we have a "desire and

need for such orderings" (p. xi). In Gordy's second stage of reading, you "read [a book]

for its history" (p. 95), which involves interrogating the historical knowledge that is

embedded in the etymological uses and structures of language. And lastly, Gordy's third

stage involves reading with jouissance and erotic intent, and with full knowledge "that

the act of finishing, of completing, of accomplishing a task—is joyous" (p. 98). As with

any useful theory of reading, Gordy's can also be considered a theory for living, which

involves a decidedly holistic awareness of the fact that even though certain human

experiences may appear incompatible with each other, they are all nevertheless essential,

and of value and significance. As Junior emphasizes, "I suddenly understood that if every

moment of a book should be taken seriously, then every moment of a life should be taken

seriously as well" (p. 95). This pronouncement effectively works to equalize and affirm

the value of ostensibly legitimate *and* illegitimate forms of knowledge and experience,

and to promote a kind of "unconditional welcome" in relation to that which we do not yet

know, which as Gilbert (2006) writes, "demands that we accept what is not yet

intelligible" (p. 27).

     In considering where Junior is left at the novel's end, it is here worth turning to

Kristeva's (1991) consideration of the concept of "the foreigner" in *Strangers to*

Ourselves, which she defines as "The one who does not belong to the group, who is not

'*one of them*'" (p. 95). Though Junior is not necessarily a foreigner (he is, after all, an American citizen), the ways in which he is construed in Rierdan as an *other* implies, that to the students at this school, *he looks* like a foreigner, which in turn leads Junior to *feel like* a foreigner. Junior, however, eventually transfigures this feeling into a position that can be described as either foreign-less or foreign-full, depending on whether he is understood to extend the concept indefinitely (in turn making everything and everyone foreign), or to erase its significance completely—either of which would have a similar effect.

In Kristeva's (1991) book, she outlines the implications of Freudian psychoanalysis for the field of human ethics; it is argued that, through introducing the idea of the unconscious as the foreigner within, psychoanalysis necessarily refutes the concept that while certain people are relegated to a class of foreigners, others are not: "The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners" (p. 192). As Kristeva sees it, though foreigners may initially feel "torn between here and elsewhere, now and before," there are nevertheless, "in the way one lives this attachment to a lost space … two irreconcilable categories" of foreigner-subjectivity (p. 10). In the first place, there are those who feel crucified in an endless struggle between what was, and what lies in some unattainable future: "the followers of neutrality, the advocates of emptiness; they are necessarily defeatists" (p. 10). On the other hand, there are "those who transcend: living neither before nor now but beyond," and though they may live with a forever-unsatisfied passion, it is a passion that remains fixed on another world that is also a promised future (p. 10). Though Kristeva locates examples of such promised futures in the passion that one may feel for "an occupation, a love, a child, a glory" (p. 10), it also may surely be

characterized by the passion experienced in the realm of artistic creation, and as a semi-autobiographical account, we know that Junior's story is tied to that of Alexie's, an internationally renowned and award-winning author. As with Mr. P's advice, Junior's passion is premised on an interminable, and hopeful, search for hope, which Alexie (and Junior) eventually discovers in his pursuit of artistic expression and creative writing.

From this perspective, it is interesting to note the book's epigraph, which is a short quote from W.B. Yeats: "There is another world, but it is in this one." While one way to read this line may be to take Alexie's reference to "another world" as an allusion to the Indian Reservations that exist alongside more prosperous American communities, he might also be seen as referring to the world that a foreigner creates through transgressing his otherwise limited situation (reading the world "with the real possibility that you might get a metaphorical boner at any point"). And if, as Kristeva suggests, we are all foreigners, then the prospect of passionately grasping a further world remains possible for each and every one of us.

Projections of Redemption: Responding to The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

While this dissertation has thus far looked at a variety of psychical strategies that preservice teachers employ and maneuver in their encounters with young adult literature, nowhere is the strategy of projection more forceful than in their readings of Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. In these readings, the participants in this study imagined Junior's story as one of redemption, along with a promise of success and salvation through education. Such promise was also repeatedly measured against what they saw as a lack of redemptive qualities in Rowdy, Junior's best friend on the

reservation. In their binarial speculations on Junior and Rowdy as good/bad, success/failure, a promise of redemption/a lack of redemption, these readers enacted a project of psychical splitting, which can be read through Melanie Klein's theorizations regarding the infant's relations to the "good" and "bad" breast; this is an object relation that, though it first appears in infancy, continues to reemerge "in later development and throughout the life cycle" (Youell, 2006, p. 29).

As Klein (1946/1991) articulates this fundamental relation of infantile paranoid-schizoid anxieties:

> I have often expressed my view that object relations exist from the beginning of
> life, the first object being the mother's breast which to the child becomes split into
> a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast; this splitting results in a severance
> of love and hate. (pp. 180-181)

As this splitting of the mother's breasts (and thus of the figure of the mother as well) represents the conflicts inherent in what Klein calls the paranoid-schizoid position, the depressive position involves the reparative act of regarding "the mother as a whole person commensurate with but also distinct from the infant's existence" (Phillips, 1988, p. 56). Importantly, as Bibby (2011) notes, it is significant that Klein refers to these phenomena as *positions* rather than stages, since while, "'Stages' suggest the possibility of development beyond; 'position', on the other hand, suggests places to stand, to move from and return to but never lost or entirely overcome" (p. 102).

Though the student is obviously no breast, and the teacher is clearly no infant, we can nevertheless think of the teacher's pedagogical anxieties, and these readers' imaginings of Alexie's novel, in terms of the frustrations and gratifications first

encountered in infancy. "In a paranoid move," Bibby (2011) explains, "the hated breast (the thing that I cannot bear) becomes the hating breast (a thing that hates and cannot bear me). Simultaneously, the good breast is idealized as a saviour" (p. 101). As the splitting of breasts into categories of "good" and "bad" originates entirely in the baby's mind, and are thus "projections of the infant's own feelings of gratification and frustration, love and hate" (p. 101), the splitting of students and fictional characters—into seemingly definitive categories of "good" and "bad"—can therefore be read as a representation of the ways in which teachers and readers manage "intensifying anxiety about children, education, and the future" (Powell & Barber, 2006, p. 44). As Skorczewski (2005) reminds us, "Teachers unconsciously participate in the creation and reproduction of particular forms of knowledge in a classroom, and their students are often the objects on which these ways of knowing are projected" (pp. 63-64).

In regards to the character of Rowdy, his choices in life are repeatedly interpreted, once again, through the language of *potential*. As Bridget phrased her suspicions about whether Rowdy will ever do anything to improve his lot in life, and despite the numerous other characters for whom life on the reservation offers no alternatives to poverty, she constructed her judgment in terms of choice and faith: "I don't necessarily think that Rowdy will overcome the reservation. I think that he doesn't believe in himself enough to do so." Despite the utter lack of opportunity on the Spokane reservation, and the fact that Rowdy's home life is punctuated by abuse and neglect, Bridget appeared to place the responsibility for "overcoming" such circumstances on the figure of Rowdy alone. On this point, Mark agreed:

I think there's a difference between him having the opportunity, and whether or not he actually follows through with it. *The opportunity is there for sure.* You leave the novel thinking, there is hope for this kid, if he decides to take it. … I see him as staying on the reservation. … He has the chance and it's there.

Strangely (considering the explicitly liberal attitudes of these readers), the discussion surrounding the splitting of Junior and Rowdy's fates took on undeniably classist tones, with judgments concerning *potential* focusing on willpower and self-discipline. For Calandra, "All you need to do is change your way of thinking, and that's what [Junior] did. But, then again, not everybody has that strength of mind." Obviously, the "everybody" Calandra referred to includes Rowdy, and the majority of the Spokane community. The pedagogical implications for such attitudes are ominous; if students are struggling—academically, financially, emotionally, etc.—all they need do is pick themselves up by their bootstraps and push on past their troubles.

Tegan, who considered the potentially deleterious *and* beneficial effects that this book may have on less privileged adolescent readers, adopted a more nuanced approach: in reference to poverty, she declared, "It's the way you choose to live with it." While this statement takes into consideration the fact that poverty is not simply a matter of choice, it still considers Rowdy's behaviour through a judgment of tenacity. And certainly, while no matter our lot in life we always have a range of options, Tegan's outlook seems to lack an appreciation of the fact that Rowdy is a young adolescent, and that much of his life is determined by factors unrelated to personal choice. While Junior took it upon himself to hitchhike across county lines to attend school, which thus made him physically and emotionally vulnerable in an almost superhuman sense, it is difficult to imagine that such

a choice can be taken by Rowdy; he does not have supportive parents, nor does he seem to possess Junior's inclination for academic achievement. To criticize him on this count is thus detrimental and non-productive, and for students learning to teach, it is important to recognize that the majority of schooling environments have trouble providing alternatives to students that do not easily thrive in the classroom. "While Rowdy conformed around the situation he was in," Tegan continued, "Junior didn't." From this valuation of non-conformity, it is therefore worth posing the question: Is rising above conditions and situations of abuse what teachers, albeit unconsciously, expect of their students? If this is the case, then teacher education must rethink its objectives, and radically reconsider the ways in which teachers think about pedagogical expectations. While teachers should obviously not give up on struggling students, it is nevertheless clear that, at times, expectations (a teacher's version of the narcissistically-imbued pleasure principle) must take a back seat to realities (and to the pleasures of others). For Salvio (2007), who refers to unwarranted expectations as a "form of self-deception," the tendency to believe "what is good for ourselves is good for our students can suppress substantial differences between our students and ourselves" (p. 53). And since some degree of self-deception is always inevitable when considering the relation of desire to projective identification, it is also necessary to note how, "Every analyst," as every teacher, will naturally "have their own—mostly unconscious—repertoire of suitable interests for a good person" (Phillips, 1998, p. 9)—a kind of "secret chart of tastes, distastes, indifferences" (Barthes, 1981, p. 18) that we inevitably use to judge the actions of others.

For Farrin, the approach that she took towards Rowdy was undeniably one of hostility and aggression: As she admitted, he just didn't have "that strength of character." "Well," she declared:

I'm not saying Rowdy was dead inside, but … in a way, you could look at it … almost like *a symbolic death*. I mean, he was trying to deal with his anger … but in a way, he had given up, and … Junior could get past it, and kind of rise beyond whatever they're told their *potential* is, to his *actual potential*, but [Rowdy] didn't make that effort. Like, he just didn't see it in himself. So, I think that hopelessness, in a way, is *a symbolic death*.

Though this was obviously not a conscious move, by declaring Rowdy—who, despite his faults, is a (fictional) living, breathing being—as suffering from "a symbolic death," Farrin actually commits an act of symbolic murder. While she criticized Rowdy's "hopelessness," by calling this condition a "death," it is difficult to understand how Farrin could qualify her own judgment as one of hope. Humans all unconsciously produce their objects of love and hate. To further understand this indispensable creation of hatred and aggression it is necessary to turn momentarily back to Klein.

As Klein (1946/1991) explains the violent nature of an infant's attacks on its mother's "bad" and "frustrating" breast:

From the beginning the destructive impulse is turned against the object and is first expressed in phantasied oral-sadistic attacks on the mother's breast, which soon develop into onslaughts on her body by all sadistic means. The persecutory fears arising from the infant's oral-sadistic impulses to rob the mother's body of its good contents, and from the anal-sadistic impulses to put his excrements into her

(including the desire to enter her body in order to control her from within) are of

great importance for the development of paranoia and schizophrenia. (p. 177)

And, it must here be recalled, the paranoid-schizoid position is a necessary, natural and

temporary manner for humans to understand their social relations. For preservice

teachers, as they develop their egoic sense of what it means to be a teacher, they will

most certainly undergo numerous instances of projection and introjection in their

pedagogical relations. As Klein defines these terms in the context of object relations,

anxiety and splitting: "Projection … originates from the deflection of the death instinct

outwards and in my view it helps the ego to overcome anxiety by ridding it of danger and

badness. Introjection of the good object is also used by the ego as a defence against

anxiety" (p. 181). While the readers in this study projected their own anxieties and fears

onto the character of Rowdy, who became a hated and hateful figure, Junior was

increasingly idealized as perfect and faultless. Rowdy was projected outside, as an abject

figure, while Junior was introjected inside, and imagined as a kind of teacher. For Klein,

this process of idealization is closely linked to fear and anxiety:

> Idealization is bound up with the splitting of the object, for the good aspects of the
>
> breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against the fear of the persecuting breast.
>
> While idealization is thus the corollary of persecutory fear, it also springs from
>
> the power of the instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification and
>
> therefore create the picture of an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast—an
>
> ideal breast. (p. 182)

Considered through the lens of Klein's commentary, it is clear that, for these readers,

their attachments to Junior were intimately connected to the expectations they assume of

their students, which themselves arise as an unconscious response to the anxieties associated with the unknowable elements of educational practice.

For teachers, there is often an imperative to believe that what one does can make a difference, *in an inevitable sense*; for Taubman (2009), this idealization constructs teachers "as ministering angels" (p. 140). However, while this imagined inevitability is dependent on the fact that the teacher *needs* to sacrifice themselves for their students, according to this fantasy's narrative, this is an act of symbolic devotion which will in turn result in the student sacrificing (or pushing) themselves to accord with their teacher's demands and desires. In this fantasy, the teacher is therefore positioned as saviour, and as Taubman reminds us, "It is interesting in passing to note that the word 'serve' is etymologically associated with both slavery and adoration—worthlessness and grandiosity" (p. 146). As with the "good" and "bad" breast, the teacher—if imagined as saviour—is also precariously in danger of being split and torn themselves between the poles of insignificance and significance, "worthlessness and grandiosity." For Rowdy, however, since he has no teacher (or indeed, any adult figure) placing their faith in him, Junior is himself imagined in the role of returning saviour. And, as teacher education is always a kind of return (back into school and the energies and insecurities of one's educational past), it is interesting to note the ways in which Junior is imagined as potentially returning to Spokane—both to *save* and to *teach*.

For Bridget, who asked, "But will Junior ever come back?" Junior was idealized as a character who, in "remember[ing] his roots," *must* return; "I think," she said, "that he will come back." In Farrin's response, she made the link between returning, teaching and saving explicit: "I don't think that he has to leave forever … [which] made me wonder

whether he would actually go back to teach in the school." Tegan agreed with this

assessment, stating, "It's very likely that … he'd go back, or at least try to help them in

some way." In splitting the characters of Junior and Rowdy, as with the infant's splitting

of the mother's breasts, these preservice teachers entered into a discussion that

illuminates the complex relation between a teacher's emergent occupational identity, its

accompanying anxieties, and the impulse to expel the bad and fearful, while keeping the

good close in.

As Calandra asked about Junior's possible return to teach—which, it must be

noted, is a return never hinted at in the book, which makes its appearance in both groups'

discussions suspicious and significant—"But, would he be well received?" As student

teachers inevitably operate in an awkward zone—not quite student, not yet teacher—this

question of Junior's reception, *as returning teacher*, can here be read through Britzman's

(2003) claim that, "Learning to teach, like teaching itself, is a time when desires are

rehearsed, refashioned, and refused" (p. 221). If we think of these readers' responses to

Junior as a form of idealized introjection, Calandra's question may thus be rephrased:

Will I be well received? Will my students reciprocate my love and desire to serve? In her

response to Calandra's query, Farrin remained optimistic: "I think he may be embraced

… well, maybe not at first, but I think eventually, that's the stature he would actually

gain if he chose to go back." As a returning saviour, Farrin displayed a strong

transferential desire to believe that Junior will necessarily be "embraced" and accepted by

his community, and by extension, the students he would be teaching: "If he ever goes

back," she pondered, "I don't think they would tell him to leave. I think they would

always take him."

Problematizing this desire to return, Mark structured his response in relation to the designation of Junior as a "part-time Indian," a questioning of identity's stability that can here be interpreted in relation to the often-contradictory demands of being and becoming a teacher. "No teaching identity," Britzman (2003) reminds us, "is ever singular or without contradictions; the teacher's identity expresses a cacophony of calls" (p. 223). For Mark, in presenting his understanding of the relation between Junior's identity and his desire to leave the reservation, "If you're making that the next step, if you are separating or moving on, then it has to be … a complete separation." From this figuring of Junior's identity as requiring a severe break from his past (which begs the question: Can the teacher remain who they were, after the adoption of the title of *teacher*?), Mark then vacillated in a confusing degree of shifting and unstable meaning:

> Not in the sense of you keep those, you know, you keep those lessons with you … you keep, you know, your experience and your life with you … but like, to have that kind of return to it. I'm not sure if he would do that in the end, if he would come back for Rowdy.

As I read Mark's response, he is stumbling through understanding the ways in which identity—whether Junior's or that of a teacher—is something one can remake, and whether, in this remaking, one can negotiate the various influences of one's past. Through the lens of young adult literature, Mark can therefore be seen as rehearsing, refashioning and refusing his desires to be a teacher, and linking these desires to his desire to hold onto who he had previously imagined himself to be. Wandering into this "dangerous territory of the unknown" (Britzman, 2003, p. 224), it is hardly surprising that Mark articulated himself confusingly.

…

In these last two chapters, interpreting the ways in which readers consider the literary representations of fictional adolescence, I have held fast to the notion that preservice teachers require a space to experiment with their developing identities as educators. Students learning to teach inarguably occupy a psychically awkward zone, a difficult mental space that is further complicated through the interaction of personal histories, past educational experiences and projected anxieties and desires. In the above conversations, these readers have illustrated the depth of their literary identifications through strategies of projection and introjection, transferential attachment, idealization, pronoun shifting, linguistic displacement, and various excursions into memoried space. Through such strategies, the preservice teachers in this study have been able to explore the challenging nature of power dynamics in the classroom, the cultural meanings of teacher identity, the relationship of sexuality to literary engagement, the significance of student refusal and failure, the certainty of fallibility and regression in educational life, the question of whether adolescent development is a straightforward sequence, and the ways in which teachers express their expectations concerning adolescent behaviour.

In ending this chapter, it is important to reflect on the fact that, as Klein (1946/1991) describes, "The processes of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them into objects are … of vital importance for normal development" (p. 184). For students learning to teach, the practice of socially engaging with young adult literature can function as a means to work through their emergent—and often inarticulable—anxieties about becoming a teacher. As this process of working through the difficulties of assuming oneself as an authority figure can be a daunting and fearful proposition, it is

essential that preservice teachers be given a space to work through their fears and anxieties, and moreover, that such work be considered a part of "normal development." As the above discussions illustrate, allowing teachers to use the context of fictional lives to indirectly work through their own anxieties—while it will certainly not produce any final or conclusive support (though reading can help, it is not therapy)—nevertheless provides a forum for the symbolization of desires that may otherwise be left unvoiced. As teachers teach, they invariably call on a variety of experiences to inform the decisions they make; for the readers in this study, the challenging nature of the above conversations will inescapably inform and influence their future teaching practices.

Chapter VII: The Problem of Ending(s)

In our best redescriptions
the present answers
back to the past
with a view to
making a future…

(Phillips, 1998, p. 144)

Having introduced, at the beginning of this dissertation, what Said (1985) refers to as the "problem of beginnings," the elaboration of an adequate ending is no less elusive and problematic. While teacher education and reading experience both have no certain beginning, it is also necessarily the case that their endings are arbitrary and often misleading. When the dream is over, the dreamer is left to piece together the puzzle that is their sleeping mind, and while sexual endings might offer some degree of satisfaction, what they also provide is a moment for desire itself to regroup. When does an experience of reading end? When the book is shut? When the reader sleeps? Can the reader ever fully exhaust the possibilities of any given read? When does teacher education end? The moment the degree is confirmed? When the teacher signs their first full time contract? Can the teacher ever come to admit that their teacher education has come to a close, that they have nothing pedagogically left to learn? And for the practice of writing, can all questions ever be answered, all meanings extracted, all language made to comply with the writer's intents? No, no, and no. This being said, endings are real, and though they often leave us feeling disappointed and incomplete, they also offer a space for us to reflect on what has come to pass.

Though a conclusion is not generally intended as a space to offer new insights, it is nevertheless necessary that I look briefly at the ways that the participants in this study

framed their responses to the novels' endings[iv]. For *Speak*, the participants generally

agreed that the book's ending was satisfactory, and that it offered to readers a sense both

of resolve and completion. For Calandra, she articulated her response to Halse

Anderson's work in the following way: "I think it ended well. It resolved the issue …

The important part is that … [Melinda] reclaimed her sense of self, and her value for

herself, and … so, for me it was resolved. I was happy with it." For Calandra, along with

many of the other readers, endings are deemed satisfactory when their culminating

arrangements are clearly comprehensible and unambiguous.

　　　In regards to *Sprout*, the ambiguity of the novel's ending left the readers with a

deep sense of disappointment and unease. For Mark, he felt "a little lost," and "a little

confused," and though he admits to liking ambiguous endings, he found Peck's narrative

"a little bit on the extreme side of that." Sasha also felt a sense of disquiet, and

acknowledged that she "felt really unsatisfied at the end": "I was like, waiting, waiting,

for this big chapter, this big page, this big sentence to happen, and it just never did."

Megan also experienced a similar impatience, and as she put it, "I was getting a little

disappointed, and I was waiting for this chapter where you're like, 'Okay, this is where it

all ties together,' and I just felt more like it just fell apart." And significantly, this

uncomfortable feeling of disintegration is coupled with a recognition of unwelcome

flirtation and playfulness. As Megan declared, as a reader she felt as if, "He" (and

whether she is referring to Peck or the character of Sprout is unclear) "keeps teasing us."

For the readers in this study, then, though some degree of ambiguity is welcomed in

reading, the greater the interpretive uncertainty of the ending the greater the potential for

feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and offence. For teachers, this unease is similar to that

which may arise when students fail to meet up to externally imposed expectations of personal potential.

With regards to *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the feelings that the readers expressed towards the novel's ending are at times hostile and excessively categorical. As Mark so forcefully and stutteringly stated, "I-I-I-I hated the ending. I hated the ending." For Mark, there is a disconnect between the ways that Alexie's novel "kind of builds into addressing these social issues," and then "just goes ridiculous and there is no moral." As he later phrased his dis-ease with the novel's ending: "I was disappointed, 'cause there was a potential to, you know, really lay out a solution to this race issue, and it was just kinda like, 'The future is bright.'" As with the participants' framing of whether or not the adolescent characters meet up to their potential, Alexie's work is here deemed incomplete, since it fails to offer concrete solutions to the social problems of race and class. Though it is obviously debatable whether Alexie actually fails to address these issues well, Sasha also expresses a similar sentiment of deficiency:

> I kinda thought the last chapter was going to be about the future, like … I was hoping it would be like, maybe, their senior year, and what was going to happen afterwards. Something like that, where it gives a little bit about the future, and there is a little hope, there's a little bit of an answer.

In expressing their dissatisfaction with Alexie's ending, both Sasha and Mark communicate their need for answers, rather than questions. As Mark phrased his desire: "I think …what I was looking for [was] a bit more of a realist kind of conclusion." For teachers, whose days, classes and school years are marked by multiple endings, it is here worth considering the ways in which educators respond to conclusions that are different

than those they may have initially presumed or desired (for example: a student's marks, an irreverent opinion, an alternate interpretation, etc.).

If we bear in mind Britzman's (2009b) description of the status of dream thoughts in educational spaces, and the connection that I have articulated in this study between the experiences of reading and dreaming, we can also draw a link between these readers' interpretations of narrative endings and their desires as preservice teachers:

> Straying dream thoughts hold no currency in daily classroom life. They are too enigmatic, too inarticulate, too sexual, and too much about sleep. Their images that trade transmission with transgression make us laugh. Dreams, Freud wrote, are not made for the purpose of being understood. They propose what is most preposterous about considerations of representation and what is most inventive about the dream work. They give us access to our unconscious life world and each night while we sleep, present what cannot be understood but is nonetheless felt: our wishes, our fears, our comic missteps, our enigmas, and lost history. Dreams urge us to play in our inattentiveness, absurdity, non-sense. They … are fleeting, hard to remember, concealed by forgetfulness, difficult to pin down, and, more often than not, confuse our conscious mind with their refusal of reason, of time, and of negation. (p. x)

As experiences that similarly fringe the unconscious, reading and dreaming therefore offer a challenge to the curriculum of teacher education, and its overwhelming insistence on conscious intention and realism at the cost of dreaming. Though the readers in this study often took pleasure in articulating their experiences of reading as spaces of potential levity and imaginative thought, they also remained steadfastly concerned with

the pedagogical uses of literary texts (and for preservice teachers, such concern obviously makes sense!). The challenge for teacher educators, then, lies in figuring out how the imperatives of *reading as a teacher* (where reading is typically framed in relation to pedagogical application) can be broadened to also include the energies of a reading that makes a priority of enjoyment, pleasure, dreaming, interpretive risk and nonsense. Such a reading, as we have seen in this study and when set in the context of an informal reading group, allows readers to symbolize desires, fantasies and anxieties that might otherwise remain unarticulated. In the context of teacher education, to facilitate a space in which preservice teachers can safely explore the—at times contradictory, unofficial and illicit—emotions associated with their emergent occupational identities, and their own unfinished adolescence, might also provide an interpretive space for readers and teachers to approach their own limits and structures of acceptability, identity and thought. Therefore, such a space might allow teachers to explore "what one cannot bear to know" (Britzman, 1995, p. 165), and through such exploration, to develop a method for thinking about teaching potentially apart from the imperatives of preexisting structures and constraints.

Over the course of this dissertation, and using the lens of psychoanalytic theory and a hermeneutics of cultural reception informed by the commitments of cultural studies, I have explored the meanings produced in the convergence of teacher education, young adult literature and social experiences of reading. When approached as a prompt for thinking, young adult literature—and its representations of adolescent life—allows adult readers, and teachers in particular, to theorize their past in relation to their desired and imagined futures. While the future necessarily remains uncertain, the projecting of life through the lens of literature allows for preservice teachers to recognize, as Piper

(2012) phrases it, that since they transport and sustain ideas across generational divides,

"Things," such as books, "make the sharedness of ideas possible" (p. 87)—between

generations, within the self and between the self and others.

ⁱ In the language of psychoanalysis, *working-through* is a term that symbolizes the majority of what takes place in the therapeutic context, where—through repetitions modified by the work of interpretation—the patient (the *analysand*) acquires interpretive insight into the complex nature of their psychical conflicts and anxieties, realizing the extent to which events from their past might be influencing and repeating themselves in the present. It is "a sort of psychical work which allows the subject to accept certain repressed elements and to free himself from the grip of mechanisms of repetition" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 488). As a consequence of such acceptance, the patient moves "from rejection or merely intellectual acceptance to a conviction based on lived experience" (p. 488), and may therefore (ideally) begin to make positive changes in their life and in relations with others. The reading groups in this study thus offer a space to *work through* the repetitive and insistent nature of unconscious arrangements in learning to teach, by "bringing these into relation with the subject's personality as a whole" (p. 489).

ⁱⁱ Though not identical, certain parts of this literature review have emerged from previous publications, most notably: Lewkowich (2012a), (2012b), (2012c), and (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ Of course, no text is actually safe, and no reading can be defined as innocent, stable or neutral. In reading, the text is invariably transformed, which makes of the reader an inventor and thief, in a world where we stake our own claims to knowledge. "All stories," as Phillips (1995) writes, "are subject to an unknowable multiplicity of interpretations" (p. xvi).

^{iv} Since *The Hunger Games* is the first novel in a trilogy—a fact that the readers were well aware of—I will not be referring to their responses to this book's ending, as its ending is only a stopgap.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

![McGill logo]

<u>**Participant Consent Form**</u>

<u>Project Title:</u> **Teacher Identity, Adolescence and Reading: The Cultural and Psychic Dynamics of Young Adult Literature**

<u>Student Researcher (P.I.):</u> **David Lewkowich**   **Phone: (514) 862-2245**
<u>Email:</u> **david.lewkowich@mail.mcgill.ca**

<u>Faculty Supervisor:</u> **Dr. Bronwen Low, Assistant Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, bronwen.low@mcgill.ca, (514) 398-6399**

Hello,

My name is David Lewkowich, and I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. You are invited to participate in a comparative study of two reading groups of young adult literature. This research will form the basis for my doctoral dissertation. The results of this research will be communicated through academic publications and conference presentations.

If you are willing to participate in this research study, please sign and return the consent form at the bottom of this letter.

Please read this letter carefully and ask any questions you have before signing.

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- There are no risks for participating in this study.
- Deciding not to participate in this study will have no influence on your classroom marks.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question, and to withdraw your consent to participate at any time, for any reason.

Purpose and Description of the Study

This study aims to examine the issues involved in the reading of young adult literature, literature that is aimed specifically at an adolescent audience. Two concurrent reading

groups will be initiated as part of this study, composed of preservice Language Arts teachers.This study will involve the reading of four texts: *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Andersen; *Sprout*, by Dale Peck; and two others that will be determined at a later date.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study, though the novels will be distributed for free to each of the research participants. There are no potential benefits, foreseeable discomforts and/or risks associated with this study.

If you consent to being part of this study, your participation will consist of the following:

- Four reading group discussions (approximately one hour a month), which will each revolve around a different text. These meetings will be audio recorded.
- Two individual interviews (approximately half an hour each), one near the beginning of the study, and one near the end. These interviews will be audio recorded, and will take place outside of class time.

Confidentiality

Only David Lewkowich, the Primary Investigator, will have access to any of the original materials, such as the interviews, the group discussions, and the reading journals. If any of this research is published or presented at a conference, identifying information will be removed to assure the confidentiality of all participants.

There are two copies of this consent form, one of which I may keep.

_____

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and have received answers. I give my consent to participate in this study, and to have my interviews audiotaped.

PRINT NAME_____

SIGNATURE_____DATE_____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

APPENDIX B
OFFICIAL ETHICS APPROVAL

🛡 **McGill**

Research Ethics Board Office   Tel: (514) 398-6831
James Administration Bldg.   Fax: (514) 398-4644
845 Sherbrooke Street West. Rm 429   Website: www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/
Montreal, QC H3A 2T5

Research Ethics Board III
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 104-0911

Project Title: Teacher identity, adolescence and reading: the cultural and psychic dynamics of young adult literature

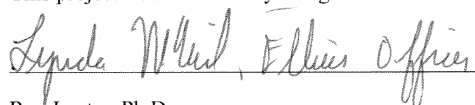**Principal Investigator:** David Lewkowich   **Department:** Integrated Studies in Education

Status: Ph.D. student   **Supervisor:** Prof. Bronwen Low

This project was reviewed by delegated review.

[signature]

Roy Lyster, Ph.D.
Delegated Reviewer, REB III

Approval Period: *Sept. 19, 2011* to *Sept. 18, 2012*

This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

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* All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
* When a project has been completed or terminated a Study Closure form must be submitted.
* Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDES

<u>**FIRST INTERVIEW**</u>

So, first of all, I just want to thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this project, and, understanding that your identity will remain anonymous, and that I am the only one who will listen to this tape, I was hoping I could start by asking you some general questions about yourself. Is this all right?

Okay, so how long have you been in Montreal? Are you from here?

And how old are you?

And how would you describe your cultural or religious background?

Can you describe some of your interests outside of school? (artistic, athletic, political, or anything else you might think of…)

And which program are you in now?

So what grade level do you hope to teach?

Do you see yourself teaching adolescents?

Have you ever taken any courses outside of the faculty?

Student Teacher

So how many stages have you done so far?
Where were they?

How would you describe your experiences as a student teacher?
Do you have any especially significant stories that you can share with me?

Other than your student teaching, have you worked as a teacher before?

Are there any other teachers in your family?

What other kinds of work have you done?

What would you consider the ideal teaching position for yourself?

What have you most enjoyed about your time at McGill so far?

Are there parts of the program that you haven't liked so much?

In moving from student to teacher, would you say it has it been an easy transition?

How would you describe the differences between what you encounter in the classroom, on your stage, and what you learn about in university?

Teacher

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

Now, when you think forward to being a teacher, and to having your own class, what are some of the concerns you have?

What would you consider the most challenging aspects of becoming a teacher?

When you think forward to being a teacher, and to having your own class, what do you hope for? What do you fear? What are your hopes and fears?

How will you approach reading in your class? What type of space will you make for reading in the school day?

Thinking back to your childhood, can you recall some of your early memories of reading?

What kinds of books would you like to read with your students?

Adolescence

How would you describe your adolescence?
Were you much of a reader?

As an adolescent, what were your favourite subjects in school?

What was your relation to school? Was it a place you liked? Was it a place you felt comfortable?

Reading

So, what types of books would you say that you usually read? Do you have any favourite authors?

How would you describe yourself, as a reader?

Now, personally, I like to think of reading metaphorically, as a kind of dreaming, and so I'd like to know, what metaphors, images or symbols would you use to understand the experience of reading?

And what about teaching? Can you think of a metaphor, or an image, that relates to your understanding of what teaching is, or the role of the teacher?

When you think about what reading means to you today in your own life, what other types of memories come to mind? Anything from school, or from your family?

Do you think that adolescents relate to books differently than adults?

What do you think the difference is between reading that takes place in school, and reading that takes place outside of school?
Do you think this difference should exist?

When we think of reading, we usually imagine it as something that we do on our own, but have you ever experienced reading as part of a social or public activity? Book clubs, reading groups, or anything else of this nature?

YA

In your own words, how would you define young adult literature?

Do you think that an adult reader, or a teacher, might approach a piece of young adult literature differently than an adolescent?

Many books for young adults deal with difficult issues, such as sexuality, drug use, and alienation. Do you think that, as a teacher, you'd be comfortable talking to your students about these issues?

What does adolescence mean to you? Other than saying that it's simply the ages of 12-19, how would you define adolescence?

What does being an adult mean to you?

Do you think most adults relate well to adolescents? Do you think they understand them?

What kinds of pleasure do you find in reading?

What kinds of pleasure do you find in teaching?

<u>FINAL INTERVIEW</u>

Where are you at now? What have you done over the course of this past term?

What does teaching do to the teacher?

Has your understanding of young adult literature changed over the course of this study?

How do you think reading young adult literature can help people learning to teach?

In what ways did our discussions help you to think about teaching?

In what ways did reading these books allow you to think about your own adolescence?

In what ways did reading these books allow you to think about being, and becoming, an adult?

How would you have read these books differently if you were reading for a class?

How were our discussions different or similar from classes you've taken?

Do you have any metaphors that can be used to describe what we did as a group?

What did you enjoy most about this whole process? Were there things you didn't enjoy?

Did reading these books, knowing you'd be discussing them, change how you read?

How could you imagine such a reading group being used in teacher education?

Thinking forward to teaching, do you have a better understanding of how you will approach the practice of reading in your classes?

What does reading do to the reader?

(Now, this is just for me, but do you have any feedback you can give me in terms of how I approached our discussions, our interviews, and this whole process?)

APPENDIX D
READING GROUP TOPIC/QUESTION GUIDES

Speak

-Introductions, and discuss what parts of the book you most enjoyed, what parts of the book you found difficult or troubling … Or anything you might want to start up with.

Silence as a type of power.

SYMBOLS

The use of mirrors. –When she's changing at Effert's (p. 124), the mirror in her bedroom, the mirror in her closet that she eventually uses to stab and threaten Andy Evans…

The use of the closet.

Use of art in the book.

The symbol of the tree.

The symbol of snow and cold.

The seasons.

What did you all think about the ways that teachers and administrators were represented in the book?
(Principal Principal, Hairwoman, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Neck, Ms. Keen)

p. 152-153: Mr. Freeman gives harsh criticism. Is this motivating? Is this helpful?

Moments of self-harm in the book. When Melinda cuts herself, she keeps biting her lips, she pick at her nails until they bleed…

-What about the other characters in the book?: Heather and the Marthas, Rachel/Rachelle, David Petrakis, Ivy, Nicole.

-Did parts of this story remind you of your own adolescence?

LANGUAGE and Expression

The changing team name: Trojans, Devils, Tigers, Wombats, Hornets.

Why does Melinda call Andy Evans "IT"? And then why does she start calling him "Andy Beast"?
-Writing on the bathroom stall wall.

Sprout

The move… a trope of YA fiction

Mrs. Miller (43), drinking, Janet, "Since, technically speaking, I'm not your teacher during the summer", swearing, getting with Sprout's dad.
When he comes out to her: "I just don't want you to get sidetracked, Sprout. Kids who come out in school have a hard time."

The dictionary? ("Boyfriend … I tried looking it up in my dictionary, but it wasn't a lot of help" (p. 76).

Sprout, meaning of the name?? (66-67): "I vowed I would be more than a single story. I would sprout a second story, a third if I wanted, a fourth. I would grow like a beanstalk or a skyscraper. Like the Tower of Babel, I would tell my stories all the way to heaven."
Stumps (22-24) and Sprout

"I want to write about being gay…" (69)
(Being gay isn't my secret)
When he comes out, his dad says, "Hey. You're a fag. I'm a drunk. Nobody's perfect."
"Just promise me you won't tell anyone."
"I had sex with Ian Abernathy" (84).

The Stains. Everywhere. And everyone noticed them.
"But no one noticed I was having sex with Ian Abernathy" (100).

Explicit reference not only to adolescent desire, but to adolescent bodies.

Internet porn sites.

"A part of me was glad for the distraction of the gun, since without it I wasn't sure what else we might do. But another part of me (I'll let you guess which part) wanted to grab the gun and throw it in the river so there wouldn't be any more distractions" (226).
"He was stiff against my body" (229)
"I felt that something … that other thing … the thing that I was feeling on the small of my back" (91).
"Assuming my belt … hadn't slipped a few inches south … that warm spot on my back … Ian was panting … and I was too" (92).

So erotic. "… kissed him with some screwed up mixture of anger that made me wish I could eat him instead. Chew him up into little pieces so he could never pull a trick like that again, but also take him inside me, so he could never get away"

"God, it was a good kiss" (231).

"That's when I knew I was gay … I labored at something that both of us knew the name of, but had never connected with real life" (93).

"When we woke up we did it again" (233).
"The best thing about the day was the sex … it lives up to the hype" (235)

" … The carol was in the library, which meant we couldn't talk, let alone, you know, moan, curse, cry out, or sing hallelujah" (253). School and religion.
"Christians. God save 'em. Ha ha." Comments about religion?

The hole. "The fissure … seemed to promise so much" (164). "Maybe it was just the idea of making a space that was ours … maybe … the labor itself, sweaty and close."

"I'm not gay, Daniel. Dammit, I'm not! I'm not!" (173) Was Ty gay? (178)
"I'm not gay! … and then he grabbed me and kissed me" (205).

"When I started writing … I waited as long as I could before I told you I was gay, because once you reveal that, it seems like it's all anyone can think about" (179).

The Nidus. "It was a long time before I realized I was actually making something" (247)."My own version of bruised knuckles. Or, who knows, maybe just my own version of bruises" (246).

Man in Buick. "He's here for us, Ty. Ty: "Is that what happens to you when you're gay?" (257).

"That was the only time we ever had sex in a bed. … After that, all we had left was the janitor's closet" (259). **The Closet**
Sprout: "We're just fucking." "So much for the book ending up in a high school library." (261).

I have a secret. And everyone knows it but me.

The Hunger Games

The Reaping

Katniss' parents

The Capitol, the districts, Panem.

Haymitch

The training, measurement and evaluation.

The careers.

Entertainment/Reality TV.

Teenage love.

Violence/death.

Meanings of hunger (Feasting, desire, appetite)

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

What were your **expectations** for the book before you started reading?

A **vulnerable** body (more teeth, big feet, brain-leak, seizures)
-How does this description affect you as a reader?
"Like 2 people inside of one body" (p. 61).

"**Isosceles triangles** make me feel hormonal. I admit that I masturbate."
-Any thoughts?

Gordy: to "approach each book … with the real possibility that you might get a metaphorical boner.)

CLASS

"And sure, sometimes my family misses a meal, and sleep is the only thing we have for dinner."

"Poverty doesn't give you strength … Poverty only teaches you how to be poor."
Dog: "A bullet only costs two cents, and anybody can afford that."

White Privilege (teaching about it?)

Rearden Kids: "They were beautiful and smart." "I don't know if hope is white …"

Notions of Whiteness: **Penelope** (p. 114): "Her skin was pale white. Milky white. Cloudy white. I wanted to be her chocolate topping."

Gordy: "I think it means you're just a racist asshole like everybody else."

"It wasn't racism, not exactly. It was well, I don't know what it was" (p. 181).

DEATH-----Grandma, Eugene, Sister: "I'm 14 years old and I've been to 42 funerals. That's really the biggest difference between Indians and white people" (p. 199).

QQ: Talking about death with students.
"I keep writing … it becomes my grieving ceremony" (p. 178).

Death and Sex: "I had a big erection when I learned of my sister's death."

Family: "He may not have loved me perfectly, but he loved me as well as he could" (p. 189).

Adults: Representation of adult figures?

The drawings: "I draw because words are too unpredictable. I draw because words are too limited" (p. 5).

Bulimia, Addiction.

Male Friendship, Male sexuality ----- Rowdy

-Superhero drawing (p. 102)
"I missed him, and if that was gay, then okay, I was the gayest dude in the world."
"I was a happy faggot" (p. 198).

The Ending???