NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

SPECIAL ISSUE: NARRATIVE EMOTIONS AND THE SHAPING(S) OF IDENTITY

Writing the Erasure of Emotions in Dystopian Young Adult Fiction: Reading Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Lauren Oliver's *Delirium*

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Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction blends the traditional developmental narrative with a heightened concern with issues regarding the individual against society, often in the context of a post-apocalyptic world. In this article, I examine the way Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011) focus on the state's regulation over or removal of their people's emotions and decisions in the context of the representation of future societies. If we consider the place of emotions in YA literature in general, with its interest in adolescents' interaction with their families, each other, their school, or other communities, we can accept the validity of emotions as a prism through which to examine the text's didactic and social purposes. Specifically, by deploying a discourse that emphasizes the dangerous consequences of unbridled emotions in earlier historical times, dystopian texts ask us to think about the political potential of feelings as catalysts for social change.

Young adult dystopian fiction can be read as a response to today's mass media culture's often pessimistic and/or catastrophic vision of the world. Through all kinds of social and public media, adolescents are being trained to view humankind as inherently wasteful and oblivious to the consequences of their actions on the earth. Dystopian Young Adult (YA) texts blend the traditional developmental narrative with a heightened concern with issues regarding the individual against society (generally in the form of strict political organization), often in the context of a post-apocalyptic world. Clearly based on, but departing in key ways from, a solid tradition of dystopian works that includes Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921/2009), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's*

Tale (1985), the texts envision a future world which often presents, as Carrie Hinz (2002) notes, "a rigorously planned society, charismatic leaders or masterminds, control of reproductive freedom, and the prioritization of collective well-being over the fate of the individual," intersecting with depictions of adolescent personal problems, inviting writers and their readers to "speculate about the way individuals position themselves in reference to a wider collective" (p. 254). In this article, I want to examine the way two highly successful novels, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011), focus on the state's regulation over or removal of their people's emotions and decisions in the context of the representation of future societies.

Dystopias are best understood in the context of utopias. In children's and young adult's literature, Carrie Hinz and Elaine Ostry (2003) explain that "utopia" can be used

> to signify a non-existent society that is posited as significantly better than that of the reader. It strives toward perfection, has a delineated social system, and is described in reasonably specific detail. Dystopias are likewise precise descriptions of societies, ones in which the ideals for improvement have gone tragically amok. (p. 3).

Utopian literature encourages people to examine their society critically, allowing for a turn to political action, should this be necessary. They carry out

> important social, cultural, and political work by challenging and reformulating ideas about power and identity, community, the body, spatio-temporal change, and ecology. Children's literature is marked by a pervasive commitment to social practice, and particularly to representing or interrogating those social practices deemed worthy of preservation, cultivation, or augmentation, and those deemed to be in need of reconceiving or discarding" (Bradford, Mallen, Stephens, & McCallum, 2008, p. 2).

Representations of utopian societies generally privilege cooperation, equality, and justice. But authors of dystopias seem to ask: do we reach a point at which "utopian cooperation" becomes "dystopian conformity"? (Hinz & Ostry, 2003, p. 7) When the measures previously deemed expedient or beneficial for survival and/or peaceful co-existence are

transformed into ends in themselves, how do adolescents negotiate their places in that society? Because YA fiction is generally structured as *bildungsromane*, dystopias address the intersection between political or social action in the contexts of the narrative of formation. Disengaging the *bildung* from merely familial or educational locations widens the field of adolescent action, complicating the ways the maturation process is represented. So, although these novels continue to attend to teen concerns such as family and peer relations, sexual awakening, independence, and identity, they highlight the interconnection between personal growth and political involvement. Further, as Hinz (2002) explains, the conflation of the personal and the political in YA novels produces interesting effects in the reader:

> Freedom, for example, is figured simultaneously as a political issue (should we allow ourselves to be brainwashed by a computer into a perfectly efficient society?) and a negotiation between adolescents and their families or friends Presumably, this conflation is meant to help adolescent readers cope with difficult political and social ideas within a context they can understand: their own narrative of development. Good citizenship within the ideal society (or in opposition to the dystopian society) is figured as a process of both achieving the autonomy of adulthood and keeping the clarity of vision held by a child. (p. 263)

Dystopian novels in general serve as cultural critiques and models as to what might happen if we pursue some of our present courses. The themes in both adult and YA texts mirror each other significantly and we can point to key resonances in many of the texts. The organization of labor and identical clothing in Zamyatin's *We* (1921/2009) is replicated in Lowry's *The Giver* (1993); the surveillance of private life embodied by Big Brother in Orwell's *1984* (1949) recurs in Ally Condie's *Matched* (2010); and the institutionalized deployment of fertile women to produce babies for the state that shapes Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is reenacted in a teenage context in Megan McCafferty's *Bumped* (2011). These novels are a sampling of the numerous ways that YA literature dialogues with its adult tradition. But YA texts are more openly didactic, teaching with occasionally shocking, negative examples to compel their young readers to question social and cultural impositions and discern the rhetoric of corruption. A case in point is the hugely popular *Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins—*The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching*

Fire (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010)—where the Capitol maintains government control by forcing teenagers to kill each other in a televised reality show. As Kay Sambell (2004) explains,

> the dystopia foregrounds future suffering, then, to force readers to think carefully about where supposed "ideals" may really lead, underlining the point that these hugely undesirable societies can and will come about, unless we learn to question the authority of those in power, however benign they may appear to be. (p. 248)

Thus, they function as critiques precisely by inviting parallels with certain aspects of contemporary culture, encouraging teens to be more thoughtful about politics and society and their place in it. Further, in perhaps a nod towards writing for children, the endings of YA dystopian novels tend to be more hopeful than those for adults. Indeed, Sambell (2003) notes that "the narrative closure of the protagonist's final defeat and failure is absolutely crucial to the admonitory impulse of the classic adult dystopia" (p. 166). However, the YA protagonist (a substantial number of whom are young women) generally manages to help change the system, reverting it to a version of the status quo, often through revolution but certainly by using her wits and talents.[1]

In the dystopian novels I examine in this paper, Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Oliver's *Delirium* (2011), the societies represented have established forms of regulation and elimination of emotions, respectively. I suggest that a perspective that focuses on narratives of emotions or the narration of emotions illuminates ways these dystopias engage contemporary YA culture. Thinking about how narrativity and emotions operate in these texts allows us to further our understanding of the aesthetic, didactic, social, and cultural works of these texts.[2] If we consider the place of emotions in YA literature in general, with its heightened interest in adolescents' forms of interaction with their families, each other, their school, or other communities, we can accept the validity of emotions as a prism through which to examine the text's didactic and social purposes. Specifically, by deploying a discourse that supports this program by emphasizing the dangerous consequences of unbridled emotions in earlier historical times, dystopian texts take the

[1] For a more comprehensive discussion of the differences between adult and YA dystopias, see Sambell (2003).

[2] See Keen (2011) for a cogent discussion of the development of perspectives on narratives and emotions.

more domestic form of YA writing a step further and ask us to think about the political potential of feelings as catalysts for social change.

Sarah Ahmed's (2004b) model of emotions as a vehicle of political mobilization, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, serves as a useful frame for this discussion. By investigating what emotions do and produce in current nation-states as they circulate and affect social life, she connects the personal with the political. Her model, based on ideas from Marx and Freud, tracks how emotions "circulate between bodies," arguing for a "sociality of emotions," that leads her to examine how "words for feelings, and objects of feelings, circulate and generate effects" (pp. 8, 14). Ahmed contends that the study of emotions, which effect, rather than merely reside within, the boundaries of personal and collective bodies, can help to show how "subjects become invested in particular structures," as well as institutions, values, and entities (p. 12). Thus, more than viewing emotions as merely psychological dispositions, in her article "Affective Economies," Ahmed (2004a) considers "how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective," a framing that leads to subjects binding together (p. 119). Moreover, as she explains,

> in my model of sociality of emotions, I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an outside and an inside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something that 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces and boundaries are made: the 'I' and 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. (2004b, p. 10)

Emotions, she argues, can play a critical role in making or breaking political organizations and social movements. They are thus intimately bound with the work of activism. Her basic premise—the expression and circulation of emotion as a catalyst for social change—may thus be used to read the ways Lowry and Oliver allow their young protagonists to challenge the configuration of their dystopic worlds.[3]

The ostensibly benign totalitarian regime presented in *The Giver* draws from Cold War rhetoric that leads the inhabitants of the city to believe they live in an ideal place where national, racial, or ethnic conflict

[3] Ahmed's (2004a, 2004b) theory is more complex than I have explained here. For reasons of brevity, I have elected to use only her basic premise for the discussion.

no longer exists, nor does suffering or illness.[4] Michael Levy (1997) explains that "the world of *The Giver* is enormously seductive" because "Lowry has intentionally constructed its society to solve many contemporary problems, particularly those likely to be of significance to twelve year olds and their parents" (p. 52). Scientific progress has managed to erase difference and so, with the exception of a very few, everyone is the same. Having decided to embrace "Sameness" and obliterate historical and cultural memory, the people have trapped themselves in a dystopia that rejects real individual originality as it purports to celebrate community harmony. Myriad regulations govern every detail of the people's existence—from family configurations, to clothing and food, to their assigned professions. Children (designated as a collective by their age: Fours, Fives, etc.) all turn a year older in December, at which point they move on to another carefully calculated developmental stage. Families are non-biological—couples are matched to ensure harmony and can then apply for "newchildren" when they feel they are ready, ultimately receiving a maximum of two, a "male" and "female." People's clothes (generally tunics) are designed for utilitarian and pedagogical purposes. For example, Fours, Fives, and Sixes wear jackets buttoned down the back so that they have to help each other dress and therefore learn interdependence (p. 40). The front-buttoned jacket received at the public ceremony at Seven is the first mark of independence (p. 40). Receiving a bicycle at Nine becomes "the powerful emblem of moving gradually out into the community, away from the protective family unit" (p. 41). At Ten, the children all receive their distinguishing haircuts: females lose their braids and males get a shorter cut. At Twelve, the children are assigned their vocations by the Committee of Elders, which has carefully watched them throughout their childhoods.

The Giver is narrated by Jonas, an Eleven, who, when the novel opens, is apprehensive about the December ceremony in which he will learn what vocation he has been assigned. Though the characters speak about feelings, only after Jonas has been chosen to be the community's

[4] Critical studies on *The Giver* have noted that the lack of "diversity"—actually creating an all-white world and the conservative nature of Jonah's decisions in the novel—is quite problematic. Susan Stewart (2007), in "A Return to Normal," argues that "as innovative as *The Giver* might be, it is nonetheless a 'return to normal.' Rather than offering something different, the text ideologically undermines itself by returning most readers to a familiar subject position. … Jonas and The Giver, two light skinned, pale eyed characters, replicate contemporary cultural assumptions in that they serve as the decision makers and saviors" for the community (p. 21).

next Receiver of Memory will he (and the reader) understand that true emotions have been purged from his world. Lowry's dystopian paradigm hinges on the fact that citizens in *The Giver* have been genetically manipulated to preserve only individual memory and prohibited from access to historical and cultural memory, from the knowledge of a past time, events, and cultural manifestations such as art and music, with their attendant passions such as fear, pride, envy, sorrow, joy, and love. They live in a colorless climate-controlled environment that has eliminated the experience of weather and seasons, and eradicated animals (children from One to Eight are allowed to have a Comfort Object, usually a stuffed animal, which they think is mythological). The community engages in numerous rituals, such as the "evening telling of feelings" (p. 5), and the morning telling of dreams, a sharing family session which actually becomes a way for adults to gently regulate their children's personal preferences, ideas, feelings, towards the common aim of community harmony. Indeed, the society is designed to manage or eliminate all personal volition that may lead to suffering and conflict. The children in this world are uniformly polite, reciting standard phrases of apology to adults and to each other and having these accepted in a sincere scripted dialogue.

In order to ensure that all citizens live placidly, no biological family bonds are created, pills are taken to suppress "stirrings" (sexual urges), the weak and elderly are "released" (the word "death" is not used), and there is no contact with the natural world. In this world, "nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without color, pain or past" (p. 165). Yet the founders of this society consider it important to have at least one person who remembers existence before emotional and physical reality are changed—a person who can serve as advisor in particular situations. Jonas, who has exhibited some of the characteristics of someone who might be capable of receiving memory, notably his pale eyes (unlike the others who have dark eyes), is assigned to the task. The current Receiver of Memory (now called the Giver), an old man, begins to transfer his memories to Jonas, literally removing them from his consciousness. The boy begins to re-experience the past, reliving the positive and negative emotions associated with those events, in order to preserve them for the community. Thus, in his sessions with the Giver, Jonas experiences the gamut of feelings and emotions, from the most physical—the cold of a snowy day and a sunburn—to exhilaration (his first ride down a hill on a sled), pain (a broken leg), terror and sorrow

(at war), peacefulness (watching a sunset), and love (watching a multi-generational family celebrate Christmas).

Jonas' process of receiving memory becomes an occasion for him and the Giver to reexamine the decisions the leaders of the community made: harmony and stability in exchange for memory, freedom, and diversity. Color, for example, has been abolished. So Jonas' realization that color exists—in an apple, in his friend Fiona's hair, in a baby's cheeks—is a shock, which the Giver explains in these terms: "Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness.… We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences…. We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others" (p. 95). In a conversation with the Giver about choices, he exclaims: "If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and *decide* things! A blue tunic or a red one?" (p. 98). The Giver, leading Jonas to logical conclusions, notes that choice is a dangerous thing because sometimes, when choice is involved, we "might make wrong choices" (p. 98). Jonas initially agrees:

> "We don't dare let people make choices of their own." "Not Safe?" The Giver suggested. "Definitely not safe," Jonas said with certainty. "What if they were allowed to choose their own mate? And chose *wrong*?" "Or what if," he went on, almost laughing at the absurdity, "they chose their own *jobs*?" "Frightening, isn't it?" The Giver said. Jonas chuckled. "Very frightening. I can't even imagine it. We really have to protect people from wrong choices." "It's safer." "Yes," Jonas agreed. "Much safer." (pp. 98–99)

Receiving more memories will soon lead Jonas to rethink his commitment to security. The rhetoric of community safety and concern marks the perspective of the boy who, until now, has not experienced diversity or freedom. Interestingly, Lowry makes the community deploy rhetoric as a tool for control. Emphasis on precise and accurate speech enables members of the community to control each other, particularly with regard to the expression of feelings. Though it seems that people are allowed to feel emotions—indeed, the novel opens with Jonas feeling "frightened" (p. 1) by an unscheduled plane flying overhead and "apprehensive" (p. 6) about the coming December meeting where he will be assigned his profession, and families enact the "evening telling of feelings" (p. 6)—the community has clearly privileged the more benign forms of emotions and erased the others, partly through pills that suppress

them and partly by linguistic redirection. Crucially, after experiencing the memory of a family Christmas celebration suffused by love, Jonas goes home and asks his parents:

> "Do you love me?" There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. "Jonas. You of all people. Precision of language, *please*!" "What do you mean?" Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated. "Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete," his mother explained carefully. Jonas stared at them. Meaningless? He has never before felt anything as meaningful as the memory. "And of course our community can't function smoothly if people don't use precise language. You could ask, 'Do you enjoy me?' The answer is 'Yes,'" his mother said. "Or," his father suggested, "'Do you take pride in my accomplishments?' And the answer is wholeheartedly 'Yes.'" "Do you understand why it's inappropriate to use a word like 'love'?" Mother asked. Jonas nodded. "Yes, thank you, I do," he replied slowly. This was his first lie to his parents. (p. 127)

In the end, Jonas and the Giver resolve to return all their memories to the community, a decision that requires Jonas to leave it forever. Taking with him a toddler with pale eyes who had been condemned to release because he would not conform to the kind of nurturing he was being given, Jonas walks away. The novel ends with him arriving, hungry and cold, to

> the place that he had always felt was waiting, the Elsewhere that held their future and their past.… He forced his eyes open as they went downward, downward, sliding, and all at once he could see lights and he recognized them now. He knew they were shining through the windows of rooms, that they were the red, blue, and yellow lights that twinkled from trees in places where families created and kept memories, where they celebrated love." (p. 178)

But this ending is not without its complications: the decision to return the memories to people who were not ready to receive them might actually be problematic. Having chosen to live in a utopia, where they give up choice

and are spared injustices, the people might actually not welcome the transformation that memory will bring. But that story is not told.

The Giver, though classified as YA fiction, is actually meant for pre-teens; Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011) engages more adolescent concerns, particularly romantic love. The novel is set in Portland, Maine, in a future time after war has obliged the country to close its borders and enforce civil order by vigilantism and "the cure," an operation that all citizens have at the age of 18, which amounts to a coming-of-age lobotomy that renders people incapable of feeling emotions, particularly, the disease called *amor deliria nervosa*, love.[5] As *A Brief History of the United States of America*, by E. D. Thompson, explains:

> *In the decades before the development of the cure, the disease had become so virulent and widespread it was extraordinarily rare for a person to reach adulthood without having contracted a significant case of* amor deliria nervosa*…. Many historians have argued that pre-cure society was itself a reflection of the disease, characterized by fracture, chaos, and instabilit…. Almost half of all marriages ended in dissolution…. Incidence of drug use skyrocketed, as did alcohol-related deaths.*" (p. 164)

The Government's official publication, *The Book of Shhh* (The Safety, Health, and Happiness Handbook) justifies the "procedure" by noting that: "Humans, unregulated, are cruel and capricious; violent and selfish; miserable and quarrelsome. It is only after their instincts and basic emotions have been controlled that they can be happy, generous, and good" (p. 317). Indeed, inscribed on American currency is the country's new motto: "*Ex remedium salus. From the cure, salvation*" (p. 288).

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[5] Oliver makes a plausible argument for the diagnosis of love as a disease, considering its symptoms: "Phase One: preoccupation; difficulty focusing, dry mouth … fits of dizziness and disorientation, reduced mental awareness; racing thoughts; impaired reasoning skills. Phase Two: periods of euphoria; hysterical laughter and heightened energy, periods of despair; lethargy … disruption of sleep patterns; insomnia or constant fatigue, obsessive thoughts and actions … . Phase Three (Critical): difficulty breathing, pain in the chest, throat, or stomach … complete breakdown of rational faculties; erratic behavior; violent thoughts and fantasies; hallucinations and delusions. Phase Four (Fatal): emotional or physical paralysis (partial or total), death" (p. 132). The society has established a toll-free hotline (1-800-PREVENT) to call in case citizens fear that they might have the disease or know someone who does.

When the novel opens, Lena Halloway is nearly 18 and eagerly awaiting the day of her procedure. Her mother had committed suicide years earlier, a victim of love, leading Lena to believe that love equals suffering and that its ruinous possibilities are unfathomed:

> They say that in the old days, love drove people to madness. That's bad enough. *The Book of Shhh* also tells stories of those who died because of love lost or never found, which is what terrifies me the most. The deadliest of all deadly things: It kills you both when you have it and when you don't." (p. 4)

As an Uncured teenager, she is particularly vigilant, knowing that her blood is tainted by her family history of the disease and relatives who were "sympathizers," supporters of the group of people called "Invalids," citizens who rejected the cure (they are so ill they do not even realize they have been infected!) and live in the Wilds. Her last memory of her mother terrifies her:

> [she] had remained uncured despite three separate procedures, and the disease had claimed her, nipped at her insides, and turned her eyes hollow and her cheeks pale, had taken control of her feet and led her, inch by inch, to the edge of a sandy cliff and into the bright, thin air of the plunge beyond.… I remember only the hot pressure of her fingers on my face in the nighttime and her last whispered words to me. *I love you. Remember. They cannot take it.*" (pp. 28-29)

The world Lena lives in is perfectly regulated:

> Fifty years ago the government closed the borders of the United States. The border is guarded constantly by military personnel. No one can get in. No one goes out. … This is for our own protection. Safety, Sanctity, Community: That is our country's motto.… There is no more hatred in the United States, at least among the cured. (p. 39)

In this world, marriage exists as an institution controlled by the Government: people are matched after their procedure and informed of how many children they may have, based on their character and ability: "It's the way things are. 'Marriage is Order and Stability, the mark of a

Healthy society.' (See *The Book of Shhh*, 'Fundamentals of Society,' p. 114)" (p. 10). Lena's aunt, who raised her after her mother died, "has always talked about marriage with words straight out of *The Book of Shhh*, words like *duty, responsibility, perseverance*" (p. 13). Parenting must be performed "*normally, dutifully,* and *responsibly*" (p. 7). Though they admit that sometimes, "in the absence of deliria nervosa, some people find parenting distasteful," Lena notes that "cases of full-blown detachment—where a mother or father is unable to bond with his or her children …, and winds up drowning them or sitting on their windpipes or beating them to death when they cry—are few" (p. 7).

In Oliver's dystopia, Church, State, and Science have fused into one fundamentalist institution and religious, literary, philosophical, and scientific texts have been rewritten to support the Government's regulations. In the book of *Genesis,* for example, God is recast as a passionless ruler and children learn about God's order together with atoms and probabilities (284). Adam and Eve, eternal partners, "*were untouched by illness, pain, or desire. They did not dream. They did not ask questions*" (p. 234). Indeed, in this version, the devil

> *stole into the Garden of Eden. He carried with him the disease*—amor deliria nervosa—*in the form of a seed. It grew and flowered into a magnificent apple tree, which bore apples as bright as blood.* –From *Genesis: A Complete History of the World and the Known Universe,* by Steven Horace, PhD, Harvard University. (p. 22)

Literature is also reimagined: *Romeo and Juliet* has become a cautionary tale about the dangers of love and is "required reading in every freshman-year health class" (30). The Government also has a list of State-approved texts that exclude particular kinds of music, art, and writing.

When Lena meets Alex, an Invalid who works underground in the city to subvert the Government's policies, she is instantly drawn to him. The story of forbidden teenage romance becomes complex in a society where desire has been eradicated and love itself is a disease. But when Lena begins to believe Alex and suspect that the cure might actually be a means to control the population, she starts to question everything she has been taught. She eventually understands that her world is a totalitarian dystopia and manages to resist the procedure and escape to the Wilds, to be with Alex and to search for her mother, who has apparently survived.

So, though this novel ends with Lena's physical escape from her city, she will continue to deal with the emotional scars of her upbringing.[6]

The world of *Delirium*, therefore, posits a totalitarian rejection of free will in the guise of a solution to the problems that emotions bring. Before the procedure, children are trained to distrust emotions and fear the consequences of love; after it, citizens are essentially turned into obedient and unquestioning zombies who support the laws that permit stability and peace. The central conflict of the novel, however, is existential and epistemological rather than political. As Hana, Lena's best friend, tells her before they head off to be assessed for their procedure: "You can't really be happy unless you're unhappy sometimes" (p. 21). In a world where emotions have been eradicated, acknowledging the existence of love and experiencing it makes the individual unique and powerful. The Invalids' choice not to submit to the procedure, their embrace of emotions, allows them to possess a knowledge denied to the cured. They are regarded as dangerous because they threaten the stability obtained through the removal of emotions. Their power lies, on the one hand, in their personal agency, obtained by being able to make choices about what they desire and, on the other, in their perception of the Government's strategy for political control. Emotions thus become the key for political mobilization for the Invalids and, for Lena, a way to work through the versions of her story she has been fed.

The Giver and *Delirium* share important elements, generically and in the context of a discussion about the *bildungsroman*, political power, and emotions in YA fiction. First, as *bildungsromane*, they locate their protagonists' personal development within a political context. That is, the maturity they achieve transcends individual self-awareness as it involves political insight into systems of corruption that they are compelled to challenge which, eventually, leads them to abandon their homes. Intellectual and psychological growth for Jonas and Lena requires them to, in a sense, unlearn the lessons they have been previously taught. Having been raised in societies that stifle independent thought and deep emotional bonds, their coming-of-age process involves challenging the utopias gone wrong. So Jonas' received memory of "choice and unregulated experience" (Hinz, 2002, p. 262) and his decision to give historical and cultural memory back to his community become a subversive act. Similarly, Lena's rejection of the cure and her abandonment of her city in order to join the Invalids marks her as one of

[6] The book is the first of a trilogy: the second and third volumes are *Pandemonium* (2012) and *Requiem* (2013).

them. The plots of the novels focus on their personal itineraries of self-awareness, as they are transformed from innocent children who wholeheartedly support the status quo to teenagers willing to risk their lives to change it. These texts, therefore, intervene in critical discussions of YA novels by articulating the *bildung* as a political, rather than merely personal, attainment of maturity.

Second, both protagonists have to engage the reality and power of emotions as their path to this new political maturity. In both, freedoms taken for granted have been surrendered for "safety," "security," and "the common good" as emotions have been replaced by duty and responsibility. So for freedom *from* the perceived conflicts resulting from emotions, the societies have given up individuality and freedom *of* choice: of profession, of marriage partners, or even of how many children will be part of their family. Admitting emotions becomes a way to access vital forms of knowledge, which leads them to political action. The fictional epistemological frame in these texts consists of regulations and traditions: people do not actually have to learn for themselves, as even what appears to be sites of learning (both protagonists go to school) are actually sites of indoctrination disguised as security. Passivity becomes an ideal as citizens are encouraged to appreciate the life they have and fear anything that would disrupt the society. As Levy notes, "Utopias are static, virtually by definition. Having worked so hard to achieve a society in which there are no serious problems, the citizens of utopia want things to stay pretty much the way they are. Change essentially becomes the enemy" (p. 53). For Jonas and Lena, the experience of forbidden emotions becomes the catalyst for change, but one that their societies—invested in creating peaceful worlds—might not actually welcome. Totalitarian adhesion to the created reality becomes, in these novels, the place of the dystopia.

By deciding to remember and embrace love, the novels' protagonists enact critical forms of social change in their worlds. Emotions, then, are shown to have revolutionary possibilities as they undermine the pre-accorded paradigms of political stability. By positing emotions, particularly love, as the antithesis of safety and happiness, these YA dystopias warn of the dangers of rhetorical manipulation and ideological rule. Turning to Ahmed's (2004a, 2004b) frame for reading the use of emotions as a site for social change, we can locate the dystopic elements in these texts within the structuring of the relationship between the personal and the social/political. Harnessing emotions, the

protagonists are enabled to effect change: first, within themselves and, later, for their worlds.

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