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

Memory of the Present: Empathy and Identity in Young Adult Fiction

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Recent studies in cognitive literary criticism have provided scholars of literature with new, stimulating approaches to literary texts and neuroscientists with new insights about human emotions, empathy, and memory through evidence from fiction. What have so far been largely neglected are the implications of cognitive criticism for the study of literature targeting a young audience, whose theory of mind and empathic skills are not yet fully developed. A cognitive approach to children's and young adult literature has to meet several challenges less relevant in general fiction. Firstly, how is a young fictional character's consciousness represented by an author whose cognitive and affective skills are ostensibly superior? Secondly, how do texts instruct their young readers to employ theory of mind in order to assess both the young protagonist's emotions and their understanding of other characters' emotions (higher-order mind-reading)? Thirdly, how can fiction support young people's development of their theory of mind? The paper will discuss these issues with a particular focus on memory and identity, expressed textually through tense and narrative perspective. Drawing on work by Lisa Zunshine (2006) and Blackey Vermeule (2010), the predominantly theoretical argument will be illustrated by a contemporary young adult novel, *Slated* (2012), by Teri Terry.

Self-knowledge and a sense of identity are central for our existence. Childhood and adolescence are periods of identity formation. Adolescence, especially, is a dynamic and turbulent phase of human life, and it is perhaps young adult fiction that has the strongest potential to offer readers somewhat accurate portrayals of selfhood. Scholars of young adult (YA) fiction have recently learned some important facts from neuroscience. Adolescence is a period of human life when the brain, still more intensively than before, learns to recognise and attribute mental states to ourselves as well as other people. Adolescents' deviant behaviour

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is the consequence of the social brain's development. Strong emotions override adolescents' ability to take other people's perspectives. Actions such as planning, decision-making, and synthesis of information are still underdeveloped in the adolescent brain. All these processes take more effort in adolescence than in adulthood (see e.g., Adams & Berzonsky, 2003; Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Goswami, 2007). YA fiction has been trying for ages to reflect this laborious development that brain research has only recently confirmed through experiments.

While the narrative features of YA fiction have been discussed extensively (e.g., Cadden, 2011; McCallum, 1999; Nikolajeva, 2010; Wall, 1991), there are so far few studies inspired by cognitive criticism, in particular the direction utilising empathy and theory of mind as analytical tools, such as Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (2006), Suzanne Keen's *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), and Blakey Vermeule's *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (2010). In this article I will use the young adult novel *Slated* (2012), by the British author Teri Terry, to explore the potential of cognitive criticism for a new "*way of thinking* about literature" (Stockwell, 2002, p. 6) written and marketed for young audiences. My purpose is thus not to offer an interpretation of a specific literary text, but to illustrate the method.

Slated has three features recognisable from the narrative conventions of this literary form: it is told in the first person, it is told in the present tense, and it uses italics to mark memory narrative. I will return to the italicised passages in the novel in due time, but will first discuss the use of tense and point of view. Temporality is decisive for our cognitive and emotional engagement with fiction (see West-Pavlov, 2013, pp. 87-92). We only exist in the present, while fiction allows us to oscillate between various temporal levels, to go back in narrative time, to re-live, re-play, and perhaps re-vision memories. The temporal variations contribute to *heteroglossia*, the hallmark of the modern and postmodern novel. Even if the story time is short, as in *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1922/1993) or *Mrs Dalloway* (Woolf, 1925/2008), the stretched discourse time includes layers upon layers of tensed time, in addition to multiple consciousnesses. The present-tense first-person perspective reduces the narrative multiplicity, one of the strongest incentives for the reader to engage with fiction. If we only hear one unambiguous voice in a strictly defined moment of time we lose the attraction of fiction: the possibility of penetrating other people's consciousness.

A consistent present-tense first-person narration is the closest approximation to an explicit "here and now" experience that does not allow reflection on the past nor anticipation of the future. In other words, it constructs the fictional self as static and stable. Cultural geographer Doreen Massey (2005) describes space as a bundle of trajectories: all living and inanimate objects come from somewhere and move further to somewhere else. A present-tense first-person narration loses the trajectory, focusing on one singular point of timespace. It loses the depth and dynamism essential for the formation of identity. It confines the reader's vicarious experience to a single consciousness in a temporal singularity.

It is conceivable that contemporary YA authors employ present tense because of the assumptions that young people live here and now, and that their perception of time and space is underdeveloped, perhaps a residue from Piaget (1928, 1969; see also Bruner & Haste, 1987). However, the excessive use of present tense sets a limitation in the temporal possibilities offered by fiction. The words "here" and "now" are deictic shifters, and unless they are unequivocal, as they inevitably become in a present-tense narrative, they account for the complexity of narrative that demands reader's attention and imagination—that is, cognitive activity. From the cognitive point of view, it implies that present-tense narratives offer less resistance to readers. If we consider some of the great modernist novels narrated in the first person, such as Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927/1983), the very premise of their narrative is the constant change of temporality, the subtle split of the experiencing and the narrating self which allows the exploration of identity formation.

Suzanne Nalbantian (2003) and Anne Whitehead (2009) offer a comprehensive account of philosophical approaches to memory and a set of examples illustrating the use of memory in literature. Temporality of texts that allows narrators to return to events in their past is central in these discussions. Both works highlight instances of metafictional portrayal of memory, a deliberate depiction of the process of remembering (not unexpectedly, both refer to Proust as a persuasive illustration). Both emphasise memory as the fundamental aspect of identity. Both point out that memory is embodied in time and space, and that it is connected to sensory perception and emotions. Memory is doubtless the greatest narrative engine in fiction. Not only does it mould the fictional characters' identity, making it fluid and more resemblant of a real human being; it also evokes readers' memories and thus affects their

identities in interaction with fiction. Again, this is why we read fiction: it has the power to shape our identities. Until recently, we could not really explain how it is possible; today we know, thanks to neuroscience, that reading fiction definitely improves readers' theory of mind (Kidd & Castano, 2013).

It all works neatly until we start looking at children's and young adult fiction. How can YA literature employ the richness of narrative possibilities afforded by fiction? Isn't this limitation exactly what adversaries of YA literature point out as its inevitable inferiority? If, as cognitive psychology points out, adults have a better understanding of their own (as well as other people's) thoughts and feelings, the adolescent perspective in fiction should logically impede the artistic project. If an adolescent mind cannot assess its own reactions, if it defies reason, if it is a pandemonium of random impressions, how then can a purportedly adolescent narrative voice convey an authentic, but at the same time comprehensible, portrayal of this chaotic consciousness? If lack of coherence is the very token of a young person's state of mind, how can its narrative be sufficiently coherent to be understood by an outsider, that is, the reader?

And yet, YA fiction attempts to convey exactly an adolescent's inability to understand the world and other people; the confusion and anxiety of being young; the discomfort about the profound changes in mind and body. Fiction takes on the challenge of representing a physiological and psychological condition through the only means fiction has—words. Experimental psychology has its tools to study real adolescents' brains, with concrete and measurable results. Readers only have words to rely on, but language is inadequate to convey complex mental states. While language is ordered and structured, thoughts and feelings are vague and nebulous.

Recent massive studies in cognitive criticism have provided scholars of literature with new stimulating approaches to literary texts and neuroscientists with new insights about human emotions, empathy, and memory through evidence from fiction (in addition to aforementioned works, see also Burke, 2011; Hogan 2011, 2012; László, 2008; Oatley, 2011, 2012; Zunshine, 2012, to name a few). Even though some of these studies occasionally mention a children's book, what have so far been largely neglected are the implications of cognitive criticism for the study of fiction targeting young readers, who not only lack the real-life experience of a full range of emotions, but who also have not yet fully developed theory of mind. The few cognitive studies of YA literature

have been mainly inspired by schema theory that goes back to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's groundbreaking work, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and that has been developed by other cognitive scholars (Gibbs, 1994; Hogan, 2003b; Turner, 1996). Schema theory explains readers' engagement with fiction through recognition of schemas or acknowledgement of deviation from schemas, the latter demanding attention and memory that allow adjustment and restructuring (see Hogan, 2003a, pp. 29-48; Stockwell, 2002, pp. 78-81). YA literature scholars have concentrated on scripts, schemas, prototypes, universals, metaphors and conceptual blending (Shonoda, 2012; Stephens, 2011). It is gratifying, since YA fiction is indeed abundant in recurrent patterns, including identity formation (see Trites, 2012, 2014). There are just a few publications that explore another direction of cognitive criticism, focused on theory of mind and empathy (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2012; Silva, 2013).

Cognitive studies frequently base their inferences about cognitive and affective responses on cases involving people with various brain damage (e.g., Damasio, 2006). Young readers may not have mastered the ability to empathise yet, but they are in the process of developing this skill. Their involvement with young fictional characters, whose theory of mind is also in the making, is still more complicated than adult readers' engagement with adult fictional characters. This additional dimension of cognitive criticism is the focus of my current research (Nikolajeva, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2014), which has to meet several challenges less relevant in general fiction. Firstly, how is a young fictional character's mind represented by an author whose cognitive and affective skills are ostensibly superior, or at least more developed? Secondly, how do texts instruct their young readers to employ empathy and theory of mind in order to assess both the character's emotions and their understanding of other characters' emotions (higher-order mind-reading)? Thirdly, how can fiction affect young people's cognitive and emotional development? The last question is of an educational nature, and I am less intent upon it for the present purpose, but it cannot be totally ignored (see Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2013; and Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2014, in this issue).

Children's and YA literature is a unique literary mode since it is based on a power imbalance between the adult author and the young reader (see Nodelman, 2008; Nikolajeva, 2010). It has been repeatedly claimed that adult authors are unequivocally in a position to portray young characters' mental and emotional states because they have once

been children and therefore remember what it was like to be a child. Purportedly, this enables them to express artistically the experience of a child self. Cognitive criticism strongly interrogates this assumption. Recent memory studies have provided a significantly better understanding of how memory works (e.g., Baddeley, 1999; Schacter, 1997, 2001; Tulving & Craik, 1999; see Foster, 2009, for a short overview). To put it simply, long-term episodic memory that preserves our real-life experience is subjective, incoherent, fragmentary, disjunctive, random, and imprecise. What is stored and what is retrieved has little resemblance to what has actually happened, if it happened at all. The so-called childhood memories described by authors, whether idyllic or traumatic, are complete confabulations. They may remember—which is also contestable—superficial events, but not the exact mental states they experienced (cf. Hogan 2003a, pp. 159-162). Therefore, the notorious child perspective of children's literature is an illusion. These "memories" are just as much a construction as any other fiction, and they are most likely based on a nostalgic view of childhood, on "self-induced emotional states of longing for the past" (Nalbantian, 2003, p. 41).

However, a children's or YA writer does have a wide range of narrative devices to maintain this illusion. One may assume that interior monologue would be adequate; it is indeed employed quite frequently in contemporary YA fiction—with or without italics—although hardly on the scope of *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy, 1873-1877/2003) or *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1922/1993). However, to be plausible, an adolescent's interior monologue must inevitably be adapted to his or her cognitive and linguistic level. A more successful strategy is blended narration, in which an internally focalised young character's consciousness is rendered through an outside (extradiegetic-heterodiegetic) narrative voice, ostensibly an adult voice that can translate an adolescent's thoughts and emotions into a language and with the level of self-reflection that a young person is not capable of. This device is, however, different from the ironic narrator of narratologists' favourite example, Henry James' *What Maisie Knew* (1897/1998), in which the text and the reader communicate over the character's head. Modernist fiction excels in exploiting a child perspective at the child's expense, as it also does with a mentally disturbed person, such as Benjy in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929/1994) or Lennie in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937/2006). The effect is defamiliarisation, which offers an expert reader challenge, resistance, and pleasure, while a novice reader may get disoriented. However, this is a business between the author and the reader, and literary

scholars have not worried about the "average readers'" undeveloped taste. YA authors ostensibly have responsibilities toward their audience. A text addressed to young readers should preferably be accessible to them and invite empathic identification; otherwise, the readers will be just as confused as Maisie. It is a matter of debate at what age children develop comprehension of irony (see Walsh, 2011; Winner, 1988). While some YA novels use ironic narration, it is generally believed to be less suitable for the young audience. Hence, blended narration, in which the (adult) narrator's discourse prompts the readers how to use theory of mind to assess focalised characters' consciousness. This narrative form, of course, presupposes a third-person perspective.

If personal perspective is for some reason preferable, retrospective self-narration is widely employed by YA literature from *Treasure Island* (Stevenson, 1883/1999) to the present day. The temporal shift and the separation of the narrating self and the younger, experiencing self immediately creates the heteroglossia and heteroscopia necessary for our engagement with the character. For a young reader, an adult voice, whether omniscient or retrospective, has authority. Dorrit Cohn (1978) calls this type of narration *dissonant* (pp. 145-153); in analogy, we can speak of cognitive dissonance. Any kind of narrative "anomaly," that is, deviation from a straightforward, chronological, reliable narration, demands readers' attention and imagination to make sense. Even if the split between narrative agencies is minimal, the past narrative tense affords self-reflection from the fictitious "present" narrative position. The young readers' theory of mind turns on, stimulated by the adult narrators' theory of mind employed to re-create and assess their younger selves' thoughts and emotions. Both modes—blended impersonal and retrospective personal narration—presuppose disjunction between the narrating agency and the character. It is the intersection that shapes identity that young readers can engage with.

Ostensibly, from a cognitive-psychological point of view, there is little difference between a literary character represented as Self or Other; cognitively, the character will always be Other, and readers will always have to relate to him or her as they relate to other people in real life. For a literary scholar, however, there is a significant difference between narratives that portray people from the outside and narratives that are self-reflective and focused on identity. The reason YA writers use personal narration to an increasingly greater extent is possibly an attempt to create a more intimate—and therefore purportedly more authentic—voice. Yet there is a more profound reason. Personal narration involves the linguistic

function of deixis. Personal pronouns, such as "I," "you," and "he/she" are deictic shifters, signifiers that change their signified depending on circumstances. For cognitive criticism, the importance of deixis lies in its embodiment, its anchoring in spatio-temporal context. Deictic shifting is a powerful narrative device since it contributes to the ambiguity of fiction (e.g., Duchan, Bruder, & Hewitt, 1995), which, again, is beneficial for cognitive engagement.

Alienated Mind

I have allowed myself this lengthy preamble to point out some key differences in applying the tool kit of cognitive criticism to fiction written and marketed for a young audience. In choosing *Slated* (Terry, 2012) to illustrate my argument, I singled it out from a number of recent YA novels with similar features, thus judging it to be representative of a trend. If YA novels were traditionally realistic, focused on social issues (e.g., Hilton & Nikolajeva, 2012), in the past decade we have witnessed the emergence of YA novels written in non-mimetic modes, such as fantasy, dystopia, science fiction, and magical realism. Xenotopia, or strange-worldliness, is a powerful defamiliarisation device. In a xenotopic setting, readers are vulnerable, because they cannot anticipate the rules of this fictional world, including laws of nature, social structures, or physical abilities of its inhabitants. *Slated* is a dystopia, a highly exploited genre in contemporary YA adult fiction (Bradford, McCallum, Mallan, & Stephens, 2008; Hintz, Basu, & Broad, 2012; see also Davis, 2014, in this issue). It is a gratifying mode for exploring interiority since it can place young protagonists in situations impossible or improbable in real life. All fiction does this, but there is a limitation on what would be plausible for a young person in straightforward realistic fiction. The obvious attraction of young adult dystopia is the exploration of the boundaries of a young person's body and mind, since the mode allows the blurring of human and technology, the natural and the artificial (see Graham, 2002). However, the central premise in *Slated* is only marginally dystopian, since the *slating*—that is, memory manipulation—described in the novel is not only technically possible today, but commonly practised, albeit not on a grand scale.

In the following discussion of *Slated*, I investigate the narrative strategies employed to evoke young readers' cognitive and emotional response. How is the defamiliarised interiority represented? How does the text encourage readers to engage with the protagonist? And on a more

concrete level, how does the simultaneous, present-tense first-person narration work in *Slated*? If it does, which is still to be explored.

The sixteen-year-old protagonist/narrator has been surgically stripped of her memory, her mind becoming a blank slate. She is given a new name, a new family, and a new identity. As far as Kyla knows, slating is a mild punishment for a crime; she is given another chance. The premise of the plot is that a slated person cannot get aggressive, because emotions trigger the computer implant in the brain that reduces the "levels" (apparently neurotransmitters, although the word is not used), which is potentially lethal. Slated persons must watch their levels and regulate their basic emotions: anger, fear, anxiety, distress, but also excessive joy. Social emotions are beyond their reach. The present tense of Kyla's account is thus not a trivial convention, but an ingenious narrative device to represent the character's consciousness. Kyla does live in the present. She has no long-term memory beyond the moment she woke up after her surgery. She is not dumbed down enough to believe that she was created ready-made; she knows that she used to be someone else. But she has no way of knowing anything about her past. It does not exist.

Here the text offers the reader the first big cognitive-affective challenge. Few of us have experience of living without a memory, and those who have cannot tell the story. Cognitive psychology has described subjects with damaged long-term memory, but we do not normally empathise with brain-damaged patients in clinical reports. Yet as readers of fiction, we are expected to empathise with Kyla, connecting with her empty consciousness. The unfamiliar situation demands the reader's full attention. Switching on empathy and theory of mind, readers are invited to consider how it feels not to be able to have any feelings at all. Let us remember that theory of mind, or mind-reading, is the ability to understand other people's thoughts, beliefs, and intentions independently of one's own. Empathy is the ability to understand other people's emotions. Both are indispensable social skills. In *Slated*, readers have an advantage over the protagonist since they know what Kyla lacks. This is an exacting exercise, but rewarding in the long run. Kyla comes to her new home, which is a recurrent script in YA literature; thus, readers are expected to recognise it. What they do not recognise, however, is that unlike the endless orphans and temporary exiles of classic children's and YA novels, Kyla has nothing to compare it with, no memory of any old home, a previous family, familiar environment, missed classmates, or

abandoned pets. The dislocation script is disrupted, and the readers need to adjust to an unknown and unknowable social and narrative situation.

The theme of suppressed traumatic memory is frequent in YA literature, most often connected with the death of a close relative or friend. However, when it appears in a realist fiction we can relate to the characters' emotions even when we have no direct experience of them. Projecting our lived or mediated knowledge onto the text, we may recollect that bereavement causes, in this order, denial, anger, and grief. Yet we do not know how it feels not to be able to feel grief. Kyla's plight is not focused on her loss, since she does not know much about it. Without memory, she cannot predict any future for herself, either, nor make decisions. She is this strange, impossible singularity that does not have a trajectory. Her identity is blank, because identity, who we are, is built through memory. Here the first-person perspective becomes interesting: again, not merely a convention, but a justified narrative form. Although Kyla is seemingly totally disempowered, she is given a voice, and thus agency.

Confronted with the literal single-mindedness of the protagonist, readers need to activate their theory of mind to get to grips with Kyla's experience. But how can it be possible, if her emotion discourse cannot utilise the familiar words and metaphors, and if what Kyla really feels has no adequate correspondence in our language? This is a dilemma frequently discussed in respect to representation of emotions in fiction: emotions are, unlike language, non-linear, imprecise, unstructured, and diffuse. Therefore language is an inadequate medium to represent emotions, and "telling," that is, putting a simple label on an emotional state, is less engaging than "showing" by a wide register of narrative means available to fiction. How, then, can "showing," representation rather than metarepresentation (Zunshine, 2006), allow readers to circumvent the extremely unreliable narration by someone who not only lacks life experience, but any knowledge and understanding of selfhood?

Cognitive psychology highlights the embodiment of emotions (Gallagher, 2005; Johnson, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), which in our engagement with fiction is both afforded by texts and available to readers. This observation is particularly pertinent to children's and YA literature. While adults are expected to master their emotions, children express them without inhibition. Happy children, in real life as well as in fiction, run, jump, hop, skip, dance, poke each other, climb trees. Angry children throw tantrums. Scared children cover their faces and crouch together. Children's fiction utilises this device to create ambiguity between what

the narrator states explicitly and what the reader can infer from the character's behaviour (Nikolajeva, 2013). From the beginning, Kyla's experience of her new home is visual, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory. She may not be able to label her emotions, but she is obviously fully capable of experiencing them (which seems to be an accurate description of subjects with damaged brains). She shies away from her foster mother's hugs, but enjoys stroking a cat. When Kyla's "levels" drop because of anxiety, she survives by running. Running to the verge of exhaustion is her way of communicating her happiness to other people as well as the reader. Thus the text successfully utilizes representation of bodily movement to convey a mental state.

Embedded Mind-Reading

There is another, less conventional way of embodiment of emotions in the novel, possible because of the non-mimetic mode. Since Slateds are subjected to governmental surveillance, they are equipped with a monitor connected to the chip in their brains that controls the level of their emotions. Not only Slateds themselves, but anyone, can read their monitors. (This, again, is not simply a detail of a technologically advanced future; think, for instance, of electronic tagging for paroled prisoners or remote control of diabetic patients). Kyla is therefore in a disadvantaged position, since everyone can read her emotions, but she cannot read other people's. Externalisation of emotional states is an intriguing device in fiction, most brilliantly explored in Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy, *His Dark Materials* (1995, 1997, 2000), where people's minds are projected outside their bodies in the form of daemons. The inhabitants of Pullman's fictional world do not need theory of mind since their minds are visible and express their emotions for them. However, Lyra, the main character, as any character in a *Bildungsroman*, needs to acquire the necessary social skills, including empathy. Thus is exactly what Lyra learns throughout the trilogy, but to master it, she needs to let go of her daemon, which translates into internalisation of her mental and emotional life. Readers, who initially received direct information about Lyra's emotions through the shape and behaviour of her daemon, must subsequently return to mind-reading and, for instance, recognise Lyra's guilt as the engine behind her decision-making (Nikolajeva, 2012a).

Kyla's ultimate goal in *Slated* is also to get rid of her external emotion indicator (which she achieves in the sequel). Yet before she is ready to even imagine such a possibility, she needs to develop theory of

mind, and the readers need to apply higher-order mind-reading, of the type "A thinks that B thinks that C thinks ...." Apparently, an average reader is able to automatically keep track of three to four orders, while any additional order demands a special effort (e.g., Vermeule, 2010, p. 37). It would make an interesting empirical study, but my guess is that average young readers do not automatically go beyond the second order (in this case, what Kyla thinks), while the text encourages, if not compels us, to venture deeper, into "Kyla thinks that her mother thinks" and further still: "Kyla thinks that her mother thinks that Kyla thinks...." Cognitive critics, such as Zunshine (2006, 2012) and Vermeule (2010), do not claim it explicitly, but it follows from their argument that the quality of a literary text can be evaluated through the depth of embedded mind-reading it potentially affords. In any case, as I argue throughout this article, we engage more strongly with fiction that offers challenge and resistance.

With her brain slated, Kyla lacks empathy, and her theory of mind has regressed to that of a very young child. The visiting nurse warns Kyla's foster mother about Kyla being "like a small child," but she is only referring to Kyla's lack of practical knowledge: for instance, she does not know that a knife is sharp and can hurt you. However, such everyday skills are relatively easy to learn. Kyla's real dilemma is the social knowledge. She can judge people by their actions, but does not understand what they think and thus is unable to grasp the motivation of these actions or to predict any future actions.

In real life, we have no access to other people's minds and need to be able to read their emotions from external signals, notably facial expressions and body language. A famous example from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mike Haddon (2003), shows how an autistic boy learns to understand people's basic emotions with the help of emoticons: once he has connected his own concrete and singular experience with the emoticons of "happy" and "sad," he is able to read other people's facial expressions as reflecting their emotions of happiness or distress (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2012). Kyla, in *Slated*, is not autistic, but her brain damage does not allow her to read other people's faces. Neither can she control her own face, which is a clear disadvantage, since everybody around her can easily understand her state of mind. As her emotional skills develop, Kyla must learn how to wear a "poker face."

Because Kyla cannot read external emotional signs, she is dependent on what people say and what they do. She is thus completely deceived by her foster mother's actions and frosty attitudes, by her

therapist's routine phrases, by her teachers' hostility, and by her school counsellor's amiability. Here readers are expected to employ their theory of mind to grasp Kyla's shortcomings as a mind-reader. After all, readers have privileged knowledge over Kyla. Even the least adept child has more expertise than Kyla in mind-reading. However, the specific text/reader relationship of children's and young adult fiction creates a worry. Expert readers will typically be able to detach themselves from the protagonist's subject position, irrespective of the narrative form (personal or impersonal focalised), as they do with Maisie (James, 1897/1998) or, for instance, Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960/2010). Such detachment is deliberately created in fiction through narrative slant, that is, shifting the subject position away from the reader. Making the protagonist a child or a mentally disabled person effectively interferes with the adult, mentally healthy reader's sharing the protagonist's subjectivity. In other words, as repeatedly pointed out in studies of empathy in fiction, a reader must be able to get empathically engaged with a character without sharing his or her literal or transferred point of view; to be curious about a character who is unpleasant, ugly, sick, criminal, mentally retarded, morally depraved or even inhuman. Unless we can do this, we will not be able to engage with Macbeth (Shakespeare, 1623/1990), Raskolnikov (Dostoyevsky, 1866/2002), or Gregor Samsa (Kafka, 1915/2007).

The problem with young readers is their solipsism. They will most probably automatically identify with the protagonist, not least a present-tense first-person narrator/protagonist, unless prompted by the text to avoid it. However, such direct or immersive identification, when readers simply align with the character's thoughts and actions as if they were their own—the "just-like-me" assessment of characters—is limited to the readers' scope of experience and does not endorse mind-reading. For engagement with fiction, it is counter-productive. In real life, theory of mind is essential for interpersonal communication. Direct identification precludes or at least substantially impedes mind-reading, since readers know, or rather believe they know, exactly what the character thinks and feels by projecting their own real-life experience onto the character. This is a solipsistic position that educators in real life encourage young people to abandon. Readers' narrative goals, and thus desired outcomes, do not necessarily coincide with the character's. In other words, a character can obtain his or her goal and therefore experience happiness, while a reader's goal, and thus preferred outcome, evokes sorrow or disgust (as adult, professional readers, we may find the endings of most children's novels

unsatisfactory). Readers who identify with characters may uncritically share the character's goals, and thus emotions.

YA authors have a range of narrative devices to subvert immersive identification, or "identification fallacy" (Nikolajeva, 2011), without toppling over to Jamesian irony. Non-mimetic modes and settings, non-human characters, fluid gender identities, ambiguous narrative situations, and multiple narration effectively steer the readers' subjectivity away from the protagonist, which immediately demands attention and advanced mind-reading. Paradoxical as it may seem, personal narration can produce the same effect, as long as the narrator is sufficiently othered, which Kyla doubtless is. Therefore, personal narration in *Slated* does not endorse immersive identification, but on the contrary, encourages employing theory of mind because the protagonist/narrator is alienated by her brain damage.

Yet the text goes even further in its cognitive twist. If readers have an advantage over Kyla in understanding non-slated people's emotions, the advantage Kyla has over non-slated people, as well as the readers, is that she understands other Slateds' emotions. Slateds are programmed to be incessantly happy, which is naturally difficult for readers to understand, since even if generally happy, we constantly experience shades of other emotions. It is almost impossible to imagine that a deviation from happiness can cause excruciating pain, blackout, and death. Here, the readers are expected to use a different higher-order mind-reading than when Kyla tries to understand her parents and teachers. Readers know how ordinary people think, even though young readers may have problems with contradictory emotions. Still, readers should be able to see that Kyla misunderstands ordinary people's minds. Conversely, readers do not know how Slateds think, while Kyla does. She knows that her foster sister is vacuously happy because her brain implant makes her feel happy, that her classmate is scared and her boyfriend is anxious. Moreover, Kyla knows that other Slateds know what she is feeling (fourth order of mind-reading). This intricate tension between what Kyla knows and what readers know, between what Kyla knows and what secondary characters know, and between what readers know and what secondary characters know, prompts readers to be on the alert if they want to be ahead of the protagonist in solving the mystery. In other words, engaging with the text demands perception, attention, imagination, empathy, and reasoning, all important components of cognitive activity.

Mystery, with all its genre variations (crime novel, thriller, horror, paranormal romance), is a perfect field for mind-reading in fiction (see

Part III of Zunshine, 2006). Mystery is based on narrative *paralipsis*, the omission of essential information that is either hidden from the character, or the reader, or both. Reading a mystery demands putting together puzzle bits acquired from various sources and filling in with inferences from concealed minds. As in any skilful mystery, in *Slated*, readers are given clues ahead of the protagonist. For someone with a minimal knowledge of neuroscience, the signal appears long before the consequence is explicated. Kyla is left-handed. Or rather, she discovers to her amazement that she is left-handed and that her left hand seems to "remember" things that her consciousness has been forced to forget. Her left hand can draw images of which she has no conscious recollection. Once again, the emotional memory turns out to be embodied. Readers may not know about laterality, but the left-handedness is described in a way that makes them curious and alert. In recursive engagement with the text, they will look back for details to fill the narrative gaps.

Here, the incoherent italicised passages in the novel start to make sense, since they offer an alternative perspective on the events. I still do not feel that italicising is fully justified. Apart from explicit temporal indications, temporal shifts in fiction can be marked by tense, possibly amplified by iterative frequency. Memory narrative within a past-tense narration may be marked by present tense, and vice versa. Since *Slated* is told in the present tense, and memory narrative is rendered in the present tense as well, perhaps italics have a function after all, although for a reader familiar with the conventions of fiction it still should not be a problem to discern memory narrative from the main story. The memory passages are incomplete, fragmented, and to begin with, inscrutable, which should be sufficient to perceive them as deviant from Kyla's conscious narration. Yet together with Kyla's left-hand motor memory, they firmly indicate that there is a lived experience stored in Kyla's brain, suppressed, but not totally severed. At some point Kyla discovers that broccoli is disgusting. She does not even know what broccoli is, and she has never seen it before, yet the taste triggers a vague, but clearly embodied and emotionally charged memory. Kyla also discovers that she has a motor memory of driving. Eventually, it transpires that the minimal past Kyla was supplied with at the hospital is a fabrication. Somewhere, she has a loving family who miss her. Yet she also used to belong to a gang of terrorists, who are now trying to claim her back. Here the reader is invited to consider what is going on in a split mind. Kyla has just started to accept her new life, to understand and even like her new mother, to be curious about her classmates, to enjoy having a friend.

Suddenly, she is confronted with at least two different identities, two additional names. She is given two contradictory sets of the past that she has been deprived of.

Emotions and Ethics

Adolescent identity is inevitably unstable, so the text merely offers a metaphor for what neuroscience describes in terms of chemical and electric cerebral processes. Yet Kyla's dilemma is more complex than an average real-life adolescent's. With her multiple pasts, she can make an active choice and decide which of them has construed her true identity. Yet is any identity more real than any other one? Can she shed her experience after she has been slated, obliterate the memory of her new life? Now these different sets of memories are mixed up, interwoven, and inseparable; they have fused into yet another identity, as reflected in the title of the sequel: *Fractured* (Terry, 2013).

A decisive step in Kyla's identity formation is the emergence of social, or higher-cognitive emotions: love, hatred, jealousy, and guilt. Unlike basic emotions, social emotions are not innate and have to be learned and trained. They always involve more than one individual (e.g., Oatley, 1992). Love, for instance, implies that two individuals' ultimate goals and happiness are equally valuable for both. Moreover, it requires that both are prepared to negotiate and even sacrifice their own happiness for the happiness of the other party (see the discussion of love in Hogan, 2011, 76-110). Slateds are not supposed to be able to love, since it jeopardises their selfish happiness. Again, for most readers, it is probably an unfamiliar state of mind, inviting strong empathy, that is, an attempt to understand how it feels not to be able to experience love. Mutual love, viewed pragmatically as a social bond ensuring procreation and protection of the progeny, is the foremost source of happiness, which accounts for the abundance of happy endings in certain literary genres, including YA literature. The premise of *Slated*, however, precludes a happy ending, since Kyla's and her boyfriend Ben's feelings toward each other raise their level of anxiety and are potentially fatal. Their need to protect each other, natural between lovers, triggers aggression toward any external threat. Since both are slated, they understand each other's mind and feelings perfectly, yet their damaged brains do not allow them a full expression of feelings. Ben's blackout as he tries to destroy his monitor brings about a storm of emotions in Kyla, including grief and guilt.

However, by that time she has become someone different from the complacent teenager we met at the beginning of the novel.

Kyla's emotional maturation thus leads to a whole range of ethical issues where readers need to liberate themselves from any remnants of immersive identification. Cognitive critics, in particular Hogan (2003b, 2011), Keen (2007), and Vermeule (2010), explicitly connect ethics and social justice with emotions and empathy. Ethical values are an essential part of any consciousness and thus govern people's behaviour and relationships with other people, as well as with the physical and social environment. Understanding other people's ethical beliefs is therefore a vital constituent in theory of mind and empathy, and arguably a more sophisticated constituent. Indeed, we may understand how other people think and how this thinking motivates their actions, but we may need to go beyond the basic motives to comprehend that people can act not only against common sense, but against their own good, because of their ethical convictions. Ethical values are closely interconnected with emotions, and the conflict between ethics and emotions is central for human existence, in real life and in fiction. Fiction offers perfect opportunities to contemplate this conflict. The system of ethical values and beliefs is also an inseparable part of our identity, and identity formation includes the understanding of ethics and the development of ethical principles that will regulate our behaviour throughout our lives. Fiction offers representation of this identity formation, providing vicarious ethical experience not easily available in real life. In other words, fiction puts its characters in situations where ethical issues are inescapable, and moreover, in fiction these issues can be amplified and become more tangible, as clearly seen in *Slated*.

One of the major theorists of ethical criticism, Martha Nussbaum (1990, 1995, 2001), claims more or less explicitly that we become better individuals and citizens because of reading. While I would not go that far, we are undeniably affected by interaction with literature (see Booth, 1988; Guroian, 2002; Marshall, 2009), which is particularly pertinent for my argument, since in YA fiction emotions are frequently pitched against ethical values. Empathical versus immersive identification is decisive for the reader's position: “adopting another person's point of view is a dangerous thing.... It creates feelings and attachments. It leads us to think of this other person in moral terms” (Hogan, 2003b, pp. 139-140). The danger with *Slated* is that readers can be seduced to take Kyla's side, rather than consider an independent ethical position.

Whatever Kyla's identity is, she is legally and morally guilty of assisting Ben in what might have led to his death and what leads to his re-slating. Moreover, she feels guilty about the disappearance of her classmates and teachers who are either slated or "terminated" by the totalitarian government. However, the only alternative to the government is terrorism, and in one of Kyla's restored identities, explored in *Fractured*, she is exploited by a terrorist organisation to be used as a suicide bomber. Kyla's fractured mind is divided between hatred toward the regime, loyalty toward the terrorists, but also hatred toward terrorism and frustration over what she believes is her biological parents' betrayal. The italicised fragments, repeated with increasing clarity, begin to gather into a more cohesive story. Kyla is now a vessel of strong and contradictory emotions that, fortunately, few young readers have been exposed to. The gradual regaining of several sets of memories, none of which is more reliable than the other, and thus the painstaking reiteration of identity formation, is a powerful portrayal of an adolescent's identity crisis. Kyla's extreme situation offers readers an exceptional opportunity to engage with her dilemma and to test empathy vicariously, in a safe mode.

The young adult novel emerged in the late 1960s-early 1970s as a hyperrealistic form, focused on everyday problems and issues that adolescents struggle with, including sexuality, drugs, violence, parental revolt, and social pressure. Most of the young adult novels published today still follow this path, yet the lure of the "what if" allowed in non-mimetic modes is quite apparent in YA novels today. I do not think that the emergence of this trend is a coincidence; I believe it is informed by achievements in neuroscience. We know tremendously much more about how our brains work than we did only ten years ago. We know how memory works, and we know that empathy is an indispensable social skill, evolutionarily conditioned. This knowledge is hugely tempting for YA fiction writers to explore.

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