WRECKED: AN EXPLORATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

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Contents

Abstract

Wrecked is a Young Adult novel, about the criminal exploitation of young people in the North East of England. It seeks to explore how socio-economic disadvantage leaves young people vulnerable to grooming by criminal gangs that use them to traffic drugs across the country.

Told from the perspective of two young protagonists and a gang leader, the story utilises a present tense, first person narrative to demonstrate an authentic stream of consciousness that acknowledges the constant flow of thought, interaction, and interruptions of the mind. With the reader placed directly in the heads of the characters, memory and thought are blended to build rich backstories and unique voices to tell this cautionary tale.

In the accompanying exegesis, I explore my approach to constructing the novel, and my research across Creative Writing, Psychology and Neuroscience, using the framework of Reader Response Theory to underpin how modern theories of the mind impact on writing twenty-first century Young Adult fiction.

I also explain links to sociological discourse and how specific social issues can be portrayed in fiction, including reference to a range of notable texts, placing my novel within the existing canon of literature.

I conclude that *Wrecked* demonstrates how stream of consciousness can be a powerful tool for communicating sociological discourse in fiction for young adults, providing a meaningful, holistic representation of a person moving through space and time, shaped by their experiences and individual narrative, and providing a deeper understanding of human nature.

Exegesis

Foreword

One sunny afternoon when I was nine years old, marvelling at the deep blueness of the sky and the drift of petals from the blossom trees that lined the street by my school, I suddenly ceased to be conscious. This was not the unconscious state that occurs slowly, counting back from ten under general anaesthetic, with colours flickering behind my eyelids. I was hit by a car and my consciousness blinked out instantly, plunging me into oblivion.

I heard the term ‘unconscious’ at the hospital and I knew it meant that period of darkness, where there were no thoughts, no images, no memories, no voice narrating the story of my world. My inner-voice had been silenced, as if by an on-off switch. Although that period was fleeting and I was relatively unharmed by the event, I was left with such a fear of that place without thought, that I was even afraid to fall asleep at night. What I now recognise as childhood existential depression, a common occurrence in children who experience a traumatic event, caused me to develop an intense interest in the meaning of life and what it is to exist. I became hyper-aware of the voice in my head narrating the world to me; I wondered where it had come from, what it sounded like in other people’s minds, where it went when I was no longer conscious and why it had failed to warn me of the oncoming car. It also made me think about the behaviour of others, how and why they react to specific events and why some people committed certain acts. Throughout my adolescence, I sometimes struggled to understand the behaviours of others, and I was always curious about what people thought, how they felt, and the diverse ways the mind seemed to work.

Anil Seth describes a similar experience from his childhood, using it as an introduction to his exploration of a neuroscientific base of consciousness, a childhood sense of self and what happens when the self ceases to exist (*Being You,* 2022*, p.3*). Instead of science, however, my interest in the mind set me on a literary trajectory. In books I found the inner-voice I now describe as 'consciousness', other voices telling other stories. The first book I remember really connecting with is Charlotte Brontë's *Jayne Eyre* (1847). I have read it many times, studying it at two different times in my academic life, but as a child I understood Jane Eyre to be a girl trying to make sense of the world and the people around her. As I write this foreword, I think that *Wrecked* has its roots in *Jane Eyre*, a story of young people trying to improve their socio-economic status in the face of adversity, seeking independence when the odds are stacked against them.

David Lodge describes literature as 'a record of human consciousness, the richest and most comprehensive we have' (*Consciousness and the Novel,* 2003*, p.10*). He connects the examination of the self with literature, examining its cognitive potential in relation to the novel and its description of human beings moving through space and time. I believe that as a writer, my consciousness is constantly making links between my mind, the minds of others and the world. This attempt to make sense of existence will always be the undercurrent of my writing, as I seek to unravel the complexities of inequality and raise awareness of important issues in the hope of inspiring important social reforms. Child criminal exploitation is just one of the sociological injustices I hope to explore. Millions of children worldwide continue to be victims of such crimes (*Child Trafficking Statistics,* ECPAT) and in the geopolitical context of the Covid-19 pandemic, natural disasters and conflict, inequality continues to exacerbate the situation. I believe that writing such stories from the perspective of a young person,

and placing the reader inside the minds of characters encourages a close emotional connection, promotes empathy and inspires readers to imagine a better future.

This ultimately influenced my decision to undertake a PhD, to explore, through research and practice, the various ways diverse experiences and individual narratives can be presented in young adult fiction. *Wrecked* is the product of my studies; a unique experimentation, helping me to better understand the complex ways in which literature reflects and shapes our world.

Introduction

Wrecked is an exploration of how stream of consciousness can be presented in Young Adult (YA) fiction, utilising a contemporary application of multiple first-person narratives to delve into the minds of young protagonists, and provide sociological discourse on a bleak and disturbing subject: child criminal exploitation.

My approach to depicting stream of consciousness was inspired by Eimear McBride's style of stream of consciousness in *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (2013*),* where the reader is given direct access to the protagonists' thoughts, as they pass through their minds.

McBride uses a fragmented linguistic style that portrays the impact of the childhood trauma experienced by her protagonists, and I was interested in how this approach could be utilised in fiction for younger readers to tell important, sociological stories about diverse characters. Whereas McBride's adolescent protagonist narrates to her brother, my characters narrate to themselves, as they make sense of the world around them.

My approach to stream of consciousness is framed within a series of records from a fictional technology called 'Spectrotext', which was influenced by neuroscientific studies of consciousness, including the work of neuroscientists Francis Crick and Christoph Koch (*A Framework of Consciousness,* 2003) and emerging technologies, such as Elon Musk's Neuralink microchip (*An Integrated Brain-Machine Interface Platform With Thousands of Channels,* 2019). Musk's description of miniaturised custom electronics (2019, p.2) and brain machine interface (2019, p.9) specifically inspired the fictional Spectrotext.

The novel predominantly follows the storylines of two sixteen-year-old protagonists, Jake and Minnie. Jake is a student and an aspiring writer, but longs for a practical way to make his own money, and help his mother and sister escape his violent stepfather. After an incident puts him in hospital, he is referred to The Hive, a revolutionary supported housing centre, where the residents receive the Spectrotext chip, which turns their thoughts into coherent words to find the root cause of their trauma and tailor treatment accordingly.

After leaving foster care, Minnie is sent to The Hive where she is befriended by Shannon, who moves drugs between nightclubs for gang leader Theo.

With lockdown looming, they all attend a party at Theo's lavish home, where they are exposed to a new drug, Angel, and each suffer dangerous side effects. Shannon dies in mysterious circumstances, and after hiding her body, Minnie is hidden away by Theo, to prevent her from talking and to protect her from a rival gang called the Taylors.

Consciousness is presented in two ways: firstly, the Spectrotext records capture the stream of conscious thought as it passes through the minds of the characters. They do not narrate the story to the reader, but the reader is giving direct access to their thoughts, which have been crafted into a narrative by the Spectrotext app. Secondly, the characters narrate moments of the story, having collectively reflected on the events.

The novel is structured as though the teenagers have gathered their Spectrotext records and reflections together, interspersing them with additional documents, such as Theo's police interviews, to tell their story.

The adversities the protagonists experience are underpinned by trauma theory, particularly Adverse Childhood Experiences, which I revisited in order to understand

how I might merge contemporary theories of consciousness with trauma studies, and how this might aid my understanding of how the minds of my fictional characters work.

When I began writing the novel, I was mostly concerned with portraying the myriad of sensory impressions demonstrated by modernist authors, such as James Joyce (*Ulysses,* 1922), Virginia Woolf (*Mrs Dalloway,* 1925) and William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury,* 1929), which I recognised in Eimear McBride's style of writing. I was specifically interested in portraying those moments of narrative style that depict the protagonists narrating to themselves, as they move through time and space. I wanted to place the reader directly inside the head of the protagonist, and demonstrate a fragmented, fractured consciousness that is the result of exposure to trauma, danger and adversity. However, I also had to consider how to capture this experience in a manner that would be suitable for younger readers.

While there are many contemporary novels for adults that utilise this modernist interpretation of authentic stream of consciousness, such as Lucy Ellmann's *Ducks Newbury Port* (2019), Daisy Johnson's *Sisters* (2022), Eimear McBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (2013) and Ali Smith's *How to be Both* (2014), the literary style has been given less attention in YA fiction.

There are many YA novels that utilise interior monologue and first-person, present tense narration, however, I have found few novels written entirely, or in part, using the stream of consciousness technique during my research. Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking* trilogy (2008-2010) incorporates moments of a fragmented stream of consciousness, that captures the protagonist's flow of thought. There is also evidence of the consideration of consciousness and the potential impact on storytelling in novels such as Nicky Singer's *The Innocent's Story* (2005), in which the protagonist resides as an entity in the minds of others, narrating their inner thoughts to the reader.

It is also practical to assume that in the wake of twenty-first century studies of consciousness across a range of disciplines, that more fiction associated with stream of consciousness is likely to emerge.

When discussing 'authentic' stream of consciousness, I refer to the natural flow of thoughts in the mind, as introduced by psychologist William James (1890). I explore how fictional minds can be developed by examining interpretations of consciousness and interiority in young adult fiction, alongside critical responses to the canon. This can be further enriched by examining fiction for adults that utilise both stream of consciousness and an adolescent protagonist, such as *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing (*McBride, 2013*).*

In this exegesis, I explore how stream of consciousness is presented in *Wrecked* and I examine the creative decisions I made in the development of the novel, through the critical lens of Cognitive Narratology. This theoretical framework is suitable for such an examination, because I am experimenting with a style of writing that reflects interiority, which is rarely used in YA fiction, in order to tell a story that has a relevant, sociological discourse on a major issue affecting today's youth. Analysing my creative decisions through the lens of Cognitive Narratology, I examine how the story's message is communicated to the adolescent reader, in order to elicit an empathetic response. In applying aspects of Cognitive Narratology to the techniques I have employed, I test the validity of Stream of Consciousness for telling important stories to younger readers.

In section one, I introduce stream of consciousness, providing some background and discussion of the literary style across a range of fiction. I then introduce a range of contemporary YA novels that utilise interiority as a narrative mode, that positively contribute to the inquiry of stream of consciousness. I also

introduce critical responses to Young Adult fiction, including the work of Maria Nikolajeva and Roberta Seelinger Trites, who make reference to Cognitive Narratology and sociological discourse.

I introduce adverse childhood experiences and make reference to some examples of adult fiction that utilise stream of consciousness through adolescent protagonists who have experienced childhood trauma, exploring the differences and similarities between these and the Young Adult examples of interiority.

In section two, I focus on my initial approach to stream of consciousness, examining my method to developing an interiority that reflected the experiences of my characters, with consideration of twenty-first century theories of consciousness. In section three, I explore other narrative modes that were utilised and why they were necessary to provide context and further insight into the story and lives of the characters. I examine the temporal distance between first person, present-tense narration and retrospective narration, in addition to the adult voice in YA fiction. I also explore the Dystopian tropes that were employed as tools of engagement.

Finally, I summarise the main findings from my creative practice and associated research, explaining that stream of consciousness can provide an immersive experience for young readers, but that the application should be balanced with other techniques that promote the joy and fun of reading.

1. Literature Review

Consciousness

There is much debate, across a range of disciplines, on the nature of consciousness. The philosopher Karl Popper stated that science, when challenged with the mystery of consciousness, fails, because scientists have yet to definitively explain the nature of consciousness, how it occurs, or why it occurs (cited in Maziarczyk and Teske, 2017, p.1). Popper attests that part of the problem is due to a lack of appropriate language to describe the phenomenon (cited in Maziarczyk and Teske, 2017, p.2), whilst the philosopher and neuroscientist David Chalmers describes the problem, explaining the relationship between brain processes and experience, as the 'hard problem of consciousness' (Chalmers, 1996, p.13).

A shift in thinking towards the end of the twentieth century, arguably fuelled by the increasing availability of brain scanning technology, led to the emergence of cognitive science, which explored an understanding of the human mind in relation to narrative theory. Scientists and philosophers acknowledged the narrative nature of consciousness, even Daniel Dennett, who reduces the idea of consciousness to an illusion, likens the phenomenon to storytelling (*From Bacteria to Bach and Back – The Evolution of Minds,* 2007, p335). Narrative continues to be a dominant factor in the inter-disciplinary study of consciousness, and the lack of a definitive explanation of the nature of consciousness in the twenty-first century, can only provide creative opportunity for authors to imagine representations of inner experience.

In *Explorations of Consciousness,* Maziarczyk and Teske state that 'contemporary fiction can help people develop awareness of their own and others' psychic life' and that it can also 'explore the ways in which consciousness might evolve

(naturally, or with the forthcoming assistance of information technology)' (2017, p.9). Maziarczyk and Teske introduce a collection of essays that are concerned with the ways in which the 'representational, cognitive and ethical potential of the novel is exploited in contemporary English-language fiction to inquire into various aspects of human consciousness, taken broadly as an awareness of feelings, perceptions and thoughts' (2017, p.4). The essays, and the novels they are concerned with, discuss developments such Artificial Intelligence and Neurodiversity in consciousness study, demonstrating opportunity for further creative experimentation and critical response, inspired by interdisciplinary fields.

As literature continues to artfully craft and analyse the nature of consciousness, those in the scientific fields continue to study inner experience. Author and critic David Lodge, in his discussion of the connection between literature and the sciences in the study of consciousness, traces current scientific interest in the narrative nature of consciousness back to Francis Crick and Christoph Koch's 1990 paper, which announced that it was time to make human consciousness the subject of empirical study (cited in Lodge, 2002, p.7).

Building on their 1990 paper, in 2003 Crick and Koch published *A Framework of Consciousness*, which presented ten elements of conscious experience, and sought to offer a theoretical explanation on how memory and attention are perceived and processed in the brain. Specific aspects of the framework, including sensory input, unconscious reflexes and representations of visual scenes, while theoretical, could be used for reference when crafting a creative representation of fictional minds as they offer a 'higher order' principle of how certain conscious experiences occur. For example, Crick and Koch propose that consciousness is series of static snapshots. In literature, an author could adopt a technique such as staccato in describing a visual

scene, using monosyllabic short, sharp sounds to represent a series of static snapshots. Or, an author could take Crick and Koch's principle of Zombie modes, which captures conscious reflexes to sensory inputs, in considering how they might represent a character's movements. Both techniques have been adopted in *Wrecked*, and will be explored later in this exegesis, but here the description of Crick and Koch's framework serves to introduce the notion of using twenty-first century, neuroscientific theory as a basis for creating a fresh approach to consciousness. Such practices would, as Maziarczyk and Teske attest, exploit the representational, cognitive and ethical potential of the novel in the inquiry of human consciousness (2017, p.4).

Stream of Consciousness

When developing my proposal for this thesis, I was concerned with experimenting with an authentic stream of consciousness that could realistically reflect the torrent of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that pass through the mind. The technique is more than one hundred years old, and while there is some debate on its source, the term stream of consciousness is most strongly associated with William James, who, in *Principles of Psychology* (1890, p.224), described it as 'the unbroken flow of perceptions, thoughts and feelings in the waking mind' (James, 1890). In literature, the term was adopted by May Sinclair when discussing Dorothy Richardson's novel series *Pilgrimage*, and the technique was later demonstrated by the modernist writers James Joyce (*Ulysses*, 1922), Virginia Woolf (*Mrs Dalloway*, 1925) and William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*, 1929). In many of the modernist texts, the authors adopt an omniscient narrative voice, reporting the thoughts of characters to the reader, sometimes slipping seamlessly into a first-person perspective.

The post-modern era introduced a more subjective approach to consciousness, mostly concerned with dialogue and the actions of characters, sometimes written in the form of metafiction and often utilising fragmentation. Famous texts include Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969).

Discussion on stream of consciousness is vast, and often complex, due to the variety of ways it can, and has been, depicted. The modernist and post-modernist texts demonstrate the varying ways that stream of consciousness can be presented, though the dominant narrative techniques are direct and indirect interior monologue, and for the purpose of this study, it is important to distinguish between the two. Direct presents the consciousness of the character, removing interference from the author so that the reader is given direct access to the character's flow of thoughts, written from a first-person perspective. As the character is not addressing the reader, but essentially narrating to themselves, there is often little consideration of conventions relating to syntax, grammar or form.

Indirect interior monologue utilises the omniscient author to present a character's thoughts and feelings, guiding and commenting on inner experiences, whilst also narrating other events within the story. The main difference between the two methods is that indirect interior monologue gives the reader a sense of the author's presence, whereas direct monologue excludes it.

Dorrit Cohn states that both direct and indirect are valid forms of thought report, and states that 'in some respects, a first-person narrator's relationship to his past-self parallels a narrator's relationship to his protagonist in a third-person novel' (*Transparent Minds*, 1978, p.169). However, Cohn categorises techniques for rendering conscious experience as three grammatical structures: psycho-narration,

quoted monologue and narrated monologue. Cohn states that the only structure that does not utilise a third-person narrator is quoted monologue, referring to other terms used to describe the technique, such as interior monologue.

David Lodge refers to an increased reluctance to use omniscient narrators to represent consciousness in fiction, and states that ‘a single human voice, telling its own story, can seem the only authentic way of rendering consciousness’ (2002, p.87). He goes on to say that while in fiction this method is still artful, ‘it creates an illusion of reality, it commands the willing suspension of the reader’s disbelief, by modelling itself on the discourses of personal witness: the confession, the diary, autobiography, the memoir, the deposition’ (2002, p.87). The difference between such formats as diary and autobiography and stream of consciousness, however, is the narrating ‘I’.

While Lodge refers to a single human voice as the only authentic way to represent consciousness (2002, p.87), he does not refer to the artifice of a narrating self. In contemporary fiction, it is usual for the first-person narrator to tell the reader what they are doing, thinking, feeling, and seeing, using verbs to highlight a specific action. Where the modernist author often used omniscient narration to report the thoughts of their characters, providing context for parts of the story that could not be clearly rendered by stream of consciousness alone, the contemporary narrator establishes a discourse between an experiencing and narrating self.

As I have previously mentioned, one of the most prominent examples of stream of consciousness in twenty-first century fiction, is Eimear McBride’s *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (2014), which uses fragmented sentence structure and syntax to present the impact of trauma at the pre-speech level. McBride inverts the concept of the narrating self by having her protagonist narrate to her brother, an implied ‘you’. As

much of the discourse relates to personal experiences between the girl and her brother, much of the standard grammatical structure is removed.

While McBride does not explicitly reference interdisciplinary inspiration beyond literature, in discussing how she crafted the novel, she does refer to removing the artificial aspects of narration that would create a barrier to an immersive experience of interiority (McBride, 2016). McBride coins her technique ‘stream-of-existence’ (2016) and provides the following insight into how she developed this style of writing:

I avoided all tangible information about time and place, leaving my inevitable Hiberno-English to fill in those gaps. Similarly, all characters remained unnamed in the hope of closing that very basic sense of separateness down. The reader experiences the narrative from the girl’s perspective, therefore it seemed logical they never receive descriptions of her appearance – for who walks around describing themselves to themselves? Once all identifying markers were withheld the reader was left with what the girl sees, thinks, how her body reacts to what it experiences and can, from the sum of these, hopefully extrapolate how she feels. I didn’t want the reader to feel separate from her or in a position to pass judgment on her actions. I wanted them to feel they *were* her, and that what was happening to her, and inside her, was also happening within themselves.

(McBride, 2016)

McBride’s reflection is useful, as it provides insight into how a contemporary author has developed her own style of stream of consciousness. It is specifically important to my own study, as McBride details how she wanted the reader to *become*

her protagonist (2016), which relates to my earlier reference to an immersive experience.

A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing is overall an important novel to reference, as it demonstrates a fresh approach to the technique that still has its roots in the modernist principle of authentic interiority.

Similarly, Lucy Ellmann's *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019), structured as a seemingly endless sentence, tells the story of a woman recovering from cancer, pondering motherhood in a personal, global and political sphere, using pop culture as reference points. While Ali Smith's *How to be Both* (2015), utilises a dual narrative alongside stream of consciousness, to tell a story of life and loss.

I reference Ellman's and Smith's novels here alongside McBride's to demonstrate the continuing literary importance of a stream of consciousness grounded in modernist principles, more than one-hundred years since the publication of *Ulysses* (James Joyce, 1922). This observation is essential to my argument, as it demonstrates the relevance of stream of consciousness in twenty-first century fiction and the lasting impact of the modernist texts.

Stream of Consciousness in Young Adult Literature

While first-person narration is a common technique in Young Adult fiction, the authentic stream of consciousness referenced thus far is rarely adopted.

In Goodreads Top 100 Stream of Consciousness novels, just one is considered a YA novel, J.D Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye,* 1951. While Salinger certainly uses aspects of stream of consciousness, such as free association, to demonstrate a flow of inter-connected thoughts, the protagonist, Holden, reports to the reader what they did, felt and thought, rather than simply allowing the reader to see sensations pass

through their mind. Salinger uses the first-person and past-self relationship to structure the narrative clearly, so that a reader may make sense of Holden's story.

A more recent example is Patrick Ness's acclaimed *Chaos Walking* trilogy (2008), which utilises moments of stream of consciousness, presented as the 'Noise' – a condition affecting the male population, who are able to hear each other's thoughts. While most of the narrative is presented in the present tense, from the perspective of protagonist Todd, he reports on the moments of others' consciousness that he is able to hear:

And Ben's noise is saying Apples and yer getting so big and Cillian again and itch in the crack of my arm and apples and dinner and Gosh, it's warm out and it's all so smooth and non-grasping it's like laying down in a brook on a hot day.

(*The Knife of Never Letting Go*, 2008, p.27-28)

Similarly, the protagonist in Nicky Singer's *The Innocent's Story* (2005), narrates the thoughts of those whose mind she inhabits, though in a more orderly fashion, as though making sense of the narrative for the reader:

Dad climbs up the stairs and Bonnie follows with her head down. 'Oh grow up, says Dad, and then his brain cracks again: '*They'll never grow up. Never go to college, never get married, have children of their own, grandchildren. I will never have grandchildren.'*

(*The Innocent's Story*, 2005, p.40)

The lack of YA stream of consciousness novels is also mirrored by an apparent lack of research in this area. After conducting a number of searches, I found that the only study available on stream of consciousness in Young Adult fiction, is a paper entitled *Downriver Narratives (*Beiber and Gooding, 2023*)*, which discusses river journeys in YA fiction and connected narrative elements, but does not expressly discuss or critique the literary technique of stream of consciousness, nor identify any novels associated with this form. This is not to say that such research and studies have not been conducted but may not have been available at the time of publication of my own thesis.

There are, however, a vast number of YA novels that are told in the first person, using interior monologue to create a sense of intimacy and immediacy, novels that contribute to the discussion of consciousness, and novels that push against the boundaries of consciousness. A notable example is Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999) which, although using a direct narrative voice to describe actions and feelings to the reader, reflects a consciousness marred by the trauma of sexual assault. The protagonist's consciousness is captured in short, sharp paragraphs that describe each painful moment of her experience at school. Further, the protagonist rarely speaks to others in the story, so the writer uses blank spaces in place of their dialogue to highlight their silence and blends the dialogue of other characters into the interior monologue.

Other novels that use first-person narratives to provide such social discourse include Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* series (2001-2021) and Melvin Burgess's *Junk* (1996), which tackle complex themes, such as racism, teenage pregnancy, mental health and drug abuse. While none of these novels utilise stream of consciousness, they do represent interior monologues and they utilise multiple-narrative perspectives.

There are also a number of critical responses to YA novels that consider theories of Cognitive Narratology, the response of the adolescent reader, and sociological discourse in YA fiction, such as Roberta Seelinger Trites' *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Young Adult Literature* (2000), which states that Young Adult fiction tends to 'interrogate social construction, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual' (2000, p.20), highlighting the sociological importance of literature for adolescents.

Maria Nikolajeva also discusses Cognitive Narratology in fiction for adolescents, investigating the narrative strategies employed to evoke young readers' cognitive and emotional responses in her paper *Memory of the Present: Empathy and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* (2014*).* Nikolajeva seemingly expands on Dorrit Cohn's past and present narrator relationship (1978, p.169), applying it specifically to YA fiction, stating that 'memory is doubtless the greatest narrative engine in fiction' (Nikolajeva, 2014, p.4), in discussing the use of past-tense narration. In rejecting first-person, present tense narration, Nikolajeva states that 'a more successful strategy is blended narration' (ibid p.7).

This is a useful insight when considering the use of stream of consciousness, which in *Wrecked* is written in the first-person and in the present tense. However, in adopting stream of consciousness, authors often blend memory with the present to create a discourse on how a character's past experiences have shaped them, and how they behave in the present. This is a technique that is specifically employed in *Wrecked,* as the protagonists' early experiences and adolescent experiences are blended, providing insights into why they are tempted by the allure of financial gain and a sense of belonging, despite the dangers of the criminal world.

Nikolajeva has also discussed the potential of cognitive criticism for thinking about literature marketed to younger audiences (2014, p.5), and her discussion of the YA novel *Slated* (Terry, 2012) considers a range of critical lenses, concluding that neuroscientific advancements create opportunity for sociological discourse through non-mimetic modes (2014, p.15). The *Slated* series, like *Wrecked*, demonstrates a speculative approach to real-life issues affecting not only young people, but throughout society. Nikolajeva's critical response leans towards advancements in neuroscientific theory in presenting the conscious experience of characters. Nikolajeva states the following:

> The lure of the 'what if' allowed in non-mimetic modes is quite apparent in YA novels today […] informed by achievements in Neuroscience. We know how memory works and we know that empathy is an indispensable social skill, evolutionarily conditioned (2014, p.10).

This is an important reference when applied to my use of the fictional Spectrotext technology described in *Wrecked*, which captures the thoughts of my protagonists. It highlights the merit of using such a non-mimetic mode to help adolescents understand the representations of other minds using a trope that is familiar to them. On a broader scale, it also draws links with the evoking of empathy in the young adult reader, by placing them inside the heads of the characters.

Even without a stream of consciousness, the interiority presented in *Slated* (2012), the *Chaos Walking* trilogy (2008, 2009, 2010) and the other texts mentioned, serves to place the reader as close to the protagonist as possible, providing an immersive experience.

Comparing Adult and Young Adult Interiority

I have previously mentioned Eimear McBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (2014), citing the novel as an inspiration for my study of stream of consciousness. In the absence of such texts in the YA canon, I think it is useful to explore the novel in comparison to Young Adult fiction, as it features a young protagonist and has themes associated with YA fiction, such as coming of age. The darker themes of the novel, such as trauma and sexual abuse, have also been depicted in YA fiction. *Speak* (Laurie Halse Anderson, 1999) is a typical example, telling the story of a teenager's experience of sexual assault and associated trauma. In both novels, the female protagonists express their traumatic experiences through interiority, each in a fragmented way that reflects their inability to process and disclose their inner traumas. The difference between *Speak* and *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing,* is the narrative mode. McBride's fragmented sentence structure and unconventional syntax can be challenging to read, whereas Anderson's narrative structure is clear and orderly, set out in short paragraphs so that the story's message is clearly relayed to the adolescent reader.

Anderson still demonstrates moments that move away from conventional form, as she presents her protagonist's interiority, yet these moments are encapsulated within the conventional structure. The protagonist tells the reader what they are thinking and how they are feeling, making those moments less of a cognitive challenge. This relates back to my previous comments on the lack of stream of consciousness in YA fiction, as it is clear that Anderson, whilst experimenting with the form of her novel, has still ensured that she communicates the important sociological meaning of her story.

Nikolajeva states that ‘a text addressed to young readers should preferably be accessible to them and invite empathetic identification’ (2014, p.12). While McBride’s novel does invite empathetic identification, its challenging narrative may not be accessible to the average adolescent reader, and this challenge may account for the lack of stream of consciousness in YA fiction.

All of the YA novels mentioned thus far, while depicting first-person interiority in different ways, provide additional context on their stories so that the discourse can be received. Through the use of multiple perspectives, a relationship between a past and present self, or non-mimetic modes, young adult readers have engaged with these stories and all of the novels have been successful in reaching a wide audience. What is important to note, particularly alongside the critical responses to Young Adolescent literature, is the accessibility of the texts, to ensure that readers are able to receive the important social messages.

When comparing literature across the subjects of consciousness, stream of consciousness and YA fiction, it is clear that there is still room for fresh, creative interpretation of studies of consciousness in the twenty-first century, and an appetite for presenting and examining literary interpretations of the mind.

The current lack of stream of consciousness in YA literature may relate to concerns around reception, due to the well-publicised difficulty of publishing certain stream of consciousness texts, despite their literary merit. *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* (McBride, 2013), for example, was rejected by numerous publishers before being published by Galley Beggar Press nine years later, and winning several awards (Jordison, 2014). Similarly, Lucy Ellmann’s long-time publisher Bloomsbury refused to publish *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019). Ellmann’s novel was also picked up by Galley Beggar Press and was nominated for the Booker Prize (Preston, 2019).

From an academic perspective, stream of consciousness may be considered too complex for adolescent readers, or the inversion of structure and language in such texts may be deemed unsuitable for young people who are developing their language and literacy skills. There is not enough research available in this area of study to be able to determine whether this is the case, even research on stylistics in children's literature does not address the appropriateness of language or style for younger readers (Burke and Coats, 2022). Psychologist Alan Leslie, however, points out the capacity of children's literature to develop empathy and Theory of the Mind, as well as linguistic and literary competencies (cited in Burke and Coats, 2022).

Although stream of consciousness is relatively unchartered in YA fiction, from both a creative and critical viewpoint, there is a foundation of research and literature on which to effectively develop and study this style of writing in fiction for adolescents.

The magnitude of the additional study required is beyond the scope of this exegesis, however, I mention it here to demonstrate both a significant gap in research and practice, in addition to demonstrating the potential for further inquiry.

Cognitive Narratology and Adverse Childhood Experiences

I previously introduced scientific, twenty-first century advancements in the study of consciousness, but I have yet to expand on my discussion of the concept of cognition, how it links with stream of consciousness and how young adult readers might make sense of the sociological messages communicated to them in literature.

An interdisciplinary merging of fields including Psychology, Linguistics, Neuroscience and Philosophy, aids our understanding of how the mind functions in relation to writing and reading stories. I have previously mentioned how consciousness is thought to be narrative in nature, but the way we make sense of stories, and how

we use this learning as a scaffold for understanding experience through narrative structure, are the fundamentals of Cognitive Narratology.

The Cognitive Narratologist David Herman, states that there is a need to explore the extent to which psychological concepts can be considered alongside other models for understanding the relationship between narrative and the mind (*Storytelling and the Sciences of the Mind: Cognitive Narratology,* 2017, p.227). One such psychological concept I have utilised in *Wrecked* is trauma, as the protagonists have traumatic experiences throughout the story, and their individual viewpoints, story-worlds and narratives are based on past traumas in childhood. Palmer states that the study of such states of mind in fiction are rarely addressed and argues that a closer examination of fictional minds is required (*The Construction of Fictional Minds,* 2002, pp.31-34). In *Wrecked*, states of mind are utilised to demonstrate reasons for particular behaviours. In inferring meaning from the text, adolescent readers are given insight into a cause-and-effect reality. They may recognise experiences similar to their own, and subsequent actions reflected back at them, or they may be given insight into a completely different type of experience, fostering empathy and understanding for other young people.

In her book *Why We Read Fiction*, literary historian Lisa Zunshine makes a case for admitting findings of Cognitive Psychology into literary studies, by showing how the ability to explain behaviour in underlying states of mind provides insights into interaction with literary texts (Zunshine, 2006, p.198). Zunshine coins this ability to attribute states of mind to ourselves and other people 'mind reading' (2006, p.198).

The specific childhood traumas that the protagonists of *Wrecked* experience are based on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's). The term, coined by Fellitti and Anda, is used to encapsulate a subset of specific adversities, such as domestic

abuse, parental substance abuse and physical abuse, which when experienced in childhood, are linked to issues in adulthood, including a range of behavioural, psychological and health-related concerns (1998*).* Morgart et al attribute a change in the culture of therapy to the work of Felitti and Anda, stating that when mental health concerns present in adulthood, practitioners are more likely to ask 'what happened to you?' as opposed to 'what is wrong with you?' (2021*).* This empathetic response from a psychological perspective, mirrors the empathetic response required in literature, to help readers engage with the plights of fictional characters, embodying Zunshine's 'mind-reading' (2006).

Drawing links between Cognitive Narratology and Adverse Childhood Experiences are important to this exegesis, as it provides a real example of the empathetic potential of fiction for adolescents. In *Wrecked*, I hope to communicate, through interiority, the need for a broader understanding of the traumas experienced by many of today's teenagers. I, therefore, draw upon adversities, demonstrating how they impact on young people's vulnerabilities to exploitation and risk-taking behaviours, in a way that elicits an empathetic response from the reader. By immersing the reader directly in the mind, I also demonstrate the potential for the stream of consciousness novel, in a market that scarcely adopts this style.

2. Establishing a Stream of Consciousness

When developing the proposal for this thesis, I had a firm idea of my method for discovering how far I could align my writing with the nature of consciousness. I planned on immersing myself in the interiority of my protagonists in order to present how the subject narrates the world around them, telling stories to the self.

I planned on adopting an automatic writing style, the initial outcome of which would be a draft manuscript of raw interiority, with little consideration of convention. I practiced initially with free writing, placing my characters in scenarios and writing from their viewpoint. I felt that this would be the closest way that I could position myself against a stream of conscious thought. However, I also wanted to conduct research to consider how my characters' life experiences could affect their mental experiences.

Through this experimentation, I hoped to develop a unique approach to writing stream of consciousness. I anticipated that through research and creative practice, I could develop a framework of methods for writing the interiority of my characters, and firmly demonstrate my own interpretation of conscious experience. This is a tool that not only suspends disbelief, as all fiction seeks to do, but tries to cement the realism of the story, as the characters do not speak to the reader, but *think* to the reader. The reader receives a constant flow of thoughts, actions and interruptions, directly from one mind to another.

Some critics believe that the internal experience of characters is the most important part of a story, letting the reader know how the protagonist is reacting internally to something that happens, as it happens (Palmer, 2004, p.49; Cohn, 1978, p.124). Palmer discusses this 'interface' between the character and their story-world as a highly informative way to link the internal consciousness of characters to their external, social and physical context (2004, p.49). This idea was key to linking my two

primary motivations for writing *Wrecked*, which were writing about social issues affecting young people today and exploring the representation of consciousness in fiction.

Developing a Fictional Mind

Although I intended to use an automatic writing style, I was aware of the need to plan and plot as much as possible before even writing a sentence, as the interiority I wanted to reflect was that of my adolescent protagonists. I wanted to have a deep understanding of who my characters were, what they had experienced in childhood, and how this might make them react to certain events within the story. Based on the research presented in the previous section of this exegesis, I felt that my characters' stream of consciousness had to reflect their past experiences in order to appear plausible to the reader, suitably blending past and present and strengthening the interface between character and story-world (Palmer, 2004, p.49). For this to work, I also had to have a firm idea of what happens in the story from start to finish, so I ensured that all of the major moments of the plot were established, before I began writing from each protagonists' perspective.

With some knowledge of child psychology, I was able to construct each character's narrative, writing about how their early childhood experiences shaped their circumstances, actions and their imagined thought processes. In order to develop each of their individual interiorities further, I conducted research into behavioural science, creating a psychological foundation for my characters that would yield a model of consciousness. One of the areas that I was particularly interested in, was Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (1943), which I used to explore my protagonists' motivations and the reasons why they were vulnerable to exploitation.

Maslow theorised a set of physical and psychological needs that must be met in order for a person to achieve self-actualisation (1943). The model has been used in child development in order to demonstrate how children need to feel safe and loved, in addition to being free from hunger and neglect, in order to reach their full potential (1943). Children rely on the mother, the first caregiver, for physiological needs and safety, without which, they are unable to transcend through the hierarchy of needs. I, therefore, used problematic maternal relationships in my novel as a basis for the adversity my protagonists experience later on. Minnie's mother has been absent from most of her life due to substance abuse, and Jake's mother is a victim of domestic abuse, who, due to her own vulnerabilities, is unable to keep Jake safe.

Trauma and attachment are also closely linked with Maslow's work, particularly in relation to adverse childhood experiences. In the interest of incorporating this concept, the protagonists reflect on some of their childhood memories to show how early experiences impact on children in their later life stages. Jake, for example, was once very close to his mother and he recalls memories of her from his early childhood. The following quote reflects this:

I remember thinking how much better it was when it was just me and Mam. Night times were best, hushed words and cuddles, falling asleep to the sound of her heartbeat. But then she met him, and he had to have all of her.

(*Wrecked*, 2023, p.8)

I purposefully included physical intimacy in this memory, to demonstrate the early bond between Jake and his mother, which is at the heart of attachment theory.

In the context of evolution, psychologist John Bowlby believed that children's attachment behaviours emerged to make sure they could successfully remain under the protection of caregivers in order to survive (*Attachment,* 1969*).* Bowlby believed that early bonds formed with caregivers have a tremendous impact on their life chances (1969). Other studies, such as Harlow and Zimmermann's monkey study (1958) and more recently, Teicher's studies on child maltreatment and brain imaging (2017), further support Bowlby's theory.

Modern attachment theory builds further on Bowlby's work, considering how contemporary understanding of the brain and the body impact upon emotional regulation and treatment (Schore and Schore, 2008). Schore and Schore attest that it is not just maternal relationships, but early experiences generally that impact on unconscious systems, which remain active for a lifetime, affecting not just psychological, but neurological development (Schore and Schore 2008).

The disruption in each character's relationship with their mother, their first caregiver, underpins their motivation for finding connections and a sense of belonging. The adversity that they experience in relation to early attachments and adversity, along with issues associated with emotional regulation, means they have a skewed view of what constitutes safe relationships, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

The United Nations identifies the period of 15 years of age to 24 years of age, as a period of vulnerability generally (UNESCO, 2013), but due to associated attachment issues and early experiences, young people may be particularly vulnerable if they are part of specific populations (Osgood et al, 2005). Osgood et al, identify these groups as young people ageing out of foster care, leaving the criminal justice system, homeless youths and those experiencing disabilities (2005). Osgood et al explain that this vulnerability arises from the removal of support systems that have

previously been in place for young people until they reach the cusp of emerging adulthood, a term introduced by Jeffrey Arnett to describe the period between adolescence and adulthood (2000).

Teicher's discussion of neurobiological consequences of childhood abuse and neglect (2017) demonstrates the links between adversity and later behaviours of risk-taking, self-destruction, aggression, depression and self-harm, demonstrating the plausibility of the characters' actions and reactions in the face of the events within the narrative. When combined with the vulnerabilities associated with age, the period of emerging adulthood and the factors described by Osgood et al (2005), the justification of these creative choices is further enhanced.

In recent years, such links between attachment theory and risk-taking behaviours, specifically associated with gang-related activity, have formed the basis of several studies. Katherine De Vito, for example, explored the experiences of young people affiliated with gangs and concluded that many sought a replacement for an attachment figure (De Vito, 2020) and a lack of consistency in their lives (2020).

While the characters in my novel do not identify as gang members, gang activity is a focal point within the story and an element that I wished to focus on was young people looking for a sense of belonging within the criminal group. Studies such as those conducted by Katherine De Vito, demonstrate that this way of thinking is valid, and that young people are not just coerced through fear.

As the reader is given an insight into the minds of the characters, such complex inner experiences are revealed, as the protagonists explore their early attachment issues. This demonstrates the research that I brought together to develop a foundation for my characters' minds, to ensure that the content of their thoughts was realistic and followed certain patterns relating to the behavioural sciences.

I also used this a reference point when considering what actions my characters might take when faced with certain situations. Such cause and effect scenarios can be evidenced throughout the novel, including Minnie's fear and distrust of adults, which is due to the lack of a single, stable carer in her childhood.

Writing the Mind

With a firm idea of plot and who my characters are, I could freely write their stream of consciousness, detailing events from each of their perspectives. I wrote quickly, with little consideration of grammar, syntax or convention, using the method of free association to generate words associated with what was happening in the story.

Free association is a highly identifiable element of the modernist novel and suggested by Luncar-Vujnovic as the main technique for controlling the process of stream of consciousness writing (2013, pp.69-76). In Psychology, free association refers to a process of sharing seemingly random thoughts, memories and feelings that pass through the mind. Developed by Sigmund Freud, it is a method of exploring the psyche of the patient in psychoanalysis, which was later adopted by literary criticism and theory. The principle involved in this technique is that a word, an idea or an image can act as a stimulus to a series or a sequence of other words, ideas, or images which are not necessarily connected in a logical relationship. For the author, it allows the freedom to present the association of thoughts and memories of characters which might be stimulated by observations, such as remembering certain memories. In experimenting with this principle, I used particular memories from the protagonists' past that were relevant to the moment that they were experiencing. I then imagined specific images related to these memories and attached words to describe the image, which I then threaded together. This is an example from Chapter 7, when Minnie is hit

with a penny that Jake throws and the sight of it on the ground reminds her of a time in her childhood:

There's a shiny penny near my foot. Pennies always remind me of Emma and that time in the supermarket, piggy bank tipped up and pennies all over the floor, woman at the checkout all huffy and apologising to other customers, apologising for us being there, holding them up. No, no, I won't think about it, don't let you see that. Emma took care of us when mam was too out of it in bed all day, couldn't remember she had kids. Don't think about it.

(*Wrecked*, 2023, p.48)

The type of language I used had to reflect the fact that the reader is listening in on the thoughts passing through Minnie's head at this particular moment in time. Through free association, the penny makes Minnie think of the incident in the supermarket, which leads to some narrative on Emma taking care of Minnie and their siblings.

As the principle of automatic writing is to write as freely as possible, I found it particularly difficult to maintain the stream of consciousness, and at times found myself slipping into a mode of direct narration, explaining the events, as opposed to writing as though my characters were reacting to them. However, I did not immediately correct this, as I planned on shaping the technique further, and I did not want to lose any raw material at this early stage.

Once I had this raw thought process in place, I wanted to consider it against twenty-first century theories of consciousness in order to experiment with applying scientific theories of the mind to fictional interiority. This would provide a basis for me

to revise and shape my writing, while testing how far interdisciplinary research on the mind could be utilised beyond what we already know of the narrative nature of consciousness.

When researching theories of consciousness, I perceived several challenges in incorporating them within my writing process. Firstly, without a definitive answer to the nature or process of consciousness, it appeared inconceivable that a unique, corresponding literary structure could be developed. The scientific field of consciousness is very broad and there are so many opposing theories to choose from, that just selecting any combination on which to develop a literary approach, may appear arbitrary. I therefore sought a simple, all-encompassing theory of consciousness that resonated with my writing. I rejected the many philosophical debates of conscious experience, and the scientific papers that sought a root cause of consciousness, as they did not fit well with the psychological and cognitive links I discussed earlier.

It was at this stage that I discovered Crick and Koch's *A Framework of Consciousness* (2003). I was drawn to their ten-stage framework, as it included consideration of various existing theories of consciousness across a range of fields, and, as stated in the previous section of this exegesis, it appeared that certain elements could inspire creative representations of fictional minds. Some steps relate specifically to neurons and synaptic effects, which contribute to the commentary of consciousness experience (ibid.) and therefore could not be applied to my research in a meaningful way. These particular steps serve to demonstrate the root causes of some of the more tangible elements of the framework that I will discuss next.

In demonstrating each protagonist's subjective experience, I considered elements of the framework in relation to their individual storylines. For example, I

considered how I might use ‘Snapshot’, which is the representation of conscious awareness as a series of static snapshots (2003) to consider how my characters’ experience time; Zombie Modes, which are unconscious actions that happen because of sensory input to consider how my characters might think about movement (2003); and also Attention Neural Activity, which explores how details from visual imagery are assimilated, with the individual being aware of only basic details initially (2003), to consider how my characters might recall memories.

To explain my usage of the framework more fully, I will detail how I used some of the principles to present the thoughts, movements and actions of my characters.

It is important to remember, that when presenting stream of consciousness, the character will not always explain their movements, as they are not narrating to anyone but themselves. However, as I will explain here, it is reasonable to assume that actions will pass through the mind at some point, and in some form.

I used Zombie Modes, which Koch in his later works describes as Zombie Agents, or Actions (*Consciousness*, 2017, p.30), to consider how I might present reflexive actions of characters in their stream of consciousness. Koch states that you can become conscious of an unconscious action, but only after the fact (*Consciousness*, 2017, p.78). Koch explains this theory in the context of an incident with a rattlesnake, which he almost stepped on while running on a track. Koch explains that before he became consciously aware of the snake, he had already sidestepped it and sped on (*Consciousness*, 2017, p.78). Koch relates this story to the experiments of Marc Jeannerod, who concluded that action is faster than thought (*Consciousness, 2017, p.78*). What this meant for my writing technique, is that when representing stream of consciousness, my characters would be unable to describe actions as they occurred, and it would not be natural for them to do so. I had to imagine how those

actions would pass through my protagonists' minds, and how I would communicate those actions to the reader. This relates to Alan Palmer's description of non-verbal consciousness phenomena (2002, pp.31-34), demonstrating the tangible links between consciousness study and literary theory. My experimentation with the application of Zombie Actions, can be seen in this extract from Minnie's Spectrotext record:

Move, move, can't breathe. Moved quickly like a cat. If I hadn't turned. The big bottle of maybe juice, she was about to pour it over my head, I can tell. It's on the floor, splash drops flying, and over her instead...stunned, mouth round, eyes slits. 'You stupid cow.' Go now go down the stairs, her voice in every step, stupid cow, stupid cow.

(*Wrecked*, 2023, p.45).

Minnie does not describe the moment she saw the bottle being tipped towards her head, or the moment she moved. She moves instinctively, and describes the moment afterwards, whilst still in the present. Her mind instructs her to 'move', and she immediately reflects on the action. This captures the Zombie Mode (Crick and Koch, 2003), the instinctive action that a character would not naturally narrate to themselves as it happens, whilst also communicating the action that occurred to the reader.

I used Snapshots on a broader basis, using the principle to think about capturing moments of action in smaller scenes, which allowed me to cut out some of the mundane details of the protagonists' everyday experiences. However, I also used

this step to think about how a sequence of images may move through the characters' minds. For example, this section from Minnie's Spectrotext record:

It's him. Inside and looks out at the street, he's about to close the door and I remember the party and Shannon and feel bang-head pain and long sleep and sick all over again. 'No.' Scream, as loud as I can. Just the sight of him, scared of him, of not knowing. Not knowing where and for how long. Closes the door, locks it, bolts it, looking at me and Mary on the stairs, her grip is tight on my arm, nails digging in. 'We've got to get her out now. Is this hers?' He is kicking the bag at his feet. His phone ringing, reaching into his pocket to look.

(*Wrecked*, p.231, 2023)

Various images pass through Minnie's mind, as she remembers the night of the party and processes what is happening in the present. The specific snapshots here are the memory of the party and Shannon, and the movements of other characters as the action unfolds. The description of each image is condensed into just a few words, to reflect the 'snapshot' principle (Crick and Kock, 2003).

The principle of Attention Neural Activity (Crick and Koch, 2003) was much more complicated to incorporate, as it relates to memory recall. As previously stated, Crick and Koch theorise that when we see something, we only immediately recall specific things, because our attention can only be focused on one thing at a time. I experimented with this principle on a small scale, by using words attached to specific visual stimulus the characters are exposed to, such as the moment when Jake first goes to Rocky's bar:

Look, a gate to the side, hold bag tight around no one about, around and into a garden, broken glass on the top of a high wall, barrels used as tables with high stools and graffiti covered, picnic tables and sad umbrellas. Did I hear? Something growl, as massive Rottweiler, docked tail and trotting towards me, growling, up on one of those barrels and up with the thing snapping at my ankles.

(*Wrecked,* 2023, p.81)

Jake cannot describe everything that he sees in the garden, so he relates a few small details. I captured the things that I thought, visually, Jake's attention might be focused on and included details of the beer garden as a stream of words.

The sentence *'Did I hear?'* is purposefully incomplete. This is a common occurrence throughout the Spectrotext records, and it demonstrates how the characters' thoughts overlap.

This approach for capturing the present is different to how memories are recalled. To highlight this difference, I also used Attention Neural Activity in relation to the events at Theo's party, when Shannon dies and Minnie disappears. Jake and Minnie's experience of the party is captured in their Spectrotext records, but each view different moments surrounding Shannon's death. Later, when they try to piece together what happened, their memory is hindered by the Angel drug, but also by their perception. They build on these memories as the story progresses, and as the Angel drug forces them to experience flashbacks from the party.

What I have explored so far, is my approach to constructing an authentic stream of consciousness that considers twenty-first century theories of the mind across a range of disciplines. After I had finished experimenting with this construct, I began to

think more about how the book might be received by the adolescent reader, as stream of consciousness novels can be challenging. I wanted to convey a message on the signs and dangers of criminal exploitation, and it was important that younger readers would be able to engage with the novel.

It was at this stage that I began to critically consider the novel in greater depth. As the stream of consciousness deals specifically with the mind, I considered cognitive narratology to be a viable, critical lens for observation and analysis.

As stated previously, Cognitive Narratology is concerned with the way we make sense of stories, and how we use this learning as a scaffold for understanding experience through narrative structure. I was worried that by adopting an experimental approach to writing, I had convoluted the story in a way that may be unappealing to adolescent readers. I did not wish to lose my construct of stream of consciousness, but I wondered if there was a way to encapsulate these moments of interiority, whilst still contributing to the exploration of stream of consciousness in YA fiction. The next section will explore this approach in further detail.

3. Returning to Storytelling: A Whole Approach to Consciousness

As with most first drafts, the original manuscript was imperfect in its form. Although I had incorporated all of the steps within the plot that I wanted to achieve, and I was reasonably satisfied with the voices and minds of my protagonists, I felt the need to be more imaginative with the premise of the novel, and I wanted the story to be exciting for young readers. I also felt that, in concentrating on an application of stream of consciousness, I had neglected certain aspects of storytelling that I would usually incorporate, such as world building and elements of mystery. Before I advance into the specific elements of narratology I employed, I will briefly examine some of the techniques I described in the previous section, in order to demonstrate the progress I had achieved, but what was still felt to be lacking.

Considering my initial approach from a Cognitive Narratology viewpoint, I was concerned with engaging my young adult reader, as I did not want the style of writing to be a barrier to adolescents reading and enjoying the book. In *Get Started in Young Adult Fiction*, literary agent Juliet Mushens states that authors should not patronise younger readers, as they are capable of grasping sophisticated concepts and ideas, but that it is important to speak to them on a level that they can understand (2015, p.3). Roberta Seelinger Trites states that 'Cognitive Narratology specifically investigates how embodiment influences both the author's discursive creation of story and its subsequent meaning-making as a function of the reader's cognition' (*Growth in Adolescent Literature*, 2012, p.1). Trites identifies three aspects of cognitive narratology that are pertinent to adolescent literature: metaphors, scripts and blending (2012, p.2). Trites explains that narratives rely on readers' ability to blend cognitive processes such as metaphor and scripts, to identify patterns that emerge within

adolescent literature (2012, p.12). Trites compares the concept of metaphor to the concept of adolescence, in terms of psychological and physical growth, and how this is presented in YA fiction as a metaphor within itself (2012, p.13). She also describes scripts as familiar, embodied experiences, such as shopping or attending school (Trites 2012, p.5), and that these 'knowledge representations', aid our understanding of, and engagement with, narratives (ibid.).

In *Wrecked*, the metaphor of adolescence is complicated by the fact that the protagonists have experienced significant adversities in childhood. However, both Minnie and Jake stand on the precipice of adulthood, each feeling unprepared, a feeling that I think would resonate with many adolescent readers. The shifting viewpoints, alternating between Jake and Minnie's stories, explore the different ways each of them venture into the unknown adult world. In addition to providing alternating reference points for readers to engage with, Nikolajeva states that this technique demands attention and advanced mind-reading, effectively steering the readers' subjectivity (2014). This demonstrates that I had already employed a technique that, according to Cognitive Narratology, would prove to be engaging for an adolescent reader.

A further tool I employed was flashbacks within each of my protagonists' narratives, a temporality that Nikolajeva states is decisive for cognitive and emotional engagement with fiction (2014, p.3). As Nikolajeva's studies are concerned with YA fiction, this demonstrates the validity of my initial approach and establishes that adolescent readers can be challenged by narrative modes that demand attention and interrogation. However, Lisa Cron states that establishing events early in a story, and piquing readers' interest is essential to hooking them into a story, because these are evolutionary responses to narrative (2012, p.14). I was concerned that immediately

immersing my younger readers into my protagonists' stream of consciousness could be off-putting, as it has not previously been used as a technique to tell a whole story in YA fiction.

Traditionally, stories introduce characters, settings and plot to situate the reader within the story-world. In the stream of consciousness novel, this is difficult to establish, as the reader is required to make sense of who is speaking and what they are saying.

While the dual-narratives and discourse between past and present through flashbacks, all correlate to Trites' metaphor of adolescence (2012), I think the concept of scripts was lacking in the original manuscript. While they are present, such as the script of the dangers of Child Criminal Exploitation, these would not necessarily be familiar to the adolescent reader. In returning to techniques of narratology, I think I was looking for familiar reference points, which would hook my reader into the narrative and help them engage with the darker subject matter.

The Covid-19 Catalyst

Around the time that I finished the first draft of the novel, the UK entered lockdown, and I was contemplating incorporating the pandemic into my story. There were reports in the media of the ways in which drug dealers adapted their criminality in order to find a way around the lockdown restrictions, such as posing as deliver drivers. While crime rates generally decreased during the pandemic, drug-related crime increased significantly (Casciani and Butcher, 2021). I thought that the impact of Covid-19 on organised crime and drug culture could enhance the story, but I also recognised how the pandemic and lockdown lent towards the tropes of Dystopian fiction.

Marta Komsta, in discussing the *Chaos Walking* trilogy, states that Dystopian fiction incorporates tropes such as the confrontation between the individual and the oppressive system, the impact of technology and a rebellion against uniformity and control, usually set within a place 'razed by environmental disaster' (*Men are Noisy Creatures,* 2017, p.40). Komsta, quoting Carrie Hint and Elaine Ostry, highlights that the genre is popular, because it acts as a powerful metaphor for adolescents (2017, p.39). Maria Nikolajeva pushes this explanation further, stating the following:

In Dystopian novels for children, the adult world is interrogated, as it is presumably the adults who have created the highly ordered, hierarchical but dull society that serves as a backdrop for a Dystopian plot. In fact, such an interrogation is one of the many stereotypes of the Dystopian novel for young readers.

(Power Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers, 2010, p.73*).*

It could be argued that the description of the 'Highly ordered, hierarchical but dull society that serves as backdrop' (Nikolajeva 2010, p.73) along with Komsta's description of 'a place razed by environmental disaster' (2017, p.40), is reflective of the UK lockdown, which many young people found to be challenging (*Newsround,* 2020*).* Nikolajeva also goes on to say that Dystopian novels 'which have a stronger impact on the reader, describe a future so near, that it is almost perceived as the present' (2010, p.74). The pandemic and lockdown is the closest thing to Dystopia that teenagers born and living in the UK today have experienced, and Nikolajeva's statements demonstrate that my observation of the pandemic as Dystopian is in fact

reasonable. Komsta relates the nature of a Dystopian storyline to the overarching metaphor of adolescence (2017, p.40).

What this meant for the development of *Wrecked*, was that I could manipulate the tropes of Dystopia by presenting a realistic, identifiable, apocalyptic story-world, which I could utilise as an engaging premise, as a metaphor for the power struggles the protagonists' experience, and also a foundation on which to develop their conscious experience in a unique way.

I used specific moments of the timeline of Covid-19 to set moments in the plot against, for example, Theo's party which heralds the impending lockdown, in order to ground the storyline within this timeframe. The lockdown also impacts on fundamental moments of the story, such the investigation into Minnie and Shannon's disappearance, which is complicated by the new rules and restrictions that the characters must live by.

Lockdown also makes Jake, Ethan and Emma's journey to finding Minnie that little bit more perilous, as they flout the rules and risk having their search hindered.

The pandemic and associated timeline becomes, in itself, a script which readers can blend with the metaphor of adolescence, particularly of an adolescence lived through the period of lockdown. Not only does this blending support the cognitive processes required for reader engagement, but it also serves as a familiar reference point, helping the reader to navigate the stream of consciousness.

Contemporary readers will have an understanding of the pandemic and what it felt like to live through lockdown. While they are unlikely to have faced the scenarios that Jake and Minnie experience, they will know the frustrations of remote learning, of not being allowed outside except for essential travel, of the isolation, fear and emotion experienced during that time.

Adolescent readers in the future may not have the personal experience of the pandemic as a reference point, but the pandemic will still be embedded as a script in our history and culture.

The Spectrotext Records

Revisiting Marta Komsta's description of Dystopian fiction, one element that I specifically chose to utilise in my approach to stream of consciousness, was the impact of technology (2017), in creating the fictional Spectrotext.

Spectrotext is a microchip that is implanted in the protagonists' heads to download their stream of consciousness to an app on their phones. The idea was inspired by emerging neuro-technology, such as Elon Musk's Neuralink, which seeks to restore sensory and motor function in the treatment of neurological disorder *(*Musk, 2019*)* and the theoretical concept of Mind Uploading (Graziano, 2019). I thought that it was an interesting way to frame the moments of stream of consciousness, which could prove to be engaging for the adolescent reader.

I had begun to develop a discourse between the protagonists' past and present selves, switching between a stream of consciousness technique, and a direct, first-person narration, with the characters narrating elements of the story to the reader, in order to provide further insight into their predicaments and actions. I will discuss this temporality later, but for now it is important to explain that I had decided to adopt both past tense narration and present tense narration, separating the stream of consciousness and highlighting it as just one way of capturing the inner thought processes of the characters.

I had an idea of encapsulating their stream of consciousness within a fictional technology, leaning towards the Dystopian trope, and making this method of

communication more accessible and engaging for the adolescent a reader, in a similar way to how Patrick Ness utilises the concept of the ‘Noise’ in the *Chaos Walking* trilogy (2008).

The purpose of Spectrotext, is to download the consciousness of adolescents in order to find the root cause of their trauma. The protagonists choose to have the Spectrotext microchip implanted as part of a pilot programme, however, it is a condition of their admission to the supported living complex, The Hive, raising moral and ethical implications on the concept of neuro-technology. Once the thoughts are downloaded to the app, the characters are able to select which records they share with the research team. However, it is established later on the in the novel, that the research team are able to access all of the records directly from the microchip, should the need arise. Once again, this adds to the discussion of neuro-technology and associated ethics, an emerging script in our culture.

The novel is structured as though the protagonists have given the reader access to their Spectrotext records, letting them in on deeply personal moments of interiority. This forges a personal relationship between character and reader, encouraging empathy and understanding. Minnie draws parallels between social media and Spectrotext, stating:

We live in a world where people post their thoughts on social media and post videos to followers, sharing every detail of their lives on the internet. Spectrotext didn’t seem that unlikely to me.

(Wrecked, 2023, p.16).

However, when she first experiences the app downloading her thoughts, her perception changes:

I don't want them to see, I don't want them to know what's in my head, not yet. They are looking, all of them, the whitecoats and clever people, medical, watching, wondering what's wrong with me and what's on my phone, bet they can't wait to get their hands on.

(Wrecked 2023, p.31)

As stated, I will explore this shift in temporal perspectives in further detail later, however, I include it here to demonstrate that the debate and perspectives of social media, provide a reference for adolescent readers on which to develop their understanding of, and engagement with the novel. It bridges the gap between the familiar concept of social media and the unfamiliar Spectrotext, so that readers can expect that they are going to receive a communication of the protagonists' thought processes, which Roberta Seelinger Trites refers to as 'Dynamic Repertoire' (2012, p.68).

The initial stream of consciousness I developed, demonstrated long periods of interiority that included a multitude of sensory and visual perceptions, as the characters narrated to themselves about the world around them. What was problematic with this approach, was that it captured elements that felt a little flat and mundane, as the characters went about their day. Referring back to Lisa Cron's comments on engaging readers (2017, p.151), I felt that the reader should be specifically shown moments that moved the plot along, rather than just typical moments of interiority as the characters moved through space and time. Spectrotext helped to capture these moments in smaller sections that focussed on specific events, cutting out the more mundane elements that did not add much to the story.

It is explained in the novel that the app will download thoughts at regular, random intervals. The final draft of *Wrecked* is presented as a collection of accounts

that the young characters have curated in order to tell their story. The reason for this was to demonstrate that they have been selective in which records they choose to share, and justifies my reason, as an author, for selecting those moments of interiority that are most specific to the plot.

In the opening chapter, Minnie introduces Spectrotext and the format of the Spectrotext records. This demonstrates the difference between the narrated elements of the story and the moments of interiority, familiarising the reader with this approach and preparing them for the immersion into the characters' minds.

By the time the reader reaches the events of the party, they should be familiar enough with the format to be able to understand what has happened, and be able to decipher moments of interiority that are further fragmented, to demonstrate the effects of drugs:

Party's thinned out, corridor split in two and I can't see straight to stumble down both of them, bouncing off every wall, colliding with last shoulders and elbows, getting pushed away. Can taste blood in my mouth.

Collapsed a heap onto wooden floor, legs and shoes step. I feel the vibration of the music, floor turning, turning over.

(Wrecked, 2023, p.102*).*

The reader is given the sense that Jake is at a party and he is not well. Jake is not narrating to the reader, he is narrating to himself, mentally reacting to the effects of drugs on his body and mind.

The visual descriptions of the corridor splitting in two and the legs and shoes as he lies on the floor, positions the reader so that they see everything through Jake's eyes. The physicality of the extract also demonstrates more than just thought report,

as it demonstrates that Jake's consciousness is embodied. David Herman states that such qualities allow a reader to experience what it is like to be someone else, beyond verbal report and positioning (2011, p.230).

In contrast, when Minnie is hidden away by Theo following Shannon's death, Minnie has a dream in which she has a conversation with her dead Aunt Kathy. Minnie reports that she cannot see or feel anything, she can only hear Kathy. This disembodied consciousness represents Minnie's dissociative state following Shannon's death. As it is captured as a Spectrotext record, the reader is aware that the exchange is occurring in Minnie's head, rather than inviting any supernatural interpretation. This conversation was included so that the reader may feel sympathy for her character, as Minnie relates earlier in the story that she was previously cared for by her aunt, and that she died. Now Minnie has lost Shannon and her own life is in danger. The reader is aware that these have things have occurred and they are given access to Minnie's inner experience of these ordeals. This moment draws a link between past and present trauma.

Through the Spectrotext records, the reader is able to directly access the thoughts that pass through the protagonists' heads in way that should be understandable to them. The similarities between social media and the app are a point of identity and hopefully of interest to the adolescent reader, engaging them into the narrative.

Temporality

Ricouer states that past, present and future are each separate moments of a continuum that are somehow held concurrently in consciousness (1984, p.174). This is an important concept of the novel, as it is concerned with how past traumas impact

upon actions and behaviour in the present. In the stream of consciousness moments of the novel, the protagonists often refer back to the past, and they also make reference to what they want from the future, however, I chose to expand on this further by incorporating specific elements of the narrative that are told in the past tense.

While the novel was still in development, the UK was emerging from lockdown, and I was concerned about retaining a present tense narrative set against such a large, global event that would shortly be committed to history. I was also exploring the temporality of collective consciousness and trauma, as presented in *Mrs Dalloway*, as the characters emerge from the aftermath of the First World War (1928). I therefore adopted a non-chronological structure and a discourse between past and present.

While the Spectrotext records transport the reader back to the year 2020, the protagonists report the story from the year 2022, explaining and reflecting on what occurred, and what has happened since.

Minnie begins with an introduction to Spectrotext and reference to the events surrounding Shannon's death, before the reader is plunged into Jake's interiority from that night. When the reader returns to Minnie in the following chapter, she explains her arrival at The Hive and her admission into the Spectrotext programme. The reader's attention is specifically drawn to the change in the narrative modes in Chapter 4, when Minnie goes to her hospital appointment to have the Spectrotext microchip implanted. They are given access to her Spectrotext record from the appointment, which is embedded in the general narrative about the procedure. From this moment on, Minnie and Jake's discourse switches between the Spectrotext records and their past tense narration as they explain and reflect on events.

The reason I chose to adopt this discourse between past and present, was so that I could demonstrate that the protagonists have considered what happened to them

in 2020 and have had time to reflect. They are, therefore, in a position to comment and communicate further context on events to the adolescent reader, in a peer to peer exchange. They are able to report, for example, what they understand about why they became involved in criminality, despite the obvious dangers, drawing links between their individual vulnerabilities and their needs for factors such as financial security and a sense of belonging.

At 16 years of age, it would be unlikely that the characters would have the insight required to explore the behaviour of other characters, or explain the cause and effect realities presented. In real life, most young people could only glean some of these insights from reflecting on situations through therapy, or similar interventions. Minnie makes this point at the beginning of the novel: *'How can I unpick the knot that sits just above my stomach, pull out the threads and show each one to you?'* (*Wrecked* 2023, p.1)

It was important that this insight was given by the protagonists at only a slightly advanced age, in order to retain an adolescent voice. An alternative could have been an omniscient narrator, who could have reported on all events and motivations, but I wanted young people to engage with the story on a personal level, listening to other young people tell the story. Maria Nikolajeva states that such an approach is important as opposed to talking over the heads of young readers (2014, p.11). In *Wrecked*, it serves to engage young readers in the discussion of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). The insight of the characters, who are still only eighteen years old when they are telling their stories, is still limited to an understanding that is reasonable for their age.

Other Voices

In addition to Jake and Minnie's Spectrotext records and their retrospective narration, I incorporated other modes and voices to add different insights and additional information to the story.

One subject area that I was particularly keen to expand upon was Child Criminal Exploitation, and as a practice exercise I had written some notes from the perspective of the character Theo. I used the same approach as I did for the construction of Jake and Minnie, imagining what might have occurred in Theo's childhood that would lead to him becoming head of a criminal gang at such a young age. I developed what I felt was a particularly strong storyline that did not seek to justify his actions, but explained a plausible cause and effect reality that predicted a trajectory that Jake could find himself on if he continues to engage in criminal behaviour.

Although Theo is only 25 years old, he is still an adult and is able to reflect more upon how his past experiences have shaped his behaviours in the story. He does not defend his actions, but Shannon's death unravels him and it forces him to relive the death of his cousin, Olivia, which fractured his family. Theo draws attention to the scar on his face, the result of a serious injury inflicted on him by his alcoholic father, and explains that from that moment, he sought to take over the family 'business', seeking to gain power, authority and control.

Although it is unusual to have such adult perspectives in YA fiction, I decided to incorporate Theo's chapters, framing them as his side of a police interview. His narrative explains the setup of deep-rooted organised crime in the fictional town of Waterfell, but the message of his story is how childhood trauma and negative influences can deeply impact young people as they enter adulthood. He tells the story

of his own childhood, specifically the moments that are interconnected with Minnie and Jake's narratives, such as how he too was criminally exploited as a teenager.

Theo's chapters are included in the novel as pieces of evidence, in order to provide some distance between him and the reader, because he is a deeply flawed character. While he saves Minnie from the Taylors and is seemingly co-operating with the police, he is a criminal who has exploited young people for personal gain. While there is room for empathy within his narrative, it would be unethical to position him alongside Minnie and Jake, or as a voice to relate to.

There are also short chapters from the perspectives of Ethan, Shannon and Alfie, which serve to tell different parts of the story that Jake and Minnie did not witness themselves. Even in their past-tense chapters, Jake and Minnie only report on their own narratives, and like Theo's police statements, they tell the reader that they have included other characters records to give weight to their story.

Cognitive Challenge

What I have covered so far, is my approach to creating a stream of consciousness construct, and then expanding consciousness further to incorporate a first-person, past-tense narrative voice, a fictional framing device for the moments of interiority, and the inclusion of other voices to aid readers' understanding.

While I was successful in developing a stream of consciousness I was relatively satisfied with, I felt it was necessary to employ the other narrative modes in order to create a more enjoyable and engaging reading experience for young adults. The techniques I employed offer a cognitive challenge to the reader, demanding attention, switching between familiar and unfamiliar scenarios, scripts and symbols to promote empathy and engagement.

The first cognitive challenge for the reader, arises from the Spectrotext records which frame the protagonists' interiority. I have previously discussed how the records are symbolic of social media and Dystopia, which supports the readers in engaging with the narrative mode. This in itself requires a cognitive process of identification, however, the moments of stream of consciousness also demand an understanding of potentially unfamiliar situations. At 16 years of age, Minnie and Jake lack insight into their own vulnerabilities and the dangers they experience. They know that drug dealing is wrong, and they react with appropriate fear responses, but for them, their need for money and a sense of belonging outweighs the risk. It is only when Shannon dies that both Jake and Minnie are confronted with the consequences of their involvement with drugs in a tangible way. In his review of the *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, John Mullen describes such characters as 'inadequate narrators' (2004). Mullen states this is a more appropriate term than 'unreliable narrator' (2004), when the narrator is not purposefully trying to hold things back from the reader or mislead them. Mullen uses the character of Christopher from the novel, as an example of an 'inadequate narrator', as Christopher tells the reader that he is incapable of lying because of his autism, but he cannot fully comprehend or explain all of the events around him. The reader must infer the rest from context and dialogue with other characters. I agree with Mullen's term as being more appropriate than the term 'unreliable', which I think can have deeply negative connotations in YA literature, particularly in storylines of abuse. I equally did not want readers to question Minnie and Jake's adequacy in narrating events, as I do not think this is a positive message for younger readers, going through the same period of brain development and identity formation.

The gaps that exist in their moments of interiority are filled with their own narrative voices, completing their own stories and adding details they could only reasonably be aware of after a period of reflection.

Our ability to create and understand stories is biological, and from the ideas encapsulated by Cognitive Narratology, it is apparent that all readers, including younger readers, are able to draw meaning from literature. It can, therefore, be assumed that adolescents could make sense of a story written entirely in stream of consciousness. However, whether they choose to engage with such a story remains to be seen, due to the lack of this technique in YA literature.

Lisa Cron states that in order to 'create a story that readers will care about, the narrative must follow an emotional cause-and-effect trajectory from the outset' (2012, p.148). Cron discusses the difficulty in clearly demonstrating cause and effect in a way that is appealing and engaging for readers, including the modernist, stream of consciousness novel, but attests that it can be achieved if authors adopt a narrative thread that gives meaning to everything (ibid., p.151).

There are various narrative threads in *Wrecked* that are interwoven to give meaning to the novel as a whole. I think that a combination of the various perspectives was necessary to provide the in-depth discussion required, given the complexity of the subjects covered. Had I continued with stream of consciousness alone, the perspective would have been limited to Jake and Minnie's interiority. While this offers a dual perspective, both characters are of the same age and their adolescent brains are still developing, affecting their decision-making and tendency for risk-taking behaviours. I do not think that I could have interrogated the subject of CCE fully through their interiority alone. Their reflections on their actions, however, provided an extra layer to the narrative, which requires further cognitive application by the reader.

In these moments, the protagonists offer commentary to the adolescent reader on the events that occur in the year 2020, telling a story that is not only concerned with the risks and dangers they faced, but how those experiences shaped their future. Nikolajeva states that such examples of temporality in YA literature which allow narrators to return to events in their past, is central to discussions of memory in literature and identity formation (2012, p.17). It may also help the reader to reflect on their own experiences, aiding them in the construction of their own identities through an immersive reading experience.

While stream of consciousness is just one way of presenting interiority in fiction, I believe that it can be beneficial in demonstrating a realistic interpretation of the mind, particularly when constructed through research across inter-disciplinary fields.

What Next?

Although creative writing research and practice provides a valuable framework through which to experiment with craft, the next logical step would be to test the style of writing with a young adult focus group.

This was not a step that I chose to incorporate within my research, as I was primarily concerned with an approach to technique, and I knew that this, alongside research across a range of fields, would take up much of my time.

I also felt that in employing a focus group of adolescents, I would be exposing them to a sociological subject area that is relatively unchartered in fiction. This raises a number of ethical considerations that would require certain controls and measures in testing the readability of the novel with an adolescent focus group, which would be a project within itself.

In terms of personal development, my research and experimentation has helped me to develop what I believe is a unique approach to crafting stream of consciousness for adolescents, which I will continue to use when writing fiction.

4. Conclusion

I started writing *Wrecked* in 2019, and the novel has received three complete drafts in the past four years. With each draft, I expanded my knowledge on how to present consciousness in fiction, and considered how it might appeal to an audience of young adults. I found this to be a deeply challenging journey, not least because of the lack of stream of consciousness and associated research in YA fiction. As an author experimenting with this form, I felt adrift, struggling to make links and validate my findings through the research available. I reference Maria Nikolajeva a lot in this exegesis, because her work was fundamental in helping me to bridge the connections between my work, and the theoretical frameworks that relate to consciousness in YA fiction, such as Cognitive Narratology. Her investigations of the narrative strategies used to evoke young readers' cognitive and emotional responses, helped me to understand what may and may not work in adolescent fiction.

Despite the challenges I experienced, I developed a stream of consciousness that represents the interiority of adolescent characters, taking into consideration brain development, specific sets of adversities that shape their actions and thought processes, and neuroscientific theory.

I started, like many authors do, with planning, ensuring that I knew my characters inside out, so that I could adopt their interiority when writing stream of consciousness.

What I obtained from this approach, was a technique that I could employ again when writing fiction, to develop a holistic approach to representing the inner experiences of a person moving through time and space. I also learnt the importance, particularly when writing for young readers, of balancing such moments of interiority

with context, which ensures that any sociological message is communicated clearly and that important elements of story are not neglected.

The multiple perspectives presented, along with the dual timeline, created a dialectic space in which the adversities, risks and dangers explored, could be discussed. As a recipient of the collection of accounts, the adolescent reader is immersed in the interiority of the characters. They are invited to engage with the story and make sense of the events themselves, guided by the narration of the protagonists. While this requires cognitive challenge on the part of the reader, such engagement fosters a level of empathy and understanding that not only supports their engagement in a story, but also aids the formation of their own identities and exploration of the self.

In this respect, the novel not only adds to the discussion of consciousness in YA fiction, but it also adds to the discussion of Cognitive Narratology, because of the various mind processes the novel encompasses.

I believe that there is a requirement for more research on how stream of consciousness can be adopted in YA fiction. Popular novels, such as Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking* (2008) demonstrate an acceptance of both the utilisation of interiority and discussion of consciousness in stories for younger readers. The critical responses I have referenced attest to the adolescent's ability to understand complex narratives and literary strategies, as long as readers are given opportunities to understand and engage with texts.

I have developed a novel that I hope provides enough cognitive challenge to support the reader's engagement with the sociological subject matter, whilst also providing an enjoyable reading experience. Employing stream of consciousness allows the reader to experience events through the eyes of the protagonists, providing

them with the opportunity to identify and empathise with their plight. This ensures that the sociological message is holistically communicated.

Wrecked and this accompanying exegesis demonstrate the potential for incorporating stream of consciousness into fiction for adolescents. It also demonstrates how stream of consciousness can provide insight into the fictional mind and how the fictional mind interacts with its story-world, as a representation of a person moving through space and time. Finally, it determines that there is potential for considering advancements in the scientific study of consciousness in the twenty-first century, connecting theories of the mind and literature, and ultimately providing a deeper understanding of human nature and conscious experience.

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