LOST OR AWARE?:

AN EXAMINATION OF READING TYPES

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....……..……1

2. IMMERSION VERSUS AWARENESS READING…..……5

3. TEXTUAL ADAPTTATION OF READING TYPES…....……..25

4. METACOGNITION IN THE CLASSROOM..…..……...……...46

WORKS CITED….…….……..…….....63

ABSTRACT

Reader response theorists focus on studying how and why readers read, and the effects of these practices on literacy. One aspect of reader response theory that has been largely ignored, however, is the fundamental conflict that exists between two different "types" of reading: reading for pleasure, or ludic reading, which I called "immersion reading," and reading with a critical detachment from the text, or "awareness reading." Theorists such as Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser tend to favor one "type" of reading or the other, not acknowledging the fact that both "types" exist and exert a pull on the reader. The conflict that results between the two "types" of reading, I argue, are enforced by educational practices aimed at funneling students towards one type of reading, depending on age and educational level. This educational trend is problematic for two reasons. First, because it limits the perceived appropriateness and thus the scope of literacy education in schools, and second because it actively discourages readers—especially reluctant readers—from seeing literacy as complex, multifaceted and engaging. I argue instead in support of a metacognitive approach to literacy, one that recognizes the conflicts readers encounter and addresses the potential difficulties and successes facing student readers.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the most fascinating and frustrating aspects of working in the English classroom is the monumental differences in how students experience texts. What makes one student engaged with a text while another remains indifferent? Why do some students find such joy in reading, while others struggle with and give up on reading? How can educators become better equipped to address the conflicts that so many readers experience? What, furthermore, is the source of such conflict, and can it be reconciled?

I first became interested in the conflicts that occur within readers during conversations with fellow English majors who blame their education for "ruining" their reading experience. They claim to no longer able to read a text "for fun," and instead become hyperaware of theoretical and more "academic" dimensions of reading. I found myself intrigued by these conversations—how could English majors have completed a degree in a topic that left them so fundamentally conflicted? Did this conflict present itself to other readers? How could such a conflict impact non-English majors, and especially students who struggle with reading? Perhaps most importantly, why was this conflict never addressed within the classroom?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I combined readings of reader response theorists and metafictional novels. Within my theoretical readings, I found that there is a fundamental difference—even a conflict—in how theorists approach reader response which echoes the conflict between reading for pleasure and reading with a critical awareness. Reader response theorists appear, in large part, to extol the virtues of one

"type" of reading over the other. Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, two of the theorists I focus on in Chapter One, address the nature of reading with critical awareness—in fact, their presumption that critical awareness as the only type of reading worthy of study is so deeply embedded within their theories that it is presented as fact. I argue, though, that this type of reading is only one option among many, equally worthy of study. The fact that scholars and educators value awareness reading over other types of reading demonstrates a deep-seated bias. In contrast to Fish and Iser, Louise Rosenblatt and Victor Nell make the case for reading for pleasure, or ludic reading. Reading for pleasure in neither elementary nor simple, according to Rosenblatt and Nell, and the study of ludic reading offers challenges to the assumption that critical reading is more scholarly, more academic, and more worthy of study than ludic reading. Within this theoretical framework, I place the reader, struggling with the conflict between the two schools of thought. In Chapter One, I establish the conflict that the individual reader feels when oscillating between the two theoretical camps and the influence of this conflict in an educational setting. The overarching question this chapter proposes is how to resolve this conflict, particularly within the classroom.

Chapter Two delves into two sets of metafictional texts that clearly illustrate not only the conflicts readers encounter, but also a fictional world where readers can directly grapple with these two types of reader identity. Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* series, as well as Jasper Fforde's *Thursday Next* books provide insight into the reading process, and how readers hope to both become fully immersed in texts but also critically separate from them. Within these novels, the characters—the readers—are quite literally immersed

within the texts they read, as they "read themselves into" stories. Additionally, though, these readers maintain a sense of critical distance, allowing them to evaluate and enact change upon the texts in which they are immersed. I argue that these texts provide scholars a way to address the conflict between the two types of reading, which I define as "immersion reading" and "awareness reading."

In Chapter Three, I make the case for a metacognitive approach to reading, especially within the college classroom. Unless instructors directly address the conflicts reader face, students will continue to be frustrated by their reading experiences, even students who make English their life study—much less students who struggle with reading. I argue that a metacognitive approach allows readers a way to talk about their reading processes, explore the limits of their reading experience, and examine new ways to approach texts. Additionally, this study of the conflicts within readers benefits instructors, who could become more effective in dealing with divergent reading styles and types, and help educators better understand not only their students but also their own approaches to teaching English. Furthermore, the attempts to become more transparent educators through such a metacognitive approach to reading allow for an examination of unconscious biases and stereotypes present within the educational system. By examining the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading, we begin to see how the educational process privileges one type of reading over another, becoming critical of students who do not follow the pattern of "successful" students. After recognizing this trend of cookie-cutter educational practices, my hope is that educators become resistant

to such practices, instead helping students to become more aware and resistant to such forces at work upon them.

Although I have addressed many of the questions I asked myself at the beginning of this project, I feel that I have only scratched the surface of an immensely interesting and largely disregarded aspect of literacy studies. In the end I raised more questions than I answered, but that is the goal of any work of critical examination. Once students and educators begin to understand the conflicts they both experience and reaffirm, perhaps reading will become at once a less frustrating and more engaging practice.

IMMERSION VERSUS AWARENESS READING

As the name implies, reader response theory is focused on different types of readers and the ways in which they read. It could be argued that all phenomenological literary theory is concerned with this topic, but the literature of reader response theory is most metacognitive of this question. How do people read? Why do some read and others do not? How can reading be both a shared, communal experience and an intensely personal, individual one? Such questions form the basis of phenomenological theory and are the source of endless speculation. Perhaps the reason for this fascination with the reading process stems from how useful the answers to these questions could be. Students and pedagogues both benefit from exploring reading; understanding the act of reading could enable teachers to understand how to help their students become better readers. Reluctant readers especially could benefit from instructors who anticipate which texts they would consider engaging and identify the source of their difficulties with reading. Using theory can help to some of the aspects of reading that are still not fully understood.

Theorists have developed categories or 'types' of readers in order to explain these questions and attempt to understand the reading process. Within this trend, reader response theorists such as Michael Riffaterre, Stanley Fish, Erwin Wolff, and Wolfgang Iser, among others, have proposed their various theories such as that of the superreader, the informed reader, the intended reader (Iser 30). These types of readers attempt to explain fundamental questions about the reading process. Some of these theories, like Fish's informed reader focus on how the reader must function in order to have the most

effective reading experience. Others focus on the author's conception of the reader, like in Wolff's theory of the intended reader. Iser takes another approach, focusing on the intended reader, or the fictional reader that is required by each text.

These categories, however, are incomplete because they fail to take into account the basic conflict that readers encounter while engaging with texts. This is the conflict between what the reader *wants* to do what the reader feels *should* be done—the conflict between the desire for immersion reading and the perceived need for awareness reading. This is the struggle in finding the motivation to read and with defining the ultimate goal of the reading experience. The two categories are, I argue, mutually exclusive, but also mutually desirable. Readers are drawn to texts by the prospect of the immersion reading experience. Otherwise, reading for pleasure—or, as Victor Nell calls it, ludic reading—would not exist (Nell 32). On the other hand, some readers feel the need—sometimes socially imposed—to justify their reading as productive, analytical, and intellectual, and therefore resist the concept of ludic reading.

The concept of complete immersion within a story has a long tradition. The rhetoric of reading supports this idea, as readers are commonly described as "falling into a book," being "transported by a story," becoming "lost in a book" (Holland 41). This rhetoric is so commonplace that is exists across cultures. "The English phrase 'to be carried away by a book' has equivalents in many languages. For example, in Dutch the phrase is 'om en een boek op te gaan'; in German, 'in einem Buch versunken zu sein'; and in French, 'etre pris par un livre.' " (Nell 50). Additionally, the language of transportation includes reading as travel, both in literary theory and in literature itself. In

Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, Matilda herself is described as traveling through literature. "She went on olden-day sailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling. She traveled all over the world while sitting in her little room in an English village" (qtd in Tatar 131).

Even the term used to describe "low-brow" literature as "escapist" literature implies immersion, a transportation from the real world to a place where one can be free of everyday worries. This connection between escapism and transportation in reading is also the source of some criticism of immersion reading. "It takes one's mind away from the problems and pressures of life…it switches one off from one's 'other life' and shuts one's mind to the tensions and worries of the day…one forgets everything…" (Nell 240). The idea of "switching one off" is often seen as a problematic form of thinking. As immersion reading has significant physiological effects on the reader's body, this sort of "switching off" of conscious awareness could leave the reader unprepared to deal with the real world problems they avoid through immersion reading. Additionally, Freud argued that the type of "escapism" or "magical thinking" that seems to be present in immersion reading is unhealthy in adults.

> Leaving behind 'the world of reality,' they [readers] operate in an 'as if' that permits wishes to come true, thoughts to materialize, and magic to happen. For Freud, as for Jean Piaget and others who have studied childhood development, that world of 'as if' is a constant wrongheaded faith in the power of words to transform reality—the belief that saying so will make it so. It is a belief that children must surmount as they mature, or else risk joining the class of what Freud termed 'neurotic and psychotic adults' (Tatar 140).

This acknowledgement of childhood as the appropriate place for indulgence in escapism equates this type of reading with childhood notions that should be outgrown at the appropriate time.

Louise Rosenblatt, however, argues that "this term *escape* has perhaps been used too often in an indiscriminately derogatory sense; there are useful and harmful forms of escape. Anything that offers refreshment and a lessening of tension may have its value in helping us to resume our practical lives with renewed vigor" (39). Therefore, this escapism can be more productive than detrimental, allowing for readers to "refresh" themselves rather than constantly be goaded into only pursuing reading that is socially sanctioned as "productive."

Along these lines, this trend of becoming lost in the world of fiction also has an established history in the realm of children's stories. Books like Michael Ende's The Neverending Story, Cornelia Funke's Inkheart trilogy, and C.S. Lewis' The Voyage of the Dawn Treader have protagonists that are magically drawn into the story through the act of reading or storytelling. This phenomenon should be of great interest for reader response theorists, as such books are the ultimate embodiment of reader response theory. The characters—the readers—are fundamental to the creation and experience of the text itself, which is the basis of this branch of theory.

Additionally, the idea of story as transportation also has a tradition in children's and young adult literature. Classic works like The Chronicles of Narnia focus on the concept of the protagonists being "transported" into another world, the world of the story. Countless others, especially in the science fiction genre, explore the idea of

"falling" into a story or traveling into the story's world, like Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Philip Pullman's The Golden Compass, and Norton Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth. Not only the act of reading, but the subject material itself supports the idea of immersion reading.

The concept of physically entering the world of the story does not only have roots in literature, however. Many classic Disney movies, such as Robin Hood and Sleeping Beauty, feature an open book in the first few scenes, with the words of the stories printed along with illustrations. As the story progresses, the viewer, or the "reader," is pulled into the illustrations of the book and is therefore transported into the book world for the rest of the movie. After these first scenes, the literal concept of existing in the book is abandoned until the end of the movie.

The predominance of the trend of "falling" into a story, though, leads to the question of why this seems to be a standard theme primarily in children's literature. Why are so many of these stories focused on an audience of children, containing youthful protagonists, when works like The Chronicles of Narnia also consistently appeal to adult readers? Maria Tatar argues in Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood that this type of transportation is only available to youthful readers, that there is some element that exists in the young reader that is somehow lost upon adulthood. Tartar states that "the way we read when we are young…that magical, direct connection to words and images diminishes over time" (Tatar 13). Tatar also proposes that one reason that children are so closely associated with immersion reading is because they are more likely to "obliterate the threshold between reality and fantasy as they enter other worlds"

(18). Not only is this type of reading found in childhood, but Tatar goes so far as to say that "the experience of childhood reading is irretrievable" (18). This line of argumentation is reasonable, as it conforms to common views about children and the development of imagination. Tatar's arguments hint at the basic conflict that exists between immersion reading and awareness reading; in any stage of life, one type of reading is valued over the other. What I would argue, however, is that this concept of value is a social construction. Age does not necessarily preclude a reader from being immersed in a text. Similarly, readers of any age are capable of being critically aware of their reading experience, although this awareness is, of course, limited by emotional and physical development.

Reading as experience—immersion reading—is the type of reading that is most advocated when trying to persuade children to read, as our stereotypes of child readers make us advocate the abandonment of the self to the story; it is often seen as a building block which can help lead young readers to other, supposedly more sophisticated types of reading (Nell 77).

Perhaps this perception can be explained through an examination of the rhetoric of immersion reading. Using terms of involuntary action to describe immersion reading, such as "falling into" a book, or being "transported by" a story, imply that there is a lack of control. Readers lack the agency to control their minds and their bodies in these situations—the book or story, in immersion reading, is the active agent. Lack of control is a trait associated with children or adolescents, a stage that young people are expected to leave behind on the journey to adulthood. Thus, children are *expected* to "fall into" a

book, and therefore "falling into" a story is viewed as an elementary process—"escapist"—in older readers. Despite the negative connotations attached to escapism in adult literature, however, the concept of "losing" one's self in a book has become so central to the reading experience that in the last fifty years it has become the subject of many metafictional texts, moving from the realm of children's and young adult literature to mainstream adult fiction as well.

Immersion reading also has close ties to reader response theory. Louise Rosenblatt speaks extensively about the importance of immersion reading, especially in the realm of academia. Rosenblatt continuously argues that the experience of the reader is the most important aspect of reading, and the interaction between text and reader is what forms the "imaginative experience" of the text, which is the basis for English Studies (25). While Rosenblatt recognizes the need for more than immersion reading alone, she does not underemphasize its importance, especially to the reader. In addition, immersion reading has become a source of interest for physiological and psychological literary theory. Victor Nell and Norman Holland have both researched and published in this area, demonstrating that immersion reading is a complex process; our brains are physically transformed by this kind of reading, which shows that immersion reading is misunderstood when it is applied only to children's literature, or denigrated as a simplistic act in adult readers.

In addition to immersion reading, what I label "awareness reading" comes with its own set of traditions and connotations. Awareness in the reading experience implies reflectivity, a conscious evaluation of the text. Often in English classes this type of

reaction is touted; it is not enough for the reader to "like" or "hate" a text. Instead, the effective student further evaluates *why* these reactions occurred, and *how* the text functioned to evoke such responses. The majority of literary theory is centered around the concept of awareness reading—after all, it is difficult to theorize about a text if the reader is not read a text with critical reflection. Rosenblatt writes about the importance of awareness reading, and the concept is implied in the works of Iser and Fish. It seems to be assumed that in higher education, students are always functioning in this state; awareness reading is essential to English courses. Maria Tatar argues that the transition from immersion reading to awareness reading is age-based when she states, "As we grow older, we begin to draw boundaries and develop the sense of critical detachment that makes it harder to inhabit a fictional world" (Tatar 22). However, perhaps this is not simply an internal process; if age were the primary reason to develop this critical distance from a text, then adults would be unable to experience immersion reading, which is clearly not the case. Rather, the motivation is external; as we age and move through our educational institutions, the *expectation* for critical distance and awareness is imposed upon us. Because of the value placed on critical reflection, it is seen as another building block in the reading process.

For many readers—and educators—this type of awareness and critical reflection is the natural evolution of the reading experience, and without such thought the reading experience is rendered flat and meaningless. Indeed, this sort of discourse is what transforms reading from a solitary to a social act, as "encounters with books leave memories so powerful that readers constantly seek outlets for preserving them and

sharing them with others" (Tatar 11). This motivation is perhaps the source where Stanley Fish's theory of interpretive communities. Fish argues that readers are shaped by the communities in which they participate in day-to-day social life, and this contact influences the way in which readers interpret and experience texts (Fish 2866). Fish's theory makes sense to an extent, as our communities do shape our lives, but this drive to bond with others over awareness reading pushes the boundaries of Fish's theory. The need to participate in a shared literary experience can also shape our communities. Readers come together through critical evaluation of texts in English classes, book groups, in line at the library or at the bookstore, while participating in online forums. In this manner, readers are exposed to a variety of interpretations and textual experiences, giving the act of reading more dimension and depth than Fish's theory of interpretive communities allows. The discussion about reading is "a means of getting outside the limited cultural group into which the individual is born" (Rosenblatt 192). Without this critical reflection, readers are constricted and confined to their own individual reading experience.

This type of evaluation also can lead the reader to a more complete understanding of the text. Louise Rosenblatt argues that "an undistorted vision of the work of art requires a consciousness of one's own preconceptions and prejudices concerning the situations presented in the work, in contrast to the basic attitudes toward life assumed in the text" (115). Awareness reading therefore implies not only reflection of the textual aspect of reading, but also reflection and criticality of the self. The reader gains a critical perspective of his or her own personality and ideology in addition to experiencing the

text. Furthermore, awareness reading can help readers to make sense of the text in relation to their own personal experiences. "In order to share the author's insight, the reader need not have had identical experiences, but he must have experienced some needs, emotions, concepts, some circumstances and relationships, from which he can construct the new situations, emotions, and understandings set forth in the literary works" (81). This type of reading allows for the reader to consciously make sense of experiences, and Rosenblatt argues that this type of meaning-making is where much of the value of the reading experience can be found. Without this type of awareness, Rosenblatt even views the reading of a text as an incomplete act, especially in the realm of education. "The young reader needs to learn how to suspend judgment, to be self-critical, to develop and revise his interpretation as he reads" (284-5). Here we find another essential difference between immersion reading and awareness reading. While immersion reading seems to happen spontaneously, awareness reading is a skill that must be taught. Awareness reading is therefore associated with higher learning, taking precedence over immersion reading, which is theoretically available to any reader.

Yet another important aspect of awareness reading is the sense of control that it gives the reader. Awareness reading not only gives the reader control over his or her reading experience, but over his or her construction of language and literacy. If immersion reading is peppered with rhetoric of involuntary action, then awareness reading provides the reader with a greater opportunity for personal agency—what to *do* with the reading experience. It is a basic tenet of written culture that "control over language conquers helplessness and vulnerability, leading to confidence and authority"

(Tatar 156). Perhaps this is another reason why awareness reading is so valued, especially in the context of education; while immersion reading is something that happens to a reader, awareness reading requires more action and agency on the part of the reader.

The problem comes from the very nature of each kind of reading. With immersion reading, the focus is completely on the world of the text, and the reader's immediate response to the text. The reader becomes literally lost in the text, often unaware of the physical environment, even losing touch with his or her own body (Holland 41). Entering into a trancelike state, the reader surrenders the sense of self and is located, for the duration of the reading experience, within the text itself (Nell 212). By definition, immersion reading excludes the possibility for critical awareness, as the reader does not have the distance from the text necessary to make a critical evaluation of either the text or of the reactions evoked by the text. In fact, critical reflection effectively ends the immersion experience. "Indeed, the moment evaluative demands intrude, as in the case of an absorbed reader suddenly told that he or she is to produce a critical review of the book, ludic reading, in obedience to a variety of mechanisms (Apter, 1979; Deci, 1976), at once becomes work reading: the response demand triggers a perceived effortfulness" (Nell 75). This is not to say that awareness reading is more or less important or desirable than immersion reading; without a critical perspective on texts the field of English would be rendered meaningless, and reading would become tantamount to an isolationist act. The conflict between the two states, however, is fundamentally important to understanding the reading experience.

In fact, the two types of reading are so diametrically opposed that I see shifting from one form of reading to another to be an identity shift within the reader. In immersion reading, the text entrances the reader to such an extent that the reader *is* the text; a shift to awareness reading necessarily strips the reader of that complete identification with the text, allowing the reader to regain autonomy. Often this reflective reader takes on the identity of academic, functioning as critic, establishing the distance between self and text that is necessary for criticality. Locating reader identity within—or at least as a product of—the text is not a new concept. There is something about the intimacy of the act of reading that works upon the very identity of the reader—perhaps it is the immediacy of the texts, and its emotional impact, as "the very real feeling of the fictional world makes it just as critical to the formation of identity as what is encountered in life" (Tatar 22). While it is undeniable that texts work upon readers, shaping their views and opinions, the result does not have to be overt or even noticeable in order to be present. "As they [readers] appropriate and internalize words, readers use those same words to construct their identities, changing them in ways so subtle that they often escape conscious attention" (Tatar 90). On the other hand, there are texts that show results in the most overt ways, changing the ideology in masses, such as Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriett Beecher Stowe. It is obvious that reader identity and textual experience are closely related; it follows, as well, that reader identity and reader interpretation are also closely related. Immersion reading and awareness reading, therefore, can be called two different types of reader identity.

Reader identification with texts is even more obvious within young adult readers, as "the adolescent reader…has probably not yet arrived at a consistent view of life or achieved a fully integrated personality" (Rosenblatt 31). Additionally, the highly personal and intimate nature of literature forces the reader to merge the text, and the reading experience, as fully as possible with the self. "New understanding is conveyed to them [the readers] dynamically and personally" (Rosenblatt 38). Furthermore, this intimate aspect of reading is particularly relevant to readers who are still in the formative stage, as "reading literature suddenly becomes a very personal act—perhaps even a type of therapeutic experience (i.e. bibliotherapy), as readers come to terms with developmental problems and challenges through vicarious experience of the trials and tribulations of teen protagonists" (Alsup forthcoming).

Educators should recognize that this is especially true in young adults "Teachers of adolescents, in high school or in college, know to what a heightened degree they share this personal approach to literature" (Rosenblatt 7). This personal identification with literature gains even more significance when viewed in relation to the relationship between immersion reading and awareness reading; the struggle between these two types of reading becomes much more intimate and difficult when literature is so personal. These two identities exist within all readers, though, regardless of age, as does the ongoing need to merge the two, which will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

Fish, Iser, and Rosenblatt hint at this underlying conflict in their analysis of reader types, but none directly acknowledges the depth or the importance of the opposition

between immersion reading and awareness reading. Fish's informed reader is described in a list of traits as

> someone who 1.) is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up. 2.) is in full possession of 'semantic knowledge that a mature…listener brings to this task of comprehension.' This includes the knowledge (that is, the experience, both as a producer and comprehender of lexical sets, collocation probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, etc. 3.) has *literary* competence (qtd in Iser, 31).

Fish clearly describes a reader who is critically aware and conscious of the analysis of meaning in the reading experience, but what does he mean by "literary competence"? This area is obviously neglected, leaving one to guess at the kind of competence Fish deems necessary. Is a reader with literary competence one who simply comprehends a text, or is literary competence more complex? Must one have an emotional attachment to the text? Is a part of literary competence relating texts to real-world experiences, or applying lessons learned from texts? Fish goes on to state that the informed reader "is sufficiently experienced as a reader to have internalize the properties of literary discourses, including everything from the most local of devices (figures of speech, etc.) to whole genres" (Fish 145). Again, the focus is almost exclusively on the reader as critically aware of the reading experience, who "must not only possess the necessary competence, but must also observe his own reactions during the process of actualization in order to control them" (Iser 31). Under Fish's definition, then, the informed reader is one who approaches a text with the goal of analysis in mind; the concept of the experience of reading is lost. The only reference to the reading event itself is in the context of analysis—the emotions evoked by the reading are to be controlled, not felt or experienced, or even examined.

This category of reader is unsatisfactory and lacking due to Fish's absorption with the awareness aspect of reading. He briefly acknowledges that there is some sort of conflict present within the reader—the need to control the emotional response evoked by the text points to the fact that there is tension within the reading experience, tension between the reaction of the reader and the desire for critical analysis. Fish fails to explore this conflict, though, denigrating the reaction of the reader and ignoring the possibility that the suppression of the reader's response could have consequences for the reader's critical analysis.

Wolfgang Iser's analysis of reader activity comes closer to identifying this fundamental conflict in readers, as in his discussion of the "wandering viewpoint" he makes the argument of immersion reading. Through the reading experience, Iser argues, "we are situated inside the literary text. The relation between text and reader is therefore quite different from that between object and observer…there is a moving viewpoint which travels along *inside* that which it has to apprehend. This mode of grasping an object is unique to literature" (Iser 109). Furthermore, Iser argues that while reading, "the reader is given no chance to detach himself, as he would have if the text were purely denotative" (Iser 109). Therefore, the reading event by nature encourages immersion reading; if apprehension were the sole purpose, texts would not engage the reader in such a close, intimate manner. Iser continues his discussion by supporting the concept of the reader engaging in another world, which is the ultimate goal of immersion reading. He states, "the synthesizing operations of the wandering viewpoint enable the text to pass

through the reader's mind as an ever-expanding network of connections…so that we have the impression that we are actually present in a real world" (Iser 116).

Although Iser does not clearly describe the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading as fundamental to understanding readers, he does acknowledge that there are two opposing sides to each reader that produce what he describes as a "tension." Iser resists totally supporting the concept of immersion reading, as he finds the idea that "I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full" (qtd in Iser, 37) as an incomplete experience. To support this one-sided view of reader response theory would be unproductive. "The sacrifice of the real reader's own beliefs would mean the loss of the while repertoire of historical norms and values, and this in turn would entail the loss of the tension which is a precondition for the processing and for the comprehension that follows it" (Iser 37). Iser goes on to state, "however, the suggestion that there are two selves is certainly tenable, for these are the role offered by the text and the real reader's own disposition, and as the one can never be fully taken over by the other, there arises between the two the tension we have described" (Iser 37). Here Iser establishes the concept of the reader having two "selves" and there being tension between the two parts. Additionally, Iser denies that immersion reading ever truly occurs, because the sublimation of the self precludes understanding of the text. This argument, however, disregards the true nature of immersion reading; the self is not anesthetized and packed away, but becomes completely submerged within the text. The reader is not a passive vessel for the text. Instead, the interaction between text and reader takes the primary role. Reactions to the text are not removed or disregarded; they are

more fully and deeply experienced without the self-conscious filtration. Rosenblatt describes such an experience, where the reader is "intent on the pattern of sensations, emotions, and concepts [the reading] evokes" (Rosenblatt 33)

Iser does address an important issue when he argues that "one can never be fully taken over by the other." With this phrase, Iser argues that the tension produced as a result of the conflict between the two selves comes from the struggle for dominance—from one type of reading conquering the other. I would argue, however, that the reader is struggling to mesh these two selves, and the tension comes from the inability to reconcile the two. If the reader were to desire a purely ludic reading experience, the selection of a text the reader finds pleasurable would be enough to have such an experience. Similarly, if the reader wished for a purely critical experience, picking up a selection of critical theory would have the desired effect. However, this tension is not resolved within the reading experience or through the simple selection of an appropriate text; therefore, would it not make more sense to consider that the tension comes from the desire on the part of the reader to merge the two selves, rather than merely valuing one over the other? Since the two selves, the two identities of the reader, cannot function at the same time, as the ludic reading experience is by definition separate and distinct from awareness reading, the reader's desire to merge the two is unachievable, and the tension is unresolved.

Louise Rosenblatt also hints at the conflict between the two types of reading, especially in Literature as Exploration. Rosenblatt speaks from the perspective of the teacher, addressing the role of reading in adolescent development. Within this work,

Rosenblatt observes the immersion reading phenomenon, arguing that, "Imaginative literature is indeed something 'burned through', lived through, by the reader. We do not learn *about* Lear, we share, we participate in, Lear's stormy introduction into wisdom. In *Huckleberry Finn*, we do not learn *about* conditions in the pre-Civil War South; we live in them, we see them through the eyes and personality of Huck" (Rosenblatt 277). Rosenblatt also recognizes that awareness reading must occur, as it is an essential part of the act of reading. In fact, Rosenblatt identifies the need for both immersion and awareness reading to an extent that even Iser does not. Rosenblatt argues that for a complete experience to occur, the reader must both experience immersion in the fictional world and be reflective and conscious of this experience. The two are inseparable, as the one ability enhances the other.

> The greater the reader's ability to respond to the stimulus of the word, and the greater his capacity to savor all that words can signify of rhythm, sound, and image, the more fully will he be emotionally and intellectually able to participate in the literary work as a whole. In return literature will help the reader to sharpen further his alertness to the sensuous quality of experience" (Rosenblatt 49).

Therefore, Rosenblatt establishes that both types of reading are necessary, as one builds upon the other, each complementing and more fully developing the appreciation of each reading type.

What Rosenblatt dismisses, however, is any tension or conflict between the two types of reading. The great strength of Rosenblatt's position is that she firmly establishes the *should* of the reading experience; readers *should* become immersed within their texts, and they also *should* be critically aware of their reading. What she fails to establish, though, is if this envisioning of the perfect reader is an achievable goal. Throughout her

arguments, Rosenblatt repeatedly proposes that the teacher is the great arbiter between the two types of reading. It is the instructor's responsibility, she states, to teach the student to reconcile these two competing influences, as "to do justice to the text…the young reader must be helped to handle his responses to it" (285). Without recognizing the basic conflict between the two types of reading, though, Rosenblatt leaves the teacher ill prepared to "handle" reader's responses. If there is no conflict between the two types of reading, then why does the response of the reader require handling at all?

Rosenblatt seems to imply that the teacher's role is to settle the issue—therefore also implying that there is some sort of conflict that needs arbitration. She states that "the instructor's job was to help them [the students] maintain that personal sense of the work and yet react to it in rational terms" (231), to make "the whole discussion…*felt* as well as thought" (237). What Rosenblatt really argues for here is the separation of reading into two separate stages. First, the work is felt, lived through, by immersion reading. Then Rosenblatt advocates that the first stage is described and explained through critical reflection. What this argument fails to do, though, is to bring the two types of *reading* together—the goal of the reading is what Rosenblatt neglects. In Literature as Exploration, Rosenblatt argues to discuss and critically analyze immersion reading, not to bring together the two types of reading within the experience itself.

Rosenblatt, Fish, Iser and others have all presented convincing, complex ideas about the ways readers read and the importance of studying the act of reading. However, their theories are limited in that they are incomplete; each theorists limits him or herself by prioritizing one element of reading over another, therefore circumscribing our

understanding of acts of literacy. I argue, instead, for a more holistic look at reading, which could potentially benefit the reader, but also enhance our educational efforts at increasing literacy.

TEXTUAL ADAPTATIONS OF READING TYPES

In Literature and the Brain, Norman Holland identifies the conflict present between the desire of the reader for the immersion reading experience and the perceived need to critically work upon the text—to be able to interact with characters, to engage in the adventure of the plot, and to change the storyline to "fix" the course of the book. Holland argues that along the course of the reading experience, though, "we lose track of self and world in responding to works of art because we know we will not try to change them" (48). Thus the very essence of the immersion experience, according to Holland, is located in the fact that readers believe themselves to be passive agents in the reading process. Readers constantly recreate this passivity because "we *know* we cannot possibly act to change what we are paying attention to" (Holland 40, emphasis added). In addition to the reader *knowing* the absolute impossibility of enacting change upon the text, though, Holland argues that as readers, "We inhibit impulses to do something to the aesthetic or literary object, and that inhibition changes what we *believe*" (48, emphasis added). Here Holland picks up on an important conflict which arises within the reading process—a perceived lack of control on the part of the reader. This lack of control is what produces the impulse that Holland cites, the impulse to try to enact some sort of change upon the text. I argue that this need for control over texts and over the reading experience is what creates the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading. Immersion reading creates the need to control texts and can only find an outlet in the ultimately unsatisfying act of awareness reading—attempts to control the story through analysis and

theory. Awareness reading, however useful, does not fulfill the urge to interact with texts, as "we feel real emotions towards fictional people and events" (Holland 40). Awareness reading lacks the tangible results of change that immersion reading demands—evidence that the story has been physically changed. What is important here is not the possibility or impossibility of interacting with the text, but the established fact that the desire exists within the reader, present in the conflict between the two reader identities.

This concern over the ability to control the reading experience can be quite clearly seen within the rhetoric of reading, in both the real world and the fictional realm. Jasper Fforde's *Thursday Next* series explores the concept of control through juxtaposition of immersion reading and critical response in a quite literal manner throughout the series, especially in the first two novels, *The Eyre Affair* and *Lost in a Good* Book. The protagonist of the novels, Thursday, is imbued with the special ability to enter into works of fiction, finding herself physically present within, among others, Jane Eyre, Sense and Sensibility, and "The Raven." Another series, Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* trilogy, explores the same themes of control—or lack thereof—and reading. Like Fforde's novels, *Inkheart*, *Inkspell*, and *Inkdeath* all focus on the protagonist Meggie, who, along with her father, Mo, has the ability to read people and things both into and out of texts, although this series focuses on the interaction between the real world and just one fictional text, also called *Inkheart*.

These texts are excellent examples of how the rhetoric of reader control in regards to literature perpetuates itself. Throughout the *Inkheart* texts, Meggie, Mo, and the other

protagonists are quite cognizant of the supposed power of words. When either Meggie or Mo reads out loud, their listeners are "enraptured," and the real world disappears into the story (*Inkheart* 175). As the series continues, emphasis on the power of words and the corresponding lack of control on the part of the reader continues to grow. In the final novel, the characters consistently lack personal agency when it comes to words, "caught up in…fine words like a fly in a spider's web" (*Inkdeath* 316). The classic phrase "lost in a book" (*Inkdeath* 4) is also echoed here, as is the fear of failing to return to the real world, when Meggie is told, "who knows whether you'll find your way out of the letters on the page again" (*Inkdeath* 147). The *Thursday* Next novels employ similar rhetoric when Thursday suggests that she lose herself in a book to escape from the real world (*Lost in a Good Book* 396). These phrases and others are familiar ways to describe the activity of reading and the world of books, but what is the message behind these catchphrases? The concept of being "lost" in a book, "entranced," "captured," "entwined" by a story all imply a lack of control, a lack of will, a struggle, and, ultimately, a surrender. The text itself is in control in this situation rather than the reader. Additionally, the rhetoric of immersion reading establishes a loss; to "lose one's self" in a text, the reader must relinquish the self, the very essence of the physical being. Furthermore, the concept of experiencing any sort of loss implies a lack of control over the process. The reader therefore does not will him or herself into the book, but is "lost" in a fundamental way—lost to the one's self—and the act of immersion reading then becomes an elemental struggle within the reader.

Perhaps this popular rhetoric reduces immersion reading to a childlike enterprise. To lose control over one's self is an idea that is foreign and unappealing to most adults. Even though adults readily acknowledged that children lack control over themselves, their emotions, and their reactions, adults also view such behavior as a stage that should be left behind as soon as possible. Even if it is only a simulation of loss—a controlled loss, perhaps—the idea of surrendering control must be anxiety-producing. Both Fforde and Funke seem to recognize that the loss of control over the reading process has different results for children and adults. The entire *Inkheart* series traces this journey, beginning with a sense of childlike wonder over the power of words but quickly transitioning into a very adult sense of anxiety over the lack of control that a reader experiences.

Within Funke's first novel, Meggie and Mo both share a devout love of books, words and stories. They live in constant contact with the world of fiction. "There were books in the kitchen and books in the lavatory. Books on the TV set and in the closet, small piles of books, tall piles of books, books thick and thin, books old and new" (*Inkheart* 4). This passion for books also provides the two with a livelihood, as Mo is a bookbinder and Meggie his assistant. A more intimate relationship with books, is also related, as they often whisper to Meggie through their covers, a process which "only works for children" (*Inkheart* 2). Both Meggie and Mo often describe their desire for the immersion reading experience. Even Meggie's great-aunt Elinor states, "To think of all the times I've wished I could slip right into one of my favorite books" (*Inkheart* 148). The conflict within this novel which is carried throughout the series with increasing

intensity, though, it established in Elinor's next words: "But that's the advantage of reading—you can shut the book whenever you want" (*Inkheart* 148). Elinor's shutting of the book signifies her desire to control the reading process; although Elinor readily admits that she desires complete immersion, she also perceives a risk in such an activity. By retreating into safety by closing a book, Elinor re-establishes the proper distance between herself and the story, once again gaining control over and autonomy from the reading experience.

Funke takes this conflict to the extreme when Meggie and Mo discover that they are able to read people into and out of stories, but have a difficult time controlling this skill. Mo states that "it never seemed to happen when [he] wanted it" (*Inkheart* 150), and ends up reading Meggie's mother into *Inkheart*, trapping her within the story for ten years. His efforts to read her out again are fruitless, as he has no control over his reading experience. "I read the whole damn book until I was hoarse and the sun was rising, but nothing came out of it except for a bat and a silken cloak…I tried again and again during the days and nights that followed, until my eyes were burning and the words danced drunkenly on the page" (*Inkheart* 143). This lack of control over reading and, moreover, the lack of control the reader has over the effect of words is the primary theme of the trilogy. Throughout the first novel, Meggie and Mo learn to master their ability to bring texts to life, but the characters brought to life inflict fear, suffering, and death in the real world. At the end of the novel, however, the positive effect of words is still touted, as Meggie's reading ability allows for the villains to be defeated by re-writing their story.

The next two books, however, emphasize the danger that stems from the uncontrollable nature of the written word. The second and third books take place one year from the time of *Inkheart*, when Meggie turns thirteen. The two texts constantly describe Meggie as being more grown-up, and she faces adult issues like the death of a parent and first love. The emotional growth that Meggie experiences during the course of this year echoes in the plot arc. One of the many villains of the piece, Orpheus, voices his discontent about the Inkworld created in the first *Inkheart* book. "But that was the trouble with this world—at heart, it was childish. Why had he loved the book so much when he was a child? Well, for that very reason! But now he was grown-up, and it was time this world grew up, too" (*Inkdeath* 645). This marks a departure from the "childlike" wonder and fundamental comfort in books and stories that was the persistent theme of *Inkheart*. Characters in the next two novels regard books and words with increasing suspicion and distrust, stemming mostly from the lack of control experienced by readers. It is as if Meggie has leapt from childhood to adulthood from the age of twelve to thirteen, and therefore regards this lack of control over reading with anxiety and suspicion. This attitude is also present within the other characters, marking a decided transition in ideology from Funke's first book to her second. Far from celebrating the written word, Mo is equally distrustful of books, stating that he would "like to put a padlock on all the books in this world" (*Inkspell* 78). This sentiment is antithetical to Mo's character as presented in *Inkheart*, but consistent with the emphasis put on the need for control over the written word in *Inkspell* and *Inkdeath*. Within both of these texts, Meggie and her family enter into the world of *Inkheart*, trying to work upon the text to

right wrongs and save good characters in this fictional world. Soon, though, it becomes obvious that the Inkworld is dangerous and cruel, and Meggie and Mo's attempts to read different events into the book create only more suffering and hearbreak. The author of the fictitious *Inkheart* accompanies Meggie and her family, and even the author decides "the time for living words was over. They were deceitful, murderous, bloodsucking monsters, black as ink and bringing nothing but misfortune" (*Inkdeath* 47). Words themselves are cast as the villains, bringing forth misery, and the need to control acts of creation—both reading and writing—is apparent.

Where does this sentiment spring from within the texts? One answer could be the established shift in "childish" thinking—reveling in a lack of control without consideration for consequences. Another possibility can be found in one of Mo's conversations with Meggie, when he feels that Meggie thinks too much about the world of literature. He tells her to "take your head out of those books, or soon you won't know the difference between reality and your imagination" (*Inkspell* 38). Perhaps the concept of surrendering to a story seems dangerous because it pushes the limits of the rational and reasonable. Another possibility could be found in the guilt so many adults feel about the idea of spending so time engaged in ludic reading, which is supposedly unproductive or antisocial behavior (Nell 32). Again, the negative rhetoric of reading points to such guilt as a possible answer. A conflict exists between what adults claim to think about reading compared to the rhetoric often employed to describe ludic readers—especially youthful ones (Tatar 23).

Jasper Fforde's texts deal with some of the same issues control, immersion reading, and critical awareness, but through very different methods. Throughout the first two novels of the series, *The Eyre Affair* and *Lost in a Good Book*, Fforde's main concern is the concept of entering into a novel, and then on the mastering of this ability. Fforde's characters explain the ability to cross into fiction in a variety of ways, but perhaps the most vivid is the concept of the permeability of the separation of the real world from the fictional one. "The barriers between reality and fiction are softer than we think; a bit like a frozen lake. Hundreds of people can walk across it, but then one evening a thin spot develops and someone falls through; the hole is frozen over by the following morning" (*The Eyre Affair,* 206). This concept of a flexible barrier between reality and fiction becomes more intriguing when Thursday observes that age has an impact on how elastic that barrier can become. Thursday describes her first entrance into Jane Eyre when she was young, where she met Mr. Rochester. "We first encountered each other at Haworth House in Yorkshire when my mind was young and the barrier between reality and make-believe had not yet hardened into the shell that cocoons us in adult life. The barrier was soft, pliable, and, for a moment, thanks to the kindness of a stranger and the power of a good storytelling voice, I made the short journey—and returned" (*The Eyre Affair,* 63). Perhaps most intriguing about this statement is the reinforcement of the popular concept of youth being the most likely demographic to "fall into" or become "lost" in a book. Although Fforde's work follows the adult Thursday as she continues to travel through novels, the story takes as fact the theory that young people are more susceptible to the joys of reading and more likely to experience immersion reading. While Thursday

continues to learn how to control her ability to enter into fiction, she often reminded by other characters that her age is an impediment—that she should have learned to read herself into books years ago, while her mind was more open to traveling through the barrier. This concept is persistent throughout the novels, but is never more fully explained, leaving the reader to call on other sources of knowledge—for example, C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* books, in which children are transported to a magical land only until they become too grown-up for such fantasies. There is an echo here of the disillusionment present throughout the *Inkheart* series—that aging somehow decreases the magical potency of the written word.

Another of Fforde's tactics in developing the concept of book travel is to dispute the notion conveyed by the rhetoric of immersion. During her first venture into *Jane Eyre*, Thursday was involuntarily transported into the book by another—an adult had to assist her in becoming "lost" (*The Eyre Affair* 66). This process echoes the commonly held notion of immersion reading; the reader becomes "lost" or "loses one's self" in the text. Such an idea creates the impression of helplessness, of being sucked into a text against one's will. The very method of immersion reading employed by Fforde's characters, however, refutes this concept of immersion reading as a passive, involuntary act. In fact, becoming "lost" in a book for Thursday is a difficult task, and Fforde demonstrates this willful and purposeful aspect of immersion reading with his use of the term "jumping" to describe how characters move from the real world into the fictional one. Victor Nell further supports this concept when arguing that ludic reading, although perceived as less difficult than critical reading, actually requires more brain activity (Nell

75). The brain's activity is heightened, but because the act is so pleasurable, the reader is fooled into thinking that the reading activity is effortless. The fact that increased brain activity is required to immerse one's self in a text seems to refute the notion that immersion reading should be equated with youth and inexperience, instead proving it to be a taxing and mentally dynamic activity.

In Thursday's experience, complete physical immersion in the text is created by the skillful reading of a passage. Even the words of the most skilled book-jumper Thursday meets, Mrs. Nakajima, imply that focused intent and purposefulness is required for immersion reading. When Thursday asks how Mrs. Nakajima can jump into the world of fiction, she replies, "I just *can*…I think hard, speak the lines, and well, here I am" (*The Eyre Affair* 326). The simplicity of this description does not imply ease. Mrs. Nakajima must still "think hard" in order to "speak the lines" that bring her into the world of fiction; this is not the description of a loss of control. Mrs. Nakajima gives a further description of her first encounter with immersion reading:

> I first learned of my strange bookjumping skills as a little girl in the English school where my father taught in Osaka. I had been instructed to stand up and read to the class a passage from *Winnie-the-Pooh*. I began with Chapter Nine—'It rained and it rained and it rained…'—but then had to stop abruptly as I felt the hundred-acre wood move rapidly in all around me. I snapped the book shut and returned, damp and bewildered, to my classroom. Later on I visited the hundred-acre wood from the safety of my own bedroom and enjoyed wonderful adventures there (*Lost in a Good Book* 168).

In this description the reader was not simply acted upon. Although the intent might not have been to become immersed in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, it was not a passive act. The fact that Mrs. Nakajima was able to "stop abruptly" and return to the classroom demonstrates

the amount of control she had over her immersion. Thursday describes the act of immersion reading as even more willful and determined. "I relaxed, took a deep breath, cleared my throat and read in a clear, strong and confident voice, expressive and expansive. I added pauses and inflections and raised the tone of my voice where the text required it. I read like I had never read before" (*Lost in a Good Book* 173). Thursday's determination and conscious effort allow her to jump into the text she is reading, completing the immersion process.

Fforde most clearly demonstrates an understanding of the reader's desire to work upon the text when Thursday travels through novels herself. In *The Eyre Affair,* Fforde has constructed a world with an alternative history to our own; among other startling differences, *Jane Eyre* ends with Jane joining St. John Rivers in his missionary work in Africa instead of being reunited with Mr. Rochester. Although this is one example of a work that has been enshrined within Fforde's fictional universe, readers also express dissatisfaction with the ending of the novel. "The rather flawed climax of the book was a cause of considerable bitterness within the Bronte circles. It was generally agreed that if Jane had returned to Thornfield Hall and married Rochester, the book might have been a lot better than it was" (*The Eyre Affair* 36). This dissatisfaction with the novel provides a basis for literary analysis, stemming from the fact that the readers *want* Jane and Rochester to be happy; immersion reading has made the story into an emotionally real experience. Fforde's characters engage in critical analysis in order to explain their response to *Jane Eyre*'s ending through postulating Bronte's motivations. Thursday argues that

> The ending does sound a bit of an anticlimax. We try to make art perfect because we never manage it in real life and here is Charlotte Bronte concluding her novel—presumably something which has a sense of autobiographical wishful thinking about it—in a manner that reflects her own disappointed love life. If I had been Charlotte I would have made certain that Rochester and Jane were reunited—married if possible" (*The Eyre Affair* 272).

Additionally, and far more pragmatically, another character suggests how the disappointing ending could have developed. "It's just that the book cries out for a strong resolution, to tie up the narrative and finish the tale. I get the feeling from what she wrote that she just kinda pooped out" (*The Eyre Affair* 65). In the real world of literary analysis, this is where the reader is stuck—with suppositions, guesses, and explanations supported by textual analysis and theoretical approaches which ultimately prove insufficient, thus prompting the reader to engage in further analysis. In *The Eyre Affair,* however, the reader, in the form of Thursday, is able to move beyond theoretical analysis and enact actual, physical, satisfactory change upon the text. After jumping into *Jane Eyre*, Thursday decides to rewrite the climax of the novel, acting within the text itself. "I met Rochester in the dining room and told him the news; how I had found [Jane] at the Riverses' house, gone to her window and barked: 'Jane, Jane, Jane!' in a hoarse whisper the way that Rochester did. It wasn't a good impersonation but it did the trick. I saw Jane start to fluster and pack almost immediately" (*The Eyre Affair* 347). This action taken by Thursday obviously weds the two conflicting reader identities; Thursday is fully immersed in the text, but has also retained her critical awareness. She functions as both reader *and* writer in a way that is impossible outside of the fictional world. The fact that she is able to enter the book and enact change from within the storyline itself

demonstrates each reader's secret desire—to participate in the book while simultaneously controlling the text. The reader believes that they would be told, as Thursday was, "Your intervention *improved* the narrative" (*The Eyre Affair* 190). This is perhaps where the motivation to participate in fanfiction can be located; the reader wishing to function both as reader and as author during the reading experience. Additionally, this could be the source of Holland's inhibited "impulse to do something to the aesthetic or literary object" (Holland 48). Perhaps it is not so much the fact that the reader knows that he or she is *unable* to enact change upon the text, but the idea that enacting such a change would move the reader into the role of author, thus effectively ending the reading process. The struggle between the two reading identities might be frustrating and ultimately unable to be resolved, but at least the reader is still firmly located within the reading experience, rather than removed from it altogether.

An important element within both the *Inkheart* series and the *Thursday Next* books is the concept of reader identity. Both Funke and Fforde develop this concept by questioning the identity of fictional characters. The authors try to imagine what characters within their texts would be like if they existed outside of the narrative; if "the story is like the lid on a pan: It always stays the same, but underneath there's a whole world that goes on—developing and changing like our own world" (*Inkheart* 147). Again, the two authors envision their characters in very different ways.

In Fforde's books, the characters are consciously tied by the narrative, but also quite aware of this limitation—their tie to the story functions almost like a job. The character must be in the right place when the story is being read, but is otherwise not tied

to his or her character role, like an actor. In fact, some of Fforde's characters depart dramatically from their traditional roles in literature. When Mrs. Havisham is not required to be in her narrative, she dons tennis shoes, a leather jacket, and enjoys tinkering with car parts (*Lost in a Good Book* 205). Although the characters are allowed to have their own lives outside of their textual obligations, altering the text, changing the plot, or removing characters from texts is strictly prohibited. In fact, Fforde expresses the need for control within the reading process by establishing a policing force within the fictional realm. "Jurisfiction," as it is called, consists of characters from classic novels that are responsible for making sure that narratives run smoothly and according to plan (*Lost in a Good Book* 180). This concept of controlling characters and narratives is an interesting and amusing compromise mediating the conflict between the reader's immersion reading experience and critical awareness. In this example, Thursday is allowed to be immersed within a book as a Jurisfiction agent. She has control over the text, is engaged in critical awareness, but is also fully and physically immersed within the story. Fforde's playful resolution of this conflict allows the reader to understand the conflict and establishes a fictional model with which the reader can engage.

Funke, on the other hand, envisions her characters in a more traditional way. Throughout the *Inkheart* trilogy, it is quite clear that the characters of the Inkworld are unaware of their status as characters. Instead, their actions within the story seem to be essentially tied to their characters. The only characters who are aware of the fact that the Inkworld is a work of fiction are those who are from the real world; Meggie and her family, for example, and Fenoglio, the author of *Inkheart*. These characters are the ones

who ponder the metafictional elements of the story. One consistent question is whether many authors are constantly collaborating and re-writing the story, or if the story has gained independence from an author and is "telling itself" (*Inkdeath* 567).

This discussion of character identity inevitably leads to questions about reader identity, especially when the reader is functioning as a character within the story being read. Perhaps the most important question here is how immersion reading works on the concept of identity. Throughout both sets of texts, the fictional readers—Meggie, Mo, and Thursday—enact tangible and obvious change upon the works they enter into. Thursday alters the ending of *Jane Eyre*, and Meggie and Mo both create huge changes within the book *Inkheart*. Meggie saves her friend, Dustfinger, who is one of the main characters, from being killed at the end of the book. Also, Mo kills the villain Capricorn, allowing the story to continue in new and unexpected ways. Additionally, the very entrance of Thursday, Meggie, and Mo into their respective texts alters the course of the storylines, as new characters have been created.

However, what is even more interesting is the *interaction* that these readers have with the texts, as change is enacted not only on the text but also upon the reader. Fforde's texts deal with this influence upon the reader in subtle ways. When Thursday stays for an extended time with Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, the setting seems to impact her speech patterns. Thursday is a wisecracking smart-aleck in her real world, but picks up the expressions and syntax of Rochester when describing her estranged love. Instead of saying that she is angry, she states, "there is much bad air between us. He accused my brother of a crime I thought unfair to lay upon the shoulders of a dead man…I find it hard

to forgive" and, later, expresses her unhappiness by saying, "Alas!...He is to marry" (*The Eyre Affair* 333). This effect is repeated when Jack Schitt, who has been trapped within Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," is released and tries to have a normal conversation, but is foiled by his speech. "Do you have any idea of the fantastic terrors I've just been through? Tapping—I mean *trapping*—me in 'The Raven' is something Next is *not* going to live to regret…the bookslut *will* surcease my sorrow!" (*Lost in a Good Book* 339). One explanation for this behavior is offered within the text, when Thursday is told that these stories "have a way of *weaving* you into the story, and before you know it you're stuck there" (*Lost in a Good Book* 183). This is a clever way of describing the reading process—once the reader is no longer immersed in the text, parts of it can still be located within the reader. Fforde offers yet another example of this kind of reading residue metaphor when Thursday takes her copy of *Robinson Crusoe* for bedtime reading and is transported to the desert island in her sleep—and the reader is unsure if this is a dream, an actual example of Thursday being transported into the text, or a hybrid of the two. When Thursday awakens, she finds remnants of her textual immersion/dream. "Lying on the carpet was an old coconut husk—and better than that, there was still some sand stuck to my feet" (*Lost in a Good Book* 154). Here Fforde make skillful use of this scene to demonstrate how elements of novels stay with the reader, become almost tangible, physical evidence of the influence of books and stories. Thursday's coconut shell and sand become her link to *Robinson Crusoe*, proving the depth of her reading experience. Likewise, when readers become immersed in their reading, residue from what is absorbed

from the book remains with the reader, to the extent of influencing personality development and reader identity.

The *Inkheart* books explore this concept of reader identity to an even greater extent than Fforde's works. The concept of "belonging" to a particular story is questioned, especially when Meggie and her family read themselves into the *Inkheart* text. Meggie, Mo and Fenoglio all question the wisdom of allowing the fictional *Inkheart* to be changed by acting upon the storyline, but taking a part in the story eventually becomes unavoidable. The question remains, though, as to what right the reader has to change the story. When Mo states "Perhaps all of us belong in more than one story," it becomes apparent that this is yet another source of conflict present in the reading process (*Inkdeath* 253). Through being immersed in a text, the reader no longer feels alienated from the text; instead, the reader "belongs" to the story as much as the other characters—or even more so. The fact that readers leave their marks on texts, and texts on readers, shows how important the reader-text interaction is during the reading process, supporting the reader-centered theories of Louise Rosenblatt. Mo tells Meggie when someone reads a book,

> The book begins collecting your memories. And forever after you only have to open that book to be back where you first read it. It will all come to your mind with the very first words: the sights you saw in that place, what it smelled like, the ice cream you ate while you were reading it…yes, books are like flypaper—memories cling to the printed page better than anything else (*Inkheart* 15).

Here the text is indelibly associated with the reader; the reading experience becomes linked to other experiences through the medium of the text. Funke takes this aspect of reader-text interaction even further, arguing that "a book always keeps

something of its owners between its pages" (*Inkspell* 550). Explained in this manner the reader's interaction with the text becomes a dynamic relationship, not a one-way experience. Perhaps this is the aspect of immersion reading that critical awareness attempts to analyze or explain. The reader leaves something of the self in the text, and the text works upon the identity of the reader—this creates a transaction between text and reader, similar to Iser's theory in "Interaction Between Text and Reader," but also existing as a modification to this theory, as the text and the reader are *both* worked upon. Funke gives an explanation of how this works:

> Isn't it odd how much fatter a book gets when you've read it several times?...As if something were left between the pages every time you read it. Feelings, thoughts, sounds, smells…and then, when you look at the book again many years later, you find yourself there, too, a slightly younger self, slightly different, as if the book had preserved you like a pressed flower…both strange and familiar (*Inkspell* 47).

In this passage, Funk clearly demonstrates the text working upon the reader. The "younger, slightly different" self is the reader who existed prior to an engagement with the text, but no longer exists once the reading experience is ended—except within the pages of the text, where the old self was left behind in the creation of a new one. Although all texts might not impact readers to the extent of creating entirely new personas or drastically influencing identity, the reader always emerges from the text changed in some way. This influence on identity is yet another aspect of immersion reading that critical awareness reading attempts to explain—in reader response theory, critics attempt to explain how this interaction works. Each type of theory or analysis of textual experience seems to be based in the fact that texts influence reader identity, for better or for worse.

Funke also explores the concept of reader identity in a more concrete way, however. The character of Mo is established as the most extreme example of the reader interacting within the text, as throughout *Inkspell* and *Inkdeath*, Mo gradually becomes so consumed by the role he plays within the texts that he loses a hold on his own identity. In the first novel, *Inkheart*, Mo is constantly portrayed as a gentle, loving man whose passion for books is only trumped by his love for his family. The climax of the story comes when Mo defeats the villain Capricorn by reading his death aloud, making it reality. Mo struggles with this act, and his conscience is only mollified once Capricorn tries to execute Meggie. Throughout the second and third books in the trilogy, however, Mo's identity rapidly changes through his interaction in the story of *Inkheart*. The reader is overtly informed that Mo's identity is being questioned by Meggie, Mo's wife Resa, and by Mo himself. Such change is described quite vividly, through Resa thinking that "The letters were drawing him deeper and deeper down, like a whirlpool made of ink" (*Inkdeath* 143). This description echoes the rhetoric of immersion reading as a loss of control, a thing to be feared, as it subsumes Mo's identity until he becomes unfamiliar even to himself. Mo describes his own interaction with the story in similar terms. "But he wasn't choosing his own way through this story, that much was certain. It had even given him a new name—the Bluejay. Sometimes he felt as if the name were really his. As if he had been carrying it around in him like a seed that only now had begun to grow in this world of words" (*Inkspell* 420). The story "draws" Mo deeper in, "gives" him a new name, and eventually takes Mo over so much that he comes to believe that he has always belonged to the world of *Inkheart*—but this change happens against his will, and

becomes a source of anxiety and concern for the characters of Meggie and Resa (*Inkdeath* 147). This process clearly demonstrates the tension present in the adult world of immersion reading. Immersion might be acceptable for children, but in adults it can become problematic. Awareness reading is what takes over instead, allowing for a distance between the self that the text.

This conflict between the desire of immersion reading and perceived risk to the reader's identity comes from problematic thinking on the concept of identity as a whole. Once adults have passed through the stage of adolescence, we believe that their identities are established, that one can know the essence of the self. Identity might be able to be modified or slightly altered, but the idea is so firm that we speak of people having an "identity crisis" if this concept of the self becomes in any way problematic or destabilized. The anxiety evident in the *Inkheart* trilogy and in the *Thursday Next* series stems from this attachment to the idea of identity as static and relatively inflexible; if interactions with texts disrupt this notion, then we must develop a different understanding of identity. This concept of knowing one's self is so ingrained in us that it is understandable that questioning that concept becomes a source of anxiety and fear.

If this notion is troubling for adults, though, it is doubly so for adolescents. Young adults are caught in the middle in the conflict between immersion reading and critical awareness. Because of their age, adolescents are still encouraged overtly to engage in immersion reading. During this stage in their schooling, however, young adults meet constantly increasing demands that they engage in critical awareness in texts—it has become no longer acceptable for students to like or dislike a text, and

students must instead engage in awareness reading, taking an enforced step back from the world of the text. In regards to the concept of identity, establishing a meaningful relationship with a text becomes even more complex, as the common notion of adolescent identity focuses on its flexibility and lack of concrete, established understanding of the self.

METAGOCNITION IN THE CLASSROOM

Recognizing and understanding the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading is useful for the individual reader, but is perhaps even more useful in the classroom environment for both students and instructors. The benefits of examining each type of reading and the conflict between the two are extensive. Any concept that allows for a greater understanding of learning—especially in the realm of literacy—helps instructors through allowing them to have a better understanding of their students through recognizing the diverse and complex ways in which students encounter texts. This enhanced understanding, in turn, enables instructors to have more success in the classroom as they are better able to craft lessons and units that will interest and motivate students in areas of both reading and writing. For example, instructors will be better able to choose reading material and subjects that appeal to students if they better understand the approaches students use in their reading. Additionally, being able to study the reading process can help students to better understand their own reading experiences. The study of the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading could also provide a method for unsuccessful or disengaged readers to find an avenue into reading, helping to explain the lack of interest many students experience. Furthermore, expanding the understanding of ideas about what qualifies as valid knowledge, studying reading attitudes and experiences, disrupting the notion of a static reader identity, and breaking down negative reading rhetoric are all benefits that could come from studying the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading in the classroom.

I argue that texts like the *Inkheart* trilogy and the *Thursday Next* books are valuable to study in the English classroom—especially in the college classroom—because they allow students and instructors a clear and direct way to address these questions that are usually more subtly embedded in conversations about reading. By illustrating in a concrete and tangible way the types of interaction experienced between reader and texts, students can gain a greater understanding of the often elusive and complex theoretical explanations of reader response theory. In addition, these texts prompt readers to examine their own reading experiences in contrast to those of the characters'. Examining both the similarities and the differences within the reading process could help to shed light on potential problem areas and help bring students a greater understanding of the reading experience.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi identifies a reading phenomenon similar to the immersion element of reading as a "flow" experience, a term which can be applied to any area of life where the optimum level of engagement occurs, to the point where the self becomes submerged within the activity itself. According to Csikszentmihalyi, when engaged in an aesthetic flow experience, subjects "are completely involved in something to the point of losing track of time and of being unaware of fatigue and of everything else but the activity itself" (Augustine and Zoss 75). Although Csikszentmihalyi does not necessarily apply this concept specifically to the realm of teaching, English Education instructors Augustine and Zoss have adapted the concept of "flow" for the classroom. The term Augustine and Zoss created is "aesthetic flow," which implies an interactive, dynamic relationship between the subject—the student—and the aesthetic work—the

text. Aesthetic flow becomes more about the relationship between rather than participating in an activity, "exploring a relationship between the subject and the object in which each is acting on the other (e.g., The book and I are in a meaning-making relationship)" (Augustine and Zoss 77). The definition of aesthetic flow is quite similar to that of immersion reading, and Augustine and Zoss recognize the value of incorporating such experiences in the English classroom, arguing that aesthetic flow benefits both students and instructors. The study performed by Augustine and Zoss focuses on preservice secondary educators, but I would argue that their analysis of aesthetic flow applies equally to post-secondary instructors, if not more so. Augustine and Zoss argue that "recognizing aesthetic flow experience in the classroom sets the stage for those preservice teachers to experience enriched notions of what counts as learning and knowledge…these richer notions of knowledge and learning can point to ways of appreciating the diverse settings, activities, and experiences that secondary students bring with them to school" (72). The importance of aesthetic flow—or immersion reading—in the classroom is important here as it "sets the stage" for further knowledge building. Therefore immersion reading becomes an essential part of English education rather than merely a juvenile process leading to more highly valued, sophisticated reading and learning. This often ignored or overlooked aspect of education actually functions to "enrich" teacher's interpretation and understanding of reading, allowing instructors to look beyond the traditional value system that ranks different types of reading, enabling them to better understand not only the learning event experienced by students, but also to better understand students themselves. Such knowledge allows instructors to become

more confident with their teaching methods as they become potentially better equipped to address differing learning styles and student needs.

Compared to Augustine and Zoss, my focus on immersion reading diverges in one essential way. Augustine and Zoss state that *recognizing* aesthetic flow experience is important, whereas I would argue that *studying* aesthetic flow or immersion reading is the key to classroom experience, both for instructors and students. Merely doing lip service to the importance of immersion reading merely reinforces the concept that reading should be engaging, interesting, and essential to education without addressing the *why*—the common notion that immersion reading is "natural," "passive," or "elementary" is only perpetuated when instructors treat immersion reading as important to recognize but not complex or sophisticated enough to study and attempt to understand. Instead, I argue that immersion reading is "something that [instructors should see] as integral to understanding what makes school experiences meaningful" (Augustine and Zoss 78). One of immersion reading's many strengths is the depth of the connection between the text and the reader, allowing for the reading experience to become vivid and deeply moving for the reader. This type of educational experience should be every instructor's goal for his or her students, as it facilitates learning and has the potential to engage students deeply in their course work. Furthermore, instructors should be prompted to study student engagement with texts in order to understand "what makes school experiences meaningful." Often instructors are drawn to teaching because of their own positive educational experiences, and such experiences make it easy to forget the struggle that many students encounter while trying to make courses and texts immediately relate to their lives.

One way to attempt to understand student's disengagement with texts is to consider the textual application expected of students. Although instructors like to concentrate on the importance of student engagement, personal connection with texts, and applying text to students' personal experiences, the reality is that students are primarily motivated by grades. An excellent reason to study and encourage immersion reading is that these reading experiences can provide intrinsic motivation for students, enhancing and continuing their education beyond time spent in class. Csikszentmihalyi argues that "a teacher who understands the conditions that make people want to be literate…is in a position to turn these activities into flow experiences, and thereby set students on a course of…learning" (132). Providing students with intrinsic motivation proves to be nearly impossible for the instructor, so the study of immersion reading can help to promote student motivation. Augustine and Zoss describe how immersion reading boosts motivation while talking about one student, Dave, who became immersed in class assignments: "He was so involved with *the doing* in the class that he was not concerned with what often consumes students: the grade that will come from the doing…this intense engagement combats the monotony that many students feel in classes in which they watch the clock in anticipation of leaving" (84, emphasis in original). Within the immersion reading experience, "the doing" becomes the focus rather than the final result, allowing for the student to more fully experience the text rather than reading with a specific goal or objective outside of the text in mind. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi argues that immersion reading experiences are so consuming and enjoyable that "not only does the student learn something from the experience, but the

student also wants to reproduce this type of experience" (Augustine and Zoss 84). Therefore, encouraging and studying immersion reading provides students with experiences which prompt intrinsic motivation—instead of "watching the clock in anticipation of leaving," students feel the desire to "reproduce" the experience, prompting further opportunities for learning both in and outside of the classroom.

The study of immersion reading may have a multitude of benefits, but also presents several problems. The first and most obvious difficulty with immersion reading is the fact that, by nature, it resists being *taught*. Perhaps the best way to encourage this type of reading is to simply promote student reading. Although this seems like a logical step, many English instructors—especially college instructors—leave out this essential aspect of English education. Because of steadily increasing expectations of student success and the time constraints experienced by instructors, setting aside valuable class time for reading might seem elementary or like a waste of time. This contradictory attitude, though, further demonstrates the extent to which the building-block model of reading has saturated educational practices. Again, instructors speak of the value of literacy, but fail to encourage immersion reading in the classroom, as it has no place in a curriculum that values supposedly more sophisticated and complex modes of reading. Silent Sustained Reading remains a practice primarily located in the elementary school classroom. By bringing the *study* of immersion reading into the classroom, instructors might be more willing to break down the stereotypes associated with immersion reading, and begin to value it as an important and complicated form of reading.

Another of the challenges faced by instructors when engaging in classroom discussions concerning immersion reading experiences comes from the potential lack of control that could ensue during such discussions. Whereas awareness reading encourages a sense of detachment from personal experience and emotion during both the reading experience and discussion of texts, immersion reading is such a visceral practice that emotion becomes essential to understanding the reader's responses. Such discussions "have the potential to become emotional in ways that are uncomfortable and unsettling for both teachers and students" (Augustine and Zoss 89). Such a lack of comfort is challenging for students because they must learn how to express their emotion and personal views in an intellectual and scholarly manner, and also must learn how to productively discuss and argue about their ideas. It is much easier for students to remain professional and detached when they have no personal investment in class discussion; the challenge of working through this potential lack of comfort raised within a discussion of immersion reading is a valuable tool for students to acquire, and will serve them well both in and out of the classroom. This discomfort is perhaps even more productive for the instructor, as "when emotions become a part of the curriculum, a door is opened that can be unpredictable, messy, and full of surprise" (Augustine and Zoss 90). Unpredictability and messiness are not adjectives that inspire confidence in preservice or beginning instructors, and often can disturb even experienced educators. The value, though, comes from that very disruption; by allowing for the disturbing, the unexpected, and even the upsetting to find a place in the classroom, instructors are constantly re-developing and re-shaping their pedagogy and continuing to learn about their classroom

abilities and weaknesses. The study of immersion reading "should be another strategy for addressing the complexity of language arts classrooms," as it proves beneficial through broadening the scope of what is acceptable to study within the field of English and by pushing both students and instructors to explore ideas outside of their comfort zones (Augustine and Zoss 92).

It is much easier to see the value of teaching awareness reading in the classroom, as this is the type of reading and learning with which the average academic is most comfortable. Being able to read, interpret, and critique a text are skills that all English instructors would argue are valuable for students to learn. What becomes most valuable within the realm of awareness reading, though, is not that it teaches students how to read *The Scarlet Letter* or "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?," but that awareness reading functions as another avenue into literature for students, a method as fundamental and as complex as immersion reading. Again, what is important within the realm of the classroom is not only the teaching of awareness reading but also the *study* of it—how critical awareness influences readers, what educators and students can learn from such study, and how this type of reading experience can help to broaden understanding of what education is and should be.

Much as studying immersion reading helps to dispel connotations with childhood and inexperience, studying awareness reading helps to remove criticality from its pedestal and become more useful to struggling readers. Undervaluing immersion reading also circumscribes the power of awareness reading, limiting its scope to the classroom and academia. Through this limitation, students are subtly informed that awareness reading is

not something that should be engaged in until they are sophisticated, fully engaged readers. This message, enforced by academia's structuring of the reading hierarchy, ignores the fact that there is no "standard reader," and that for some readers, critical awareness is a way to engage with literature on a fundamental level. Gerald Graff argues that his experience of English was restricted in exactly this way—his lack of engagement with texts and a resistance to immersion reading effectively frustrated his reading experiences. He cites the traditional notions of reader progression as the source of his difficulties, even within the college classroom.

> The standard story ascribes innocence to the primary experience of literature and sees the secondary experience of professional criticism as corrupting. In my case, however, things had evidently worked the other way around…It was only when I was introduced to a critical debate about *Huckleberry Finn* that my helplessness in the face of the novel abated and I could experience a critical reaction to it (45).

In Graff's description, what is particularly interesting is his description of his lack of engagement as literal "helplessness," demonstrating how completely immersion reading had failed him. Instead of viewing awareness reading as a logical, sequential step in the progression of educational literacy, Graff can only "experience a…reaction" to his reading by disregarding the building-block reading model. Graff further describes his exposure to awareness reading in even more telling terms, arguing that once exposed to criticality he "had some issues *to watch out for* as I read, issues that reshaped the way I read earlier chapters as well as the later ones and focused my attention. And having issues to watch out for made it possible not only to concentrate, as I had not been able to do earlier, but to put myself into the text—to read with a sense of personal engagement that I had not felt before" (43). When Graff argues that awareness reading brought him

"into the text," he is using rhetoric commonly associated with immersion reading, demonstrating how deeply his awareness reading engaged him with the text. Furthermore, Graff gained agency through his awareness reading, resolving the earlier "helplessness" he felt when reading. Although Graff's experience is only a single example of awareness reading providing success with a single student, his arguments illuminate the fact that the notion of reader identity—of a reader progressing through each "stage" of the reading process in order—is deeply embedded within educational practices. If Graff was a single disengaged student who did not find a way to connect with literature until college, how many other disengaged readers must there be who could benefit from the dismantling of the idea of reader progression? Furthermore, dismantling the concept of the progression of the reader allays "anxieties [that] are expressed in our romantic literary tradition, which protests against the urban forms of sophistication that, it is believed, cause us to lose touch with the innocence of childhood and our creative impulses" (Graff 44). Rather than cherishing the "innocence of childhood" in direct opposition to the "sophisticated" and "urban" trends of criticality and awareness reading, recognizing and studying both awareness reading and immersion reading could help to begin to soften such categories, encouraging student success through education tailored to student needs rather than preconceived notions of reader identity.

Exploring the notion of reader identity can perhaps be most interesting and effective when examined in relation with the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading. I argue that reader identity is in a constant state of flux, as through interactions with texts, "the subject [is] being created in the relationships that exist across

time and space; thus, the self is an ever changing provisional subject always being made" (Augustine and Zoss 87). When focusing on the relational aspect of reading, it becomes easy to see how reader identity and textual interaction are essentially linked, as the *interaction between* and the *acting upon* merge within the reading process. Reading becomes an important element to study when considering identity, and since identity is fluid and unendingly re-created, it is reasonable to say that "words and stories powerfully affect the formation of identity" (Tatar 22). Such a powerful influence comes from close identification with texts—or, possibly, from an intense aversion to particular texts. Because of the relationship the reader has with the text, "the emotions we feel when reading or viewing fiction are the same emotions we feel when we read or view non-fiction—or experience real events. And these emotions, particularly when they resonate with our experience and we can identify with them, can lead to behavior change" (Alsup forthcoming). The very real emotional impact that readers face point to the importance of recognizing this interaction and studying and addressing it within the classroom, particularly when the conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading has the potential to further complicate identity formation through the imposition of artificial constraints upon readers.

Across the constant re-making of reader identity are laid the distinct categories of immersion reading and awareness reading, concepts reinforced by the reinforcement of a building-block model of reader progression within educational systems, which disallow the mutability of the reader's identity by attempting to confine and define it through oppositional categories that are constantly in conflict, engaged in a struggle for

supremacy. Robert Scholes argues that awareness reading is created by "the failures of reading" and educators "feel that interpretation is a higher skill than reading, and we value and tend to privilege texts that require and reward interpretative activity" (22). Within the educational system, therefore, awareness reading and immersion reading are constantly in conflict for dominance within a single reader, regardless of which method, if either, is more effective for the reader. The conflict between immersion reading and awareness reading is irresolvable because the fluidity and constant re-creation of the reader's identity undermines any kind of stable categorization or definition. Furthermore, the attempts to separate and define readers in one category of readership—the perceived need for instructors to solely value one type of reading—attempts to foist a pre-made identity onto readers. By structuring education in the building-block model of literacy, educators attempt to simplify what is in fact a complicated and intricate development of reader identity. Graff argues in favor of this complex system by stating, "our assumptions about what is 'primary' and 'secondary' in the reading process blind us to what actually goes on" (45). The categorizations imposed upon readers throughout their education do not necessarily make sense, but the notion that one type of reading should be valued and studied over another has become a fundamental practice for instructors, widely accepted as fact. Rather than using a building-block, progressive mode of reading instruction, the need for both awareness reading and immersion reading brings the two types of reader identity into conflict, but also into a sort of symbiosis; the two always exist in conjunction with each other. Although the conflict is potentially problematic and limiting for readers, studying this struggle could aid students in understanding their

reading processes, their educational experiences, and, ultimately, their own identity development.

Educators can best be of service to their students by recognizing this fundamental conflict and addressing it within the classroom. The college classroom could function well in this capacity, as students at are perhaps most likely to see contradictions in expectations of them and their identity formation at this stage in their lives. College is a place where the binary thinking that seeks to categorize experiences becomes quite obvious. This problematic categorization can be seen in the artificial development that is expected of the typical college freshman. At eighteen years, this student suddenly becomes an adult, according to legal standards. Behavior that was commonplace in a high school setting becomes unacceptable, as the student is now an adult and responsible for his or her own education. Additionally, students are for the most part in charge of their own finances, housing, schedule, and social calendar, often for the first time. This abrupt transition from dependence to relative independence reinforces the common opposition of child/adult status. Such a distinction is problematic, to say the least, because there is no clearly defined category that controls growth and development—furthermore, the standard college freshman still falls into the category of adolescent until settled comfortably into his or her twenties. According to social standards, an eighteen-year-old is still very much a child; while accepting this new responsibility, college freshmen are often ill-equipped to handle it as a result of their lack of experience. Even though instructors argue that their students are now adults, it is clear that these adolescents are struggling to establish their identities in a social setting where demands

and expectations of behavior are often contradictory. As a result, these artificial categories supposedly defining identity are constantly transgressed; the very notion of possessing a stable identity is called into question at the same time that the concept of a static identity is constantly reinforced through such binary thinking.

Within literature classes especially, this type of conflict can be addressed through the study of reading. By directly addressing the conflict between immersion reading and critical awareness reading, instructors also offer students a way to begin to think of other sources of irresolvable conflict in their lives. Perhaps the most important part of acknowledging and studying the ongoing conflict between awareness reading and immersion reading is located in the attempt to occupy a conflicted space—establishing a compromise. Once students begin to understand and recognize the fact that reader identity is unstable and mutable, and that awareness reading and immersion reading pulls the reader in different directions, students also become more aware of the forces attempting to control their identities as readers, more able to both resist these forces and decide when such conflict is effective in the reading process. Educators do their students a disservice by reinforcing divisionary thought, both in reference to reading and to identity formation. The distinct categorization of these concepts eliminates the possibility of existing in more than one category, or from traveling back and forth across categories. If a specific reader or student engages in the "immature" immersion reading of a text, then that category excludes any "mature" response; the reader is thus labeled as an "immature" reader. Ignoring any positive aspect of immersion reading, this labeling is in itself problematic, as the student is therefore defined and restricted to one category.

Furthermore, instructors teach students that categorization is a necessary and important part of life, rather than recognizing the power of transgressing expectations and limiting categories. By teaching students to recognize, analyze, and confront conflicting aspects of identity, instructors help students become more fully developed people, with the ability and the drive to read other texts they encounter throughout their lives—including lived experiences themselves—with the same level of reflection and criticality.

I argue that texts like the *Inkheart* trilogy and the *Thursday Next* series could offer a way to begin to discuss these tensions in reading and identity formation. These texts acknowledge the ongoing conflict between awareness reading and immersion reading and create a space—albeit fictional—where these two categories of reading coexist, even if engaged in struggle. A study of this kind of compromise could serve as a way to effectively discuss the reading process in concrete, tangible terms that theoretical discussions often lack. By seeing "book jumping" as a metaphor for the reading process, readers could become more reflective of the reading experience, allowing students and instructors to explore their own attitudes towards and experiences of reading.

Furthermore, the concept of reader identity being resistant to stable categorization has translates into other areas of literary study and has broader implications for the literature as a whole. The *Inkheart* books clearly demonstrate an anxiety specific to age and age-appropriate relationships with stories. Within the discussion about age and textual interaction, these texts negate the popular notion of identity as only in flux within a certain age demographic, and instead propose the idea that identity is just as mutable and unformed in adults as in children and teens. This negation provides instructors an

avenue to discuss the conflicting expectations between "mature" and "immature" readers, demonstrating in a concrete manner the conflict students experience as they progress through the educational system. The series directly affirms the concept that children and young adults are clearly influenced by textual interaction and reading experience, but the books also give equal credence to the concept of the identity of adult characters being influenced and altered through reading. For example, within the *Inkheart* series, it is a given that Meggie's personality development is influenced and formed through her interaction with texts. In *Inkspell*, Meggie even goes so far as to state that she wishes to become an author because of her interaction with the world of *Inkheart* (*Inkspell* 35). This statement is never called into question, and is presented as a perfectly natural progression. Once Mo's identity begins to be called into question through textual interaction, though, the result is viewed as disturbing and unnatural. This distinction is problematic on several levels. When does it become unacceptable or unnatural for readers to be influenced by immersion reading? Is there a threshold which readers cross as they age? How is this threshold defined? What makes a "child" and an "adult" reader? Why can the two categories not overlap? Additionally, if there is this distinction between "child" and "adult" reader, where does the adolescent reader fit? The inability to transgress such categories can only serve to discourage young adult readers, as these readers fit at once into both categories. Students situated in a place of tension and conflict could potentially become discouraged or turned away from reading, as this conflict becomes more difficult to deal with and to sort through. By directly recognizing and studying the questions raised by the "types" of readers, instructors have the potential

to encourage students to pursue the study of English, and, ultimately, become lifelong readers instead of abandoning reading because of contradictory messages.

These questions are important to address within the discussion of literacy, as they impact all readers, and are important to address within the classroom, but they are equally important to consider in a discussion of genre. The notion of reader identity as fluid and unconstrained has a direct connection to how genre is defined—or to how it should be viewed. Much like the imposition of categories upon the mutable concept of reader identity, strict categorization of genre produces similar effects in academia. Scholars often dismiss science fiction, fantasy, detective novels, graphic novels, and particularly young adult literature from serious analysis and study because of their association with immersion reading. Another far-reaching implication of this devaluing of immersion reading and literature is found in the limitations imposed on scholarship—the world of academia is circumscribed and less vibrant with the exclusion of such texts. In addition, by excluding these types of texts from serious consideration, instructors fail to recognize that such texts are often an avenue for the reluctant reader to engage in the world of literature and to become lifelong readers. The ultimate goal of the field of English, after all, is to inspire a love of literature in students and to help them better understand themselves and their world. Through devaluing the very type of literature that may have the potential to achieve that goal, instructors are creating students who view English as stodgy and uninteresting, instead of as complex, exciting, influential and essential to individual growth and development.

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