

Community Re-Imagined: Exploring Fantasy's Mythopoetic Potential as a Critical Tool
for Social Transformation in Steven Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen*

by

Amie Angèle Brochu

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2019

© Copyright by Amie Angèle Brochu 2019

For my mother,

You are the ink to my quill, the sword in my scabbard.

Together we make it possible.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2	
2.1 Rung #1: Fantasy Literature and the Malazan Book of the Fallen.....	18
Chapter 3	
3.1 Rung #2: Erikson’s Background – Writing in Neo-Liberal Canada	31
Chapter 4	
4.1 Rung #3: Notions of Community and Communitarianism	45
Chapter 5	
5.1 Rung #4: Mythopoesis and the Malazan Book of the Fallen	70
Chapter 6	
6.1 Rung #5: The Social Imaginary and Imagined Communities	78
Chapter 7	
7.1 Rung #6: Social Work and Social Justice	87
Chapter 8	
8.1 Rung #7: Fantasy Literature in Social Work with Future Applications.....	92
Chapter 9 Conclusion.....	106
References	108

List of Figures

Figure 1	Literary ladder outline.....	16
----------	------------------------------	----

Abstract

In social work, there is often little consideration given to the importance of fantasy literature and its potential contribution for further discussions about its myth-making (mythopoesis) possibilities. The benefits of employing fantasy literature within social work foster the goals and processes of social justice by encouraging global and humanistic thinking (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018). Considering Canada's current neo-liberalist position upholding systemic inequality and social injustice, this thesis argues for the transformative power of fantasy literature as a narrative for critique and resistance to individualist principles. Drawing on Steven Erikson's ten volume series, *Malazan Book of the Fallen*, I propose a new genre called critical fantasy which employs critical reflection and mythopoesis to promote the importance of community and solidarity as a model for a new mythos of universal collaboration and harmony while offering future applications for critical social work pedagogy.

Acknowledgments

This wizard would like to thank her committee familiars, Dr. Jeff Karabanow and Dr.

Catherine Bryan, in helping to edit and critique this conjuration.

Thanks also goes to my family, for their unrelenting support and patience. The PhD is next by the way...

Chapter 1

Introduction

I have always considered myself a champion of the underdog, coming to the rescue of any human, animal or otherwise and lending them a hand or paw. It was, then, a natural progression that I enter the field of social work. However, my true love in life has always been fiction literature; from the classics to the contemporary and everything else in between. As a bibliophile, I surround myself with books. In fact, the very first card in my wallet as a child was from our local library. In minus thirty degree weather I would take the four city block trek to browse the shelves of the mobile library parked in the OK Economy store parking lot and come home with a backpack bursting with new adventures, not only for myself, but for my mother, also an avid devourer of books. As an adult, my love of the written word has not faltered and sometimes as a social worker I have found the latest teen fantasy or gripping mystery a conversation starter with my clients and co-workers.

Since my formal educational years, my bibliophilic nature has shifted. My education in critical theory influences everything I read, including my favourite genre, fantasy. In fact, as I read and re-read some of my favourite fantasy works, the concepts of fellowship, brotherhood, kinship and community piqued my interest. I started to pay more attention to the joining of long-time enemies and the collaboration of different races in my books and began to question the meaning in what the authors were portraying. My experiences working within and across diverse communities made me realise how important solidarity is. As ter Meulen (2016) points out, solidarity's relational capacity to identify with the values of humanity (compassion, empathy, respect) and one's sense

of responsibility for the other are vital to societal unity. Perhaps because of the rupturing and disintegration of kinship ties I saw around me through the experiences of my clients, co-workers and friends, I started to pay more attention to the concepts of solidarity and collectivity espoused within some of my favourite books. Though these values are not new and have been modelled by many intentional communities like Ecovillages and numerous Aboriginal societies, these principles highlight the continual erosion of togetherness and community caused by the divisive individualising and dominating tendencies of neo-liberal influences.

Throughout this thesis, I will be focusing on the mythopoetic (myth-making) potentials for the promotion of community in fantasy works like Steven Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen* as his books offer examples of humanity's capacity for solidarity and inter-dependence while moving away from individualism and self-interest. As such, I position the mythopoetic potential in Erikson's works towards notions of community as standing in opposition to the individualist and market fundamentalism within neo-liberalism. From my own experiences in social work, I share Marx's view that individualism is the result of competitive capitalism, a requirement for impersonal social actors who embrace the raw cash nexus that characterises it (Roulstone & Morgan, 2009). Individualism is thus promoted as the basis of social and economic efficiency. According to Scheurich (1993), individualism is the idea that each person is the source or origin of themselves, whereby dominant Eurocentric ideologies frame this belief as a naturally occurring, trans-historical, trans-cultural condition to which all humans naturally aspire.

Arising out of a place of personal frustration with the current individualist frameworks, I have always believed there needs to be social justice initiatives aimed at creating new social relationships and associations for increased collectivity and community motivated towards social change. Jordaan (2011) states that the requirements for social justice initiatives are more likely to appear when there is a sense of communal belonging for those seeking universal principles of justice and equal rights. I believe it will be a global community working together in concert that puts forth solutions to some of the world's current issues by combatting and resisting the systems of injustice that oppress so many. That is why I have decided to combine a love and a passion for this paper. In my view, there is value in critically studying fantasy literature with the potential contribution it can make in challenging dominant destructive and oppressive ideologies. According to Baker (2012), the progressive potential of fantasy can direct the reader towards a new and radical subjectivity. Through the construction of possible worlds within fantasy, it creates a new version of what could be within the real world, thus positing fantasy as a category open to proposing radical and progressive change (Baker, 2012). Furthermore, the progressive potential of fantasy "can use the genre's ubiquitous temporal dislocations to expose how history informs the present and the future, rupturing reality to re-imagine the then for the benefit of the now and the nows yet to pass" (Baker, 2012, p. 440).

Despite the fact that there has been some academic literature about the progressive potential of fantasy, (see, for example Baker, 2012; Bould, 2002; Jameson, 2002) there exists a gap regarding the importance of fantasy literature and its potential contribution for further discussions about its myth-making possibilities around collective

solidarity and community. Throughout this thesis I will be arguing for the fantasy genre's mythopoetic possibilities that encourages progressive "ways of connecting the dots between the moments of human experience [by creating] a sense of continuity and purpose" (Rushkoff, 2018, para. 7); this purpose being a new mythic awareness towards an ethos encompassing collaboration and togetherness. Furthermore, I contend that the creation of a new myth for community and collectivity within fantasy literature has the potential to increase self-awareness within the reader that offers "a link to the collective awareness of humanity" (Beer, 1990, p. 43) by way of drawing individuals towards a global identification with others and the world around them. In this regard, the mythopoetic possibilities in fantasy literature myths can help bring people together based on shared values of unification, community and solidarity.

For Canadian literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye, a myth is the "hope against the desolate record of human history and the tyrannies that have oppressed so many in this century" (J. Hart, 2005, p. 190). The progressive potential for myth as a means of social resistance in fantasy literature, establishes a rising up of the proletariat into a classless society bespeaking the return of the repressed and oppressed (J. Hart, 2005). In other words, fantasy literature has the potential to oppose dominant ideologies and class structures (J. Hart, 2005). The progressive myth creation in fantasy literature can also be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of our global community (J. Hart, 2005). Therefore, the challenging of dominant ideologies and destructive social conventions in fantasy seeks to provide readers with "a new vision... enriched with an emotional experience of harmony and reunification" (Waggoner, 1978, p. 27). In this manner, the myth-generating function of fantasy novels serves to construct the foundation

upon which social change is possible through a mechanism of establishing new myths that highlight the importance of discursive work to facilitate the process of social change (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2001).

In order for the mythopoetic potential in fantasy literature to promote notions of social change, new myth creation allows a community or society to establish a rationale and method for its members to act in concert towards collective goals. Mythopoesis “seeks to incorporate new social configurations into the larger story of humanity” (J. Scott, 2004, p. 59). Mythopoesis also strives to harness the spirit of myth, to translate and transpose it onto a new context by mapping its past and future in towards the creation of a new narrative (J. Scott, 2004). In this paper I argue for the transformative power of critical fantast literature as a site of critique and resistance to individualistic ideology and for the potential of contemporary and progressive myth-making. Here, I suggest that fantasy literature has the capacity to generate new myths that can move us toward universal collaboration and unification. As such, I am advocating for the mythopoeic possibilities in fantasy literature grounded in a societal agenda that seeks to reveal the destructive nature of individualist neo-liberal ideology while offering an alternative through a narrative that supports a new mythos of solidarity, community and collectivity.

The progressive potential of fantasy literature and its myth-generating message of solidarity and community as a possible critique of our current world also parallels the critical and social justice oriented nature of social work. As a profession, social work is complex and equally challenging to define. It is a diverse field that is ever-changing and politically controversial (Parrott, 2003, p. 10), scattered across numerous locations embracing people from a vast scope of backgrounds. The field’s prodigiousness involves

professionals operating within direct practice in social care settings with individuals, families and communities, diversifying into policy and educational environments and further branching into areas of research and theory development. Over the years social work has continued to evolve. Since the 1960s and 1970s, there has been an influence of critical theories within the field through which the critical social work canon emerged, involving trains of thought characterized by a rebuttal against positivism, a deconstruction of social constructs, a rejection of essentializing categories and increased attention to intersectionality (Healy, 2001; Anastas, 2014). Furthermore, critical social work involves theories that are grounded in the lived experiences of multiple and intersecting oppressions and in recognition, that systemic and dominant hegemonic ideologies exclude the experiences and needs of those from oppressed and marginalized groups (Anastas, 2014).

The core mission of critical social work is to promote social justice (Healy, 2001) which has come to mean many things in the social work field. For the purpose of this thesis I am using Bell's (2016) definition of social justice as both a goal and a process. The goal of social justice entails full and equal participation of all groups in society that are mutually shaped to meet their needs (Bell, 2016). It also involves a vision for society that is equitable, respectful of human diversity, physically and psychologically safe, where individuals have a sense of their own self-agency (Bell, 2016). The process for attaining social justice should be participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacities for working collaboratively to create change (Bell, 2016). Therefore, from a social work perspective, the community discourse is consistent with the social work values based on emphasising social justice, community empowerment and the rights of

marginalised groups (Forde & Lynch, 2014). More importantly, notions of community based on a social work approach are underpinned by a critical standpoint that seeks social change at both community and societal levels, thereby employing a theoretical perspective that uses social transformation as a form of justice and emancipation (Forde & Lynch, 2014).

While social work scholarship has intersected with literature as art, it has been slow to consider the potential of fiction in terms of social work theory, practice, or research (Huss, 2019) and its possible benefits to advancing social justice. However, small bodies of academic literature are recognizing that art in social work has the potential to explore humanistic and critical theories as well as foster a space for social change within practice, education, policy and research (Huss, 2019). According to Chuddley-Diatta (2018) and Levy (2019), fictional literature provides a unique and creative way of seeing the world in order to create understandings arising out of a critically reflective process intrinsic to social justice-oriented social work. Furthermore, fantasy literature as art, can foster the goals and processes of social justice by promoting more global and humanistic thinking (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018) which is important to discussions of solidarity, community and collaboration.

Taking as my starting point my love of fantasy literature and commitment to social justice, this thesis puts forth a concept I have termed “critical fantasy”. As developed in what follows, this concept encourages us to consider the role of fantasy novels in generating new forms of social relations and opportunities for transformation by prompting readers to examine their worldviews through critical self-reflection. From its connection to the critical strains of the Frankfurt school’s theories (Corradetti, 2013) to

potentials in critical pedagogy, this genre generates a critically reflective process that prompts readers to re-examine their beliefs, values and assumptions by offering insight into the inequality and authoritativeness often at the core of mainstream worldviews and dominant ideologies. Critical fantasy reiterates the fact that power and privilege, “cares nothing for reason, nothing for justice, nothing for compassion” (Erikson, 2007, p. 448). Though not all works within the genre will fit this mould, selected works from authors such as China Miéville, N.K. Jemisin, Ursula K. LeGuin, Steven Erikson, Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman bridge critique with progressive alternative; revealing the potential of critical fantasy.

Like progressive fantasy and speculative fiction, the term critical fantasy involves world-building and storylines set in universes similar or dissimilar to our own with an underlying, occasionally subtle and other times overt, challenge to our current ideologies and worldviews. However, critical fantasy differs in that it involves a myth-generating potential that produces a modality of knowledge that challenges the ideological world around us. This aligns with the dual purpose of myth as being 1) to communicate what ought to be according to normative values and ideologies that sustain and reproduce inequality; and 2) to communicate what could be through progressive ideologies and social justice initiatives aimed at solidarity, community and inclusion (Frye, 1990; J. Hart, 2005).

Critical fantasy also presents fantasists as representatives of a more progressively oriented imagination because they possess the literary ability to generate societal critiques of the world through new myth creation. Their words have the potential to establish a framework for critical fantasy, to challenge our worldviews in the

communities they establish through their fans and readership. In this way, critical fantasists question our current world and posit solutions to a more cohesive society. In doing so, they bridge the fantasy story and our current world. From this viewpoint, critical fantasy also reveals a fantasist's work to be politically-oriented. Works of fantasy as a critical genre can display and decipher the symptoms of our current socio-political state of affairs by expressing ideas (Rancière, 2004). Fantasists writing, with and from a critical mindset, offer written expression of the possibility of progressive change. Through their work, they challenge the many controlling meta-narratives of our neo-liberal society and in doing so contribute to possibility of radical socio-political change. When a novel takes a politically-motivated stance, "the consciousness of the characters, their point of view and behaviour allows them to think in terms of opposing society as such; they rally to one or another embattled segment of society and they do so in the name of and under prompting from, an ideology" (Howe, 1961, p. 19). The fantasist, therefore, has the capacity for stirring "characters into passionate gestures and sacrifices and even more, to create the illusion that they have a kind of independent motion so that they themselves – those abstract weights of idea or ideology – seem to become active characters" (Howe, 1961, p. 21) in a critical fantasy oriented novel.

The views and values revealed in this work are my own and should not be implied as a universal solution to our contemporary issues, but rather are offered in the realm of possibility. Taking into consideration the fact that a global solution ignores the individual nuances of different societies, I cannot ascribe to the belief that these utopic imaginings of solidarity would be relevant for all people. In light of this, I would like to acknowledge that the progressive potential of fantasy literature I am proposing is in some

ways rather utopic. There are at times, utopic, idealist and quixotic elements embedded within my arguments which could be in part, due to the visionary views progressive fantasy potentially promotes (see Baker, 2012). This seeming utopianism might appear to generate themes and arguments that are highly unlikely to be met where “ought” does not necessarily imply “can” (Hall, 2016, p. 78). Although the fictional worlds, empires and communities within progressive fantasy can imagine possibilities of what our current world could look like, through its endorsement of highly idealistic proposals it does not mean this utopic idealism should “fail to capture the truth about how we ought to live” (Hall, 2016, p. 78)

To expand the concept of critical fantasy and to explore the progressive mythopoeic potential of fantasy literature, I incorporate three distinct realms in my work. The first realm will contain an examination of the secondary worlds and characters within the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series by author Steven Erikson. Beginning in 1982, Erikson (b. Steven Rune Lundin) a Canadian fantasy/science fiction writer with a background in archeology and anthropology, co-created the Malazan world depicted in the ten volume series with fellow novelist Ian C. Esslemont initially as a setting for a role-playing game. Eventually taking launch as fictional novels, Erikson’s literary tomes take an avant-garde approach in fantasy literature which is progressive in its tackling of themes such as power, privilege and oppression which does not ascribe to the Tolkienesque traditions such as all-male elven, wizard and human protagonists fighting a dark lord to vanquish evil. I have chosen Erikson’s work not only because he is my favourite fantasy writer, but also because his work possesses a certain artistry that is unique, visionary, imaginative, dynamic and scholarly. He breaks the mould of the

fantasy genre in which he faces “the real world head-on” (Erikson, 2019, p. 24). The socio-political complexity of the fictional Malazan world and its heart-rending and despairing characters appear to take on a life of their own. There are undercurrents of critical analysis in the way characters explore their own points of view and struggles, which comments on our current world issues around privilege, power, socio-economic inequality and social injustice. Canavan (2019) points out, Erikson’s work

Isn’t a white, male dominated, Euro-centric, pseudo-medieval, linear, quest fest. It is full of detail, measured and deliberate; seemingly unconnected events and characters, a cast of hundreds if not thousands of characters; storylines and plots that intersect, separate, run parallel, support and undercut each other; a de facto feminist reality that eschews both the promotion of the stereotypical pseudo-medieval patriarchy and its almost as common bald inversion; a direct challenge to Western Cultural imperialism and the ever present western capitalist sympathy of so many of the genre’s exemplars. It acknowledges yet subverts the established rules of the genre. (p. 19-20)

It is in this seeming realism of Erikson’s novels that offer what I believe is the perfect opportunity to explore the potential advancement of progressive values in a world that evolves quicker than our own.

The second realm of this work is my own fictional narrative set in a secondary world involving a character named Temple Harrowood, an educational social worker mage, whose task is to teach a group of officers from different backgrounds about the importance of social solidarity and community while dealing with a refugee crisis. Temple as instructor, sorceress and in some ways student, journals her reflections and

memories in her narrative as she attempts to use Erikson's work, posited as historical literature within the fictional storyline, as a means to demonstrate how fantasy literature can not only provide critical insight into the importance of community and solidarity, but also as a teaching tool within critical social work.

The purpose of my fictional narrative is twofold. On one hand, it is a depiction of my creative endeavours; an autogenesis of Temple's life from the soil of my imagination as something born out of my creative impulses. It is where I allow her character to grow independently from my own imaginings, evolving beyond my original intentions where I no longer manipulate her actions. From this position, my fictional narrative and Temple's journey "become a sort of adventure [and] a leap into uncertainty" (Hauser, 1974/1982, p. 735). On the other hand, it is a form of personal becoming and doing, whereby the process of artistic creation through the fictional story allows me to critically self-reflect on the research work. Within critical social work, the use of continual self-reflection and interaction become an important process in creating knowledge which places emphasis on the transformative potential (Fook, 2003) and emancipatory possibilities of social actions. Though critical reflection can be an uncomfortable experience, as social workers we must begin accepting this discomfort in order to foster increased self-awareness. However, I argue that critical reflection also needs to take place within realms of safety in order to prevent potentially harmful and damaging personal triggers to surface. At play within my thesis is a "constant self-reflection and consciousness of the possibilities and limits" (Hauser, 1974/1982, p. 735) of my research and Temple, as a fictional character, allows me to step into that space and establish a safe distance for myself. Therefore, as a teaching tool in critical social work pedagogy, the

addition of fictional creative writing as assignment options in the curriculum, like the one I have incorporated in this thesis, have the potential to establish safe and imaginative spaces for social work students to critically reflect.

As Temple explores Erikson's books with her students, my critical analysis of our current world and Erikson's secondary world makes up the third realm of this paper. Temple and I both employ a literary ladder (discussed below) as a teaching tool and methodology to guide the analysis of Erikson's series in order to examine the progressive potential of critical fantasy and its mythopoeic possibilities.

Through the intersection of the three realms, Temple, her students and I will attempt to make discoveries and create new awareness together as her story and my research evolves in tandem. Within this triadic relationship I will be speaking to the following objectives: 1) how fantasy literature can be construed as a productive analytical and critical category; 2) how the fantasy genre can offer a progressive critical analysis of social solidarity and community through its mimetic qualities of our current world; 3) how the mythopoeic potential of fantasy literature can possibly establish a new mythology of universal harmony and social solidarity that challenges existing individualistic ideologies and moves readers towards embracing a communitarian worldview; and 4) to explore the benefits of art in literary form within social work and the opportunity for fantasy literature in critical social work pedagogy and practice.

As mentioned earlier, in order to achieve these objectives I will be employing the concept of a literary ladder originally devised by Annette Lamb, a professor of education and library science at Indiana University, as a means to engage students by linking books to internet resources (Demmler, 2011; Lamb, 2001). The objective of these learning

ladders is to provide a multi-dimensional educational experience by fostering literature-technology connections (Demmler, 2011; Lamb 2001).

The ladder method can also help to foster interdisciplinary connections (Demmler, 2011) in order to expand the context of the novel. Though interdisciplinary collaboration is employed to a wide extent within the social work field, especially involving collaboration among individual professionals from community agencies and professional groups in medical, governmental and educational settings, the scholarly aspect of this thesis blends social work with the study of literature. The use of Erikson's works would typically be seen as an endeavour reserved for literary studies. However, in order to accomplish my goals I will be drawing from fantasy literary studies with authors such as Baker (2012) and Jackson (2003), socio-political theorists such as Putnam (2000) and Etzioni (1995), as well as critical social workers like Healy (2005) and Fook (2003). From that perspective this paper reinforces the interdisciplinary nature not only of my thesis and Erikson's novels, but also within social work.

There further exists an educational component to the literary ladder approach. For example, Temple's use of the literary ladder in a pedagogical manner assists in creating a dialogue between the reader, the characters in the book and the author. Its structured methodology assists students to develop connections with the narratives and apply the knowledge emerging from these relationships (Sumara, 2002). The internal and external dialogue created while reading allows for personal identifications with texts that are social and political events which create critical insight (Sumara, 2002). The characters and their plights provide a learning opportunity for a book's readership which Sumara (2001) posits as a form of mindfulness, where readers collect new information

and interpretations in the everyday organized by literary interactions. Furthermore, it is through this process of allowing readers to see how characters navigate and overcome their challenges that writers create pedagogical literary space (Sumara, 2001) in which we can, as readers, students and critical scholars, learn something about ourselves, our relationships and the social systems that structure our lives.

Though I will not be speaking of the technology connection of the literary ladder to Erikson's work, I am using the ladder's format to discuss the action of taking reading from a passive experience to one of multi-focal engagement. For the purpose of this paper, each rung on the ladder will establish a new task for Temple's students and I, as researcher, to delve deeper into the book by building background knowledge and making analytical connections between Erikson's work and our secondary and primary worlds.

The rungs of a typical literary ladder are developed in such a way that they build from the previous concept in order to establish a more inclusive and deeper picture of the novel. For example, the first rung might look at the author's background, which then builds the foundation for the second rung being the setting for the book, moving to the third and fourth rungs which discuss the historical contexts in which the work was written and the novel's characters ending at the top rung which outlines the themes within the work. It should be noted however, that although the literary ladder is used and presented in a linear fashion by Lamb, this approach as a methodology for my thesis is anything but sequential. There is a continual back and forth and even circular movement throughout this work. As Temple and I explore Erikson's novels, interactions and relationships develop between the rungs of our ladder which helps to bring in complementary research, ideas and concepts. In order to mitigate any possible veering from my objectives, I am

using the literary ladder as a guide to help focus the relational and ecological components of this work.

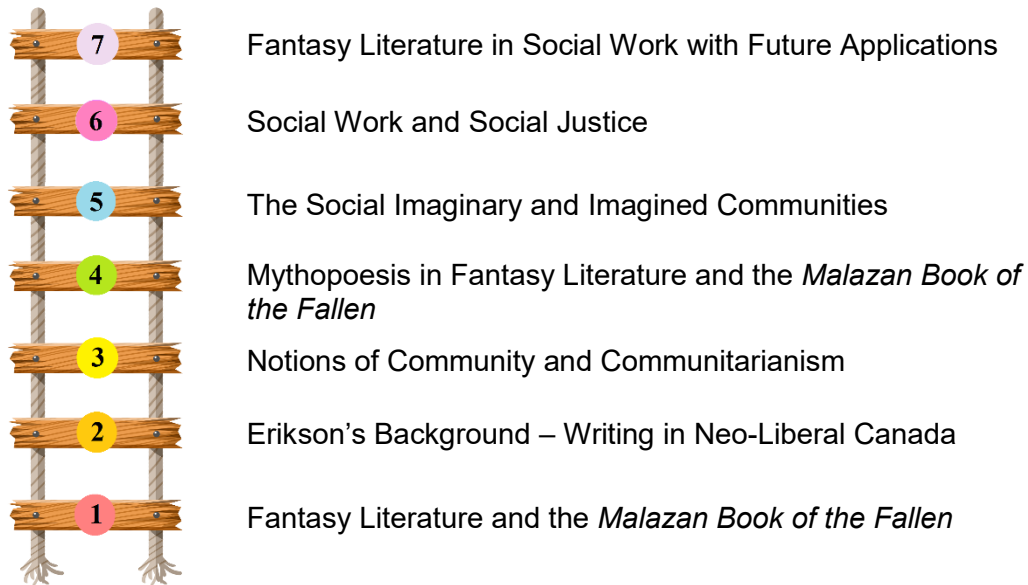


Figure 1. Literary ladder outline. From *Wood Rope Ladder Decoration*, by 588ku, n.d., https://pngtree.com/freepng/wood-rope-ladder-decoration-illustration_4708438.html

The first two rungs on my ladder (see Figure 1) will delve into the genre of fantasy literature and its progressive potential, offer a brief overview of the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series, discuss Erikson's socio-historical world while he was writing the books, and build connections between the books' characters and events that speak to Canada's socio-political climate. My continued ascent through rungs three and four will address the concepts of community and communitarianism and the mythopoetic elements in Erikson's series while further exploring the possibility of a new mythos for unity and collaboration and how it can offer social transformations for our current world. Climbing even further up the ladder to rungs five, six and seven, the thesis continues to speak about the social imaginary and imagined communities, ending with discussions about social

justice, social work and an examination of the future possibilities for critical fantasy in critical social work pedagogy.

Chapter 2

2.1 Rung #1: Fantasy Literature and the *Malazan Book of the Fallen*

Excerpts from the journals of Temple Harrowood, sorceress and social work educator.

*University of Dyan' Uru, Earth Realm, Third Age of his Prominence High Emperor
Zadimus Thane*

I propped my booted foot on the empty munitions crate and wiggled my big toe as it poked through the worn leather of my ill-fitting footwear. The Empire cutbacks have made it necessary for those on the frontlines deemed of little import to make even more sacrifices and the training militia of Universalist social workers, like myself, are the first to feel the pinch, literally. A new group of trainees would be arriving shortly. I sigh, my homely tunic shifting the collar which chafes the skin on my neck. I scratch at it absentmindedly, knowing a random collection of sergeants, lieutenants and captains from various realms will be sitting around my brazier intent on judging, harassing and provoking the other. Even though there is hostility towards the non-magical refugee races of Elementals, there is equally hostile behaviour amongst the founding magical realms of our continent.

Though I agree with the mandatory volunteer service within the Universalist Corps, I have always struggled with the current educational curriculum and its antiquated approach to teaching synergistic methods. So I put away the wax tablets and outdated training manuals in favour of a new practice. A break with tradition! The old ways are ineffective with the newer generations of squad leaders. So I am vacating the instruction tent and introducing them to possibilities beyond themselves through literature. Heaven's above if my colleagues at the university were to hear of this!

A cloud covers the distant Western sun, while the Southern begins to rise. There could be rain today I observe as I replace the stopper of my inkwell. The lesson plan made, I venture to the edge of the camp to greet my students. For the next moon I will have the opportunity to shape their worldviews and challenge their beliefs with the intention of creating a more cohesive, collaborative and united community of leaders. I hope...

The Morren's scaled, sleek-bodied sky-mount landed nearby; as he dismounted he shook himself with a distinguished air of privilege, power and irritability. Captain Cindar Delarkan's midnight blue cloak billowed in the bleak wind as the tall, pale skinned, lithe man from the north realm narrowed his gaze to scrutinize me. I met the intense glare not unlike all his kin, my husband included and remained impassive. Captain Avolor Odunn an Orobhast drew his small vessel to the pier and grunted as he took notice of the Morren. His hulking muscular frame pulled at the seams of his form-fitting clothing while the thick warrior braid cascading down his broad back adorned with carved bone and bead fetishes swayed with the effort of mooring the boat. Coming from the nearby camp were the grey-skinned stalky Fénian cousins, Lieutenants Lothir Badir and Lithia Badir. They kept their heads together in conversation while maintaining their distance from the growing group of strangers. On horseback the extensively tattooed desert dwellers, Rau'ral Sergeants Huthal Sablir and Spherin Drude arrived heavily swathed in ornately embroidered and trimmed layers of cloth. From behind me arrived the Brèleans, Captain Mace Aura and Lieutenant Leander Lock, both with hands on the hilts of their swords and a scowl to match the Morren. Aura spat on the ground, smirked and crossed his arms over his hauberk. I rolled my eyes slyly, unimpressed with the overt display of antagonism and warmongering.

Lithia graciously offered to brew the tea while everyone settled around the morning fire. Settled might not be the right word as tensions were high, but the group took to various camp stools and crates keeping a safe and comfortable distance between them. I glance at Huthal's scared face, a jagged purplish web spread across his left cheek and jaw travelling down his neck, a memento for an untimely meeting with a Vale wizard. Passing my gaze over the others I remark that these enduring keepsakes of battle exempted none in the group. The historical impact of the continued wars has left a lasting impression on these officers. Too long have the realms isolated themselves, closing their borders while hoarding fears and scattering mistrust. This was why the Universalist Corps was created and why I, as a social work educator, continue to chip away the brick and mortar foundation of disunity, detachment and individualism amongst the numerous races on the frontlines.

The group appears to be receptive to my approach of using literature to teach about the importance of unity, community and collaboration though they, as with previous groups, are lackadaisically unmoved to explore these concepts. The division in the group is also making the suggestion of possible texts difficult. To ensure coherence I impose the rule of choosing one particular author from any time period. The ancient, yet forbidden works of the pre-Ages were brought up immediately; especially the lengthy tomes of rumoured historian Steven Erikson being a popular choice. There are very few households in which the Malazan Book of the Fallen has not been mentioned or, if obtained through smuggling, read to some degree. The themes of collaboration, Quislingism and the radical, progressive views of various characters are something that have raised a lot of debate over the Ages and any literature that appears to challenge,

confront or imply correctives to our plights in Embore seems to disappear from common knowledge, teaching or thought. With the Universalist Corps promoting progressive values of cooperative effort among races, the choice of Erikson's work seems germane to these goals. The difficulty lies in keeping the subject of my lesson plans quiet and obtaining a copy of the books...

Spanning a publication time of twelve years, Erikson's ten volume series does not correspond to the traditional flow of serried fantasy works; rather, it follows several plotlines that are non-chronological and span several continents. The series itself revolves around the military conflicts of the Malazan Empire in its efforts to subdue resistance to its growing expansion and the ensuing battle against the Crippled God who seeks escape from the Malazan world. Central to the plot line are members, united by their shared experiences rather than their loyalty to their ruling faction (Vike, 2009), of a legendary elite division in the Malazan 2nd Army called the Bridgeburners, the imperial Adjunct Tavore Paran and her army the Bonehunters as well as her brother Ganoes Paran. Magic plays a central role throughout the series, not only as an inherent manifestable ability within some characters, but is also presented as a unique physical realm called a warren. As Quick Ben, a squad mage states, "magic exists in a more formalized state... refined [and] organized into something like themes and these themes are what we call warrens... accessible to mortals and gods alike" (Erikson, 2009, p. 136). Magic with the use of warrens is accessible by those able to tap into its power to manipulate it for spell-casting, energy projection such as warding, healing and illusion or inter-dimensional travel. Many notable characters are introduced as the series unfolds, providing the reader

with a range of different perspectives and points of view of the unfolding events and interactions that will influence future outcomes. As enemies and distant races are brought together to fight against the threat of the Crippled God there is a sense of unification, such as the alliance-building suggested by Krughava, the Mortal Sword of the Perish Grey Helms, when she says to Adjunct Tavore Paran, “[w]e stand before you – all of us here – and would pledge ourselves to your cause” (Erikson, 2011, p. 177). Additionally, bonds of friendship are formed through collaborations between individuals that have historically been antagonistic to each other or have never met except through legend or myth, such as when Fiddler, a Bridgeburner, shared a skin of beer with the Araks granting “them status as equals” (Erikson, 2000, p. 123).

In Erikson’s writing we can see that he is not estranged from life’s challenges. His lived experiences offer a deeper emotional and contextual meaning to the lives and experiences of his characters. Erikson (2019) “grew up poor” (p. 23), lived with a father whom he described as “an occasional drunk and philanderer” (Erikson, 2019, p. 23) and witnessed a “close friend with a gambling addiction” (Erikson, 2019, p. 23) rob the family home. He, like his characters was not immune to the complications of life. His parents were “first generation immigrants... to Canada in 1956, [his mother, being] “ten years older than his father, had been married previously, possibly twice [and] had abandoned at least two children... [his] half-brothers... back in Sweden” (Erikson, 2019, p. 21). One of the most progressive aspects of the series is the humanness and cumulative experiences of life Erikson ascribes to his characters, whether they are mortal or gods. There are high degrees of introspection and self-reflection showing a rawness of emotion and vulnerability that make them identifiable and relatable to the reader. It is

through these self-realizations that characters challenge outdated modes of thinking and ideologies when confronted with nearly impossible odds. The various characters whether major or minor are in fact creations of our modern primary world, products of sexual and physical abuse, neglect, addictions, war and diaspora which have informed who they are. Their vulnerabilities are brought out through personal sacrifice, friendships and the vast hardships of war.

Erikson also challenges typical stereotypes and conventions in his work. Women are given places of power and equality such as Empress Laseen ruler of the Malazan Empire, Adjunct Tavore Paran and Cadre Mage Tattersail. Men break down, cry and show emotions of helplessness and defeat; such as Fiddler's rawness of emotions at the thought of losing fellow comrade and dear friend Hedge shown when he "cut between two staff tents and made it halfway down before he stopped and slowly sank to one knee, his hands over his face... as tears broke loose, shudders drove through him, wave upon wave" (Erikson, 2011, p. 796). Additionally, is the presence of same-sex relationships such as Corporal Picker and her lover, fellow soldier Blend, whereby ethical or moral judgements are not made, neither implicitly by the writer nor explicitly by focalized characters (Vicke, 2009).

The aforementioned humanness of Erikson's characters draws out the underlying critical nature of the series as it attempts to show how certain aspects in the lives of various characters can mimic our own. By applying a critical-oriented perspective to Erikson's work it also contextualizes further analysis within the critical fantasy approach, especially when considering the intersections and inter-relationships between people and their social contexts. For example, the geo-political locations of the characters establish a

susceptibility to visible power structures such as laws, institutions, even empires. The fact that Erikson challenges certain stereotypes and comments on political power structures through his characters allows for the exploration of emancipatory relationship between people of equal worth and rights. In some instances Erikson questions these power imbalances and in others he reinforces them. Within Erikson's books it is not about presuming equality with others, but rather to actively recognize the differences that exist in perspective, subjective understanding and power (Butler, Ford, & Tregaskis, 2007). I believe this helps to create a further distinction in how his characters experience oppression; thereby shedding light on the pervasive impact of political and economic structures that lead to social control by the dominant groups in the Malazan world. Erikson's narrative process through characters' points of view may, therefore, be utilized as a mode of resistance to existing power structures.

Another aspect of Erikson as a critical fantasist has not only prompted personal transformations within his characters through awakened realisations, but has opened the possibility for social transformation as a critique of our own world. The reflections on the human conditions in Erikson's novels that mirror our own world have the potential to shed light on alternatives posited within fantasy works. Literacy and readership can "fuel the imagination, which in turn ruminates on possibilities" (Worthman, 2002, p. 463). Erikson's works offer the possibility of the "what if" scenarios that can play out in our minds as readers. Further to this, Canavan states, Erikson is "kicking down the walls of the [fantasy] genre and deconstructing the elements of fantasy to make stories that would inspire, challenge and engage readers" (p. 20). The progressive imagining thus "embraces a wider, more radical vision of alternative conditions involving transcendental

interventions, idealistic and artistic creations, dreams and the fulfillment of impossible wishes and fears which go beyond versions of the standard procedures of this life” (Gill, 2013, p. 73). Through Erikson’s secondary worlds and characters, he opens the door for his readers to ponder and contemplate situations unlike our own. There is a value-laden merit to its worth through imaginable engagements with current social issues.

By presenting such a model for imitation, there is the potential for a mimetic quality present in Erikson’s works especially in how they capture the flawed and fallible characteristics of human, non-human and god-like characters. For example, we have Stonny Menackis a caravan guard dealing with the pain of a son born of sexual assault:

The spawn of rape I can see his face, right there in Harllo's own, looking up at me. I can see it clear, Gruntle.’ And she shook her head, refusing to meet his eyes, and her legs had drawn up, tightly clenched, and all the bravado was gone as she clasped her arms tight about herself. (Erikson, 2008, p. 222).

Gruntle, captain of the same caravan guard to which Stonny belongs, also reflects on his tortured existence:

He looked back on the ruin of his life so far. Companions dead or lost, followers all rotting in the ground, the ash-heaps of past battles and decades spent risking his life to protect the possessions of someone else, someone who got rich without chancing anything worthwhile. (Erikson, 2008, p. 223-224).

By establishing a relationship between art and life, mimesis fosters the connection of ideas about artistic representation to the more widespread claims regarding social behaviour and the ways in which we interact with others and our environment (Potolsky, 2006). Thus, mimesis is not concerned solely with representing the world as observed by

the senses (Crljen, 2013), but also a vicarious experience of the intellectual and psychological mind. In this way mimesis becomes “educational or enlightening as well as allowing the audience some authority into the meaning and nature” (Crljen, 2013, p. 62) of the literary work. It is this mimetic quality that allows the reader to be “driven by desire at one level, to grapple with reality and at another level to transcend here and now and imagine an alternative world, thereby problematizing, the various social and cultural institutions based in religion, ethnicity, class and gender” (S. Hart & Ouyang, 2005, p. 19)

The benefit of a mimetic quality within Erikson’s works forces the readers to question the realistic presentations in our world. It prevents readers from seeing Erikson’s work as serving to reinforce our current state of affairs and to placate their sense of security by not challenging them to think in different ways. If a work is too realistic, there would be a lack of deconstruction of our current world and if a reader feels too safe and comfortable, it deprives them of seeing alternatives to our current society.

We are still without copies of the two remaining books. There is nothing more frustrating than having several books missing in a series you want to read! In spite of this, I thought it would be a good time to begin a preliminary discussion around their views towards collectivism and the efforts of the UC. I was about to open the discussion when I notice Lithia shifting uncomfortably on the camp stool, eventually seating herself on the ground. Being relatively shy and soft-spoken she hesitates to raise her hand in an attempt to ask a question. My eyes glance in her direction as I stop my lecture and nod my head in acquiescence.

“Many of us have heard the word fantasy used to describe certain writings, but as they are part of the forbidden works I... well...” she glanced at her hands quietly, timidly. Lothir spoke up on her behalf. “Professor Harrowood, what my cousin asks is that before we discuss Mr. Erikson and the Malazan books could you perhaps tell us more about fantasy literature?”

What an excellent suggestion; I wish I had thought of that!

According to Terry Eagleton (1996), literature is both a social product and a social force affecting society and continually involved in the process of social development. It is capable of political education and social transformation which can affect society and foster social change. The novel itself plays an important role in this transformation because it reflects the fostering of tendencies towards the making of a new world (Bakhtin, 1981). “A world where no voice has ever spoken before; where the act of speech is the act of creation... the only voice that speaks there is the creator’s voice and every word counts” (LeGuin, 1973/2004, p. 154). Furthermore, a novel provides a safe space to altering our worldviews and challenge preconceived notions. Reading fiction permits an educational role play that allows the reader to live vicariously through a novel’s character. In this way the reader can acquire knowledge about the fictional work and its imaginary world, but that translate/transmutate/transform what they have learned into something about the actual world in which we live (Novitz, 1987). Thus, the transformational potential of fiction may challenge and undermine our ways of construing the world and understanding ourselves (Novitz, 1987).

Due to its complexity and capaciousness, the fantasy genre poses a challenge to establishing a unified definition. When fantasy takes place in a world similar to our own it tells a story that is deemed unrealistic when compared to our current world and when set in a secondary world, that world would be considered impossible even though the stories in that world are possible within that context (Clute & Grant, 1997). The genre generally involves worlds established around its own set of rules where magic predominates and mythical beings and races reside. While the many subgenres of fantasy literature (high, low, dark, epic, sword and sorcery, contemporary, urban etc.) may share some of these characteristics or none at all, what distinguishes fantasy is that it remains distinct from other genres because of the aforementioned qualities. To situate Erikson's work, his series belongs to the high fantasy subgenre, defined as a storyline set in a secondary world dealing with matters affecting the destiny of that world (Clute & Grant, 1997).

Mathews (1997), posits fantasy as genre, evokes wonderment and mystery by encouraging a sense of possibility beyond the ordinary, material, rational world in which we live. As a literary genre, fantasy draws its roots from myths, legends, fairy tales and folklore (Jackson, 2003; Ordway, 2001; Sullivan, 2004). Fantasy literature frequently explores themes such as good vs. evil, love conquers all, friendship/comradery/social support, perseverance/overcoming obstacles, courage, personal sacrifice, honour/loyalty, fate vs. free will and personal transformation/growth, however, the coming together of races and peoples is a concept rarely spoken of in fantasy literature especially of its potential contribution in offering a counter-narrative of community and solidarity as opposed to the individualising rhetoric continually present within the genre.

It is worth noting that the fantasy genre has its fair share of critics. Lee (2016) states that “Jameson and Suvin [view fantasy] as an escapist discourse that ignores material reality in favor of pseudo-Christian and medieval nostalgia, [providing] little insight into the material conditions of reality; the form instead seeks escape to imaginary epochs of knights, elves and wizards into a space where evil is always defeated” (Lee, 2016, p. 552). Lee (2016) further contends that fantasy is not only disconnected from history, but also “politically lazy” (p. 552). Additionally, Lee (2016) postulates that Marxist criticism claims fantasy is “apolitical because of its periodization, anti-materialist subjects and its good-triumphs-over-evil allegories” (p. 562). Jackson (2003) asserts that French critics such as Castex, Schneider, Vax and Caillois previously attempted to define literary fantasy by cataloguing its recurrent themes and motifs, taken rather randomly from various works. For example, Schneider had claimed the “fantastic as dramatizing the anxiety of existence, [while] Caillois described it as a form which was stranded between a serene mysticism and a purely humanistic psychology” (Jackson, 2003, p. 5). Other critics have written about fantasy literature as frivolous and escapist (Jackson, 2003; Hume, 2014; Apter, 1982; Manlove, 1999; Zanger, 2002), whereby it takes its shape from the material reality it rejects.

By virtue of the librarian of the Morren palace, a cantankerous recluse who covets written words like a miser and his coins and my husband's trenchant persuasiveness, I was able to gather copies of all ten books. I carefully wrapped them in cloth and placed them inside my satchel which sat at my feet while I waited for my students to arrive for their first evening lesson. With the Western sun long set, the Southern sun was beginning

to follow its brother casting an amber glow over the rolling terrain and the ochre-painted moons of Lorq and Larq rose as one above the bay of Brè; so named after the fraternal twin goddess and god of Peace and Pain, because one cannot exist without the other. Balance. That's what is needed in this world. If only I could show how collaboration and community could foster this pivotal element in managing the Mirrendorean refugee crisis.

"Who is Steven Erikson?" asks Avolor as he leafs through Gardens of the Moon interrupting my lecture.

Cindar grunts with a smugness of boastful knowing, seeing as he was educated at the Morren Palace Lyceum and believes his knowledge to be far superior of the group. "You Orobhastards are so ignorant, living in your troglodytic –"

Spherin interrupts with an accusatory hand gesture, "then why don't you enlighten him sky-lizard lover?"

I sigh and quickly put the animosity to rest with a spell of Silence. I realise sorcery is forbidden on students, but I am not bound by the University in my current role. Out here rules are made spontaneously. Besides, this group will not respond to anything but a militaristic and unyielding hand. Obviously this group is going to be more reluctant to adopt the ethics and values of social change and unity I am attempting to teach.

Individualism is so entrenched in our society; it feeds this group's animosity towards each other like a smorgasbord of power and privilege. I give an inward sign of exasperation. With their lips and tongues numb and mouths temporarily out of commission I resume the lesson with a few adaptations...

Chapter 3

3.1 Rung #2: Erikson's Background – Writing in Neo-Liberal Canada

Brian Attebery (1980), an English professor whose area of study is fantasy and science fiction argues that, “unlike the novelist, whose responsibility is to portray the society around them, the fantasist must create an entire world, distinct from their own and yet intimately connected with it, reflecting its beliefs, desires and fears” (p.15). Just as fantasists cannot disconnect themselves from the structures and processes that shape the worlds in which they live, they cannot wholly separate those structures and processes from the worlds they create. As a result, there are always elements of the author present in the novel.

In line with the ecological perspective of the ladder, we need to look at Erikson not only through his textual work, but also his environment. Margaret Syverson, a professor of rhetoric and composition at the University of Texas speaks to this with her examination of literary composing in the form of reading, writing and text working concertedly with the environment to establish an ecological system. Syverson (1999) posits that writing occurs in ecological systems involving not only social, but environmental structures that constrain and enable what writers think, feel and write. This ecological systemic approach to composition and reading includes four components: 1) distribution being the cognitive process of writing that is divided and shared among agents and structures in the environment; 2) emergence is the self-organization arising globally in networks connected to each other and operating locally so the social, historical or cultural situations of the author can influence the text, evolving it into new areas or genres so that new forms emerge such as fan fiction; 3) embodiment which is not

only the physical act of reading, grounds our conceptual structures, our perceptions, our actions and our interactions with each other and with the environment while it speaks to the fact that readers, writers and texts are physically embodied both in their structures and interactions; and 4) enaction is the principle that knowledge is the result of an ongoing interpretation that emerges through activities and experiences situated in specific environments (Syverson, 1999).

In looking specifically at Erikson's educational background in archeology and anthropology and the environments within which his books were written, his use of enaction allows for the interpretation of his experiences and ideas in his series that emerges from continuing activities and events throughout his surroundings (Syverson, 1999). Through the interactive process of composing and writing, enaction enables the writer to become shaped by the works they create while simultaneously building their own literary works (Syverson, 1999). For example, Erikson's formative background in anthropology has allowed him to build the Malazan world from the macro-level where the structures on individuals' lives impact their actions and behaviours. Case in point, the Malazan Empire which is "weighted by might... [offers] a tyranny of demons [and] a sad comment on humanity" (Erikson, 1999, p. 216).

With his background in archeology and anthropology, Erikson interprets many of the everyday experiences within the cultures he represents in his books by borrowing from his formal educational training. This is demonstrated in the following passage:

Heat and smoke from the hearths, the aromas of cooking meats, tubers, melted marrow. The nasal voices of the women singing as they went about their day's modest demands. The grunts and gasps of lovemaking, the chants of children.

Someone might be working an antler tine, the spiral edge of a split long-bone, or a core of flint. Another kneeling by the stream, scraping down a hide with polished blades and thumbnail scrapers and nearby there was the faint depression marking a pit of sand where other skins had been buried. (Erikson, 2009, p. 58).

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that when interpretation is not for the sake of interpretation it ventures into “its author’s cleverness... becoming something else... something made, something fashioned” (p. 317). These understandings then become personal architectures based on other people’s constructions (Geertz, 1973). There comes the danger that in building constructions upon constructions the facts becomes obscured and the voices of the indigenous societies are kept silent. It then leads to broad-based assumptions that generalize any society to represent the whole of society, which is problematic. Geertz (1973) furthers this notion by claiming that determining the essence of societies and civilizations within notions of a quintessential village “is palpable nonsense” (p. 319). However, what Erikson is attempting to promote is a broader sense and more complex picture of the lives of the characters within his books. The realism in his anthropological descriptions manifests yet obscures human-driven attributes such as power, faith, oppression, passion, authority, beauty, violence and love (Geertz, 1973) inherent in the societies and the characters he creates.

Moving away from Erikson’s anthropological background there is evidence of his archeological training. McGuire (2008) an archeologist, claims that in seeking to gain knowledge about the world through site excavations, the dead were officially forgotten, whereby modern day archeologists work to recover the memory of those left behind in their potsherds, tools and graves. In evidencing Erikson’s archeological education, the

Malazan Book of the Fallen series is essentially a eulogy to the dead heroes and villains in his secondary world narrative. As a eulogy, the series reinforces the notion of forgotten dead and the “act of recovering the memory of the victims” (McGuire, 2008, p. 1).

The archeological aspects of Erikson’s work become evident in the manner through which the histories and traditions are revealed within character introspection and retrospection. Characters such as Anomander Rake, leader of the Tiste Andii, believed to be around three hundred thousand years old offer a unique perspective on the history of the secondary world and the people in it. The memories of long-lived races such as the Jaghut or the Azathanai Caladan Brood depict ancient histories, wars and tragedies through their personal accounts. His depiction of archeological factors is further demonstrated through his description of various races. For example the Tiste Edur, lived in village longhouses similar to the pre-contact northern Iroquoian First Nations, with “dwellings’ outer walls decorated with centuries of trophy shields and whale bones clung to the underside of the roof’s overhang, including the doorway to the house which was decorated with totems stolen from rival tribes, including strips of fur, beaded hide, shells, talons, and teeth” (Erikson, 2004, p. 37-38).

Out of all the students Avolor seems to identify the most with the anthropological history of Erikson’s novels. As we sat before a dying fire at the end of a long lesson, the Warrior-Captain gave a rare moment of vulnerability by sharing a story. While he spoke he admitted many of the cultures depicted in the books had cultural similarities to the history of his people. The Orobhast are descendants of the nomadic Spider people whom

lived on the continent of Mirrendore. They were so named because of the unique web-like structures they built as homes. The children and mothers lived primarily at the centre surrounded by the huts of the grandparents and elders, with the outside reinforced dwellings of the men and chiefs. The dome-like huts were built high in the canopies of the Tappas trees in the Glebe forest with thick ropes and ladders connecting the homes. Being a pacifistic race, the Spider people built their homes in the trees to protect their families from the on-going land battles between the Skylarkrin and Valmorah realms. During the Battle of Anguish with the invasion of the Yish and Quol, the forest was decimated and the Spider people became a nomadic group travelling in search of the elusive Tappas trees that they believed existed elsewhere on the continent.

Unfortunately, in the ages that passed, the Tappas trees were never found and the Spider people began to lose their culture. They no longer embraced a communal living ethos and the men were forced to make travel decisions that took them farther and farther away from their families, leaving their people vulnerable to attack. Many were taken as slaves and forced to join the war efforts while others were transported to Embore to work for the Empire as it attempted to expand its hold over that continent. The Spider people were no more, instead becoming a ruthless, bloodthirsty warrior race. Emperor Rasthimer seeing this cruelty as making for excellent warriors in his growing army offered them the Blackwood forest in exchange for their continued support of his war efforts. It was then that the Orobhast were born.

Though I was aware of Avolor's history the other students were not. The tragic circumstances and genocides of many races in our world is rarely documented and taught to successive generations. Even the chronicles of the Empires is something our

historians and politician like to keep quiet. Governments and the ideologies of the time are something we don't often consider when examining literature in Embore. Often because our inquiries go nowhere due to unwanted surveillance and the strict control of written works by the Empire. With Erikson's works I believe it is necessary to examine them contextually through a literary socio-historical and critical approach which seeks to understand the texts based on the cultural and historical events taking place at the time it was written. I think it will give the students a better understanding of how literature reflects the current world and how that world exerts its influence over a writer. The research for this lesson was exhausting, but again with the help of some friends (I won't name whom for fear of death) I was able to gather some interesting details about Erikson's bewildering political and economic time and the strange now extinct nation called Canada.

In Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series, "myth as a thematic motif is constantly recurring and the anthropological interest in different peoples and races existing within the world of the cycle, their beliefs, customs and mythology" (Trebicki, 2014, p. 51) becomes evident. The mythopoeic potential of solidarity and community in the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series has potentially arisen out of Erikson's response to the many national myths in Canada that propagate false and potentially damaging ideas. Within our country, these "national mythologies are created not only from civil society, but also from its institutions, public policies and government" (Rose, 2003, p. 154). Throughout the history of our country, "British settlers believed that Canada as part of the British Empire was a moral example to all nations on earth" (McLaren, 2004, p. 29).

The abolition of slavery in our country was seen as a “moral victory for the British Empire over the United States and the fact that thousands of fugitive slaves fled to Canada via the Underground Railroad to live in freedom, reinforced a sense of superiority among white citizens whose myths presented Canada as a land of freedom and equal opportunity by virtue of its British character” (McLaren, 2004, p. 29). The egalitarian potential of British law permeated our country into present-day myths situating Canada as an inclusive community that promotes a global reputation as welcoming. This is especially pertinent to our nation’s open immigration policy promoting ethnic diversity and our unique Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. For Canadians, immigrants and foreigners alike, Canada often situates itself as the ideal place in which we work together, are inclusive and promote a mythology of multiculturalism (Rose, 2003). The myth of multiculturalism that is so pervasive within our country makes claims that racial equity and harmony exist in Canada and that our country consistently supports a high quality of life for everyone, whether we are white, settler, Aboriginal or a visible minority (Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011). Furthermore, the ubiquity of this myth becomes so normalized that it is invisible (Simpson et al., 2011) to citizens, structured institutions and the international community. These myths place Canada in an enviable position with a social welfare system, plenty of natural resources and land and universal healthcare where the government is accountable to its citizens (Rose, 2003).

Pertinent to these nation-building myths are the ideals of meritocracy and individualism. Meritocratic ethics are presented as consensual values that are central to a fair and just society that treats everyone equally (Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Every, 2005). These egalitarian arguments draw on principles such as freedom, fairness, individual

rights and equal opportunity (Augoustinos et al., 2005). This further suggests that the ideology of meritocracy has a connection to individualism that privileges the stance of egalitarianism (Augoustinos et al., 2005); thus allowing the principles of individual achievement, merit, equality and freedom to act as central organizing parameters of individualist ideology that is central to neo-liberalism. Consequently, this perspective serves to maintain the “status quo while obscuring the benefits, which accrue to the dominant groups within society” (Augoustinos et al., 2005, p. 331). Therefore, the myth of meritocratic achievement infused by individualist, neo-liberal and capitalist ideologies not only “serve to rationalize and justify existing social inequities in the language of fairness, justice and equality, but also function to reproduce, perpetuate [and obscure] them by maintaining white privilege and disadvantaging minority groups” (Augoustinos et al., 2005, p. 337).

Prior to the first publication of the first book in the series, *Gardens of the Moon*, Erikson was writing in a time when Canada was experiencing an economic and political shift. Living and working through the 1980s era and beyond has no doubt impacted Erikson’s world-building within his books. According to Finkel (2013), in the post-WWII years, Canadians were moving towards behaviour patterns that reinforced the aforementioned myths of individualising capitalist structures. Critical theorist and philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, claims that capitalism objectifies ourselves and others to be exploited for profit (Ingram, 2010). Furthermore, Habermas agrees with Marx’s assertions that capitalism encourages the hyperextension of money-driven economic relations (Ingram, 2010). The economic-focused ethic of capitalism lends itself to neo-liberalism, which is a “market-based political ideology emphasizing reduced government

intervention, free market forces, individual responsibility and the extension of global capitalist relations” (Porter, 2012, p. 19-20). This ideology has been enacted globally for the last 30 years and has been on the Canadian political agenda since the 1980s (Porter, 2012).

With the election of Brian Mulroney in 1984 and subsequently Jean Chrétien in 1993 there were major socio-political shifts, resulting in modifications to social service programs and income support programs, thereby establishing an erosion of social welfare in our country (Whittington & Williams, 1995). The social control methods created in the early 1980s including reducing eligibility and benefits, particularly under unemployment insurance and social assistance; privatization of social programs; decreasing social program budgets, taxing back assistance benefits and terminating some social programs (Whittington & Williams, 1995) are reflected in Erikson’s series. For example, the deteriorating standard of living of the Letherii Empire through greed and private enterprise depicted in the books parallels the rise of neo-liberal Canadian governmental policies which produce new forms of inequality, economic polarization and new forms of impoverishment (Gunewardena, 2009), illustrating how such political initiatives can be a consequence of the autocratic regime embedded in the Letherii economy. At the time of his writing and publishing the series, Erikson’s depiction of the Letherii Empire is a direct critique of Canada’s social, political and economic climate that can be attributed to the newly established neo-liberal managerialism emanating from the late 1990s and the continued power of global economic systems (Gunewardena, 2009), that value a market managerialism established through capitalism.

The recent trends for market takeovers by foreign enterprises within Canada speak to neo-liberal capitalism and globalization suggested by Gunewardena, operating within a neo-colonialist framework. Neo-colonialism “is a term that refers to the continuation of Western colonialism by non-traditional means” (Prasad, 2003, p. 6) and in particular, through attempts at political, economic, ideological and cultural control to sustain and create dominance (Banerjee, Chio, & Mir, 2009). The principles of Western neo-liberalist governmentality and political economy were directly imported from the “colonial metropole (the central territory of a colonialist empire)” (Mckay, 2000, p. 643). During the time prior to his publishing *Gardens of the Moon*, Erikson saw the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement between the US and Canada, during which American corporate ownership of our country has increased substantially, especially where US direct investment in Canada was for takeovers and not for the establishment of new businesses (Hurtig, 1999). Conceived in this manner, the Canadian neo-liberal order was not only inspired by its colonialist British paradigm, but also by its American competition (Mckay, 2000). Our country opened the door for American corporate giants to impose economic neo-colonialism on the Canadian business sector by virtually decimating Canadian owned business that have either been forced to close their doors or succumb to buyouts by corporations south of the border. Though slightly dated, a few nation-wide examples that come to mind are Eaton’s, Zellers and Future Shop. As US companies engage not only in the Canadian economy, but the global market as well, they are creating their own expertise and engaging in their own forms of corporate neo-colonialism in other parts of the world (McKenna, 2011).

Economic neo-liberalism through a post-colonial critique scrutinizes both the socially constructed aspect of corporate geographical expansion through capitalism and the historical connectedness of the colonial past with the globalized present (McKenna, 2011). This colonial past becomes evident throughout Erikson's secondary world, borrowing from elements of Canada's colonialist history through the expansion of the British and French colonies, which reflects the colonialist ideology during the time he was writing the Malazan series. The Malazan Empire's expansion and conquests of foreign lands employed practices of local governance and almost complete autonomy in its conquered provinces (Vike, 2009); which is similar to the colony of Canada becoming part of the British Empire. After a Malazan conquest, most of the power is handed back to the previous local rulers, but is combined with the presence of representatives of the Empire (Vike, 2009) sometimes initiating regional wars of resistance. However, there is a post-colonial and critical fantasy component to how Erikson portrays the Empire's involvement. Unlike in colonialist regimes where decisions are made for the people and local culture is erased, peoples brought under Malazan rule are provided religious freedom and cultural inclusion, not to mention medical, architectural and infrastructural advantages (Vike, 2009) similar to a welfare state. Jürgen Habermas, philosopher, sociologist and critical theorist, posits that a welfare state "must intervene in the everyday lifeworld [Habermas uses Husserl's notion of lifeworld positing an inter-relational and holistic understanding of ourselves, society and our world (Ingram, 2010)] of citizens, which includes those institutions responsible for socialization, social integration and the preservation of culture: the family, the educational system and the public sphere of mass information media" (Ingram, 2010, p. 269). In the series, the Malazan Empire is a

comparative analogy to Canada's welfare state and a possible post-colonial response to the colonial past of the country. However, it must be noted from a critical perspective that the Canadian welfare model suggested by Erikson for the Malazan Empire is loosely based on a redistributive mechanism. In many instances, that model cannot be an assumed solution for all countries, because the ability for many of the world's developing nations to establish effective redistributive or allocative social development policies is very limited (Milliken & Krause, 2002). Furthermore, the "welfare structures that are in place often play a central role in regime legitimation and maintenance strategies, through neo-patrimonial distributive structures that are not efficient in an economic sense and that can, therefore, increase societal fissures or exacerbate inter-group conflicts" (Milliken & Krause, 2002, p. 761)

I noticed an expression of perplexity on Captain Aura's face as my lecture came to a close for the day. A few of the others were yawning and Cindar was resting his chin against his chest as he reclined against a tent pole. I could see the exhaustion from not only the ongoing refugee crisis, but also the mental fatigue in unlearning entrenched ideologies and learning novel histories. The resistance was starting to fade but the process was proving to be a little daunting as expressed by Mace's befuddlement. As much as I, like the students, would have been inclined to end the lesson I did not want to leave anyone in a state of confusion and since both Brèleans say relatively little I wondered if he might have something worthy of all ears.

“I’m thinking you have something to add Mace”, I implied while tossing my riding gloves at Cindar, hitting his cheek to wake him up and shaking my head as he refused to awaken.

Leander cleared his throat and spat into the fire, he cocked a cautious glance at me. “I kind of like the politicking of Erikson’s Canada. It’s like our own Empire without all that market and money bullshit. I don’t see what’s so damn bad about it”.

The tent flap was thrown aside as a shadow moved. “Because the tendencies towards individualism within capitalist society such as Erikson’s displace collectivistic values not unlike the ones the UC is trying to promote”.

The deep, melodic voice of my husband entered the tent. I smiled to myself. A soldier with analytic brains, such an anomaly! No wonder I married the brooding Lord Commander.

His voice alone roused the group to attention including the sleeping Morren, whom quickly rose to his feet and bowed in reverent awe. In the North realm it was a rare occasion for those of court status to fraternise with a low born plebeian. The Lord Commander’s fierce amethyst gaze narrowed on the Captain.

“Of all people, I would expect more from you Delarkin. The Morren are the ancient founding race of this world, our ancestor’s sorcery created these lands. And you whom have been educated at the Lyceum have the audacity to sleep through such important discussions”.

Cindar lowered his gaze and glanced at the brazier. “I didn’t think —.”

“That’s exactly the problem with your generation. You don’t think. The whole reason my wife is using the forbidden works of fantasy is to examine the polluted ideological

thinking that has plagued our world and Erikson's. Our Empire, like Erikson's time has displaced the focus on community and solidarity. More societal attention is given to individualistic and materialistic ends like our own Empire. In order to better serve the refugees and to fight the ongoing war with the Yish Empire we must begin to work together. These values are what the UC and the Morren stand for. I will not be shamed by your insolence and ignorance again Delarkin."

The Lord Commander passed his scrutinizing and calculating gaze over the other students and grunted. "I would say your lessons are over for now. Return to your regiments, there are new orders". He then turned to me, "our presence is requested at the Moon castle. I will make arrangements for you to plan your next lesson in due time. Though I suggest you address the concept of community with your students before continuing work on the novels".

In my mind there is no doubt that the rise of neo-liberal capitalism and subsequently individualism has forced our notions of community to disintegrate, thereby affecting our abilities to work towards collective goals that benefit society as a whole.

And with that I take my husband's suggestion to heart because even I have a hard time arguing against his proclivities.

Chapter 4

4.1 Rung #3: Notions of Community and Communitarianism

The word community is a multi-faceted reality which according to Mason (2000) is inherently vague consisting of shifting definitions. For some, it can be a geographical boundary made by roads, fences, borders or postal codes. For others, it can be a social space where we share common interests, ideas and beliefs or a place where we foster emotional identity. Community also has the capacity to promote coherence and wholeness that incorporates diversity. Taking examples from Erikson's novels, the enslaved Imass believed community "possessed freedom, a will of [its] own that could shape destiny [calling] it growth, emergence [and] knowledge" (Erikson, 1999, p. 415). For Karsa Orlong¹, a Teblor warrior, love and community are moments that flourish through the means of civilization (Erikson, 2011). Additionally, the Tiste Andii believed community was a gift (Erikson, 2008). Essentially, no matter what community one belongs to, it provides its members the most fundamental and meaningful experiences outside their homes by establishing connections to each other.

According to Power and Wilson (2000), communities have three interlocking aspects: the home and immediate surroundings, services such as stores and schools which reflect the social composition of the area and the local environment giving an intangible, but powerful signal of who we are and how we should behave. However, the concept of community does not always have to have a physical locality or limit. Andrew Mason (2000), a political theorist, posits that the concept of community also has blurred boundaries; in other words, "a group of people may exemplify degrees or aspects of a

¹ In light of the potentially controversial and divisive nature of this character, I will offer a more nuanced discussion of Karsa Orlong and his contribution to my discussion about community at the end of this section.

community without fully exemplifying one” (Mason, 2000, p. 27). If we look at the notion of the army as community in Erikson’s books, armies are a complex institution made up of multiple communities, not only in terms of its regiments, but in terms of “cult groups, soldier's dependents and the socially isolated families of commanding officers” (Haynes, 1999 , p. 10). Once a member of a regiment, the army often “embroils soldiers within a complex web of symbols and cultural references transforming them as individuals, even as they transformed the army/community of which they were part” (Harris, 2014, p. 81). In this manner, soldiers are seen as a distinct group by themselves and the wider society, helping to foster a broadly-sensed community that transcended ethnic, regional and class backgrounds (Harris, 2014). This is evidenced in Erikson’s series with the creation of two army communities; one being the Bonehunters a group of approximately forty soldiers previously known as the Malaz 14th Army whom managed to escape the second fall of Y'Ghatan by crawling through the buried ruins (Erikson, 2006), and the other, the Bridgeburners, an army community created by crossing the Holy Desert because:

As the wind and sun did to the sand and stone, Raraku shaped all who had known it. Crossing it had etched the souls of the three companies that would come to be called the Bridgeburners... Raraku burned [their] pasts away, making all that came before a trail of ashes. (Erikson, 2000, p. 131)

With the above examples, Haynes is suggesting that there are common beliefs and prevailing lifestyles that make up the lives of members within the army community. However, even though a community might be based on shared values, a shared way of life and mutual recognition, individual members might systematically exploit one another

(Mason, 2000) through power imbalances. For example, men and women might be of the same army community as a Bonehunter or Bridgeburner, but labour divisions, military ranking and social and economic inequities can be exploitative. While both armies exhibit mutual recognition, it does not necessarily guarantee it, because individual soldiers within the army community may not identify with the entire group's perspectives (Mason, 2000). Additionally, failures for mutual recognition may occur when members claim an individual does not meet the agreed set of criteria for group membership or when there is disagreement over the criteria itself (Mason, 2000).

An important aspect of community is a sense of belonging. Community belonging reflects emotional ties and a sense of place-based identity that individuals develop through the experiences and memories they create within places (Schellenberg, Lu, Schimmele, & Hou, 2018). Community belonging is also a function of local social ties and organizational membership (Schellenberg et al., 2018). It is within this belonging that a sense of community develops, entailing an attitude of bonding with other members of one's locale, including mutual concerns and shared values (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, & Pfefferbaum, 2008), not to mention the potential for the establishment of hierarchies and exclusionary practices. Community and belonging is also characterized by a high concern for community issues, respect for and service to others, sense of connection and needs fulfillment (Norris et al., 2008).

A sense of belonging also entails a membership which corresponds to the feeling of being part of a community; this aspect embraces the perception of shared boundaries, common history, symbols, sense of emotional safety and personal investment in community life (Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014). A common history and shared

symbols as establishing belonging and community is illustrated in Erikson's novels with individual soldiers in the Malazan army creating highly symbolised squad names for their fellow comrades. For example, Fiddler is so named for the "scorched fiddle strapped to his back" (Erikson, 1999, p. 26) and Sergeant Sunrise named for "[n]ew beginnings, just like dawn breaking on the horizon. [Where] every time [he] hear[s] it out loud, [he'll] be reminded of how [he's] begun again. Fresh. No debts, no disloyal friends, no cut-and-run wives" (Erikson, 2009, p. 313).

Within Erikson's books a sense of community and belonging is further developed through the fulfillment of needs, thus representing the benefits that people derive from their community membership and refers to the positive relationship between individuals and their communities to the extent that the community helps its members meet their personal and group needs (Talò et al., 2014). Shared emotional connection also unveils the connection of common repertoires, such as history, traditions and significant events, thereby strengthening the quality of social ties (Talò et al., 2014). For example, in book number nine, *Dust of Dreams*, Onrack T'emlava of the Imass of Logros clan knew that a shared emotional connection in his community meant traditions like "[t]he hunt and the feast, the gathering and the shaping. Days and nights, births and deaths, laughter and grief, tales told and retold, the mind within unfolding to reveal itself like a gift to every kin, every warm, familiar face" (Erikson, 2009, p. 59). Onrack also knew that this connection was not only felt spiritually with "[e]very appeasement of the spirits who sought the protection of that precious peace, that perfect continuity... [t]he ghosts of ancestors hovered close to stand sentinel over the living" (Erikson, 2009, p. 59), but also

with memories weaving “strands that bound everyone together, and when those memories were shared, that binding grew ever stronger” (Erikson, 2009, p. 59).

For as much as Erikson promotes the notions of community, there is also counter-rhetoric where he is examining the breakdown of community that he might be seeing in Canadian society at the time of his writing. For Erikson, living and writing in Canada is not only to reside within the neo-liberal market-driven economy of our country, but rather to be “transformed into a malleable and disposable appendage of advanced capitalism” (Arfken, 2018, p. 687). The effects of capitalism that he might have witnessed in Canada could have illustrated an economic system that promotes consumerism, competitive individualism as well as undermining a sense of community solidarity (E. Wright, 2015). It is this type of solidarity that is vitally important to one’s sense of belonging within a community; however, individualist values can and are eroding our notions of community. To further illustrate this notion, it was Mao Zedong who once argued that individualism was evil and that the selfishness associated with it would harm the collective. He further advocated that self-interests are not inconsequential; rather, that the success of the collective ensures the well-being of the individual (Earley & Gibson, 1998). In an individualist society the emphasis resides on “an ‘I’ consciousness, where autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial security and need for specific friendships are privileged” (Brewer & Chen, 2007, p. 133-134). In Erikson’s seventh book in the series, *Reaper’s Gale*, Denabaris of Letheras parallels Tse-tung’s argument when he states that “[t]rouble arrives when individualism becomes godlike and sacrosanct and no greater service to any other ideal (including community) is possible... [i]n such a system rapacious greed thrives behind the guise of

freedom and the worst aspects of human nature come to the fore” (Erikson, 2007, p. 135). In contrast, collectivist societies “stress a ‘we’ consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, duties and obligations, need for stable and predetermined friendship and group decision” (Brewer & Chen, 2007, p. 133-134).

According to Leafe Christian (2003), “community is not just about living together, but about the reasons for doing so” (p. xvi) and within my arguments for community and new myth creation centred on solidarity and collectivity, there exists a naïveté about communities acting in harmony. Present within my assertions and the concept of community is idealism, which Leafe Christian (2003) argues as stemming from a vision of wanting to live a better life, an idea that is slightly nostalgic that looks back on a paradise lost. However, communities are not always an Eden of fellowship and togetherness. In fact, my analysis of Erikson’s character, Karsa Orlong, offers an opportunity to critique the idealistic notions around community that I have previously discussed. For example, Karsa’s violent and aggressive nature throughout the books brings into focus the often intense and turbulent occurrences within and between communities. According to Bockstael (2017), communities are systems of conflict as well as cooperation, whereby the social, political and economic macro-structure cannot be ignored. Individuals living within communities are continually shaped by the various institutions, systems and structures that govern their lives and inherent to the maintenance of these establishments is internal hierarchy. Intrinsic to Karsa’s community is the creation of hierarchy and with it the means of attributing status and prestige based on barbaric prowess. This privilege-based line of dominance highlights the power relations within communities, “prompting questions about whose voices are heard and how mutual

respect and equity of treatment can be fostered” (Anderson & McCune, 2013 p. 285). Furthermore, the social pyramids established by hierarchical ranking form foundations that reinforce and propagate social inequities within areas like gender, race and class. In this way, communities “place their own interpretive constructions” (A. P. Cohen, 1985, p. 40) upon others within and across community-based groups.

Karsa states that in his “village, no one is a stranger, [which he believes] is what civilization has turned its back on” (Erikson, 2011, p. 755). Karsa’s vision is to “make a world of villages” (Erikson, 2011, p. 755). He believes that villages, as representative of community, are an answer to the current civilized society of the Malazan world which is “characterized by deceit, decadence, conspiracy... tyranny [and] the loss of freedom” (Erikson, para. 4) through slavery. Karsa’s ideals around community are rising out of what he sees as “lacking or missing in the wider culture” (Leafe Christian, 2003, p. xvi). From this perspective, Erikson’s character represents the self-motivated aspects of community in an attempt to carve out its own sense of identity or niche in society. Like Karsa, any members of a community that identify with the values of their community encourage “personal beliefs in the right to espouse different views [and] to argue and disagree with others... irrespective of the internal disagreements and disputes and the cultural differences between different groups and between individuals” (Cantle, 2005, p. 119). In the Malazan world, Karsa is promoting his community through a form of inter-continental identity for the Teblor. Like all communities that attempt to establish local, national or international identities, this self-concept formation encompasses a wide range of different ideas, most of which are subjective and value-laden, but also geographically specific and culturally homogeneous whereupon they are posited as sites for affirmation,

identification and political expression (Cantle, 2005; Hill Collins, 2010). Conceived in that manner, community identity formation establishes symbolic and physical boundaries. Communities strive to maintain these allegorical and real boundaries by instituting an “us versus them” mentality (i.e. Karsa, emulating the ideals of community, against the world). This sentiment of distinctiveness leads communities to reassert and reaffirm their boundaries (A. P. Cohen, 1985). The reaffirmation within these physical or metaphorical walls, borders and boundaries allows community members to establish exclusionary and inclusionary practices which establishes decisions on who gets to be part of the community and who doesn't. Within their confines, the community ascribes cultural rules and values on all members within that community through which members are expected to adhere, model and respect. Furthermore, the social construction of a community's identity inextricably defines who they are by reference to who they are not (Cantle, 2005).

Karsa's violent and often brutal actions in the series can attest to the aggressive commitment to a bounded community through the ways in which people use, regard and revise some of their customary social forms and practices (Cantle, 2005). The deliberate maintenance of Teblor customs such as, “culturally-acceptable rapes [and] the slaughter of townsfolk [through raids reaffirms Karsa's] unquenchable self-belief” (Erikson, n.d., para. 13), in which he infuses personal meanings to serve his own symbolic purposes (A. P. Cohen, 1985). The meanings which Karsa finds in his “behaviour goes far beyond the functions or character of [his] behaviour as [they] may be perceived” (A. P. Cohen, 1985, p. 42) by the reader. The Teblor customs and practices become “both a celebration of the individual, by those who stand in a certain relationship to him or her and also a

celebration of the community itself since it is an accomplishment in its valued behaviour” (A. P. Cohen, 1985, p. 58). Through this behavior, Karsa illustrates how communities and their members “draw the conventions of community about them, like a cloak around the shoulders, to protect them from other people’s ways of doing things, other cultures and other communities” (A. P. Cohen, 1985, p. 63).

The above argument illustrates that the new myth creation around notions of community I am proposing must lie somewhere between an idealised version and Karsa’s trouble-laden system. Without a critique of community there would be no inherent value to my academic discussion, however, the critique also makes evident that my assertions within this project lie in the realm of possibility. While there is merit in discussing a new myth centred on community, solidarity and collectivity, the inherent values that draw people together for collective goals form the basis of any community which I argue are inherently motivated towards the goodness of humankind, righteousness, oneness and harmony.

Fish stew again, urgh!!! I am definitely considering the Shar motto of ‘if it swims, walks or breaths it makes for bad eating’. I’ve never considered sustaining oneself solely on vegetables, fruit, bread and cheese, but if I have to endure one more day of the squiggly tickle fish I’m going to join their camps. I watch with revulsion as one of the UC camp cook ladles the thick glutinous mass into my bowl while an assistant slaps a generous amount of buttered bread on my tray. Ah for the want of a baked noolta bulb and a succulent swamp melon! I glance reluctantly at the overflowing bowl while heading in the direction of the other social work educators and higher ranking officers when I feel a

nudge at my elbow. I notice the squat and cheerful presence of colleague and close friend Vale wizard J'rome Wix smile ebulliently up at me.

“Tickle fish! Oh how I do love the bounty of the seas! You are so fortunate here. In the Vale we have nothing reminiscent of this delicacy!” He spoke while eyeing my meal. I took the bread and handed him the tray, “it’s all yours!” Glad to be rid of the revolting slop.

He smiled joyfully as his eyes lit up taking the tray quickly from my grasp. “Why don’t we eat together and you can tell me of your teaching woes? And don’t tell me it all goes well. I know you are embarking on radical pedagogy with that fantasy tome you are studying”.

It did not take me long to give a detailed description of my lessons thus far and the route our discussions under the literature ladder were taking. It was then that J'rome embarked in one of his soliloquies about the many interesting scholars of Erikson’s time. As a matter of personal interest, Wix took pleasure in getting to know more about a certain time period or nation by reading the contemporary criticisms by local authors. He particularly enjoyed the political and economic commentators. Whether he agreed with them or not was another matter altogether, and if you asked his opinion, the answer would most likely take you into the next age.

All I know is it was worth suffering through his tirade, because in an attempt to look for any opportunity to teach his outlandish theories, J'rome offered to guest-lecture a lesson!

*In his 1996 book, *Boom, Bust and Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift in the 21st Century*, David Foot, a Canadian economist and*

demographer suggests that our country's social cohesion is at risk. Social cohesion is based on shared values of societal legitimacy and solidarity believed to be important to the generalized culture and sense of belonging in any given community (Jaffe & Quark, 2006). It is a process whereby solidarities, groups, identities and communities are in a constant state of flux as they attempt to accommodate the changes around them based on notions that people have the same opportunities to succeed (Jaffe & Quark, 2006). To discuss the growing disintegration of social cohesion and its impact on Canadians' sense of belonging and community, Foot employed demographic research by dividing the Canadian population into various generational cohorts. The findings of this research demonstrated that Canadians have "vested interests rather than traditions and far from having anything of value to teach each other, each cohort lives in a world of its own making, deeply suspicious of the others and concerned only to prevail in a world of shrinking resources and growing demand for them" (R. Wright, 2000, p. 14). The book further contends that the slowly eroding social cohesion in our country is claimed to be driving deep wedges into our most immediate sources of identity, community, and tradition (R. Wright, 2000). There is a point to be made however, that neo-liberalism and its effects of hierarchical stratification within communities has legitimised highly individualised economic systems that are driving these wedges in Canadian communities while affecting social cohesion.

Along similar lines, Robert Putnam, an American political scientist, posits that the reasons for the disintegration of community lie not only in neo-liberalism, as Arfken and Wright discuss, but also from a loss of social capital, which is a component of the social cohesion Foot speaks to. Social capital can be defined by two perspectives; 1) from a

micro level standpoint which operates exclusively on the individual level, consisting of norms of reciprocity, civic participation, trust in others and the benefits of membership (Mohnen, Groenewegen, Völker, Flap, 2011) and 2) a macro level aspect which is accessed collectively enabling people to participate in effective local decision making, to better monitor government agencies, lobby for improved services and to secure supports from friends, neighbors and the community (Clever, 2005). In using the first perspective, Putnam contends that social capital erosion can be understood generationally. Consequently, reinforcing notions that social capital is inherited from generation to generation through repeated actions that permit the buildup of trusts and norms (Dhesi, 2000). Foot also relies on similar claims drawing from Canadian generational demographic research. Some of Foot's assertions are along the same lines as Putnam, which could be due to the Americanization of popular culture and the economy within postwar Canada (Mckay, 2000), postulating that recent generations of Canadians are also affected by similar societal trends and structural influences as our neighbours south of the border. Putnam (2000) asserts that the baby-boom generation (b. 1946-1964) in work-life are less comfortable in bureaucracies, less loyal to a particular firm and more insistent on autonomy because they place more emphasis on individualism. This may be because of the uniformity of the post-war society in which they were born such as the nuclear family (Putnam, 2000) that focused on social conformity. Consequently, Putnam (2000) claims that throughout their lives baby-boomers have expressed more libertarian attitudes than their elders and less respect for authority, religion and patriotism and late baby-boomers are more cynical about authorities, less trusting, less participatory, more self-centred and more materialistic.

Additionally, Putnam (2000) also postulates that the trend continued with the generation X (b. 1965-1980) which accelerated the tendencies towards individualism, with an increased emphasis on the personal and private over the public and collective due to the societal influence of the previous generation.

One issue with Putnam examining social capital on a micro and individualised level is that he positions social capital as a collection of resources, in which, according to Lin (1999), are embedded in a social structure accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions. By this definition, the notion of social capital contains three ingredients: resources embedded in a social structure, accessibility to such social resources by individuals and use or mobilization of such social resources by individuals in purposive actions (Lin, 1999). If left unchecked, this individualised form of social capital can not only reinforce facets of neo-liberalism, but it fails to acknowledge that not everyone has the same access to resources or possesses the inherent factors necessary to build social capital, which negates the impacts of the manifestations of broad inequalities permeating hegemonic social structures and institutions. Furthermore, it is also important to mention that generational demographic research and reliance on such findings, as Foot and Putnam do, can be problematic because this type of investigative study is rooted in positivist traditions to mobilize the problems within generations as an illustration of progressive time that is mechanistic and externalized (D. Scott, 2014). This form of research is very quantitative and therefore, does not take into account the historical forces that may be affecting generational shifts that are part of one's socio-political environment. The reliance on the linearity of Putnam's generational process does not allow for an "analysis grounded in the dramatic growth in centralized economic and

governmental power, the mounting impact of globalization and the simultaneous institutional expansion (and ideological narrowing) of media culture” (Boggs, 2001, p. 288) over the last six decades.

Notwithstanding the fact that social capital is an important aspect in creating a sense of belonging, as an alternative to its more individualised framework it can be best applied to notions of community in a collective manner. Collective social capital, as opposed to micro level social capital, reflects the character of social relationships within a system realized through members’ levels of collective goal orientation and shared trust (Pearson, Carr, & Shaw, 2008). When looking specifically at it from a collaborative and solidarity stance, social capital’s internal structure establishes linkages among individuals or groups with the collective and specifically, in those features that give the collective cohesiveness and thereby facilitate the pursuit of collective goals (Pearson et al., 2008). Collective social capital involves three complimentary facets: bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding is based on strong ties between immediate family members, neighbours and close friends (Cleaver, 2005). Bridging, gained through association between people of different ethnic, geographical and occupational backgrounds, is seen as more important in terms of creating public benefits (Cleaver, 2005). Linking provides people with the opportunity to promote their interests within structures such as government agencies (Cleaver, 2005). Thus conceived, collective social capital contains three elements intersecting structure and human action: 1) structural embeddedness; 2) opportunity and accessibility; and 3) action-oriented use (Lin, 1999).

Within Canada, Aboriginal peoples have been central, not only to the history, but the tapestry of our nation. Their teachings, life lessons and worldviews have established

collective social capital as the backbone of their culture and society. Borrowing examples of clan-like societies in Erikson's books, such as the Tiste Edur, Barghast and the Teblor to name a few, their values of community and family share those of our nation's Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal holistic approaches model collective social capital and its importance in community-building and one's sense of belonging. Indigenous worldviews emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings with their environments, where human beings and the environment form one large interacting system (Baskin, 2006; Kirmayer, 2009). Thus, human beings have practical and moral obligations to maintain good relations with all aspects of their social, physical and spiritual environment (Kirmayer, 2009). Features such as values, beliefs and behaviours related to spirituality, child-rearing, extended family, veneration of age/wisdom/tradition, respect for nature, generosity and sharing, cooperation and group harmony, autonomy and respect for others (Baskin, 2006; Kirmayer, 2009) not only help build community, but also maintain it. Having a connection to the community and cultural traditions is crucial in that it creates a sense of kinship, solidarity and belonging that is specifically important for Aboriginal people.

The autobiographical tales told by the Elders make reference to core Indigenous values by proffering teaching moments to help the community make sense of their own predicaments and offer hope by drawing on collective history, myths and sacred teachings. In this sense, oral storytelling serves not only to help people make sense of their experience and construct a valued identity, but also ensure the continuity and vitality of a community or a people (Armstrong, 2013; Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011). Narratives also provide a communal or collective dimension

maintained by the circulation of stories invested with cultural power and authority which the individual and groups can use to articulate and assert their identity, affirm core values and attitudes (Armstrong, 2013; Kirmayer et al, 2011). For example, for the Teblor in the book *House of Chains*, “legends and their tales of glory describe an age little different from [the current one, where] the very point of those tales is one of instruction, a code of behaviour [and] the proper way of being a Teblor” (Erikson, 2002, p. 50). From that perspective, Erikson is reminding the reader that collective social capital depends on collectively telling the story of a community’s experience (Norris et al., 2008).

Aboriginal concepts of the person have also been described as socio-centric, communalistic or relational, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals within the family and community (Baskin, 2006; Kirmayer et al., 2009). This relational self is balanced by a strong recognition of individual autonomy of thought, feeling and experience. In addition to this associative orientation, many Aboriginal cultures foster a sort of eco-centric self in which the person and their spirituality is seen as strongly connected to the environment, the animals, plants and forces of nature (Kirmayer et al., 2009). Erikson reflects this notion with the Teblor beliefs that “the spirits that had ruled the land and its people were the bones of rock, the flesh of earth, the hair and fur of forest and glen and their breath was the wind of each season (Erikson, 2002, p. 22)

The way Erikson’s characters and members of different cultural backgrounds work together collaboratively, effort-gathering in a collective social capital manner to fight growing power imbalances with gods or invading empires or even oppressive government structures, speaks to the progressive nature of his writing around the need for

community and collective action, albeit not without some inter-group fighting and resistance. In the final book of the series, *The Crippled God*, Erikson (2011) wrote “the ethics of the world [belong] to society” (p. 373) and it is in this society that communities can come together for social change. I believe such phrases, like those above, written by Erikson, promotes a progressive worldview of community and solidarity that fits well within the realm of critical fantasy. Literature is a very powerful medium in which its platform can communicate not only the particularly avant-garde and dynamic views of Erikson as author, but foster a web of readership that conveys potentially forward-thinking standpoints in broader society. In this manner, literature becomes a form of communication towards community formation. In view of the fact that the conditions of everyday experience of reading are common among Erikson’s readership, states of mind evoked by literary works of art are also shared in common; they are essentially the same, not individualised but occurring concurrently (Waks, 2014). Literature can then create a sense of merger—a suspension of personal boundaries among its readership potentially cutting through entrenched rhetoric and habits of the neo-liberal world that isolate individuals (Waks, 2014). John Dewey, an American philosopher, offers a critique of individualism by stating that “individuals are not isolated atoms, but form many kinds of associations which reshape their interests, responsibilities and aims” (Waks, 2014, p. 42). A community of readership that reflects Dewey’s sentiments is one that would establish a shared understanding of the social world in which a new language about the social and political world could evolve (Eisenberg, 1995). From a critical perspective, Dewey’s concept of community as readership is a place where loyalties, habits and knowledge are

shared, thereby resisting potential oppressive socio-political and structural manipulation (Eisenberg, 1995).

The warm arid breeze stirs the heavily laden branches of the towering tilka trees lining the quiet street; the desiccated rinds of their fruit lying in a sticky carpet of bat guano on the road below. A dim hum of the pier's traffic rumbles in the distance. The tower bells of Mell's Barrow, locally known as Mell's Cats so named for their ringing, reminiscent of a cacophony of felines in heat, pierces the evening air as it reverberates through our memories of the departed. A couple of hulking rats tumble about in nearby Kril Lane and a dog barks as I pass by. Silence ensues once more as I cross under the rusted portcullis of Bane's Gate. There is a stillness in the dry air that penetrates my thoughts, though I remain conscious of the prepubescent wenches soliciting their wares and the faint aroma of tobacco emanating from puffs sent forth by two boys sitting on the granite balustrade, this remains my space for the moment. I do not focus on the dingy sidewalk gutter littered with detritus or the ramshackle homes with broken windows where vagrants reside. My eyes pour over the neglected overgrown rosebush pushing forth its delicate pink petals amidst a tangle of weeds and rubble. I stop and inhale its sweet, heady fragrance above the decay, putridity and filth. I glance around; I am surrounded by a decaying community, a crumbling foundation that has lost itself, its meaning, its identity. However, like the rose there is hope, a renewal waiting to blossom from the jungle of wayward vines.

I was young then, only 19 and in love with the idea that love could conquer all. I was newly recruited into the UC which did most of its work underground in discarded

bunkers and cellars. The Bay Wars came to Brèle like a storm in the night, swift and virulent, leaving nothing in its wake. My grandmother gone, the UC became my family, my one reason to live, to survive. I needed to believe that there was a better world than one filled with war. Yet my work in the UC was anything but a constant war; with myself, the Empire's growing power and the sordid conditions of those we were attempting to help. Little did I realise that the UC and the wars we battled were built on concepts of trust, bonding and collective action. We were a community.

I was brought out of my reverie by the loud spark from the fire and Avalor's grunting about a proper camp stool. Our discussion regarding the importance of collective social capital and community was indeed fruitful and sparked much commentary. Even my own memories surfaced as a result. I thought about sharing these recollections, but paused preferring to reflect. My memories are my own and I want to leave them there. For today's lesson, I still want to stress the importance of community-building although from the more philosophical position of communitarianism.

In the spirit of critical fantasy, what Erikson, Foot, Putnam and Dewey are speaking to what Arthur (1998) claims is a growing perception that there has been an erosion of communal life in contemporary society, in which the answer lies with the need for increased notions of communitarianism throughout society. Originating from the work of classical sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies and his work "*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*" (Community and Civil Society), communitarianism is a philosophical stance originating from academia that developed from a critique of liberal individualism (Cowden & Singh, 2017). Tönnies was interested in understanding the nature of the

social ties that bound people together in a period of emergent capitalism (Cowden & Singh 2017) which Israeli-American sociologist Amatai Etzioni took even further to evolve as a “corrective to the cult of the individual” (Arthur, 1998, p. 355-356).

Communitarianism's basic tenet is that, “modern, atomised society has lost a sense of social solidarity, whereby both State solutions and the market have failed thus appealing to concepts of fraternity, solidarity, civic pride, social obligation and tradition” (Arthur, 1998, p. 355-356). As an alternative to neo-liberal individualism, Archard (2000) points out three communitarian principles by which we can begin to build inclusive and collaborative communities: 1) co-operative enquiry; 2) mutual responsibility; and 3) citizen participation. All three advocate for consensus-building when making decisions that affect the community and the individual so that each person as part of the community is held mutually accountable by all members to promote equal participation and to reduce power imbalances. In this way it mirrors the very core of communitarianism as the tap root of social democratic thought-caring, community, social and economic justice (Lorjé, 1996).

Given that communitarianism is based on the concept of solidarity, a strong social identity formed from strong social bonds positions itself as the basis of community and social cohesion. It promotes the values of collective social capital demonstrating that no one person is an island. Communitarianism values recognize our interdependence on each other, not only in our local communities, but the global as well. The principles of this philosophy promote the prevention of social isolation and alienation and, therefore, become the basis upon which social stability and cohesion are to be promoted (Cowden & Singh, 2017). In Etzioni’s (1995) own words:

A communitarian perspective recognizes both individual human dignity and the social dimension of human existence. A communitarian perspective recognizes that the preservation of individual liberty depends on the active maintenance of the institutions of civil society where citizens learn respect for others as well as self-respect; where we acquire a lively sense of our personal and civic responsibilities, along with an appreciation of our own rights and the rights of others; where we develop the skills of self-government as well as the habit of governing ourselves and learn to serve others-not just self. A communitarian perspective recognizes that communities and polities, too, have obligations-including the duty to be responsive to their members and to foster participation and deliberation in social and political life. (p. 11)

Within the communitarian viewpoint, Etzioni emphasises “voluntary action, civil society, and reconciliation of competing values that are compatible with pluralism” (Schumaker, 2018, p. 5). According to Arthur (1998), communitarianism is the “politics of the common good” (p. 356), which reflects certain assumptions somewhat inherent within pluralism such as: 1) interests of all significant groups in society are given representation; 2) the representation of interests reflects true representation and not manipulation; 3) there are multiple group ties and overlapping memberships; and 4) groups will accept defeat and compromise on some interests (Perrow, 1964). Pluralism, operating from a basis of groups, empowers individuals through educating them to understand their potentialities (Eisenberg, 1995). This philosophy allows the creation of meaning for the individual, providing them with structures, standards and traditions which imbue their life with meaning (Eisenberg, 1995). Pluralism is a means of tapping

individual potential by promoting diversity (Eisenberg, 1995). Not only this, but it emphasizes self-development by shedding the oppressive structures in society in favour of community. Just as communitarianism which maintains that individuals require community in order to develop their selves and their capacities (Eisenberg, 1995). Adherents to communitarianism and pluralism claim that the self is always constituted through community which provides us with our shared nationality, culture, language, history and religion commonly experienced by all (Arthur, 1998). Dewey would further this by saying that the self-development necessary for communitarianism and perhaps collaborative pluralism, requires “the release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in rich manifold association with others” (Eisenberg, 1995, p. 45). Not only this, but a communitarian perspective that promotes social solidarity places importance on the community for personal identity and moral thinking; one that promotes self-development through the use of self-reflection (Arthur, 1998).

Nowhere is Erikson’s critique of our current society more apparent than through his depictions of the cataclysmic economic downfall of the Lettherii Empire caused by the machinations of Tehol Beddict. In Tehol’s self-reflections and self-development he is displaying Daly’s (1994) notions that communitarians are interested not only in the creation of strong and sustaining communities, but they are also concerned that an effective democracy be established by the citizens of these communities. Tehol’s father was in debt and the empire in which his father lived was in debt from what would be considered by our current standards a capitalistic system. It was this debt and inability to cope which led to Tehol’s father’s demise and subsequent suicide. Despising the current capitalist socio-political values of his city, Tehol planned to destroy the Empire by

turning the economic system back onto itself through the use of his accountancy skills by triggering a cultural reformation and reconfiguring of Letherii values. After hiding his personal wealth through the purchase of islands, which he turned into refugee camps, secret ownership of local property, investments and infrastructure, he is persuaded by others to strike at the Empire. Tehol uses his financial knowledge to borrow vast amounts of money, bankrupting the capital city and then floods the market by abruptly spending his wealth, thereby crashing the market and causing the subsequent downfall of the Letherii Empire. In the end, Tehol becomes the new King of Lether known as Tehol the Only and re-establishes the city of Lether as one based on more egalitarian principles of equal distribution and community-fostering. Tehol's actions are Erikson's response to a communitarian ethic by adjusting institutions (economic or otherwise) to meet changing social needs which are tempered by the more universal rules of justice. In my opinion, Tehol's emperorship evolves to form an ethos that Etzioni (1995) claims creates a sense of social purpose aimed at community-building which attempts to diminish polarization, teaches and models diversity, establishes coalition-building and focuses on dispute resolution, negotiation and mediation.

While Erikson was writing his *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series in the 1990s and 2000s, communitarianism was in its zenith of influence. Though communitarianism was espoused as a solution to the growing impacts of neo-liberal and capitalist individualism, its critics were constructing it as idealistic in nature, proposing the creation of a global community, implying a worldwide government structure that rests on the establishment of a unified international moral community (C. Gray, 2005). Furthermore, communitarianism is unreasonable in its scope because it does not take into consideration

the geo-political context where individual nations will willingly succumb to a harmonious global ethic in which they will not be antagonists and where war will be obsolete (C. Gray, 2005). In looking at communitarianism as a global approach to solidarity, it will thus represent efforts by individuals to act together and to share a vision of the world, which as Jasper (2018) points out are “fictions necessary for making political claims upon others, fictional in that they paper over enormous differences” (p. 24) within societies and nations. Youngmevittaya (2019), states that the communitarian solidarity ethic as a global counter-narrative to neo-liberalist individualizing ideologies, limits the abilities of individuals across cultures and societies to question or reject traditions and practices they find oppressive, demeaning and unsatisfying. Dalacoura (2002) furthers this notion by bringing to light the universalising potential in communitarianism. In this manner, communitarianism has the potential for “cultural homogenization that seeks congruence between ethnic and political boundaries, leading to cultural standardization and the overlap between the global communitarian agenda as state and culture” (Conversi, 2010, p. 719). Postulated in this manner, communitarianism displays the potential for a top-down approach that establishes a hierarchical imbalance of power where the hegemonic Westernized version of communitarianism could be enforced on non-Western societies and nations. If used in this fashion under a global agenda of universal harmony, it could pave the way for conformity and standardization. Consequently, a hegemonic form of communitarianism could argue for the assimilation of smaller, more independent communities for the benefit of a global representation that is more cohesive and collective. Nonetheless, regardless of such criticisms, I maintain that the message behind communitarianism’s progressive, albeit somewhat radical and

idealised potential as community-building and solidarity-inducing, is worthy of future consideration.

Chapter 5

5.1 Rung #4: Mythopoesis and the *Malazan Book of the Fallen*

Since his stern talking to by my husband, Cindar has been relatively more engaged with the lessons and I have to admit is helping to shift some of the worldviews of his fellow students. Even as we sit in our final moments of class he sings a song about a valiant group of enemies turned friends who lifted an island out of the water because the people living on it were plagued by terrible storms.

Huthal stretched his arms and legs as he yawned. “We have a similar story in the desert that speaks of seven men from different tribes that were once enemies and became friends because they were dying of thirst and needed to work together in order to break down the stone walls of an ensorcelled dam.”

Lothir nodded, “the Fénians have a similar legend of how our people in the Hindales worked with other races from the Foredales to defeat the Lord of Night and help the Lord of Day make the suns rise.”

Lithia turned to the group, “that was in the Creation time when we had eternal night. We knew the suns rose in other parts of the world, but the Lord of Night with his legion of Eternal Darkness was too strong for us alone to fight.”

Hum... a teaching moment, I thought to myself. “So what do these stories have in common?”

Aura scratched his privates, “that we obviously used to work together to get things done”.

“Not only that”, Leander pipped up looking for an opportunity to outshine his superior, “but they rest on premises of solidarity”.

Finally, a breakthrough!

Cindar turned to me with cynicism on his features. “They are stories, myths and legends we can’t put any truth into them.”

I mused for a moment. “No, perhaps not truth, but nonetheless they are a reflection of society, similar to our lecture on mimesis and, therefore worthy of discussing. Besides, is that not what we are in a way trying to promote with the UC; a new mythology, a narrative around solidarity, community and collaboration?”

They all exchanged glances and I smirked with self-satisfaction. Now I’ve got the wheels turning...

At its root, much of the fantasy genre is built upon myth and folklore. Myths are symbolic stories intended to establish meaning cultivated from the past; they not only create, sustain and legitimize historical, current and future actions, but also shape and conceal political interests by permitting individuals to rationalize difficult and complex phenomena (Brown, 1994). As determinants of action and conduits to the consequences of deviance and compliance, they have the potential to influence decisions, processes and outcomes (Brown, 1994). Furthermore, myths are part of the “culturally approved communication rituals within society thus establishing a folklore which provides a historical backdrop against which contemporary dramas are played out” (Kreps, 1983 as cited in Brown, 1994, p. 863).

Joseph Campbell (2011), a professor of literature, renowned for his work in comparative mythology and religion, posits that myth serves four functions: 1) myth satisfies a mystical function, where we experience wonderment leading to the realisation

that mystery is manifest through all things in our world; 2) myth fosters a cosmological function with natural science at the forefront; 3) myth offers a sociological function by supporting and validating a certain social order; and 4) myth serves a pedagogical function by teaching how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances. Along similar lines, Frye (1990) claims that myths have a unique and “distinctive social function in that they are instructive by playing a leading role in defining a society and in giving it a shared possession of knowledge” (p. 30-31). This knowledge can embed itself in ideologies which Frye argues are applied mythology which come to be expressed through the imaginative and hypothetical nature of literature (J. Hart, 2005).

From Tolkien, Lewis and Lovecraft to even George R. R. Martin and George Lucas the mythopoeic legacy in fantasy fiction and film is a legacy known to many of us in contemporary society. Their overt or subtle use of mythology “fuses reality and fantasy... with a desire for strength and intensity of conceptualization... offering a comprehensive view of life... [in which] we are concerned with major moral issues, [whereby] the very stability and continuity of our world is at stake” (Egoff, 1981, p. 92-93). While the use of mythic elements varies from author to author some elements are considered universal, such as “the ultimate hope for recovery and redemption, [the use of] high or good magic, forces of the oldest magic representing amoral powers which are dangerous to rouse, [a strong presence of universal patterns] in an archetypal, Jungian sense [and the use of] open spaces in real, recognizable settings” (Egoff, 1981, p. 93-94).

Mythopoeic fantasy in general shares certain myth traditions. They often grow in cycles and sequences similar to clusters of myths rather than individual ones involving creations stories, etiological aspects which explain human institutions and practices in the

secondary world and incorporate components of nature myths that elucidate on the secondary world's natural phenomena (Oziewicz, 2008). According to Oziewicz (2008), the plot of mythopoeic fantasy is formulaic involving a combination of the quest and the *bildungsroman* structures. There are aspects of an intrusion of the supernatural on the life of a protagonist such as Crokus Younghand becoming the bearer of Oponn's (the twin Jesters of Chance) coin giving the young thief considerable good luck. Often there is a character that is "violently wrenched from ordinariness and faced with overwhelming demands and shattering responsibility... where they will be assisted by supernatural helpers though not necessarily when they think they desperately need it and usually not in a way they expect" (Oziewicz, 2008, p. 86). In this case we have Ganoes Paran who is introduced in the first book as a twelve year old boy with grandiose ideas for his future, later becoming a Lieutenant in the 8th Cavalry and then Captain of the Bridgeburners. In the city of Pale he was mortally wounded, but survived due to Oponn's intervention. He subsequently became Master of the Deck of Dragons (similar to tarot cards) imbuing him with supernatural knowledge and god-like magical powers which he used to manipulate various outcomes of events and characters throughout the following books. As the story evolves characters like Paran are called upon to make moral and ethical choices where they might feel overwhelmed by what they are expected to do. This can be seen in an exchange between Paran and Silverfox a Soletaken and Imass Bonecaster (similar to a shaman) when Paran discovers he is now Master of the Deck:

"You must find the answer for your own creation, you must find the purpose behind what you have become." His brows rose mockingly. "You set for me a

quest? Really, Silverfox. Aimless, purposeless men do not undertake quests.

That's for wall-eyed heroes in epic poems." (Erikson, 2001, p. 116).

On the other hand, the protagonist will never be left totally alone in their task, no matter how much on their own they may seem to be (Oziewicz, 2008).

When exploring the concepts of community, collectivity and solidarity within critical fantasy works like Erikson's, it brings into the forefront of our minds that there is something erroneous with the ideation of Canada as a utopic myth for an all-welcoming, multicultural and inclusive nation. If nations like Canada had mastered a method to establishing a truly harmonious country with an equal playing field for all its citizens, then works like Erikson's would not be employing the safe space of literature to explore alternatives to our current world. The mythopoeic elements in some fantasy works like Erikson's, offer a counter-rhetoric promoting a mythology for a new humanity bound by values of solidarity and collaboration. While speaking to the sociological function of myths, the role of myth is to not only promote social solidarity but harmony with the environment during times of crisis (Bidney, 1966). Myth's pragmatic function, serves to resolve critical problems which affect the welfare and future of individuals and their societies (Bidney, 1966). The ideation of "universal harmony is based on the conviction that equality and collaboration between races, religions and genders is creative and life-enhancing" (Oziewicz, 2008, p. 118). Much like the extreme wars and battles within some fantasy works that lead to a radical transformation of the secondary worlds for their inhabitants, the new mythology establishes a new story for a unified world. The themes of collaboration within these novels portends to the notion that a new Earth is needed,

where global social restructuring is necessary to combat the neo-liberal hijacking by monopolies, competition and the profit-driven motive.

The mythopoesis of new myths provide resources to change meanings and to create new ways of being (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2001). The worldview associated with a new mythology which asserts a revolutionary purposefulness of all existence whose functions in the mythopoeic sense of fantasy literature, is perhaps “compensational in the Jungian sense of being both therapeutic, that is, assisting its readers in reaching psychological equilibrium and vatic, which is helping to bring the unsatisfied yearnings of the human psyche to the surface of consciousness” (Oziewicz, 2008, p. 85). This thesis asserts that these yearnings are the result of a society reflected in authored works like Erikson’s which desire social change. There is a subtext within these works that moves into a worldview of harmony and collaboration through social transformation that attempts to rise above discriminatory practices, environmental abuse and retributive concepts of the past” (Oziewicz, 2008).

The mythopoeic elements in Erikson’s work is, in many ways, similar to movement narrative, which refers to various myths, legends and folktales collectively construed about a movement and the domains of the world the movement seeks to change (Benford, 2002). Movement narratives can, therefore, influence a reader’s interpretive frames (attitudes, beliefs and values) as well as feelings and actions in the efforts to motivate change (Benford, 2002). In this sense, the mythopoetic alternative narrative in critical fantasy works allows readers, individually or collectively as a readership, to insert themselves into mythopoeic-inspired movement towards social change. A movement for change through narratives can lend itself to the big books myth, where books become a

symbol of and a focal point for growing social movements, rather than an initiator of those movements (Meyer & Rohlinger, 2012). This myth involves a plotline that models the relationship between ideas and social change with a narrative that offers both moral lessons about the past and prescriptions for the future (Meyer & Rohlinger, 2012). Like Benford's movement narratives, the big book myth allows new ideas to grow within relatively intimate groups called "critical communities" (Rochon, 1998, p. 23). These communities could be fan clubs, internet forums or even classrooms and academic fellowship. These critical communities use a critical analytic approach to identifying and seeking solutions to social justice problems that move beyond the immediate sphere to the greater local, national or global community. Meyer and Rohlinger (2012) argue from Rochon's perspective that books provide a form communication within and beyond a critical community by articulating and legitimizing new ideas for the critical community and mainstream society. The big book myth persists because it resonates with contemporary cultural beliefs and familiar plots about social movements and social change propagated by people invested in a vision of social change (Meyer & Rohlinger, 2012). Furthermore, it suggests an open field upon which a good idea, if championed effectively, can prevail by generating collective action (Meyer & Rohlinger, 2012). However, Benford (2002) warns that books as movement narratives can establish methods of social control if there is an underlying agenda in their potential to create social change through myth-making. Meyer and Rohlinger (2012) also caution against books as perpetuators potential societal disruption. Also, the big book myth does not take into consideration the fact that in order for progressive critical ideas to take root as social change initiatives, there is a component of collective motivational action that is needed,

which obscures the misconceptions about the way social change occurs such as time, motivation and external supports.

Chapter 6

6.1 Rung #5: The Social Imaginary and Imagined Communities

The mythopoeic qualities in Erikson's work, outlined in the previous section, suggest that every society, real or fictitious, has attempted to define itself, to create meaning and attempt to understand its purpose and place in the world. According to Castoriadis (1975/2005), the role of the imaginary, such as a novel, is to answer these questions. Contemporary philosopher Charles Taylor takes this one step further where he defines the modern social imaginary as "the ways in which [people] imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). The imagining is a "way of seeing one's social surroundings through the lens of images, stories and legends which establish an understanding of common practices" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23) throughout the whole of society. It is the very nature of these creative narratives that lends them to the imaginary. As a collective society we give meaning and attribute symbols to these narratives, conceiving them as a form of shared understanding that enables society to carry out the collective practices of our social spheres (Taylor, 2004).

Taylor (2004), postulates that humanity's current positioning is a "predicament of how we continuously stand or have stood in relation to others and to power, [which] opens up the possibility for wider perspectives on where we stand in space and time, our relation to other nations and peoples and where we stand in our history, in the narrative of our becoming" (p. 27). This power he refers to is governance driven based on our own social positions to which we may resist or emulate. This opens up the discussion about

the public sphere of media which Taylor (2004) calls the “locus of a discussion potentially engaging everyone in which the society can come to a common mind about important matters through the exchange of ideas” (p. 87). Additionally, this collective dialogue has a reflective potential. This discourse is both action oriented and “contemplative which expands the repertory of collective action and that of objective analysis” (Taylor, 2004, p. 167). It has the potential to lead to a “new collective agency” (Taylor, 2004 p. 145), whereby internal reflection moves alongside the creation of a new discourse embodying continual questioning and inquiry (Castoriadis, 1997). Within this new transformational and reflective social imaginary the personal and political components of social justice lie at its core. As Castoriadis (1975/2005) points out, the self-transformation of society concerns social doing and politics, wherein this thoughtful doing and political thinking allows society to rethink and remake itself into one essential component for a new social imaginary.

The social imaginary as a community of Erikson’s readers and other fantasy enthusiasts bring people together in aesthetic ways, to value the collective as much as the individual, to see the world as made up of multiple and complex processes, to recognize commonalities and respect difference, to work toward common understandings that involve the development of empathic intelligence (Prendergast, 2011). Conceived from this standpoint, a social imaginary based on critical fantasy and mythopoeic works acts as an enchainment of actions for the creation of a new world. In the transformational sense it attempt to expose the social meaning and ideological implications of the values enshrined in cultural representations of our world (Wilkinson, 2013). The social imaginary, therefore, allows the fantasists and their readers to imagine possibilities for the future and

a new social imaginary for humanity as a global community. In order for this to happen, fantasy enthusiasts as part of a new social imaginary will need to spread the messages espoused in critical works of fantasy in order for all people to mobilise themselves into a collectively imagined society. Though fantasy literature like Erikson's may offer hypothetical ways to achieve revolutionary change on paper, in real life it will require social engaged people operating from an ethos of "alliance, of... mutual benefit... between equals... a partnership if you will" (Erikson, 2001, p. 396). The collectivistic values espoused in some fantasy works are simply a roadmap of potentialities. The actions implied in speculative fiction must turn into a reality even if it is only imagined in the beginning.

When looking at the potential for Erikson's work and other critical fantasists to promote a new mythos of harmony and collaboration, the aforementioned notions of the social imaginary lend themselves to discussions about the underlying need for solidarity. May (2007), posits that solidarity arises from a shared sense of common interest. Individuals that read, write or derive inspiration from critical fantasy works may hold a commonality of interests from the community they are part of. Therefore, to establish a new myth for collaboration the interests of such a community would need to reflect values, ideals, rights and duties associated with collectivity and unity that should be shared locally and globally (Williams, 2005). Furthermore, for solidarity to exist there needs to be individual and group motivations to form relationships through shared bonds of similar feelings and a reciprocity of attitude (May, 2007). Conceived in this manner, a new mythos of collaboration derived from notions of solidarity would help to establish these bonds by drawing communities together to provide an authentic voice of women,

Indigenous peoples, diasporas, religions, trades unionists, environmentalists and others to offer a potential counterbalance (Williams, 2005) to the detrimental impacts of individualising neo-liberal capitalist ideologies. From this perspective, a new myth of collaboration and solidarity contributes to establishing a participatory dialogue in generating a more inclusive community ethic.

“Shit! Shit! Son of a Swamp Slug!” J’rome danced frantically around the fire flapping his stubby arms wildly making the long sleeves of his robes fly about like flags in the wind. “Help! Help! Help me you ingrates!”

I quickly rose to my feet with Cindar and Lithia rushing to my side all thinking the same devastating thought. The clumsy oaf has flung The Crippled God into the cook fire!

“Where is it?” I glared at J’rome and the others furiously. I could feel the anger within me stir my strongest sorcery. The thought of the rare, irreplaceable book roasting in the blaze nearly conjured the man into a chamber pot.

Cindar, Leander and Huthal ran to the fire backing off quickly from the heat.

“I can’t see anything!” Leander cried exasperatedly.

“For fuck’s sake!” I muttered to myself.

Regaining my calm, I gestured and doused the fire. Everyone approaching the smoldering pit with breaths held and eyes searching the cinders for the fateful remains.

J’rome jumped up suddenly. “There it is!” He reached into the blacked dust. “Oh my lovely! You are still alive!” J’rome started to brush off the ash from a cylindrical object.

“A bloody fucking sausage!” cried Mace angrily as he placed his hand on the pommel of his sword. “All that for a piece of meat?” He cocked his head and glanced over his shoulder at me. “I’ll sever his head. Just give me the order.”

J’rome spun on his heels at the sour captain with an expression of astonishment. “I’ll have you know young man this is not just any old piece of meat, you so flippantly deign with disdain”. He smiled to himself as his thoughts drifted, “Deign with disdain, I must remember that one.” He put the nearly burnt sausage on his plate stroking it gently to get the blackened crust off. “This is a sausage from the Vale made with the finest imported spices and choicest meats and with such passionate—.”

“I can’t believe this!” Lothir shook his head in disbelief as he interrupted the wizard.

“My thoughts align with Mace’s.” He patted his scabbard with a narrowed gaze.

Spherin chuckled. “I don’t know what’s more surprising, that we almost burned ourselves trying to save a sausage or that Professor Wix called Mace a young man”.

Several of the others laughed with her including myself.

J’rome glanced at them with a slight confusion and held out his sausage to them.

“Believe me, one bite and you will think you were in another world. A utopia of mouth-watering bliss!” He smiled lovingly, hungrily at the meat.

“Speaking of a utopia”, Huthal cleared his throat, “don’t you think all this talk of a new mythos of harmony and collaboration is a bit, well you know, utopic?”

Cindar grunted as he crossed his arms over his chest. “Looking at it that way I can see why some would want these books in there”. He pointed to the fire pit.

I sat down on the crate, my elbows on my knees, my breath recovered; my heart’s pounding slowed and looked up at them. “Is that not the purpose of our analysis of

Erikson's work; to imagine possibilities, to imagine communities, even if they are seemingly impossible for the present? How do we make change and fight for social justice if we cannot imagine a better world? What then would we be fighting for?"
The silence of their minds working was deafening. At least I hope it was their minds...

Erikson's novels speculate a different world, a community that has to be imagined because it is conceived to stretch beyond immediate experience. His works mirror Temple's statement about imagining possibilities. Erikson's books establish an imaginary community; most of his readers will never know their fellow members, let alone meet them, yet in the mind of each member lives the image of their communion (Shahzad, 2012). In other words, every social community is imaginary based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative on the recognition of a common name and traditions we have lived (Shahzad 2012). From this position, the fantasy novel as potentially establishing a critical readership is something to be explored through Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities. Anderson, a political scientist and historian, explored the origins of nationalism through his 1983 book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. For Anderson, nationhood implies a sense of profound and balanced camaraderie (Shahzad, 2012) in which language and communication, "encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, [where] pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined and futures dreamed" (Shahzad, 2012, p. 27). Anderson emphasizes how the role of print media and language in helping to create a reader's sense of belonging within a community of readership fosters a sharing of concerns through which an imagined community of

readers can establish new identities and political groups (Strauss, 2006). What is interesting is the formative power of the novel as language which according to Anderson, “rests on its structure of address, its ability to interpellate the reader as a national and to create a symbolic mapping of external social space” (Cheah, 1999, p. 8). As Cheah (1999) suggests, individual readers are held in the “embrace of a novel’s omniscient narrative, the world inside the book becomes fused with the external real world and they are enabled to see or represent their external surroundings as part of the larger protonational or national community to which they belong” (p. 8). Novels have the potential to act as a physical space establishing a community of readers, fellow writers and critics. Through the interactions with the novel, one’s everyday life is provided “confirmation of the solidity of a single community, embracing characters, author and readers, continually moving onward, whereby a community within the novel is evoked and it is subtly extended to the community of those addressed” (Culler, 1999, p. 28) outside the literary work.

Fantasists like Erikson and their readership as an imagined community are establishing the groundwork for the motivational inspiration groups of people can derive from a literary creation. There is a manifestation of creativity that erupts from mythopoeic fantasy which allows for the birth of an independent genesis beyond that of the scope of the book itself, thus calling others to participate in this new mythopoetically imagined community. This can be seen in movie adaptations, fanfiction and cosplay resulting in more ardent “imitations of mythopoeic fantasy worlds and characters as extensions of the imaginative potential of the story by weaving new threads into the vast mythological tapestry to which the author successfully manages to image forth”

(Oziewicz, 2008, p. 86). The communal advantage of this new community established outside a book launches the mythopoeic property of fantasy literature as the “narrativization of a shared communal identity versus the fundamental social heterogeneity and alienating materialism of modern culture” (Hunter, 2006, p. 131). Subsequently, there exists a potential for Erikson’s work to birth a plethora of imagined communities where ideas are explored and challenged; including, but not exhaustive of, Facebook and twitter pages, official websites, a Malazan wiki on Fandom and numerous fantasy fan forums discussing his works.

As this sections has evidenced, there are several possible conditions set out for a mythopoeic critical fantasy novel: one being the potential of imaging possibilities as a community of writers and readership; and the second where the fantasy novel is a force in motivating social change. In this manner, critical fantasy literature can offer a community of readers a means of representing a progressive push to change our nation, to critique what is wrong and offer a counter-culture movement. Culler (1999) indicates that any book can build the foundation for an imagined community “because it addresses readers in a distinctively open way, offering the possibility of adhering to a community as an insider, without laying down particular criteria that have to be met” (p. 37).

Therefore, if an imagined community moving towards social justice initiatives is to come into being, there must be an opportunity for “large numbers of people to feel a part of [an imagined community] and the novel, in offering the insider's view to those who might have been deemed outsiders” (Culler, 1999, p. 37). Furthermore, the critical fantasy novel as a “space for community offers an open invitation to readers of different

conditions to become insiders by becoming the basis of political developments” (Culler, 1999, p. 38) and movements towards change.

Lithia glanced up from her perusal of Deadhouse Gates and sighed. “You know Temple, I think it’s going to be rather hard for me to return to my battalion and not think about how there is so much more I could be doing”.

There were a few nods in the group.

I arched a brow. “Well, the UC is always looking for people”.

Mace chuckled. “And give up our officer’s wages? It’s a known fact the UC’ers work for dirt”.

I smiled and showed them my big toe poking through my boot. “Too true, however, some of us, especially social workers, do believe in a bigger picture. And hopefully in our final lessons you too can see this portrait as well”.

Spherin in one of her more thoughtful moods sat forward on the crate. “Universality, balance, harmony. A world where we all work together in collaboration”.

I nodded. “Yes, and that is why the UC is so important. It puts the work I do into perspective”.

Chapter 7

7.1 Rung #6: Social Work and Social Justice

Social work is both an academic subject and a profession (Becker, Bryman, & Ferguson, 2012). The nature of social work has evolved out of context-bound realities such as: dependence on external influences (natural disasters, globalisation, immigration); attention towards marginalised people in society (poor and vulnerable); and multidisciplinary and practice-oriented approaches (M. Gray, 2005). The profession focuses on three levels of analysis; the structural, organisational/group and family/individual (Kam, 2014). Traditional social work practice involves the location of problems within the biological, psychological or social functioning of the individual, family, group, community and/or culture (Kam, 2014). Social work is not only concerned with the customary aspects of direct practice, but also as a field it has moved into many other societal realms. In policy-oriented work, social workers recognize the importance of the social and physical environment, the value of relationships and the significance of value-driven policymaking driven by a primary mission of promoting overall well-being (Miller et al., 2017). Theory development in social work involves continually redefining what social work is, how to do social work and theories of the client world, which may mean an interdisciplinary approach of incorporating theories from other fields to ensure that they are re-interpreted from their original discipline to the practice of social work (Payne, 2014). In this way, social work theories help to understand and contest ideas, offer explanation and understanding, informs one's practice and helps to maintain accountability and self-discipline (Payne, 2014). Additionally, research within social work strives to examine the nature of interventions and societal

impacts taking place in the context of relationships with others and/or the environment at the individual, group or community level (Lorenz, 2016).

“So what is this critical social work shit? Now you want to turn us soldiers into social workers?” Mace protested rudely as he rose to his feet angrily. “I ain’t turnin’ into no people-pleaser! I ain’t gonna be like you prof!” Mace shook his head, his thoughts drifting slowly as he turned to the fire. “I just... can’t be”, his voice lowering to a whisper.

I glanced at him over my shoulder. “And just what do you think you have been doing as a captain in charge of relocating refugees? Pleasing people. Easing their suffering and fears. Working calmly in a crisis and drawing from supports and resources no matter how scarce they may be to benefit those most vulnerable. Mace, soldiering in the UC is social work!”

“Then is Erikson a social worker?” asked Spherin.

Cindar rolled his eyes with judgemental disdain. “No, but he espoused views that social workers support such as social justice”. The others glanced at him with mixed expressions of discomposure and puzzlement. Cindar shrugged nonchalantly. “I read about it once in the Morren library”.

Avolor threw a few more logs on the fire. “So then, just what in Embore does social justice have to do with social work and Erikson?”

According to the Nova Scotia Canadian Association of Social Workers’ (2008) Code of Ethics’ second value, the pursuit of social justice, urges social workers “to

provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity... promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources... expand choice for all persons... oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons". Social work's ability to embrace more holistic and relational aspects of the second value stated above reflects Finn and Jacobson's (2003) suggestion that the field should be named "social justice work" (p. 59).

Erikson (2011) writes, "justice is a sword without equal" (p. 749), indicating that there are many ways in which social workers are able to use a proverbial sword of social justice to enact change through direct practice, policy, theory development, research, structural institutions and even communities at local or global levels. The motivation for social work to establish change has helped social work's entry into the post-modern era. This doorway has allowed social work to develop a critical perspective within the field that allows social workers to continually re-examine how they address social problems and support clients and critically self-reflect on the power and privilege within their own practice and the world. Critical social work as social justice involves perspectives which are anti-oppressive in nature that seek to overcome the cultural, institutional and structural as well as personal obstacles to individuals and communities taking greater control of their well-being (Healy, 2005). Critical social work as practice involves the following: a structural analysis of personal problems, an analysis of the social control functions of social work and welfare, an ongoing social critique particularly regarding oppressive functions and setting goals for personal liberation and social change (Fook, 2003). Critical social work as theory involves challenging domination and oppression in all forms be it structural, interpersonal and/or personal (Fook, 2003). Domination is

achieved through external exploitation by ruling groups and also internal self-deception where individuals participate in their own oppression (Fook, 2003). From a critical perspective, it is important to recognize that domination can take many forms and that the personal sphere can be a site for a challenge and change for relations and structures of domination (Fook, 2003). Additionally, there is a strong value placed on the possibilities for social change (Fook, 2003) within critical social work. In this way, the social justice-oriented perspectives embedded in critical social work involve relational and holistic considerations about power and privilege not just among individuals, but within the global community to respect human rights worldwide and foster the obligation to refrain from exploiting vulnerable communities (Kam, 2014).

Reading is a very personal act, yet collectively readership can act in solidarity towards social change. For the social work field, literature such as Erikson's, allows genres like fantasy to contribute to "socio-political relationships or to socio-political constructs that should be understood as crucial for the destiny of people" (Suvin, 2000, p. xix) as it challenges contemporary notions of what is needed to achieve social justice. Critical fantasy assists in forming the basis of discovering ways of interrogating the status quo, which is at the heart of social justice initiatives (Termini, 2015). By exploring the ideological themes in critical fantasy literature, we are able to gain a sense of the author's purpose in a text, along with relevant contextual information while making meaningful connections with social justice pertinent to social work. Exploring social justice through literary fantasy study helps us to think critically about global issues that have pervaded our past, present and inevitably our future (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018). Furthermore, critical fantasy literature allows individuals not directly affected by prominent social justice

issues to think critically, analyze and understand how inequality has the ability to impact identity, culture and the world (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018).

Chapter 8

8.1 Rung #7: Fantasy Literature in Social Work with Future Applications

In its basic form, Erikson's work as a novel is art. Works of literary art, such as fantasy, are uniquely capable of entering into the stream of experience, of deepening the meanings in situations we encounter and understand in terms of language, and thus profoundly affect subsequent dispositions to action (Waks, 2014). Art as literature establishes an experience of both the artists who create them and their audiences, whereby artistic creators bring something of themselves to their creations and the audiences bring their own experiences to the understanding of these works (Waks, 2014). As a form of reciprocal communication between artist and audience, literary art is instrumental as a form of concerted action and community formation (Waks, 2014). This communication can be particularly useful in social work especially in how the critical fantasy novel could establish a critical community to promote a new mythology of harmony and unity for social justice oriented social work.

Until recently there has been little academic discussion about the use and importance of art in its many forms as a useful tool in creating societal change and social justice within social work practice and education. As Huss (2019) argues, "arts are an excellent way to embody the humanistic, empowerment, resilience-focused and social-critical theories that are central to social work" (p. 2). They can be used as a methodology to establish a collaborative and interdisciplinary space for social change at micro, mezzo and macro levels as well as in practice, pedagogy and policy. For those on the frontlines, arts as a creative medium can help to initiate "communication, team work, problem solving, cultural understanding and decision making" (Huss, 2019, p. 2). In

therapeutic social work settings, art as a form of creative expression reactivates flexibility and playfulness, reconnects cognition, emotional experience and physical sensation and helps to counteract the rigidity of traumatic reactions (Huss, Elhozayel, & Marcus, 2012). Within social activism, arts have the power to transform through political, radical or progressive rhetoric, because they have the potential to enable multiple ways of understanding and seeing the world. From a critical and social justice-oriented framework, arts are neither neutral nor apolitical; they have the potential to incite, disrupt and subvert familiar and chosen territory (Levy, 2019) within the discipline and practice of social work.

From a critically-oriented standpoint, literature as art in social work provides its readers with opportunities for critical reflection. From a social work perspective, critical reflection is a way to bring practice and theory together in a manner that develops awareness to foster social change (Mattsson 2014). Critical reflection helps social workers to develop their professional role in relation to an understanding of social structures and the globalization context (Mattsson, 2014). Critical reflection is also a process by which one may identify the assumptions governing one's actions, question them and develop alternative ways of acting (Savaya & Gardner, 2012).

Rudine Sims-Bishop, professor emerita of education at Ohio State University, claims that literature provides readers with symbolic representations of windows and mirrors (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018) which I argue could be used as tools for critical self-reflection. According to Sims-Bishop, the windows allow readers to look externally and perceive the world while the mirrors become a means to internally reflect and perceive oneself (Chuddley-Diatta, 2018). The critical reflection brought on by literary study can

then construct experiences for readers to think critically about global issues. Because literature presents “imaginative creation, often very complex and with its own peculiar coherence, it allows, even compels, the reader to explore new and remarkable possibilities, to confront difficulty and despair and take risks in imagined experience” (Turner, 1991, p. 238). In other words, the critical study of books, narratives and stories provide “a way of knowing the world” (Short, 2012, p. 11) while providing a safe space to explore issues and take imagined risks that might trigger past traumas. In adding a third tool, the door, to Sims-Bishop’s analogy, it helps to create safe critically-reflective opportunities to walk into a new way of knowing the world. For social work, this would allow for the expansion of our horizons into a deeper understanding of humanity and its struggles while allowing us to establish a safe space to explore social justice initiatives within the imagination and the real world.

Fantasy literature and its potential to initiate critical reflection leading to social change is also seen through the genres mythopoetic possibilities. In social work, mythopoesis brings into perspective how myth can represent a means of making sense of reality, while also evidencing the collective nature of the problems facing each of us as students, professionals and clients. Myths are developed to help cope with uncertainties associated with the problems and issues each of us face. Myth perpetuated by society through their telling and re-telling “creates a social field that operates by constructed norms which have a guiding impact on human beings” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 59). Society is a “mythological web that establishes conditions for the lives of human beings enmeshed in that web” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 59), thus creating “collective-cultural myth systems” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 200) within groups of people. As such, myths that “circulate

in the social world create the rhetoric framing for role-enactment dramas leading to scripted everyday life situations” (Valsiner, 2007, p. 219). For the social work field, this scripting allows myths to become narratives that are enacted or avoided by the way they structure our understanding of our own and others’ experiences (Ryan, 2011). As stories, myths are imbedded in history, religion and culture that guide human behaviour and give it meaning (Ryan, 2011). That being said, myth can also be a mistaken belief (Ryan, 2011). From that perspective, myths in society have sometimes taken on a negative connotation; this can be especially true in social work with myths around rape, welfare, ageing, disability, immigration, culture and ideology, just to name a few. These destructive myths can serve to rationalise and justify behaviours, sentiments and actions which can lead to victim blaming, prejudice and other discriminatory behaviour. Such myths allow the institutions and mechanisms responsible for the formation of culture to distribute false images, which permits unlimited manipulations to construct and empower oppressive power relations, thereby reproducing the knowledge gaps necessary for their preservation (A. Cohen, 2010). However, the formation of counter-myth in society spreads opposite notions and images. For social work, establishing counter-myths will involve a critical stance that interrogates current myths and encourages new ones, in the form of collective social action (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2001)

The formation for a counter-myth narrative of harmony, collectivity and unity within social work reflect the field’s desires for social justice reforms suggested through critical social work. The mythopoeic potential in critical fantasy novels aligns with social work ethics and values especially through the production of a new mythology acting as a complete and inclusive synthesis of praxis as theory/activity. This new mythos can help

to guide social workers towards more critical and anti-oppressive practice, policy, education, research and theory development. The implications for mythopoeic critical fantasy within social work, advance themes of solidarity and universal collaboration enhancing the creation of a personal mythology where the “personal becomes the universal” (Block, 1980, p. 6). This allows social workers to move the discipline beyond the realms of their immediate surroundings and practice settings to one that encompasses a more global worldview. Conceived in this manner, critical fantasy novels promoting a new harmonistic and collaborative mythos exhibit the relational and holistic nature of the social work discipline by stressing the importance of achieving personhood, building communication with others, fostering a sense of community, striving to realize other aspects of the human dimension while sensitizing them to the fate of others (Oziewicz, 2008). In speaking to social work’s humanistic values, establishing a new mythology for unity allows not only social workers, but other humanitarian groups to promote and create collective myth dealing with values, morals and ethics that lie at the core of critical anti-oppressive work.

The candle wick is getting dangerously close to extinguishment much to the delight of my restless husband whom detests any form of light while he sleeps. I turn the page of my journal, the summons of sleep not yet forcing my quill to rest, and continue my scrawling. Our class discussions have been rather insightful, leading me to think about the ethics and values inherent in my position as a UC social worker. The ideas behind a new myth of unity make me believe that even across our diverse cultures we have universal similarities. The progressive ideas about solidarism in critical fantasy literature is

something that I have come to realise is vital to my work in the UC and as a social work educator. Even in Erikson's time, the creation of new myths was essential for drawing people together based on comparable values. I ponder about the capacity for critical fantasy literature and its potential in my teaching praxis.

I'm beginning to feel as if the literary ladder is not only guiding my lessons and the students' learning, but my own learning. It is as if the tables have been turned and I am now a pupil. I don't feel slightly comfortable in my new role as learner-teacher, but in my profession there are expectations by the university and society that I hold the answers. My learning is never done. How can a teacher need to be educated? Does that make them fit to teach others? These are a few issues I currently grapple with and fear that my colleagues may see this as a potential weakness. In Embore, the University is seen as the idol and epitome of knowledge and I am beginning to think that we place too much faith in this effigy of omnipotent absolutism. What is knowledge after all? A worldview? Something given credence to because it was written? A social construction perhaps? This process of educating others in the UC with fantasy and a literature ladder has altered my approach to education. My pedagogy has become a collective reciprocity of mutually exchanged knowledge and experience. Students, colleagues, soldiers, refugees and the like are all part of the bigger picture. It is in this collaborative we are making change and my teaching is reflecting this shift. So, I must ask myself what does critical fantasy literature like Erikson's Malazan Book of the Fallen have to do with a social work education and pedagogy?

While literature as a critical art form is not widely concerned in social work practice, scholarship, or theory, a small, but growing body of research has emphasized the value of incorporating literature in social work education. According to Turner (2013), researchers Rosemary Link and Maura Sullivan have “written about incorporating use of fiction in teaching their social work students in order to expand insight into social work issues and to expand their capacity to visualise through imagery” (p. 856). As an artistic and transformational tool the use of literature as an educational tool in social work introduces students to critical thinking and analysis while broadening perspective and building empathy, capacities critical to practice (Viggiani, Charlesworth, Hutchison, & Fromm-Faria, 2005). The use of literature in the social work classroom incorporates a narrative approach to learning about other lives by exploring multicultural diversity and inclusivity and understanding challenges, struggles and systemic ideologies that may be at play in our current society that go far beyond the use of role-playing and case studies. Literary analysis also provides an opportunity for theory-practice integration because fiction helps students establish a bridge between the theoretical and the systemic influences on individual lives where they will be situating their future practice. The analysis of fictional works in social work provides a unique and unconventional approach to teaching about social work issues like social justice in a way that lectures and textbooks cannot; especially when it corresponds to wider social and political needs of our communities.

A fundamental aspect of using literature in social work education deals with art as a platform for initiating socially and critically engaged pedagogy. As Giroux (2004) points out, pedagogy is not simply the social construction of knowledge, values and

experiences, but it is embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts and institutional formations. Like the arts, critical pedagogy can be transformational if not confrontational. For Freire (1970/2005), critical pedagogy is concerned with social transformation through education. He comes from a place of critical consciousness or “*conscientization*,” which focuses on perceiving and exposing social and political contradictions and taking action against oppression (Freire, 1970/2005). From this perspective, critical pedagogy is concerned with issues of privilege, power and discriminating “isms” of all kinds and has the potential to gather groups of students and educators around a more emancipatory vision of social work education. There is an inherent political role of critical pedagogy that helps build connections between the individual and the collective forces of external social conditions. Through the process of learning and teaching there are political mechanisms through which identities are shaped and desires mobilized, where experiences take on form and meaning within and through collective conditions (Giroux, 2004), therefore, as a social justice initiative, critical social work pedagogy becomes an anti-oppressive practice. Critical pedagogy’s role then “lies not only in changing how people think about themselves and their relationship to others and the world, but also in energizing students and others to engage in those struggles that further possibilities for living in a more just society” (Giroux, 2004, p. 63-64).

Irrespective of the benefits to engaging in critical pedagogy, Saleebey and Scanlon (2005) point out that feminists, multiculturalists and post-structuralists question “whether university classrooms can foster democratic dialogue given the gender, race and class inequalities that structure society and the academy as a whole” (p. 5). These scholars ask whether safe spaces for dialogue can really be constructed given such

inequalities and wonder whether asking students from oppressed social categories to share their perspectives isn't another form of discrimination that allows for the continued domination of privileged groups within the classroom (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). Further to this, immersion in a culture and social institutions, whether in an academic perspective at a university or a professional social work capacity in the community, which are increasingly predicated on the values and norms of neo-liberal ideologies, make dedication to the values of critical pedagogy difficult and even problematic. The continual market-based capitalist approaches within social work establishes an external push from licensing bodies, social service agencies, policies, institutions and even some theories toward an understanding of social work as primarily composed of direct, psycho-social therapeutic forms of practice (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). A tension to engage in critical pedagogy and messages of social transformation is created when students and instructors need to learn and work amongst the ideologies critical pedagogy is designed to question and raise issue with. Rather than fight against capitalist bureaucratic systems embedded in academic curriculum and service work, many social work educators and professionals would rather retain the comforts of "being ensconced in the lap of the immediate structures bereft of political, ideological, economic concerns" (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005, p. 7). For students entering the field, the tension also arises where critical pedagogy prepares them to be "liberators", but in the workplace they are often asked to be "controllers" (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005, p. 7). Such tensions highlight the fact that rigid neo-liberal systems in education and the professional workplace "make critical pedagogy a move away from educational urgency of learning how to work with

individuals and families so that they can accomplish a smoother accommodation to their various environments and to their own hopes” (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005, p. 8).

Despite these challenges to critical pedagogy, the nature of critical fantasy narratives have the potential to tell untold stories, to offer perspectives unlike our own, to give voice to those whom are silenced. The use of fantasy works in critical social work pedagogy “serves as a medium of cultural emergence through which new images of society and new cultural systems move into focus and become tangible” (Bender, 1987, p. 7). If we come to understand the social work curriculum as “representative of a set of underlying interests that structure how a particular story is told through the organization of knowledge, social relations, values and forms of assessment” (Giroux, 1987, p. 13), then critical pedagogy focusing on the use of critical fantasy novels comes to represent unheard voices. It is in this place of critical social work pedagogy that critical fantasy can provide opportunities for transformational learning while emancipating forms of knowledge, history, language, culture and authority (Giroux, 1987). Critical fantasy literary analysis thus enables a shifting awareness towards social transformation that permits fiction, like fantasy, to help social workers as social justice crusaders contribute to the social process of myth-making. In this manner, social work educators, students and professionals can advocate for the possibility of a new mythos by collaborating towards goals of social justice, breaking down boundaries and issues, seeking a better world for clients and themselves, fighting oppressive social structures and working as a community towards global unification.

As I put down my wax tablet and lecture parchments from the final lesson, I waited for the usual hurried rush of my students to leave, but this time I found they all remained seated. It was Cindar who rose to his feet first with the others following suit.

“Professor Temple, on behalf of our group we would like to thank you for opening our hearts and minds”.

Huthal chuckled. “Maybe not Mace’s”.

“Ha! Ha! Rau’ral.” Mace replied without laughing. “I’ll have you know I’m joining the UC.”

“And wanting to get paid dirt?” Leander glanced at his superior, dumbfounded. “I don’t believe it!”

“Well believe it Lock!” Mace grunted irritably. “I’m a changed man, like the Morren said.”

“Now you actually have to prove it Mace.” Lothir spoke with disbelief. “It’s one thing to say it, but another to do it”.

“Change takes time. Mace will learn all about that soon enough.” I placed my hand on his arm as I spoke. “In fact, all of you have this potential in any position you choose to occupy within this war and hopefully one day, all of us will be working together in some capacity or another. Now go, all of you, get out of here before I start to cry and believe me my sorcery isn’t pretty when I’m upset!”

They all started to leave, I hesitated briefly. “And thank you. Truly, it means a lot”

They nodded and walked away. No embracing, clasping of wrists or fond farewells. We all knew the war would claim us one by one, eventually.

*I noticed Mace resuming his seat by the fire as he pulled out a frying pan from his pack.
I looked at him with bewilderment.*

*The now ex-Brèlean war-captain shrugged. "I fancied a couple of Wix's sausages, just
don't tell the old bugger if he comes looking for 'em'".*

In my own life, until more recently, I have given little thought to solidarity and collectivity, though it was an often understated and integral part of my employment positions. For nearly the last 20 years, I have worked in the social domains of society, not as a registered social worker, but rather, a worker in the realm of the social; that being, with, for and among people. I have come to appreciate the unity that one can establish when people work together for a common goal, be it to help a client or to fight the various systems of oppression. My worldview has shifted over the years from one that embraced the solitude and individualism of the island to one that embraces the universal global community. I learned that the frustrations of systemic inequality, historical influences like colonialism and all the ism's created through imbalances of privilege, power and oppression are best fought together, not alone. I mirror Temple's reflections in my own ethos around critical social work and social justice and have been transformed as a result. Moving forward, as a student and professional worker in the realm of the social, I see the potential for critical fantasy employed in critical social work education to offer a safe space to critique and postulate possibilities for a better world and to enact social justice as a community of readers, students and educators.

Writing as both Temple and myself has brought into perspective the wars waged within me every time I battled the frustrations of examining our current world and my

past practice with clients. Violence is often regarded as negative and in fantasy books it takes lives, ruins nations and decimates worlds. Yet violence can also be a force leading to self-transformation. My values and ethics resonate with the soldiers in both Temple's world and the Malazan worlds, where an epic battle is one of self-realization. I believe restructuring our world will come out of revolution which is often bloody. A change in consciousness will come out of self-sacrifice. It will require *conscientization* coming from a place of Freire's critical consciousness. It will involve a community of mythopoetic revolutionists working for awareness and change. It will also need to bring groups of people together in the form of a collective struggle, metamorphosing into a new way of thinking and being.

In further reflecting on this work, I have two caveats I would like to point out. The first is where at times, my research took a reductionist approach, serving to reduce ambiguity and achieve more certainty towards my predetermined themes of solidarity, community and collaboration. In this manner, my paper was structured in such a way to exclusively explore these themes to help with cohesion of thought and ideas. My reductionist approach has the potential to come across as essentializing, where I used my research to create the conditions necessary to support my purpose, claims and objectives. This leads to an essentialist mode of thought that imposes an "all or nothing" constraint to my work. I further contend that this reductionism and essentializing is also a by-product of the radical utopic dialogue that I believe was necessary to explore my concept.

This leads to my second caveat, the utopic nature of my thesis and the creation of a new mythology for unity and harmony. It proposes an idealist stance, by imaging a world without strife, oppression, wars and conflict. The collectivistic mythology I

propose rests on assumptions that all humans want to work for unification and collectivity and are willing to adopt this new mythos. It also assumes that people will want to value the needs of community and society over those of the individual. In light of these limitations, I contend that this utopic stance offers an expression of what is missing and what needs to be altered across communities. This thesis further proposes the possibility for creating waves of social change, not necessarily through the formation of a new society, but through a rediscovery and reorganization of current ones.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Samar Dev, inventor, scholar and witch, to Karsa Orlong, “there is no flaw in being critical.” (Erikson, 2008, p. 433)

Through the study of Steven Erikson’s ten volume series *Malazan Book of the Fallen*, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate how fantasy literature can be a productive analytical and critical category in promoting the possibility for a mythos of solidarity and unity. I introduced a new category to the genre I call critical fantasy, comprising of literature from the fantasy category that questions our current world, posits solutions to a more cohesive society and proposes possibilities for social transformation by means of new myth creation. With an exploration of Erikson’s personal and educational background and his writing in neo-liberal Canada, we have observed his progressive approach using mimesis in the secondary world to challenge existing individualistic ideologies in our primary world. My research further investigates how Erikson’s series focuses on the struggles of individual characters and the collective conflicts of society through discussions about the importance of community, collective social capital and communitarianism. The examination regarding the mythopoetic potential in critical fantasy leads to an analysis about this area’s potential to establish a new mythology of universal harmony and solidarity that moves readers towards embracing a solidaristic worldview through the concepts of the social imaginary and imagined communities. Finally, this thesis also considers the benefits of art in literary form within social work and the possibilities for critical fantasy literature in critical social work pedagogy.

Kruppe, a regular patron at the Phoenix Inn in Darujhistan, once said to the thief Crokus Younghand:

Is it not true that, from one year to the next, we each ourselves are capable of changes so fundamental that our present selves can in no reasonable way be considered equal to our past selves? If the rule does not apply even within our own individual lives, how can one dare hope to believe that it pertains collectively?" (Erikson, 2008, p. 164)

The importance of personal awareness, consciousness-raising and self-transformation are essential to making change on a global scale. The mythopoetic possibilities for collaboration, harmony and unity in critical fantasy literature like Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series, opens a dialogue for a collectivist-oriented society promoting inclusivity and diversity. Whereby, oppressed and marginalised communities can find their socio-political voices. As Kruppe suggests, there must be a shedding of our past selves, a commitment to transformational change, not only within ourselves, but at the local, national and global levels. For critical social work, this will involve some discomfort and some self-sacrifice to shed the cloak of individuality by shifting our gaze from the ego-centric ideologies that ground our current professional and personal circumstances to ones that are more world-centric. The mythopoetic potentials of collaboration in critical fantasy proposed throughout this work highlight the embracing of solidarist values, where the bottom line is not coin, but community. Critical fantasy offers us a realm in which to dream of alternative possibilities, to form communities, real or imagined, that act in concert, building bedrocks for solidarity. Together.

References

- Anastas, J. W. (2014). The science of social work and its relationship to social work practice. *Research on Social Work Practice, 24*(5), 571-580.
- Anderson, C., & McCune, V. (2013). Fostering meaning: Fostering community. *Higher Education, 66*(3), 283-296.
- Apter, T. E. (1982). *Fantasy literature: An approach to reality*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Archard, D. (2000). British communitarianism. *Res Publica, 6*, 227–235.
- Arfken, M. (2018). From resisting neoliberalism to neoliberalizing resistance. *Theory & Psychology, 28*(5) 684–693
- Armstrong, H. (2013). Indigenizing the curriculum: The importance of story. *First Nations Perspectives, 5*(1), 37-64.
- Arthur, J. (1998). Communitarianism: what are the implications for education? *Educational Studies, 24*(3), 353-368.
- Augoustinos, M., Tuffin, K., & Every, D. (2005). New racism, meritocracy and individualism: Constraining affirmative action in education. *Discourse & Society, 16*(3), 315-340.
- Baker, D. (2012). Why we need dragons: the progressive potential of fantasy. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, 23*(3), 437-459.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. M. Holquist (Ed.). (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Banerjee, S. B., Chio, V. C. M., & Mir, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Organizations, markets and imperial formations: Towards and anthropology of globalization*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Baskin, C. (2006). Aboriginal world views as challenges and possibilities in social work education. *Critical Social Work*, 7(2). Retrieved from <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/>
- Becker, S., Bryman, A., & Ferguson, H. (Eds.). (2012). *Understanding research for social policy and social work: themes, methods and approaches*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Beer, L. E. (1990). Music therapy: Sounding your myth. *Music Therapy*, 9(1), 35-43.
- Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2008). *The social impact of the arts: An intellectual history*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bell, L. A. (2016). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Diane J. Goodman & Khyati Y. Joshi (3rd ed., Eds.) *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 3-26). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bender, J. (1987) *Imagining the penitentiary: Fiction and the architecture of mind in eighteenth-century England*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Benford, R. D. (2002). Controlling narratives and narratives as control within social movements. In Joseph E. Edwards (Ed.), *Stories of change: Narrative and social movements* (pp. 53–75). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bidney, D. (1966). Myth, symbolism and truth. In J. B. Vickery (Ed.), *Myth and literature: Contemporary theory and practice* (pp. 3-14). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Block, H. M. (1980). The myth of the artist. In J. P. Strelka (Ed.), *Literary criticism and myth* (pp. 3-24). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Bockstael, E. (2017). Critical capacity development: An action research approach in coastal Brazil. *World Development*, 94, 336–345.
- Boggs, C. (2001). Social capital and political fantasy: Robert Putnam’s bowling alone. *Theory and Society*, 30(2), 281-297.
- Brewer, M. B., & Chen, Y. (2007). Where (who) are collectives in collectivism? Toward conceptual clarification of individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Review*, 114(1), 133-151.
- Brown, A. D. (1994). Politics, symbolic action and myth making in pursuit of legitimacy. *Organization Studies*, 15(6), 861-878.
- Butler, A., Ford, D., & Tregaskis, C. (2007). Who do we think we are? Self and reflexivity in social work practice. *Qualitative Social Work*, 6(3), 281–299.
- Campbell, J. (2011). *The power of myth*. New York, NY: Anchor.
- Canavan, A. P. (2011). *Looting the Dungeon: The Quest for the Genre Fantasy Mega-Text* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Liverpool).
- Canavan, A. P. (2019). Steven Erikson: More than meets the eye. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 29(1), 18-20.
- Cantle, T. (2005). *Community cohesion: A new framework for race and diversity*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castoriadis, C. (1997). *The Castoriadis reader* (D. A. Curtis, Trans. Ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Castoriadis, C. (2005). *The imaginary institution of society* (K. Blamey, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Original work published 1975)
- Cheah, P. (1999). Grounds of comparison. *Diacritics*, 29(4), 2-18.

- Chuddley-Diatta, B. A. (2018). Sowing seeds of social justice: The impact of bringing literature to life. *The Educational Forum*, 82(3), 378-382.
- Cleaver, F. (2005). The inequality of social capital and the reproduction of chronic poverty. *World Development*, 33(6), 893-906.
- Clute, J., & Grant, J. (1997). *The encyclopedia of fantasy*. London, UK: Orbit.
- Cohen, A. (2010). Myth and Myth Criticism following the Dialectic of Enlightenment. *The European Legacy*, 15(5), 583-598.
- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. London, UK: Ellis Horwood.
- Conversi, D. (2010). Cultural homogenization, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. 719-742. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Daniele_Conversi/publication/231537076_Cultural_Homogenization_Ethnic_Cleansing_and_Genocide/links/09e41506b746ad5123000000/Cultural-Homogenization-Ethnic-Cleansing-and-Genocide.pdf
- Corradetti, C. (2013). The Frankfurt School and critical theory [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256045695_The_Frankfurt_School_and_Critical_Theory
- Cowden, S., & Singh, G. (2017). Community cohesion, communitarianism and neoliberalism. *Critical Social Policy*, 37(2), 268-286.
- Crljen, F. (2013). *Lost in the fray: Discovering mimesis in an estranged world*. (Master's thesis, RMIT University).
- Culler, J. (1999). Anderson and the novel. *Diacritics*, 29(4), 19-39.

- Dalacoura, K. (2002). A critique of communitarianism with reference to post-revolutionary Iran. *Review of International Studies*, 28(1), 75-92.
- Daly, M. (1994). Introduction. In M. Daly (Ed.), *Communitarianism: A new public ethics* (pp. 1- 27). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Demmler, K. (2011). Climbing the Literacy Ladder. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/kelliedoty/88672-633572627762812500>
- Dhesi, A. (2000). Social capital and community development. *Community Development Journal*, 35(3), 199-214.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: an introduction*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Earley, P. C., & Gibson, C. B. (1998). Taking stock in our progress on individualism-collectivism: 100 years of solidarity and community. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 265-304.
- Egoff, S. A. (1981). *Thursday's child: Trends and patterns in contemporary children's literature*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Eisenberg, A. (1995). *Reconstructing political pluralism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Erikson, S. (n.d.). The problem of Karsa Orlong. Retrieved from <http://www.steven-erikson.com/index.php/the-problem-of-karsa-orlong/>
- Erikson, S. (1999). *Gardens of the moon: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Tor.
- Erikson, S. (2000). *Deadhouse gates: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Tor.

- Erikson, S. (2001). *Memories of ice: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 3). New York, NY: Tor.
- Erikson, S. (2002). *House of chains: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 4). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2004). *Midnight tides: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 5). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2006). *The bonehunters: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 6). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2007). *Reaper's gale: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 7). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2008). *Toll the hounds: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 8). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2009). *Dust of dreams: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 9). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2011). *The crippled god: Malazan book of the fallen* (Vol. 10). London, UK: Bantam.
- Erikson, S. (2019). Stand fast. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 29(1), 21-25.
- Etzioni, A. (1995). *Rights and the common good: The communitarian perspective*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Finkel, A. (2013). *Social policy and practice in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Finn, J., & Jacobson, M. (2003). Just practice: Steps toward a new social work paradigm. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 39(1), 57-78.

- 588ku [pngtree.com]. (n.d.). *Wood rope ladder decoration*. [Vector Graphic]. Retrieved from https://pngtree.com/freepng/wood-rope-ladder-decoration-illustration_4708438.html
- Fook, J. (2003). Critical social work: The current issues. *Qualitative Research Social Work: Research and Practice*, 2(2), 123-130.
- Forde, C. & Lynch, D. (2014). Critical practice for challenging times: social workers' engagement with community work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(8), 2078-2094.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. Bergman-Ramos, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing. (Original work published 1970).
- Frye, N. (1990). *Words with power: Being a second study of "the Bible and literature"*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture: Selected Essays*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gill, R. B. (2013). The uses of genre and the classification of speculative fiction. *Mosaic*, 46(2), 71-85.
- Giroux, H. A. (1987). Introduction: Literacy and the pedagogy of political empowerment. In P. Freire & D. Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the word and the world* (pp. 1-19). London, UK: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 59-79.
- Gray, C. S. (2005). Sandcastle of theory: A critique of Amitai Etzioni's communitarianism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(12), 1607-1625.

- Gray, M. (2005). Dilemmas of international social work: Paradoxical processes in indigenisation, universalism and imperialism. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 14*, 231–238.
- Gunewardena, N. (2009). Pathologizing poverty: Structural forces versus personal deficit theories in the feminization of poverty. *Journal of Educational Controversy, 4*(1), 1-11.
- Hall, E. (2016). Skepticism about unconstrained utopianism. *Social Philosophy and Policy, 33*(1-2), 76-95.
- Harris, O. J. T. (2014). (Re)assembling communities. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory, 21*(1), 76-97.
- Hart, J. (2005). *Northrop Frye: The theoretical imagination*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hart, S. M., & Ouyang, W. (Eds.). (2005). *A companion to magical realism*. Suffolk, UK: Tamesis.
- Hauser, A. (1982). *The sociology of art*. (K. J. Northcott, Trans.). London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (Original work published 1974).
- Haynes, I. (1999). Introduction: the Roman army as a community. *Journal of Roman Archaeology, 34*, 7-14. Retrieved from <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/260/1/haynes1.pdf>
- Healy, K. (2001). Reinventing critical social work: Challenges from practice, context and postmodernism. *Critical Social Work, 2*(1). Retrieved from <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/reinventing-critical-social-work-challenges-from-practice-context-and-postmodernism>

- Healy, K. (2005). Modern critical social work: From radical to anti-oppressive practice. In K. Healy, *Social work theories in context: Creating frameworks for practice* (pp. 172-192). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hill Collins, P. (2010). The new politics of community. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1), 7-30.
- Howe, I. (1961). *Politics and the novel*. London: UK, Stevens & Sons.
- Hume, K. (2014). *Fantasy and mimesis (Routledge revivals): Responses to reality in Western literature*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hunter, J. C. (2006). The evidence of things not seen: Critical mythology and “the lord of the rings”. *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29(2), 129-147.
- Hurtig, M. (1999). *Pay the rent or feed the kids: The tragedy and disgrace of poverty in Canada*. Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.
- Huss, E. (2019). Introduction: Arts in social work practice: From theory to practice, an introductory chapter. In E. Huss & E. Bos (Eds.), *Art in social work practice theory and practice: International perspectives* (pp. 1-6). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Huss, E., Elhozayel, E., & Marcus, E. (2012). Art in group work as an anchor for integrating the micro and macro levels of intervention with incest survivors. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 40(4), 401-411.
- Ingram, D. (2010). *Habermas: Introduction and analysis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Jackson, R. (2003). *Fantasy: The literature of subversion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Jaffe, J., & Quark, A. A. (2006). Social cohesion, neoliberalism, and the entrepreneurial community in rural Saskatchewan. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(2), 206-225.
- Jasper, J. (2018). Communitarian idealism? *The Social Science Journal*, 55(1), 23-24.
- Jordaan, E. (2011). Including the excluded: communitarian paths to cosmopolitanism. *Review of International Studies*, 37(5), 2365-2385.
- Kam, P. K. (2014). Back to the 'social' of social work: Reviving the social work profession's contribution to the promotion of social justice. *International Social Work*, 57(6), 723-740.
- Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marshall, E., Phillips, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from indigenous perspectives. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56(2), 84-91.
- Kirmayer, L. J., Sehdev, M., & Isaac, C. (2009). Community resilience: Models, metaphors and measures. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 5(1), 62-117.
- Lamb, A. (2001). *Literature Learning Ladders*. Retrieved from <http://www.eduscapes.com/ladders/>
- Leaf-Christian, D. (2003). *Creating a life together: Practical tools to grow ecovillages and intentional communities*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.
- Lee, D. (2016). The politics of fairyland: Neil Gaiman and the enchantments of anti-bildungsroman. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 57(5), 552-564.

- LeGuin, U. K. (2004). From elfland to Poughkeepsie. In D. Sandner (Ed.), *Fantastic literature: A critical reader* (pp. 144-155). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
(Original work published 1973)
- Levy, S. (2019). Recreating the social work imagination: Embedding the arts within Scottish social work. In E. Huss & E. Bos (Eds.), *Art in social work practice theory and practice: International perspectives* (pp. 44-56). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a network theory of social capital. *Connections*, 22(1), 28-51.
- Lorenz, W. (2016). Reaching the person—social work research as professional responsibility. *European Journal of Social Work*, 19(3-4), 1-13.
- Lorjé, P. (1996). Communitarianism: A legislator's perspective. *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 19(1), 20-24.
- Manlove, C. (1999). *The fantasy literature of England*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Mason, A. (2000). *Community, solidarity and belonging: Levels of community and their normative significance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Mathews, R. (1997). *Fantasy: The liberation of imagination*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mattsson, T. (2014). Intersectionality as a useful tool: Anti-oppressive social work and critical reflection. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 29(1), 8-17.
- May, L. (2007). The international community, solidarity and the duty to aid. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 38(1), 185-203.
- McGuire, R. (2008). *Archaeology as political action* (California series in public anthropology; 17). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- McKay, I. (2000). The liberal order framework: A prospectus for a reconnaissance of Canadian history. *Canadian Historical Review*, 81(4), 616-678.
- McKenna, S. (2011). A critical analysis of North American business leaders' neocolonial discourse: Global fears and local consequences. *Organization*, 18(3), 387-406.
- McLaren, K. (2004). "We had no desire to be set apart": Forced segregation of Black students in Canada west public schools and myths of British egalitarianism. *Social History*, 37, 27-50.
- ter Meulen, R. (2016). Solidarity, justice, and recognition of the other. *Theoretical medicine and bioethics*, 37(6), 517-529.
- Meyer, D. S., & Rohlinger, D. A. (2012). Big books and social movements: A myth of ideas and social change. *Social Problems*, 59(1), 136-153.
- Miller, D., Bazzi, A., Allen, H., Martinson, M., Salas-Wright, C., Jantz, K., & Rosenbloom, D. (2017). A social work approach to policy: Implications for population health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(S3), S243-S249.
- Milliken, J., & Krause, K. (2002). State failure, state collapse, and state reconstruction: concepts, lessons and strategies. *Development and Change*, 33(5), 753-774.
- Mohnen, S., Groenewegen, P., Völker, B., & Flap, H. (2011). Neighborhood social capital and individual health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 72(5), 660-667.
- Norris, F. H., Stevens, S. P., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K. F., & Pfefferbaum, R. L. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41(1-2), 127-150.

- Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Nova Scotia association of social workers code of ethics*. Retrieved from http://nscsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Code_of_Ethics_en.pdf.
- Novitz, D. (1987). *Knowledge, fiction and imagination*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ordway, H. E. (2001). *The development of the modern fantasy novel*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst).
- Oziewicz, M. C. (2008). *One Earth, One People: The Mythopoeic Fantasy Series of Ursula K. Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle and Orson Scott Card*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Parrott, L. (2003). *Social work and social care*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Payne, M. (2014). *Modern social work theory*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Pearson, A. W., Carr, J. C., & Shaw, J. C. (2008). Toward a theory of familiness: A social capital perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(6), 949-969.
- Perrow, C. (1964). The sociological perspective and political pluralism. *Social Research*, 31(4), 411-422.
- Potolsky, M. (2006). *Mimesis*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Porter, A. (2012). Neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism and Canadian social policy: Challenges for feminism. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 29(3), 19-31.
- Power, A., & Wilson, W. J. (2000). Social exclusion and the future of cities. *Centre for Analysis for Social Exclusion London School of Economics* [Data file]. Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1158926

- Prasad, A. (Ed.). (2003). *Postcolonial theory and organizational analysis*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Prendergast, M. (2011). Utopian performatives and the social imaginary: Toward a new philosophy of drama/theater education. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 45(1), 58-73.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rancière, J. (2004). The politics of literature. *SubStance* # 103, 33(1), 10-24.
- Rochon, T. R. (1998). *Culture moves: Ideas, activism, and changing values*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rose, J. (2003). Government advertising and the creation of national myths: The Canadian case. *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 8(2), 153-165.
- Roulstone, A., & Morgan, H. (2009). Neo-Liberal individualism or self-directed support: Are we all speaking the same language on modernising adult social care? *Social Policy & Society*, 8(3), 333-345.
- Rushkoff, D. (2018, June 21). Do we need a new myth, or no myth? [web log comment]. Retrieved from <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/do-we-need-a-new-myth-or-no-myth/2018/06/21?cn-reloaded=1>
- Ryan, K. (2011). The relationship between rape myths and sexual scripts: The social construction of rape. *Sex Roles*, 65(11-12), 774-782.
- Saleebey, D., & Scanlon, E. (2005). Is a critical pedagogy for the profession of social work possible? *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 25(3-4), 1-18.

- Savaya, R., & Gardner, F. (2012). Critical reflection to identify gaps between espoused theory and theory-in-use. *Social Work, 57*(2), 145-154.
- Schellenberg, G., Lu, C., Schimmele, C., & Hou, F. (2018). The correlates of self-assessed community belonging in Canada: Social capital, neighbourhood characteristics, and rootedness. *Social Indicators Research, 140*(2), 597–618.
- Scheurich, J. J. (1993). Toward a white discourse on white racism. *Educational Researcher, 22*(8), 5-10.
- Schumaker, P. (2018). Amitai Etzioni: Communitarian centrist and principled pluralist. *The Social Science Journal, 55*, 4-5.
- Scott, D. (2014). The temporality of generations: Dialogue, tradition, criticism. *New Literary History, 45*(2), 157-181.
- Scott, J. (2004). Translating myth: The task of speaking time and space. *Bucknell Review, 47*(1), 58-72.
- Shahzad, F. (2012). Forging the nation as an imagined community. *Nations and Nationalism 18*(1), 21–38.
- Sheridan-Rabideau, M. P. (2001). The stuff that myths are made of: Myth building as social action. *Written Communication, 18*(4), 440-469.
- Short, K. G. (2012). Story as world making. *Language Arts, 90*(1), 9-17.
- Simpson, J. S., James, C. E., & Mack, J. (2011). Multiculturalism, colonialism, and racialization: Conceptual starting points. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 33*(4), 285-305.
- Strauss, C. (2006). The imaginary. *Anthropological Theory, 6*(3), 322–344.

- Sullivan, C. W. (2004). High fantasy. In P. Hunt (Ed.), *International companion encyclopedia of children's literature* (2nd ed., pp. 436-446). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sumara, D. J. (2002). *Why reading literature in school still matters: Imagination, interpretation, insight*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Suvin, D. (2000). Considering the sense of “fantasy” or “fantastic fiction”: An effusion. *Extrapolation*, 41(3), 209-248.
- Syverson, M. A. (1999). *The wealth of reality: An ecology of composition*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Talò, C., Mannarini, T., & Rochira, A. (2014). Sense of community and community participation: A meta-analytic review. *Social Indicators Research*, 117(1), 1-28.
- Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Termini, C. (2015). *The bent mirror: Speculative fiction for social justice*. (Master's thesis, Empire State College).
- Trebicki, G. (2014). Subverting mythopoeic fantasy: Miyuki Miyabe's the book of heroes. *Mythlore*, 32(2), 49-63.
- Turner, L. M. (2013). Encouraging professional growth among social work Students through literature assignments: Narrative literature's capacity to inspire professional growth and empathy. *British Journal of Social Work*, 43, 853–871.
- Turner, L. M. (1991). Literature and social work: An exploration of how literature informs social work in a way social sciences cannot. *British Journal of Social Work*, 21, 229-243.

- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.
- Viggiani, P. A., Charlesworth, L., Hutchison, E. D., & Fromm-Faria, D. (2005). Utilization of contemporary literature in human behavior and social justice coursework. *Social Work Education, 24*(1), 57-97.
- Vike, M. (2009). *The Familiar and the Fantastic A Study of Contemporary High Fantasy in George RR Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire and Steven Erikson's Malazan Book of the Fallen* (Master's thesis, The University of Bergen).
- Waggoner, D. (1978). *The hills of faraway: A guide to fantasy*. New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Whittington, M. S., & Williams, G. (Eds.). (1995). *Canadian politics in the 1990s* (4th ed.). Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Wilkinson, I. (2013). The provocation of the humanitarian social imaginary. *Visual Communication, 12*(3), 261-276.
- Williams, J. (2005). Pluralism, solidarism and the emergence of world society in English School theory. *International Relations, 19*(1), 19-38.
- Worthman, C. (2002). "The way I look at the world": Imaginal interaction and literacy use at TeenStreet. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 45*(6), 458-468.
- Wright, E. O. (2015). Eroding capitalism: A comment on Stuart White's 'basic capital in the egalitarian toolkit'. *Journal of Applied Philosophy, 32*(4), 432-439.
- Wright, R. (2000). Historical underdosing: Pop demography and the crisis in Canadian history. *The Canadian Historical Review, 81*(4), 1-27.

Youngmevittaya, W. (2019). A critical reflection on Michael J. Sandel: Rethinking communitarianism. *Journal of Social Sciences Naresuan University*, 15(1), 83-116.

Zanger, J. (2002). *Fantasy*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.