Inscribed Into Skin: The Influence of Trauma on Narration in Spellslinger and Way of the Argosi

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The Influence of Trauma on Narration in *Spellslinger* and *Way of the Argosi*

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Abstract

Young adults are continually confronted with instability and crises, as well as traumatic events at large. Considering that literature, and Young Adult literature specifically, can be seen as a reflection of the lived experience, it is expected that the existence of such trauma influences the novels written. The ability of Young Adult literature to reflect the lived experience, and the necessity for it to do so, is also discussed by columnist and author Michael Cart in 2016, literature researcher Bruce Carrick in 2017 and literature studies researcher Amy Elliot in 2015. However, they do not specifically note on the place of trauma in this reflection. This thesis considers how trauma affects the narrator's voice. To do so, Canadian author Sebastien de Castell's fantasy Young Adult novels *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger* were taken as a case study. Ferius and Kellen, the respective protagonists of the aforementioned novels, are confronted with traumatic experiences, such as torture and genocide. Due to perceived commonalities in the situations of the protagonists, and their communities, to that of Indigenous communities, knowledge of the latter is used to make sense of the former. Similarly, knowledge of the Holocaust was used to contemplate the fictional narrative. Knowledge on trauma in these real world communities was gained from articles by, among others, psychologists Sarah Panofsky et al. (2021) and social worker Elizabeth Fast and psychologist Delphine Collin-Vézina (2010). Due to the influence trauma can have on the lived experience, there was a need for discussing the reliability of the narrator of each novel. As a result, this thesis looked to the articles on unreliable and fallible narrators by religious studies professor Catherine Caufield, published in 2021, and cultural studies researcher Greta Olson, published in 2003. A close reading of the novels found trauma to affect not only the narratorial style, such as through narrative fragmentation, but also the narrator's reliability and tone of voice. Though the narrators of *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger* were not affected similarly in narratorial style, with the former's narration being more fragmented as opposed to the linear narration of the latter, the tone of voice is comparable. In both cases, there is a clear influence of fear and resentment on the narrator's voice. The reliability of the respective novels narrators is also similarly fallible, though due to different reasons. The insight provided by the novels

to the readers allow for a fostering of understanding between different real-life cultures, histories and life-journeys.

Keywords:

Trauma, YA literature, narration, fallible narrator, resilience models, Sebastien de Castell, Way of the Argosi, Spellslinger

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Chapter 1. Introduction.

Sebastien de Castell, author of *Spellslinger* and its prequel *Way of the Argosi*, does not shy away from a discussion on serious subject matter in his Young Adult (YA) novels. Both fantasy novels confront the reader with detailed descriptions of the inscription of sigils (symbols carrying magic and spells) into skin. In *Way of the Argosi*, this inscription was performed on Ferius' skin at the hands of Jan'Tep mages. Ferius is Mahdek, a people once at home in the oasis which has since been lost to the Jan'Tep. Dispossessed of their lands, they are hunted across the continent by the Jan'Tep, who fear that they will come to take back what is theirs. Having no magic or armies to take care of this threat, the Mahdek wander the continent and beg for shelter and jobs to survive on. Often, their survival is short-lived, as Jan'Tep mages have been following and murdering them since the war. Ferius' torture follows this history of genocide. The act is an experiment in fostering hatred, allowing for further decimation of the Mahdek through making people despise them.

The experience of Kellen in *Spellslinger* differs sightly. His parents, whom he trusted, inscribed sigils into his skin as to ensure his inability to channel magic. For someone living in a society of Jan'Tep mages, united by their ability to use magic, this entailed being cut off from his future as a mage. His parents take away his chance at becoming the ideal Jan'Tep mage and with it his connection with Jan'Tep society. As a result, Kellen is demoted to the role of Sha'Tep, serving those who continue to practice their magical abilities while themselves unable to do so. All of that, because he has shadowblack: a disease which, according to legend, the Mahdek infected the Jan'Tep with during the war three hundred years ago.

In both cases, the consequences are traumatic as they are cut off from their communities. Both Kellen and Ferius find a new home with the Argosi, magicless individuals who record that which they see happening in the world. By doing so, Argosi attempt to influence the outcome of events and make for a peaceful ending to a conflict, either by intervening or manipulating the parties involved. It is interesting that Ferius and Kellen join the non-magical Argosi as magic and curses, or simply the belief in them, are of importance to the narratives found in both novels. It is the foundation of both

Spellslinger and *Way of the Argosi*, influencing the way Ferius and Kellen think of themselves and their communities.

In his article on the history of the YA genre, published in 2016, columnist and author Michael Cart argues that YA literature has always been interested in serious subject matters. Specifically, YA has an interest in subjects that reference the real surroundings of young adults. In the beginning of his article, Cart quotes S.E. Hinton, author of *The Outsiders* which portrays gang violence, arguing that: "Teenagers today want to read about teenagers today." In a world that confronts young adults with ever more serious problems, such as war, abuse, pandemic(s) and climate change, this assertion becomes self-evident. It is of importance to include such matters in contemporary fiction in order to provide a level of relatability to young readers. Literature researcher Bruce Carrick in 2017 argues they use their "own family background to relate to the fictional worlds created by writers" and vice versa (164). As is argued by both Carrick and literature studies researcher Amy Elliot (180), in her 2015 article on community and trauma, YA literature does not shield its audience from serious matters. The existence of trauma can be seen as a way in which young adults are taught to deal with real life problems. Matters of belonging to a group are also of importance in the genre of YA literature (Cart). Thus, YA novels cover a diverse range of topics that often relate to real world circumstances and discuss these without feeling the need for censorship. They serve as an educational resource, offering information on real-life situations and informing the readers personal perspectives on matters discussed. YA novels provide a creative introduction to and reference for real world problems.

This thesis will deal with the topics of trauma and identity formation in two YA fantasy books written by Canadian author Sebastien de Castell: *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger*. *Way of the Argosi* follows a girl named Ferius Parfax, whose tribe is a victim of genocide by the Jan'Tep. Specifically, the inner life and experience of Ferius is a special focus within the narrative. *Spellslinger* takes place an unspecified amount of years after *Way of the Argosi* and follows Kellen, a Jan'Tep who is unable to access magic. He suffers from childhood illness, making him weaker than other mages. As a result, he questions his identity. The books revolve around self-discovery. They also engaged in a thematic exploration of the impact of torture, (group) identity, trauma and genocide.

Way of the Argosi and *Spellslinger* follow the lives of two teenagers, belonging to opposing groups. The novels present the reader with the events through their eyes. Thus, Ferius and Kellen act as the main focaliser in their respective novels. A focaliser, as cultural theorist Mieke Bal (135) explains, is the "subject of focali[s]ation", the point of view through which the story's actions and "elements are viewed" and presented to the reader. Because of their different backgrounds, this point of view is dramatically different for each character. Both stories are written in first person, but each makes use of a different type of narrator. It is of interest to this thesis to consider how these narrators consider the aforementioned topics of self-discovery, torture, (group) identity, trauma and genocide. Close reading will be used as a mode of analysing these novels. Mark Byron, professor of English, published a description of close reading in the 2021 online edition of the Oxford Research Encyclopedia. He explains close reading as "examin[ing] a literary work (or part of a work) with sustained attention to such matters as grammar, syntax, vocabulary, rhetorical tropes, prosody, as well as the presence of literary allusion and other forms of intertextuality", which can bring forth information about (among others) language effects, tropes, and historical and literary references. This thesis will set out to explore the ways in which trauma affects the narrator's voice.

1.1. Naming Conventions

De Castell's books fall within the fantasy trope of using apostrophes for fictional cultures. This is especially clear in the Jan'Tep naming conventions, including names as Ke'heops and Mer'esan. Writing about this trope, Tina Dubinsky's 2022 online article on naming conventions notes that often fantasy authors create their own languages or draw upon existing (Latin, Native American and Aboriginal) languages and dialects for inspiration. Jessica Lee's online article on creating fictional languages, published in 2013, also suggests existing languages as source of inspiration, but warns against inventing languages with many dashes and apostrophes, due to the risk of making them unpronounceable. Professional screen-and-copywriter Jonathan Trueman, discussing the topic on Quora, considers the exotic quality of the apostrophe and the suggestion of otherness it creates. Justin Thoby, in the same discussion as Trueman, rightfully notes: "There are real world naming conventions that use apostrophes to denote a space break in a single name […]. I think more often it's done to lend

the names a fantastical element because it isn't common in modern names, particularly in the western world." His comment brings this analysis to the non-Western uses of apostrophes, attaching a sound (e.g. glottal stop) to it in Anglicised spellings to transfer the correct pronunciation. This was discussed at length on TVTropes' webpage "Punctuation Shaker" and the First Peoples' Cultural Council 2020 webpage "Orthographies", showing how such an Anglicisation also happened to the names of Indigenous peoples. The use of apostrophes by de Castell could thus be (unconsciously) inspired by these communities in Canada, even if he does not make such a direct connection. This would not surprise the reader of *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger*, as these novels draw on themes as dispossession, trauma and genocide. These are also key to the situation of Indigenous communities in Canada.

1.2. Indigenous Histories

To deepen the understanding of the comparison, of these fantasy groups with real life communities, this project must turn to a brief history of the Indigenous communities in Canada, also referred to as Aboriginals, or more specifically First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. According to the webpage on First Nations published by the Government of Canada in 2017, Canada's relationship with these communities started as an (informal) trade relationship, evolving into a military partnership. This took a drastic turn in the 1820s, with the colonial administrators taking upon themselves the task of 'civilising' First Nations. This program became central to Indian policy and legislation for the next 150 years, with most influence being exerted by The Indian Act (1876).

As explained on the aforementioned webpage of the Government of Canada, as well as in the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples by René Dussault et al., The Indian Act permitted the Indian Department, erected by the British to resolve issues along the colonial frontier against First Nations and their lands, to intervene in band issues and make policy decisions. Moreover, this department managed Indigenous lands, resources and money. They acted as a guardian until the First Nations, Métis and Inuit integrated into Canadian society, promoting 'civilisation' in the process. This act became more controlling over the years, pushing for "the whole-scale abandonment of traditional ways of life" as well as "introducing outright bans on spiritual and religious ceremonies"

(Government of Canada). The promotion of civilisation and assimilation was eminent because of the existence of the residential school program, which took Indigenous children from their bands and taught them low-skill subjects in schools (Dussault et al. 172). In addition, these children were forced to abandon their traditional languages, dress, religion and lifestyle (315-316). As recounted in the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia entries by J.R. Miller on Residential Schools in Canada, published in 2012, and Ry Moran, who wrote on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, the situation at the residential schools was traumatic for the children. The 2009 entry on the residential school system to the Indigenous Foundations website by Erin Hanson et al. corroborates these statements. The situation is considered to be traumatic due to the disconnect with family and traditions, the (sexual and physical) abuse suffered as well as the (witnessing of) deaths as result of disease and starvation.

Well into the 20th century, and during what came to be known as the "Sixties Scoop" (1961-1980), the act of taking children away from their parents continued. Scholar Erin Hanson explains the "Sixties Scoop" on the Indigenous Foundations website as referring to a time in which native children were drastically overrepresented in the child welfare system and often placed among middle-class (European) Canadian families. In most cases, there was no consent from either family or band for this practice. According to Hanson, as well as the explanatory webpage "What is the Sixties Scoop?" by Settlement.org, partly to blame for this drastic increase was the fact that social workers were unfamiliar with Indigenous culture and practices, being prone to believe that a child was not cared for when not spotting (European) Canadian ways of caring. Moreover, some social workers wanted to protect the children from the poverty and unemployment that the reserves faced. Based on those facts, they justified their actions to themselves. The children were placed in foster homes which often denied them their heritage, consequently detaching them from their familial roots. It is seen as another step in the Canadian government's efforts of assimilation of Indigenous peoples ("What is the Sixties Scoop?"). The foster homes and institutionalised care were also no stranger to (covering up) abuse (Hanson). The "Sixties Scoop" resulted in psychological and emotional problems for those who were part of the system, often due to identity crises and abuse. From the 1990s onwards, local bands have

taken more control over their own child protection services, with many territories allowing children to know their background and considering cultural appropriateness of potential caregivers. Even so, Indigenous children are still overrepresented in the current child welfare system.

The welfare of Indigenous children called for interest in the residential school system, such as signalled in the 2022 blogpost by Unite for Change and signified in the Every Child Matters movement, as well as by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC intended to uncover facts behind the residential school system and build the foundation for reconciliation across Canada. It led to the creation of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), which houses all TRC collected materials and functions as a place for continuing the journey of the commission in "public education, research and access to the collection" (Moran). As the commission closed, it presented four summary reports. The final report paid special attention to the victims of the Canadian residential school system, making the point to label the whole period a case of cultural genocide. Genocide is defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by the United Nations as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". This broader definition does not just pay attention to murder and massacre, but also includes causing "bodily or mental harm to members of the group", as well as "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

An example of genocide is the Holocaust. This not only entails the actual extermination, but also the laws put into place to make it easier to discriminate against them. Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, published the laws of Heydrich as well as informational pieces on anti-Jewish legislation and the Judenrat. These show how anti-Jewish laws not only influenced their work lives, but also every personal detail, such as who an individual could marry. Further genocidal practices were labour camps, in which Jews were forced to work for the Nazi Regime. Some elders, as explained by Yad Vashem's informational piece on member of the Judenrat Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, saw this as the only way the greater Jewish community could be spared from a worse fate. As is known today, this was not the case.

The aforementioned cultural genocide entails the “destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group”, with measures forming “a coherent policy to eliminate Aboriginal people as a distinct peoples and to assimilate them into the Canadian mainstream against their will." (Moran). The imposition of western thought is also assessed by feminist philosopher Mariá Lugones in her 2007 article. She explains how the colonial/modern gender system influenced the way Indigenous communities are understood and how they constructed their own categories. Imposing this system on Indigenous communities resulted in the erasure traditional structures (often matriarchal hierarchies) and practices (such as relating to gender). The healing of Indigenous communities' trauma, resulting from the above mentioned treatment, is still a work in process.

1.3. Studies in Trauma

A connection between these historical realities and the novels can be clearly observed in the ways Ferius and Kellen are cut off from their heritage. In both cases the Jan’Tep were responsible for the forced abandonment of their respective cultures, either by massacre or ostracization. Interestingly, in both cases the tool which signals this disconnect is torture by inscribing sigils. These sigils and their accompanying spells result in each character being shunned, either through hatred or active ostracization. Their disconnect is inscribed directly into their skin. At the core of this practice lies fear, fear of retribution by the Mahdek as well as fear of weakness in the Jan’Tep. Both are informed by the war that took place between these communities generations before their birth. Theories of intergenerational trauma are of importance in relation to these aspects, as the distress suffered by this event has had a lasting impact on these communities. This impact is clear in the influence it had on their way of life and the creating of ways to deal with such an experience. This thesis will use theories of intergenerational and historical trauma to understand ways of experiencing and dealing with the trauma of war and genocide.

Intergenerational and historical trauma are often considered in relation to Indigenous communities and Holocaust survivors, whose traumas are regularly compared. As anthropologists Laurence J. Kirmayer et al. (301) argued in their 2014 article on historical trauma, such a comparison allows for an illumination of common mechanisms, distinctive features and the ways in which political

processes move to individual experiences. In the 2009 article by neuroscientists and psychologists Amy Bombay et al. the comparison of the trauma of Indigenous communities and Holocaust survivors resulted in a discussion on the prevalence of depression and suicide (9), insight in responses to historical trauma (24) and the importance of identifying with a group (13). Aforementioned will be taken into account in the analysis of Ferius' and Kellen's traumatic experiences in their respective novels. This entails looking at the way they, as well as their respective cultures, respond to their (historical) trauma.

Defining historical trauma in their 2021 article, psychologists Sarah Panofsky et al. (2-3) state that it entails a group of people, whom share a specific affiliation or identity, that have been on the receiving end of emotional and psychological wounds for generations. These wounds come from events which cause collective distress and were sustained by people from outside of their community with harmful intents, argue social worker Elizabeth Fast and psychologist Delphine Collin-Vézina in their 2010 article on historical trauma (131). It is thus a collective experience with cumulative effects and a cross generational impact (Kirmayer et al. 301). To deal with trauma, communities build and use resilience models. Fast and Collin-Vézina (126, 133-134) found resilience models on three levels: individual, family and community. All stress the importance of connecting and participating in the traditional culture and values. Community and the feeling of interconnectedness were also found to be important to the resilience of indigenous communities (Panofsky et al. 16-17.). Other contributing factors were spirituality and personal empowerment, as well as the furthering of their own understanding of their historical trauma and history of abuse. Of further importance was gaining trust, agency and a sense of coherence (Panofsky et al. 16-17; Fast and Collin-Vézina 134). These resilience models are also found in *Spellslinger* and *Way of the Argosi* and will be discussed later in the thesis.

1.4. Connecting Fantasy and Reality

Though *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger* have parallels with the situation of the Indigenous communities in Canada, de Castell stated in his 2021 Reddit R/Fantasy AMA that he "writes books that have no bearing on Canada whatsoever". In an interview with DJ, published as a blog in 2018, de Castell explains that *Spellslinger* is set in "an odd kind of western-influenced magical nation", a nation

of Jan'Tep who see themselves "as the most refined and dignified culture on the continent". Moreover, as is clear in the 2016 Goodreads interaction with Alex Boyce, de Castell considers the Jan'Tep lands to be "akin to the American frontier". Overall, this typology leads to a Western, cowboy-like idea of the setting of the series. It is interesting that de Castell does not talk about concrete real world influences when asked about his inspiration.

As a reader, the connection between the novels written by de Castell and the Indigenous communities in Canada, as well as theories of intergenerational and historical trauma, are apparent because of the fact that a dispossession from the land takes place as well as the treatment Ferius and Kellen had to suffer. These connections allowed me to connect more to the subject matter discussed in the book, seeing it as a possible reflection of the world I live in and learning from it in the process, as was argued to be of importance to YA novels by Cart, Carrick and Elliot. Moreover, it has provided an interesting avenue into the genre of fantasy YA and the possibility of (indirect) representation of real world communities.

De Castell avoids a direct discussion of real world communities and pivots to a focus on the fantasy trope of someone who is considered mundane discovering they are special, and the challenges they experience in their life. Elaborating on this idea, on a blog written by Luna in 2019, de Castell explains the core of *Spellslinger*, and with it the Argosi's way of life: "one [...] finds wonder in what they always believed to be mundane". For a fantasy book, this might seem odd. Yet, it makes sense when reading his view of magic. Writing in 2021 on the website United by Pop, Kate Oldfield allows Sebastien de Castell to explain this view: "In our own world […] [b]eliefs about magic reveal to us what people saw as wondrous or terrifying, beneficent or baleful. Not only that, but often our definition of "evil" magic is simply whatever mysticism is practiced by people who don't look or act like we do." Thus, his view on magic in books is influenced by the way magic is thought about in the real world. The real world which often labels that which is not understood, which is not part of the society we belong to, as evil.

De Castell goes on to indicate that that Jan'Tep spells are seen as both science and morality: "those most skilled at using magic are more intelligent, more disciplined in their minds, more pure in

their thoughts and intentions" (Oldfield and de Castell). De Castell continues by stating: "And as for all those others who can't wield magic [the Sha'Tep] and are thus consigned to being the clerks, cooks, and servants of their society? Well, clearly that's their natural purpose in life, otherwise they, too, would have sparked their tattooed bands." Magic is thus seen as something natural and innate by the Jan'Tep, something you have or never will. All those who can access magic are naturally superior. Their (group) identity is based on magic, differentiating them from those who do not have it.

1.5. Constructing Group(s)

The Jan'Tep consider themselves to be the epitome of man. Their innate ability to channel 'good' magic becomes a structuring principle of society as they know it. Those who cannot channel magic or who channel 'bad' magic are seen as naturally inferior to the Jan'Tep. It mirrors the debate on knowledge production, in which Western knowledge is considered to be the (legitimate) truth whereas other types of knowledge are discredited. Therefore, the Jan'Tep can be observed as Western. They perceive the shadowblack as a demonic minority and the Sha'Tep as fit for no more than servitude. In addition, throughout the novels it becomes clear that the Argosi are regular humans who train their arts. Nevertheless, we must ask questions about the identity and inter-connections associated with the Mahdek. As the review website Kirkusreviews noted on March the 1st, 2022, *Way of the Argosi* takes place in a non-Indigenous context with Ferius being read as a racialized White character. Nevertheless, the narrative does parallel Indigenous struggles of being dispossessed, (inter)generational and historical trauma, and genocide. Furthermore, the notion of the vision quest, described by Amanda Robinson in 2018 in the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia as an Indigenous ritual in which adolescents gain both sacred knowledge from the spirit world as recognition as an adult in their community, is used as main identity marker.

In constructing themselves in this manner, group identity takes the form of an 'us vs them' construction. Sociologists and criminologists Hüseyin Cinoğlu and Yusuf Arıkan consider this distinction between the in- ('us') and out-group ('them') in their 2012 article on identity theories. Discussing social identity (1123-1125), they consider how group membership provides an understanding of the role of someone in society, who they should associate with and how they should

act. Those similar to themselves will be labelled the in-group, which provides "a sense of uniqueness to its followers", allowing them to "distinguishes them[selves] from other social entities and have them stand out on the list" (1124). Those who are not associated with are labelled the out-group. It differs from identity theory, in which identity is explained by the roles individuals are assigned or take on (1129), and personal identity theory, which privileges (personal and societal) values in identity formation (1128-1129). These identity theories will be taken into consideration in the analysis of both *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger*.

1.6. Representing Trauma and the Unreliable Narrator

The central point of analysis in this thesis is to address how *Way of the Argosi* and *Spellslinger* represent trauma, both in the way in which the 'adventure' is started as in the way it is dealt with. Carrick talks about the former, noting that often the "peril begins at home" (165). Events in the immediate family push child characters into adventure, often through the means of parental death and family dysfunction. Philosopher Šárka Bubiková also researched how YA deals with trauma in 2017. Initially defining trauma as a(n) (series of) event(s) "so extreme that it cannot be properly assimilated and processed by our memory and thus keeps coming back in unbidden recollections" (3), it is seen not only as the event itself, but also the result of said event. The way that literature reflects the experience of trauma through the conflation of time and the disruption of narrative, shows that trauma belongs in the present, as opposed to the past (7). The narrative techniques of representing trauma include "narrative fragmentation, frequent repetitions, a disjointed narratorial voice", problems with memory as well as a "skewed temporality, and a breakdown in communication and relationships" (Elliot 180). The disjointedness of the narrator, together with the fragmentation and problems with memory, makes for an unreliable account of events. For example, Ferius, in *Way of the Argosi*, has trouble remembering when people have or have not yet introduced themselves. This leads to sentences as: "Durral was his name, though I didn't know it at the ti- No, wait, I *did* know his name by then." (*Way of the Argosi* 165). Not only is this a clear example of problems with memory, but it also relates to the problem of fragmentation, as this sentence get interjected at a moment when a fight is about to start, feeling somewhat out of place.

The reliability of the narrator is also of interest. *Way of the Argosi* is narrated in first person, the 'I' coinciding with Ferius. It seem like Ferius, often feeling disconnected from time and place, is an unreliable narrator. Religious studies professor Catherine Caufield (204-205, 207) wrote an article in 2021 on the unreliable narrator and traumatic experience, noting that the narration and other information given to the readers often do not coincide, creating a tension in the story concerning what is not said. The question arises if Ferius has actively distorted the reality of the situation and could, therefore, be considered a truly unreliable narrator. Just as importantly, the readers must question if this distortion occurs without her self-recognition of that fact. The latter would entail Ferius being a fallible narrator, according to the definition given by cultural studies researcher Greta Olson in 2003 (96, 101, 103-104), due to her impaired perceptions or mistakes in information. Throughout *Way of the Argosi*¸ Ferius notes on the difficulty of grasping time. She acknowledges this, stating that: "One of the ways folks know you're crazy is when you can't keep track of stuff like that" (*Way of the Argosi* 160). Yet, when meeting Durral Brown, she is so sure that her name is Ferius and that it is not the dog's name, that it comes close to, or even is, distorting the reality of the situation. Similarly, the first-person narrator in *Spellslinger* might not be as reliable as perceived. The narrator mainly focalises through Kellen, who does not have all information on the relationship between and history of the Mahdek and Jan'Tep. Thus, he is shown to operate with incomplete knowledge when making claims about who is/was 'good' and who is/was 'bad'.

The task to figure out if the narrator is purposefully lying or not entails a sort of detective work, a mystery of sorts. When a reader has the option to solve this mystery, through uncovering hidden information, it stabilises the narrative recounted. As children's literature researcher Talia E. Crockett (7, 11) argued in her 2020 article on young adult Holocaust literature, the literary techniques used to represent trauma do not only work to disorient, but also to protect the readers from the intensity of the situation. The readers stabilise the narrative by filling in the gaps, making them engage actively with the questions raised in the book and making them question how it relates to their current situation. These techniques, used to represent trauma in a literary form, also have an effect on the narrator's voice and influences the way readers are presented the story.

1.7. Thesis Outline

In light of the above mentioned trauma concerning torture, genocide, being shunned and being considered inferior, this thesis sets out to consider how trauma affects the narrator's voice. What follows is a close reading of specific scenes and moments in the *Way of the Argosi*, followed by a chapter doing the same for *Spellslinger*. Due to a perceived overlap of the communities in de Castell's books with that of the experience of indigenous communities of Canada, this investigation will pay special attention to the way in which these books can be read in the context of these communities. The goal is to see how trauma affects the narrator's voice in Young Adult fantasy books. Using knowledge of trauma experienced by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada, the aim is to show how a link can be made with real world experiences through a fantasy setting. The analysis has shown the ability of fantasy YA literature to use fantasy as a point of reference to the real world. Learning from these novels, the readers can obtain modes of thought and ways of dealing with traumatic events in their own life. Considering the current state of the global world, one of instability and crises, YA novels are more important in this regard than ever.

The first content chapter will focus on the *Way of the Argosi*. This discussion will consider the ways in which Ferius deals with the consequences of war, genocide and torture. Of importance is the way that Ferius is confronted with this history, both through personal experiences as through stories that were passed on. As this is the key to Ferius' trauma, this topic will be related to mental health. Specifically, Ferius' mental health is integral to the ambiguity of time, place and identity. Throughout the book, it is clear that she is unable to concretely position herself within her personal narrative. As was addressed earlier, in reference to the work of theorist Fast and Collin-Vézina (133-134) and Panofsky et al. (16-17), community is crucial to resilience and by extension to the representation of mental health. This idea can be carried over to the realities of Mahdek culture and informs the analysis in this thesis. The analysis found trauma to influence the tone of voice and narratorial style. Through first-person narration, the reader experiences the inner life of the narrator, which coincides with the main character Ferius. The narratorial voice is fragmented, troubled by discerning between the past

and the present. The tone changes throughout the novel, with the narrator being doubtful of their own experiences as well as feeling hopeless, angry and, eventually, at peace.

Spellslinger will be the focus of the second content chapter. In a manner similar to Ferius, Kellen also experiences torture, though in his case it is connected to (the fear of) an illness. Both the illness as the torture bring forth feelings of helplessness and unworthiness. In Kellen's case, it does not end up affecting his mental health to the degree that Ferius experiences. Instead, it is added to the resentment of his own people, the Jan'Tep. Of importance to both these topics is the negative self-image of Kellen, which is enriched with the view of him by other Jan'Tep, as well as the view that Kellen is presented of the Jan'Tep themselves. Considering the importance of group, and the rituals attached to it, Jan'Tep culture will also be considered. The construction of the Jan'Tep and Sha'Tep groups will also be examined. Specific interest will be given to the trials, which is where the Jan'Tep get categorised into Jan'Tep or Sha'Tep. The idea of worth is also prevalent here, thus bringing the conversation back to Kellen's inner life and self. Here as well, the project will consider the effect of these matters, and the trauma attached to it, on the narrator's voice. Through an assessment of these key aspects, the project revealed that the tone of voice of the narrator is both helpless and resentful, with fear informing both. This is especially prevalent due to first-person narration, with the narrator coinciding with the main character Kellen. Contrary to *Way of the Argosi*, Kellen's experiences are narrated in a linear fashion. Trauma does influence the breakdown of relationship in *Spellslinger*, leading to Kellen abandoning the Jan'Tep way of life.

Chapter 2. *Way of the Argosi*.

Way of the Argosi, a prequel to *Spellslinger*, follows Ferius Parfax's childhood. As a Mahdek victim of genocide and lone survivor of her tribe, she suffers from the consequences of traumatic events. This manifests in a poor mental health and suicidal thoughts, but also in the centrality of Mahdek culture to the realities of war, torture and genocide. It is worth considering how the novel's status as a prequel could influence the experience a reader has reading *Way of the Argosi*. It poses questions about the importance of the journey taken by the main character, but also if the reader is more likely to look for certain details, thus influencing reading behaviour. These are also points of interest in a close reading. In the case of this thesis, it entailed a closer look at the life events Ferius goes through and how it relates to the broader dynamics between the Mahdek and Jan'Tep, which is of importance to the story told in *Spellslinger*. This chapter considers Ferius' mental health and the representation of the experience of (healing) trauma. Additionally, a closer look will be taken at the intersections between genocide, language and cultural loss. To make further sense of Ferius' situation, the Mahdek are compared to the Indigenous communities of Canada. Taking into account the aforementioned, this chapter will focus on the effect of trauma on the narrator's voice.

2.1 Contemplating a Wild Daisy: Dealing with Trauma

2.1.1. Narration and Trauma

Ferius' mental health, experience of time, and identity are all unstable. This does not come as a surprise considering that she is the lone survivor of the genocide of her clan. In their 2012 article, sociologists and criminologists Hüseyin Cinoğlu and Yusuf Arıkan state that the self "is created out of the interpretation of the interaction between the society and the individual by the mind" (1116). Identity is constructed within this exchange. This would mean that when one of the poles fall away, identity can no longer be constructed and thus becomes unstable. The instability of time, in the case of *Way of the Argosi*, can be explained by looking at the concept of trauma. As social worker Elizabeth Fast and psychologist Delphine Collin-Vézina note in their 2010 article, trauma makes for a lack of cohesive plot, "shattering one's sense of self" (130). Thus, sense of self and time are interrelated in the experience of trauma.

Near the beginning of the book, Ferius finds herself adopted by Sir Gervais and Sir Rosarite. They had taken her out of the cave where she had been hidden from the Jan'Tep mages who murdered her tribe. In an attempt to help Ferius understand her traumatic experience, Sir Rosarite explained to Ferius what might be happening to her memory. The narrator Ferius recounts this moment: "Rosarite said that when we experience something really big – so big that we're just not ready to hold it all in our head at once – our minds sometimes break it apart into little pieces, only showing them to us one part at a time, until the day we're ready to look at the entire experience reliving it" (*Way of the Argosi* 28). It is a definition of trauma similar to the one given in 2017 by philosopher Šárka Bubiková, who defined it as a(n) (series of) event(s) "so extreme that it cannot be properly assimilated and processed" (3). Considering that *Way of the Argosi* is written in first person, where the figure of the narrator, focaliser and character Ferius merge into one, the story immediately becomes less reliable due to the narrator looking back in time. If Ferius' memory is fragmented and cannot be processed properly, the readers have to question the reliability of the story that is told.

Even Ferius doubts the order of events happening. Sometimes it is explicitly noted on in *Way of the Argosi*: "[A]fter [Rosarite] and Gervais were gone [(killed)] I started losing track of things – time especially. I'd forget when something happened and in what order" (29). At other points in the novel, Ferius' experience of time collapses: "My thirteenth birthday had come and gone by then, though I couldn't be sure precisely when; keeping track of the passage of time becomes precarious when life has been reduced to its most primal elements. Find food. Seek shelter. Don't get killed. Repeat as many times as you can" (57). Her days are so similar that she cannot differentiate them. She relates it to her collar, experimental magic inscribed into her skin by Jan'Tep mages during torture, which leads people to despise her. Due to "being untethered to other human beings", as it is impossible for her to be safe around those who despise her to the point of threatening her life, "the passage of time and the order of events lose any real meaning" (145). Ferius, in her narratorial role, is aware of the mistakes in her narration. According to the definition given in 2021 by religious studies professor Catherine Caufield (207), knowingly giving wrong information to the reader is a sign of an unreliable narrator. Thus, it could be said that Ferius' account of events is unreliable. However,

narrator Ferius cannot be held accountable for this, as it is outside of her power to influence the way she experiences time. She is aware of the distortion, but is telling it from the perspective of Ferius in the moment, thus following the fallible account of the moment she is in. Therefore, as a narrator, Ferius' imperfect account of events can be considered a case of a fallible narrator. This aligns with the definition given by cultural studies researcher Greta Olson in 2003 (101). Time for Ferius, who has experienced trauma and is living with its consequences, has no real meaning. This is particularly due to her focus on survival.

Bubiková's definition of trauma also includes the idea of trauma "coming back in unbidden recollections" (3). Though this is not noted on as often as the passage of time or problems of identity, Ferius is plagued by the past invading the present. This is especially clear on page 198 in *Way of the Argosi*: "My memories manifested as ghosts that haunted me until I could no longer tell where I was or how I'd gotten there. One time I woke up in a cave, huddled there among rocks I thought were corpses, wondering when Sir Rosarite and Sir Gervais would come and save me." Her present (being asleep in a cave) is interjected with the past (corpses and being saved). It is not only the physical 'where' that is lost on Ferius, but also the time that is attached to this 'where' that is slipping. Children's literature researcher Talia E. Crockett, quoting trauma theorist Cathy Caruth in her 2020 article, shows how trauma is often given form in a delayed response to the events experienced, such as in flashbacks and repetitions (10). It is a chronological displacement, a strategy often used in trauma literature to reflect a characters' inability to formulate their own story (7). This is what Fast and Collin-Vézina (130) refer to as a lack of cohesive plot. The displacement, the slipping in time, is not just a way to reflect this inability of formulation. Due to first-person narration, the reader experiences Ferius' inability to formulate her story, even as she struggles to do so.

2.1.2. Mental Health and Self-Harm

Ferius, haunted by her memories (*Way of the Argosi* 198), is not well in body or mind. She can no longer stand being alone (191), doubts her own experiences and thinks that her blood is talking to her (197). To that end, she articulates the fact that "the problems in [her] head [are getting] worse" and questions how long it had taken for her "to get this messed up" (198). Ferius' trauma is thus not only

related to her experience of time but also to her mental health. All influence the way she thinks of herself, as well as her view of the world. This view of the world is negative, which ends in her most serious contemplation of suicide yet: “I sat down cross-legged on the ground and wondered whether the crimson sand would look any different when I was done” (199). Having decided that she no longer wants to be alone, but having no other option due to the collar, all she can think of is death. She no longer has (anyone around her to call) a clan and this negatively affects her desire to live.

Though she decides against suicide, the contemplation is a representation of the fact that the YA genre is prepared to tackle serious subject matter that relates to the everyday experience of young adults. Unfortunately, this everyday experience includes depression and suicide. Neuroscientists and psychologists Amy Bombay et al. 2019 article discusses the prevalence of depression among Indigenous communities, with rates being double that of the national average, as well as death due to suicide being more prevalent than among non-Aboriginal youth (9). At this point, Ferius’ contemplation of suicide parallels the broader realities of Indigenous youth’s mental health. In a manner similar to Indigenous youth, Ferius’ mental health is vastly influenced by her group membership and the resilience models it provides. Psychologists Sarah Panofsky et al. (16-17), in 2021, as well as Fast and Collin-Vézina (133-134), discuss that in the case of Indigenous communities, the level of community is of importance for these resilience models to work, while community itself is also a model of resilience. By connecting with community values and traditional culture, as well as spirituality, there is a sense of communal healing of collective trauma. As literature studies researcher Amy Elliot said in 2015, a lack of “brotherhood and mutuality […] is inimical to overcoming trauma” (182). Being part of a community, then, helps make sense of trauma and helps to overcome depression.

Community and identity are interconnected for Ferius. In Mahdek culture one declares their name and goal in front of their tribe, often when they are around the age of thirteen. Ferius, however, is long past this age and still has trouble concretely positioning herself within her personal narrative. This starts quite early on, when she refers to Met’astice as Ferius only to say: “I think … no, wait. That can’t be right” (*Way of the Argosi* 28). The name Ferius returns later, when in the lair of the thief

gang called the Black Galleon, which is the first time she refers to herself as Ferius: “[W]ell, it’s possible he had a completely different name, like Grizo or Terberon or Ferius. No, wait – Ferius is my name. I think. It might belong to a dog” (83). Not only does it show the hard time Ferius has remembering pieces of the past, it also showcases the unsteadiness of who she believes she is. Without a group to declare herself, her sense of identity is unstable. Even if she is looking back to the past, she cannot be sure about anything related to herself, including her experience of herself.

This uncertainty is explained as a result of the collar. One of the sigils was inscribed “to see if we [(Jan’Tep mages)] could impair aspects of the subject’s sense of self” (*Way of the Argosi* 127). It would be easy to attribute Ferius’ identity issues entirely to magic. However, even before being tortured and having the sigils inscribed on her skin, Ferius becomes unreliable for the novel’s reader in matters of remembrance. Though she only makes comments about the weird flows of time, the flow of time as she experiences it does account for how her memory works. Thus, the flow of time might have impacted her memory and if she could remember choosing her name. It adds the layer of identity to the complexity of trauma, showing how a lack of cohesive plot shatters "one's sense of self" (Fast and Collin-Vézina 130). There is a parallel at this point to Indigenous identities. Specifically, the identification with group might influence the reaction a person has with stressful situations (Bombay et al. 13). Thus, a way to heal trauma is giving community a bigger role, allowing a “sense of personal empowerment and self-determination” to form (Panofsky et al. 16). Having a community is therefore of importance to the healing process of trauma, as well as in the matter of choosing a name.

The experience of speaking the Mahdek language is important to Mahdek culture, particularly in relation to the tradition of finding a spirit animal. The loss of this aspect could explain the importance attached to names. It is a last remnant of Mahdek culture that remains crucial for Ferius. Names are not given but chosen and declared in front of the clan (*Way of the Argosi* 163). This ritual includes telling the tribe what one’s spirit animal is, as well as the service you plan to provide to the them. It resembles the vision quest of Indigenous peoples, described by Amanda Robinson in the 2018 online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia as a ritual in which adolescents set out to become recognised as adults in their communities and gain sacred knowledge from the spirit world. Mahdek

do not use their chosen personal name outside of the declaration. Instead, they use the name of their tribe, clan or family (*Way of the Argosi* 162). Individual names are thus only used in a family context, but names within a larger community continue to matter. Ferius' inability to choose, or remember, her name has to do with the lack of community. Having no one to declare herself to, to participate in this key ritual in, she cannot solidify her identity. It is not until she decides to be an Argosi and wants to be mentored by Durral Brown that the situation changes.

Fed up by being called kid, she demands Durral to refer to her as Ferius (*Way of the Argosi* 260). Seeing how much it means to her, he hands her a bowl asking: "To whom am I offering this food and the shelter of my camp?" (262). Durral has become her new family, and with it the Argosi have become her new tribe, allowing Ferius the agency to finally participate in a key ritual of the Mahdek. As Ferius recounts: "Something changed in me then. Nothing big - at least nothing grandiose. But I had a name now, and that meant something to me" (263). Having wandered the continent not knowing who or what she is, she declares herself Ferius Parfax, a Mahdek-born Argosi.

Ferius is not magically cured from her displacement in time and her identity-related problems. Neither does the past stop invading the present. Instead, she lives with it. At the end of the novel, she is adopted by Durral Brown and his wife Enna. Safe in their home, Ferius reflects on the time she spends with them: "These past six months haven't been all good though. I still get confused sometimes. I forget things. I look at myself in the mirror a lot, which probably isn't good for you, but if I don't, I have trouble remembering what I look like" (*Way of the Argosi* 359). Due to her traumatic experiences, she feels so disconnected from herself that she cannot remember who she is. Though she is plagued by her experiences, she is guided to a road of living with them by Durral. He expresses his belief that "everyone needs a keepsake to remind us of the darkness in our own heart, like a compass that points backwards, showing the road we need never again tread" (360). You cannot overcome, discard or outrun your past and your trauma. You can, however, learn to live with it by making peace with it. You need to let go of anger and contemplate something as insignificant as a wild daisy.

2.2 The Realities of War and Genocide

2.2.1. Genocide in a fantasy world

Ferius' experience is rooted in that of an ongoing war, an event that can only create physical and psychological wounds. Panofsky et al. (3-4, 17) also use the term wounds, defining historical trauma as emotional and psychological wounds suffered for generations by a group of people sharing a specific affiliation. The constant hunt against the Mahdek, following the war against the Jan'Tep as discussed in *Way of the Argosi*, could be seen as such a historical trauma. It has been so zealous that Ferius asks herself: "Why is it so important to them that no trace of us be left behind?" (*Way of the Argosi* 5). The question is answered by the Jan'Tep Met'astice, when he leaves her behind after having tortured her: "Your ancestors did a great deal to us, just as those who remain would do, given the chance" (48). Mahdek livelihood is threatened by the Jan'Tep mages, who have created a narrative of Mahdek baby-torturers who should be taken care of before they attack Jan'Tep cities and society (40-41). Such narratives are similar to those found in the real world, for example the narratives that White North Americans often conjured up in relation to the Indian "Savage". Both sides of the narrative construct a strong 'us vs them' structure, a distinction between the in-('us') and out-('them') group.

In social identity theory, as Cinoğlu and Arıkan (1124) explain, the in-group consists of people perceived similar to oneself while also giving them a sense of uniqueness as opposed to other groups (the out-group). Thus, the Mahdek in-group is constructed around their unique situation of being dispossessed and hunted by the Jan'Tep. In the case of Ferius, this identity marker remains relevant as there is nothing else left to identify her as Mahdek. In physical terms, the Mahdek "don't look any different from the other folk who make their home on this continent" (*Way of the Argosi* 72). When Ferius is confronted by two Jan'Tep, she is invisible to them: "They hadn't seen a Mahdek demon worshipper […] [or] an enemy" (73). When they do not exhibit behaviour that is considered typical of the Mahdek, at least as it has been perceived by the Jan'Tep, they cannot be constructed as the Mahdek out-group. In effect, they are invisible and erased. It is a consequence of events that happened generations ago, one that influences the current events as well as interactions between the groups involved.

The torture Ferius suffered at the hands of the Jan'Tep mages Met'astice and Falcon presents the reader with just such a piece of consequential action. At first Ferius thinks she is getting banded, the Jan'Tep ritual of inscribing metals into the skin to help with channelling magic (*Way of the Argosi* 42-43). Met'astice corrects her: "No, my dear, don't think of this as a mage's band. It's really more of a … bridle" (43). The bridle, used to control horses, creates the idea of Ferius being an untamed and uncivilised animal. As Met'astice's said: "A horse has an aptitude for running, yet without a rider, he knows not where to go" (41). The Mahdek are seen as not worthy of (access to) magic. They are only allowed to suffer at the hand of magic and cannot be constructed as Jan'Tep in any way. Even more compelling is the allusion to untamed horses, depicting Mahdek as animals who need to be controlled. The Jan'Tep consider themselves to be the epitome of man, with magic structuring their society and thereby their view on the world and other societies. Their magic makes them the better people in comparison to the animal-like Mahdek.

There are serious consequences to this sense of superiority and the actions that flow from it. The self-perceived rationality and superiority of the Jan'Tep allows them to experiment on the Mahdek. This results in the torture that is depicted in the novel and which Ferius must survive. Whereas Ferius is begging and screaming, her torturers are behaving with a sense of duty, honour and thoughtfulness (*Way of the Argosi* 38, 40). When all is done, Ferius asks why this took place. The younger torturer, Falcon, responds: "One day all Mahdek will have collars upon them […] and then can our two peoples know peace" (50). Falcon seems to imply that it is possible to eradicate a people by influencing interactions (the collar makes people shun and despise Ferius) and personal identity (which is later revealed to be an effect of the sigils). Based on the outline of the UN definition of genocide, detailed in the introduction, it becomes clear that the treatment Ferius receives at the hands of the Jan'Tep meets the test of a genocide. The storyline presents her as a visible victim of genocide. The Mahdek were a national group, who were destroyed in part and brought mental harm in the form of trauma and bodily harm in the form of being hunted and tortured. The inscription of the collar, which results in the Mahdek being shunned and despised, is not present in every Mahdek. Although there are hints towards many Mahdek having this collar, the fact that not all Mahdek are inscribed with

such a collar adds another layer to the complexity of identity and identification. Still, the conditions of life that exist as a result of this collar, entailing those who wear it being shunned and despised, had the intent to bring about the physical destruction of the Mahdek. With that information, it becomes clear that these key critical aspects conform to the UN definition of genocide.

2.2.2. Cross Cultural Comparison: Genocide's Relation to (the Loss of) Language and Culture

An example of such a genocide can be found in the situation of Indigenous communities in Canada. In their case, as described by Ry Moran in the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia in 2015, the Canadian governments efforts of assimilation, which included but were not limited to residential schools, has been labelled cultural genocide. This entails the destruction of practices and structures of these communities, thereby eliminating the groups distinctness. "The most widespread and longstanding [form] of oppression […] designed to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures", according to the 2014 article by anthropologists Laurence J. Kirmayer et al. (306), being the residential school system. Such a cultural eradication is also what the reader confronts in the novel when they learn about the fate of the Mahdek people.

Had Ferius not been born Mahdek, she could have been spared from these events. Nevertheless, being Mahdek is of importance to her system of knowledge. Whenever Ferius finds herself in a new situation, she uses knowledge gained from Mahdek culture to make sense of it. The first instance of this is when considering the sentence "*Be a good girl now*" (*Way of the Argosi* 1). For Ferius, this is against the logic of her people. Being a good girl would entail being quiet, but "Mahdek children are encouraged to make noise […] so that spirit herds passing by will be drawn to our words and songs and one of them will sense a kindred soul whose life they want to share" (3). Being a quiet good girl is thus opposed to Mahdek culture. It would make sense for language, that which is spoken, to be an integral part of life.

Yet, the Mahdek don't speak their own language amongst each other, as it makes those who shelter them uncomfortable (*Way of the Agosi 3*). Ferius also does not speak this tongue. The first mention of a Mahdek word is at the end of the book: "[M]y own people had once conquered these lands from those who'd come before us. That the Mahdek language has seven different words for

slave hardly paints a virtuous picture of our history" (336). It points to the way language transmits history and culture. Though stories of Mahdek victories are passed down (242), knowledge transmitted across generations loses its power. Coming face-to-face with a Jan'Tep city, one which the Mahdek believed was theirs before, the novel recounts that no one knows its Mahdek name (201). Some younger Mahdek even doubt the truth of the statement, thinking it a myth "made up to make ourselves feel better for having no cities of our own" (201). The lack of use of the Mahdek language seems to signify the loss of historical, and with it cultural, knowledge. Instead, it is replaced by survival knowledge.

Knowledge of survival is of such importance that it is considered magic. Ferius remembers learning that the elders' divination came from "experience - from having seen enough of the world and its ways that you recognised the signs and patterns that told you what was waiting at the end of a road" (*Way of the Argosi* 119). Though once the Mahdek had been able to perform magic, the magic they perform now is that of life experience. Magic, as a cultural practice, has been lost to their society as the population is decimated through war and (cultural) genocide, as is their sense of history as a group. The loss of cultural practices is also a consequence of cultural genocide.

The forced removal of Ferius from her tribe (due to the death of her tribe members) and 'adoption' by people of another culture also mirror the assimilation practices of Canada. Ferius is first adopted by Sir Rosarite and Sir Gervais from another continent, and then by the Daroman thief gang the Black Galleon. At last, she is adopted by the Argosi family headed by Durral Brown, who, like those who adopted Ferius before, have no cultural connection to the Mahdek. Taking away children from their Indigenous culture and placing them in western contexts was a practice both in the residential school system as in the "Sixties Scoop", as was discussed in the respective 2009 entries by Erin Hanson et al. and Erin Hanson on the Indigenous Foundations website. It can thus be said that *Way of the Argosi* is referencing this situation in a fantasy context. The Jan'Tep are indirectly the cause of the removal of Ferius from her culture, aiming to "eliminate from human history the very idea of [Mahdek] existence" (*Way of the Argosi* 128). This process of elimination in itself also mirrors the (cultural) genocide of the Mahdek. The elimination of the Mahdek would mean that the Jan'Tep no

longer have to fear them coming back to claim their land, and with it the oasis' magical source so important to Jan'Tep mages.

It must be asked why Ferius is not killed by the Jan'Tep. Instead of eradicating the remains of the Mahdek, the Jan'Tep make sure that she can never know love again. Ferius asks Met'astice why they let her live, to which he responds: "Why would we kill you? You're a child." (*Way of the Argosi* 50). At that moment, Met'astice pretends to be benevolent. Ferius is saved from death but remains in a position of servitude, sentenced to a life with no future with a tribe of any sort. In effect, she is no longer deemed a threat to the Jan'Tep. Met'astice's decision to let Ferius live is more destructive than letting her die, as she grows to hate herself (96). No longer able to trust anyone, she is left alone, allowing the hatred that the Jan'Tep feel for the Mahdek, which was inscribed into her skin, to become self-hatred.

In their discussion of the consequences of trauma, Fast and Collin-Vézina found daily traumatic experiences of racism and discrimination have a negative impact on (other) traumatic experiences (129). This can be found in *Way of the Argosi*, as the negative view on the Mahdek, the feeling of being despised by others, is a form of discrimination that has a negative impact on Ferius' experience of being dispossessed and surviving genocide. It influences her already existing self-hatred. She feels more alone, hopeless and angrier than before. It is not until she defeats the wax figure, confronting that which has taken away all she had, that her (self-)hatred mellows out. Ferius' narratorial voice reflects this journey as well. At first, she is scared and feeling worthless, after which she turns to anger for the majority of the novel. She stays angry until she is able to make peace with her experience, looking back at it with a sense of astonishment.

2.3. Building Resilience, Healing Trauma

The trauma Ferius experienced in the past has consequences in the present and future. The on-going legacies of trauma are also pointed to in the concepts of historical and transgenerational trauma, not just in individual lives but in the community, as discussed by Panofsky et al. (3), Fast and Collin-Vézina (131) and Kirmayer et al. (301). As Ferius learns that there were multiple experiments just like hers (*Way of the Argosi* 190), it becomes clear that the situation calls for community-wide healing

from trauma. This healing can be done by building resilience models, which stress the importance of community (Panofsky et al. 16-17; Fast and Collin-Vézina 133-134). Also of importance to resilience models is trust, agency, personal empowerment and gaining understanding of the history of abuse. These factors can be found in the way that Ferius finally defeats the collar with the support and assistance from Durral.

Durral has a very different view on Ferius' situation from the one that she initially presents to the reader. He considers the Jan'Tep as "tryin' to make their way through life, carryin' the weight of history on their backs" (*Way of the Argosi* 215). Durral does not try to diminish that which has happened to Ferius, but aims to teach her that everyone suffers the consequences of bad actions sooner or later. Devising a plan to rid Ferius of her collar, he decides to draw out the spell by intensifying the hatred felt for Ferius in a small frontier town. A hatred, as Ferius notes, that felt "almost like a living thing" (225). The wax ingested by Ferius during torture, as a seal to the spell, is drawn out of her, the amount seemingly having "grown inside [Ferius'] guts until [she] was more wax than flesh" (226). The wax, the hatred towards the Mahdek as felt by the Jan'Tep, had grown to the point that all Ferius was feeling was hate. Not just hate towards the Mahdek and their inability to take care of themselves (256), but self-hatred. In effect, she had digested the Jan'Tep's view on the Mahdek. The wax exits her body in the shape of her Jan'Tep torturer Met'astice. Ferius, seeing the face of all her adversary, is immediately scared. Durral only sees "a big ol' pile of wax, a spit of magic and the cruelty of a tired old man that grew inside a petrified child's heart" (229). It is Ferius who has created her own enemy by allowing her fear and self-hatred to strengthen the collar.

Durral's solution to this is to dance, experiencing joy and laughing in the face of hatred. Ferius joins, reflecting on "the sheer preposterousness of the idea that anyone could hate something so small and meaningless as me – and maybe that something as small and meaningless as me could be bothered to hate those I could never harm" (*Way of the Argosi* 241). Instead of keeping her hate, she laughs at the idiotic nature of this situation, at the idea that she ever let hatred guide her. In the end, she is nothing special. Letting go of her hatred, the wax figure collapses, not able to hurt anyone. The spells only had as much power as Ferius allowed it to have. In letting go of her hatred, she disallows her

traumatic experiences to define and rule over her. She gains agency, trust in herself and is empowered. By facing the wax figure, she understands that hatred empowered the influence of trauma over her life. Letting go of hatred allows for her to live with, instead of within, trauma.

The resilience models as discussed by Panofsky et al. (16-17) and Fast and Collin-Vézina (133-134) afford the communities that went through trauma agency. Their resilience model is built and enacted by the Indigenous communities, not by a force from outside the community. This is the resilience model build in the defeating of the wax figure. Ferius had allowed the Jan'Tep to control her body and spirit. In effect, her desire and fear of revenge was dictated by the Jan'Tep. By taking back her agency, by working through trauma on her own volition, she limits the impact of trauma on her life. Moreover, by learning not to hate, she takes back her own emotions. In a way, hate has been inflicted upon her as an emotion, inscribed into her skin, as much as the traumatic experiences were. Working through trauma by taking agency of her emotions and life events, she no longer lives on the terms dictated by the Jan'Tep.

2.4. Conclusion

It follows from this discussion that the voice of narrator Ferius is fickle and unpredictable. Starting out scared and feeling worthless, these feelings evolve into anger until she is able to make peace with her trauma. Self-hatred often interjects in moments of anger, as do suicidal thoughts in moments of loneliness. The tone switches endlessly between hopeless and hopeful. Sometimes at the brink of giving up on life she sounds determined, other times she doubts her decisions. Doubt is the most frequent tone, specifically taken on when contemplating her own experiences. The instability, as reflected in the fragmented narration, makes for a fallible account of events recounted. The fragmentation of the narrative is a way to represent trauma, allowing readers to experience Ferius' inability to formulate her story and trauma. Trauma has made her unable to fully assert herself in situations. Working through her trauma, as is signified by the defeating of the wax figure, she regains control of her feelings. This allows Ferius to claim her own identity and name. Still, in the process of finding stability her voice is weak, even as she pretends to be strong. This is due to her own endless

doubt, the questioning of her own agency and experience. It is not until she is allowed to enact her agency that the tone of voice becomes a tone of refusal: a refusal to disappear.

Chapter 3. *Spellslinger*.

Last chapter concentrated on Ferius' journey in *Way of the Argosi*, with a focus on the fragmented narration, tone of voice and focalisation. As the focalisation of the book is undertaken through Ferius, who has a negative relation to the Jan'Tep due to a history of genocide, her characterisation of the Jan'Tep (as consisting solely of mages) might not be reliable. A more reliable narrator could be Kellen, the main character of *Spellslinger* and the identically named series, who has lived in Jan'Tep society his whole life. Throughout this series, Kellen encounters life-threatening situations. He must face societies that are in conflict and planning wars. He is continually confronted with the shadowblack (an illness said to be a curse put upon the Jan'Tep by the Mahdek as retaliation in an ancient war) and Jan'Tep politics. This is also the case in *Spellslinger*, in which the reader follows Kellen as he navigates Jan'Tep society. Considering that he is the main focaliser through which the first-person narrator narrates, the reader learns about the Jan'Tep in a different way than in *Way of the Argosi.* Kellen's world is divided into Jan'Tep mages, Sha'Tep servants and those afflicted by shadowblack. It raises the question of how these groups compare to each other and to real life Indigenous communities.

Kellen is about to enter the trials which decide his future role in society, as either a Jan'Tep mage or Sha'Tep servant. The idea of becoming Sha'Tep is terrifying to Kellen and it dramatically influences his self-image. As he comes to learn more about the society he lives in, and experiences inhumane treatment, he becomes disenchanted. It is of interest to this thesis to see how this process could be read as a representation of trauma. Through a close reading, the following chapter takes a closer look at instances in which Kellen's view on his society, and in extension his own life, is challenged. To do so, this chapter looks at the Jan'Tep community, discussing genocidal practices within that community and how these can be understood using knowledge of trauma in Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the chapter conducts an assessment of the personal trauma Kellen experiences in the course of *Spellslinger*, as well as the resilience models Kellen build to live with these traumatic experiences. The effect of trauma on the narrator's voice will be considered in these aspects as well.

3.1. Feeling lesser: Constructing Inferiority and Influencing Self-Image

3.1.1. Outside the Group

Written in first person, *Spellslinger* focalises through its protagonist Kellen. Contrary to the fragmented narration of *Way of the Argosi*, *Spellslinger* is narrated linearly. The past does not interrupt the narration. Rather, information on the past is given and functions as informing Kellen's current situation. Especially his childhood is of importance: "From the age of six I'd spent countless hours in [my mother's] room, sitting anxiously as my parents cast evocations in the hope of strengthening my pathetically weak connection to the six foundations of magic" (*Spellslinger* 47). Kellen's childhood is defined by illness and by extension weakness. The latter of which is the opposite of the ideal Jan'Tep mage. As Ke'heops, Kellen's father, repeatedly states: "A Jan'Tep must be strong" (48). As a result, Kellen's self-esteem is low, shown by applying words as 'weak' and 'pathetic' to his own magic (47). The importance of strength, in Kellen's case, lies in the need to pass the trials.

These trials, taken around the sixteenth birthday of the initiate, consist of a demonstration of the multiple core values of the Jan'Tep. When passed, the initiate earns their mage name (*Spellslinger* 10). The trials act as a rite of passage allowing the initiate to gain the recognition of the adults in society as part of their community. Failing the trials means that you are no longer considered to be a Jan'Tep mage. Instead, you are demoted to the rank of Sha'Tep servant. This would entail losing your group identity and replacing it with another, prescribed identity. In this case, the young Jan'Tep engages in a complicated relationship with agency and group identity. Such a situation is the opposite of what sociologists and criminologists Hüseyin Cinoğlu and Yusuf Arıkan describe in their 2012 article on identity theories. They stress that identification with a group comes from interactions, feedback or choice (1122, 1129). In Kellen's case, none of those exist. The trials take away this agency. According to the 2021 article by psychologists Sarah Panofsky et al. (16) agency and self-empowerment are of importance to resilience models to heal trauma. It becomes clear to the reader that those declared Sha'Tep might not have the tools to work through trauma.

Sha'Tep would benefit from such resilience models, as their situation is detrimental to their (mental) health. The Sha'Tep do not have the same rights as the Jan'Tep. Not only are they forbidden

from having children, as the Jan'Tep mages only want children who can wield magic, they are also barred from careers as scholars and diplomats (*Spellslinger* 305). As the Dowager Magus, Mer'esan, states: "As our magic grows, the gap between us becomes wider and wider. Every generation the Sha'Tep become more like slaves" (275). Moreover, the Sha'Tep live in "ill-made structures of rough wood and unshaped sandstone", also known as slums (273). These are sub-par living conditions, meant to make Sha'Tep life as unpleasant as possible while still liveable, as they are needed for the workforce.

A similar treatment was given to the Jewish population, such as in the form of forced labour and laws barring them from entering certain professions, as discussed by the World Holocaust Remembrance Center Yad Vashem informational pieces on anti-Jewish legislation and the Judenrat. Moreover, the reader is reminded of the situation of Indigenous children in residential schools, described by Erin Hanson et al. in 2009 as having low educational standards and sub-par living conditions. It becomes clear that similar genocidal practices are in place for the Sha'Tep. The UN definition of genocide, detailed in the introduction, is applicable to these groups as well. They are prevented from giving birth, while also being treated as unworthy of proper jobs and lives. This brings upon them mental harm, such as in the form of a lesser self-image.

In the case of Kellen, the interactions with this society show that he does not, and arguably cannot, belong to the Jan'Tep. Other mages are often quoted in reflection on this issue with statements such as: "How many times have we told you that he should have been declared Sha'Tep years ago?" (*Spellslinger* 40). Moreover, as Kellen interacts with the Argosi woman Ferius, this idea gains a new form as Kellen is cast out. They make sure Kellen knows he is "the *other*. [He] wasn't Jan'Tep or Sha'Tep or anything else" (115). It results in Kellen's self-recognition of his own isolation from his family and society. Though his relationship with Ferius allows him to consider a different life journey than the one he has been told to follow, that of either being Jan'Tep or Sha'Tep, it also results in an additional sentence being passed. By interacting with outsiders, other mages position him outside of the Jan'Tep community. In both these situations, Kellen can still prove being Jan'Tep by channelling his magic (the sole right of a Jan'Tep) and becoming strong.

3.1.2. Gaining Recognition

As identity is constructed in the exchange between the individual and society (Cinoğlu and Arıkan 1116), being ostracised from society would destabilise it. In Kellen's situation, trauma can be considered a catalyst that pushes towards stability. The search for stability results in a clinging to a familiar community, retaining an unhealthy attachment to a society and its ritualistic practices, such as the trials. At play here is also the refusal to lose his trust in the world, in that Kellen can be a mage, an effect that trauma can have on an individual according to the 2015 article by literature studies researcher Amy Elliot (188). Trust, in the case of *Spellslinger*, is central to Kellen's identity as well as traumatic experiences.

There is a certain disempowerment attached to the risk of failing the trials, which reflects on the helplessness felt by Sha'Tep-bound initiates. As Nephania, a fellow initiate, states: "I need those people to help me, Kellen. I don't want to end up like my mother, married to a man who treats her like a Sha'Tep. […] I have to earn my mage name" (*Spellslinger* 118). There is a helplessness attached to being weak, being like a Sha'Tep. One cannot protect themselves against a Jan'Tep mage if one is weak. Trauma, such as due to being considered inferior, results in disempowerment. Moreover, the unstableness of Kellen's identity is embedded in his response to the situation he confronts. Kellen's identity is mostly solidified as a Sha'Tep-bound initiate, yet he works hard to channel his magic (21). One of the ways through which he achieves this is by joining his sister, Shalla, on the Path of Spirits. It is a path "occupied by the ghosts of [Jan'Tep] ancestors […] where Jan'Tep mages went on vision quests when seeking out the high magics" (125). Shalla and Kellen use this path where knowledge is gained to summon a power animal, a familiar that would enable Shalla to show off her strength and allow Kellen to pass the trials. The practice is reminiscent of that of the vision quest, which Amanda Robinson in the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia in 2018 described as an Indigenous ritual in which adolescents gain sacred knowledge and recognition as an adult within their community. It opens up an avenue for considering an Indigenous history of the Jan'Tep.

Shalla is not weak. She is so strong that she, like Kellen's weakness, can be a threat to Jan'Tep society. As Shalla goes outside the bounds of law, her father Ke'heops threatens her stating: "I am the

head of this house. It is my right and my responsibility both to protect this family and to protect the clan from the threat of another rogue mage" (*Spellslinger* 49). As is revealed, Ke'heops' mother, who suffered from shadowblack, was such a rogue mage (50). The shadowblack is said to be a curse placed on the Jan'Tep by the Mahdek (68). It has the ability to infect others and to change a person's personality, thus those carrying the disease (like Kellen's grandmother) get killed to protect the community (68). A powerful mage going rogue, such as would be caused by the presence of shadowblack, would be too great of a threat to the community. Kellen reflects that it is "[n]o wonder our father was concerned about Shalla's behaviour" (50). It is Shalla's power that makes her both a threat and an acquisition to Jan'Tep society, whereas Kellen's weakness is only a threat. He is a weak link that carries no weight. As long as Shalla does not go out of her bounds, she has value in Jan'Tep society. A value Kellen can only have if he too were able to use his magics.

Kellen finally gains this value midway through the novel. After endless attempts to channel his magic, he is successful (*Spellslinger* 205). However, contrary to the joyous experience it should be, his parents take it away from him in a cruel act (224-226). It changes his view on the world and creates a feeling of anxiety within Kellen. In their 2009 article, neuroscientists and psychologists Amy Bombay et al. (23-24) considered anxiety to be a response to historical trauma. It can be observed in the behaviour of the Sha'Tep and initiates that are the direct result of being mistreated and seeing mistreatment over generations. Kellen's weakness is a danger to himself and his family. The family must ensure their strength by discarding those who are not Jan'Tep. An example of this is Ke'heops' brother who is Sha'Tep and treated accordingly. His status makes him a second tier member of the family and society (*Spellslinger* 53). The threat of being abandoned is a stressor in Kellen's life, influencing the way he views himself. Like his uncle, Kellen is bound to be regarded as inferior.

3.2. The Power of a Narrative: Ingrained Structures

Kellen's position as a Jan'Tep becomes increasingly threatened as those he fought fall ill. As he reasons: "People are going to think I poisoned them or that I'm diseased and they got sick because of me" (*Spellslinger* 147). He recognizes that he will become a scapegoat and fears being ostracised by his community. Being left "with no allies, no clan and no access to the oasis" would be "nothing less

than a death sentence" (85). Residing in a society focussed on acting on behalf of the community, every action is performed in service of said community. When the Jan'Tep consider perceived outside threats, they serve their community with a focus on protection in all its forms. This is achieved by honing their magical abilities. A threat to this ability, such as an illness, impairs their safety. Therefore, a sacrifice, in the form of expulsion from the community, needs to be made to uphold communal safety. Those deemed to be weak, the Sha'Tep, are still taken care of by the Jan'Tep, who consider themselves to be protecting them from outside threats. It is a sentiment that is ingrained in their community. There is an interdependence at place here, making those unable to stay within the community fear their future.

The idea of outside threats is prevalent in Jan'Tep society. The communal narrative of the Jan'Tep follows a narrative path where the magic was gifted to them to protect one another and to face the danger facing them (*Spellslinger* 149). Ferius offers Kellen the idea of other people and animals coming to their lands because they embraced magic, not to wage war (154-155). His reaction is to state: "My people belong here. We need the oasis to give us strength to protect ourselves from those who'd hunt us down or enslave us for our magic" (155). As Kellen fills in gaps of knowledge with newly gained information and reorders fragments, he learns that this is not the case. These are examples of how temporary suspension and diffusion of information allow for silences, creating space for trauma, in a text, such as children's literature researcher Talia E. Crockett considered in 2020 (4). The narrative of the Jan'Tep as victims is a powerful one, with Kellen finding it hard to change his mind as he learns the truth.

The communal narrative stresses Jan'Tep victimhood and righteousness, which is constructed on the basis of the war outlined in the novel. It is of importance to reflect on this event as it created heavy losses on both sides and had a devastating impact. The consequences can be explained by cultural trauma. Cultural trauma is defined by Crockett, quoting Jeffrey C. Alexander, as occurring "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (12). This concept allows the reader to

understand how the Jan'Tep might have suffered from such trauma due to war, and its influence on their self-image and memories. To not construct themselves as helpless, they portrayed themselves as on the right side of their history while also ridding the community of those who engage in a narrative of helplessness. The urge to purge those weaker from the rank of mages could have been a result of this.

The Jan'Tep's narrative serves to help them deal with their traumatic past, disallowing it from negatively influencing their livelihood by constructing themselves as those who were on the good side of history. Passing such narratives to the next generation, argue social worker Elizabeth Fast and psychologist Delphine Collin-Vézina in their 2010 article (131), helps make sense of the communal past and construct relations to other groups of people. Furthermore, it cleanses the community of "elements of post-traumatic subcultures that no longer serve" them and cement them in their traumatic past (131). Healing begins by telling "life-affirming and healthy narratives" (131), which seems to be what the Jan'Tep chose to do following the war against the Mahdek.

The tension surrounding Kellen's position rises when Ferius visits his city, dressed in Daroman attire. Due to the military might of the Daroman empire, she is quickly deemed to be a spy out to find Jan'Tep secrets. After having been saved by her, and helping her out in return, Kellen is branded an outsider. Kellen was still considered part of Jan'Tep society before this, with his best friend Panahasi accusing him of having "sided with that Daroman woman over [his] own people" (*Spellslinger* 112). Furthermore, he confronts Kellen stating: "Magic is the gift of the Jan'Tep. Not the Daroman. Not the Berabesq. Not whatever you are" (111). Regarded as part of an outside group, Kellen in constructed as inferior to the Jan'Tep. Unable to access magic, he is established outside the category of Jan'Tep mages.

Not only do the Jan'Tep construct themselves as superior to other groups of people, they also consider themselves to be a benevolent father figure to the Sha'Tep. In a physical altercation that takes place with Panahasi, Kellen realises that "all [his fellow initiates] saw was a good old-fashioned Jan'Tep tale of good versus evil, where good always wins" (*Spellslinger* 342). They are the good guys, taking care of their fellow mages as well as their magicless and hopeless servants. Kellen, in these

interactions, is considered to be outside of this heroic and benevolent Jan'Tep society. The Jan'Tep can thus be observed as a dominant or paternalistic society. It shows how the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system, discussed by feminist philosopher Mariá Lugones in her 2007 article, can influence the structure and categories of Indigenous communities (which the Jan'Tep remind the reader of due to their naming practices and the vision quest tradition) into one resembling the patriarchal system of the West.

The fear of being lorded over, laughed at, and being expected to be his fellow initiates servants makes Kellen grow resentful (*Spellslinger* 274). This is especially prevalent as Kellen comes face to face with his fellow initiates training their magic on a Nekhek, an animal considered to be as devilish as the Mahdek (143). Seeing them hurt this animal, Kellen reflects: "*I hate all of them. I even hate my family, because one day they're going to think I'm just as worthless and vile as the animal in that cage*" (179). Just as was the case for Ferius in *Way of the Argosi*, Kellen is constructed as an animal not worth living on its own terms. An animal, more exactly, that has no significant use and is below Jan'Tep standards. These interactions have consequences for the way Kellen considers himself. As Cinoğlu and Arıkan (1116-1117, 1122) argue, interactions with members of a group influence the way you construct yourself and your role within the group. Kellen makes the intellectual and emotional link between his own existence and that of the animal, growing ever more resentful of others as well as of his own inability to change his situation. His everyday life is influenced by these discriminatory practices, even when these are not directed at him. It works as a catalyst in the way he views himself and the community of which he was formerly a part.

3.3. Losing trust

Halfway through the book, Kellen is finally able to use magic. Though this is meant to be a joyous experience, it is overshadowed by the revelation that Kellen has shadowblack (*Spellslinger* 216). Kellen's parents respond by drugging and counterbanding him (224-226). Counterbanding entails injecting too much magical ink in the skin resulting in the inability to use magic. Begging his parents for it to stop, he becomes aware that they knew he had shadowblack: "All those times you said you were trying to help me develop my magical ability … you weren't, were you? You were weakening

me" (228). Without his knowledge, his parents had impaired his magical abilities to stop the spread of the shadowblack, that which is most important in Jan'Tep society. This instance shows an act of sacrifice meant to ensure the survival of the bigger community. The situation is of reminiscent of the Judenrat, who were put in charge of their community to regulate the general aspects of ghetto life as well as ensuring the deportation of their fellow Jews, as was recounted by Yad Vashem. The act of counterbanding, ensuring the survival of the Jan'Tep while threatening the lives of those with shadowblack, parallels this practice. Assuming this to be a normal course of action, as Kellen's grandmother had also suffered and died as a result from shadowblack, those with shadowblack can be seen as victims of genocide. Their treatment matches the criteria of the UN definition, including death (Kellen's grandmother), suffering from bodily harm (counterbanding) and being subjected to conditions that bring about their physical destruction (taking away their magic, thereby making them Sha'Tep).

During counterbanding, Kellen's mind drifts "in a fog" (*Spellslinger* 230). Losing track of time, he starts to doubt his experience: "Unless I had just made that up? Damn it. Why couldn't I think straight?" (236). There is a lack of cohesive plot, a characteristic of trauma according to Fast and Collin-Vézina (130). It is the only time that the narrator truly comments on this specific problem of time. The traumatic experience of being counterbanded directly influences his experience of time. Though said effect stays limited to during the torture, the trauma works on in the relationship with his parents. The betrayal of his trust by his parents functions as a breaking point, because the stability that such a trust would afford no longer exists. Trust had been of importance to the resilience model that Kellen had built to deal with the fear of ostracization. Now, this resilience model is no longer viable. It results in a lack of tools to deal with his current situation. Not able to make use of his resilience model, he experiences the torture so intensely that he loses track of time.

The experience of being subjected to the (physically and emotionally) painful inscription of magic on his skin also influences his world view, shattering his sense of being part of a group. This is enhanced by the lack of trust Kellen has in his family, as he begins to doubt his parents' affection: "*Was there ever a time, even just a moment, where they saw me as their son and not as some danger to*

our house that had to be dealt with?" (*Spellslinger* 261). Sha'Tep servants note on this, stating that Kellen's parents "were protecting *her* [Shalla]" (306) when they weakened and counterbanded Kellen. Kellen tries to correct them, stating that: "'They thought I had the shadowblack […] They were trying to protect me.' The words sounded utterly unconvincing even to me" (306). His trust has been destroyed and with it his faith in himself. The resilience model in place to deal with his experience of (childhood) illness and everyday discrimination has failed. It is replaced by a mistrust in his parents, breaking down their relationship. Trust, an important factor to building resilience models (Panofsky et al. 16-17), has been broken. Whereas he could live with earlier ways of being disconnected to the Jan'Tep as he had this trust to fall back on, now Kellen is disillusioned and ostracised.

The sense of group identity gets diminished even more when he realises the truth about the war between the Jan'Tep and the Mahdek. Kellen is shown to doubt the stories told by the Jan'Tep, such as how the Jan'Tep got their name: "[T]hey left their old names behind and became known as the Jan'Tep, the 'People of True Magic'. Well, in theory, anyway" (*Spellslinger* 8). Even so, this small sliver of doubt is not enough to completely disregard a story with which one grows up. It is not until Kellen meets the Dowager Magus, Mer'esan, that he truly starts to unravel the truth. Mer'esan, who was alive during the war with the Mahdek, explains why it started in the first place. The threat of the Daroman empire "reaching out from the east" and "the Berabasq in the south who would happily commit genocide […] for what they saw as our devil magic", made them recognise that for self-preservation they needed more and stronger mages than before (272). This need resulted in a war for the Mahdek's magical sources and a more protective stance towards them was taken for self-preservation. The narrative constructed by the victors around the events was meant to keep them together in a way that allows them to live with their past atrocities. Self-preservation also entailed the need for powerful magics, resulting in acceptable genocidal behaviour within the group, as seen in the treatment of Sha'Tep and those with shadowblack.

Even as Mer'esan tells the story of the Jan'Tep attacking Mahdek children, Kellen refutes it: "This isn't what happened! […] Why are you lying you me?" (*Spellslinger* 268). Only when he calms down and connects the dots of his culture does he accept that the earlier stories were simply lies. As

Kellen gains more information, the reader is confronted with the fact that the account of past events is unreliable. However, this was not on purpose, thus the situation of Kellen does not adhere to the definition of an unreliable narrator as given by religious studies professor Catherine Caufield in 2021 (207). As was the case with Ferius' experience of events, Kellen's knowledge of past events is fallible according to the definition of a fallible narrator given by cultural studies researcher Greta Olson in 2003 (101). As a result of this revelation, he realises that in all those years after the war the only thing the Jan'Tep build were the Sha'Tep slums for their families (*Spellslinger* 273). The earlier resentment of being made to feel inferior changes into a resentment of their way of life at large. Kellen distances himself from his own society, his trauma of being counterbanded followed by the shattering of his sense of community, and with it his sense of self. As there is no disruption in the novel's chronology, his trauma is not reflected in the narratorial style. However, there is a breakdown in relationships, which Elliot (180) considers to be a way of reflecting trauma in literature.

Kellen's trauma coincides with the definition of complex psychological traumatic stress given by Panofsky et al., quoting Ford & Courtois. It entails an experience that is "interpersonal and often involve[s] betrayal" (2). Moreover, the experience is repetitive and can involve "direct harm through […] neglect, or abandonment by persons who are responsible for […] care" (2-3). Lastly, such an experience can "undermine important developmental attainments" (3). Kellen's situation meets all criteria, demonstrating how he is now both harmed and alone in the world. His parents betrayed him by counterbanding him, which is especially painful as he had just been able to channel magic. This was proof that he could have developed into a proper Jan'Tep mage. Moreover, Kellen realises that not only have his parents only loved him insofar as they had to control him, but through the act of counterbanding him have sentenced him to be abandoned. After all, Kellen will now be Sha'Tep and that takes priority to being part of the family. The reader is left in no doubt that the process of counterbanding ensures trauma and expulsion of the victim from the community. His doubts about affection, his mistrust in his parents and Jan'Tep society at large, as well as his fear for being cast out all come together in a resentment of the Jan'Tep. The narratorial voice copies this resentment, growing sarcastic and mocking when contemplating said community.

3.4. Regaining Resilience

Uncovering the truth about the war between the Jan'Tep and Mahdek was not a straightforward process. Mer'esan was unable to give direct answers to Kellen, unless the right questions were asked in the right form (*Spellslinger* 260-277). Moreover, her answers (in the form of a card game) often involve an implied question to be asked in response. She adds a silence, reflecting the way in which trauma cannot be dealt with directly. Asking questions and playing a card game function as a way to talk about trauma, learning about it without being hurt directly. The importance of the card game is reflected in the use of playing cards for the cover art of the novels in the *Spellslinger*-series. It points to the overarching theme of trauma and the inability to talk about it. A similar argument on talking about trauma was made by Crockett (15), noting that YA can help make certain subjects able to be talked about through silence, shielding readers from harsh brutalities and traumatisation while also acknowledging the impossibility of conveying trauma. Moreover, it asks for the reader to make connections with their own situation or other historical events. Mer'esan's silence, her inability to talk about her trauma, allows Kellen to make the connection between the war and his own situation. By doing so, he gains coherence of the past trauma of the Jan'Tep (the war against the Mahdek) and the ongoing impact on Sha'Tep and shadowblack members of the community. He learns how to deal with his personal traumas by building a new resilience model on the basis of a cohesive history.

Part of Kellen's newly built resilience model is the way in which he regains personal agency and with it personal empowerment (Panofsky et al. 16). Kellen does so by taking back his body from the shadowblack, which in the course of the novel grows alongside his resentment, feeding off him as he loses compassion. Ferius notices this and confronts him about his actions. Kellen tries to dismiss such sentiments and places the blame back on the shadowblack, "wishing [he] could make her leave before [he] did something [he'd] hate [himself] for" (*Spellslinger* 373). Ferius does not accept this, stating: "We all got ugliness inside us, Kellen. Yours is worse? Then fight harder. Figure it out. But don't you ever pretend you don't have a choice" (373). Though Ferius' past is not spoken about in *Spellslinger,* her presence in *Spellslinger* and the previous chapter's analysis of the ways of dealing with trauma in *Way of the Argosi* allows for an interesting moment of parallel assessment. Ferius

accepted that it was her own hatred that tormented her, making her do horrible things. In her case, Durral had been the one who opened her eyes to her actions being hers and having to take responsibility for it. Now, Ferius takes that role for Kellen, reminding him that he is in control even when it does not seem that way. By doing so, Ferius passes on a narrative of resilience, a story which can help Kellen make sense of his own story. Kellen takes heed of her words, and with it takes control of his own emotions and actions.

This narrative of resilience is key to Kellen's recognition that "there's no amount of magic in the world that's worth the price of a man's conscience" (*Spellslinger* 392). The statement is made in front of those who would grant him his mages name, at the last trial. It is a defiance not only of the might of magic, but of the way Jan'Tep society treats people without magic. In order to refute the principles of the society in which he has grown up, he abandons the trials, refusing to allow others to determine his future. One of the mages of the trials asks him if he "would set aside [his] chance at passing [his] tests, at being granted a mage's name?" (392). His reaction: "I already have a name […] My name is Kellen Argos" (392). Kellen has chosen to no longer be Jan'Tep, discarding that part of his identity and with it the hierarchy of Jan'Tep society. Instead, he has chosen to be Argosi, following a future he chooses, using the opportunity of the naming ritual (the last trial) to declare himself as such. As is the case for urban Indigenous community members, Kellen has to find new ways of being Jan'Tep. These real life communities have to do so due to the lack of connection to Indigenous practices and lands, such as was described by J.R. Miller, in 2012, and Ry Moran, in 2015, in their respective entries in the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia. Kellen, similarly, has lost this connection to Jan'Tep society. He is now the only one responsible for who he is, who he will be and what he chooses to do. Kellen has taken agency of his own identity.

Kellen's new resilience model presents a character who is finally able to manage a complex history with a strong degree of enhanced personal agency. With the help of Ferius, to guide him through his feelings, and of Mer'esan, who tells him the truth, he has created a system to heal his personal trauma. There is no revenge, no defeating of a wax figure, for Kellen. Instead, he walks away from the altercation with his parents and former friends (*Spellslinger* 393). Refusing his future in

Jan'Tep society, Kellen follows Ferius not only physically, by trying to find her, but also spiritually. Just as Ferius embarked on a journey to save herself and find meaning in life, so does Kellen. There is no resolution for the trauma Kellen has suffered. There is no resolution for the trauma of being considered worthless, nor for that of being subjected to torture. He is not cured, but instead has taken the first step to healing, to living with trauma.

3.5. Conclusion

This discussion has shown that the effect of trauma on the narrator's voice in *Spellslinger* differs from *Way of the Argosi*. For Kellen, through whom the narrator focalises, trauma is mainly related to his status as someone who will not become a Jan'Tep, an initiate who should have never been allowed to be an initiate. His history of being less powerful than the others not only makes him feel weak, but also fearful of his future. We must remember that the Sha'Tep are treated within the text as if they were only equal to the value of a devilish animal. This not only makes him grow resentful of others, but also creates a negative self-image and negative image of the Jan'Tep community. Though trauma can fragment the narratorial style, as shown in *Way of the Argosi*, *Spellslinger* follows a more linear narration following Kellen's experience of time. Only when Kellen loses trust in his parents, is he able to articulate the fact that things have become unclear to him. This breakdown in relationships, the lack of trust in both his parents and fellow initiates, is the main way in which trauma affects the narration. Also of importance in the narration is the silences, used to relate the past to the current situation by Kellen. By doing so, he gains coherence of Jan'Tep trauma and its ongoing effects, as navigated through stories. The novel ends in a process of rebuilding resilience, in which Kellen gains personal agency and empowerment by walking away from Jan'Tep society.

Chapter 4. Conclusion.

This thesis set out to explore how trauma affects the narrator's voice. The analysis of the two novels revealed that it is evident that trauma is not represented the same way in both novels. Whereas *Way of the Argosi* makes use of narrative fragmentation to represent trauma's effect, *Spellslinger* focussed on the breakdown of relationships. This is not to say that either exclude the other, but that one way of representing trauma is more prevalent in each narration than the other. The narrator's voice thus also endures the effects of trauma differently. Interestingly, the tone of voice that this results in is similar. As narrators, both Ferius, in *Way of the Argosi*, and Kellen, in *Spellslinger*, have a voice that is influenced by fear and resentment. Moreover, the reliability of the narrator is also influenced by the experience of trauma. Due to a lack of information, problems with memory and the fragmentation of narration, the account of events can be considered to be fallible according to the definition given by cultural studies researcher Greta Olson (96, 101, 103-104) in 2003. Lastly, the narrator's voice is permanently altered. Though resilience models have been established, trauma does not disappear and as such neither does its effect on the narrator's voice. These models offer more security, as well as ways of dealing with trauma, but it is apparent that the narrator has been affected negatively by these events. It is reminiscent of the effect trauma has on Indigenous communities and their resilience models, as discussed in 2021 by psychologists Sarah Panofsky et al. and social worker Elizabeth Fast and psychologist Delphine Collin-Vézina in 2010, showing how knowledge of these communities can be used to further understand the fantasy groups de Castell created and vice versa. The effect of trauma and its experience negatively influences the narrator's voice, as it does Indigenous lives. It is an effect that cannot, and will not, be dismissed easily.

Neither Ferius' nor Kellen's story is finished. Over the course of the *Spellslinger*-series, Kellen is repeatedly reminded of his shadowblack-affliction as well as his position in Jan'Tep society. Often, he struggles with not having the life his sister has been given: that of a Jan'Tep mage. In the final novel of the series, *Crownbreaker*, Kellen puts an end to this feeling by saying no to his father and to that which is asked of him to be considered Jan'Tep. This results in a duel, as well as a heart to heart, with his father, allowing Kellen to give words to his feelings and trauma. It is a duel to the end

and the only reason why Kellen survives it is due to the intervention from his sister, Shalla. In choosing Kellen over her father, a small moment of reconciliation is created. For once, Kellen is chosen by a Jan'Tep. The series ends with an ambivalent ending, allowing enough space for the reader's imagination to continue the journey as Kellen sets sail to another continent. After all, Kellen is still young and finding out his true identity.

Ferius' story in the prequel is followed by one other book, *Fall of the Argosi,* in which she sets out find a cure to a plague. This plague is spread by hearing a verse, turning those listening to it into monsters. In the process, she gets to know another, more adept, Argosi: The Path of Thorns and Roses, whom Ferius nicknames Rosie. In *Way of the Argosi* her own identity, her name, cannot be stable until she works through trauma. In the second prequel, the dramatic narrative pivots on the fact that confrontation is the biggest adversary to her stability. This only grows more complicated as Ferius grows closer to Rosie. It is not a cheerful novel, the tone of *Way of the Argosi* only grows dimmer in *Fall of the Argosi* as Ferius is confronted with her own trauma as well as that of others. It can only be expected that the upcoming third instalment of the prequel, announced on de Castell's website as *Fate of the Argosi*, will follow this narrative trend line. Slowly but surely, the reader sees Ferius grow into the confident and wise Argosi that is known in the original *Spellslinger*-series. Before she can become that iteration of Ferius, she has to navigate her personal relationships. Knowing who to trust is a gamble.

Gambling, or playing games, is a motif in the stories. It often entails a gamble in involving who to trust, including but not limited to (found) family and even oneself. The cover art of the series is the first hint towards this, mimicking the style of a playing card. As was discussed in the analysis of *Spellslinger,* the playing card can be considered as a way of indirectly discussing trauma. The stylistic unity of this series, both the original and the prequel, points towards the similarity of the topics that are addressed. The most striking correspondence is between Kellen's experience as a Jan'Tep bound to be Sha'Tep, as well as somebody with shadowblack, and that of Ferius' experience as a Mahdek. Both are considered to be part of an outside group, a group that suffers from ostracization and (daily) reminders of their inferior status. The best examples of this are the fact that Kellen is told that he is no

longer a Jan'Tep by his friend, as well as Ferius having to repeatedly run for her life. Every interaction creates stressors in the lives of these characters. This also ties back into the experiences of trauma both main characters go through, their similar 'climax' of this trauma (inscription into skin) and the ways they end up dealing with this trauma. It is a trauma that cannot be dismissed easily.

The ongoing effect of trauma and its healing process is self-evident in the novels, which can be related to the experience of trauma in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Through an analysis of the interconnections between fantasy groups and real life Indigenous communities, a deeper understanding of trauma and its effects was gained. Not only has it pointed to ways of dealing with trauma, such as in the form of resilience models, but also ways of talking about trauma, considering it a wound with a long way to go until it has been healed. YA literature allows for creating such connections between fictional narratives and real-life events. As a result, the reader gains more knowledge and interest on topics discussed in the YA novel, such as genocide and abuse. As literature studies researcher Amy Elliot argued in 2015, fictional situations echo real-world issues, it is the "unimaginable-made-real" (184). Fantasy, in de Castell's novels, is used as an indirect way of considering such topics, shielding the readers from direct harm while also allowing them to learn from it. Being indirect as well as using narrative gaps, as described by children's literature researcher Talia E. Crockett in 2020, is a way to "force a young reader to seek out more information and actively engage with a text, and invite them to make connections with other events, historical or recent, or even their own experiences" (15). This thesis has built on this characterisation of YA novels as a starting point of comparison to the Indigenous communities in Canada. As has been illustrated throughout the analysis, readers can draw on real life knowledge to understand a text. It is not unimaginable that readers can even draw on the text to understand events in the real world.

Given the wide variety of YA literature available, we come back to the question: what sets these novels apart? As noted on in the introduction, both *Spellsinger* and *Way of the Argosi* were chosen for their representation of trauma and tackling of the subject of trauma. Though written by an author who at the time of writing this thesis has not publicly self-identified as Indigenous, the reader of the novels can see the apparent commonalities with the living conditions of the Indigenous

communities in Canada. Therefore, the fantasy groups in the novels can be compared to these Indigenous communities. I encourage all readers to explore the effect of trauma on the narratorial voice in works by Indigenous authors. Future researchers should consider novels by member of the Georgian Bay Métis Nation Cherie Dimaline (author of the dystopian YA *The Marrow Thieves*), Two-Spirited Oji-nêhiyaw member of Peguis First Nation Joshua Whitehead (author of the new adult fiction novel *Jonny Appleseed*), Lipan Apache writer Darcie Little Badger (author of the fantasy YA *Elatsoe*), Erika T. Wurth of Apache/Chickasaw/Cherokee descent (author of the horror novel *White Horse)*, Muscogee citizen Cynthia Leitich Smith (author of the contemporary YA *Hearts Unbroken*), and Haisla and Heiltsuk First Nations author Eden Robinson (author of the fantasy YA *Son of a Trickster)*. All aforementioned authors include their heritage and experience of trauma in the novels they write.

There is a growing body of research into Indigenous YA literature. However, as Mandy Suhr-Sytsma, a professor of English interested in Indigenous literature, said in her 2016 article, research in this field is still scarce ("Armstrong's *Slash*" 25). Thus, she took it upon herself to discuss the 1986 novel *Slash*, which chronicles how a young Okanagan man named Tommy 'Slash' reconciles with his culture after a lifetime of experiencing racism and discrimination. She argues that the personal development of the protagonist is intertwined with the development and sovereignty of the Indigenous community he belongs to (35, 43). The schooling Tommy received as a child, as well as his drug- and alcohol-usage, was embedded in a colonialist system, dividing him from his community as well as internalizing a sense of inferiority (32). Returning to his community and participating in its rituals and practices allows him to feel empowered. The story in that novel mirrors the resilience models described by Panofsky et al. (16-17) and Fast and Collin-Vézina (133-134). After joining an Indigenous rights movement asking for government recognition of Indigenous peoples and their lands, he turns to sovereignty from within his community, detaching it from the colonial system by recognising that Indigenous peoples do not need to ask for permission for their lands ("Armstrong's *Slash*" 41-42). The investment in community is presented as the primary tool of resistance to a colonial system. It counters the narrative in de Castell's novels, in which the protagonists heal from

wounds by leaving their community (Jan'Tep, Mahdek) and joining another (Argosi). It points to how Indigenous and non-Indigenous ideas on resilience might differ. Further analysis might expand upon this difference.

Some of the aforementioned Indigenous YA novels have already been recognised as valuable to analysis. Analysing *Hearts Unbroken* in 2022, Suhr-Sytsma found the novel to be exemplary of the emerging of an Indigenous YA erotics ("Decolonizing Desire" 312). In her discussion of the novel, Suhr-Sytsma focusses on everyday instances of discrimination and relates this to the protagonists sexuality as a Muscogee girl as well as her hopes for the future. Another novel that has been subjected to analysis is *The Marrow Thieves*. The analysis by philosophers Anah-Jayne Samuelson and Vanessa Evans, published in 2022, stress the empowerment achieved by imparting Indigenous ways of being and knowing (275, 277). The tools to reach for these forms of empowerment are storytelling and language, which also function as ways to process trauma, (re)build nations and enables knowledge to passed on to the next generation. As was the case in this thesis, Samuelson and Evans consider the similarities of the post-apocalyptic world in the novel and our real world. Future researchers might want to turn their attention to references to real world events in works by Indigenous authors as compared to non-Indigenous authors.

In this thesis, works by a non-Indigenous author were related to the context he finds himself in: a Canadian context in which there is increasing interest in their colonial past and practices resulting from it. Not only does this entail a representation of the underrepresented (Indigenous communities in Canada) by the overrepresented (a Western man), but it also raises questions about the relation of these groups to one another. Nevertheless, two key questions that must occupy future research on this topic are how those underrepresented are understood and what makes them underrepresented.

In addition, another avenue of inquiry for future research is the role and agency assigned to women in the narratives found in *Spellslinger* and *Way of the Argosi*, as well as in the wider fantasy context. This is especially the case for *Spellslinger*, due to the implied hierarchy in Jan'Tep society that positions women as inferior to their male counterparts. Ferius' experience as a Mahdek woman in Mahdek society is not given attention in *Way of the Argosi*, however there are some signs that it is a

matriarchal society. Specifically the fact that Ferius mainly talks about the women of her tribe brings forth this idea. Women also have an unique and at times precarious position in Indigenous communities. Special interest could be given to these communities in relation to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Jennifer Brant, in her 2017 entry on MMIWG to the online edition of the Canadian Encyclopedia, and Marion Buller et al., in their 2019 MMIWG report, detail how Indigenous women and girls in Canada suffer a disproportionately high rate of violence. Just as was the case with the "Sixties Scoop", these traumatic realities are rooted in the history of colonisation, with the sexualisation of and misogyny towards Indigenous women playing a key role in attitudes towards them. A national inquiry into the problem was launched, reporting that "[d]espite their different circumstances and backgrounds, all of the missing and murdered are connected by economic, social and political marginali[s]ation, racism, and misogyny woven into the fabric of Canadian society" and declared the situation a national tragedy (Brant). Furthermore, the national inquiry included legal imperatives calling for immediate action. Considering the ongoing necessity for action due to lack of progress, as discussed by CBC news in 2023, it might be interesting to analyse the power structures in place in de Castell's novels by relating it to the position and situation of Indigenous women. The treatment Ferius' received in *Way of the Argosi*, as well as Shalla's and Nephania's position in *Spellslinger*, might have been based on the aforementioned report and ongoing situation Indigenous women face.

Trauma is crucial to the novels that have been the focus of this thesis project, driving each story forward and challenging the characters progression. That importance is reflected in the way trauma is presented to the reader. This thesis' research question, on the effect of trauma on the narrator's voice, runs into the same problems as current research on trauma as a whole does: the inability to (directly) represent trauma. Elliot (180) argued that trauma is represented using "narrative fragmentation, frequent repetitions, a disjointed narratorial voice", problems of memory and "skewed temporality", as well as by the "breakdown in communication and relationships". Crockett (4) also argued for fragments, but added the concept of silence (in the form of chronological displacement, temporary suspension information and diffusion information) to such a representation. Nevertheless,

such techniques miss out on the inability of representing trauma and traumatic events. It becomes imperative to observe how traumatic events are not simply talked about or outright ignored in each storyline and through the acts of narration. Future researchers should instead look at that which is not said, and never will be, as a way of representing a traumatic experience to the fullest.

YA literature has become a place where the representation of trauma, and its effect on the narrator(s) and main character(s), is of utmost importance. With the world becoming more acquainted with trauma in its many forms (intergenerational, personal, historical, related to current events etc.), the fact that YA is addressing this shows that literature adapts to the current situation. As is argued by Falconer, who is quoted by philosopher Šárka Bubiková in 2017, "in contemporary YA, violence, death and the apocalypse have become the norms rather than the exception" (2). If it is indeed the case that YA reflects the lived experience, as was hinted at by Elliot (184), these topics have left and continue to leave their marks on young adult life. Violence can be related to anything from discrimination to abuse, death could be linked to natural causes as well as illness and suicide, and the apocalypse could be related to climate change and the end of time. Works such as *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green and *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner relate to these topics.

Both realistic and fantasy/dystopian YA novels, as mentioned by Bubiková (2), address the current situation of their young adult readers. However Bubiková only makes a distinction between these two streams in YA. In 2016, columnist and author Michael Cart argued that YA literature encompasses many more genres and forms. From romance and fantasy to science and historical fictions, from novels in verse to creative nonfiction, Cart indicates that YA has done it all. Even so, at the beginning of his article, Cart states that he considers YA to be "at its core a literature of contemporary realism". It points to the importance of real, lived experiences as an influence on YA literature. Even when the story itself is not set in our world, but in one of fantasy, it is still grounded in reality.

Towards the end of his article, Cart goes on to state the YA literature recognises the transition of childhood to adulthood that young adults go through. Addressing their "intellectual, emotional and

societal" needs, the YA novel gains relevance to young adult lives (Cart). More specifically, it makes them feel reflected in literature. Their fear of being too unique, of being too other, is especially well represented. It follows that YA novels allow for "embrac[ing] the humanity it shares with those who […] [are] irredeemably "other"" (Cart). In this process, YA's provide their readers the unvarnished truth, allowing them to deal with the realities of adulthood. Elliot (195-196) voices her hope for trauma literature for young adults to be helpful in navigating trauma's destructiveness as well as allowing for community healing to take place. Though such community healing, in the case of Elliot, focussed on that of the community within *The Maze Runner*, she also extends the notion to the community of readers. This community of readers can form a sociocultural community as well (196), which would allow for a community of healing to take place in the real world. In the case of the *Spellslinger*-series, this resulted in a Reddit page and fandom Wikipedia, though most interaction seems to happen in book clubs, for example on the Dutch book-reviewing website Hebban. Such reading communities can thus be helpful in navigating and healing trauma, taking the world of the book as a starting point but extending it to their personal lives.

In her article on YA Holocaust literature and its representation of trauma, Crockett (6) argues that it aims to raise questions for the purpose of active engagement and identification through a deeper understanding of a traumatic experience. Readers can learn of YA's dealing of topics as trauma, through connecting with it and asking questions (14). In Crockett's case, this form of contemplation and questioning results in a new way to think about issues such as anti-Semitism in the present day. Taking this way of thinking about YA literature and applying it to *Spellslinger* and *Way of the Argosi*, the result is slightly different. Instead of thinking about a specific topic (such as anti-Semitism), it creates space for thinking about general discriminatory practices and abuse, as well as genocide in all forms. If the reader makes a connection to Indigenous communities, they might even specifically relate that which was read to practices such a cultural genocide and the ongoing effect of such a practice.

Spellslinger and *Way of the Argosi* illustrated how trauma affects the tone of voice and narratorial style. The analysis helped confirm Elliot's and Crockett's findings of representational

techniques to include trauma in the narrative, while also furthering the understanding of the role of YA in the representation of trauma. Furthermore, it shows how the reliability of a narrator can be influenced by these techniques of representing trauma. Moreover, by relating the experiences of the protagonist in *Spellslinger* and *Way of the Argosi* to those of Indigenous communities in Canada, the ways in which fantasy YA can help readers understand real-life events are brought to the forefront. Using knowledge of the latter to make sense of the former allows readers to understand their own situation, as well as those of disadvantaged groups like aforementioned Indigenous communities, on a deeper level.

YA literature has proven to be a breeding ground for fostering an understanding of different cultures, histories and life journeys. Though this literature might be simply understood as a reflection of young adult life and the topics they deal with, it also forms the way that each reader understands the world around them. As this world grows increasingly complicated, with past atrocities coming to the forefront and challenging dominant ways of thought at the same time as present crises escalate, the position of YA in the literary landscape grows along. It has never been as important to talk about trauma in YA literature as now.

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