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**Awaken the dreamer: An ontology of dreams in the raven cycle,
dreamstrider, and the dreamwalker trilogy**

Clinton J. Visser

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Awaken the Dreamer

An Ontology of Dreams in *The Raven Cycle*,
Dreamstrider, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*

Clinton John Visser



Bachelor of Arts Major in English Major in Creative and Professional Writing

Faculty of Arts

Abstract

Existing scholarship on dreams in Young Adult (YA) Literature tends to revolve around the analysis and understanding of dreams using a psychoanalytic approach. Using theorists like Freud and Jung, scholars analyse dreams to predict the future development of the self. My thesis, however, veers away from such psychoanalytic studies and focus more on the ontological and liminal powers of dreams. Within *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* dreams are used by dreamer protagonists as tools to access a constant state of becoming—the liminal space where the recognition and transformation of the self occurs. The use of dreams, and the dream worlds, as tools for becoming is the focus of my analysis. I argue that dreams are essential as experiential encounters and catalytic phenomena that enable the protagonists to access their state of becoming. By accessing a state of becoming, whilst being entangled with the spatiality of the waking and dreaming worlds, these protagonists enter a cyclical symbiosis with these other worlds—where each dreamer, waking world, and dreaming world, affects the other equally—and it is this cycle of interdependence that is both the finalisation and the beginning of a constant state of becoming.

I, Clinton Visser, certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- I. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- II. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- III. contain any defamatory material.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	8
Book Summaries.....	18
Chapter Summaries.....	20
Chapter 2: Becoming through Narrative: narrative patterns as essential to the becoming of self through dreams.....	23
Beginning: An Explication of Character.....	27
Middle: The Pivotal Event.....	29
End: The Change of State.....	33
Chapter 3: Entangled in Dream Things: Ontology as Cyclical Symbiosis with Materiality and Spatiality.....	39
Being Entangled in the Spatial.....	41
Becoming Entangled in the Material.....	45
The Creation of a Cyclical Symbiosis.....	49
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	56
Works Cited.....	62

Chapter 1: Introduction

About halfway through my last semester as an undergraduate, a quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson flashed across my Facebook feed. It said, “Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?”. Reading this quotation, I became fascinated by the prospect of living in dreams—the way that dreams are intrinsic to our lives and become meaningful pathways to understanding ourselves. This appeal led to a search for young adult (YA) dreaming literature which, in turn, led to the discovery of YA novels that focussed on dream walking—the ability to walk through a dream world and enter another’s dreams; dream striding—seen as the power to access someone else’s dreams from Oneiros (the dream world) and manipulate their bodies and minds through this dreaming link; and dream thieving—having the power to remove objects from the dream and take them back into the real world. *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* all focus on providing the protagonist with agency over their own and other’s dreams. My thesis explores the questions: how are dreams harnessed by the protagonists to access their state of becoming and does their agency over dreams provide the protagonists with a more comprehensive understanding of their own being? I argue that, in these YA novels, dreams are essential as experiential encounters and catalytic phenomena that enable the protagonists to access their state of becoming—the liminal space where the recognition and transformation of the self occurs.

I read many novels that have protagonists with dreaming powers who go through a series of experiential encounters and a coming-of-age process. These novels are: *The Raven Cycle* (2012-2015) by Maggie Stiefvater; *Dreamstrider* (2015) by Lindsay Smith; *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* (2015-2017) by Kit Alloway. Upon closer analysis, I discovered that the dream walkers, dream striders, dream thieves and dream bestowers (beings with the power to bestow dreams upon others) were able to access the dream world and change events,

shape dreams, or remove objects from the dream world. Their dreaming powers are significantly utilised within this liminal dream world to intentionally catalyse the process of becoming for each protagonist, linking directly to my thesis argument: that agency over dreams provides the catalytic phenomena to access the state of becoming.

My project will add to the current scholarship on dreams in YA literature by providing a new perspective on how dreams are utilised by the protagonists. To date, the scholarship on dreams in YA literature primarily utilises psychoanalytic theory to interpret characters' dreams. For instance, some critics analyse dreams as “safe refuges” (see El-Wahsh; Wingfield) for the individuals that dream them. Nightmares have also been analysed and are seen to serve as an educational trip into the underworld providing children with an understanding of the circle of life and death (Schafer). However, there has not yet been an argument provided for the metamorphosis of being—the state of becoming—that is accessed via the dreaming world, which is the subject of my analysis. Therefore, my research project extends the field to posit that adolescent protagonists are given agency over dreams and use this realm of liminality, and the things within it, to access their state of becoming.

Maggie Stiefvater's *The Raven Cycle* has been analysed from many different perspectives. Most of these works, however, are theses and though *The Raven Cycle* is fiercely popular there is not much else written about the series. For instance, Marit Keegstra analyses the connection between the Celtic Twilight (or Celtic Revival) and *The Raven Cycle*'s representations of magic. Polina Efremova and Katerina Gladkova analyse the imagery of the raven in the series and argue that Stiefvater uses this image system to foreshadow further plot development and to amplify the atmosphere of mystery within the series. Stiefvater's series has also been analysed using the linguistical framework of J. L. Austin to argue that the magic of the series happens through intimate cooperation between the five teenagers and the magical forest—Cabeswater (Moore). *The Raven Cycle* has also

encapsulated queer theory, lending itself to an analysis of queer experience by Lee Mandelo. Lastly, Stiefvater's representations of dreams have been analysed as the tools to explore the possibilities of a porous border between the real and the imaginary worlds (Sert; Spencer). However, Stiefvater's dreams explore more than just the boundaries of the real and imaginary worlds. In her series the dreamers break through this boundary and in doing so, as I analyse, access a continual state of becoming.

Both Lindsay Smith's *Dreamstrider* and Kit Alloway's *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* have little analytical scholarship dedicated to them but are reviewed as exceptional fantasy novels with realistic characters and delightful representations of the dreaming world. Alaine Martaus, in the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, leaves a glowing review of *Dreamstrider* highlighting the qualities of Livia's character: "The primary draw is Livia herself, a heroine who is a spy rather than a warrior, a girl who manages to lose the gift that makes her special and still come out stronger and more confident than ever" (168). Other reviews call the novel the book to buy if you love dreams and espionage and a book that is sure to delight everyone (Kirsten, *my friends are fiction*). With an overall rating by Goodreads of 3.4, and 4 out of 5 by Google Play, this novel has delighted many readers since it was published. Kit Alloway's *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* is described by Publisher's Weekly as a "suspenseful riddle full of political intrigue" filled with "richly rendered details" and "palpable" dream sequences (Orr). Kirkus Reviews calls the series a "dark and exciting paranormal adventure that will keep patient genre fans up late" (Kirkus). On average the series has a 4.3-star rating on Goodreads and Amazon, with many excited and happy fans of dreaming fantasy. Due to the small amount of scholarship found on *Dreamstrider* and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* my thesis will extend the research on dreaming literature by providing careful close analysis on this series and the way it utilises dreams and dreamers.

The overarching methodology my research thesis utilises is textual analysis supplemented by close reading techniques. The purpose of my research, then, is to deliver a textual analysis of *Dreamstrider*, *The Raven Cycle*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* that uses close reading techniques to provide insight into the use of dreams as tools for becoming within the novels.

In *What is Textual Analysis?* Alan McKee defines textual analysis as a “way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world” (1). Researchers that undertake this methodology undergo a data-gathering process through which they “understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world” (McKee 1). To provide a textual analysis as part of my thesis, I gather information from other secondary sources that discuss dreams and the concept of becoming which inform my close readings of the selected texts. Textual analysis prioritises the interpretations of the reader, and for the reader to understand the text in a more significant manner close-reading techniques can be utilised.

Textual analysis is performed using the techniques of close reading to provide a deeper analysis of the text being studied. Close reading, as presented by Barry Brummett in *Techniques of Close Reading*, is essentially “mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings” (n.p.) and, as Annette Federico explains in *Engagements with Close Reading*, must use a certain kind of “discernment—a habit of noticing what an author’s doing, and a way of making connections with other books and with a world of ideas” (6). Close-reading begins with reading: “we have to just read—read all the words, read to the end” (Federico 8) using our imagination and curiosity to understand the “different levels of coherence in written communication” (Federico 10). Critical readers, therefore, dig deeper into insights found within a text using their close reading to support the theory (Brummett n.p.).

Through close reading I will perform a textual analysis on my chosen novels investigating the role that the dreamer protagonists play and how their dreaming agency helps them understand their own being and sense of becoming.

Young adult literature is often categorised as coming-of-age stories, focussing on the ontology and growth of their characters. In his book *A World of Becoming*, William Connolly describes coming-of-age as a “world of becoming, [where] the new periodically comes into being in ways that defeat attempts to generalize from past regularities to a reliable future” (35). The world of becoming is characterised by the defeat of past stereotypes, a reconfiguration of the protagonist’s identity, and an agential unsealing of a dependable future. Connolly reasserts that adolescents within these stories access the state of becoming to find a more reliable future when he says, “The new is ushered into being through a process that exceeds rational calculation or the derivation of practical implications from universal principles” (69). An attachment to being becomes a fundamental register for experience and feeds into the everyday character, providing ontic acknowledgement and development of character rather than an elimination of unwanted characteristics. Character growth and personal development is as much an acknowledgement of ontological exchange and the state of becoming as it is a liminal place for the recognition and awareness of becoming.

YA literature is characterised by a world of becoming and ontology with the network between them providing a liminal ground for the reconfiguration of character. Lisa Sainsbury, in *Metaphysics of Children’s Literature*, writes that “children’s books have an important contribution to make to an ontological philosophy of childhood through their metaphysical groundwork and an engagement with childness in the astonishment of being” (7). Sainsbury asserts that children’s literature, which includes young adult fiction, provides significant contributions to the elements of liminality and becoming. Ontology is defined as a state of becoming, a liminal journey—a quest through liminal place to become aware of yourself

(Connolly; Masson; Sainsbury). Sainsbury explains ontological exchange as “an ontic meeting of self and other during which being is tested and made aware of its status as being” (16). Ontological exchange, therefore, is a liminal place where the state of becoming is manifested (Masson; Sainsbury).

The ebb and flow of the world of becoming is a liminal place where being passes through a veil of becoming to develop an awareness of its persona. This state of becoming is essentially a liminal journey, a quest through liminal place to become aware of oneself and does not necessarily reach a destination. In her article “No Traveller Returns: The Liminal World as Ordeal and Quest in Contemporary Young Adult Afterlife Fiction,” Sophie Masson says “the concept of liminal place is at the core of the central ordeal and quest of characters” (61). This central metamorphic quest of character is discussed in “‘Leaving my Girlhood Behind’: Woke Witches and Feminist Liminality in *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*” where Megan Henesy argues that Sabrina has gone through a metamorphosis—Sabrina’s character has morphed from a bubbly blonde to a confident new-age feminist. Similarly, in his article “Memories, Dreams, and Fictions: The Liminality of Mudarra and Embedded Narrative in the *Legend of the Seven Infantes of Lara*,” Marcelo Fuentes “emphasizes Mudarra’s liminality: [arguing that] he occupies an intermediate position between the past and the present, as well as between life and death, and from that liminal space he draws the strength to accomplish his mission” (35). Both the reimagining of Sabrina’s character and the liminal occupation of Mudarra provide strength for each character to complete their quest; it is only through the liminal place that these characters are reborn as victorious. In her article “At the Limits of Perception: Liminal Space, Vision and the Interrelation of Word and Image in Walpole’s *Strawberry Hill*, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother*,” Kirstin Mills argues that this liminal place can be found in the realm of dreams, where ebb and flow are integral “as

liminal spaces that figure a threshold state between the supernatural and the subconscious” (5) for dreaming.

The dreaming world—*Oneiros*—is the ultimate liminal world highlighting the realm between the real and the imagined. Dreaming involves both reality and imagination, as objects are taken from a real place and transferred in an imaginary world. Vered Kenaan, in his article “Artemidorus at the Dream Gates: Myth, Theory, and the Restoration of Liminality” argues, “Artemidorus establishes the distinction between ‘oneiros’ and ‘enhyponion’ and explains why it is central for his approach to dreams. At the same time [...] Artemidorus has difficulties in upholding this distinction [...] the experience of dreams involves an ambiguity that cannot ultimately be explained away” (190).

According to the Greek diviner Artemidorus Daldianus, in *Oneirocritica*, “enhyponion” are specific types of dreams that relate only to the present and have no temporal meaning outside of sleep (14). Both “oneiros” (dreams) and “enhyponion”—something in one’s sleep (14)—are accessed at the same time. However, “oneiros” provides the sleeper with a vision of the future and “awaken[s] and excite[s] the soul by inducing active undertakings” (15). This classification, Kenaan argues, presents a framework found in myth and poetry where the influential constitution of dreams is a direct response to its mythopoetics (192). “Oneiros” and “enhyponion”, therefore, are useful for understanding the underlying logic leading to interpretation, when the mythology of dreams is allowed to be set free, rather than being suppressed by their classification (Kenaan 192). Once the mythological power and ontology of dreams is allowed to grow (and control over dreams could stem from this growth) then the dreamer can access becoming through the dominant composition and liminality of dreams.

This argument is extended toward the role of Hermes by Richard Stromer in his article “Hermes as God of Liminality and the Guide of Souls”, who regards Hermes “as master of the in-between spaces we call “liminal” and as psychopomp guiding both the souls of the dead to the underworld and of the sleeping to the realm of dreams” (1). Hermes is regarded as the psychopompos, the guide of souls, but also the oneiropompos, the guide of Dreams, and it is only through sleep that one can understand his liminality. He guides humans into the dreamworld through the liminal gates and into a world that cannot be explained away because of its ambiguity (Kenaan; Stromer). Hermes’ liminal appearance between the space of souls and the realm of dreams links to the agential becoming of self and the control of dreams that the protagonists in my selected novels have.

Examining seminal dreaming theories provides insight into the liminal nature and dominant power of dreams. Sigmund Freud first classified the dream as “a creation, a piece of work which has its motives, its trains of antecedent associations [...] Dreaming has a meaning, like everything else we do” (Jung "The Analysis of Dreams" 3). In opposition to Freud, Carl Jung viewed dreams as “spontaneous self-portrayal[s], in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious” (*The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* para. 505). It is Jungian theory that I wish to establish further because he classified dreams as authentic and natural: “[Dreams] are pure nature; they show us the unvarnished, natural truth, and are therefore fitted, as nothing else is, to give us back an attitude that accords with our basic human nature when our consciousness has strayed too far from its foundations and run into an impasse” (Jung "The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man" 149 para. 317). Jung recognised the dream as a door into the secret recesses of the psyche that opens inwards to show us a more universal and truer mindset towards the human personality. Dreams allow us to become aware of our primordial being where we are indistinguishable from nature and free from our ego (Jung "The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man" 145 para. 304).

According to Jung, dreams are “directed towards future development” (As qtd. in Rowland). It is this looking towards the “future development” of self, termed “becoming”, that dreams in young adult literature focus on.

When it comes to dreaming, the most integral element is sleep—that is, the intentional change of state from waking to sleeping. Erich Fromm argues for the pivotal role of sleep in his book *The Forgotten Language*, saying that it is only in the realm of sleep that the psyche can become free from all imprisoning boundaries: “When asleep we may be likened to a fetus or a corpse; we may also be likened to angels, who are not subject to the laws of “reality”. In sleep the realm of necessity has given way to the realm of freedom in which “I am” is the only system to which thoughts and feelings refer” (27). In the realm of freedom, as Fromm labels sleep, the boundaries of reality cannot hinder the psyche, and therefore dreams are gifted as a mirror into the innermost state of becoming—a place where humans are better able to feel and think the truest and most valuable feelings and thoughts (Fromm). Thus, sleep is an essential part of dreaming, for without it the inner mirror—dreams—will not be found, and the state of becoming would be unachievable. To intentionally fall asleep for the specific purpose of dreaming is the agential change of state that the protagonists in the selected novels undergo. To access their dreaming power, each protagonist intentionally sleeps, so they can enter the dreamworld.

Dreams can be used in literature to provide healing to a fractured character. In his article, “Divine Surgeons at Work: The Presence and Purpose of the Dream Vision in *Till We Have Faces*,” Wagner analyses the network between the processes of convergence and fragmentation, suggesting that this symbiosis between fragmentation and convergence provides healing to the fractured identity of the protagonist:

the nature of dreams as truth-bearers is forefronted [sic] and through doing so, Lewis also makes an argument about the respective roles of faith and reason, using liminality to discuss the necessary convergence of these two processes. Convergence, which seems to be the necessary partner to fragmentation in this novel, provides healing to the broken narrator, Orual.

(15)

Broken narrators and lost characters are healed through the process of dreams and gain strength of character through liminality. The use of dreams, in the selected YA novels, to heal traumatised characters refers to the ontic exchange that occurs when the state of becoming is accessed. A cyclical symbiosis arises between the protagonist and the dreaming and waking worlds where characters fragmented by trauma go through a process of convergence (seen as the state of becoming) and become ontologically reconfigured and healed. Only through agency over their dreams, then, can the protagonists access this healing cyclical symbiosis and the state of becoming.

Carl Jung viewed dreams through active imagination and the identification of symbols, which provided a future-focussed directionality. Jung classified symbols as “a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning” (*Man and His Symbols* 20). Put simply, a symbol is an object, thing, term, or name that has significant meaning to the dreamer and is transferred into the liminal imaginary. Such symbols can be produced physically and in the form of dreams: “man also produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously, in the form of dreams” (Jung *Man and His Symbols* 21). The importance of symbolism in Jungian dreams, says Anthony Stevens in *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*, is that “symbols were natural growth factors which made possible the development of the personality [...] and the transcendence of polar oppositions” (82). Without such symbols,

personal growth could not be achieved and, therefore, the state of becoming is made redundant.

Book Summaries

The Raven Cycle follows a group of adolescents as they search for Glendower—the mythical Celtic raven king. The series consists of four novels: *The Raven Cycle* (2012); *The Dream Thieves* (2013); *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* (2014); and *The Raven King* (2015). Ronan, a sharp, edgy, raven-like boy has the power to retrieve things from his dreams. His personality is defined by the trauma of his past—finding his dad dead in his BMW—and his struggle against the nightmares that this trauma brings on. Adam is a poor, smart, pallid young boy who sacrifices himself on the ley line and receives magical powers. Gansey is an adventurer who was saved from death by the untimely, and unjust murder of Noah—the group’s ghost friend. Lastly, there is Blue Sargent, a psychic’s daughter and magical mirror who can amplify the powers of others. Their search for Glendower leads them along the ley line and into a place called Cakeswater—a mystical forest on the ley line that warps time and holds many magical secrets. As the series progresses, dreams become more prevalent as Ronan begins to manifest more objects from the dreamworld and restore the rift on the ley line caused by the reckless dreaming of another dreamer. In their search for Glendower, the group also mistakenly waken a demon who proceeds to unmake Cakeswater and the dreamer who dreamed it—Ronan. The series focusses on Ronan’s powers, and his understanding of them, as they continue to grow whilst he learns to control them better.

Dreamstrider is split into three different parts “Dreams,” “Nightmares,” and “Dreamstrider.” The novel describes the path of Livia, a young tunneler girl—a slave—who dreams of heroism and as she is taught to dreamstride, that is, to enter the dreamworld (Oneiros) and from there gain access to someone else’s body and mind. Set in the kingdom of Barstadt and its neighbours—the Farthing Confederacy and the Land of the Iron Winds—the

narrative follows Livia as she learns about dreamstriding. Growing up in the tunnels under Barstadt City, Livia was a slave to the gangs that ruled there. She slaved her entire childhood in these tunnels alongside her mother, who was ultimately lost to addiction in a Lullaby den (a place where dreamless sleep was advocated with a drug called Lullaby). As a result of living and working in the tunnels, Livia has lost all confidence in herself. Though Professor Hesse, the man she cleans for, sees Livia's potential and teaches her how to enter the dreaming world through her sleep and later on continues to teach her to dreamstride, she is unable to believe in her own potential power. The narrative tracks her progress as she goes on missions for the Barstadt government, mostly in connection with a Farthinger agent known as Marez—who questions the values of Barstadt and the teachings of the Dreamer. Barstadters believe that the Dreamer (the one who gifts them with dreams) defeated Nightmare the last time it rose from the dream world. Livia's quest to become a dreamstrider leads her to find Hesse's theory of transference—transferring an object from the waking world into Oneiros. Her dreamstriding ability grows as she gains confidence in herself, and she ultimately defeats Nightmare to become free—both physically, by gaining her full citizenship papers, and mentally, by releasing the pain she feels because of her traumatic past.

The Dreamwalker Trilogy describes the journey of Joshlyn Weavaros, a young prodigy in the dream walking society, as she solves nightmares and stabilises the three worlds—the Dream, the World, and Death. Josh's journey is extended over three novels: *Dreamfire* (2015), *Dreamfever* (2016), and *Dream Forever* (2017). Being a part of the dream walking society Joshlyn works to keep the balance of the three worlds (Dream, World, and Death) stable. She enters the Dream through special archways that break through the Veil between the worlds and physically enters another dreamer's dream/nightmare. The task of a dream walker is to stabilise the dream by calming the dreamer's fear (known as dreamfire) and allowing the dream to resolve itself. Joshlyn is prophesied to be the True Dream Walker,

who was said to be the first dream walker, and her journey to become a better dream walker is filled with mental obstacles (such as self-doubt) and physical obstacles (including rogue dream walkers). For instance, Josh and her friends encounter Feodor, a radical dream walker who believed he could force the True Dream Walker to come out of hiding. Through this encounter, Josh learns about the prophesy regarding her life and gains insight into Feodor's thoughts and memories. Her access to Feodor's memories helps her to create objects like the vambrace, circlet, and the Vibrational Harmonic Acclimation Guides (VHAGs), which help to control and manipulate the Dream or seal tears in the Veil between the Dream and the World. To become the True Dream Walker, Josh must let go of her ego, escape the pains of the past, and allow herself to heal. She finds the answers to her questions of ontology in the Cradle—the middle ground between all three worlds, where the worlds overlap—and employs the Omphalos (a powerful egg-shaped object used to fully recreate the worlds and grant complete insight into the workings of the worlds). This ultimate journey of becoming leads Josh to be free from the painful trauma of her past—the death of her boyfriend Ian, who was ripped from her grasp and sucked into the Dream, which caused her to be riddled with self-doubt—to a life of confidence and full trust in her abilities. The culmination of these events occurs in Perigrineum, the place where Josh's grandfather merged the three worlds together, and Josh uses the Omphalos to separate the worlds and recreate/reconfigure reality.

Chapter Summaries

In the following two chapters, I analyse the narrative structure and the entanglement between dreamers and objects to demonstrate how the dreamers' subjectivities are shaped as a process of becoming. In each chapter, I order the discussion by publication date. *The Raven Cycle* was the first published, and because it is more well-known and popular series, it may have influenced the creation and direction of the other two novels/series. *Dreamstrider* comes next in accordance with publication dates, and lastly come *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*. For

this reason, I analyse the novels in this order: *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and then *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*.

Chapter 2 “Becoming through Narrative” discusses the similar narrative structures these novels employ and outlines that in each novel/series the protagonist accesses their state of becoming in the same section of narrative. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the connection between plot and character, determining that pivotal events catalyse agential becoming. Chapter 3 “Entangled in Dream Things” discusses the entanglement of things in the spatiality of the dreaming and waking worlds. The chapter uses ecocritical entanglement theory, along with spatial theory and thing theory to inform the close analysis of the novels. Chapter 3 emphasises the importance of things in the worlds and posits that the creation of a cyclical symbiosis between the dreamer protagonist’s, the dream worlds, and the waking worlds, in these novels allows for the dreamers to access a state of becoming.

My thesis works with existing theoretical frameworks covering topics of dreaming, becoming, liminality, narrative theory, thing theory, and ecocriticism to conduct a textual analysis and close reading of *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*. I argue that adolescent protagonists are given agency over dreams and use this realm of liminality, and the things within it, to access their state of becoming. My analysis will extend the coming-of-age trope to suggest that in these novels, such agential becoming can only be achieved once the protagonist is given agency over their dreams and can navigate through the realm of liminality to find the state of becoming. By accessing a state of becoming and entangling themselves with the materiality and spatiality of the waking and dreaming worlds, these protagonists enter a cyclical symbiosis with these other worlds—where each dreamer, waking world, and dreaming world, affects the other equally—and it is this cycle of interdependence that is both the finalisation and the beginning of a continuous state of becoming.

Chapter 2: Becoming through Narrative: narrative patterns as essential to the becoming of self through dreams.

The young adult novels chosen for my thesis follow a pattern of becoming centred around dreaming and the dream. *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* represent the process of finding oneself and achieving success through agency over one's own abilities, identity, and world. Each novel begins with outlining the characteristics and attributes of the protagonist dreamer and highlight that these malleable characteristics allow the dreamer to acknowledge their trauma and flourish. The pattern continues in each novel and series to feature a pivotal event of character recognition which happens by gaining agency over the dreamers' dreams. This agency then becomes the catalyst for change and revives the path of becoming in each dreamer's life. In each novel, the beginning explicates character traits; the middle provides the pivotal event that catalyses change; and the end completes the causal change of state. Remembering that becoming is "an ontic meeting of self and other during which being is tested and made aware of its status as being" (Sainsbury 16), each section of the novel/series catalyses the protagonists becoming in relation to an other—either another character or an object/place. The process of agential becoming in these novels, then, is characterised by the experiential encounters outlined through the interactions with the other (person, place, or thing) in each section—beginning, middle, and end.

The aspect of narrativity discussed in this chapter does not separate as binary the delineation of the framework of plot and events from the development of character, but rather

seeks to discuss the entanglement and connection of the two. Aristotle's *Poetics*, asserts Maria Nikolajeva in "Beyond the Grammar of the Story," presents the view that characters are "subordinate to actions and events, and they are not supposed to possess any other traits than base or noble" (8). However, in my chosen novels, as is present in many modern young adult texts according to Nikolajeva, a higher demand is placed on "the literary characters' psychological and ethical dimensions" (8). Therefore, the connection between plot and character is a causal relationship where the character's dislocation or transportation through plot is intrinsically connected to the character's psychological and ethical becoming.

In these novels, events and eventfulness are significant as experiential encounters that catalyse the causal relationship of becoming. In the *Handbook of Narratology*, Peter Huhn classifies both event and eventfulness as "characterized by the presence of a change of state—the transition from one state (situation) to another, usually with reference to a character (agent or patient) or a group of characters" (80). The classification of the plot-to-character relationship is therefore the causal nature of events and eventfulness. The express consequences of these events transition characters from one state to another (Huhn). The change of state that occurs for characters often transpires in middle section of narrative—as Aristotle would categorise it—and is explicated further throughout the ending. For instance, in these novels, the protagonists experience events that shape their identities such as the death of loved ones. These events create a causal eventfulness that leads to a state of becoming where the protagonists deal with their grief and emerge with reconfigured identities.

The connection between plot and character in these novels is extended when discussing identity, especially the malleable characteristics of the protagonist who has accessed the state of becoming. Identity is described by Michael Bamberg in "Identity and Narrative" as an attempt to differentiate the self, amidst the multiple dimensions of social and personal (e.g., gender, age, race) (132). Such "claims to identity [must] begin with the

continuity/change dilemma and from there venture into issues of uniqueness and agency; self and sense of self begin by constructing agency and differentiating self from others and then go on to navigate the waters of continuity and change” (132). The essential elements for identity include a change of state—often through events and the eventfulness that occurs from them—and a sense of agency over one’s character and is continued through the differentiation of self from the relational other. These essential elements highlight the express link between plot (events and eventfulness) and character (identity). This link culminates in the compulsion for change and the agency required to assert such transformation. The malleable characteristics of the protagonists in these novels are moulded through the navigation of the network of events such as gaining agency and control over their dreaming power.

Before delving into the narrative structure and delineation of plot and character in these novels, I will provide an overview of their beginning, middle, and end sections to build an understanding of the narrative structure of these novels. *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* have similar overarching narrative structures. As I outlined in the introduction of the thesis, *The Raven Cycle* is split into four novels: *The Raven Boys*, *The Dream Thieves*, *Blue Lily, Lily, Blue*, and *The Raven King*. *Dreamstrider* is divided into three parts: “Dreams”, “Nightmares”, and “Dreamstrider”. And *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* is separated into three novels: *Dreamfire*, *Dreamfever*, and *Dream Forever*.

The beginning sections of these novels establishes the traumatic past each protagonist has endured. The opening of *The Raven Cycle* is found in the first novel: *The Raven Boys*. In this section an explication of Ronan’s character and summary of personal history, in particular the death of his dreamer father, is provided. For *Dreamstrider*, the beginning lies in the Prologue and first Part—titled “Dreams”—where Livia stumbles through learning how to become a dreamstrider and her characteristics and struggles are highlighted as consequences

of the trauma she has endured. Book One of *The Dreamwalker Trilogy: Dreamfire* holds the beginning character explanation where Josh's dreamfire—"dreamer's fear" (99)—is displayed and her past trauma highlighted.

The second part, Aristotle's aptly named "middle", defines the pivotal moment/epiphany/event that drives the characters toward change. For Ronan this pivotal moment transpires in the second novel in the series, *Dream Thieves*, and his dreaming agency—his control over dreams—grows as eventfulness from this moment. Livia's pivotal moment of epiphany and character change occurs in the second part of *Dreamstrider*, named "Nightmares", where she struggles against Nightmare's minions, and her own personal nightmares, to become a better dreamstrider. For Josh, this significant moment of change happens in the second novel, *Dreamfever*, where she realises that power and control are not to be used to control others.

The final stage of narrative development—the end—expounds the change of state that occurs because of the pivotal event in the middle. Ronan's change of state, or state of becoming, is accessed in the third and fourth novels of *The Raven Cycle: Blue Lily, Lily Blue*, and *The Raven King*. In this section, Ronan's identity becomes framed by a mature joy: the kind that knows about the troubles and traumas of the world but decides to focus on the joyful, peaceful things in life. Livia also undergoes a change of state, where her lack of confidence turns into a boldness and self-confidence that helps her become a great dreamstrider, which transpires in the third part of *Dreamstrider*, named "Dreamstrider". Josh's change of state allows her to understand the wisdom of the world and follow it to a constant state of becoming. Her state of becoming is developed in the third novel of *The Dreamwalker Trilogy: Dream Forever*.

Beginning: An Explication of Character

To begin with, each novel describes the malleable characteristics of the dreamer because of past trauma. In *The Raven Boys*, for instance, the dreamer Ronan, who has the power to retrieve objects from the dreamworld and return with them into the waking world, is described as acidic, uninterested, disdainful, and at odds with the world. Descriptions of Ronan include “sharp” (21), “shark-like” (21), “brittle” (47) and “poisonous” (47) which all emphasise the hate, derision, and wrath he feels at the world. Ronan’s identity is framed by these “poisonous” (47), characteristics because of his father’s death (71) which shapes his personality to become harsh and brittle. He is trapped by his grief and the unknowns of life and retaliates with disdain and acidity to shield himself from the pain. As a result of his traumatic past, Ronan lacks the confidence, which he later gains through his dreaming agency, to believe that he has the power to choose his future path and mould his future identity: “I don’t know what I want” (76). Therefore, Ronan must learn to escape the trap of his grief and embrace the freedom of agency his dreaming power gifts him.

Like Ronan, Livia in *Dreamstrider* lacks the confidence to believe in agential becoming because of her traumatic tunnelling past. Livia overhears her mentor describe her as “clumsy and careless [...] stunted by life in the tunnels” (5). She takes these words to heart, even using them to describe her own failings: “I’ve endangered lives with my clumsiness [...] and slow wits” (13). She doesn’t believe in herself, but rather views herself as a failure and wishes that someone more worthy was given the gift of dreamstriding (14). Instead of understanding that she must grow through a stage of becoming, Livia believes she does not belong (83). Livia’s utter negativity toward herself is clear—she believes herself to be a failure and a fraud. She is sceptical of her own abilities and she denies herself the freedom to choose to escape through the freeing liminality of her dreams.

Livia thirsts for freedom because of her position as a tunneler is fuelled by her dreams. In the Prologue, this longing for freedom is explicated: “the Dreamer filled my head with promises of a better life” (1). Livia believes she deserves freedom, a life free from the slavery of the tunnels, free from the gangs. Livia dreams of a “life of sunlight and beauty—a place where I had a purpose” (1) and wishes to serve Barstadt in a tangible way, instead of in the unseen and unheard way of a tunneler (1). Livia is offered a chance to make her dreams come true (2) and in doing so, become free—for in the realm of the dream (sleep) freedom is the system to which thoughts and feelings refer, to recall Fromm's definition. Therefore, through learning how to dreamstride Livia is granted agency over her liberty and accesses a free state of becoming.

Dreamfire also employs the same foundation of transmutable characteristics to emphasise becoming through dream agency. Joshlyn Weavaros is an extremely talented dream walker filled with determination and grit, yet she finds it hard to deal with the truth about her traumatic past: “her deepest fear, her personal dreamfire, surrounded her in the form of friends and family. The celebration was her moment of truth, and she was terrified that the truth was exactly what would be said” (16). Her determination brought her nowhere when it came to the truth about “last summer” (17) and how it made her feel an “aching with every breath” (17). She was trapped by the “charade of her infallibility” (17) but lacked the confidence to speak the truth and deal with her emotions. She is trapped and can find solace and freedom only in the Dream where she plunges herself into solving nightmare after nightmare to free herself from the pain and guilt she feels.

Josh’s quest for freedom is epitomised by her dreaming skill and her neglect of the rules. Though she does not believe in herself and in her own abilities, she is repeatedly doing things other dream walkers would not do. For instance, she seeks freedom within the dream by breaking “Stellanor’s First Rule of dream walking: *Never let the dreamer’s fear become*

your own” (2) every time she enters the dream. This blatant disregard for the rules shows that Josh seeks freedom from trauma and the guilt of the past. She believes she has not yet met the standards set for her. She cannot be the True Dream Walker after having failed so many times, “The True Dream Walker wouldn’t have screwed things up the way I have” (329). This underpinning thirst for freedom joins with her lack of self-confidence to create a basis for transformation and a change of state as effected by the causal agency she receives through the events of her traumatic past.

Middle: The Pivotal Event

The middle of the narrative holds pivotal events and causal eventfulness that catalyse agency over one’s own world. In all these novels, this event occurs in relation to another character who applies pressure to change the protagonists’ identities in a way that is detrimental to their state of becoming. For Ronan, this pivotal moment transpires in the second novel, *Dream Thieves*, where another dreamer, Kavinsky, teaches Ronan how to control his dreaming power better, but in a way that drains the dreamworld of its power. As eventfulness stemming from his interaction with Kavinsky, Ronan’s character begins to develop and he intentionally turns away from this injurious dream thieving. Livia’s pivotal moment of epiphany and character change occurs in the second part, “Nightmares”, where she is plagued by Nightmare’s minions in Oneiros and learns about Hesse’s theory of transference, whilst her self-doubt and lack of confidence is fuelled by Marez, the Farthing agent, who tries to seduce her. Learning of this interaction, Livia strives to become a better dreamstrider and to stop the transference of Nightmare’s shards, which also means stopping Marez and trusting in her personal values. For Josh, this significant moment of change happens in the second novel, *Dreamfever*, where Josh realises that power and control are not to be used against others. This epiphany happens after she uses the vambrace and circlet,

creations of Feodor, to control another person's dream. After this event, Josh strives to access her state of becoming without the help of such gadgets of control, or persons like Feodor.

In *Dream Thieves*, Ronan gains a better understanding of his dreams and learns how to develop control over his dream powers through his interaction with Kavinsky when Kavinsky shows him how to retrieve objects from the dreamworld with ease. During these pivotal moments he realises the potential of his powers and the inner agency that will help him to access the change of state (or state of becoming). To learn more about dream thieving, Ronan joins another dreamer, Kavinsky, who uses pills to plunge himself into the dream world and steal objects. As Ronan learns more, he recreates through dreaming the Pig (Gansey's beloved Camaro) successfully. Ronan's newfound control plunges him into a sense of euphoria he has never felt before: "And then the joy hit. [...] He was hurled into the emotion. It pummelled and thrilled him. He'd been so proud of the puzzle box, of the sunglasses, the keys. How stupid he'd been then, like a kid in love with his crayon drawings." (327). Ronan's pivotal moment occurs during this state of euphoria. When Ronan realises the potential of his dreaming power his understanding of his being is at its peak. As he compares himself to a "kid in love with his crayon drawings," Ronan also begins to understand the breadth of his power. The emotions that Ronan feels are personified as they "hit" (327), "hurled" (327), and "pummelled" (327) him into a recognition that his power was stronger and held more potential than he imagined. He finally recognises, through the epiphany pummelled into him by the other of these emotions, that he can access his state of becoming. He does not revel in the elation, but rather returns to reality and sets out to fix the reduction in power he causes the dream world.

Though Ronan is led to understand his power by another dreamer, he realises the damage that his power can cause and turns away from such destruction. With this responsible decision his character begins to change. Ronan's power and control over his dreams has

grown which begins the process of becoming: “I know how to control my dreams and I know what's wrong with Cabeswater” (346). In contrast to before the event where Ronan does not know what he wanted, or what to do with himself (*The Dream Thieves* 310, *The Raven Boys* 76) the Ronan after the event is decisive: he “know[s] how to control [...] know[s] what’s wrong” (346). The mask of anger, disdain and lack of self-belief/self-confidence fades and a rational, decisive, and sophisticated young man emerges. He is in complete control of his power, his life, and his choices. The agency that this event gifts Ronan allows him to enter a change of state (into the state of becoming).

Dreamstrider also uses decisive events to present Livia with the magnitude of losing the key to Hesse’s theory of transference. When on the mission to Birnau in the Land of the Iron Winds Livia learns more about the malicious plans of Nightmares minions in the waking world. Her reaction to seeing Hesse’s theory of transference in action shows her disbelief and guilt: “My choked cry nearly wrenches me out of Oneiros. Hesse’s theory of transference. [...] *Dreamer save us all*” (248-250). Again, she cannot help but pray to the Dreamer, not acknowledging her own power and responsibility. Her lack of confidence leads to guilt and a reflection on the travesty of her power where she cannot even look into her own body’s eyes (250). Livia wallows in the guilt saying that she “failed” (268) again, returning to the lack of confidence she had from the start. However, as Livia continues to fight the nightmares, she begins to believe in herself acknowledging that though she is now not the only dreamstrider she is “the only one who can set this right” (330). Her choice marks her accepted agency that she is the one who can set things right, even though she may have failed several times. Her self-belief returns through the experiential encounters that confront her with her failures and allow her to reconfigure her identity through them.

Livia struggles against the deconstructive words of Marez as he questions the validity of her values and fuels the self-doubt living in her heart. Livia’s relationship with Marez is

built upon espionage as she is tasked with helping Marez find the betrayer in Barstadt's aristocratic society. As Livia's relationship with Marez continues to grow, Marez plays the devil's advocate and presents different values for Livia to consider. In doing so, he works to fuel the doubt that fills Livia's mind and urges her to let her suppressed emotions "break free" (180) and "accept [her] baser instincts [...] let go of [her] convictions and sink into whatever role [she] must play" (180). Livia's mind, already plagued by nightmares and doubt is easy for Marez to mould. Marez himself admits that he "wants [Livia] to question what [she's] been taught" (184) and turn away from her conviction that believing in the Dreamer is all that she needs to thrive. Though Marez uses his deconstructive words to turn Livia away from her values and align them with his own—that Nightmare is the answer—her ultimate conviction turns toward herself as the dreamer. This realisation that she herself is strong enough to be a dreamer because she chose to dream, gives her the agency to access the state of her own becoming.

In *Dreamfever* a vital event is also utilised as a tool to allow for Joshlyn's change of state. Josh uses her memories gained from interacting with Feodor to further her thirst for power. She builds a vambrace and circlet which help her control the dream. When she achieves this control over the Dream and uses the tools, she notices that the dreamer responds in fear to her misconceived help and control (172). In connection with this response, Josh believes she is neither strong enough, nor wise enough to control the dream: "I don't have the right [...] I don't have the wisdom" (173). Though Josh wishes for control over her dreaming power, the agency achieved through her connections with Feodor fuels her self-doubt and lack of confidence. Therefore, she must break from the "other" (Feodor) and access a state of becoming in connection with a more stimulating "other." Such a significant event stimulates an effort for change of state and allows Joshlyn to access her state of becoming.

As Josh begins to grasp the concept of her power, she recognises the need for sacrifice. She realises she must humble herself before she can access the power of the True Dream Walker and manipulate the dream: “It’s my ego, she realized. I can’t access the power with my ego in the way. I can’t decide what should be” (283). Josh recognises the inhibiting power of her ego, and that to continue her becoming she must release her thirst for power, and her ego. Without forgetting her ego and accepting that she must follow the current that guides souls (283) through the world she can never act as the True Dream Walker. To continue becoming, Josh learns through her encounter with her own ego to trust in her identity and not care about the inhibitions and expectations of others. These experiential encounters allow her to continue her becoming through the release of her ego.

End: The Change of State

The becoming of self, explicated in the ending (where the change of state occurs) of each novel, is emphasised after the dreamer accepts agency over their dreaming power. The ending takes place in the third and fourth books of *The Raven Cycle: Blue Lily, Lily Blue* and *The Raven King*. Here Ronan’s character encounters physical, mental, and emotional struggles in relation to Cabeswater and the demon. However, as the demon tries to “unmake” (411) Ronan, he can draw on the strength and confidence gained from his encounter with Kavinsky to resist and save Cabeswater. *Dreamstrider* expounds its ending in the third part, “Dreamstrider,” where Livia interacts with the Dreamer to find her dreaming power and defeat Nightmare and his minions. Livia finds the confidence to defeat Nightmare and recognise her dreaming power only through her agential becoming as accessed by her interactions with Marez. Josh’s agential becoming is continued in the ending, found in *Dream Forever*, as she encounters the Cradle and Omphalos, using them to relinquish her ego and reconfigure both the worlds and her own identity.

In *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* and *The Raven King* Ronan's character morphs from lacking self-confidence and decisiveness to understanding his power and knowing what he wants—being free to choose his own future occupation, love partners, hobbies, and dreams. In his interactions with Cabeswater, Ronan learns to trust his power and to be decisive in his choices. Ronan “was like Cabeswater: a maker of dreams” (*Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 13), and this relationship determines that his becoming and dream agency is linked directly to the fate of Cabeswater. The link between them is exemplified when the demon in *The Raven King* begins to unmake Cabeswater and Ronan is directly affected (411). However, with his strong connection to Cabeswater, Ronan resists the demon's unmaking and ultimately reconfigures his identity. He ponders how to make Cabeswater a “truer reflection of himself” (438) emphasising the network of experiential encounters with Cabeswater that give him the self-confidence and agency to access his continual becoming and delivers the freedom to choose his own future path.

By trusting in his own abilities and motives Ronan can access the strength of his dreaming power and continue his becoming. Without this trust, his own world would collapse again, as it had before. Ronan changes through his experiences with the dream, Cabeswater, and the demon. The Ronan at the beginning of the series would laugh scornfully at the world, but this new Ronan—the one at the end of the series—understands the troubles and pains of the world personally and still chooses to laugh (*Dream Thieves* 346). Ronan before the dreaming event, no longer holds power over Ronan after the dreaming event. Ronan has complete agency over his dreams and therefore transforms his character from not knowing what to do (*The Raven Boys* 76), to wishing he had something (anything) to do: “the only true nightmare was not being able to do something, and that this [dreaming an object to save Gansey and kill the demon], at least, was *something*” (*The Raven King* 345). Ronan has gained so much self-confidence, and continues to do so, that he cannot stand the idea of not

doing something to help—not making the choices that will aid in defeating the demon. He feels helpless when he is unable to do anything, a pirouette from his beginning characteristics.

This change of state occurs also in *Dreamstrider* when Livia accepts her dreaming powers potential for transformation through her interaction with the Dreamer. Livia, originally a timid slave worker afraid to speak out of turn whilst disbelieving in her own potential, becomes a strong, self-confident woman who saves the kingdom. Livia's change of state begins when she accepts agency over her dreaming power: "Dreamer, I whisper, but it's not a prayer. Dreamer. I am a dreamer, the one who can make all my dreams and hopes and wishes real [...] the Dreamer didn't choose me for anything. I chose to dream" (374-375). In relationship to the Dreamer, Livia's state of becoming is accentuated when she recognises that she chooses to dream. Her agential becoming climaxes when she is "made aware of [her] sense of being," to use Sainsbury's phrasing, by her acknowledgement that she is the "dreamer" (374). By acknowledging her power over her choices, her life, and her dreams, Livia opens the door for transfiguration of being, accesses that key change of state (state of becoming), and becomes the Dreamstrider.

Livia's newly accessed self-confidence and the epiphany of her dream agency allows her the ability to begin the process of becoming a confident, decisive dreamstrider. Instead of calling herself "clumsy" (5) and "slow wit[ted]" (13) she "embrace[s] [her] own strength [...] and] strange mix of talent" (375). This crucial moment of power and agency is where Livia accepts her strength and recognises that the Dreamer's power and hers are moulded together. Her newfound confidence and charisma are accentuated by her belief in her own dreams. Livia begins as a timid tunneller girl "poisoned [by her] dreams" (1), but now she is "not afraid to dream" (384). The contrast in faith highlights her sense of becoming and the development of her character in relation to pivotal experiential encounters. Therefore, after

accepting agency over her dreamstriding power, her character continues to develop into a more confident, self-believing identity.

Joshlyn Weavaros is similar to Ronan and Livia insofar as she is socially awkward and unconfident. To move through her state of becoming, Josh recognises that her ego is blocking her from fully understanding her powers. Therefore, she transforms herself and gives up her ego: “I’m a stupid American child, remember? I’m no one special, as it turns out. [...] I’m a very new, stupid soul. I’m awkward and I have no self-confidence and I’m thoughtless about other people” (*Dream Forever*, 311). Josh learns about her naivety through her interaction with the Omphalos in the Cradle. In the Cradle, she learns that she is a new soul, unwise and untested by the experiential encounters of the world. Josh removes herself from the equation, allowing her friends the agency to create a new world. She acknowledges that she is “a new, stupid soul” and therefore is not in the best position to fix a broken world. She gives up her ego, doing exactly as she realised she had to—“I can’t access the power with my ego in the way” (*Dreamfever* 283). In doing so, Josh accesses the change of state (state of becoming) and allows herself to become more confident in her dream-walking power.

As she interacts with the Cradle, Josh realises her agency is enough to help others and all that is required of her. All Josh must do is believe that she helps people, believe she has made a difference in the fight. Her time in the Cradle helps her to see and to understand that her dreaming power has helped people: “Feodor’s soul had left a glowing, jagged trail, chaotic, crazed. But then it crossed Josh’s path, and on the other side, it began to straighten out. [...] ‘See? You helped him’” (*Dream Forever* 214). By acknowledging that she has done everything she could to help the others, and that she is enough, Josh is able to move through the process of becoming. She has accessed the causal change of state occurring after a pivotal event, and therefore morphs from a state of self-doubt and misinformed egotistical power to a

state of becoming where she becomes humble and selfless (a servant leader) and ultimately characterises the True Dream Walker.

These three young adult series each have a similar narrative structure that emphasises the bildungsroman element of becoming. Each novel or series follows a pattern of discussion around the self and its transfiguration. This pattern can be characterised by the beginning—explication character traits; the middle—catalysing change through pivotal events; and the end—completing the causal change of state. Each novel represents the potential power of dreams and how agency over their dreams allows the protagonists the ability to morph their character's self through interactions with the other. Emphasis on the dream then provides the argument that it is through agency over the liminal dream that the adolescent protagonists in these novels can enter the process of becoming into self. Thus, the pattern begins with development of the traumatised character of each dreamer, then moves to an epiphany event through the agency over dreams, which catalyses the dreamer to acknowledge the need for a change in state. The process of agential becoming begins with the protagonists choosing to reconfigure their identities, which is achieved only through experiential encounters and significant interactions with the other as outlined through the narrative pattern of beginning, middle, and end. This discussion of the power of agency over dreams is typified by the liminality of the dream world and the corresponding liminality of adolescence. The liminality of the dreaming world is intentionally accessed by the protagonists to further their becoming by creating a continual connection between the dreamer and the dreaming world.

Chapter 3: Entangled in Dream Things: Ontology as Cyclical Symbiosis with Materiality and Spatiality

The entanglement of materiality and spatiality in *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider* and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* creates a network between the dreamer, dreaming and waking worlds where liminality and the state of becoming is accessed. Each series/novel intertwines the material with the dreaming power that is embodied within the protagonists. In *The Raven Cycle*, Ronan removes objects from the dream utilising them to help in his journey of becoming. Livia, from *Dreamstrider*, learns from the objects that are within her dreams, and the dream house of her mentor, to guide her in becoming a better dreamstrider. Joshlyn Weaveros in *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* uses objects to become more powerful and to harness her dream walking power. However, she learns to turn away from them and trust in the power of the dream that guides her. Each dreamer uses objects to help them in their journey of becoming. They become entangled with the materiality of the dream, and the binary between the dreaming and waking life is disentangled to allow for a more flowing connection between the dream, dreamer, and waking world. In this chapter, I will show how this web of entanglement creates a cyclical symbiosis between the dreamers, the dreaming world, and the waking world in these novels, where each separate persona or space affects the other equally. The entangled spatiality and materiality of the waking and dreaming worlds allows for a more fluid relationality than other forms of fantasy other-worlds and creates a vast web of interconnectivity directly linked to the phenomenon of agential becoming which the protagonists in these novels utilise.

Entanglement affects the protagonists of these novels through the connection it creates with things and the centrality of being. Entanglement is defined by Pieter Vermeulen in *Literature and the Anthropocene*, as “the deep interconnections between human and nonhuman actors [...] to the point that these can no longer be separated and distinguished” (175). Entanglement is explicated in Karen Barad’s work: *Meeting the Universe Halfway* where Barad argues that being is entangled in things and through these entanglements humans can reconfigure their beings, psyches, and imaginations (383) to support a reality that is composed of a things-in-phenomena perspective (140). Barad describes these entanglements as phenomena— “the ontological inseparability of objects and apparatuses” (128)—and discusses the intra-actions (acting in co-constitutive ways that come from within rather than inter-actions which means acting among or along with) of the objects and human agents. Through the entanglement of things/objects/phenomena and the protagonists in these novels, a sense of ontology is discovered, and agential becoming is performed.

The intra-actions of the components of phenomena are specifically tailored to access a state of becoming, as phenomena themselves become meaningful. Through these agential intra-actions the boundaries and properties of phenomena become determinate: “(particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful” (Barad 139) and a disparate sense of being is enacted (140). Barad describes agency as the “ongoing reconfigurings of the world” (141) and attributes this agential intra-activity as being essential to the universe's becoming. Therefore, if agential intra-activity with phenomena/things/objects is significant to the becoming of the world, personal becoming must also be attributed some sense of epiphany. For if the world is constantly becoming, humans must intentionally become with it. The components of phenomena are tailored for accessing a constant state of becoming when the things entangled with them are made meaningful. These novels utilise such components of

phenomena to aid the protagonist journey of becoming through the entangled relationships the protagonists have with things in the dreaming and waking worlds.

Being Entangled in the Spatial

The spatial entanglement of the waking and dreaming worlds finalises the protagonists entangled network of things and spaces. Whilst humans often become entangled in the things of the real (waking world), the entwined “other worlds” (in this instance, the dreaming world) also hold significance. The spatiality of these worlds is mutually advantageous to the characters as entangled liminal spaces. Paul Fox, in “Other Maps Showing Through: The Liminal Identities of Neverland,” makes the distinction between the real and unreal, classifying this distinction as “mutually beneficial relationships and identities [that go] beyond opposition binaries” (255). Anthony Pavlik in “Being There: The Spatiality of 'Other World' Fantasy Fiction” connects Fox’s claim about mutually beneficial relationships to the spatiality of other world fantasy fiction, and says that indistinctive and malleable “protagonists who experientially encounter the world(s)” (240) work with these relationships and identities to access the state of becoming and liminality that surrounds the spatiality of the dreaming and waking worlds. Pavlik concludes that “‘other’ worlds may [...] reveal themselves, to varying degrees, [...] as actualised thirdspaces of performance and agency, generated by protagonists, negotiated and utilised, manipulated and transgressed, and thus as spaces of pure activity in themselves” (249). This indeterminate realm of possibility connects the network between the protagonist, the things they are entangled with, and the spaces they become intertwined in, to create the potentiality for agential becoming in these novels.

The centrality of a home within these novels provides a significant spatial ground for the liminality of becoming. In each novel, the protagonists find themselves returning to a house that is significant to them. For Ronan in *The Raven Cycle*, it is his childhood home, the

Barns, that provides him the space and freedom to access his state of becoming. Livia in *Dreamstrider* learns from the dream house of her mentor, Professor Hesse, in Oneiros and gains the confidence and freedom to begin becoming. In *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*, Joshlyn is drawn back to her mother's burnt cabin, both in the waking world and the dreaming world, and finds her confidence and freedom there. The spatial liminality of these homes is significant in the process of becoming for each protagonist and provides them with the freedom and confidence to learn about themselves and their powers.

The home in Ronan's life holds significance both within the waking world and the dreaming world as a thirdspace of peace where the two worlds are intermingled through dream objects. After the death of their father Ronan, Declan, and Matthew are all banished from their home by their father's will. Ronan, who searches for a sense of freedom and a way to relieve himself of his grief for his father, is drawn back to his childhood home. The Barns is described as a warren filled with antiques and random objects collected through dreaming by Ronan's dad (*Dream Thieves* 157). The Barns is a dreamer's house, filled with dream objects, designed by a dreamer. Without this heritage, Ronan would not be able to understand himself. His ontology is entangled with the Barns as a space, and the many dream things that it contains. Here he finds the peace to dream freely and to understand his power and become more than just the indignant son of a dreamer.

Ronan's home also helps him become more by learning from the material focus of his father's life. As Ronan and his friends search through the Barns, they find several different dream objects, realizing that "his home was populated by things and creatures from Niall Lynch's dreams" (*Dream Thieves* 163). Niall Lynch's materialism provides Ronan with an understanding of his own power and how these objects connect to his ontology. He is also entangled in things and his intra-action with them creates an agential reconfiguring of his psyche reminding himself that his ontology is directly linked with the dreaming world and the

objects it holds. These dreaming objects, which he also brings into the waking world, remind him of the agency his dreaming power provides him. Therefore, he chooses to entangle himself in what he creates catalysing a reformation of his being through agential becoming.

In *Dreamstrider*, Livia's agential becoming is stimulated within a peaceful thirdspace of learning—to recall Pavlik's claim—and helps her understand her power and the binary between the waking and dreaming worlds. Livia's mentor shaped a home for himself in Oneiros (the dream world) and transferred many objects from the waking world into it. When Livia returns to the home after Hesse's death, she is reminded of Hesse's being: “[he] spent his whole life Shaping it.” [...] His dreamworld home brings [Livia] closer to his mind and his memories than [she] ever was in life” (217). She becomes knitted in the details that enshroud the home, and the objects within help her to understand her own power. She learns more about herself and Professor Hesse—their relationship and their goals—in this home, than she ever did from him in waking life (218). This thirdspace within Oneiros helps Livia to find herself amid the objects directly linked to her dreamstriding power. As she understands Hesse's theory of transference—where objects from the waking world are transferred into Oneiros (the dreaming world)—she gains the necessary insight to begin disentangling the binary between the worlds. Her understanding of herself and her dreamstriding powers grow through the entangled spatiality of the home, and her intra-action with the phenomena that it holds allows her to disentangle the binaries of the waking and dreaming worlds and understand how to defeat Nightmare.

When Livia understands the spatiality between the waking world and Oneiros she acknowledges that the Dreamer wishes it to remain. Livia's insight into the schism between the worlds grants her the agency to say, “We're meant to chase such impossible dreams; we're meant to bring our nighttime longing to reality through our actions and deeds. The Dreamer fills our heads at night with dreams of what we could become in the day” (371). She

sees how the Dreamer planned the binary to remain and understands the power of agency that the Dreamer has gifted her (and all dreamers). If she accepts the Dreamer's wishes for the binary to remain, she can also accept that the Dreamer shows her how to shape her own world. The Dreamer gifts agency to her through the dreaming world and demands that she carry it from there into the waking world. If she is to follow the Dreamer's desires, she must accept her own agency and live in harmony with the dreaming and waking life. Through this understanding of the spatial worlds, Livia's entanglement with the Dreamer (and his thoughts and desires for her life) grows and helps her to gain agency over her dreaming power and to access her state of becoming.

Josh learns from her home to become a powerful dream walker, yet it is from her mother's old cabin that she learns to mature and accept the essence of her True Dream Walker power. After accidentally figuring out that the archway her mother died building (*Dreamfire* 85) still works, Josh finds herself repeatedly drawn back to the burnt, old cabin. Though originally filled with dread and fear at returning to the cabin, Josh finds herself learning from it and understanding her own character more. This basement and this home are entangled in her being, and she is learning from it and maturing with it. Her growth becomes evident when she is trapped in the dream version of this basement, and they see no way out of the dream basement (336). However, it is here that Josh begins to believe that she is the True Dream Walker. Here, in this thirdspace, which is directly entwined with the waking and dreaming worlds, she acknowledges the power stored within her and accepts her dreaming power and agency. Her experiential intra-actions with the cabin help her disentangle the binaries between the dreaming and waking worlds and provide a peaceful liminal space of learning and the platform for agential becoming.

Becoming Entangled in the Material

The liminal space between things holds the epiphany of becoming as a meeting place of other beings. Timothy Morton, in “The Liminal Space between Things: Epiphany and the Physical” describes things as intricately given: “A thing is an epiphany—a givenness whose given is irreducible, like suddenly coming across a forest clearing” (278). Things, therefore, affect all life on Earth directly, and cannot be susceptible to reduction through the demands of metaphysics (Morton 278). Things also transform the relationship between subject and object, where the thing (object/phenomena) becomes integrally placed in an entangled position next to the subject and therefore directly affects their ontology—as suggested by Bill Brown in “Thing Theory” (4). The affectual transformation caused by the assertion of thing power as irreducible entities allows a liminal space of things where humans enter agential change through their intra-activity with the things (phenomena) around them. Morton asserts, “Things are a kind of liminal space made of other things. [...] a meeting place of other beings [...] an epiphany that coexists anarchically alongside us, physically before us, and despite us” (279). The liminal space of things is an epiphany of agential becoming intricately entangled with human ontology which these novels utilise as the protagonists proceed on their journey of becoming.

Thing theory explores the relationship between humans and things and expresses their significance in human ontology, linking directly to their significance in the dream. The importance of things as symbols within dreams provides a link between thing theory and dream theory where both bestow ontological power to the thing. William James, in *The Principles of Psychology*, posits that the human-thing relationship is one of ontology, as a human’s being becomes entwined with possessions: “man’s Self is the sum total of all he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children” (292). Consequently, when dreams are given meaning by the symbols

(Jung *Man and His Symbols*) that are found in it, and these symbols are entangled with an individual's own things (James), the relationship between dreams and things becomes significant to the state of becoming. In his article “Can a Sofa Speak? A Look At Thing Theory,” John Plotz asserts that Thing theory highlights the approaches to the margins of cognition and material substance (110). Connecting the margins of cognition, which are inhabited by dreams, to material substance (or things) provides the grounds for agential becoming within these novels.

The connections between the dreaming classification of things as signs and their ontological power highlights the link to dreaming and liminality. Plotz further explicates and recognises that though they may seem to lie beyond the bounds of reason, things are categorised as “signs and substances, meaning and materiality, [and] appear to break down” (110) the binaries of this world. The disentanglement of these binaries is significant in the state of becoming, where things as symbols within dreams are meaningful as they break through the ordinary categories of signs and substances (Plotz 110) to create an impact on inner being. Things are no longer viewed as commodities alone (349), as Jennifer Sattaur suggests in “Thinking Objectively: An Overview of Thing Theory in Victorian Studies,” but must be understood through their relationship of entanglement with the subject (human). The protagonists in these novels access the ontological power of the things within their dreams to provide an avenue for liminality and the state of becoming.

Ronan's identity and agential becoming is directly entangled with Cageswater, helping him learn to control his dreaming power. Recalling Morton's claim that things are an epiphany that appear from nowhere, Cageswater is a both a thing and a dream (*Dream Thieves* 171), a magical forest on the ley line where Ronan and the others search for Glendower. Ronan's identity is linked with Cageswater because he manifested it and can control it (346) like the other things created from his dreams. In his intra-actions with

Cabeswater, Ronan's identity as a dream thief becomes more solid, and he begins to understand himself more. This link is accentuated when Cabeswater is undreamt by the demon (*The Raven King* 285) and Ronan too becomes intangible and unmade. Ronan and Cabeswater are completely entangled, inseparable, and indistinguishable. As Ronan's strength and identity grows through becoming, Cabeswater's strength grows too, and vice versa. When the demon begins undreaming Cabeswater the link between Ronan and Cabeswater causes Ronan to feel the unmaking and to be directly affected by it. Through this entanglement and Ronan's intra-actions with the phenomena of Cabeswater, Ronan achieves agential becoming and learns how to control his dreaming power and ultimately thwart the unmaking power of the demon.

Ronan's agency over the dream and his ability to choose which objects he will manifest are important to his becoming. As his power is dreaming up objects and removing them from the dream, choosing meaningful phenomena to manifest is significant to his identity. Helping himself on the journey of becoming he chooses objects that have meaning to himself and his friends—things with which he is entangled. For instance, he says that his raven companion, Chainsaw, is a dream creature: "I took Chainsaw out of my dreams" (*The Raven Boys* 419). Ronan is described as more "raven" than the other "raven boys," so by manifesting Chainsaw (a raven) as a companion, he cements his identity as a raven boy. Ronan also crafts a new Pig (Gansey's car) to continue the material symbol of the group's friendship. The Pig is the liminal space they collectively use on their quest to find Glendower, so it is essential to Ronan's (and all their) becoming. He could remove anything—like his father did with the cows and all the other dream things at the Barns—but instead, he chooses carefully, understanding the phenomena he wishes to create, before doing so. This understanding and connection with these objects helps him in reconfiguring himself in the state of becoming through the meaningfully entangled phenomena he manifests.

Understanding the objects within her dreams and their symbolism for the agency over her own life is something that Livia learns on her journey of becoming. As Livia embarks on her quest to become a better dreamstrider she dreams of many different objects: “I dreamt I was standing in a great room [...] and I had to select what to wear [...] on each wall were] elegant ball gowns [...] plated suits and leather armor [sic] [...] gauzy robes [...] and] rags and scraps” (*Dreamstrider* 61-62). Each distinct set of phenomena represent a disparate role she plays in the democracy and espionage of Barstadt: the armour of warriors, ball gowns of aristocrats, gauzy robes of the priests, and rags of the tunnelers. She has intra-acted with all of them and is entangled together with them and must accept that through these experiential encounters she will learn more about the network of agency that is the waking and dreaming worlds. These objects in her dream help her to understand the conundrum that wages war inside her and allow her to choose the path she will follow providing her with the agency over her dreams and identity.

Josh’s intra-action with the symbol of the egg becomes significant to her agential becoming. Significantly, Josh uses the analogy of an egg to help protect her and Will, her dream walking apprentice, from the dreamfire—the dreamer’s ultimate fear. Will is told to imagine an “egg around him, not made of eggshell but of an iridescent energy force field that would incinerate anything that tried to pass through it” (*Dreamfire* 75). The egg is symbolic of protection, and meaningful to both Will and Josh. However, the meaning of the egg intensifies when Josh finds the Omphalos in the Cradle of the Worlds, described as an egg on a pedestal which holds the power of the universes (*Dreamfever* 282). When she picks up the Omphalos, Josh understands not just one little thing but everything. She understands the lives of every soul, their meaning in the world, and the entire cycle of reincarnation. The meaningful object—the egg, or Omphalos—begins with the symbolism of protection and grows to encompass the understanding and wisdom of all things in the three worlds. Josh uses

the power of the Omphalos to stabilise the network of agency and liminality between the three worlds. Josh's becoming is entangled through her intra-actions with the phenomena of the egg through these interwoven phenomena she can understand her power and access agential becoming.

Josh's True Dream Walker power also shows entanglement with the objects within the Dream. As she enters the state where her power is used, she moulds with her surroundings and becomes like a fly on the wall, seeing all and feeling all: "She was the floor, she was the walls, she was the shards of broken mirror. Her arms stretched across the ceiling and beyond into other dreams. Her heartbeats were the seconds of time; her breath was change" (*Dreamfire* 341). Josh becomes entangled with the floor, walls, and ceiling of the dreamed basement—she was the "seconds of time," the "breath of change" in this dream and in others as her arms stretched "beyond the ceiling into other dreams." Josh becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from the objects within the dream and through this entanglement is granted control of the dream. This connection to the dreamed basement shows Josh the strength of her power as she allows herself to understand her dreaming power and choose to look beyond the walls, floors, and ceilings that confine her being. Through this experiential encounter Josh's begins to understand her dreaming power and her connection to the worlds and learns to look outside of the boundaries and limitations she has placed upon herself towards the network of agency that is the liminal space of the dreaming and waking worlds.

The Creation of a Cyclical Symbiosis

The interconnected nature of materiality and the human subject provides the liminal potential for becoming. Nicholas Pagan—in his article "Thing Theory and the Appeal of Literature"—summarises Martin Heidegger's philosophy on the "thing" and posits that things can only take on meaning in relation to human ontology as a result of human interaction with them (31). Thus, things become more than just a commodity and are given a distinct

“thingness” when interacted upon by humans because their ontology becomes interwoven with them. It is only through this interaction with humans that things can be given a significant role in dreaming and the state of becoming. An interconnected network of agential power, where the thing and human each affect the other equally, is created when ontic exchange occurs between the human and the thing. In these novels, this exchange becomes the creation of a cyclical symbiosis—a cycle of agency built on the liminality of the powerful ontic exchange between the protagonists and the things within their dreams.

The vast network of agency, built upon phenomena and things, within the spatiality of the worlds provides a platform for liminality and agential becoming. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman, in the introduction to *Material Ecocriticism*, “Stories Come to Matter,” claim that “the world’s material phenomena are knots in a vast network of agencies” (2). Matter/things/phenomena are within the air we breathe, the food we eat, and in the things and beings of and beyond this world (2)—in both the waking and dreaming worlds. Things, therefore, are a “material 'mesh' of meanings, properties, and processes, in which human and nonhuman players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces” (2) and provide background for agential becoming within the entangled network of these worlds. The spatiality and materiality of this vast web of interconnectivity provides the liminality essential for agential becoming. This network of interconnectivity is displayed within these novels as the protagonists entangle themselves with the things in their dreams to produce the liminal forces essential for agential becoming.

As Ronan’s dreaming power continues to grow, the spatiality between the dreaming and waking worlds began to narrow and he can more easily walk between them. The more his agency over his dreams grow, the easier it becomes to untangle that binary and merge the two worlds—to see one whilst living in the other: “They were beautiful in a way that Ronan’s dreams could be, the way Cageswater could be, only now he was awake. Somehow, without

Ronan marking the moment, the schism between his waking life and dreaming life had begun to narrow” (*The Raven King* 32-33). Whilst awake Ronan could still see the beauty of his dreams overlaying the world. Ronan’s dreams become more involved in his waking life, and vice versa. Whilst his dreams help him understand his waking life, events from his waking life help him to fabricate meaningful things in his dreams. For example, when threatened with destruction by Kavinsky in *The Dream Thieves* Ronan manifests a white night horror to defeat Kavinsky even though Ronan himself was almost killed by black night horrors manifested from his nightmares. The entanglement between the spatiality of the two worlds—where Ronan intentionally creates an epiphany of things in this space where things and other beings interact—helps Ronan gain agency over his becoming. This cyclical symbiosis—where one world affects the other equally as much as it is affected by the other—between Ronan, the dreamer, the dream world, and waking life helps Ronan access his state of becoming through the liminality found in these spatial dimensions.

Ronan’s intra-actions with the objects he removes from dreams makes up the components of phenomena that are specifically tailored to agential becoming. Ronan had to feel the object—its essence—and understand it completely, as an object, before he was able to retrieve it from the dream. He would feel “not the idea of it, but the real sensation of it, the texture and shape and temperature of the metal, everything he’d need to bring it back from a dream” (*Dream Thieves* 149-150.) The phenomenon, or thing, becomes determinate through Ronan’s intentional intra-activity with it. Ronan’s agential intra-action with the things he manifests from the liminal dream, creates a phenomenon designed for accessing the cyclical symbiosis between Ronan as the dreamer, the dream, and the waking world. The causal relationship provides the liminal space for constant becoming through further experiential encounters in the network of agency that is the dream, dreamer, and waking world.

Livia also becomes entangled in the dream and allows her own body to become an object that is connected to both the waking and dreaming worlds. Though struggling with self-confidence throughout the novel, Livia finally becomes confident enough to acknowledge that she is a powerful dreamstrider and can save the city of Barstadt. She recognises that her life, her body, and her dreams are all entangled in the Dream, as she is “an oak tree surrounded by mothwood in a field [... whose] roots went all the way into Oneiros” (*Dreamstrider* 33). By entangling herself with the dream as an “oak tree,” Livia reaches with her roots to find the meaningful intra-actions between the dream and her identity in the waking world and accesses the state of agential becoming. The oak tree becomes the object with which she is entangled, which in turn entangles itself with both the dreaming and waking worlds. She becomes an object of meaning with deep interconnection between herself and the oak tree—her being is completely intertwined with the oak in Oneiros—and realises that she is part of the dream and part of the waking world, entwined between them with roots sent into both worlds. With this insight, she enters the state of becoming and accesses her dreamstriding power to rescue Barstadt and realises that she has the power within herself to do so (378). Her becoming is entangled in the materiality of the oak, representative of her own identity, and its connection to the dreaming and waking worlds. This cyclical symbiosis between Livia as the dreamer, Oneiros, and Barstadt (the waking world), allows Livia to access a state of becoming completely entangled with the materiality and spatiality of her worlds.

Josh’s encounter with the collapse of the veil between the waking and dreaming worlds causes an agency over her authority and self-belief. The last book in the trilogy, *Dream Forever*, describes a few small tears in the Veil between the worlds, which Josh works to try and heal with the VHAGs to unlock her True Dream Walker power. However, when the Veil begins to collapse all at once, creating huge tears around the world, the

VHAGs are not enough: “The Veil is coming apart [...] a tear in the Veil stretched a quarter mile above the city and straight down into the ground” (225). Josh must take action to find the source of the collapse and stop it from continuing. Here Josh’s authority and power are at a crossroads. She has a choice: stand, fight and become the True Dream Walker, or give in and let the worlds collapse. When Josh makes the choice to fight and become the True Dream Walker, she accesses her state of becoming and can continue her becoming through her interactions with the spatiality of the worlds and the objects found within them.

As she fights to stop the collapse of the Veil and the worlds with it, Josh accesses the power of the True Dream Walker through her dreaming agency. This power then helps her to return, stop the tear, separate the worlds again, and help rebalance the cycle of reincarnation: “She separated the three universes again, put them in tidy order, neat parallels like the plates on a dessert tower. But she left Peregrineum as it was, as a reminder of the chaos staging could cause [...] She kept it as a graveyard for the fantasy of control” (317-318). Though her agency gives her access to the True Dream Walker’s power, she still leaves a warning against the fantasy of control, both for herself and the world. Her state of becoming accessed through dream walking helps her to understand her own weaknesses and acknowledge the inner wisdom found in everyone to achieve greater possibilities. Through a better understanding of the spatiality between the World, Dream, and Death, as being separate spaces connected through significant links of becoming and reincarnation, Josh can continue her becoming and move on from being a “new, [and] stupid soul” (311). Josh’s state of becoming allows her to mould into a cyclical symbiosis with the dreaming and waking worlds.

The becoming of self within these novels is entangled with the spatiality and materiality of the dreaming and waking worlds. Ronan, Livia, and Josh all have strong dreaming powers with distinct links to materiality. Ronan removes objects from his dreams and utilises them to help him understand himself and his entanglement with materiality; Livia

uses her intra-actions with the objects in her dreams to understand her power and reconfigure her identity through becoming; and Josh harnesses the phenomena of objects within the dream to access her dreaming power and agential becoming. Each dreamer uses objects that are entangled in their being to help them in their journey of becoming by entering a cyclical symbiosis with the phenomena within the worlds and between the worlds themselves. They learn from these objects through experiential encounters within the Dream and become entangled with the materiality of the dream whilst the binary between the dreaming and waking life is disentangled to allow for a cyclical symbiosis between the dream, dreamer, and waking world. This fluidity in the relationship between the dream, dreamer, and waking world is the beginning of the state of becoming.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In writing my thesis where I analysed the employment of dreams in *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* I have experienced a great deal of joy and excitement. The analysis that I have provided using the theoretical frameworks of thing theory, dream theory, narratology and ecocritical entanglement, argues that adolescent protagonists in these novels are given agency of dreams and use this realm of liminality to access a state of becoming through entanglement with the things within the liminal dream world. I started this thesis with a buzz of excitement, and I can honestly say that this feeling has not subsided. I have loved every step of this research project and have been thoroughly entertained by the outcome. This thesis project has expanded my repertoire of both texts for analysis and theoretical frameworks to use for analysis, which fills me with further excitement for future research. With the vast possibility surrounding the field of dreams in YA literature and the increase of mainstream media delving into such topics the potential for expansion on this research thesis is growing. I look forward to completing further research studies in this area and topic, by incorporating newer texts, and possibly extending the research beyond YA literature and into mainstream media representations of dreams.

In reflection on my thesis, I recognise that I have been limited to my cultural and personal context. As an English-speaking student, I am limited to English translations of both secondary and primary sources. For example, when using Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* I had to rely on a translated version of the text, whereas the original publication in Latin perhaps would have been a better source. The most prominent discourse used in scholarship on dreams is psychoanalytic theory, and therefore steering away from these theories restricted the number of dream-related secondary sources I could utilise. My freedom to analyse anything and everything within the novels also limited me as the task of a close reader is to

read the novels, extract the important and meaningful information and analyse it. However, the close analysis made me focus on specific themes found in the variety of theory I accessed, for example objects, or pivotal moments that cause change in identity.

Although lucid dreaming was of interest to people who attended my Honour's proposal seminar, lucid dreaming itself extends beyond the scope of this thesis. I, therefore, did not discuss the emergence of lucid dreaming clubs, where lucid dreaming is practiced as an art form. For interests' sake there are two lucid dreaming clubs ("Lucid Dreaming Groups in Australia" *Meetup*) in Australia who actively meet and practice lucid dreaming and astral adventuring. The first, and largest, group is called "Astral Projection and Lucid Dreaming" (Tim). This club focusses on experiencing and exploring the astral realm through lucid dreaming techniques. They have conventions, discussion groups and lucid dreaming sessions monthly to practice astral projection and lucid dreaming and learn new techniques from each other. The second group in Australia is named "ECKANKAR Adelaide Spiritual Experiences Group" (Nigel. B.). This group leads discussions tailored to accessing spiritual freedom through dreams. Topics of interest are: "How to Master Change"; "The Spiritual Purpose of Dreams"; "Out-of-Body Experiences"; "Self-Realisation"; and "How to Master our Destiny." Further research, however, would consider delving into the realm of lucid dreaming, and the direct impact it has on society. The novels that link directly to this theory would be the *Poet Anderson* series that I decided not to use for my thesis as the novels displayed the use of lucid dreaming as its main dreaming avenue.

In contemplating the argument I develop in this thesis, I see there are more novels that could have included. The novel *Gossamer* by Lois Lowry, for instance holds strong correlations with the two series and one standalone novel this thesis analyses in its representation of materiality and the unmaking power of nightmares. *Gossamer* is a haunting narrative that tiptoes the binary between the imaginary and the real. Focusing on two

people—a sensitive older woman and an angry traumatised young boy—the book tells the story of how they face their own histories and discover the healing power of their relationship and the emotional footings they can be to each other. All the while, they are secretly being renewed by the strength that comes from a tiny, caring creature who they will never see—Gossamer. Through the collection of fragments from objects around the house, Littlest One, or Gossamer, and her mentor Thin Elderly bestow dreams upon their sleeping wards. Bestowal of dreams is essential to strengthen their wards against the hordes of Sinistees—the chaos of nightmares. The collection of fragments from objects around the house, which hold the emotions and memories of the human's lives, allows the dream givers to bestow strengthening dreams to negate the deconstruction of the Sinistees. Although the publication date of *Gossamer* is beyond the period I set for the thesis, in a larger project *Gossamer* could be included, perhaps as a starting point for novels that represent materiality and entanglement in relation to dreaming.

As I write this thesis, there are more texts that are being published/released which lend themselves to meaningful and related analysis. The most significant of these recent texts is Maggie Stiefvater's new series, *The Dreamer Trilogy* (2019-2022), which expands her Raven Boys universe, focussing its attention on life after the magic of *The Raven Cycle*. The trilogy pays close attention to expounding Ronan's character and dreaming power. This trilogy would enhance future research on the topic of dreams in YA literature as it works to push Ronan's character to the limits as a discussion on what happens when the magic dies.

Future research on the representation of dreams in popular culture might also include a recent film in Marvel Cinematic Universe *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*. This movie would expand the research into a multimedia analysis which would provide a more mainstream demonstration of the impacts of dreaming and becoming in visual and verbal texts for young people. In this movie, the power of dreams as windows into this

multiverse is discovered with Dr. Strange himself saying, “dreams are windows into the lives of our multiversal selves” (Raimi). In the movie, Scarlett Witch has the power to dream walk—where she enters the body of her multiversal counterparts and controls them. The story unfolds as Doctor Strange fights against Scarlett Witch, trying to stop her from using her dream walking powers because of the imminent destruction they might cause. Ultimately, Doctor Strange gives in to the lure of dream walking and accesses the dead body of his multiversal self to thwart Scarlett Witch’s plans of world domination. The character development throughout the story links directly to the subject of my thesis, and the becoming through dreaming power and dream agency is another connection. Further research conducted under similar guidelines would consider *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* as an exemplary text to include in the analysis.

Similarly, the upcoming film *Slumberland*, due for release on 18 November 2022, explores the dreaming world through the eyes of a young girl, Nemo, who discovers a map that leads to the dreamworld. In preview material, it appears as though she employs the help of a guardian (or rather dreamworld outlaw) named Flip as she travels through dreams and escapes nightmares in the hope that she will be able to see her late father again.

If one were to extend dream research beyond popular film and into television, again expanding the research across fields, then the new Netflix series *The Sandman* would be an exemplar. Adapted from Neil Gaiman's graphic novels of the same name, the television series follows Dream (the personification of dreams), or Morpheus, who upon escaping after decades of imprisonment sets about to reclaim his lost objects of power. Being the personification, or agent, of dreams themselves, Morpheus can control whether the sleeping have dreams or nightmares. This agency lends itself to a similar discussion on becoming and liminality as I have articulated in my thesis. Further research would consider the multimedia

aspects of this series, being adapted from graphic novels, and would therefore expand the research universally across many different literary forms once again.

All these texts, both the texts mentioned above and the novels I have analysed, represent the concept of nightmares, and the frailty of the relationship between nightmares and dreams. The topic of nightmares was one I thought I might discuss in my thesis, but it soon became clear that the representation of nightmares in these texts warrants its own study. Nightmares unmaking capabilities is displayed in *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy*, and so would have worked as a discussion on the unmaking power of nightmares contrasted with the making power of dreams. For instance, in *The Raven King* the demon is personified as a nightmare, and it “undreamt” Cageswater and worked to “unmake the dreamer.” Nightmare, the opposite deity to Dreamer, in *Dreamstrider* works to sow doubt and fear in Livia’s mind and causes devastation when he and his minions from the nightmare wastes, break through the veil between the waking world and the dreaming world. Joshlyn and the other dreamwalkers in *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* work to stabilise the three worlds—Death, Dream, and the World—by solving nightmares and saving dreamers from them. Without their essential task being completed properly the three worlds would converge upon each other and nightmares would leach into the waking world to unmake and destroy everything, causing widespread chaos and madness through fear. In contrast, dreams in these novels work to create change and, as I argue, help access the protagonists' agential becoming to cause positive change.

Analysing the utilisation of dreams in *The Raven Cycle*, *Dreamstrider*, and *The Dreamwalker Trilogy* has provided me with a lot of pleasure. Reflecting on how my Honours thesis all started, with the quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson, “Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?”, I remember how excited it made me feel when thinking about the possibility of analysing dreams in YA literature. With the vast amount of potential

surrounding dreams, and the many newer texts that have surfaced, the excitement has not subsided but risen to new heights. I truly believe that dreams in YA literature are being utilised to accentuate the process of becoming and am thrilled by the prospect of further research in this area. I look forward to conducting future research on the topic, incorporating newer texts into the discussion, and building my own personal understanding of this fresh sub-trope in YA stories.

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