Cognitive Narratology and the 4Es: Memorial Fabulation in David Almond's *My Name is Mina*[1]

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This essay demonstrates the fruitfulness of applying a lens based on 4E-inspired cognitive narratology to David Almond's *My Name is Mina* (2010) in order to illuminate how the so-called cognitive-affective imbalance between children and adults needs reassessing, especially when it comes to memory. Merging recent developments in 4E – or embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive – approaches to cognition as proposed in philosophy of mind, with concepts such as fictional minds and storyworlds as discussed in cognitive narratology, I engage in close readings of *My Name is Mina* that reveal kinship between the adult author and his child character. In order to understand how Almond imagines the "what-it-is-likeness" (Nagel) of being Mina, I work with two premises that reflect this kinship: firstly, the shared trait of adults and children being human beings; and secondly, the confabulatory nature of memory recall that is experienced across all ages. Adults and children alike are "memorial fabulators" (Chambers), and 4E approaches to the cognitive study of literature can enrich the field of children's literature studies and its considerations of adult authors' mind depictions of child characters.

"A [human being], to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; [they] must put [themselves] in the place of another and many others […] Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination"
(Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," [1840] 2001: 1775)

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Introduction: Why Cognitive Narratology and Why the 4Es?

Cognitive narratology is described by David Herman as probing "the nexus of narrative and mind" ("Cognitive Narratology Second Edition" 46). Herman points out that the field's scope is broad: "Mind-relevance can be studied vis-à-vis the multiple factors associated with the design and interpretation of narratives, including the story-producing activities of *tellers*, the processes by means of which *interpreters* make sense of the narrative worlds [. . .], and the cognitive states and dispositions of *characters* in those storyworlds" ("Cognitive Narratology First Edition" 30; emphasis added). In recent years, the field of cognitive narratology has stressed the importance of integrational approaches, which merge hypotheses developed in philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences with insights central to the domain of narratology. This interdisciplinarity has seen the embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive approaches to the mind, also known as 4E approaches to cognition, illuminate narratological analyses. Such interdisciplinary fusions can enrich our understandings of how the concept of age functions in the field of children's literature, in fiction that is (predominantly) written by adults for child readers.[2] By merging the "nexus" of narrative and mind (Herman, "Cognitive Narratology Second Edition" 46) with embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive approaches to cognition, one can engage in more fine-tuned analyses of the mind-body-world interrelations of adult authors and child characters.

The field of children's literature studies has been infused with "cognitive" insights emerging in the form of "cognitive poetics" (Nikolajeva, "Reading Other People's Minds;" Coats), "cognitive criticism" (Nikolajeva,

[2] As Vanessa Joosen rightly notes, "in recent years, critics have nuanced the idea that only adults write children's books. The #ownvoices debate that is best known from critical race studies and disability studies finds a parallel in children's literature studies with a renewed interest in child authors and intergenerational collaborations" (forthcoming).

Reading for Learning; "Recent Trends"), "cognitive approaches to children's literature" (Kokkola and Van den Bossche), "cognitive development" (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer), "neuroscience" (Nikolajeva, "What is it Like to be a Child"), "theory of mind" (Zunshine), "embodied experience" (Trites, "Ontology, Epistemology and Values;" Tandoi, "Negotiating Childness"), and "cognitive narratology" (Trites, "Growth in Adolescent Literature;" "Cognitive Narratology and Adolescent Fiction;" Nikolajeva, "Identity, space, and embodied cognition;" Alkestrand and Owen; Pauwels). Whereas there seems to be a strong focus on embodied cognition in children's literature studies, hardly any attention has been paid to the embedded, extended, and enactive approaches to cognition.

Maria Nikolajeva does come close to the "extended mind hypothesis" when she writes that "we use mobile phones as an extension of our memory or spatial orientation, a mental prosthesis" ("Recent Trends" 141), yet she does not situate this form of mind extension within the field of 4E cognition. Although the term "enacted" is used in analyses of children's literature, this usage primarily refers to "enacting", in the sense of "performing", a particular role. Malin Alkestrand and Christopher Owen mention the term "enacted" in their discussion of Tahereh Mafi's *Furthermore*, for example, when they write that "in situations where others expect Alice to use her magic, Alice embodies her intersectional subject position by enacting a REFUSAL script" (73). Despite these usages of terminology pertaining to the extended and enactive mind hypotheses, 4E approaches to cognition have yet to make their full entrance into the field of children's literature.

4E-inspired cognitive narratology can shed new light on fiction created about child experiences, in helping to explore how adult authors evoke the thoughts of child characters. Such analyses can enrich our understandings of the way adult authors construct the experiences of child characters – with

whom they vary significantly in numerical age – by questioning the "what-it-is-likeness" (Nagel) of their characters' embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive experiences. Therefore, this essay examines how David Almond depicts Mina McKee's mind in *My Name is Mina* (2010) through the prism of 4E-based cognitive narratology.

My Name is Mina puts the spotlight on a home-schooled eleven-year-old named Mina, who is grieving the loss of her father. Despite the fact that *My Name is Mina* was published more than ten years after Almond's award-winning *Skellig* (1998), the story about Mina is in fact a prequel to *Skellig*. Whereas *Skellig* focuses on how the protagonist Michael and his neighbor Mina encounter a winged creature they find in a decrepit garage in Heaton, Newcastle, *My Name is Mina* sets Mina's mind, body, and world at center stage, taking the form of a journal in which Mina creatively notes down her experiences. Furthermore, Almond creates a child character who engages in philosophical thinking, and who poses existential questions about human experience. During an interview, Almond exclaimed: "The book is a weird form, isn't it? It's got all these different layouts, poems, songs, empty pages, nonsense and stories and it is just like Mina's mind" ("Each story"). As such, *My Name is Mina* – the book in Almond's oeuvre that most pushes the boundaries of evoking a child protagonist's mind – is a formidable touchstone when probing how Almond depicts Mina's embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive experiences that in turn fuel her selfhood, her behavior, and her social interactions.

By merging recent developments in 4E approaches to cognition as proposed in philosophy of mind (Newen, de Bruin and Gallagher), with concepts such as "fictional minds" (Palmer) and "storyworlds" (Thon) as discussed in cognitive narratology, this essay engages in close readings of *My Name is Mina* that reveal kinship between the adult author and his child character. By doing so, I build on Marah Gubar's definition of "kinship"

("Risky Business" 453-454) and demonstrate that this way of looking at intergenerational relationships can be extended by exploring – via the lens of cognitive narratology applied to children's literature – facets of kinship that are expressed in writing processes and acts of storytelling about past experiences, and this across the lifespan.

In order to understand how Almond imagines the what-it-is-likeness of being the child Mina, I work with two premises that reflect this kinship: firstly, the shared trait of adults and children both being human beings (as opposed to the bats in Thomas Nagel's seminal article on subjective experience, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"); and secondly, the inherent confabulatory nature of remembering that is understood as very much analogous with acts of imagining in considerations of memory across the lifespan, as discussed in philosophy of mind (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 203-232; Gerrans; Michaelian). To demonstrate this, 4E-based narratological analyses of Mina's mind, which illustrate the entanglement between Mina's mind, her body, and the storyworld in which Almond depicts her in, will be paired with a discussion of adults and children alike being "memorial fabulators" (Chambers 17).

My Name is Mina: Fictional Minds and Storyworlds Through the 4E Lens

When it comes to characters' thoughts, Alan Palmer's *Fictional Minds* is a first port of call, seeing as he focuses on "presentations of mental functioning" of characters (5), and their "dispositions to behave in certain ways" (171-173). Jan-Noël Thon highlights the reciprocal linkages between fictional minds and the narrative worlds in which they are depicted by defining "storyworlds" as "worlds populated with characters and situated in space and time – consist[ing] not only of existents, events, and characters but also of the spatial, temporal, causal, and ontological relations between these elements" (291). These

storyworlds depicted by narratives present readers with "the stuff" of fictional minds, or, as Gilbert Ryle explains:

> To talk of a person's mind is not to talk of a repository which is permitted to house objects that something called "the physical world" is forbidden to house; it is to talk of the person's abilities, liabilities, and inclinations to do and undergo certain sorts of things, and of the doing and undergoing of these things in the ordinary world [. . .] Whatever else may be contained in [their] stream of consciousness, at least [their] sensations, feelings, and images are parts of that stream. They help to constitute, if they do not completely constitute, the stuff of which minds are composed. (190)

Bearing in mind the vantage point of 4E cognition – namely that our minds should be considered as inextricably fused with our bodies and with our environment – analyses of characters' fictional minds cannot be separated from the storyworlds they are presented in. The 4E approaches gained momentum in the field of philosophy of mind in the 1990s and have since started to dominate discourses on how we think (Newen, de Bruin and Gallagher). The paradigm in the philosophy of mind operating under the 4E header unites theories of embodied, embedded (Varela, Thompson and Rosch), extended (Clark and Chalmers), and enactive cognition (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism*; "Going Radical"), thereby aiming to establish the dynamically interlinked relations between mind, body, and world.[3] These approaches argue that the mind cannot be detached from its physical, social, and worldly environment, and although these perspectives are grouped under the 4E umbrella, each hypothesis involves case-specific nuances (Newen, de Bruin and

[3] Albert Newen, Leon de Bruin and Shaun Gallagher point out that Mark Rowlands ascribes the "4E label" to Shaun Gallagher who organized a conference on 4E cognition at the University of Central Florida in 2007, however, they also mention that the first use of the term surfaced in discussions held during a workshop on the embodied mind at Cardiff University in 2006 (4).

Gallagher 6). What the four strands share, however, is a vantage point that is opposed to internalist understandings of the mind such as those suggested by René Descartes. According to the Cartesian view, the mind belongs to some kind of skull-bound interior space, and is separated from the body (Descartes in Tweyman). 4E accounts of cognition, by contrast, view the mind as very much interlinked with body and world.

To begin with the "embodied" approach to the mind, Albert Newen, Leon de Bruin, and Shaun Gallagher explain that the first "E" pertaining to 4E approaches is described as regarding the mind as "embodied": our cognition is shaped by non-cerebral, so non-brain-bound, features of our physique (6). By practicing a particular sequence of dance steps, for example, dancers' bodies determine the manner in which they learn the sequence. Almond renders such an embodied experience of Mina's mind in her exclamation to engage fully with the senses: "Look at the world. Smell it, taste it, listen to it, feel it, look at it. Look at it!" (31). Mina's cognitive and affective engagement with the world around her reveals a sense of awe for the "horrible world" that she describes as "blooming beautiful" yet "blooming weird" (31).[4] It is this sense of awe for the world around her that consoles Mina when she goes through difficult experiences.

Aside from stressing the importance of embodied senses, Mina is also depicted imagining and embodying the what-it-is-likeness of being inside an egg in her egg poem: "I empty my mind and forget that my name is Mina," she writes (178). Mina then goes on to describe how she is "inside an egg," "a chick, growing in the sticky gloopy stuff" (178). Eve Tandoi points out how Mina's

[4] This is where 4E approaches to cognition, and by extension, to affectivity, can inform our understanding of the mechanism at work between adult authors and their child characters. After all, "a comprehensive description of any individual's mental functioning", Uri Margolin stresses, must "go beyond the purely cognitive activity, account for the affective and volitional sides as well, and interrelate them with the cognitive one" (272).

egg poem depicts "a child protagonist whose poetry shows how writing makes it possible to shape and inhabit new roles" ("Hybrid Novels" 81). This mechanism is also at work during Almond's writing process when shaping his character Mina: the creative act of writing provides Almond with the opportunity to shape his characters' fictional minds and to inhabit their worlds. Almond describes the creation of the fictional minds of his child characters as an organic process, explaining to Vanessa Joosen that depicting children in his fiction "is not like constructing a character, it is like discovering a character, you find a character and it kind of grows through you", pointing out that he "do[es] not find it difficult to enter the mind of a ten-year old boy", for example ("Interview with Vanessa Joosen"). Furthermore, and more specifically for the case study at hand, Almond reflects on the process of creating Mina's mind as follows:

> It was very weird when I was writing about Mina, I felt like Mina, I felt like I was Mina, that Mina was speaking through me. And I think more and more that writing is like that, writing is a process of discovery, you discover these characters, you discover this language, discover these stories that somehow feel as if they were already there, they already exist. And you have to get yourself into such a position that these stories, these characters, these voices can come through you. So, you become kind of aware that these beings can enter the world. That sounds mad! But the more I go on and the older I get, the more I believe that the story writes you, the characters write you.
> ("Interview with Vanessa Joosen")

Almond sketches a very embodied process of character creation, describing how he "feels like Mina" when writing about her and how her voice "can come through" him ("Interview with Vanessa Joosen"). This account of his writing process foregrounds sensorial aspects of imagining the what-it-is-likeness of being a character. Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris highlight the importance of

embodied experiences, emphasizing that "our bodies also carry the memories of our lived experience, so our childhoods are never completely closed chapters" (*Picturebooks* 163).

Taking embodiment a step further, and shifting back to my example of dancers: if dancers' embodied mastery of a dance sequence relies on props and demarcations on a stage that aid them in their execution of the sequence, then their minds are not only embodied but also embedded in their surroundings. The embeddedness of the mind within a particular environment forms the second "E" under the 4E banner. Newen, de Bruin, and Gallagher distinguish the nuance between embodiment and embeddedness as follows: "Extracranial processes [or processes taking place outside of your cranium, or skull] can be bodily (involving a brain-body unit) or they can be extrabodily (involving a brain-body-environment unit)" (6).

This importance of embeddedness is clearly at work in Almond's writing process: in an interview for the BBC conducted in Almond's home outside Newcastle, Almond explains while standing in "his writing cabin in his back garden" how his surroundings in the cabin – "images, pictures, photographs, religious memorabilia" – inform his writing, and how the Tyneside area is "almost the geography of his imagination" ("Meet the Author"). Almond compares his creative process to "set[ting] off like an explorer," claiming that he's "often not quite sure what [he's] doing or why [he's] doing it" ("On Writing"). The following passage depicts Mina's mind being very much prompted by the embodied physical activities she engages in within the world she is embedded in. Her sense of wonder can be traced through the depiction of the entanglements between Mina's mind, her body, and the storyworld, facets which can be contextualized by means of 4E-based cognitive narratology:

Went up to the loo. Listened to the lovely tinkling sound of my pee

> splashing down into the water. Thought about water running through me, water and my pee being flushed away into the drains, how it'll end up in rivers and seas and how it'll evaporate into the air and come back down again as rain. Lovely to think of water that's been my pee coming down as rain! Maybe that's why people say it's pissing down!
>
> Water's moving all the time, running, flowing, swirling, splashing, gurgling, evaporating, condensing. Some of the water molecules that are in me now were once in the Red Sea, or in the Mississippi, or in Ernie Myers, or in a blackbird, or in an orange, or a sprout, or inside a dinosaur, or in a caveman, or a sabre-toothed tiger, or a three-toed sloth or… (123)

Mina imaginatively inhabits the what-it-is-likeness of pee transforming into rain, and of water molecules that were once part of her body being absorbed by the Red Sea, or by a blackbird, or by an orange, or a sprout. She then uses this embodied and embedded experience to come up with an "extraordinary activity," namely: "Go to the loo. Flush your pee away. Consider where it will go and what it will become" (124). Mina wonders about the "wanderings" of pee, deducing that, if sixty-five percent of her body is made up of water, that "two thirds" of her is "constantly disappearing, and constantly being replaced" (124). Mina then concludes that "most of [her] is not [her] at all!" (124). This transformative process can be linked to Almond's immersion into the what-it-is-likeness of his characters' minds: by attuning to what it is like to be Mina, and by imagining how Mina's mind is embodied within her physique, and embedded within her surroundings, Almond can try on Mina's mind. Moreover, he does so by referring to phenomena that are not just part of Mina's body, but that are part of any human body. Regardless of their age, all human beings experience such processes of bodily renewal when they pee.

Aside from demonstrating embodied cognition and embedded cognition, Mina's thinking can also be considered as extended, primarily through her engagement with her journal. In 1998, Andy Clark and David J.

Chalmers introduced the third "E" to the 4E header in an article entitled "The Extended Mind." They argued that human beings can come to rely on particular objects and tools accessible within their surroundings, explaining that if these particular objects and tools are able to constitute cognitive processes, then they can be considered as parts of the mind. The extended mind hypothesis focuses on the question: "[w]here does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?" (7), proposing that minds demonstrate a constitutive relation with resources located in the world. In this day and age, calculators take care of arithmetic for us, our smartphones remember telephone numbers for us, and Booking.com generates a list of the hotels we have stayed in at the click of a mouse. It is in such cases that the mind can be regarded as extending into the world.

Moving back to the example of dancers, a dancer's mind is extended when they use their smartphone to get directions to a theatre because they can't quite recall the shortest route, or when they record themselves while dancing to then watch the recording in order to improve their dance sequence. As for the tools and objects Mina relies on, she is depicted as a child writer who entrusts many of her thoughts to her journal: "I'll let my journal grow just like the mind does, just like a tree or a beast does, just like life does" (11). In *The Courage to Imagine*, Roni Natov explains that "writing in many forms offers Mina access to her innermost feelings, to the deepest part of the imagination, a path to her vital life, and to healing" (129). Almond shows how a character's mind can be explored by conveying how they think and feel on paper, in their notebooks, and in journals. Mina echoes this in that she sees her journal as a portal to discovering her selfhood: "Writing will be like a journey, every word a footstep that takes me further into an undiscovered land" (16). This way, Mina's journal becomes part and parcel of her mind: her mind extends into the world as her thoughts and feelings take shape on paper. A similar creative process can be found in Almond's account of writing:

> I use notebooks, sketchbooks, pens, pencils, colored pencils. I scribble and doodle, experiment and play. I allow words and images to flow from my hand onto the page and I'm often amazed by what appears there. I love my computer, too. At the same time as scribbling, I start to compose sentences, paragraphs, pages. I create a title page with the name of the book (even though I know the title will probably change) and the name of the author (me!). I establish a daily routine and keep a tally of the number of words I write. I print out the pages and hold them together with bulldog clips so that I can see the pages growing and accumulating. ("On Writing")

These examples of entanglements between writers and their writing material show how important acts of transferring thoughts to paper can be in creative processes, and how Almond creates a sense of kinship between himself and Mina as authors who are developing their thoughts while they are writing.

Engagements with the surrounding environment can also prompt acts of writing, a mechanism that is discussed in enactive accounts of cognition. The strand of enactivism understands cognition as being "enacted in the sense that it involves an active engagement in and with an agent's environment" (Newen, de Bruin and Gallagher 6). Daniel D. Hutto and Erik Myin argue that the enactivist approach to the mind considers cognition "in terms of unfolding, world-relating processes" ("Going Radical" 97), thereby shifting the weight to interaction, dynamicity, and relationality between mind, body, and world. To pick up on the example of a dancer, once the dancer arrives on the stage and the curtain goes up, revealing the seated audience members, the dancer's mind is enactively prompted to perform: the dance recital may begin. Enactivist cognition can also be understood in patterns of how we adjust ourselves to the rising and setting of the sun, for example, or how we ascend or descend a staircase when confronted with one.

Tracing this to *My Name is Mina*, Mina's mind is enactively shaped by her

faring in the world. The sight of her notebook lying on the table in her bedroom, for example, causes Mina to write: "There's an empty notebook lying on the table in the moonlight. It's been there for an age. I keep on saying that I'll write a journal. So I'll start right here, right now. I open the book and write the very first words: My NAME is MiNA AND I LOVE THE NIGHT" (10). Mina's mind is led to engage with an object in her vicinity: merely by looking at her journal, Mina's mind is beckoned to engage in a dynamic interaction, thereby filling the blank pages in her journal with her thoughts and feelings. Such enactively prompted engagement can also be traced to Almond's writing process. In an interview entitled "Storytelling, Society and Savagery," Almond even shifts the power of creativity to his character, explaining that "it was Mina who introduced birds into his stories through her notebook where she continually studies and draws birds" (Almond qtd. by Coleman 9). Such power, thus transposed to the child character in the process of generating ideas during the act of writing, is remarkable. It underscores that Almond is, in a sense, attributing what Aidan Chambers refers to as a "person-like consciousness" to his child character as she comes to life on the pages of his notebooks (15).

Shared Practices of "Memorial Fabulation" across the Lifespan: What Is It Like?

As illustrated above, 4E approaches to cognition can yield new insights in explorations of how adult authors depict child minds in fiction. This focus on age is a crucial debate within children's literature studies, given that many consider children's literature as "a unique literary mode in that the sender and the receiver of the text are by definition on different cognitive levels", as Nikolajeva describes it (*Reading for Learning* 13). However, Gubar's reflection on the term "innocence" within children's literature shows that the shifting "story about children" will "involve a move away from the binary thinking that sets

children up as blank, alien others, and toward a more flexible paradigm which acknowledges that they are akin to adults in their diversity, complexity, and embeddedness in particular sociocultural milieux" ("Innocence" 127). Gubar fleshes out this aspect of "kinship," urging children's literature scholars to "take the risk of theorizing in new ways about what it means to be a child," and introducing the "kinship model" as an alternative to the "deficit model" – whereby young people are considered as lacking the "abilities, skills, and powers" of adults during childhood – and the "difference model" – whereby children are seen as "categorically different from adults" ("Risky Business" 450-451). The kinship model, by contrast, stresses "relatedness, connection, and similarity without implying homogeneity, uniformity, and equality" when it comes to children and adults (Gubar, "Risky Business" 453). Joosen calls attention to the benefits of Gubar's "kinship" model for age-related explorations in children's literature studies, in that it "highlights the shared humanity of children and adults" (*Adulthood* 83).

This shared humanity of children and adults can be illustrated by reflecting on the what-it-is-likeness of experience as discussed by Nagel in his seminal "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?". Nagel describes "conscious experience" as "the subjective character of experience:" "something that it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism" (436). Although Nagel stresses the impossibility of being able to imagine "what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat," he does point out that this is because he cannot imagine "changing [his] fundamental structure" by means of "some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications" (439). However, adults and children do share a "fundamental structure" (439): being human. Gubar also stresses this shared structure explaining that "our younger and older selves are multiple and interlinked, akin to one another rather than wholly distinct" ("Risky Business" 454). Surely this "kinship," as Gubar deems it ("Risky Business" 453-454), can

inform adult authors' depictions of child characters' minds? After all, Nagel does point out that considerations by "bats or Martians" of what it is like to be human would not suffice, given that our experiences as human beings are extremely complex and varied. According to Nagel, these specificities could only be described in terms understandable by "creatures like us" (440). Does this shared feature not underline the common ground between adults and children in their being the same kind of "creature", and not – as Gubar warns against in her discussion of the difference model – "a separate species" ("Risky Business" 451)?

Nagel concludes that "we are completely unequipped to think about the subjective character of experience without relying on the imagination – without taking up the point of view of the experiential subject" (449). The process of questioning what-it-is-likeness by trying on minds that inhabit particular storyworlds, or "taking up the point of view of the experiential subject" as Nagel mentions, unites the adult author Almond and his child character Mina. However, in "What Is It Like to be a Child? Childness in the Age of Neuroscience," Nikolajeva reflects on Nagel's "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", and considers the infeasibility of adult authors accessing the what-it-is-likeness of children's experiences due to the "cognitive and affective imbalance" between adults and children (26).

Drawing on studies in the field of neuroscience, Nikolajeva stresses that this "philosophical dilemma of cognition highlights that it is by definition impossible to penetrate another living organism's mind" ("What is it Like to be a Child" 24). The cognitive development of human beings produces additional barriers, and according to Nikolaejva: "an adult writer knows hardly more about what it is like to be a child than what it is like to be a bat. This is because of the cognitive gap between adult and child; a gap that memory cannot bridge" (26). Such an approach to the human mind, taking the workings of the brain as its

main impetus, does not consider the mind as 4E approaches to cognition do. It thus pushes aside the non-cerebral embodiment and embeddedness of the mind, and the ways in which the mind can be extended by means of tools and objects and be enactively prompted by means of the surrounding environment. Moreover, as Roy Sommer points out, "the neurosciences are still busy understanding lobsters and rodents," therefore "experiential accounts" must continue to play prominent roles in our understanding of the human mind when it comes to literature (83; 97).

Nikolajeva focuses on the unfeasibility of authors accessing their childhood memories in order to fuel their evocations of childhood experiences, seeing as "childhood memories" are "not genuine recollections, but confabulations" ("What is it Like to be a Child" 33). However, the inherent confabulatory nature of memories is one aspect of memories that is shared across the lifespan (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 215-221; Gerrans 69-72). This confabulatory nature is a shared feature of memory recall across all ages: whether it is a child or an adult remembering past experiences is not the point (Ackil and Zaragoza). Despite Nikolajeva's claim that children's "childness is *there*" (33), the question could be raised: is it *there* though? And when is it *there* exactly? Is it *there* the very moment a childhood experience takes place? Or is it *there* the same day, or the same week? What would the time window be for a childhood experience to be *there*, should children wish to recall their experiences in a "genuine" and "authentic" way, as Nikolajeva puts it (33)? Given the confabulatory nature of memories, aren't all the moments and experiences we remember – be it as children or as adults – *there* and not *here*, i.e. now?

Kinship is thus not only to be found in the fact that adults and children are human beings, or the same kind of "creature" (Nagel 440), but also in the fact that adults and children engage in acts of remembering that involve "re-

creative imagination" (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 217; Michaelian 120). The link between remembering and imagining is a shared human trait, and an element of kinship between human beings of all ages. As Hutto and Myin point out, "acts of recall in which specific events or episodes are reexperienced – for example, when we remember what it was like for us to enter a particular classroom for the first time – can be understood in terms of acts of re-creative imagination that involve neural reuse and reactivation" (*Evolving Enactivism* 217). This is dubbed the "simulation theory" of episodic remembering, and these acts "appear to require simulative imagining" (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 203; Gerrans 70).[5] Acts of remembering are therefore understood as analogous to acts of imagining. Take the following example involving laboratory research concerning the effect of "imagination inflation," whereby "merely being asked to imagine what it would have been like to experience a particular event can lead people to mistake having actually experienced such events in their personal pasts" (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 225; Garry et al.): this underscores the power of the imagination.[6]

There have even been studies suggesting that children are "more prone

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[5] In his discussion of "mental time travel", Philip Gerrans points to Daniel Gilbert and his work that "participates in a reconceptualization of the nature of episodic memory (for previous experience) and imagination as aspects of a unified capacity for simulation of experience" (69-70). Gerrans goes on to underline that "episodic memory and episodic future thought (*prospection* as it is known) are processes that depend on the same neural systems" (70). The evidence supporting this view is, according to Gerrans, "that damage to neural circuitry known to be essential for episodic memory also impairs imagination" (70).

[6] Garry et al. researched occurrences of imagination inflation by means of the following procedure: "First we asked subjects about a long list of possible childhood events, and they indicated whether or not these events had happened to them as children. Two weeks later, we asked them to imagine a few of these events. Finally, we gave the long list of possible childhood events to our subjects again, and they indicated whether or not the events had happened to them" (209). Garry et al. specify their aim, giving the example of a group of subjects who said it was "unlikely that they had ever broken a window with their hand" (209). Later, these subjects imagine a scene in which this did take place, "complete with how they tripped and fell, who else was there, and how they felt", the question being: "would these subjects later think it was more likely that they had broken a window with their hand as a child?" (209). If this proved to be so (and it did), then empirical evidence would be generated as to the hypothesis of imagination inflation, or at least to an inflation in confidence that a certain event occurred.

to memory error" than adults (Ackil and Zaragoza).[7] Jennifer K. Ackil and Maria S. Zaragoza propose that "developmental differences" in source monitoring tasks could be linked to the possibility of children being "less skilled in reasoning about the source of their memories", and this "either because children are less able to encode or activate the memory characteristics necessary to support accurate source monitoring or because they fail to engage in the extensive and complex decision-making processes that accurate source monitoring sometimes requires" (1369). These studies suggest that children and adults alike make mistakes when it comes to processes of remembering, and that our imagination often plays a part in memory recall.

Such acts of negotiation between memory and imagination can be traced to Chambers' essay "Anne Frank's Pen" in which Chambers uses the term "memorial fabulators" (17) for mechanisms that involve processes merging memory and imagination. Chambers discusses passages from Frank's diary, which he describes as "laced with episodes that amount to short stories constructed from the unpromising material of her everyday life confined in those few rooms of the secret annexe" (14-15). The analogy between Frank and Almond here is that they are both authors who supplement their memories with imagination in their writing. In this light, memorial fabulation can be seen as a

[7] Jennifer K. Ackil and Maria S. Zaragoza conducted an experiment in which they involved "participants from 3 age groups (1st grade, 3rd/4th grade, and college age)" who were asked to watch a movie clip and who were subsequently "forced" to answer questions about "events that clearly never happened in the video they had seen" (1358). The purpose of the study was to gauge "whether children might eventually come to remember their forced confabulations as real" and to assess "whether young children might be more susceptible to this source confusion error than older children and adults" (1358; 1360). Ackil and Zaragoza suggest that this is indeed the case with children because "source monitoring [whether a memory is based on reality or confabulation] involves a variety of interrelated cognitive processes including encoding, retrieval, and decision-making / reasoning processes" (1369). Their conclusion is that "pressing children to fabricate information they would not have otherwise provided can lead to false memories for the confabulated incidents" (1369).

shared practice, regardless of age. In *Counting Stars* (2000), a semi-autobiographical story collection based on Almond's childhood, the author writes that "like all stories, they merge memory and dream, the real and the imagined". Almond's epitaph to *Counting Stars* could very well be the credo of the "simulation theory" of memory, which holds that we revisit the past by means of "re-creative imagination" (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 217), or what John Sutton calls "imaginative compilation" (30). According to Philip Gerrans, the simulative approach to episodic memory regards the simulation of past experiences along similar lines as the simulation of possible future events: in both cases, this kind of "mental time travel" involves narrative elements (66-70).

Intergenerational Transposition of "Memorial Fabulation" During the Writing Process

Almond's description of *Counting Stars* as a collection of stories that "merge memory and dream, the real and the imagined" can be traced to *My Name is Mina*. Mina engages in similar practices when she writes about her experiences at the "Corinthian Avenue Pupil Referral Unit." After several instances of anxiousness about sharing her experience at the unit with her journal, Mina finally decides to put pen to paper, but explains that writing about such experiences makes her feel "edgy" (209). She then opts to write the story in her tree: "I sit on my branch, surrounded by thickening leaves. Soon I'll be quite hidden away up here. I turn my mind back towards the past" (211). Mina pauses the writing process, feeling the need to "mess about before she go[es] on," so she "plays with words for a while" in order to gather her thoughts (216).

Prompted by the "extraordinary activity" she suggests earlier in her journal to "write a story about yourself as if you're writing about somebody else" (59), Mina reminds herself of how she will narrate the story: "We… No.

Not we. Not I. Third person, Mina. She. They" (220). Using third-person narration to render one's experiences is often employed as a coping mechanism. Here, Mina sheds new (positive) light on her selfhood by introducing herself as follows: "And so one day our heroine, Mina, who thought she was so clever and strong, arrived at Corinthian Avenue" (221). She merges memories of her past experiences at the Pupil Referral Unit with imaginary elements, engaging in "re-creative imagination" (Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism* 217).

Mina's tale traces her day at the unit, moving from her embodied scowls on arrival, through her indifference on entering the classroom and her refusal to acknowledge her embeddedness in such surroundings, to her acquaintance with the art teacher Malcolm and the other pupils, including three "misfits" (231). Although Mina does yearn to connect with these pupils (she wants to tell them how it had been suggested that she be put on pills too), she assumes a distant attitude (229). Mina and the "misfits" do maths worksheets, eat lunch, and write stories. The afternoon of storywriting sees the pupils being enactively prompted by Malcolm who shows objects such as a pen, and a key, and who makes "the kids imagine stories from them" based on the characters he suggests (236). Mina enjoys this activity at first, she loves to "see all the new characters and their worlds coming to life inside her mind and on her page" (237).

However, when Malcolm asks the pupils to write their own stories, Mina finds it difficult to start writing, wondering "what if there was a story where nothing interesting happened at all?" (237). Almond also pinpoints such difficulties during the creative process, highlighting the "huge uncertainty" he experiences while writing, and stressing the importance of the imagination to overcome this ("Interview with Vanessa Joosen"). Mina recounts how she gets over her sense of writer's block by experiencing a vision, seeing her deceased father appear on the courtyard outside (240). Almond reflects on a similar experience in relation to *Counting Stars*: "And then I wrote a whole series of

stories based on my own childhood called *Counting Stars*, and writing those stories really kind of changed things a lot for me, I began to experience a kind of childhood, you know, experience the intellectual and emotional and physical sense of being a child again, and to write through that experience" ("Interview with Vanessa Joosen"). The parallel between Almond's writing and Mina's writing ties in with Hutto's suggestion that to "re-imagine" undergoing a certain experience in the past (just like imagining an experience that is yet to come) is the only way in which we can try to understand what-it-is-like ("Impossible Problems" 52).

If child and adult memories are partly confabulations anyhow, then perhaps the clear-cut distinction between children merging memory and imagination, and adults doing the same, should be replaced with age-fluid approaches that treat such practices of memorial fabulation as a shared feature across the lifespan. After all, there is a call for a dismantling of stark child-adult binaries by reflecting on children as "akin" to adults (Gubar, "Risky Business"), and as "beings *and* becomings" (Uprichard; emphasis added). Indeed, Emma Uprichard points out that "we are all – children and adults – interdependent beings who are also always in the process of 'being' and 'becoming' with one another" (307). Haynes and Murris, for example, explain that "[i]n a world seemingly pre-occupied with age and ageing, agelessness and immortality point towards other imaginary or experimental worlds, where age ceases to exist or to matter; where past, present and future intersect or collide" ("Intra-generational Education" 975). In her discussion of age and identity, age scholar Susan Pickard, then, suggests that we can "look to the possibility of drawing on the various qualities associated with diverse life stages as we travel through our unique biographies, keeping our subjectivities age-mobile in the sense of not being defined by any, but incorporating all, as and where appropriate" (108).

Shifting back to adult authors' depictions of child minds: until cognitive

science develops ways to probe authors' minds during the writing process, experiential accounts will have to play a prominent role, not only in gauging what it is like for adult authors to create child minds in their stories, but also in reflecting on how adult authors keep their "subjectivities age-mobile" (Pickard 108). The 4E framework can help in charting how such experiential accounts of lived experience can feature in authorial strategies of mind depiction. Enactivist proponent, Hutto, underscores this:

> The only way to understand "what-it-is-like" to have an experience is to actually undergo it or re-imagine undergoing it. Gaining insight into the phenomenal character of particular kinds of experience requires practical engagements, not theoretical insights. The kind of understanding "what-it-is-like" to have such an experience requires responding in a way that is enactive, on-line and embodied, or alternatively, in a way that is re-enactive, off-line and imaginative – and still embodied. ("Impossible Problems" 52)

Almond's "practical engagements," by means of which he "re-enactively," "off-line", and "imaginatively" (Hutto, "Impossible Problems" 52) creates his child character Mina, involve his interaction with his material environment during the writing process: he often stresses the importance of his notebooks and stationery in interviews ("David Almond on his Creative Process;" "On Writing;" "Interview with Vanessa Joosen;" "An Evening with David Almond"). His intense interactions with writing material and the array of notes, sketches, and mind-mapping activities he creates on paper are all elements that allow Almond to vividly create his characters, in a way that involves enactively re-imagining the what-it-is-likeness of childhood and imaginatively transposing this to his characters' experiences.

Conclusion: Experiential Accounts of Wondering and Wandering

By integrating cognitive narratology with 4E approaches to cognition, my close readings of embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive cognition at work in Almond's *My Name is Mina* illustrate the ways in which the adult author depicts Mina's fictional mind by evoking the what-it-is-likeness of being Mina. Almond tries on Mina's mind by imagining the experience of childhood through his character's subjective engagements with the storyworld around her. Most interviews with Almond reveal that he invests greatly in exploring the what-it-is-likeness of his characters' minds. He also addresses this as a focal theme in *My Name is Mina*. In the chapter "Moonlight, Wonder, Flies & Nonsense," Mina thinks about the what-it-is-likeness of her own mind: "Because my mind is not in order. My mind is not straight lines. My mind is a clutter and a mess. It is my mind, but it is also very like other minds. And like all minds, like every mind that there has ever been and every mind that there will ever be, it is a place of wonder" (11-12). Almond not only evokes Mina's thoughts on her own mind here, but he also depicts her thoughts on others' minds, revealing that Mina is not only curious as to the what-it-is-likeness of her own mind, but that she also contemplates the shared qualities of other minds, past, present, and future. Almond evokes Mina as quite the philosopher, and as someone who considers the subjective experiences of other minds aside from her own.

As for the all-important verb "to wonder," Mina writes that "wandering and wondering are almost the same word. And wandering through space is very like wondering inside the head. I am a wonderer and a wanderer!" (16). By *wondering* about what goes on in Mina's head (or in her fictional mind) and by imaginatively *wandering* through Mina's surroundings (or the storyworld), Almond depicts Mina's mind as "A PLACE OF WONDER" (12). Mina's reflection, on "wondering" and "wandering" being "almost the same word" (16), is demonstrated by Almond in his characterization techniques. Not only does Almond *wonder* about the what-it-is-likeness of being Mina, he also *wanders*

through this what-it-is-likeness by evoking his child character's dynamically unfolding engagements in the storyworld.

Caroline Walker Bynum describes "wondering" as "having a strong cognitive component; you could wonder only where you knew that you failed to understand" (72). She goes on to explain that wonder "entail[s] a passionate desire for the *scientia* it lack[s], being "a stimulus and incentive to investigation" (72). This desire to understand and to investigate lies at the basis of adult authors' constructions of child minds in fiction. It is also this desire to understand and to investigate that lies at the basis of children's literature scholars' questioning of how adult authors construct child minds in fiction. As Gubar mentions: "philosophizing about what it means to be a child feels outlandish, overambitious, and even dangerous," but, she goes on, "what is the alternative?" ("Risky Business" 454). The field of neuroscience is still developing research on the effect of age on human memories and is not yet able to trace an author's thoughts while they are creating child characters in their books. For now, we will have to rely on experiential accounts, and we will have to "wonder" and "wander."

Both Almond and Mina are writers who try to discover the what-it-is-likeness of being different living beings, and who try to interpret life through writing. This is part of their kinship, and despite the fact that Almond is, of course, a professional author with a specific writing routine, he does evoke experiences of his authorship through Mina, as he "actively seeks out the common ground between the ages that is so crucial in Gubar's kinship model" (Joosen, forthcoming). As Gubar shows, the "difference model" that produces great skepticism regarding an adult's potential to know anything about childhood paradoxically also relies on the false assumption that children and adults are inherently different ("Risky Business" 451). While reflecting on adult authors' depictions of child characters, my experiential perspective that revolves

around "age-mobile" subjective experiences (Pickard 108) – based on kinship and memorial fabulation – is an alternative track that we need to consider as accounts of cognition continue to develop insights into children, authors, and readers.

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