



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“Gendered heroes? Male and female hero construction
in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s
Stone* and Philip Pullman’s *Northern Lights*”

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2012

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuerin:

Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl

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A hero is a man who is afraid to run away.

English proverb

The prudent see only the difficulties, the bold only the advantages, of a great enterprise; the hero sees both; diminishes the former and makes the latter preponderate, and so conquers.

Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss theologian and poet

The ordinary man is involved in action, the hero acts. An immense difference.

Henry Miller (1891-1980), American author

We can't all be heroes, because somebody has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by.

Will Rogers (1879-1935), American humorist and actor

You cannot be a hero without being a coward.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish writer

Children demand that their heroes should be freckleless, and easily believe them so: perhaps a first discovery to the contrary is less revolutionary shock to a passionate child than the threatened downfall of habitual beliefs which makes the world seem to totter for us in maturer life.

George Eliot (1819-1880), British writer

Heroism feels and never reasons, and therefore is always right.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), U.S. poet, essayist and lecturer

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Introduction

Self-terrorized, fear-haunted, alert at every hand to meet and battle back the anticipated aggressions of his environment, which are primarily the reflections of the uncontrollable impulses to acquisition within himself, the giant of self-achieved independence is the world's messenger of disaster, even though, in his mind, he may entertain himself with humane intentions. Wherever [the tyrant-monster] sets his hand there is a cry (if not from the housetops, then – more miserably – within every heart): a cry for the redeeming hero, the carrier of the shining blade, whose blow, whose touch, whose existence, will liberate the land (Campbell, 11).

Heroes, it seems, have always been able to fascinate humanity, hundreds of years ago as well as today. Humankind has seen so many of them: Jesus, Beowulf, Achilles – you name it. There has been a long tradition of heroic literature which has portrayed the adventures of certain literary characters and which has made them and their deeds appear mystical, captivating and worthy of imitation.

There is, however, another interesting aspect to heroic literature: Reading through one hero story after the other, it immediately strikes that the bulk of these literary personae tend to share certain experiences, values and character qualities. At the fin-de-siècle, this impression brought a number of researchers on the plan who then tried to pin down the essential plot points of a literary hero's life. These first scientific approaches to the literary hero were of a strictly structuralist nature, trying to extract the very "marrow", the most basic events in a fictional hero's life, from the texts worked on.

Apart from the just mentioned structuralist method, there are, however, also other ways of scrutinising the construction of heroes in literature: One can read these characters from a narratological point of view, one can compare the heroes' sets of character qualities, and – considering the perhaps most obvious and, to me, most interesting distinguishing factor of heroes, namely their sex/gender – one can also look at the constraints and possibilities that come with the choice of a female or male protagonist for one's novel.

In order to analyse how the construction of a heroic character *can* work – the intended scope of this thesis unfortunately allows for only a limited number of sample heroes – I chose to consider two recent and immensely popular heroes of children's literature: Pullman's Lyra Belaqua und Rowling's Harry Potter. Trying to shed light on hero construction in general and

the construction of child heroes more specifically, I decided in favour of these characters for two simple reasons. The first reason has to do with the books' obvious popularity. These popularity seems to suggest that the chosen heroes not only have the potential to be perceived as heroes according to some theory, but have actually already been unconsciously regarded and accepted as heroic child characters; the second reason has to do with the moment of publication and the protagonists age. The two books have been published at roughly the same time and the heroes are of approximately the same age. These two facts render the texts comparable and work towards minimising the number of factors involved in the construction and, therefore, in the analysis of the novels.

Trying to scientifically grasp the construction of heroes and heroines (in children's literature), I formulated a handful of research questions:

1. How can the concept of heroism be approached scientifically and theoretically?
2. What do the terms "heroine" and "hero" comprise and imply?
3. Is there such a thing as a "hero formula"?
4. Considering the long literary tradition of male heroes, can a reader be made to perceive and accept a female character as heroine of a story? If so, how?
5. Do heroes and heroines share the same qualities and the same modalities of literary construction?

It is the goal of this thesis to attempt and find valid – if only limitedly so – answers to these and similar questions. One part of my thesis will therefore be dedicated to a brief introduction to a number of useful theoretical concepts, such as the "hero patterns" developed by structuralists, an analysis of liable "heroic genres" and their gender constraints as well as other models of hero construction. The other part of this thesis will attempt to give insights into the construction of the two heroes chosen for this analysis and their compatibility with the theoretical concepts of heroism introduced.

1. Social gender, literary genre

1.1 Stereotypical representations of gender roles: gender and society

In today's world, stereotypes seem to be omnipresent. They can help us to organise the world around us in order to make social contact with others easier (see Hogg and Cooper). However, because there are not only positive stereotypes, but also negative stereotypes which often end up in the creation of a prejudice against the group concerned (Hogg and Cooper 367), academic discourse has often tried to raise awareness for the problematic aspects of stereotyping and has criticised society's tendency to do so on the ground of prejudice happening.

As the analysis that represents the objective of this thesis will look at how gender is constructed in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Northern Lights*¹, not only but mainly examining the hero of the story, it seems to me to be important to make a brief detour and introduce at least the very basics of gender studies.

It has often been pointed out that many people conceive of gender as being something unproblematic with crystal-clear boundaries (Wharton 2): either you are born a man or you are born a woman. The sex allocated to you at the moment of your birth tells others what you are and raises expectations as to your future role and behaviour. But is it really as easy as that? In fact, scholarship has been rather troubled by the thoughtlessness with which the categories of sex and gender have been understood to be dependent on each other. Being born as what society interprets as a female person, however, does not necessarily entail any inborn qualities, of whatever nature they might be. Naturally, the same goes for women's male counterparts. "In fact, what people view as unproblematic and accept as "the way things are" may be most in need of close, systematic scrutiny" (Wharton 2).

It seems that humanity has always displayed a certain tendency to divide the world into categories, and the binary opposition of man and woman, like so many other established categories, serves to classify not only objects but also people. Wharton explains this as follows:

¹ In fact, I will use the American version of the novel which is called "The Golden Compass".

Though complex and ever-changing, the social world is ordered and, at some level, knowable. As a principle of social relations and organisation, gender is one of the forces that contributes [sic!] to this patterning of social life. By understanding gender, we understand more about the social world. (Wharton 2)

As has already been hinted at above, the characterisation of a person as either male or female is also often perceived to account for the behavioural differences between man and woman. It is this – very determinist – assumption, that a man incorporates a certain set of qualities while a woman embodies another one, solely *because* they are either man or woman, which gave rise to stereotypical views of what femininity and masculinity mean. The problem concerning this distinction between feminine and masculine qualities is not only that it regards character traits and behaviour as the consequence of one's biological sex but also that it seems to deny the individual differences between men and women within these two established categories. These assumptions therefore deny both people's individuality and society's conditioning of men and women: Even considering the possibility that there really exist natural differences regarding the behaviour between the two sexes, one would have to consider the possibility that these disparities which allegedly exist do so to a large extent because of the influence of society. Because, to a certain degree, every society shapes its members according to accepted images of what being a woman or a man means.

In spite of the fact that not all researchers are of the same opinion when it comes to how this “education” of people as men and women works, there generally seems to be a consent that the concepts of masculinity and femininity which are valid within a society have some effect on the society's members: “Researches disagree over the means by which these gendered characteristics are acquired and precisely how they become a part of the person, but they agree that gender enters into how people see themselves, the ways they behave, and how they view others” (Wharton 9).

At this point it should be mentioned that the picture I have so far drawn of the mechanics of gender is a very reductive one compared to the state of research (see Wharton 6). My introduction to this field might perhaps strike some as describing gender as a no-growth, no-change concept, which is definitely not the case; in fact, gender must be described both as a state and something undergoing development, as something which is not only shaped by society, but also by the individual who

constantly re-enacts their respective gender (see Wharton 7). Additionally, femininity and masculinity should not be regarded as binaries, as two distinctive extremes, but there should rather be talk of a masculinity-femininity continuum which has masculinity on the one and femininity on the other extreme but does also allow for in-between categories (see Marchbank and Letherby 5).

Feminist scholars furthermore argue that patriarchal societies have not only conducted this binary distinction, but that they have also done so in favour of men, thus not only creating stereotypes (which, as has already been mentioned, each society does in order to establish categories), but also describing men as superior to women. It should, however, also be mentioned here that sex stereotypes are not only created by men about women, but also vice versa (see Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz qtd. in: Demczuk 34), and ultimately by society in general. But what is the origin of the sex stereotypes and why are women regarded as being inferior to men?

For the French scholar Poullain de la Barre, who is regarded to be the first feminist and who, in the second half of the 17th century, published three treatises in which he speaks of the source of and the remedies for the inequality that has up to then existed between the sexes, the reason for the discrimination of women lies not only in the fact that “things have always been this way” but also, and most importantly, in the wrong translation of the Bible. In his treatise *De l'excellence des hommes contre l'égalité des femmes* (English title: *On the excellence of men*), Poullain de la Barre argues that the prevalent version of the Holy Bible, the so-called *Vulgate*², contains certain inaccuracies of translation, which led the Catholic Church to the belief that women were indeed inferior to men. In this treatise, de la Barre treats a number of passages (for example the fall of Eve, the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, etc.) which have, according to him, been wrongly translated or simply misinterpreted, and on the basis of which not only the inferiority of women but also stereotypical qualities ascribed to men and women were explained as determined by nature and, most importantly, as determined by God. Poullain de la Barre's contribution lies in his raising awareness for the injustice done to women but also in his urging his readers to question the traditional way of viewing gender roles.

² The *Vulgate* is the Latin translation of the Hebrew original that was attempted by Jerome.

Before being able to judge whether the two protagonists who are of concern in this thesis have been created according to gender stereotypes, it is necessary to find out what these male and female stereotypes actually comprise and how they present femininity and masculinity.

According to Diana Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, men have traditionally been perceived "as strong, rational, dominant, independent, and less concerned with their appearance", while "[w]omen are stereotyped as weak, emotional, nurturing, dependent, and anxious about their appearance" (Kendall 324). Kendall's characterisation of the male and the female stereotype offers valuable insights into how gender stereotyping has traditionally worked in patriarchal societies. As literary texts are constructs of the society in which they were created, one would expect their mirroring these societies' prevalent gender role allotment. In line with this idea, Nikolajeva adds yet another interesting component to the characterisation of stereotypes, one which is especially linked to literary production and which evokes the two-sphere oikos-polis model:

Some [...] [gendered narrative] conventions concerning the story level include construction of time and space, as well as of plot structure. The use of narrative space is closely connected with the question of genre. Masculine space is frequently perceives [sic!] as being outdoors while feminine space is indoors; masculine space is open while feminine space is closed ("imprisonment" is a recurrent trope in women's fiction); masculine field of activity is away from home, while feminine sphere is home; masculine concern is to conquer nature, while feminine concern is to "understand" and be one with nature. Male characters perceive home as restrictive while female characters perceive it as secure and protective (Nikolajeva, *Power* 132).

Here, Nikolajeva shows that gender decisions always also have some kind of influence on the construction of the story. On the other hand, she implies that the choice of genre is very likely to entail gender decisions when constructing characters and therefore deserves attention when analysing ways of hero construction. However, how exactly genre and gender seem to be linked in the case of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Northern Lights* will be discussed at a later point as I would now like to come back to my theoretical introduction to gender issues.

Interestingly enough, Western patriarchal cultures differentiate between a number of stereotypes to be able to describe and categorise women. Glick and Fiske³ have developed what is called an “ambivalent sexism inventory”, according to which there are positive and negative female stereotypes:

[There exist] hostile and benevolent attitudes to women on dimensions relating to attractiveness, dependence and identity. Sexists have benevolent attitudes (heterosexual attraction, protection, gender role complementarity) towards traditional women (e.g. pink collar job holders, “sexy chicks”, housewives) and hostile attitudes towards non-traditional women (e.g. career women, feminists, athletes, lesbians) (see Glick & Fiske, qtd in: Hogg and Vaughan 360).

Further, Altermatt, DeWall and Leskinen found out that the most popular female stereotypes, the career woman, the housewife and the sex object, can be further split up according to their level of agency and virtue (see Altermatt, DeWall and Leskinen 632), a fact which adds to this thesis in that it illustrates the multiple-layer stereotyping that is practiced with respect to women. However, the most traditional female stereotype, the one of the helpless, inactive woman (as formulated by Kendall), seems to be the basis on which the positively connotated sub-stereotypes build. If one compares this basic female stereotype to the sub-categories presented by Glick and Fiske, one realises that all actually of them represent the kind of woman traditional patriarchal society must be most in favour of, simply because it most neatly fits the role patriarchy has intended for woman: they are dependent and in need of men to feed and provide for them, thus allowing men to fulfil their stereotypical role of the heroic, strong, saving, helping and guiding individual in turn. Literature which presents female literary characters who fit in these categories and who would not be expected to do what real life feminists feel is necessary, namely subvert the existing order (even if only in the realm of fictive world) is therefore often considered as comforting.

When discussing and criticising women’s position in gender stereotyping, one should not fail to mention two things: firstly, that not all stereotyping is done by men, and secondly, that women are not the only ones who suffer because of stereotypes: Men are equally subject to gender stereotypes. While those male representatives who “live” the desired male stereotype, that is, men who do not cry and who are strong, dominant, independent and so on (see Kendall again) tend to be positively presented in works of

³ See Glick and Fiske, qtd in: Hogg and Vaughan 360

literature (the “warrior” or the “leader”, for instance), men who do not do so are less positively connotated. This is where certain negative male stereotypes, such as the “wimp” or “eager beaver” come in. Interestingly enough, both the male and the female negative stereotypes seem to borrow from the positively connotated stereotype of the other sex: while ambition or aggressiveness might be regarded as quality appropriate for a male person, the same qualities tend to be regarded as undesirable in females (compare, for instance, the stereotype of the career woman).

The real-life development towards a relationship between men and women which is marked by a higher level of equality, as well as Hegel’s master-slave dialectic have demonstrated that the patriarchal system heavily depends on both parties, males and females, playing their respective traditional roles. As women have become more independent from men⁴ and no longer tried to live up to patriarchy’s expectation the same way they did before, this very change of the image of womanhood invariably and automatically also entailed a change in the perception of manhood. In spite of the fact that femininity and masculinity must not be regarded as static but as more of a constant process of repeated, but never completely identical performances (one must only think of Butler’s ideas on this), the system cannot work the traditional way if one of these two parties refuses to “act” according to their – stereotypical – role. Like in Hegel’s dialectic⁵, in which the master cannot be the one who is superior unless the slave acknowledges and accepts his inferior role, man cannot easily maintain their superior position in society if woman refuses to play the inferior part (see Metzler Lexikon 240-241 & 399; see also Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*).

This change obviously going on has also been reflected in the construction of literary characters and has entailed re-negotiations. Therefore, academia nowadays talks of “new femininities” and “new masculinities”. These concepts will be discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter.

Now I would like to briefly return to the relationship between literary genre and gender. The realisation of how many different stereotypes for women actually exist, combined with the fact that, even today, the image of the stereotypical woman is likely to be found

⁴ This movement can be said to have started with the emergence of first-wave feminism of the 19th and beginning 20th century.

⁵ Which we know Beauvoir has famously applied to the gender relations between male and female.

in some literary productions, consciously or unconsciously considered by authors in the construction of their fictional heroines, as well as the likelihood of certain images of woman appearing in literary works having an influence on especially young readers, do not only rend academia's perceived need for awareness-raising and revolutionary approaches to character construction justified, but also necessary. Considering the degree to which fairy tales, for instance, can influence young readers⁶, one easily understands academics' desire to finally find new and most of all alternative images of men and women in literary œuvres.

As has just been mentioned, there seems to be a trend towards new masculinities and new femininities, thus towards changing the rigid stereotypical patterns according to which both male and female characters have so far frequently been shaped. Nikolajeva stresses that

[b]oys and young men are exposed to societal pressures just as much as girls and young women, merely in a different manner. While girls, in reality as well as in literature, have been forced into silent and submissive roles, young males have always had the pressure on them to be strong, aggressive and competitive. Similarly, while real and literary girls have relatively successfully insisted on their right to be strong and independent, the masculine stereotypes turned out to be much more tenacious. The masculine stereotype has been dominant in juvenile literature because it has prevailed in Western culture at large, going back to myths and classic literature. Recent Y[oung] A[dult] novels frequently present a new male, encumbered by the social pressures and uncomfortable in his conventional gender role (Nikolajeva, *Power* 106).

In this passage Nikolajeva states that there are attempts made by authors to construct male protagonists which deviate either more or less from the image of the traditional, stereotypical male. As an example, she mentions the novel *Dance on my grave* (1982) which does, in spite of the fact that it keeps much of the traditional male hero's storyline, portray moments in which the male protagonist's characterization distances itself from this stereotypical pattern. This is, for instance, achieved by the author's putting the protagonist's feelings in the center of attention, thus following a narrative pattern which is usually associated with feminine narratives (see Nikolajeva, *Power* 106-112). The "stereotypical "new male" [...] lacks conventional masculine traits" (Nikolajeva, *Power* 114).

⁶ In his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Bruno Bettelheim elaborates on the effect fairy tales can take effect on children.

On the other hand, Nikolajeva also mentions the creation of a new, rather problematic, feminine stereotype by Swedish writers during the 2000s:

Here is a full-size portrait of the new femininity: ignorant, immature, solipsistic, focused on her own sexuality on a primitive, superficial level, perceiving herself as a sexual object, eager to please the male. There is a substantial difference from the conventional female stereotype we meet, for instance, in *Little Women*, but it is still a highly problematic stereotype (Nikolajeva, *Power* 113-114).

Gender-role-stereotyping therefore remains a highly problematic and utterly touchy thing. Be it the older, traditional male and female stereotypes or the more recent female stereotype that has apparently developed in Sweden over the last year: gender stereotypes reduce (literary) people to beings void of individuality and a fully-fledged character.

Before I go over to analyzing the relation between gender and the literary genre, there is yet another, a last, problematic aspect to gender labelling which should be briefly addressed. When we try to categorise male and female child characters according to stereotypical patterns of character construction, we must be aware that these patterns were initially designed to describe adults and not necessarily children. As far as I can tell from my research, this problem seems to have been widely ignored by the academia. However, it seems important to me to at least point this out as an issue yet to be resolved. As I have not been able to find any indication of how to treat child characters when it comes to discussions of gender performance in literature, and as there apparently exist no established categories that could be used to talk about the gender of child characters, all that can be done is, again, stressing how powerful gender stereotypes are in the shaping of our personalities – in which ever way this may happen – and working with the adult categories.

Bearing in mind that every child is, in some way and up to a certain degree, subject to the discourses dominant in their society and therefore shaped by them, one could argue that even if the children are, at the moment of analysis, still in the middle of their personal development, it is only a question of time until they will be expected to live up to certain images of either femininity or masculinity. What can be done is keeping this yet unsolved problem in mind, especially when later on analysing Harry and Lyra with regard to their gender markers, and underlining the circumstance that, no matter which

gender markers seem to apply, these two characters still find themselves in a developing process. Therefore, their “masculinity” or “femininity” must all the more be seen as continuum and as a thing subject to change and development.

Having now introduced the very basics of gender theory and having equally addressed the problem of using adult gender categories on child characters, the next chapter aims at having a closer look at the relationship between gender and genre.

1.2 Literary genres and gender representation

It has to be mentioned that “[t]he correlation between gender and genre has been pointed out repeatedly” (Nikolajeva, *Power* 129) by many who work and do research in the field of literature. There are certain literary genres which appear to tell the story of one sex rather than of the other, and as the determinist perception of gender dictates that there is an automatic and also naturally given link between one’s biological sex and one’s gender, the author’s decision whether or not to adhere to stereotypical genre norms may also have consequences in terms of gender and hero construction. Authors who choose to write within the conventions of a certain literary genre then have to decide whether they also want to follow the chosen genre’s conventions regarding gender representations. In order to find out about the influence the choice of literary genre might have had on gender constructions in *Northern Lights* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, we will therefore have to ask ourselves which literary genre(s) Rowling and Pullman chose for their narratives, be it consciously or unconsciously.

As a matter of fact, one must think of the two novels as trans-generic works of art⁷ as they can be said to incorporate a large variety of genres. First of all and most importantly, the two novels belong to the genre of fantasy. The genre of fantasy, or heroic fantasy, as it is also sometimes called, has developed from the tradition of fantastic literature. In fact, fantastic literature is not too closely related to what is understood by the term *fantasy* today (see Rainer 68) but. Due to the similarity of terminology, however, these two terms are often used synonymously. Fantasy can be defined as

⁷ This has been equally suggested by Anglika Mühlbauer and Claire Squires.

[...] eine bestimmte Art von Geschichten, die sich nicht in der Welt, wie sie ist, war oder sein wird, abspielen, sondern in der Welt, wie sie sein sollte, um eine gute Geschichte abzugeben. (...) Es sind phantastische Abenteuergeschichten, die sich in imaginären prähistorischen oder mittelalterlichen Welten abspielen, als alle Männer stark, alle Frauen schön, alle Probleme einfach waren und die ganze Welt ein einziges Abenteuer war. (Sprague de Camp, qtd. in Rainer 69)

Sullivan also quotes an illuminating definition offered by Kathryn Hume, which allows us not only to better understand fantasy literature but also literature in general. Hume suggests that literary works are

the product[s] of two impulses. These are *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality – out of boredom, play, vision, longing or something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience’s verbal defences [sic!]. [...] [Fantasy] is any *departure from consensus reality* (Hume, qtd. in Sullivan 436, not my emphasis).

Fantasy literature can, however, be divided in yet more categories, for example in high fantasy versus low fantasy. Although the “compound term “high fantasy” is enormously evocative and, like most evocative terms, [...] pluralistic in meaning and therefore difficult to pin down with a neat or precise definition” (Sullivan 436), Gary K. Wolfe has offered a useful explanation when he says that, while high fantasy is set in a world completely different from ours, low fantasy “contains supernatural intrusions into the “real world” ” (52, qtd in Sullivan 436).

With regard to the themes and story points to be found in high fantasy, Sullivan explains that the genre has been highly influenced by “the most ancient and most traditional literary impulses in Western Europe: myth, epic, legend, romance and folk tale” (437-438) and that its basic plot structure has been inspired by the magic tale (see Sullivan 438). Here, Sullivan chooses a definition of the magic tale offered by Dégh:

The *Märchen* is, in fact, an adventure story with a single hero⁸...The hero’s (or heroine’s) career starts, as everyone else’s, in the dull and miserable world of reality. Then, all of a sudden, the supernatural world involves him and challenges the mortal, who undertakes his long voyage to happiness. He enters the magic forest, guided by supernatural helpers, and defeats evil powers beyond the boundaries of man’s universe. Crossing several borders of the Beyond,

⁸ This notion is debatable as there has been a number of fairy tales with more than just one single hero (*Hänsel und Gretel* is just one example).

performing impossible tasks, the hero is slandered, banished, tortured, trapped, betrayed. He suffers death by extreme cruelty but is always brought back to life again. Suffering turns him into a real hero: as often as he is devoured, cut up, swallowed, or turned into a beast, so does he become stronger and handsomer and more worthy of the price he seeks. His ascent from rags to riches ends with the beautiful heroine's hand, a kingdom, and marriage. The final act of the *Märchen* brings the hero to the human world; he metes out justice, punishes the evil, rewards the good. (qtd in Sullivan 438)

As *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Northern Lights* are novels which show a world clearly not completely congruent with what is called consensus reality and incorporate story elements typical of fantasy literature, such as fights with fantastic creatures, swords and magic, they clearly belong to the literary tradition commonly referred to as fantasy. They are works of literature in which much, but not everything, is possible. Less clear, however, is whether one should consider them to be works of high fantasy or of low fantasy. Sullivan argues that, although the *Harry Potter* books are not, per definition, works of high fantasy – a statement which he probably makes with the fact in mind that displacement into a different world does not really take place in the series: the magical world presented coexists with the real world of the muggles in *Harry Potter* – they do, in fact, include many elements of content and structure that can be regarded as typical of works of high fantasy, such as swords and dangerous creatures, for instance (also see Sullivan 445). Was it not for that, one would actually have to put the *Harry Potter* books into the category of low fantasy.

The case seems to be a little easier with Pullman's work. Although the first part of the trilogy, which is the one that will be more closely considered in this thesis, also does not really allow its characters entrance into another world and only deals with spatial displacement into the Far North and never into a different world as such, it ends when Lyra and Pan are about to cross the threshold into another world. It therefore at least hints at the story's continuing with a journey to another world. Furthermore, there are, throughout *Northern Lights*, allusions to the existence of a number of different worlds, especially before Lyra and her daemon leave safe Jordan College to start their adventures⁹. It is only in part two and three, however, that Lyra and Pan visit alternative worlds. Another thing which should be addressed in this context is that the world the reader is introduced to throughout the first part of Pullman's work is never presented as

⁹ One may want to consider the crucial scene in which Lyra overhears her uncle and the scholars during their conversation on Dust and the city in the sky.

a world perfectly congruent with what has earlier on be termed *consensus reality*: There are things which seem so be *normal* to us in the sense that they are part of our *consensus reality*, such as religion and the Church, however, there exist, in the very same world we learn of, things like dust or daemons, which might be presented to the reader as being *normal* for the characters inhabiting the fictional world but which would not normally be acceptable within the readers' reality. Therefore, in the first part of his trilogy, Pullman does not offer us two or more different worlds, one of which completely represents consensus reality and is opposed to the other(s) in some way or coexisting with them, but he gets completely rid of this so-called consensus reality and, albeit keeping a number of traits he wants to include or make use of, creates a different world as norm from which to depart in yet other worlds or universes.

This feature of the displacement into other worlds leads me straight from my argument that the two novels' belong to the genre of high fantasy to the next type of text many might have at the back of their mind when trying to categorise Harry's and especially Lyra's story: science fiction literature. Spatial displacement into a different world is a feature commonly found in this kind of literature:

In der S[cience] F[iction] herrscht in der überwältigenden Mehrheit der Fälle ein Realitätsprinzip, das von demjenigen, das dem Leser vertraut ist, abweicht. Das hängt im Allgemeinen mit einer temporalen oder lokalen Verschiebung zusammen: Indem sich die Handlung in die Zukunft oder auf einem anderen Planeten abspielt, wird das die Alltagswelt der Leser bestimmende Realitätsprinzip von vornherein aufgegeben. (Zondergeld and Wiedenstreid, qtd. in Rainer 74)

This also means that, in a way, this genre deals with what will happen in a usually far away future. As has already been pointed out when discussing *Harry Potter*'s limited adherence to high fantasy, Rowling does not really introduce any alternative worlds or planets but constructs two truths which coexist within one world, the existence of the one, namely the magical world, being more or less kept secret from the so-called muggles' world. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* therefore cannot be called a work of Science Fiction, and given the fact that there exist various and by no means congruent definitions of Science Fiction literature, it even remains debatable whether one should count *Northern Lights* as an example of this kind of literature. Many of the definitions of Science Ficiton literature seem to regard science as a vital theme in this

kind of texts. In spite of the fact that *Northern Lights* does center on scientific research and its negative consequences, it is not the only important theme in the novel. Depending of the chosen definition, *Northern Lights* may or may not be called a work of Science Fiction.

Another literary tradition which could likewise be regarded as having influenced the *Harry Potter* novels and *His Dark Materials* is Greek mythology. Both Rowling and Pullman have included a number of scenes and creatures known from the ancient Greek myths:

The scenes in which Lyra and Will journey to the land of the dead¹⁰ provides several examples of this. The living entering an underworld inhabited by the dead is reminiscent of the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, with the former going in search of his dead wife, much as Lyra searches her lost friend Roger. In *The Amber Spyglass*, there are suburbs of the dead (like the river Styx), and a boatman who ferries them across the river after explaining to them the rules of their entrance into the underworld (like the boatman Charon). Once in the land of the dead, Lyra and Will encounter the harpies, also mythical creatures from Greek legend. Although these creatures are initially presented in very negative terms, they eventually are seen to have redeeming features. Pullman is perhaps referring here to the originally positive but latterly negative portrayals of the physical appearance of the harpies in Greek mythology (Squires 129).

Interestingly enough, even the heroine's name is inspired by myth. The name Lyra is said to originate from the term *lyre* which, according to Greek saga, designates one of the oldest musical instruments. Created by Hermes, who gave it to Apollo, his half-brother, the instrument was later passed on to Orpheus, who, according to the myth, used it to convince Hades to free his dead wife Eurydice. It is said that it was Orpheus' playing of the instrument that convinced Hades to let his wife go, and after Orpheus' death, which was due to his breaking his vow not to look at his wife upon their way back to the earth, the lyre he played on was thrown in a river only to arrive at the Temple of Apollo and be made a star. This alleged ability of the instrument to convince people adds metaphoric meaning to Lyra's name, and Iorek's choosing to refer to the girl as Lyra Silvertongue after her successfully persuading Iofur to carry out a fair fight against him seems to embrace the meaning and the origin of the heroine's telling name: the term "silvertongued" referring to someone who has the ability to speak fluently and persuasively, the author's choice of name gains yet another, characterising dimension.

¹⁰ This is part of the third book of Pullman's trilogy.

However, Greek mythology appears also elsewhere in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Rowling mentions a number of creatures originally found in Greek mythology, such as giants, dragons, centaurs (which are crosses between men and horses), hippogriffs (which are crosses between griffins and mares), mermaids, a basilisk (a snake which kills by as little as looking someone in the eye), a Cerberus (a three-headed dog) and a phoenix.

In how far the authors' choice to orientate their works partly by Greek mythology can be seen to have had influence on the construction of the two heroes, Harry and Lyra, cannot be said for sure. Considering, however, the importance of Greek literature and culture for western society and the influence which it therefore must have had on its cultural products, the authors' choice is quite likely to have entailed certain effects on gender as well as hero construction of the two novels. I will thus come back to this question at a later point in this thesis.

As I have so far hopefully been able to show, the two stories pertinent to this thesis borrow from a large number of literary traditions. They owe a lot to the adventure story, the bildungsroman, the fairy tale or magic tale and – this goes at least for the *Harry Potter* books – the school story. Interestingly enough, the adventure story seems to share much of its plot with the traditional magic tale:

The beginning of the story usually depicts the young hero in a minor crisis [...]. [...] Usually as the result of a domestic crisis, sometimes because of the death of a parent or a decline in the family fortunes, the hero leaves home and undertakes a long and hazardous journey – to seek other relations and repair his fortunes elsewhere. [...] The settings of adventure stories are usually unfamiliar and often exotic. [...] These unusual and dangerous locations, as well adding drama to the story, often act in a quasi-symbolic way to reinforce the sense of moral obstacles which the young hero struggles to overcome. [...] Normally the hero survives, and the end of the story sees him rewarded with wealth and honour. (Butts 344-345).

The character of Harry Potter clearly inherits many traits usually found with the heroes in magic tales: Harry Potter, a nobody at the beginning of the first novel, literally develops from rags to riches in order to become *the chosen one*, the hero of the narrative. The *Harry Potter* story can actually be seen as having adapted much of the

Cinderella material¹¹. However, why exactly Harry can partly be seen as a fairy tale hero will be dealt with later in this thesis, when the focus of our attention will be on various kinds of heroes one finds in literature.

His Dark Materials, too, contains a number of fairy tale elements. According to Claire Squires, Lyra's imprisonment by Mrs. Coulter in *The Amber Spyglass*, where she is put under the influence of drugs and therefore falls into a deep sleep, is heavily reminiscent of the tale of Sleeping Beauty (see 127). Furthermore Mrs. Coulter can be seen as standing "firmly in the tradition of the evil *stepmother* of folk and fairy tales, such as that in *Cinderella*" (127). Squires also points out the "tropes of metamorphosis and transformation that occur in fairy-tale plots" (128). This clearly refers to the shape-shifting done by children's daemons, which has already often been addressed in literature on *His Dark Materials*. Interestingly, the idea of people being accompanied by animals can also be traced back to the Aztec belief of the existence of so-called *nahuals*:

Every child is born with a *nahual*. The *nahual* is like a shadow, his protective spirit who will go through life with him. The *nahual* is the representative of the earth, the animal world, the sun and the water, and in this way the child communicates with nature. The *nahual* is our double, something very important to us. We conjure up an image of what our *nahual* is like. It is usually an animal. The child is taught that if he kills an animal, that animal's human double will be very angry with him because he is killing his *nahual*. Every animal has its human counterpart and if you hurt him, you hurt the animal too. (Menchú and Debray 18)

Although Pullman's borrowing from this Aztec belief in the *nahual* can hardly be denied, it seems that literature on *Northern Lights* has so far neglected this intertextual aspect of the book. Another thing Pullman must have borrowed from the realm of the fairy tale or magic tale is the figure of the witch, which has also been mentioned in the analysis conducted by Claire Squires (see 128). Last but not least, one also should not forget how Lyra started out at the beginning of the story and how she develops to become a heroine: while at the beginning of *Northern Lights* she is little more than a girl who unspectacularly refuses to live up to the expectations of patriarchal society, she then turns out to be the chosen one, very much like Harry Potter. As has already been said, however, a closer analysis of the fairy tale hero and of the question of in how far Harry and Lyra can be regarded as fairy tale heroes will follow later in this thesis.

¹¹ See also Gallardo and Smith's article "Cinderfella: J.K. Rowling's Wily Web of Gender".

Another genre obviously included in the *Harry Potter* books is the school story. According to Sheila Ray, a work of literature can be classified as school story if most of the action is about a school or takes place in a school, usually a single-sex boarding school, which represents a miniature world in which children can achieve rank and have power in a way which would be impossible outside the school (see Ray 467). Due to the fact that the schools in school stories are miniature versions of the world outside the school, which in western societies usually is a patriarchal world, Rowling's choice to write about a mixed school might have consequences with regard to gender relations in the book.

Lyra's story does not take part in a school or center around a school, but there are nevertheless gender issues dealt with in disguise of schooling systems: Firstly, Lyra starts her journey from Jordan College, which is not exactly a school, but at least an institution of learning, and one more than obviously dominated by men, which in itself almost certainly creates an environment in which women have little or nothing to say and are excluded from matters and decisions of relevance. This is best proved by Lyra's being forbidden to enter certain rooms inside the college. Secondly, at the end of the third part of *His Dark Materials*, there are allusions made to the necessity of Lyra's being around other female individuals, and thus there is the suggestion made to send her to St. Sophia's, the single-sex boarding school for girls. Among others, it is these two aspects of Lyra's story which underline her inferior starting position as a female.

Both Harry's and Lyra's story deal with growing up, with coming of age. Therefore, it could be argued that yet another genre has had an influence on these novels: the *bildungsroman*. In her diploma thesis dedicated to this genre, Camilla Brändström argues that the genre has been clearly male-dominated, thus more often than not having a male protagonist, while the female *bildungsroman* has been largely neglected (see Brändström 5). In *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, Mary Ann Ferguson talks about the differences between the male and the female novel of development:

The male *Bildungsroman* describes the protagonist's development as spiral; at the end of the novel, the protagonist has more often than not achieved self-realization after his spiritual and psychological journey in the external world. In contrast the female protagonist's development is circular; remaining at home in order to learn the ways of her mother, she does not have the same possibility as

her male counterpart to go out into the world to find herself. Women in fiction who violate the norms and refuse to follow this female pattern of development are perceived as rebels and they end up unhappy or insane (Ferguson, qtd. in Brändström 6).

Ferguson further argues that “[t]his ‘natural’ female development is viewed as inferior to the male’s. Perceived as part of nature, women in most novels are presented as incapable of autonomy and integrity. They simply *are* ...” (qtd. in Brändström 6).

Last but not least, one should consider how gender is treated in children’s literature in general. As I have already mentioned at the end of chapter 1.1, talking about the gender of child characters must be seen as somehow problematic. Nevertheless and in spite of the apparent lack of theoretical literature on this specific scientific problem, the question of how gender is constructed in children’s literature has been one apparently immensely interesting to academics as much has already been written on it.

Talking of children’s literature as a literary genre, however, already gets us into all kinds of trouble. It has often been pointed out that trying to pin down what the term comprises is a highly complex and highly dangerous undertaking because it not only involves the assumption that it is easily possible to define various literary genres – which certainly is not the case – but also because talking about children’s literature necessitates a definition of childhood and of their feelings and needs, in short: a definition of child (see for instance Gupta 40-54).

Rabkin has pointed out that “[t]he choice of a genre definition, a choice habitually made both conventionally and unconsciously, is a choice that reflects the perspectives of the reader” (Rabkin 117). This is an idea which might prove at least partly true in many cases, however also one which cannot be said to apply to children’s literature as the definition of the genre and its corpus is not done by the actual target group but by adults. Nevertheless, this thesis is not about solving the complex problem of how one should define children’s literature; it rather interests itself in how, within this artificial genre construct of children’s literature, two fictional characters, Harry and Lyra, have been constructed with regard to their gender, and it tries to find out to which degree the books’ alleged belonging to the genre of children’s literature might have influenced this part of their identity. I would suggest here that looking at the two novels as works of children’s literature is worthwhile even without trying to understand why they have

been classified as this kind of literature by booksellers, publishing houses, award juries and by countless academics writing on the books¹².

Belinda Y. Louie refers to a number of researchers when she attempts to sum up the (more or less) consensual results coming from thirty years of research on the issues of gender representation in literature for children:

Males have been represented more than females in books. While the numbers have varied over the years with different samples of books using different categories of analysis, the imbalances still persist [...]. [...] Although the number of females in books has increased over the years, they are portrayed with similar stereotypical behaviours. Boys have been generally known as powerful, independent, problem solvers, active, and in charge of situations, while girls are often portrayed as demure, weak, dependent, problem causers, passive, and followers [...] (Louie 142-143).

The case of gender representation in literature for children becomes even more complicated if one considers how literature for children has actually developed. According to Christine Wilkie-Stibbs,

[c]ontemporary children's fiction, by men or women writers, has inherited more from the nineteenth-century domestic and family classics by women than it has from the "bloods" and adventure stories by men like Stevenson, Marryat or Ballantyne. It is a feminized genre characterized by personal plots (many a contemporary classic for young people is a *Bildungsroman*), and implicitly endorses a personal – not public – morality [...] (Wilkie-Stibbs, *Childhood* 354).

In the course of this chapter, reference has already been made to the gender bias traditionally happening in some of the literary genres *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Northern Lights* can be seen to have borrowed from. It has been argued (see, for instance, Ray 467) that school stories double how gender arrangements work in the real world. This means that in a work of literature with a western society background, which adheres to the traditional form of the school story, women and girls would usually be inferior to men and boys.

While *Northern Lights* cannot be said to be a school story, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, like its sequels, can be called so all the more. As it tells of the life

¹² One might want to further consider Claire Squires (129) or Susan Lehr's (Ed.) *Beauty, Brains and Brawn. The Construction of Gender in Children's Literature*.

in a co-educational school, and as the traditional school story has not been a genre known for its subversive character regarding gender construction, one might suppose that the story allocates mostly traditional roles to males and females. If one re-considers the earlier discussion of how the bildungsroman and children's literature in general tend to construct the roles and the prestige of both males and females, one arrives at similar conclusions.

Concerning gender representation in the fairy/magic tale and in Greek myths, one is probably well advised to look at the roles females and males tend to hold in these stories, although one should, as always when trying to say something very general on a literary genre, be very careful not to over-generalise. If one thinks of the fairy/magic tales one knows, one seems to find more male heroes than female ones. In such tales, women often appear as helpers, witches, as the hero's reward for success, as the famous damsels-in-distress, or as evil stepmothers, thus, by trend, they take roles which are either negatively connotated or which can be seen as denying them autonomy and action (one possible example would for instance be the tale *Snow-White*).

Due to the high degree of influence ancient Greece and its myths have had on the ideological creation of the Western world (see Saxby 249-250), it seems worthwhile to consider the roles men and women have had in classical myths: In order to better understand the modern stereotypical gender roles, we have to get back to where these stereotypes presumably have come from. If one considers the stories of classical mythology, they seem to contain a number of standardised roles for women – and men. While men usually tend to hold stereotypically male roles, such as the ruler (Zeus' role as the most important of all gods and owner of both earth and heaven), the cunning and logical thinker (like Odysseus, for instance) or any kind of hero (such as Jason or Theseus), women are usually endowed with stereotypically female roles (be they positively or negatively connotated) such as the infamous damsel-in-distress (such as Helen of Troy or Eurydice), the temptress (such as Aphrodite or the Sirens), the one abandoned by her lover (sometimes being a helper like Ariadne¹³, or Medea), the strong ones who often hunted and did things traditionally rather connected with men (Artemis, Antigone) or the simply rather evil and cunning ones (like Demeter or Persephone). What immediately meets the eye is that, in Greek myths, those women who do not

¹³ Due to her there exists the famous *Ariadne theme* in literature.

behave like patriarchal society would, at the time, usually have expected a woman to behave, are often either portrayed in a negative way or punished¹⁴.

Regarding fantasy and science fiction literature, one can equally conclude that older and more traditional works tend to portray gender roles according to traditional patriarchal thinking (see Westfahl 332), although it should be said that in modern fantasy and science fiction literature there exist also some attempts to portray a less traditional gender situation. Similarly, the earliest adventure stories (such as the story of Robinson Crusoe) gave an account of what *boys* experienced when they went away from home to exotic places, and therefore probably in a way determined the shape of later adventure stories to the effect that having a female protagonist would strike many as unusual.

To discuss the difference between works of literature which, by how they construct their protagonist, rather tend to confirm traditional patriarchal structures and the kind of works which, by the same token, rather appear to try and subvert the established order, Nikolajeva has, in her book *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*, introduced two immensely useful terms, namely *masculine characterisation* and *feminine characterisation*, the former confirming gender stereotypes while the latter tries to question them (see *Power*, 133).

Furthermore, Nikolajeva offers us a highly illuminating explanation of how literary genres have traditionally been linked to gender:

The common convention is that masculine writing is action-oriented while feminine writing is character-oriented; masculine writing is focused on external events and the hero's adventures, while feminine writing is preoccupied with relationships and self-reflection. Typically masculine genres include heroic fantasy, horror, crime and thriller, science fiction, war novel, pirate and robber novel, frontier and Wild West stories. Typically feminine genres include love stories, family and domestic novels. Roughly defined, the overall masculine genre is adventure and feminine is romance (Nikolajeva *Power* 130).

When Nikolajeva uses the terms *masculine* and *feminine writing*, she does not only refer to the gender of the author or the narrator, but, similarly to what has just been

¹⁴ This negative portrayal might, for instance, be applied to the temptress, who keeps the male heroes from fulfilling their deeds, or to very strong female characters in general. Characters like Ariadne, who try to help their lovers fulfil their deeds, apparently tend to be punished for what could be considered a transgression of the *oykos-polis* dichotomy defining gender roles.

mentioned with regard to the meaning of *masculine* and *feminine characterization*. In fact, the terms refer to genres which tend to either confirm or challenge gender norms, feminine narration being a form of writing which is known to challenge the normative discourse:

Masculine narration [...] represents the dominant, empowered, conservative, conformist, normative narrative voice, as opposed to the oppressed and therefore potentially subversive one. A masculine voice implies confirming the existing norms of power, while a feminine voice interrogates and subverts it (Nikolajeva, *Power* 121).

One can therefore conclude that the masculine voice is the voice we traditionally find in many of the literary genres I have previously mentioned as having influenced the stories of Harry and Lyra. So, taking the traditional form of the genres we have just examined, it becomes clear that most of them, if not all of them, could be seen to normally strengthen patriarchal gender patterns. This in turn would mean that if *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Northern Lights* also borrowed their gender ideology from these genres, one is quite likely to find rather traditional gender roles in the two novels. Before, however, being able to find out about how the gender of the heroes in these two texts has been constructed and before being able to tell whether this has been done according to patriarchal stereotypes, we will have to dedicate some in-depth thinking to the term *hero* as such, because, no matter whether we talk of Harry and Lyra's stories as texts of fantasy, texts of science fiction, or as adventure stories: The physical or spiritual quest of the hero is always what the story really is about.

2. The hero

2.1 The structuralist approach to heroism: Hero pattern research

What is a hero? Heroes, it seems, have always been fascinating not only to people reading their stories, but also to folklorists, psychiatrists and others working within an academic environment. Much has been thought and written about heroes, and theorists have tried to find out about what could be termed the *hero formula*: they have made attempts at pinning down what it is that made – and still makes – heroes. Finding this out has often been attempted by looking at the different stages of life a hero undergoes.

According to Robert A. Segal, who edited and wrote the introduction to a work called *In Quest of the Hero*, hero myths have been the subject of academic research for a very long time, that is, at least since the English anthropologist Edward Tylor (Segal vii), who was the first to argue for the existence of a pattern shared by the bulk of the hero myths. While Tylor and others such as Johann Georg von Hahn and Vladimir Propp clearly did not aim at analysing why these stories seemed to follow any specific pattern and were only interested in the underlying structural information, there were also those theorists who went further and attempted an analysis of the pattern traceable in hero myths (Segal viii). The researchers who wanted to pin down merely a schema usually specialised on specific literary genres and compared different literary productions in order to arrive at more or less extensive patterns of the heroic life. It is the aim of this chapter to present and compare a number of different approaches, both merely structuralist and going beyond, and to decide on their value for the following analysis of Lyra Belacqua and Harry Potter.

In his introduction to *In Quest of the Hero*, Segal especially looks at and analyses the theories of three renowned experts in the field of hero pattern research, namely the Viennese psycho-analyst Otto Rank, the American mythographer Joseph Campbell and the English folklorist Lord Raglan (Segal viii). Segal furthermore explains the way in which these three men have, respectively, analysed the hero pattern they established: “Rank wrote *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909) as an outright disciple of Sigmund Freud; Campbell wrote *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) as a kindred soul of Carl Jung; and Raglan wrote *The Hero* (1936) as a theoretical ally of James Frazer” (Segal viii). As can be seen from this, both Rank and Campbell have attempted

to find a psycho-analytical explanation for the existence of the hero pattern they could pin down when analysing a number of hero myths. While Rank, like Freud, tried to compare myth and dreams to each other (Segal viii), Campbell's theories often find themselves linked to Jungian interpretation of mythology, although "[he] differs [...] with Jung over the origin and function of myth" and does not believe that Jung has found the final answer when it comes to the interpretation of myths (both Segal x). Lord Raglan is the only one of the three theorists interested in the correlation between ritual and myth, and for him, like "[f]or classicist and anthropologist James Frazer, myth is the equal of ritual and arises with it to serve as its script: myth explains what ritual enacts. Myth operates *while* ritual retains its magical power" (Segal xii). Due to the fact that the closer analyses done by Campbell, Raglan and Rank go far beyond the scope of this thesis, and also because the psycho-analyst or mythological implications of the patterns they established seem to be of no real relevance for my research questions, I will not go into more detail about the interpretations of the hero patterns they developed during their research. What, however, is of importance in the context of this work, are the structuralist models they established, even if they have also been the subject of quite some criticism in the academic world. Segal, for example, points out possible weaknesses of Rank's model when he says that,

[a]s brilliant as it is, Rank's theory can be criticized on multiple grounds. One can grant the pattern while denying the Freudian meaning, which, after all, *reverses* the manifest one. Or one can deny the pattern itself. Certainly the pattern fits only those hero myths, or the portions of them, that cover heroes in the first half of life. Excluded, for example, would be the bulk of the myths of Odysseus and Aeneas, who are largely adult heroes. Rank's own examples come from Europe, the Near East, and India and may not fit heroes from elsewhere. Indeed, Rank's pattern does not even fit all of his own examples. (Segal xv)

However, also Campbell's theory could somehow be seen as problematic:

Like Rank's theory, Campbell's can be faulted on various grounds. As with Rank's theory, one might grant the pattern but deny the meaning. Or one might question the pattern itself. Since it obviously applies only to myths about heroes in the second half of life, it excludes all of Rank's hero myths, or at least all Rank's portions of them. Whether it even fits Campbell's own examples is not easy to tell, for Campbell, unlike Rank or Raglan, provides no set of hero myths to accompany his pattern. While he continually cites scores of hero myths to illustrate *parts* of his pattern, he does not apply his full pattern to even one myth. (Segal xxii)

Also Lord Raglan's model cannot be regarded as altogether flawless:

One might grant the mythic pattern but deny a connection to ritual. One might grant some connection but deny that, in the light of the disparity between the myth and the ritual, it takes Raglan's form. Or one might deny the pattern itself – denying either that it applies worldwide or that it even applies substantially to Raglan's own cases. (Segal xxvi)

As can be seen from the above quotations, the three theories – and maybe every theory on the structure of hero myth – can be shown to have some problematic aspects to it. What should, however, not be left unmentioned and must certainly not be forgotten, is the circumstance that the vast majority of hero myths seems to work according to at least roughly the same schemata, i.e. that there, in fact, is a certain amount of common plot points shared by the bulk of heroic accounts. This theory is also supported by hero expert Katalin Horn who, in her work *Der aktive und der passive Märchenheld*, argues in favour of an existence of a broad and rather general hero pattern, the traits of which can be established empirically. This is also what hero pattern investigator Jan de Vries, who also managed to establish certain similarities, certain plot points shared by a number of heroic stories, says in his book *Heldenlied und Heldensage*: “Wenn wir die Geschichte mehrerer Heldenfiguren betrachten, so muß es zunächst auffallen, dass in ihnen immer wieder dieselben oder jedenfalls gleichartige Motive auftreten” (De Vries 281). However, Vries also stresses that it is important to realise that the biography of a hero need not incorporate all of the motifs available (see De Vries 289), like the fight with a dragon, the liberation of a virgin or the hero's youth in seclusion and/or degradation, and that, indeed some of the motifs usually regarded as “compulsory” elements can be omitted.

With this thought of the possibility of an overall, probably even more reduced hero pattern than those just mentioned in mind, the next necessary step to take seems to be a closer discussion of different hero-pattern-models.

2.1.1 Otto Rank's ten basic elements of the hero myth (1909)

Already in his introduction to *In Quest of the hero*, Robert A. Segal has pointed out the fact that Otto Rank tends to focus his analysis of the heroic journey on the first part of the hero's life rather than on the whole of it, therefore concentrating on his¹⁵ "[...] birth, childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood [, i.e.] [...] the establishment of oneself as an independent person in the external world" (Segal xii). It is probably because of this that Rank, in his book *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, starts his pattern by explaining that the hero is child to "most distinguished parents" (Rank 57), which in many cases means parents of royal ancestry. Rank continues by explaining that the conception may sometimes be preceded by difficulties "such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles" (Rank 57), and either before or during the pregnancy, there usually occurs a prophecy (a dream or oracle), which warns somebody of the birth of the hero and of the danger that comes with this. This person warned is by trend the hero's father or a representative of him. Otto Rank also writes that, as a consequence of this warning, the boy is often exposed: "As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by an [sic!] humble woman" (Rank 57). When he is a grown up, he then usually finds his distinguished mother and father and is acknowledged by them. This is how the hero achieves rank. Rank also points out that the hero's problematic relationship to his parents suggests "that something in the nature of the hero must account for such a disturbance [...] [and that] the descent from his parents often becomes the source of greatest distress and embarrassment" (Rank 57) to the hero.

2.1.2 Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949)

As Segal has already pointed out, Campbell restricts heroism to the second half of the hero's life, which means that everything starts out with his adventure (Segal xvii). While

¹⁵ In the course of the theory chapters, reference to the hero will be made by using only masculine pronouns whenever only masculine pronouns are used (or at least primarily used) by the author referred to. This is not to be understood as approval of this practice but happens only for the sake of simplicity and in order to stay true to the ideas of those authors presented and referred to in this work.

Rank's hero must be young enough for his father and in some cases even his grandfather still to be reigning[,] Campbell does not specify the age of his hero, but he must be no younger than the age at which Rank's hero myth therefore ends: young adulthood. He must, again, be in the second half of life and even cites Rank's monograph, but he demotes this youthful heroism to mere preparation for adult heroism: he calls it the "childhood of the human hero." (Segal xvii).

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell dedicates the first part of his inquiry to the adventure of the hero, thus examining, among other things, the call to adventure itself, the hero's refusal of the call and the supernatural aid made available to the hero. In this first part, however, Campbell also covers the process(es) of initiation the hero undergoes as well as the hero's return. Although Campbell is well aware that some hero myths weigh the steps he describes differently, thus stressing certain elements and motifs more than others do, Campbell also tries to schematise the heroic journey. On page 211 of his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell describes this journey as follows:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his common-day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend to death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again – if the powers have remained unfriendly to him – his theft of the boon he came to gain [...]; intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection [...]; if not, he flees and is pursued [...] At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world [...] (Campbell 211).

2.1.3 Lord Raglan's hero (1936)

While for Campbell a hero can theoretically be any grown-up male person, Raglan's hero must be of regal origin (Segal xxiii). Lord Raglan's hero pattern is far more detailed than Rank's and consists of twenty-two criteria which make, according to him, a hero. First of all, the hero's mother is of regal origin as well, and she is a virgin (1). His father too, needs to be aristocratic (2), and Raglan points out that he is often a near relative of the hero's mother (3). "The circumstances of [the hero's] conception are unusual" (Segal xxiv) (4) and it is also usually said that the hero is the son of a god (5). When the hero is born, someone, usually his father or his maternal grandfather, attempt to kill him (6), but the hero then is spirited off (7) and brought up by foster parents in a far away place (8). The reader does not learn anything of his childhood (9), but as soon as he has become a man, the hero returns or goes to his future kingdom (10). After victory over the king and/or a dangerous creature (giant, dragon, or wild beast) (11), he marries a princess, who is often the daughter of his antecessor (12), and the hero becomes the new king (13). His reign passes relatively uneventful (14) and he also makes laws (15), but later he falls into disgrace with either/both the gods or/and his subjects (16), and is, as a consequence, driven away (17). The hero then dies a mysterious death (18), often at the top of a hill (19). If he has any children, they do not succeed to the throne (20). In spite of the fact that his body is not buried (21), "he has one or more holy sepulchres" (Reglan 138).

2.1.4 Vladimir Propp's *Morphologie des Märchens* (1928)

According to Vladimir Propp, a Russian folklorist, magic tales, which could be said to represent just another kind of heroic story, usually follow a certain pattern which can be illustrated by altogether thirty-one functions. These functions need not always all occur in the course of the story; sometimes and in some magic tales, a handful of them is missing or doubled throughout the account. What is important, however, is that these 31 functions tend to occur in a certain, fixed order. In his work *Morphologie des Märchens*, Propp explains that functions are the constitutive elements magic tales consist of and that they are the basis on which the plot constructs itself (Propp 71). The term "function" designates an action taken by an acting person which is defined according to

its importance for the development of the plot (see Propp 27). Functions are constant and unchangeable elements of the tale, and it is of no relevance how or by whom these actions have been realised (see Propp 27).

Furthermore, the number of functions available is limited (see Propp 27). Propp aims at qualifying his approach as a possible way of analysing the structure of magic tales when he points out:

Die Funktionen der handelnden Personen sind jene Elemente, die an die Stelle der Motive bei Veselovskij oder der Elemente bei Bédier treten. Die Wiederkehr bestimmter Funktionen bei unterschiedlich handelnden Personen ist schon längst von Religionshistorikern in Mythen und volkstümlichen Glaubensvorstellungen nachgewiesen worden, die historische Märchenforschung indessen ist bisher an dieser Tatsache vorübergegangen. Ebenso wie Eigenschaften und Funktionen der einzelnen Götter wechseln und schließlich sogar auf christliche Heiligengestalten übertragen werden, ebenso werden auch die Funktionen der einen Märchenhelden auf andere übertragen. (Propp 26)

Like all stock characters appearing in the fairy tale, also the hero fulfils certain recurring functions as the story develops. Before discussing all of his 31 functions in detail, Propp does not fail to explain that every magic tale starts out with a presentation of the hero's family members or of the future hero and his situation. However, in spite of the importance of this morphological element for the magic tale (Propp 31), he stresses that this introductory depiction must not be regarded as one of the functions. Then Propp continues with a discussion of the functions he established (Propp 31-65):

First of all, one of the hero's family members leaves home for a certain period of time (I), either in order to go to work, to see to his business or to go to war. Here, Propp also mentions death as a more extreme variant of this function. Then, there is some sort of ban imposed on the hero (II): he is either not allowed to leave the house or to visit a certain place. Interestingly enough, this ban can also be converted into an order. The ban or order in question is then being ignored by the hero (III). This usually is the moment when the hero's opponent appears on the scene to damage the hero or his family (Propp 33). As a next step, the opponent tries to find out more about the hero or his beloved, which he either attempts personally or by sending others to do this (IV). He or she then gains the desired information (V) and tries to outwit the hero (or family member) in order to gain control over the hero or his belongings (VI): The opponent often dresses up as someone else, tries to talk his victim into doing something or

deceives him in any different way. As a consequence, the victim is taken in by the trick, plays into the hands of their opponent (VII) and is harmed by him or her (VIII).

Vladimir Propp considers the first seven functions as introductory part which is then closed by the introduction of the main action by the damage caused. According to Propp, the damage can appear in various forms: the opponent either kidnaps a person or steals any important magical item, the daylight or anything else of importance to the hero's family. He or she could equally hurt the victim physically, drive someone away, be responsible for the vanishing of a person or a vital item, demand the exposure of his or her victim or enchant a person. It is important to note that the opponent usually commits more than only one single crime (Propp 37), some of which appear in combination with other elements, often expulsion. If the opponent for example orders to kill someone or kills someone himself or herself, this action is usually accompanied by some of the other possible damages that have been introduced above. A family member or the hero could lack something (Propp 39). Then, an unfortunate circumstance or the wish to possess something is presented and the hero has to or is allowed to leave home in order to improve the situation (IV). As next points, Propp mentions the seeker's readiness to counteract (X) and his leaving the house (XI). The hero is put to the test, is asked questions or attacked, which serves as an introduction to the reception of the magic cure or the supernatural aid (XII). The hero reacts to the actions taken by the future donor ("Schenker") (XIII), the reaction being either a positive or a negative one. Often, the hero stands a test or no, and he then he gets into the possession of the magic cure (XIV). The hero is taken to the place where the thing he looks for is to be found (XV), and he and his opponent start a fight (XVI) during which the hero receives a mark, in many cases a wound (XVII) and the opponent is defeated (XVIII). The unfortunate circumstance or lack is done away with (XIX) and the hero returns (XX). He is haunted (XXI) but saved (XXII) in some way. At this point, the hero can be confronted with a new task and a new sequence of functions can become part of the fairytale. In fact, many texts consist of more than one sequence of functions (Propp 60). According to function XXIII, the hero is able to return home or go to another country without being recognised and the fake hero(es) pretend to be the ones who gained the desired object (XXIV). The hero is put to a difficult test (XXV), which represents one of the most popular fairytale elements (Propp 61). The hero passes the test (XXVI), is recognised as the true hero (XXVII) and the fake hero or opponent is punished

(XXVIII). The hero changes his looks (XXIX) and the foe is punished (XXX). In the end, the hero marries and ascends to the throne (XXXI).

As could be guessed from the above schema, Propp holds it that the characters' actions are of greater importance for the development of the tale than their qualities. According to Barbara Stiefmüller, the characters introduced in the course of story usually are presented in only little detail (see Stiefmüller 29). This is because fairy tale research generally does not ascribe much relevance to character traits; only a character's actions are pertinent. This trait of Propp's analysis is very striking, and one should not fail to mention the fact that his approach, as many other structuralist approaches, has been subject to much criticism because of its fixation on pattern and its leaving out of all parameters influencing literary production. This issue, however, will be dealt with later in this study.

2.1.5 Jan de Vries' model for a heroic life (1961)

In 1961, Jan de Vries, a Scandinavian medievalist, wrote his treatise *Heldenlied und Heldensage* in which he, among other things, offers an interesting pattern for the heroic life. Before starting his analysis, he offers a very illuminating explanation for the making of heroic personae:

Man könnte von einer Mutation sprechen, wenn man betrachtet, wie eine historische Persönlichkeit in eine Heldenfigur übergeht. Die Gestalt wird in eine ganz andere Sphäre gestellt, und zwar in eine Sphäre, die höher und bedeutsamer ist als jene weltlich-tatsächliche, in der der Held sein irdisches Leben gelebt hat. [...] Welches aber war der Zauberstab, der diese Mutation bewerkstelligte? Wenn wir das erklären wollen, erscheint es vor allem notwendig, uns eine Vorstellung von der eigentümlichen Struktur der Heldensage zu machen. Denn so erst kann deutlich werden, daß [sic] das Heldenleben ein Leben sui generis ist, und zwar ein Leben, das nicht der Geschichte angehört und das nicht von gewöhnlich Sterblichen gelebt werden kann (Vries 280).

Vries makes a statement regarding his methodology when he explains that he will refrain from referring to the fairy tale, for which he has already earlier established a model, and rather concentrate his analysis on myths and heroic sagas (Vries 282). On the pages 282-289 Jan de Vries demonstrates the structure of his pattern by establishing ten common plot points of the heroic tale. As has already been mentioned in chapter

1.1, not all of the possible plot points must apply in order to establish a story as a heroic saga.

As a first plot point of the heroic saga he mentions the procreation of the hero (I), which leaves open several choices for the author: either the mother is a virgin, impregnated by a god or because of an illegitimate relationship to the hero's father (A), or the father is of divine origin (B), possibly having met the hero's mother in the form of an animal (C), or the child is the result of some incest relationship (D). The procreation is then followed by the birth of the hero (II), which can happen in an unnatural way (A) or by Caesarean section (B). The next plot point concerns the youth of the hero, which is usually threatened (III) because of the child's being abandoned by the father (who was previously warned in a dream that the child might later on be of danger to him) or by the mother (who, by doing the same, might keep the shame she brought on the family secret) (A); the abandoned child is then nurtured by an animal (B), which can either be a hind (a), a she-wolf (b), a she-bear (c), a mare (d), a cow (e), a goat (f), a bitch (g), a jackal (h) or an eagle (i). Later the child is found and adopted by a shepherd, for instance (C). In the Greek saga it happens quite frequently that some mythical character raises the hero (D). The fourth major plot point concerns the way in which the hero grows up (IV): The hero gives away his powers very early in his youth (A) or develops rather slowly (B). The hero sometimes becomes invulnerable (V), and one of the most common heroic deeds is the fight with a dragon or some other monster (VI). After having passed difficult tests, the hero wins the heart of a virgin (VII). He then travels to the underworld (VIII), and if the hero was banished during his youth, he now returns and defeats his opponent; in some stories, however, he has to give up his realm again (IX). As a last plot point, there is the death of the hero, which is often miraculous (X).

2.2 Typically heroic? Structuralist patterns vs. other ways of hero-characterisation

Apart from the structuralist models which leave out practically all description of the personal qualities as well as of the looks of the heroes because they are not *per se* relevant to the development of the story, there exist also approaches which concentrate not only on the story line and the deeds of the hero but try to offer a description of the hero's personality.

Thus, Margery Hourihan, in her study *Deconstructing the hero. Literary theory and children's literature*, depicts the hero one usually finds in literature and in various other cultural products as almost necessarily white and male, of either British, American or European descent, and as an individual who is able to succeed because of his strength, bravery, resourcefulness, rationality and will to succeed (Hourihan 9). This definition of the concept of the hero seems rather narrow, however it may still be very much congruent with what people, as children, learn from the stories and fairy tales their parents read to them, simply because these kinds of stories, like many others, are part of the cultural capital of the western societies we inhabit.

Katalin Horn, on the other hand, investigates the construction of the heroes that can be found in European fairy tales (Horn 5). She offers her readers a hero analysis slightly different from the ones mentioned earlier in this thesis. Horn does not construct her hero only by discussing the various stages he undergoes in the course of his existence, that is, by presenting his qualities as the result of as well as a precondition for his journey. As has already been mentioned at the beginning of this study, she rather tries to pin down the very general qualities that make a hero out of a normal person, an approach which makes her vastly differ from most fairy tale investigators (who mostly are structuralists), for the character traits as well as the looks of the single characters have traditionally not been of interest to those examining the tales' structure(s). This is also why I will describe her approach in slightly more detail than I have done with the approaches of Rank, Raglan, Campbell, and Propp. Katalin Horn herself is well aware of the fact that her approach to fairy tale heroes differs from others and she states:

Wird [der Märchenheld] überhaupt geschildert? Es wurde oft behauptet, dass er figurenhafte sei, bar jeglicher Individualität, dass er bloß Träger der Handlung sei. Dies ist freilich nicht von der Hand zu weisen, aber wenn man die Gesamtheit

der Märchenhelden zu beschreiben versucht, bietet sich einem ein merkwürdig reiches lebendiges Bild. Auch ist die schematische Figurenhaftigkeit schon durch die nationalen Eigenschaften der verschiedenen Völker und ihrer Märchen teilweise aufgehoben (Horn 5).

In the preface to her book *Der aktive und der passive Märchenheld* (1983), Katalin Horn explains that her motivation to write this book was mainly inspired by the observation that fairy tale heroes, although their deeds might suggest their being active, action- and risk-taking individuals, can often be described as being rather passive, at times even helpless beings (Horn 3).

As the title of her treatise suggests, Horn differentiates between an active and a passive hero, and in the first part of her treatise she describes a set of qualities characteristic of any fairy tale hero. This allows valuable insights into how heroic characters are constructed on the level of personality. She holds it that all of the qualities ascribed to the hero ultimately serve the accomplishment of his adventures and tests (Horn 5) and describes the typical fairy tale hero as follows:

Im allgemeinen [sic] ist eine gewisse moralische Haltung dem Helden nicht abzusprechen: er ist selten hochmütig, teilt seine Habe gerne mit anderen, achtet das Tier, er verleumdet seine Mitmenschen nicht, er nimmt die gestellten Aufgaben viel ernster als die Antihelden [...], er lacht alte Frauen und Männer nicht aus, er kann demütig dienen [...]. Freilich ist das so skizzierte Bild recht allgemein, und es will auch nicht behauptet werden, dass der Märchenheld ein Ritter ohne Tadel sei. Auf das Fehlen einer absolut moralischen Haltung des Märchenhelden ist oft genug hingewiesen worden. Dies war auch nötig, denn das Schema vom Kampf des Guten mit dem Bösen im Märchen könnte einen allzu leicht dazu verführen, den Helden eben für eine Verkörperung aller Tugenden zu halten (Horn 5-6).

With this passage, Katalin Horn offers us the portrayal of a hero who is extraordinarily good, i.e. exceeds others in his virtue, a trait without which he would not qualify as a hero; however, she also points out that a hero is never altogether flawless, which is a point worth mentioning and also one, I believe, which will be of relevance in the context of a modern hero figure. Furthermore, Horn enumerates a range of other markers (Horn 6-51) which, according to her understanding, define a hero, and which she presents in much greater detail than the scope of this paper allows. Therefore, I will restrict myself to very brief descriptions of the markers she mentions.

As a first such marker she quotes the hero's tendency, his unspoken duty, to leave his¹⁶ home to find adventure, which cannot possibly be done at home (Horn 6-10). As a next important factor Horn mentions the fairy tale hero's position as a person who enjoys the freedom to turn the back to his home and experience adventure without being irrevocably stuck in his city of birth, thus his free will which enables him to do what a hero does (Horn 10-16). The third quality a hero has to incorporate is the ability to concentrate on his adventure and his tasks instead of on worldly values (Horn 16-23): the fairy tale hero is often poor, dull, dirty, primitive and laughed at (Horn 16). The fourth character quality of importance is closely linked to the third one: Horn's fairy tale hero lacks interest in traditional values and is often poor (Horn 23-42). Part of these missing values is intelligence. The author describes the heroic persona as not very successful in life and also as being of rather moderate intelligence, especially because he is easily tricked by opponents, only to have to overcome new difficulties. This is a narrative device vital to the development of new tasks and to the course of the story. Equally, the hero is more interested in magic devices than he is in riches and neat clothes (Horn 24) because he can use them in order to fulfil the tests he is put to. Interestingly enough, material goods play an important role in the hero's life (Horn 28). Often, money is either lost by one of the hero's family members or it serves as the hero's reward for his marvellous and honourable deeds. If the latter is the case, Horn explains, then it has to be interpreted symbolically, that is, as serving to symbolise the hero's advancement in terms of virtue. This plot point can also take the shape of the hero's disadvantageous inheritance from his parents or his own choosing his disadvantageous position. The next factor mentioned by Horn is the hero's necessity of being poor in order to be free enough to leave his parents' house, which is, obviously, closely linked to the criterion of free will and independence: only if the hero is free from every tying bind, he can depart and fulfil the deeds for which he has been chosen. The last but not least traditional value with which the hero breaks is the value of honourable work. The typical fairy tale hero as portrayed by Horn usually does not really have any profession – except for going on a heroic journey. As a last point, the hero's age and his level of intelligence are mentioned. Horn states that it happens quite frequently that the hero is the youngest son of the family, and that he is, as has already been mentioned, not

¹⁶ Or "her home". At this point Katalin Horn actually shows that she also allows for female equivalents of the hero, which further distinguishes her from the structuralists I have addressed earlier in this thesis. For the sake of simplicity, however, I will maintain referring to the hero as a male person, as she does for most of her treatise.

always exceedingly intelligent. What is actually meant by these terms is the hero's state of naivety and lack of experience, which, too, are vital for the story as such.

All of the facts and traits that have been discussed so far as constitutive of a fairy tale hero according to Katalin Horn must be seen as preconditions for the heroic journey, as all of them serve to make a development of a problem possible and the story continue (Horn 42). Horn offers also another interesting way of summarising a hero's character and possible stages of life:

Der Held überlegt nicht, wartet nicht, sondern zieht aus, um das Böse zum Guten zu wenden. Ob er geschickt oder vertrieben wird, ob er die Erlaubnis zu gehen erbettelt oder ohne Zwang und Hindernis in die weite Welt zieht: immer harren seiner Aufgabe, die zu lösen sind. Er kämpft, befreit oder rettet Gefangene, er löst Rätsel, gewinnt schicksalhafte Wetten, erfüllt unmögliche Aufgaben, er versteckt sich, verwandelt sich, er nimmt Dienst bei Jenseitigen oder an fremden Königshöfen, er geht auf Suchwanderung, erlöst Verzauberte, findet wunderbare Heilmittel, zauberhafte Vögel oder Zaubergegenstände am Ende der Welt, vertreibt böse Geister aus verwünschten Schlössern, er holt Antworten auf wichtige Fragen aus der Unterwelt, er wacht über die Saat oder den Garten seines Vaters, er findet seine Prinzessin, errettet eine Stadt vor dem Verdursten oder bringt sogar gestohlene Himmelskörper zurück (Horn 42-43).

These are what Horn calls the outer themes of the fairy tale (Horn 43). The inner, actual theme is the success the hero has throughout his journey (Horn 43): The hero

ist also der Mensch, der fähig ist, aus sich das Menschenmögliche herauszuholen und Hilflöse zu erlösen, zu erretten oder zu befreien oder zu befreien, Er ist ein Auserwählter, der sich zu erhöhen und die Mangel leidende Umwelt in Ordnung zu bringen. Diese Erhöhung eines Auserwählten ist es, was wir vielleicht als das eigentliche Thema des Märchens bezeichnen dürfen. Und damit gewinnt die Einfachheit und Niedrigkeit des Helden noch eine weitere Bedeutung: Auserwähltheit heisst [sic!] im Weltbild des Märchens nicht nur das Schicksal einzelner, seltener Privilegierter; vielmehr kann jeder Mensch, auch der einfachste, ärmste, zum Höchsten berufen sein. [...] Der Held ist mitunter durch magische Geburt ausgezeichnet, hat häufig glänzende Goldhaare, ist mit überirdischer Schönheit begnadet, mit Sonne Mond oder Sternen geschmückt. [...] Der auserwählte Held ist oft Träger kosmischer Werte, die durch Diamant, Gold, Silber, Blumen und Gestirne versinnbildlicht werden. Auch von seiner Schönheit ist nicht immer die Rede [...] Aber er ist fast immer einer, der nicht so ist wie seine Umgebung (Horn 43-44).

Additionally to this valuable characterisation of the hero, which can somehow also be seen to function as a description of the plot points the reader might encounter when

reading a hero's story, Katalin Horn offers an interesting distinction regarding the type of hero. According to her, heroic personae can be split into two categories, namely the *active* and the *passive* hero, a characterisation to which she dedicates all of the second part of her book *Der aktive und der passive Märchenheld*. Within the two mentioned categories, Horn carries out further differentiations, which will not be dealt with in great detail here as this would go beyond the scope of this diploma thesis.

Horn defines the active hero as a character who is marked by his autonomy: his own intelligence, power, fearlessness of knowledge of magic allow the fairy tale hero to accomplish his tasks and pass his test alone, which means that he is a hero even without any help coming from the hereafter (Horn 53). As possible types of active heroes she mentions, for instance, “the strong and battlesome hero” (Horn 54) or “the intelligent and cunning hero” (Horn 58), most of which can, again, be split into a number of sub-categories.

The passive hero belonging to the European fairy tale tradition, however, is described as the kind of hero who is more in need of superhuman help, of magical devices, of helping animals or of benevolent creatures coming from the hereafter (Horn 88); thus, she differentiates between “the suffering hero” (Horn 88) or “the passive hero accompanied by an animal” (Horn 103), for example.

What is striking when comparing the number of categories established for the active and the passive hero respectively, is that Horn distinguished between nine main types of the active hero and as many main types of the passive hero, thus again underlining her introductory statement that the fairy tale hero, although traditionally regarded as an active being, can equally often be shown to display certain qualities which suggest the existence of a hero better described as somewhat passive (Horn 3).

2.2.1 Looking critically at different models of the heroic life

In the course of the last chapter of this study, there was talk of a diversity of hero paradigms. These have been created at different points in time and under different conditions, often focusing only on one kind of literary text and consciously excluding

others, like Jan de Vries' approach has done, for instance. Horn provides us with a valuable overview of the most important facts, covering the bulk of the hero patterns we touched upon:

Mythen- und ritentheoretischen Ansätzen verpflichtet sind Hahn, Raglan, und de Vries. Hahn erblickt in den „Sagenbildern“, die auf menschliches Handeln übertragenen Äußerungen der Naturkräfte [...]; Raglans Held ist die Hauptperson eines rituellen Dramas, in welchem ursprünglich der König (Priester, Häuptling, Zauberer) die Prosperität seiner Gemeinschaft garantierte, und de Vries sieht im indogermanischen Modell des Heldenlebens einen Widerhall von Initiationsriten bzw. von deren kosmogonischem Vorbild. Tiefenpsychologisch wird das Heldenlebenschema [sic!] von dem Freudschüler Rank und dem Jungianer Campbell gedeutet. Nach Rank ist die Laufbahn des Helden ein Projektionsmodell, in dem er die Rolle des Ichs spielt, das sich gegen den Vater auflehnt. Campbells Held ist hingegen der durch Tod und Wiedergeburt initiierte Mensch der sich seiner persönlichen und historischen Beschränkungen entledigt hat (Horn 723-724)¹⁷.

Now I will take a closer look at the similarities and differences existing between the single models presented.

Nikolajeva explains that “[...] children's literature historically grew out of folklore“ (Rhetoric 11), and that, because of this, most of the roles characteristically found in folktales are also present in children's literature. This is also how Vladimir Propp's study of the magic tale, which was presented and discussed earlier in this thesis, offers a new dimension to our analysis: The fairy tale and the magic tale are considered to be sub-categories of the folktale if one speaks of the latter in the broader sense of the word. We have already heard that Propp established seven characters who are recurrent in many magic tales and fairy tales, and who, because of the fact that children's literature borrows a number of these stereotypical roles (see Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric* 11), shape stories for children. Traditional roles include “the hero, the false hero (who parallels the hero but fails to perform the task), the princess (who often is the object of quest [...]), the dispatcher, the donor, the helper, and the villain” (Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric* 11). What is more, Nikolajeva describes traditional children's fiction as being “unmistakably plot oriented” (*Rhetoric* 13), however, she also does not fail to mention that, from the 1960s onwards, this aspect has been in flux. Instead of being presented with wooden characters void of any deeper aspects of personality than necessary for the plot, merely

¹⁷ In Held, Heldin, qtd in: Brednich et al. (Hrsg.): Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung. Band 6. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1990, who has been quoted by Kurt Greiner

fulfilling their roles as bearers of the action, the reader finds characters portrayed elaborately enough to allow a closer analysis of the person (see Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric* 13).

According to Hourihan, the hero story is as old as Western culture: the oldest, known-of written heroic story is *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which probably dates back to as far the third millennium BC (Hourihan 10). Needless to mention, the concept of the hero, which itself is nothing more than a social construct, has vastly changed over time: While for the ancient Greeks heroes were semi gods, this image later seems to have changed towards the hero as courageous individual fighting for the sake of others and for the sake of the world. Today, the term *hero* can also merely refer to a protagonist in a work of literature. If we therefore try to answer the question if there exists only one type, only one definition of the term “hero”, one that fits all the examples available, the answer will invariably have to be “no”.

This is also what renders many of the approaches available partly problematic: While a large number of theorists has apparently tried to find the one and only true heroic pattern, many of them seem not to have taken into consideration – or have preferred to ignore – the versatile nature of humans, of their environment, and, therefore, of everything that has been shaped by human hands and minds. It is especially this which renders structuralist approaches touchy (even if the schemata were actually established in order to be used for psychoanalytical investigation, as it was the case with Campbell’s or Rank’s analyses), and academic discourse has often made reference to exactly this weak point. Serena Grazzini, for instance, sums the issue up as follows:

Ihre Leistung sehen [die Strukturalisten] in der Enthüllung von vorliegenden Gesetzen und Strukturen, von denen diese Äußerungen erst kreiert und geprägt werden. Vom Begriff der Form und der Struktur ausgehend, läßt die strukturalistische Schule die in den sogenannten Humanwissenschaften, besonders aber in der Literaturwissenschaft herrschenden Untersuchungsperspektiven – vor allem den Blick auf die Historie, auf philosophisch-weltanschauliche Positionen, auf die Persönlichkeit und das soziale Umfeld des Autors, auf den ideellen und pragmatischen Nutzen des Textes – völlig in den Hintergrund der Analyse treten. (Grazzini 209)

Also Jonathan Culler offers a critical analysis of the problem areas of the structuralist approach:

Manche werfen dem Strukturalismus seine wissenschaftlichen Anmaßungen vor: seine Diagramme, Taxinomien und Neologismen und seinen generellen Anspruch, die schwer erfaßbaren Produkte des menschlichen Geistes in den Griff zu kriegen und über sie Rechenschaft ablegen zu können. Andere werfen ihm Irrationalismus vor: eine maßlose Vorliebe für das Paradox und bizarre Interpretationen, Gefallen an linguistischen Spielereien und eine narzißtische Beziehung zur eigenen Rhetorik. Für manche wieder heißt Strukturalismus Rigidität: ein mechanisches Ermitteln bestimmter Strukturen und Themen, eine Methode nach der alle Werke das gleiche bedeuten. Andern wieder kommt es vor, als ob er ein Werk alles mögliche bedeuten läßt, indem er entweder die Unbestimmtheit des Sinns beteuert oder Sinn als Erfahrung des Lesers definiert. Einige sehen im Strukturalismus die Zerstörung der Kritik als Disziplin; andere meinen, er glorifiziere den Kritiker übermäßig, indem er den Kritiker höher als den Autor stellt und meint, die Beherrschung einer schwierigen Theorie sei die Voraussetzung jeder ernsthaften Auseinandersetzung mit Literatur. (Culler, qtd. in Grazzini 3)

The fact that there can hardly be one single pattern fitting all heroes, however, does not mean that comparing a larger number of schemata will not bring us closer to a generally valuable, rough hero pattern. As Jan de Vries has put it, one can hardly fail to realise that there exist certain similarities between heroes (see Vries 281). Even if structuralism, in spite of all its achievements for literary as well as linguistic studies, tends to regard itself as being able to pin down the hero paradigm as if there were only one possible truth, neglecting the existence of other, equally valid forms, it can help to find one's own working definition of the hero. Taking a closer look at the heroic patterns presented in the last subchapters, one quickly realises that certain plot points are shared by the bulk of the concepts discussed.

First of all, most of the schemata we have had a look at and most of the patterns generally available seem to affirm the famous three-part deep structure of the heroic quest: at the beginning of the heroes' stories, the heroes are at home; then they leave their home for a quest, which can be any kind of mission; and towards the end they usually return home.

Judging from what has so far been found out about hero patterns in the course of this thesis, we can furthermore conclude that at least those approaches which describe a hero as he can be found in classic mythology agree on the hero's conception and/or birth

often happening under special circumstances and on his being child to distinguished or in any case extraordinary parents (in the case of Lord Raglan, the hero is even of regal origin). Campbell's and Propp's schemata mention nothing regarding the origin: Campbell leaves this out, maybe because he believes that heroism is mainly part of the adult life; it is possible that he regards the hero's birth and childhood as being of no importance to the heroic story. Propp centers his attention on the fairy tale hero, who, as has already been pointed out, is presented in only as much detail as necessary for the plot development; one could therefore argue whether it is really necessary to talk about the hero's birth when trying to pin down the development of the story. Additionally, there seems to be a tendency among those who write fairy tales to portray the hero as an everyday person; it is apparently part of genre's appeal that the hero, albeit not of special ancestry or disposition, can perform grand deeds.

Then, there frequently occurs a prophecy which warns someone, often the father or grandfather, of the hero, and this warned one later on tries to harm the hero or to get rid of him in order to anticipate the content of the prophecy. Rank actually mentions the prophecy as a plot point in the heroic life, and de Vries speaks of a dream that warns either the mother or the father of the hero, which could be interpreted as carrying the same function. This plot point is not to be found in Raglan's schema, however, it should be added here that he at least mentions that the father or the maternal grandfather attempt to kill the hero. Interestingly enough, both Propp and Campbell leave this out; this strikes me as unusual because the comparison of the other schemata designed to describe a mythological hero seems to suggest that this is actually a rather important plot point for the mythological hero. In the case of Propp, we can at least assume that a prophecy is unlikely to be part of the story because anything that may avert the damage – which must be part of the fairy tale story in order to make the hero's journey necessary – is not conducive to the development of the plot.

Apparently, there is also unisonous consent regarding the hero's departure, no matter if he is forced to go away, abandoned, or leaves voluntarily. This is necessary for him to find adventure and to actually behave the way we expect it of a hero. The hero then has to fulfil certain deeds and to pass a number of tests, and as soon as the problems are solved he usually returns home. For Raglan and de Vries, the hero's death at the end of the story also seems to be vital, an idea which is not supported by Rank and Campbell

who do not mention the hero's death at all. In Rank, this is presumably the case because his pattern only presents the hero's life until he has reached young adulthood. There is, however, no obvious reason why Campbell did not include this plot point. Nevertheless, de Vries' hero returns before dying. Raglan's does not actually return as he usually marries the daughter of his antecessor and assumes the throne as the new king. This ascendancy to the throne is of course only the case if the hero is of aristocratic descent, which is a condition we find only in Raglan's heroic pattern. The fairy tale approaches referred to in this chapter naturally differ, must differ from those in which the hero finds death at the end of his journey because they assume that there necessarily is a happy ending to the story. Therefore, the hero never dies but always returns home in order to live "happily ever after".

Concerning the hero's character qualities, we only gain insights from non-structuralist approaches such as Horn's and Hourihan's; the other approaches describe the hero's qualities only in an indirect manner and by presenting his path through life. This actually leads us to another, in today's understanding most prominent problem linked to structuralist models of the heroic life: the fact that a character's deeds and actions in the story in fact count more than his character, a description of which is often close to the point of being omitted. Maria Nikolajeva, too, points out that structuralist models of the heroic life, in fact, do not really devote much space to the personality of the hero: what he does is what defines him as the person he is. Also, as has been mentioned when discussing Propp's model of the hero, it is not even important that the hero takes certain actions in the story: the most essential thing is that the actions necessary for the story's development are taken at all.

Regarding our last crucial marker, the age of the hero, we find, once again, a number of differences between the various approaches. While for Rank the hero must not be past young adulthood (see Segal xvii), Propp and de Vries do not really specify the age of their heroes, but they are in any case young enough for at least their parents to be still alive. De Vries seems to offer no information regarding the age of the hero whatsoever: his schema covers basically the hero's whole lifespan. Campbell, too, mentions nothing specific regarding the age, but interestingly enough, his hero pattern starts already with the heroic journey, suggesting that any heroic deed performed during youth is nothing but the preparation for the true heroic deeds to come during adulthood (see Segal xvii).

Raglan, too, does not speak of the hero's age; however, he points out that the reader learns nothing of the hero as child, which, too, suggests that no heroism occurs during the hero's childhood. As we will, during our close reading of the primary texts, mostly deal with characters that are basically still children, the question of the hero's age will invariably be of relevance when we try to apply the patterns to our protagonists. Segal's characterisation of Campbell's hero in chapter 2.1, for example, already somehow suggests the necessity of a rejection of Campbell's schema for the purpose of this study. One must not forget Campbell's insistence on the idea that real heroism can only be attained in adulthood, a thesis which seems to make an application of his pattern to Harry and Lyra difficult, not to say pointless. In spite of the fact that the rest of his characterisation could be used for an analysis of these two characters, it seems that other patterns might, at least with regard to the factor age, be better suited to describe our protagonists.

On the other hand, however, it is important not to forget that the patterns presented were conceived of at quite different points in time and under different cultural circumstances, presumably also being very strongly shaped by the people who drafted them. The patterns presented do not actually say that the hero must be male, but almost all of them are rather old and apparently more dominated by the structuralist body of thought, and their omitting the question of gender indicates that they conceive of heroism as an exclusively male phenomenon. Apart from Propp, they also seem to present patterns that mainly rely on a mythological concept of the hero, and I would argue that they have been more influenced by a traditional, patriarchal discourse than Horn's approach has. In this respect, one should, however, not neglect Campbell mentioning the possibility of having a female person as the hero in a story.

The idea of the hero, even if it is not the mythological kind of hero, goes back to a very long tradition, inevitably entailing certain ideas and patterns of thought. The concept(s) of heroism – I consciously use the plural here to stress the already mentioned fact that there exists not only one concept, and that concepts might vary according to the culture in which and the point in time at which they have been created – apparently have a very long and powerful tradition, and it seems that old ideas of what a hero is are extremely persistent. If one thinks about the heroes western society knows, Hourihan seems to be right when she says that the typical hero – if one can say that there is such a thing – is

white and male. Hourihan also mentions other markers that are important for the hero: the hero usually stands above others and is presented as superior to them; he is adolescent and sometimes, like for example in children's literature, even younger; his relationships, be it merely platonic ones or intimate ones, are never long-lasting (his male travel companions being the sole exceptions), and he is active and rational but still used to solving problems with violence (Hourihan 58-106). It is maybe partly the tradition that comes with these ideas and similar ones that accounts for the fact that certain literary genres still do not see many heroines.

2.2.2 Typical hero, typical heroine? Or: Alternative visions of (female) heroism

The answer to the question, if there is such a thing as "typical heroism", therefore appears to be more or less obvious: In spite of the fact that the term "typical" is a rather problematic one, it appears that, at least within western societies, there are certain types of characters which will be labelled heroic and others which will not.

Definitions of hero can vary a lot, from "protagonist in a work of art" to "a (usually white and male) person who saves other people and/or the world from anything bad or dangerous". By looking at patterns of the heroic life and at qualities which are usually linked to heroism, we have now more or less been able to pin down what the term "hero" can be seen to refer to in most cases. In order to be able to discuss the chosen novels, however, we will inevitably also have to ask ourselves what a "heroine" is and whether similar definitions can work for her as well. As the bulk of structuralist models presented does not actually seem too ready to envision the possibility of having a heroine instead of a hero, the next logical step to take seems to be the consultation of reference works which provide us with definitions of the terms "hero" and "heroine".

According to the *Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus*, a hero is

1. A man distinguished by exceptional courage, nobility etc.
2. A man who is idealized for possessing superior qualities in any field
3. Classical mythology: a being of extraordinary strength and courage, often the offspring of a mortal and a god
4. The principal male character in a novel, play, film etc. (1993, 531)

The same dictionary explains the term “heroine” as follows:

1. A woman possessing heroic qualities
2. A woman idealized for possessing superior qualities
3. The main female character in a novel, play, film etc. (531)

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* offers similar insights. A male hero is defined as

1. A man who is admired for doing something extremely brave: [...]
2. The man or boy who is the main character in a book, film, play etc. [...]
3. Someone you admire very much for their intelligence, skill etc. [...]

and a heroine is defined as

1. The woman or girl who is the main character in a book, film, play etc. [...]
2. A woman who is extremely brave and admired by many people
3. A woman you admire very much for her intelligence, skill etc. – see also hero (3rd ed., 1995)

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines a hero as

1. A person, typically a man, who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.
2. The chief male character in a book or film.
3. (In mythology and folklore:) A person of superhuman qualities and often semi-divine origin, in particular one whose exploits were the subject of ancient Greek myths. (813)

Somewhat disappointingly, not even the 2005 second and revisited edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English* contains an extra entry for the term “heroine”.

It is interesting to compare these definitions provided by notable dictionaries, not only because they demonstrate the whole range of meaning possible for the two terms in question, but also because they show that a heroine can be portrayed as the exact female equivalent of the hero. Furthermore, as the entry on the heroine found in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* demonstrates, the definition of heroine is often

nothing but a deduction from concept available from the male counterpart, thus indirectly putting the male hero in the superior position of the “originally heroic” and the heroine in the subordinated position of “the one who behaves like the original”. Therefore, the heroine is also in the unfortunate position of the one who tries but might still fail to attain the “status of the original” in the eyes of readers. This is an interesting point: although a heroine is usually perceived as a female person incorporating traditionally male qualities, there exists also a different opinion which suggests that the exact opposite is true: that, originally, the female held the advantageous position as the heroic and that it was only with the onset of patriarchy that this perception started to change. This view is held by Susan A. Lichtman, who, in the prologue to her book *The Female Hero in Women's Literature and Poetry*, explains this idea as follows:

The difference between the female and male heroes can be explained as the difference between mortal life and the eternal soul. In ancient human societies before the discovery of paternity and development of private property, women were perceived as immortal creatures because they could give birth to themselves through their daughters; men, on the other hand, were perceived as strictly mortal beings. These perceptions were severely altered once paternity was established, and men could now identify their own children as long as the mothers were isolated from other men. Because the status of women in patriarchal societies is so very low, they are only perceived by the dominant males as peripheral to human existence. The true human experience had to be the male experience. [...] When novels of development are combined with feminist archetypal theory, the results for women are manifested in a pattern of life stages that mark a woman's growth and maturation from the uninitiated and self absorbed youth to the trials of reintegration into the social fabric and finally into a persona of wisdom and direction as legacy. In ancient matri-focused cultures, this can be seen in the goddess myths in which women were perceived as the original heroes – the movers and shakers of their societies. This story line, along with so much more, was stolen and reintegrated with the appropriate gender change from female to male once the patriarchal philosophy took hold. As a result, when we think of heroes today, we usually envision males at the forefront of the hero myth with females taking their place as the originators of the hero through maternity, or as the obstacles the hero must overcome and/or destroy represented by female sexuality, or finally as the end goal, the prize, the *hieros gamos* the hero wins by asserting himself successfully through the hero cycle. (Lichtman 10-11)

If Lichtman is right, the idea of creating a heroine by taking a male hero and simply altering the biological sex has therefore been heavily shaped by patriarchal thinking, and that, whenever we find a work of art that tries to subvert the idea that heroism is a male domain by simply putting a female character in the place of a male one, we must

realise that this is actually far from breaking with patriarchal patterns of hero construction. This thesis is also supported by Ursula Le Guin who, too, states that it is impossible to break with patriarchal patterns of hero construction if you actually use them for creating heroines who are more or less like their male counterparts (*Earthsea revisioned* p.8, quoted in Hourihan 68). One could actually argue that, by using stereotypically male qualities to describe a heroine, one only strengthens the patriarchal pattern instead of subverting it.

Lichtman also writes that, in fact, the life cycle of a female hero looks quite different from a male one. She says that, in every heroic journey, a woman undergoes three stages of development: the virgin phase, the mother phase and the crone phase¹⁸. During the virgin phase (designating the phase during which the girl is on her own), which begins with the separation from the mother and the first menstruation, the virgin is guided by a more experienced woman. She is to get to know herself and her body, and regarding the symbols associated with this phase, we find, among others, “blooming flowers or trees, secrets hidden in containers like boxes, pockets, jewel cases, secret rooms, hidden treasures, and finally the color of white” (11-12).

The second phase, the mother phase, is the phase which sees the creation of pieces of art such as “music, poetry, social criticisms, inventions [...]” (Lichtman 12) or maybe also the birth of children. This phase is about the integration into some society, community or family and may contain images such as “containers of all types, houses, the process of naming, harvests, water, oceans, signs of change or transformations, sacrifice of the personal for the communal [...]” (12).

The last phase in the development of the female hero is the phase of the crone. “This self in relation to eternity phase begins with the menopause, a cessation of blood flow that the ancients interpreted as the beginning of wisdom” and symbols that may appear are “white horses, birds, images of flying, witches, fairy godmothers, crossroads, dogs, thresholds, and the blending and blurring of boundaries” (Lichtman 12).

¹⁸ For the sake of completeness and in order to introduce readers to another general hero pattern, all three phases of Lichtman’s tripartite pattern of womanhood will be presented at this point, even if – considering Lyra’s age – only the first phase, if any, can later be applied to the child heroine. This chapter still aims at an overall introduction to hero concepts and should therefore not omit scientific achievements which bear relevance for general hero studies.

Lichtman states that the hero cycle was originally used to justify the existence of human beings and the fact that they were mortal (Lichtman 12). She further explains the differences that, to her mind, exist between the male and the female hero paradigm when she says that

[f]or males, this mythical storyline is bound with the adolescent belief in personal immortality which is tested and retested, and finally honed into the adult acceptance of mortality and human limitations. But for females, the hero cycle is connected to endurance, and ultimately, the survival of the human condition. The original hero cycle was female in origin. Linked to the common ancient belief of earthly existence as female (Mother Nature, Gaia), the female hero cycle exemplified the growth and maturation of the human being through experience (Lichtman 12-13).

Thinking of the male and female characters we know from literature, Susan Lichtman's theory of the difference between the male and the female heroic cycle generally seems to make sense. However, her presentation of the life of the heroine also brings back up the issue of definition of the terms hero and heroine: The heroine she portrays is more of a protagonist than a hero in the mythological sense, appearing in a work of fantastic literature. The deeds of Lichtman's heroine may be of great importance for humanity, this is beyond all question, but she is probably never in the position of saving people or even the world from some evil force. In spite of the fact that her contribution is very interesting, helps us to gain insight into an important field of research and, as it will be shown later in this thesis, is by no means altogether worthless in the context of this analysis, Lichtman apparently does not investigate into the same kind of heroic life as we do. Therefore, her approach further hints at problems linked to attempts of subversion if this subversion is only done by displacing a male hero by a female one and without changing the traditional plot points.

There have, however, been other concepts developed that should enable feminist or humanist writers of hero stories to revolutionise the hero paradigm so that it also allows for heroines without merely imitating the traditional male hero paradigm. In her article *Traits of the Female Hero*, published in 1984, Jezewsky also looks at the problem that heroines often work according to a patriarchal, male oriented hero pattern. Christine Cornea sums up Jezewsky's effort to the point when she says:

In her article "Traits of the Female Hero"[, which appeared in *New York Folklore* in 1984] , Mary Ann Jezewski looks at the similarities and differences

in the narrativisation of female heroes in Greek mythology as well as powerful women in history [...]. Jezewski looks at how the female heroes' legend revolves around the seemingly masculine deeds she accomplishes, but she also notes some significant differences in the structure of the stories accompanying these figures. One of these differences concerns the absence of the female hero's mother from many of these stories. [Jezewski] goes on to say that: "The female hero most frequently received her power from her father or through the marriage and therefore it is her father and/or husband who becomes an important part of her legend". (Cornea 165)

Jezewski developed a paradigm for heroines consisting of eighteen traits, and she applied them to various heroines from different cultural backgrounds to show that between eight and seventeen of these traits worked for all heroines (Stephens and McCallum). According to Stephens & McCallum, however, her approach is not altogether flawless, firstly because five of the traits mentioned by Jezewski as belonging to "everyday female experience" (Stephens and McCallum 118) only serve to go against the construction of a "pseudo-male" heroine (Stephens & McCallum 118), and secondly because Jezewski works with the so-called "Andromeda theme", which means that an important male character rescues a woman, often of high rank, and in turn is rewarded with wealth, a kingdom etc. (Stephens and McCallum 118). This is worth criticism because it denies agency to the heroine (Stephens and McCallum 118). In order to amend the flaws of Jezewski's pattern, Stephens & McCallum instead suggest including the "Ariadne theme" (which means that the heroine saves the main male character, however without necessarily being left sleeping on an isle like it allegedly happened to Ariadne) and explain that heroines in heterocosmic children's fiction can often be shown to work according to the rest of Jezewski's pattern. However, these heroines appear to be also marked by Lord Raglan's heroic pattern, the reason for which Stephens & McCallum think lies in authors' motivation to write against the male hero paradigm (Stephens and McCallum 118).

They therefore suggest a reduced female hero pattern containing only fourteen of Jezewski's traits: The heroine's parents are aristocratic and/or sorcerous stock (1) and her conception and/or birth happens under unusual circumstances (2). The latter trait can be split up as follows: There may be an attempt to kill her when she is still an infant (2a), and if this is the case, it is also likely that she is spirited off (2b) and brought up by foster parents far from home (2c). While she is still a child, she is not provided with talent and/or beauty (3). However, she knows "that destiny intends a significant role for

her: her story will pivot on the emergence of her innate qualities (Stephens and McCallum 119) (4). On her quest, she is helped by a like-minded female society or comparable institutions (5), and men are usually made use of for political purposes in the broadest sense of the word (6): This might, for instance also include her adoption of a male disguise at some stage of her journey (6a). Furthermore, the heroine has control over the opposite sex regarding matters of love and sexuality – “she is not entirely interpellated by conventions of romantic desire” (Stephens & McCallum 119) (7). Also, she is able to fulfil deeds usually ascribed to men rather than women, such as fighting with some evil force, for instance (8). The “Ariadne theme” appears in the story (9) and it follows a development of this theme which means that the rescued male becomes her partner in the quest (10). There can occur contradictory moments regarding her goodness (11). She then becomes a ruler (12), makes laws (13) and dies an uneventful death which may or may not be included in the story (14) (Stephens and McCallum 118-119).

Stephens & McCallum especially bring out the importance of the markers three and four when they speak of what they call “strategic identity”: “strategic identity” means that “female characters begin by inhabiting interpellated “female” roles but recognize the nature of their interpellation and subsequently construct for themselves alternative possibilities” (Stephens & McCallum 119). The markers three and four are important because they describe the character’s development: the heroine’s skills that have been paralysed by patriarchy become evident, and she gains a voice, political identity or agency (Stephens & McCallum 119).

Stephens & McCallum perfectly sum up the status quo of academic research regarding literature about heroes when they say that

[b]y the end of the twentieth century the legacy of the heroic literature of the early Middle Ages can be said to have bifurcated. On the one hand, it has been perpetuated as an aspect of cultural conservation, as a form of nationalism, as an expression of perceived archetypal human experience, and even as a conservative shorting up of patriarchal ideology. These uses tend to efface specific historical differences in favour of some sense of “eternal human values.” On the other hand, and much more recently, a small literature has begun to emerge which seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct versions of the hero paradigm in order to affirm and celebrate female experiences and values (Stephens and McCallum 124).

This is also what leads me back to one of my original research questions, perhaps the essential one, the question asking if there can be heroines in the traditional sense of the word, and if yes, under which circumstances. As this thesis, however, does not and cannot aim at answering this captivating question for the whole corpus of children's literature, let alone for all that is considered as heroic literature, the question would, more accurately posed, have to be: Is Lyra, the protagonist of *Northern Lights*, a hero in the traditional sense, a character fit to save others and the world? And if yes, how has this been made possible given the circumstance that she is a female child character?

As we have seen, a heroic life has always stereotypically been the life of a man and not the life of a woman. The practical part of this thesis will be concerned with a close reading of the primary novels' main characters. Needless to say, both of them are heroes in the sense that they are the protagonists of the novels. But are they, and especially Lyra, heroic in the perhaps more traditional sense of the word? And if yes, do they confirm any kind of heroic pattern presented in 2.1?

As heroism has forever been connotated with the male sex, Harry seems to have a better point of departure, but we have yet to analyse whether he has been constructed in accordance with any pattern and whether he rather confirms or challenges stereotypical representations of male heroes. As Harry – being male – fulfils at least one condition of a traditional hero, the analysis of Lyra promises to be even more interesting. Therefore, one big goal of the practical chapters will be to find out whether young Lyra can be seen as an exception in the context of heroic literature and children's literature, and under which conditions she can be made recognisable as a heroic character.

3. How do we learn about characters?

When we want to describe the nature of a literary character, we have two main sources we can consult in order to know about him or her: the character's deeds on the one hand and the qualities that are ascribed to him or her on the other hand. Both forms of character description will be important to our analysis of the characters of the novels. For the sake of scientific correctness, the nature of the child characters chosen for analysis in this thesis will be looked upon from the point of view of narratology. As the reader gains information from various sources and as not all such sources should be thought of as equally reliable in a narratological understanding, the quality of the information gained heavily depends on who it was that provided it.

It seems that things are quite simple and uncontroversial with what the character does: what is done has – within the text we read – the status of a fact. However, this is only the case if we know for sure that the thing described has really happened and that it has happened the way presented in the story. If another character in the novel tells the reader that something has been done by the character X, or even if the character X him- or herself, as narrator/focaliser, tells you as a reader about their doings, this does not necessarily mean that the information presented is not either subjective or a lie. In order to be able to believe what is written or said about characters or actions, one needs to be faced with a reliable narrator. A narrator is per definition reliable if the reader has no reason not to trust the way they present the story or the way judgement is passed on events (see Rimmon-Kenan 100). If the narrator of a story can be called reliable, we may trust his portrayal of the story and the characters and use it to characterise them because we know that how they are and what they do reflects the fictional reality within the work of art in question. However, apart from narratorial characterization, also figural characterisation is possible: The reader can equally gain information on a character by considering how they are characterised by other characters (altero-characterisation) or by themselves (auto-characterisation). It should, however, be noted that both of these forms of characterization must be taken with a pinch of salt as those who describe are not impartial to the character in question.

Furthermore, Maria Nikolajeva states that characters can both be “perceived (and subsequently analyzed) as real, living people or as purely textual constructions”

(*Rhetoric* 8). If the first thing applies, one speaks of mimetic characterisation: the character is treated as an individual having both a personality and feelings; he or she is perceived to be real within the fictional realm. Applies the second, one speaks of non-mimetic characterisation, which “treats [characters] as linguistic entities” (*Rhetoric* 8) and sees them as merely fulfilling the role that has been allocated to them. Both approaches must be applied with caution (see *Rhetoric* 8). Resulting from what has just been said on mimetic and non-mimetic characterisation, mimetic approaches allow us to understand the essence of a character, while non-mimetic approaches are structuralist and therefore, as has already been discussed in an earlier chapter, omit all information which is not pertinent to plot development. Nikolajeva also writes that “such models have been successfully applied both to folktales and formulaic fiction (crime novels, mystery, adventure, horror, romance)” (*Rhetoric*, 12). It is generally known that certain genres, among them almost all of the genres incorporated in our two primary texts, are plot-oriented. Nikolajeva stresses that children’s literature is generally a plot-oriented genre:

Traditional children’s fiction is unmistakably plot oriented. It is commonly believed that young readers are more interested in plot than in characters, as compared with adult readers. Since myths and folktales are conditioned by plot, operating with flat and static characters, early children’s books, imitating folk narratives, also concentrated on the plot, mainly exploring characters to clarify the morals of the story. [...] There has, however, been a notable shift in Western children’s fiction, beginning in the 1960s, toward a more profound interest in character, toward psychological, character-oriented children’s novels. In many contemporary novels for children, we observe a disintegration of the plot in its traditional meaning; nothing really “happens”. (*Rhetoric* 12-13)

With these ideas in mind, it will be very interesting to see whether the descriptions of Lyra and Harry abide by the traditions inherent to the genres borrowed from in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Northern Lights* or whether the two novels can be classified as character-oriented works.

Nikolajeva offers her readers yet another hint as to how child characters are usually presented in literature. In her chapter *From Hero to Character* (see *Rhetoric*, 26-48), Nikolajeva uses Northrop Frye’s theory on how literature functions as a displacement of myth to explain how characterisation and genre can be linked. She explains that, according to Frye, the first stage is myth. In myth, characters are presented as being

superior to human beings, to the gods and to nature. The step which follows is romantic literature, which tends to present characters as partly superior, because idealised humans are superior to other humans but they are not superior to gods and semi-gods. The next, third, stage in the displacement is the high mimetic narrative: it presents humans – heroes – who are superior to other humans but who are not immune against forces of nature like death, for instance. The fourth level of displacement is the low mimetic narrative, which presents humans who are like other humans, neither being superior nor inferior to them. The last stage is the ironic narrative which portrays characters who are inferior to others. Animals and children would usually belong to this category, thus, according to Frye's definition, they would be unfit to perform as heroes. Nikolajeva, however, stresses that in spite of this, child characters can be empowered and also figure in Frye's other categories (see *Rhetoric*, 26), which makes an application of hero myths to children's literature possible (see *Rhetoric*, 28-29), even if myth is not typically part of literature for children (see *Rhetoric*, 30).

There exists a variety of ways in which characters be read. As chapter two has shown, there are numerous structuralist approaches to characters of various literary genres; even looking at a character's inner life instead of at his or her function, one has to realise that there is a wide range of angles from which one can look at a character. As just stated, information on a literary character can come from various inner-textual and outer-textual sources which do not necessarily all share the same level of reliability. It is the ambition of the following practical chapters of this thesis to look at the protagonists of the chosen novels from a number of angles so that the puzzle of hero construction can finally be pieced together.

4. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

4.1. Harry Potter and structuralist models of a heroic life

As one might already suggest, not all of the four structuralist patterns presented are equally compatible with how Rowling chose to construct the protagonist of her story. If one considers Rank's schema of the heroic life, one can say that it is basically well compatible with Harry's life.

First of all and as already mentioned when discussing Segal's assessment of Otto Rank's schema, Rank's description covers the life of the hero from birth to young adulthood, which is congruent with Harry Potter's complete story (he is seventeen, thus a young adult, at the end of the last novel). Nevertheless, Rank's schema is also highly useful if one chooses to examine only the first part of the novels, as I do in the present thesis.

Harry is the son of distinguished parents; at least they are repeatedly presented as great and very talented wizards and exceedingly decent and virtuous people. Although we know nothing of Harry's conception or birth and thus cannot judge if any of it happened under the difficult or even unusual circumstances Rank's pattern dictates, we know that there existed a prophecy well before his birth. Strictly speaking, however, neither Harry nor the reader knows this at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* – this information is only presented much later in Harry's story. In fact, the prophecy is never addressed in the first novel¹⁹. As it is well known that Voldemort, who could be regarded as Harry's negative father substitute²⁰, has learned about the prophecy and thus the danger Harry will pose to his absolute "reign", one could argue that Voldemort's attempt to kill Harry is how Rank's plot point of the father who tries to kill his son because of a prophecy has been incorporated in Rowling's story. In *Harry Potter*, the boy is not surrendered because of that prophecy, but he is almost killed because of it. The part of the story in which he is surrendered in front of the Dursleys' house is actually only a consequence of his becoming an orphan, so things are slightly mingled

¹⁹ In fact, the first time it is mentioned is in the 5th part of Harry Potter's story

²⁰ By way of example I would like to mention M. Katherine Grimes who, in her article "Harry Potter: Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero", elaborates on Harry's surrogate fathers and mothers. Substitutes, according to Andrea Hurst (187), become necessary when the actual parents have to be displaced.

and shifted in Rowling's work. Also, we know that Harry is not, like Moses, surrendered to the water. Nevertheless, there are some instances of water imagery²¹: when all first-years, including Harry, have to cross Hogwart's lake by boat, or when, at the beginning of the first book, Hagrid fetches Harry from across a lake to take him away from the Dursleys and to Hogwarts. The latter event probably comes closest to Rank's plot point of "the boy saved from the water by a shepherd". The lake at Hogwarts can further be regarded as marking a threshold, very much like the woods one finds in fairy tales.

While Harry Potter is not suckled by any kind of animal, like Romulus and Remus have famously been, he is definitely saved by a "lowly person": Hagrid²². In many hero myths, one finds shepherds who save and raise the hero, and it is exactly this to which Harry's rescuing from his parent's house by Hagrid – a gamekeeper – alludes to. According to Rank, the grown up hero finds out about his parents. This, too, can be found in a modified version in Harry Potter's story: Although Harry is not really grown up at that point, he learns about how his parents really died and also about who they actually were, along with many other things that were kept secret from him beforehand, like his belonging to the magical realm. In the broadest sense, this learning of the truth is tantamount to a first initiation ritual: Although Harry's process of initiation covers at least a large part – if not all – of Harry's story, his entering of the magic realm could be seen as a metaphor of his taking a first step towards adulthood. As his parents are dead and also because he has never been abandoned by them but, at the utmost, by Dumbledore and Hagrid, Harry cannot and need not be acknowledged by them because he has never been sent away by his true parents but only by two of his positive father substitutes, Hagrid and Dumbledore. Neither, his relation to his parents is a source of embarrassment for the young hero. His achieving rank therefore is his own "merit": it is not the connection to his parents that has made him famous but his holding out against Voldemort, even if it was only his mother's love and the help of friends which made that possible.

While Rank's schema is quite congruent with Harry's story, one has to admit that Joseph Campbell's as well as Raglan's pattern do not fit his story too well. Both men

²¹ This has equally been mentioned by Katherine Grimes (15).

²² Although Grimes suggests that the Dursleys could be seen as taking this role as they, too, are lowly people in a way.

conceive of heroism as the property of an adult and not of a child, and even if this renders Harry Potter's achievements even greater and more heroic and nicely demonstrates how child characters can be empowered, the application of their patterns remains problematic.

In Campbell's case, one could of course easily interpret Harry's leaving the Dursleys and his rather miserable life as his crossing the threshold to adventure; one could even argue that he is lured by the fascinations of this unknown world and by his chance to exchange his position of the proverbial odd man out he represents in the house of the Dursleys for his status of the famous and much-admired Harry Potter every one keeps telling him he actually is. However, apart from the fact that Campbell uses a three-step story line in which the hero first departs, fulfils heroic deeds and then returns, most of the other plot points seem utterly irrelevant to the description of a child's story: sexuality and marriage, for example, as reward for his heroic behaviour, are definitely not part of Harry's story, least of all in the first novel which primarily concerns us for this thesis, and if at all, both is merely hinted at when Harry falls in love with Cho and Ginny much later in the story. The incompatibility of this plot point as well as the possibility of a trivialisation of this (first love instead of a fully fledged sexual encounter) has equally been addressed by Nikolajeva (see *Rhetoric* 27). Furthermore, Harry must not fight a "shadow presence" in order to be allowed to enter the magic realm, neither is there a chance of "father atonement" – Harry's biological parents are dead, and while there is no need for reconciliation with his positive father substitutes such as Dumbledore, Sirius or Hagrid, atonement with his negative father substitute, Voldemort, seems impossible, not only because Harry could never forgive his killing of James and Lily Potter, but also because of two other constraints: Firstly because there is the prophecy which will in any case come true (although one should again mention here that the reader only gains knowledge of the prophecy when Harry is much older), and secondly and most importantly because this cannot happen as long as the story is to continue: if Voldemort stops being Harry's ultimate opponent, the story will invariably come to an end. Also, the hero's return to the Dursleys is not the hardest part of his journey; rather, it is the unwanted consequence of the coming-to-an-end of Harry's first year in Hogwarts. Thinking very metaphorically, one could understand the plot point of the hero's return rather as a return from the place where Harry finally encounters

Voldemort, defeats him and thus saves the Philosopher's Stone; this interpretation, however, seems to be rather far-fetched and coerced.

Raglan's pattern is problematic for roughly the same reasons. As has already been pointed out, Raglan's schema does not cover the hero's childhood; this is of course a problem because Harry's story is the account of his infancy and his development from a young boy who does not know where he really belongs to a young man who has been introduced into the difficulties of life and of his society. It would be hard to justify an application of a pattern which has been developed so as not to treat this part of the hero's existence for describing exactly this omitted phase of his life. Furthermore, one experiences difficulties when trying to apply some of the single plot points to Harry. For instance, Raglan says that both parents need to be aristocratic. One could, I suppose, argue that Harry's parents were of noble origin – "noble" here used with reference to their character – and that they stood out from the masses, but they were in no case regal. Also, they certainly were no relatives to one another. Again, we know nothing of Harry's conception, which means that also plot point number four is not fulfilled. One could metaphorically regard his father as a "Quiddich god" because he was a great player. By logical deduction, one could therefore regard Harry as the son of a god in the broadest possible sense of the word, however, one also has to admit that this interpretation is a rather a far-fetched and most certainly not admissible interpretation of plot point number five.

What is more, Raglan has included the element of the father who wants to kill the hero, which is familiar to us also from Rank's schema of the heroic life. Although Harry is not really spirited off, we at least know that he is brought up by foster parents, in a place which is at least figuratively if not spatially far away from the house of his biological parents. As Harry is not the son of a king, he cannot return in order to reign his future kingdom; one could, however, argue that upon his return to the magical world, he gains a higher status – he stops being Dudley's unwanted stepbrother to become the famous Harry Potter, "the boy who lived" (Rowling 7). Moreover, Harry, as a boy of non-regal origin, has no subjects with whom he could fall into disgrace. What comes closest to this is what happens after Harry, Ron and Hermione free Hagrid's dragon and are caught by Filch: When Harry and the others lose Gryffindor a hundred and fifty points,

Harry temporarily falls into disgrace with his fellow students who then eschew him (Rowling 264-265); nevertheless, Harry is not driven away.

Although his almost-death in part seven could be said to be mysterious in some respects and could be seen to substitute the plot point “death” in Raglan’s pattern, Harry’s “death experience” is not nearly as tragic as Raglan depicts it for his hero because in Harry’s case “death” does not actually mark an ending but rather the start of a world free from Voldemort’s evil power.

While the application of Campbell’s and Raglan’s patterns proves rather forced and difficult, Propp’s pattern suits the purpose of sketching Harry’s life slightly better. According to Propp, a fairy tale starts by an introduction to the hero and his (family) situation, which is a very important element of the magic tale. This is also what one encounters at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*: one learns where, with whom and how Harry lives and that the reason for these circumstances is that his parents are dead. One could also say that the death of Harry’s parents is congruent with Propp’s function of “leaving” because according to Propp, death counts as a rather extreme variant of this abandonment.

In an abstract way, both bans and orders are imposed on Harry while he lives at the Dursleys’: while he is not allowed to ask any questions or open his own letters, he has to live in a cupboard. As Harry already finds himself in a situation well comparable to Cinderella’s, which in itself could be seen as a punishment, the arrangement of functions is not like Propp intended it: According to Propp’s pattern, the ban/order is ignored by the hero and this then causes the punishment. In Harry Potter’s case, this sequence seems to be reversed. Like Cinderella, Harry is – even before having the chance of ignoring any order or ban – doubly punished by the death of his parents and, as a result of this, by his life with the Dursleys. Also, one has to say that Harry basically seems to obey the rules in the Dursley household, so this cannot be the reason for his punishment. It is only at a much later stage of his life, in the course of the third Harry Potter novel, that the balance of power changes and that he starts to openly oppose the wishes of his aunt and uncle.

According to Propp, the hero's ignoring the order marks the moment when his opponent appears on the scene. Also here, the temporal order of things is mixed up because Voldemort appears much earlier on the scene and his killing James and Lily Potter as well as his attacking Harry are the actions he takes in order to inflict damage on the family. According to Propp, the opponent next tries to gain information on the hero. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, we recover this function when Lord Voldemort repeatedly sends out some of his followers to collect news about Harry and his whereabouts; additionally, he enters Harry's mind in order to gain information about the hero and his plans at numerous occasions throughout the whole of the story. Voldemort also outwits Hagrid in order to find out more about the Philosopher's Stone, which would parallel Propp's sixth function: to do this, he makes Quirrell dress up as a stranger and talks Hagrid into telling him how to get past the three-headed dog guarding the stone. Hagrid is taken in by the trick (VII) and is harmed because he accepts a dragon which brings him in a dangerous position (VIII). While for Propp this is the function that concludes the introductory part of the tale, it belongs to the main part of Rowling's story.

Hagrid, however, is not the only one who is deceived by Voldemort. Harry, too, is on the wrong track when he suspects Professor Snape of wanting to kill him and steal the Philosopher's Stone. As Quirrel himself has tellingly put it: "Yes, Severus does seem the type, doesn't he? So useful to have him swooping around like an overgrown bat. Next to him, who would suspect p-p-poor st-stuttering P-Professor Quirrell?" (Rowling 310). Here, Rowling makes use of the story's fairy tale appeal and of the reader's knowledge of how this genre usually works: she deceives the reader in the same way in which Quirrell and Voldemort have baffled Harry, namely by black-and-white character drawing. It is because Snape has throughout the entire preceding story been presented as a negative, utterly unfair and cruel character that the reader believes him to be the true villain. He indeed "seems the type", and a reader who recognises Harry's story as a kind of fairy tale easily falls into the trap of thinking in those two categories, simply because of the conventions that we know usually go with fairy tales.

Like the villain in Propp's pattern, Voldemort commits more than just one crime, and like Propp's hero, Harry is willing to stop him. If one would like to go even further in one's interpretation, one could, in the sense of plot point number eleven, say that he

leaves the Dursleys' house and his everyday life existence behind in order to go on a quest for identity. Furthermore and as we know, the fairy tale hero has to leave home in order for the action to develop. Thus, his accompanying Hagrid to Hogwarts School of Wizardry could also be regarded as nothing more than a function which simply needs to be fulfilled. One could argue that this element of the hero's leaving is doubled when he decides to stop Voldemort from stealing the stone: His decision to leave the safe part of Hogwarts in order to make his way to a dangerous and actually forbidden area of the school, and more accurately his entering the room where the stone is ultimately hidden seem to double Propp's function of the leaving.

Down in the chamber where the stone is kept, Harry is asked questions and he is attacked, very much like Propp prescribes it in his pattern. What is different from Propp's schema, however, is that while Harry is put to the test, he already has magical aid; there is no need to acquire any. Apart from his and his friends' magical powers which got him that far in the first place, he is, once again, magically saved by his mother's powerful love. His mother's love for him therefore seems not only to have functioned as a magical aid in the night his parents were killed but also during this second encounter with the Dark Lord.

As part of his trial the fairy tale hero has to pass a number of tests. Harry passes the tests which allow him access to the room where the stone is kept. Because of his pure heart he is able to take possession of the stone (XIV) which he finds inside his pocket (XV). Then, in congruence with Propp's pattern, he and his opponent start a fight (XVII) in which he is wounded (we know that he is later taken to the hospital wing). Nevertheless, Voldemort is defeated for the moment being (XVIII). Clearly, however, the damage Voldemort caused when he killed Harry's parents cannot be done away with, so this function established by Propp cannot be fulfilled. The hero returns to the Dursleys for the summer holidays (XX). This is basically where the first book ends.

According to Propp, this would be the moment when the hero can embark upon a new adventure; this clearly does not happen at the end of the first *Harry Potter*, but one could say that the same effect is created with each new sequel that follows. As a consequence of this, certain functions are recurrent in each *Harry Potter*. Such a thing is not problematic according to Propp, who points out that whole sequences of functions

may be repeated within the scope of one single fairy tale (see chapter 2.4.1). There are no fake heroes in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, so Harry does not have to pass any extra tests at this stage. Also, there is no uncertainty as to who the true hero is. Although Hermione and Ron are known to have been of great help, Harry always stays *the* hero of the story. This becomes clear when, at the end of the school year, the three of them are awarded extra points for Gryffindor, Harry being awarded the highest number of points (Rowling 328). Propp's hero's marriage and ascension to the throne do not appear in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* for reasons that have already earlier been referred to.

Let us now take a closer look at how well we can use Jan de Vries' pattern to describe Harry Potter's life. Harry Potter already breaks with Jan de Vries' pattern when the reader learns nothing of Harry's procreation. This is because the story simply does not include this part of Harry's life. Also, the reader is given only little information on how James and Lily Potter met each other, the only such instance being when Hagrid arrives to pick up Harry in order to take him away from the Dursleys and to Hogwarts. This is when Harry's aunt Petunia speaks openly about the feelings she had towards her sister:

But for my mother and father, oh no, it was Lily this and Lily that, they were proud of having a witch in the family! [...] Then she met that Potter at school and they left and got married and had you, and of course I knew you'd be just the same, just as strange, just as – as – *abnormal* – and then, if you please, she went and got herself blown up and we got landed with you! (Rowling 63)

There is no information on Harry's birth, so one also cannot tell whether there actually were special circumstances surrounding the hero's birth. As there is no such indication, however, we can conclude that this probably was not the case. On the other hand, Harry is, like Jan de Vries' hero, threatened during his youth, but in a way different from de Vries' hero because his hero was abandoned by his father or mother for some reason. Harry is rather threatened because of Voldemort's usurpation and his intention to kill everyone who might get in his way. Again, Voldemort could be seen as Harry's negative father substitute here; although it was not even really him who abandoned Harry, his killing of Harry's parents was the reason why Dumbledore decided to leave him with the Dursleys. Like Campbell's hero, de Vries' hero is found by a shepherd, who, as I have already discussed earlier, is represented by Hagrid who saves Harry after the death of his parents.

In line with the pattern presented by de Vries, Harry Potters gives away his powers quite early in his youth. In the story, Harry unconsciously does magic well before knowing that he is a wizard. An example of this would be the scene in which Harry makes the glass dividing Dudley and the snake in the zoo vanish (Rowling 35-36). Also, the reader learns that Harry can make hair grow unnaturally fast. When Harry tells Hagrid that he cannot possibly be a hero, Hagrid replies:

“Not a wizard, eh? Never made things happen when you was scared, or angry?” Harry looked into the fire. Now he came to think about it...every odd thing that had ever made his aunt and uncle furious with him had happened when he, Harry, had been upset or angry...chased by Dudley’s gang, he had somehow found himself out of their reach...dreading going to school with that ridiculous haircut, he’d managed to make it grow back...and the very last time Dudley had hit him, hadn’t he got his revenge, without even realising he was doing it? Hadn’t he set a boa constrictor on him? (Rowling 67-68)

Furthermore, de Vries writes that heroes sometimes become invulnerable, which certainly is not the case with Harry. Needless to say, Harry fulfils numerous deeds: he fights a mountain troll as early as in his first year in Hogwarts and he even fights a dragon in the fourth part, which takes on one of the perhaps most clichéd fighting scenarios found in heroic narratives. Nevertheless, Harry is not completely invulnerable; his mother’s love can merely save him from Lord Voldemort.

After having passed a number of tests, de Vries’ hero wins the heart of a beautiful virgin. As already mentioned, marriage and sexuality normally do not appear in literature for children, so Harry does not have any kind of sexual relationship in the first novel. It is true that, when he gets older, he falls in love with Cho Chang and later even has a relationship with Ginny Weasley, however, at the time when these things occur, Harry is no longer a child but a teenager, and his story is, strictly speaking, no longer a story for children: As Harry gets older and develops, the themes and problems change as well. In fact, if one bears in mind that the *Harry Potter* novels have, among other things, been classified as a bildungsroman, this evolutionary aspect of theme in Harry Potter can be very simply explained by the story’s evolution from a work of children’s literature to a work for young adults.

As a last point, de Vries mentions that the hero’s death is often miraculous. This element is easily detected at the end of the last novel when Harry needs to be sacrificed

so that Voldemort can be killed: Voldemort kills Harry, who does not fully die but can return to life due to the fact that Voldemort formerly used his blood in order to stay alive himself.

Summary

As the above application of the five hero patterns chosen easily shows, not all patterns of a heroic life are equally useful when describing Harry Potter's life. It has already been stated that Raglan and Campbell's schemata prove somewhat problematic due to their presupposing that heroism is something one does not really find among children: According to them, heroism rather occurs at a later point in life; whichever heroic deeds happen during childhood are merely preparation for what is yet to come. This aspect becomes even more of a problem if one reconsiders that this thesis actually concentrates on the first books on Harry and Lyra respectively. So, considering these two patterns too closely would actually be missing the point of this thesis, and even if one considers that this makes Harry even more special because he is an "impossible" hero, it simply has to be said that most of Campbell's plot points cannot be detected in Harry's story even in a very metaphorical way. To be fair, one has to add that Raglan's pattern would still be the better choice to describe Harry's life, because in spite of the fact that it includes a number of plot points irrelevant to a child hero, his pattern at least mentions the hero's childhood.

We can say that Propp's pattern, which closely describes a fairy tale hero, is about as fit as Raglan's schema to describe Harry's heroic life: There are many congruities but also some incongruities. Considering the extensiveness of Raglan's schema, this is actually surprising and very impressive. Neither Propp nor de Vries specify the age of their heroes, so it is hard to judge whether young heroism is admissible for them. While de Vries does address the hero's youth, Propp does not mention anything about the hero's birth or anything about his/her childhood, which might indicate that for Propp these things are of no relevance for the plot whatsoever. The largest problem one encounters when applying Propp's pattern, however, is that the functions one is able to detect in Harry's story do not appear according to Propp's chronology of events. This is

problematic because chronology counts more than completeness for Propp (see chapter 2.1.4).

De Vries' pattern resembles Harry's life quite closely, however, it has to be said that Rank's pattern fits the purpose of presenting Harry as a hero best: Almost all plot points described by Rank can be found in Harry's story. The impression that Rank's pattern is extremely well compatible with Harry's life is also shared by Katherine Grimes, who also applied Rank's theory to Harry Potter.

Furthermore, it might be a good idea to reconsider Katalin Horn's partly structuralist hero model (see chapter 2.2; Horn 42-44). Harry basically fulfils all the plot points she mentions as making up what she refers to as "outer themes of the fairy tale", that is, the hero's functioning as heroic persona; Regarding the so-called "inner themes", the hero's character traits and their development, Harry also seems to fulfil most of Horn's requirements: He does everything he has to and can do in order to save the world and the people around him from the vicious Lord Voldemort, and he clearly is the chosen one and savours, as such, a heightened status within the wizarding community. Horn mentions another very important aspect concerning the hero's status when she explains that the fairy tale enables anyone to be the chosen one, independent from mundane factors such as age, ethnic origin and presumably also gender. This shows that fairy tales are ideal bases on which to create child heroes and also heroines.

However, judging from the applicability of Rank and de Vries' patterns that the young hero is a more or less typical mythological hero²³ or from the utility of Propp's and Horn's pattern that he is a fairy tale hero would be jumping to conclusions as hero construction works not only by fitting a character into a certain plot.

As chapter three has shown us, characters can be also described by using other parameters and categories of description than structuralist role allotment. Apart from merely taking a certain role and being defined by it, characters can be analysed with regard to their inner life. Harry and Lyra can thus be described both in terms of their

²³It should be mentioned at this point that Rank's hero is not actually a mythological hero in de Vries' sense. As Katalin Horn has mentioned (see page 34 of this thesis), Rank in fact works with theories of depth psychology. However, he has designed his pattern by comparing the lives of the heroes who appear in a number of myths, which is also why I prefer to characterise his hero as a mythological one.

function within their story (non-mimetic approach, see (*Rhetoric*, 7-8) and as psychological characters who are real within the borders of the fictional world they inhabit (mimetic approach, see *Rhetoric*, 7-8) If one tries to apply hero patterns to characters, this approach can be called non-mimetic: it describes how they act and function as heroes of the stories.

Using a non-mimetic approach, I have just discussed various ways of describing Harry's functioning as heroic character, having established him as mainly Rankian hero. As has been shown, it is possible to borrow elements from various kinds of heroic patterns: Harry's story not only contains elements such as the prophecy, which one is most likely to find in patterns which describe the life of a mythological hero, but also several plot points usually found in fairy tales. There is, however, one worrying aspect to these labels: both the mythological and the fairy tale hero have traditionally been flat characters: the stories never really considered the inner qualities of the heroes but they concentrated on the deeds they fulfilled. Although traditionally the case, characters appearing in the literary genres that shaped our primary texts need not necessarily be completely flat. The following chapter aims at finding out in how far Harry Potter is able to break with this tradition and whether he can be called a round character.

4.2 Towards a mimetic approach to the character Harry Potter

4.2.1 Harry Potter according to the narrator

As has just been shown, to label a literary persona as mythological or fairy tale hero, or even as a hero as such, can already entail certain expectations when it comes to character construction: for instance, that there is not much character to be analysed. The essential information about a hero would then be his or her identity as heroic character. It has already been mentioned that there are two main approaches to characters: the mimetic approach in which one regards characters as psychological entities who have an emotional inner life, and the non-mimetic approach in which there is little more to characters than the role they play within the story. I have equally referred to the possibility of viewing the hero pattern approach as a non-mimetic approach. It is the aim of this chapter to look at how Harry has been constructed with regard to character

qualities and in how far they correlate to stereotypical ideas of “being heroic”. At this point, however, one can easily run into difficulties because it seems challenging if not sometimes impossible to separate character qualities from Harry’s actions and reactions to certain situations. Thus, if Harry’s actions and reactions are pertinent to the construction of his character and therefore serve to describe Harry’s qualities, I will include them in this chapter without negating the role they might play for the non-mimetic analysis.

Chapter three has already briefly referred to ways of gaining information about characters. One must differentiate between two main concepts: narrator characterisation and character characterisation, the latter of which can be subdivided into auto- and altero-characterisation. In this chapter, I will first have a look at all three modes of characterisation separately.

Regarding the narrator in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, I agree with Mühlbauer when she says that the *Harry Potter* books do not use authorial narration the way one would expect authorial narration to work (see Mühlbauer 12). In fact, one would have to say that, based on Franz K. Stanzel’s narrative model (Stanzel, in Fenske 23-26) and disregarding the introductory chapter (see Rowling 7-24), one finds a standard omniscient narrative situation, an authorial one. However, this authorial narration is at certain moments interrupted by a third person figural narrator which allows the reader insights into Harry’s thoughts and emotional life. One could describe the narrator as authorial and trustworthy in what he says, however, one should also say that the reader is never presented with the whole truth but is told only as much as Harry knows (see Mühlbauer 12).

Professor Snape, for instance, is described in a way which tempts the reader to share Harry’s standpoint. There are vivid descriptions of his cruelty towards Harry during classes, and whenever his secret discussions with Quirrell take place, things are presented so as to suggest Snape’s threatening of him. What is more, the story’s clear fairy-tale touch tempts the reader to carry out a, in fact, very reductive black-and-white character separation which tends to omit the grey shades in between. The same thing actually happens when one looks at how Professor Quirrell is presented: Due to his portrayal as a nervous, somehow peculiar professor, the reader could easily fall into the

trap of thinking of him as altogether harmless. Thus, the reader's knowledge is restricted to Harry's level of information even if Harry is not the one who tells the story.

If we consider this, Hourihan's statement that a hero's story is essentially *his* story gains another dimension (Hourihan 38): It is his story, so the reader sees and learns through his eyes and shares his point of view. However, although this is true for the story, it seems equally important to stress that the narrator in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* does not lie to the reader when leaving out pieces of information: What the reader is told is never false but only restricted to what Harry as focaliser knows. For instance, the reader knows that Snape is a negative character, however it is always Harry and never the narrator who declares that Snape is the one who wants to steal the stone. Therefore, the reader needs to be very attentive, and it has to be clearly distinguished between what is merely Harry's impression and what is incontestably true within the fictitious world the book creates.

By choosing this kind of narrative mode, Rowling enables the reader to share Harry's emotions and his quest with him. Therefore, it is not really the narrator who betrays the readers but rather inattentive readers who betray themselves when they, due to their high degree of identification with the character Harry Potter, accept his opinions and impressions as if they were facts. The idea that the reader shares Harry's perspective has also been pointed out by Claudia Fenske who writes that

[t]he Harry Potter novels are narrated in an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrative situation [...], i.e. the narrator is not part of the story and does not belong to the text's world, referring to Stanzel's terminology [...]. Harry's perspective is the dominant point of view and according to Genette he is the focaliser. (Fenske 34)

Even while – or maybe because – a reader of *Harry Potter* is faced with this peculiar but very interesting kind of narrative mode, one can say that one gains most of the information regarding Harry's character from the narrator, so this will be the point from which I will start my analysis.

In fact, the very description of Harry's looks is of great interest to Harry's construction as a hero because it stands in stark opposition to what many would expect a hero to look like:

Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's and Dudley was about four times bigger than he was. Harry had a thin face, knobby knees, black hair and bright-green eyes. He wore round glasses held together with a lot of Sellotape because of all the times Dudley had punched him on the nose. The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning. (Rowling 27)

Considering the above description of Harry's looks, most people would agree that Harry does not have the looks of a stereotypical hero. He is portrayed in a way that would suggest that he is neither physically exceedingly strong nor very muscle-bound, thus not really living up to the stereotypical ideal of a male person. On the other hand, however, his build comes in quite handy when he is chosen to become the Seeker in Gryffindor's Quidditch team because "Seekers were usually the smallest and fastest players" (Rowling 197). Therefore, Harry's physical appearance must be seen as an advantage rather than as a disadvantage, and also as a circumstance that puts him into a fortunate position compared to the other characters in the book. He has the best chances to be the hero of the story not only because he is male (see Hourihan 58-106), but also because of his talent and his fulfilling the physical preconditions to become Gryffindor's hero on the Quidditch field. Being chosen as Seeker, however, is not the only way in which his superior position towards the rest of the pupils at Hogwarts is accentuated: Harry is not only the new Seeker²⁴ of the team but he's also the youngest player in a century (see Rowling 166), and the only first-year who is allowed to have an own broomstick, which, in order to heighten the effect of his pre-eminence, of his being the exception, even more, he receives as a present from Professor McGonagall (see Rowling 179). As McGonagall is known as a rather strict professor, her making an exception and sending him the Nimbus Two Thousand serves to demonstrate Harry's favourable position. Nevertheless, all these things would not nearly have the same effect as it not for his life at the Dursleys and Lord Voldemort's failed attempt to kill him when he was still a baby. Ultimately, all of the factors just mentioned serve to mark him as a very special

²⁴ Harry is endowed with the position of the seeker not only on the Quidditch field. As a hero undertaking a heroic quest, he is a seeker in the figural sense of the word, "seeking" to succeed against the dark Lord Voldemort.

child and an extraordinary wizard and to empower him, without which he, as a child, could never have become the hero of the story.

Apart from Harry's looks and age, which already suggest that he is not the stereotypical kind of hero, Harry is bullied by his cousin Dudley and his friends (see Rowling 39) and seems to have little say when it comes to his rights: his aunt and uncle make him live in a cupboard and they do not even allow him to open and read any letters addressed to him (see Rowling 45-49). This "Cinderella motif" makes Harry Potter's rise appear even more spectacular and him, having grown up in a wizard-free and also wizard-hostile environment and among people with apparently low moral values, even more of a "natural" hero and talent when it comes to performing magic.

Furthermore, the reader learns that in spite of – or maybe because of – his rather difficult childhood he knows empathy and is ready to stand up for and help those who cannot help themselves. This becomes evident rather early in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* when he feels sorry for the boa constrictor in the zoo (Rowling 34-35), but also later when he sticks by his friendship to Hagrid (Rowling 88) or sticks up for Ron (Rowling 120) or Neville (Rowling 161-163). In the just mentioned cases, he chivalrously defends the good from the bad, who in all three cases is Malfoy. This shows the reader the chivalrous, Robin-Hood-like Harry Potter who does whatever it takes – also breaking the rules²⁵, if necessary – to do the right thing and to help the ones who are in a less favourable position than he is, a character who is loyal to his friends by becoming the enemy of their enemies. Harry Potter stands as much for traditional values as Gryffindor does, and his acceptance in the Gryffindor house also serves as a way of characterising him:

You might belong in Gryffindor,
Where dwell the brave at heart,
Their daring, nerve and chivalry
Set Gryffindors apart (Rowling 130);

²⁵ At this point, it seems worth recalling Horn's portrayal of the hero. According to her, heroes are, in spite of their benevolence and greatness, never altogether flawless (Horn 42). In Harry's case, not being flawless means being a rule breaker and experiencing moments of spitefulness towards his enemies. A good example for the latter is Harry's reaction to Malfoy's fear when they have to do detention in the Forbidden Forest (Rowling 270).

Furthermore, Harry is also indirectly characterised by the hat's consideration to put him into the Slytherin house. This, however, will be dealt with in more detail when I will consider how Harry Potter is characterised by others; for now, the hat's incertitude should nevertheless be considered as a reminder that even an intrinsically good character like Harry Potter has the potential to become evil.

Interestingly enough, this aspect is also stressed elsewhere in the book, namely when Harry and Hagrid buy Harry's wand from Mr Ollivander and learn that Voldemort's wand was the brother of Harry's (Rowling 96). This is not only highly ironic but also indicative due to the fact that wands choose their owners (Rowling 93). One could therefore argue that there are some parallels between Harry and Voldemort, even if one of them is intrinsically evil while the other is honest and good. Both of them are highly talented, as also Mr Ollivander mentions: "The wand chooses the wizard, remember...I think we must expect great things from you, Mr Potter...After all, He Who Must Not Be Named did great things – terrible, yes, but great" (Rowling 96). Here, Harry Potter is somehow identified as Lord Voldemort's good counterpart, the only difference between them apparently being that he is a positive character instead of a negative one. By the time this characterisation through Mr Ollivander and the wand happens, the reader has already got a feeling for the kind of character Harry represents, and Mr Ollivander's "prophecy" can be seen not only as a kind of cliff-hanger which makes the reader want to read on, but also as an indicator that Harry's adventure and deeds will be great. Actually, one could argue that the fact that Voldemort is Harry's archenemy already shows that he is very differently natured. Therefore, anything we learn about Voldemort can be seen as an indirect characterisation of Harry Potter.

As a hero, Harry of course has to pass several tests, both of the psychological and the physical kind. On the one hand, Harry has to prove himself a hero in character, which he does, for instance, when he chivalrously stands up for his friends, or, less obviously perhaps, when he has to show psychological strength. A very good example of this would be his almost-dependence on the Mirror of Erised: Harry is obsessed with contemplating the image of him happily joined with his family and is at the point of getting stuck in the past; nevertheless, he finally manages to concentrate on his heroic tasks, and by doing so proves himself a worthy hero. Apart from the psychological challenges Harry has to face, he, very much like the mythological hero, has to survive

physical battles in which he not only has to prove his intelligence but also his bravery, loyalty and magical talent. This is for example the case when he and Ron fight the mountain troll in the girls' toilets in order to save Hermione who has, at this point, assumed the role of the famous damsel-in-distress (Rowling 189-192). While Hermione cannot rescue herself and almost dies, Harry does something "both very brave and very stupid" (Rowling 191) and, jumping onto the troll's back, manages to overcome him. This passage demonstrates Harry's bravery, but, more importantly, it presents us with yet another ingredient indispensable to a hero's success: his ability to live for the task and for the moment, blanking out all the risk and the logic. Harry has this ability, which is not only apparent in the troll scene but first and foremost when he decides to prevent the stealing of the Philosopher's Stone:

'SO WHAT?' Harry shouted. "Don't you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort's coming back! Haven't you heard what it was like when he was trying to take over? There won't be any Hogwarts to get expelled from! He'll flatten it, or turn it into a school for the Dark Arts! Losing points doesn't matter any more, can't you see? D'you think he'll leave you and your families alone if Gryffindor win the House Cup? If I get caught before I can get to the Stone, well, I'll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there. It's only dying a bit later than I would have done, because I'm never going to the Dark Side! I'm going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! Voldemort killed my parents, remember? (Rowling 291-292)

This scene speaks volumes about Harry's character: not only does it show a hero who knows what he wants, but it also demonstrates that Harry knows what he has to lose but nevertheless sticks to his priorities. Also, it is evidence of his loyalty to his parents and Dumbledore – in short, to all those who have wanted to stop Voldemort from coming into power.

The moment in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* when Harry has to show most bravery certainly is when he has to enter in a direct battle with Lord Voldemort towards the end of the book. Although Harry is shocked and "[feels] as if Devil's Snare [roots] him to the spot [, unable to] move a muscle [,] [p]etrified" (Rowling 315), Harry stays very cool given that he faces the killer of so many people, among them his own parents. He also sticks to his principles and, in spite of his fear, which to feel I would argue is natural for a boy of his age when facing the murderer of his parents, is not intimidated by Lord Voldemort's attempts of frightening him:

‘Don’t be a fool,’ snarled [Voldemort]. ‘Better save your own life and join me ... or you’ll meet the same end as your parents ... They died begging me for mercy ...’

‘LIAR!’ Harry shouted suddenly.

Quirrell was walking backwards at him, so that Voldemort could still see him. The evil face was now smiling.

‘How touching ...’ it hissed. ‘I always value bravery ... Yes, boy, your parents were brave ... I killed your father first and he put up a courageous fight ... but your mother needn’t have died ... she was trying to protect you ... Now give me the Stone, unless you want her to have died in vain.’ (Rowling 316)

It now seems to make sense to reconsider Hegel’s master-slave principle which I have very briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter. Like the master needs the slave in order to justify his position of the master (and vice versa) and men arguably need women in order to negotiate their identity by regarding them as the Other, it seems that heroic characters in literature are in need of less heroic ones in order to gain an identity as brave and chivalrous entities.

This can most obviously be seen in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* where Harry appears to be constantly surrounded by characters like Neville, Malfoy, but also Hermione, who, at least in difficult and dangerous situations, are not always able to share his bravery. I have already addressed one of the times where Hermione serves as foil for Harry’s bravery when discussing the troll-scene (Rowling 190-192), in which she has become literally petrified and Harry has to take the initiative and save her. It seems that, in spite of her great magical talent and her mastering of all possible spells, Hermione is sometimes unable to apply her knowledge when facing danger. This is probably a natural reaction; however, in the exaggerated world of heroism, this reaction as well as Ron’s apparent uncertainty regarding what to do in the face of a mountain troll serve to strengthen the impression of Harry’s bravery.

Also, there is another scene in which Hermione assumes the unfortunate role of the hero’s foil. This is when the three friends try to get to the Philosopher’s Stone: although Hermione basically remembers how to fight Devil’s Snare (Rowling 299), the stress of the moment makes her lose all her logic and forget her witch powers so that she is unable to think of a way of making fire without wood. The three friends are, as Ron points it out, “lucky [that] Harry doesn’t lose his head in a crisis [...]” (Rowling 299).

Feminists should be happy enough to realise that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* does not only know female foil characters but also male ones. Neville Longbottom is a very good example here because he is probably the exact opposite of what most people would call heroic. He is afraid when he locks himself out of Gryffindor Tower at night time (Rowling 171) or when he has to do detention in the Forbidden Forest (Rowling 269). The same thing basically goes for Malfoy: although he would probably never admit it, he is not as much of a hero as he would presumably like. This becomes apparent during the detention they have to do in the Forbidden Forest, when he takes flight at the sight of the hooded creature the reader later learns to have been Quirrell (Rowling 277), but also during the first-years very first Quidditch training, when Malfoy steals Neville's Remembrall and refuses to give it to Harry. The scene perfectly shows Malfoy's degree of bravery: "'No Crabbe and Goyle up here to save your neck, Malfoy,' Harry called. The same thought seemed to have struck Malfoy" (Rowling 163). Not knowing what to do, Malfoy then decides to throw away the Remembrall and to avoid a direct confrontation with Harry.

As Rowling is known to work with telling names (see Fenske 149), another valuable hint regarding Harry's character qualities can be gained from analysing the origins of Harry's name:

Harry and James are both names of British kings [...]. 'Harry' is a French form of the English name 'Henry', 'Henry' being Germanic and meaning "home rule". Phonetically, 'Harry' hints at 'to harass' and 'heir'. 'To harry' also means to bother or even 'to devastate'. The phrase 'Tom, Dick or Harry' is used to refer to the average everyman. His last name, Potter, can be interpreted as an allusion to the Christian representations of God: in Genesis, God is said to have created man out of clay, which is why the Orthodox church calls God a potter. So the boy is royal, a chosen one, a troublemaker and an heir. His name embraces the everyday with alongside of the qualities of Germanic nobility. This seems quite appropriate for a 'normal' boy who is to become the world's saviour. In its simplicity, the name is a contrast to the names which have foreign origins like Malfoy, McGonagall, or the Old English Dumbledore (Fenske 156).

As Fenske stresses in her the above statement on the origins of Harry's name, there are many sides to young Harry. On the one hand, he appears to be an average boy, on the other, however, he is very special with regard to his talent and his courage. He incorporates both those qualities which enables the readers to identify themselves with him and those which allow them to marvel at him.

In spite of the fact that narratorial characterisation is dominant in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the reader also gains information on Harry's character via auto-characterisation and altero-characterisation. As I next step, I would therefore like to look at the information on Harry's nature available from these forms of characterisation.

4.2.2 How Harry Potter sees himself

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, there are only very few instances of 3rd person figural narration. Nevertheless, some of these can be regarded as very valuable auto-characterisations which help us to gain further insights into Harry Potter's personality. Needless to mention, these auto-characterisations, like the altero-characterisations I will look at afterwards, should not be taken as facts, but they might indirectly tell us about Harry Potter.

If one chose to believe Harry's judgement regarding his own powers and talents, one would have difficulties finding the heroic sides that are to his character. First of all, Harry cannot believe that he is a wizard, and least of all, that he is the chosen one who managed to defeat one of the most dangerous and most powerful wizards in the history of magic:

Hagrid looked at Harry with warmth and respect blazing in his eyes, but Harry, instead of feeling pleased and proud, felt quite sure there had been a horrible mistake. A wizard? Him? How could he possibly be? He'd spent his life being clouted by Dudley and bullied by Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon; if he really was a wizard, why hadn't they been turned into warty toads every time they'd tried to lock him in his cupboard? If he'd once defeated the greatest sorcerer in the world, how come Dudley had always been able to kick him around like a football? (Rowling 67)

Also, Harry predicts that he will be the worst student in his class (see Rowling 112) and that he will be in Hufflepuff, having Hagrid's characterisation of Hufflepuffs as "a lot o' duffers" (Rowling 90) in mind. Equally, he is terribly nervous when the first years are allocated their houses:

A horrible thought struck Harry, as horrible thoughts always do when you're nervous. What if he wasn't chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat

over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he'd better get back on the train? (Rowling 132)

Also, he realises that not all of his success is due to his own abilities and that there are greater wizards than him: This becomes apparent when Harry tells Hermione that she is better at performing magic than he is (Rowling 308).

These instances of auto-characterisation not only prove to the knowing reader that a 3rd person figural narrator is not always reliable (after all, the reader recognises Harry as heroic character early on), but they also present them with an essentially insecure and humble hero. While modesty is a trait which is highly desirable in a hero (see Horn 5-6), insecurity is rather problematic. The hero needs to overcome it in order to be able to succeed in his quest, especially if the quest is a spiritual one. Therefore, Harry still has to learn to become aware of his powers and believe in himself, which he partly already achieves in the first part of his story.

4.2.3 Harry Potter according to other characters in the book

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, many characters pass judgement on Harry. While negatively connotated characters are against the hero, positively connotated characters are usually on his side and think of Harry as a hero and talented wizard.

Aunt Petunia, who sees Harry as being “just the same, just as strange, just as – as – *abnormal*” (Rowling 63) as his parents, clearly represents a negative character because she opposes the hero the reader identifies with right from the beginning, as does her husband Uncle Vernon and Professor Snape who, too, regards Harry as a double of his father whom he hated so much. According to Professor Quirrell, who in the end turns out to be the true helper of Lord Voldemort, Harry is “too nosy to live” (Rowling 311), and Malfoy, who is just another negative character in *Harry Potter*, becomes increasingly opposed to Harry.

On the other hand, there are many characters that are in favour of Harry Potter and present him as a talented wizard with heroic qualities. Practically all of them are

presented as positive characters. Right at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Professor McGonagall speaks of how the baby Harry will be seen in the future: "He'll be famous – a legend – I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name!" (Rowling 20). Professor McGonagall's predictions later turn out to be true: During Harry's journey to Hogwarts, he is constantly admired by the people he and Hagrid meet in the magic realm (Rowling 79-80). Everybody seems to know him and to have heard of his defeating Voldemort as his earliest heroic deed. He is looked up to by the Weasley twins (Rowling 106) and characterised as "ever so polite" (Rowling 108) by Mrs. Weasley. Hagrid describes him as famous (Rowling 59) and Professor McGonagall speaks of him as a "natural" when it comes to playing Quidditch (Rowling 165). Although the fact that Harry is singled out as "the one who drove away Voldemort" already serves as a general description of him as hero, there exist some more direct descriptions of him as heroic character. One of the first such descriptions can be found when considering the judgement the Sorting Hat passes on Harry at the beginning of his magical career at Hogwarts:

'Hmm,' said a small voice in [Harry's] ear. 'Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind, either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting...So where shall I put you?'

Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, 'Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.'

'Not Slytherin, eh?' said the small voice. 'Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you're sure – better be in GRYFFINDOR!' (Rowling 133)

Towards the end of the story, when Harry, Ron and Hermione try to struggle through to the chamber from where Voldemort tries to steal the Philosopher's Stone, Hermione, by this time alone with Harry, encourages Harry for his fight. However, the words she uses also serve as means by which to characterise him not only as talented but also as courageous:

'Harry – you're a great wizard, you know.'

'I'm not as good as you,' said Harry, very embarrassed, as she let go of him.

'Me!' said Hermione. 'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and – oh Harry – be *careful*!' (Rowling 308)

The last characterisation of Harry I would like to mention is the one supplied by Dumbledore at the House Cup award. Dumbledore awards Gryffindor sixty extra points for Harry's having shown "pure nerve and outstanding courage" when fighting Voldemort (Rowling 328).

4.3 Harry's character: As flat as a pancake or as round as a ball?

In the last chapter, I announced that I would make an attempt at finding out whether Harry is just as flat a character as many heroes before him or whether Rowling has created a hero that breaks with this tradition and subverts it. Is Harry Potter a subversive heroic character? What kind of hero is Harry when it comes to his qualities?

To answer these questions by formulating one simple sentence seems practically impossible. On the one hand, it is rather clear why Nikolajeva has classified Harry as a romantic hero:

The Harry Potter figure has all the necessary components of the romantic hero. There are mystical circumstances around his birth, he is dislocated and oppressed and suddenly given unlimited power. His innocence and intrinsic benevolence make him superior to the evil – adult – forces. He bears the mark of the chosen on his forehead, and he is worshipped in the wizard community as the future savior. The pattern is easily recognisable from world mythologies, even though Harry is not claimed to be a god or a son of god, which, in Frye's typology^[26], disqualifies him as a genuine mythic hero, displacing him to the level of romance. (*Power* 13)

Apart from the results I have gained from the structural analyses, which have established Harry as a hero who only partly follows mythological and fairy tale patterns, Nikolajeva's analysis offers us further insights into how the character of Harry Potter has been constructed. As a romantic hero, like as a fairy tale or mythological hero, Harry would have to be a flat and static character:

The romantic hero of children's fiction has, like the fairy-tale and the formulaic hero, a standard set of traits, such as strength, courage, devotion, and so on. Although the origin of this type is unmistakably the classic epic hero (Gilgamesh, Hercules, Odysseus, Sigurth, Roland), the premise for the romantic

²⁶ As well as according to the structuralist patterns I have referred to.

child hero is the idealization of childhood during the Romantic era. It is based on the belief in the child as innocent and therefore capable of conquering evil. Although this ideal child is now being interrogated by some critics [...], it affects the ways in which child heroes are still constructed in certain text types today. (*Rhetoric* 31)

If we now revisit all that has been said on characterisation in the previous chapter, one can hardly deny that Harry seems to be a vivid example of a character who portrays the standard set of traits which has been referred to by Nikolajeva: Harry is strong – albeit rather mentally than physically – and he is courageous, which emanates from the descriptions the reader gets from the narrator and the other characters in the book. Furthermore, Harry shows clear signs of devotion and is an intrinsically positive character. Also, Nikolajeva argues that apart from some minor ambiguities regarding Harry's notion of good and evil and some gender transgressions, which are altogether attributable to what she refers to as “postmodern aesthetics”, Harry appears to be a perfectly normal hero (see *Power* 13).

At least with regard to the first book of the series, I have to agree with Nikolajeva's estimation of Harry's character. His heroic traits constantly come to the fore and his innocence is constantly stressed as his ultimate advantage and his secret weapon in the fight against the evil. For instance, the reader learns that Voldemort and Quirrell are unable to kill Harry because he has been “marked by something so good” (Rowling 321-322), referring to his mother's love, and that the reason why he was able to find the Philosopher's Stone was his noble motive: it was not about finding the stone for his own purposes but it was all about stopping Lord Voldemort's takeover.

While one could argue that Harry Potter changes and develops from the very beginning of his journey in book one to the end of it in book seven, one has to say that only very little of this development takes place in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in which he is presented only with regard to his – basically very typical – heroism. In book one, he is only little developed and yet far from being what one would refer to as a round character. He is more of a stereotype, and he is a character which mainly serves to fulfil the role of the hero, very much like the hero one finds in fairy tales.

Speaking of the fairy tale hero, I would like to briefly return to Katalin Horn's approach to heroism. Horn's description of the hero is not really a story pattern but describes

many characteristics of the hero which we also find with Harry, such as his ability to concentrate on his task and his lack of experience. The only marker which strikes me as problematic with regard to Harry is the hero's alleged lack of traditional values. Rather than fully applying her approach to Harry, I feel it suffices to say that Harry in many points fits her description of the hero. What seems to be more pertinent and also quite intriguing as to the discussion of heroic traits, is whether Harry should rather be seen as an active or as a passive hero.

In order to be an active hero, a character needs to be intelligent and powerful, absolutely fearless and, in the case of the *Harry Potter* universe, a good magician so that they can succeed alone against any evil force. Harry is intelligent and through his popularity he has a lot of power he might not have had otherwise. Also, he is in most cases fearless, if "fearless" means that he conquers the fear and is not impeded by it. The only blemish one encounters with Harry's hero performance is that he actually never works alone: He is usually helped by his friends Hermione and Ron, on whom he depends heavily at times, and he is also helped by Dumbledore – both indirectly throughout the whole story (see Rowling 325), and directly by his saving Harry from Voldemort at the end of book one. Although the reader cannot know what would have happened without such interventions by others, Harry too often depends on external help to be called an active hero in Horn's terms. However, this apparent inability of Harry's to cope alone might also have to do with what Nikolajeva calls aetonormativity²⁷ (see *Power* 13): Although Harry is empowered and the hero of the story, he is never fully independent from adult will and help.

Harry is, in Horn's terms, a rather passive hero: He needs the help of others, of animals and of magical devices throughout his entire seven-year journey. Furthermore and more importantly with regard to the general meaning of the word 'passive', Harry is not always an active person: He certainly does take action and he usually is the motor among his friends (just think of their nightly excursions around school), but he has not *actively* chosen his fate. Needless to say, he cannot change who he is and the fact that he is the chosen one, however, he also has troubles accepting his role. This does not become too apparent in the first book, but it does so at later points; his role apparently is

²⁷ Nikolajeva explains that the concept of aetonormativity follows the concept of heteronormativity, the main criterion here being age. It refers to the idea that "[a]dults have by right of age unlimited power in our society" (*Secrets* 229).

a burden to Harry as he repeatedly feels responsible for the death of the people around him²⁸.

4.4 General gender tendencies in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

It has been remarked that Harry Potter's world is highly traditional in its values (see *Power* 24). According to Nikolajeva's book *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*, these traditional values refer to most social aspects, including aspects of hierarchy, adult superiority and gender (see *Power* 23-25). While I believe that aetonnormativity, the "right of age", is the aspect which poses the biggest challenge to Harry's heroism, traditional ideas of hierarchy and gender seem to work in favour of his heroism because they put him in a position favourable enough to be the hero of the story. Harry derives from two great wizards and inherits a little fortune upon his admission to Hogwarts, which, together with his being male, puts him far enough up the social ladder to become the hero of the story²⁹.

However, creating a male hero is not Rowling's only traditional choice when it comes to gender: The bulk of her characters is constructed according to very traditional gender ideas and alludes to a number of gender stereotypes. This can basically either be done by ascribing stereotypical qualities to the two genders, by making the home the female space and the public the male domain, or by ascribing certain stereotypical roles to the genders which can mostly be deducted from the qualities the sexes are said to incorporate. These are the descriptive factors one should check in order to be able to find out about the degree to which stereotypical gender pattern apply, and before looking at how gender has been constructed in Harry's case, I would like to briefly examine the hero's environment.

When it comes to the allocation of stereotypical qualities, it is striking that all the qualities which would appear desirable in a male person amount to a negative portray in the case of a female person and vice versa (compare chapter one). While strength, rationality, dominance and independence are qualities which are stereotypically perceived as positive traits in a male person, their incidence in a female person might

²⁸ An example in case would be Mad Eye Moody's death in part seven.

²⁹ Compare also Nilolajeva (*Power*)

finally result in the application of negatively connotated stereotypes such as the “career woman” or the “lesbian” (see Glick & Fiske, qtd in: Hogg and Vaughan 360). Equally, the incidence of stereotypically female qualities (such as weakness, dependence, anxiety about the appearance, emotionality etc.) in a male person might give rise to the application of negatively connotated male stereotypes such as the “wimp” (see Kendall 324).

Therefore, Neville’s letting his emotions show earns him the unfavourable position of the effeminate wimp who is afraid when he is locked out of Gryffindor Tower (see Rowling 171) or when the three friends together with Malfoy and him have to do detention in the Forbidden Forest (see Rowling 269, 276). Neville cries at numerous occasions, like when he falls off the broomstick and breaks his wrist (Rowling 161) or when he fears for Harry during the Quidditch match (Rowling 208). He is probably not what would generally be regarded as heroic, and his clumsiness does not really help him on either. Even though a touch of bravery is ascribed to him when Dumbledore awards him points for trying to stand up to Ron, Hermione and Harry (Rowling 329), he is presented as incorporating stereotypically female qualities: rather weak, emotional and dependent. This presentation is in line with the stereotype of the effeminate wimp.

Malfoy and Quirrell seem to have been pigeonholed similarly. Even though one might want to argue that they do not equal Neville in his emotionality, both characters show deficiencies with regard to their conformance to the requirements of the positively connotated male stereotype. While Malfoy has managed to become a sort of leader and can thus be seen to be dominant in this sense at least, he and his self-confidence are not fully independent from his father’s reputation and power. He seems to be in need of acknowledgement in order to feel strong and powerful, and this is also why he experiences “weak moments” in the absence of Crabbe and Goyle, like for example when Harry chases him through the air in order to take Neville’s Remembrall from him (Rowling 163) or when he does detention in the Forbidden Forest. Malfoy is afraid of entering the forest and there is a “note of panic in his voice” (Rowling 270), and also when he and Harry meet the hooded figure inside the wood, Malfoy is so afraid that he simply turns and runs off, screaming (277). Even if one considers that Quirrell is not really as shy and nervous as he pretends to be when speaking of his teaching Defence Against the Dark Arts (80) or when he announces that a troll finds itself in the

dungeons, literally fainting (188), he is not particularly brave. His fainting is very reminiscent of the fainting that frequently happens to female characters in nineteenth century literature and thus alludes to effeminate behaviour. Furthermore, Quirrell seems to be either very dependent on Voldemort's patronage or so afraid of him that he prefers siding with him.

If one considers the gamekeeper Hagrid, one finds just another example of a less traditionalist masculinity. Throughout the whole series, the reader gets to know him as a gentle giant who cries at times (see for instance Rowling 259) and who treats wild animals as if they were his offspring. He even refers to himself as their mother:

‘[Norbert]’s got lots o’ rats an’ some brandy fer the journey,’ said Hagrid in a muffled voice. ‘An’ I’ve packed his teddy bear in case he gets lonely.’ [...] ‘Bye-bye, Norbert!’ Hagrid sobbed, as Harry and Hermione covered the crate with the Invisibility Cloak and stepped underneath it themselves. ‘Mummy will never forget you!’ (Rowling 259)

On the other hand, there are a number of male characters, like Ron and Dumbledore, who seem to rather fit and therefore confirm the basic male stereotype. Although Ron does not give the impression of being as heroic as Harry, he does not obviously become subject to any kind of effeminacy and often helps Harry with his heroic deeds, which makes him a hero, too. He shows bravery when fighting the mountain troll together with Harry (191) and when he is willing to sacrifice himself in order to win at chess and be able to stop the stealing of the Philosopher's Stone (302-305). When it comes to Dumbledore, things are even clearer: He is presented as very rational, wise, strong and powerful, powerful enough for even Voldemort to fear him (18). His qualities are desirable to Ron, who considers him to be “his hero” (324) and to Harry, who in the course of the series becomes his loyal trainee and follower³⁰. Also, Dumbledore fulfils the role of the saviour when he rescues Harry from Voldemort³¹.

When it comes to female stereotypes, it immediately strikes that there are not only more available, but also that those available are very strictly followed. While even heroic characters like Harry and Ron experience moments of fear, female characters show only few deviations from the stereotypes according to which they have been constructed.

³⁰ This becomes also apparent in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

³¹ This, however, the reader learns only after Harry's fight against Voldemort (Rowling 319).

Professor McGonagall, for instance, could be stereotyped as a “strict spinster”. She is “rather severe-looking” (16) and described as “a teacher [not] to cross [,] strict and clever” (146-147). She shows only very few and also only minor deviations from the stereotypical spinster, and she also only occasionally manages to overcome her image as extremely strict professor who always acts exceedingly professional. The first break happens rather early in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, when the reader is presented with a Minerva McGonagall who is moved to tears by the death of two of her friends, Lily and James Potter (19); the second break with her image happens when Professor McGonagall finds out about Harry’s unauthorised flying about with the broomstick during their first flying session. Instead of intending to punish the boy, she recruits Harry as Gryffindor’s new seeker and refrains from any punishment. As if that were not enough bending the rules, she intends to try and “bend the first-year rule” so that Harry can become the new seeker (163-166), and actually ignores that first-years are not allowed to possess their own brooms at Hogwarts when she is the one to buy Harry his new Nimbus Two Thousand (179). Her latter “slip” endows her with a slight air of motherliness towards her dead friends’ son.

Another female character which deserves analytical attention is Hermione Granger. Due to the fact that Hermione ranks among the book’s main characters, she is described in much more detail than other female characters. She is described as having “a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth” (Rowling 116), and she tends to criticise others on the basis of her knowledge (117-118, 122 for instance), which makes even the narrator refer to her as “such a bossy know-it-all” (179). She also repeatedly instructs fellow-pupils on how to behave and does not shy away from openly interfering with other people’s business (168-170). Hermione is thus described as not very beautiful, which might be seen as going hand in hand with her impressive intelligence and knowledge, thus delineating a stereotypical careerist. If one extends this stereotype, one arrives at the stereotype of the career woman, which, in patriarchy, carries negative connotation because the career woman represents the exact opposite of the stereotypical loving motherly figure.

Hermione, however, is not only “negative” with regard to her role in society but also with regard to her behaviour which is responsible for her initial lack of friends. She arrives at a turning point when she learns the – very didactic – lesson of the importance

of friendship, and while she stays pegged as careerist/career woman, she learns that friendship and not great marks are top priority. This turning point occurs when she is threatened by the mountain troll, hiding away in the girls' toilet: Harry and Ron save her from the troll and as if that had opened her eyes, she takes all the blame and tells Professor McGonagall that it was her idea to fight the troll. Doing this really is a gesture of friendship because "Hermione [is] the last person to do anything against the rules, and here she [is], pretending she had, to get them out of trouble. It [is] as if Snape [started] handing out sweets" (194).

However, this is not the only reason why this passage is of great interest. If one focuses slightly more on the allocation of gender roles, it becomes immediately clear that this scene takes up extremely stereotypical gender roles: While Harry and Ron, like two knights in shining armour, appear on the scene in order to save the helpless damsel-in-distress, strong, powerful and brave as they are, Hermione "[shrinks] against the wall opposite, looking as if she was about to faint" (190-191), "[unable to] move, [...] flat against the wall, her mouth open with terror" (191). At the sight of the troll, Hermione cannot move for fear. She has lost her voice and is literally petrified, both of which could possibly be interpreted as a female person losing her voice in a patriarchal surrounding. Furthermore, her speechlessness stands in stark opposition to how she usually tends to talk very much and very fast (see 117). As a consequence of the troll incident, Hermione undergoes a metamorphosis which is described as follows: "Hermione had become a bit more relaxed about breaking rules since Harry and Ron had saved her from the mountain troll and she was much nicer for it" (Rowling 197). Ironically enough, therefore, Hermione's transformation from bossy almost-foe to close friend is marked by a scene which most obviously takes up the Andromeda theme, thus "socialising" Hermione as female and preparing her for her role as second-quality hero, dwarfed by Harry who, as I will later show, in many respects fits the gender stereotype which has been designed for his sex better.

Another highly interesting point which I would like to briefly mention is Hermione's almost motherly anxiety to get Harry to eat something before his first ever game of Quidditch. It is highly reminiscent of a discussion between mother and child:

'You've got to eat some breakfast.'
'I don't want anything.'

‘Just a bit of toast,’ wheedled Hermione.
‘I’m not hungry.’ (200)

It seems that it is only after the troll incidence that Hermione starts to partly fulfil the role designed for a girl/woman in patriarchal society. Actually, one could argue that she oscillates between the male and the female stereotype. However, in spite of her cleverness, her magical talent and her use of “cool logic in the face of fire” (328), as Dumbledore puts it, and also in spite of the fact that she saves the friends at numerous occasions, be it through her talent, her knowledge or her ability to think logically, she never manages to attain the status of the hero of the story. Even though she clearly breaks with the stereotype that female individuals are not good at rational thinking, and generally does not behave according to the stereotype of a girl/woman (she is not overtly concerned with her looks, she is not very dependent on other people’s help except during the troll’s attack, she is not exceedingly emotional and she is rather a dominant kind of person), she is forever – and this is a recurrent theme up to the last volume of the series – refused the position of the hero. In spite of the fact that Harry might have died several times before the end of the series without her help and advice, her “acts of saving” seem to be played down in order to accentuate Harry’s heroism. What she does appears insignificant compared to Harry’s deeds, even if she makes an important contribution to Harry’s final success at the end of each volume, which most clearly shows when they go through the trapdoor in order to get the Philosopher’s Stone.

The only female character who fully lives up to expectations of the patriarchal society she lives in seems to be Mrs. Weasley. She does so both with regard to her qualities and with regard to the role she plays in society. As the *Harry Potter* series develops, the reader is more and more presented with a woman who loves her children and her husband very much, who knows her – extremely traditional – role within the family and who is kind and helpful to children who are not even her own. She is very motherly and accepts Harry almost at once as a member of her family. This is also apparent when she sends him and Ron a self-made sweater for Christmas, which is also interesting because it shows that she likes activities regarded as typically female such as knitting. It is funny and quite telling that a woman whose first name is Molly seems so ready to indulge in mollycoddling a boy who has lost his parents.

So do men and women in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* appear in stereotypical roles and do they have equal chances? Regarding the repartition of the roles, it quickly becomes clear that saviour figures are more likely to be male: There is Harry of course, but there are also Dumbledore and Ron, and even Snape who, in spite of all his hatred, repeatedly protects Harry from being killed by Quirrell. As I have just mentioned, one should also consider Hermione as a saviour figure because without her Harry would be lost. Nevertheless, she does not use force and aggressiveness when doing so, and it is probably due to the fact that her methods do not reflect the harshness and destructive energy that her efforts are not ranked as highly as Harry's. In fact, all the women I discussed – except for Molly Weasley – have roles which are only little consistent with the stereotypical weak, emotional, dependent, rather nurturing and often vain angel-in-the-house. Hermione Stranger excels at everything to do with studying, rationality, logic and hard work. She is the kind of woman who is fit to climb the social ladder, very much like Professor McGonagall must have been at her age. Minerva McGonagall is extremely fair and strict, and she has managed to become deputy headmaster at Hogwarts. She has no children we know of and seems to have favoured making her career over living the stereotypical life of a mother and wife, seeing her accomplishments reduced to the *oikos*.

Therefore, we can conclude that although there clearly happen breaks with stereotypical gender patterns and roles, these changes do not happen unpunished as the characters concerned by these deviations appear to be drawn into less favourable or at least rudimentarily comic stereotypes. Mimi R. Gladstein, on the other hand, argues that

[w]omen in the enchanted and enchanting world of Harry Potter are anything but second-class citizens. J.K. Rowling depicts a world where equal opportunity among the sexes is a given. Unlike our Muggle world, equality is not something one needs to strive for; it is as natural a part of this world as flying on broomsticks and nearly headless ghosts. Rowling creates a world where what is and should be important is the “content of one's character” and the choices one makes. It is not through magic that the goal envisioned by classical feminism is achieved at Hogwarts: equal rights for men *and* women. (Gladstein, in: *Harry Potter and Philosophy* 49)

Among other things, Gladstein further argues that the friendship between Harry, Ron and Hermione is very natural in its ways and that “Hermione is not a lesser member of the group”, which demonstrates the given equality of men and women as well as Hermione's independence from male help and rescue (50-51). Gladstein holds it that

Rowling's representation of Hogwart's staff proves her to be "an equal opportunity author" (57).

As one might easily guess from my above analysis, I am not at one with Gladstein when it comes to her estimation of the equality of male and female characters in the Harry Potter universe. Even while Hermione is a very important member of the group, Harry and Ron's special bond of friendship and mutual understanding is repeatedly indicated in the series. My overall conclusion is that even while male and female characters might have equal chances of making their career in Harry Potter's world, they are presented according to very traditional gender patterns, which allows male characters to be the heroes of the story and mostly denies exactly this to female characters. Even those female characters who have managed to escape rather traditional gender roles are dwarfed by some men who have more power than they do. In Professor McGonagall's case this certainly is Albus Dumbledore, in Hermione's case this is none other than the tale's primary hero.

4.5 Gender and the hero

Harry Potter is the most important character in the *Harry Potter* series and not only its protagonist but also its saviour figure and hero. He is brave, strong in his own way and very chivalrous, all of which rank among the qualities we consider as heroic. Invariably linked to the image of a hero are stereotypically masculine qualities such as strength, rationality, dominance, independence and a lack of vanity regarding one's appearance.

Harry strikes the reader as a character who incorporates all of these characteristics, however, neither does he do so right from the start nor does he really offer the reader the practically flawless image most people have in mind when thinking of a typical hero. Before Harry arrives at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry has no rights and no voice. He lives in the house of his aunt and uncle and he is not allowed to express his opinion or ask questions: "*Don't ask questions* – that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys" (Rowling 27). Harry is as unheard as women have been in some patriarchal societies. He is thus far from being dominant in the Dursley household

and only gains his superior position upon his entering the magic realm, which relativises his coherence to the stereotypically male gender pattern.

His popularity and uniqueness in the wizarding world, however, do not suffice in order to be perceived as *the* hero of the series. Even if this is an advantageous starting point for a heroic persona, Harry has to prove himself and his bravery at numerous occasions. In order to do this, Harry has to be dominant enough to tell his helpers Hermione and Ron how to act. An example of this is the troll scene, where Harry tells Ron to confuse the troll and Hermione to run away. In order to succeed in the tasks he faces, Harry also needs to display rationality, which he clearly does; nevertheless, when it comes to logical thinking, he is no match for Hermione and sometimes heavily depends on her ability to use her logic. The reader can only speculate on whether Harry, left to his own devices, would have been able to solve the potion-riddle he and Hermione encounter on their way to Philosopher's Stone (Rowling 307), or whether he would have ever had even the faintest idea as to where the Philosopher's Stone is actually kept without Hermione's noticing the trapdoor (176). Also, they would have never been able to go through the trapdoor had Hermione not found a way to keep Neville from squealing on them by magic (294). Harry can therefore clearly be described as a rational being, but given the fact that he is the hero of a series which has a very traditional take on gender, his being outshone by a girl might come as a ironic surprise.

The last stereotypically male gender marker is independence. Harry Potter is quite capable of gaining the information he needs for his quest, and his life at the Dursleys taught him how to look after himself not only physically but also emotionally. Although he seems quite able to handle his fate and the loss of his parents, which appears in a wholly new light once Harry learns how they really died, it is also clear that he wants to belong somewhere. This becomes apparent when he finds the Mirror of Erised, which shows the onlooker his innermost desires and wishes, and sees nothing but him and his parents in the reflection (Rowling 224-232). Also, as already mentioned in an earlier chapter of this thesis, Harry makes friends with people some of whom later take the role of his surrogate parents: Apart from the negative substitutes, there are the positive Hagrid and Professor Dumbledore, and in later volumes also Sirius Black and Professor Lupin. Additionally, he has been more or less adopted by the Weasley family which is perhaps not so apparent in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* but more so in its

sequels. Therefore, Harry is obviously not as emotionally independent as the stereotypical hero needs to be when leaving home and going on his quest. The death of his parents comes in “handy” for the development of the hero story and is, as also the analysis of Propp’s hero pattern has shown, a highly effective means for the hero of gaining the independence necessary to play the role allocated to him. Harry is independent because there are no family ties or other ties that might keep him from what he is meant to be and do. Thanks to other autonomy-creating means such as the Invisibility Cloak, he also enjoys a certain level of independence at Hogwarts:

Suddenly, Harry felt wide awake. The whole of Hogwarts was open to him in his Cloak. Excitement flooded through him as he stood there in the dark and silence. He could go anywhere in this, anywhere, and Filch would never know.

Ron grunted in his sleep. Should Harry wake him? Something held him back – his father’s Cloak – he felt that this time – the first time – he wanted to use it alone. (Rowling 222)

The passage cited shows the twofold independence-creating effect of the Invisibility Cloak. On the one hand, rather obviously, is the freedom Harry enjoys because nobody, and certainly not Filch, can see him. In this case, Harry experiences freedom because Dumbledore gave the cloak – and therefore a certain amount of freedom – to Harry. On the other hand, the moment described in the quotation marks the first time Harry feels he should make an experience without Ron or Hermione. He thus learns that although he needs his companions and cannot fully cope without them, he is also not fully dependent on their sharing each and every experience with him. Ironically enough, Dumbledore’s giving the cloak to Harry does not only mark a chance of independence but also a certain kind of dependence on the part of the hero. As a baby, Harry was saved by his mother; later, he is saved by his friends, by Dumbledore, and, ironically enough, even by his foe Professor Snape. Giving the cloak to Harry means giving him another magical item and offering him additional, indirect assistance. The following quotation exemplifies the degree to which he depends on other people’s help:

‘I’ll use the Invisibility Cloak,’ said Harry. ‘It’s just lucky I got it back.’

‘But will it cover all three of us?’ said Ron.

‘All – all three of us?’

‘Oh, come off it, you don’t think we’d let you go alone?’

‘Of course not,’ said Hermione briskly. ‘How do you think you’d get to the Stone without us? I’d better go and look through my books, there might be something useful...’. (Rowling 292)

Harry therefore is not in all respects a traditional hero. As a person who displays a certain level of independence, he also does not live up to the demands made by the traditional male stereotype. I have already discussed in an earlier chapter that Harry already breaks with the readers' expectations about stereotypical manhood when they learn about his looks (see chapter 4.2.1), which are not very conform to what many would regard as typical of a hero: He is skinny and bespectacled, while the very masculine stereotype of the hero would usually appear strong also with regard to his build. Furthermore, the discussion of Harry's character in chapter 4.3 has shown that Harry is a passive hero, passive to be understood in terms of agency. Harry is thrown in at the deep end when he learns that he is to be the saviour of the world, a role which he never assumed voluntarily. What is more, there are several allusions to his fear and there are vivid descriptions of it: Harry "[cannot] move for fear" (277) at the sight of the hooded figure in the Forbidden Forest, or when he actively faces Voldemort for the first time in his life, he

[feels] as if Devil's Snare was rooting him to the spot. He [cannot] move a muscle. Petrified, he watche[s] as Quirrell reache[s] up and [begins] to unwrap his turban. What [is] going on? The turban [falls] away. Quirrell's head [looks] strangely small without it. Then he [turns] slowly on the spot.

Harry would have screamed, but he [cannot] make a sound. Where there should have been a back to Quirrell's head, there [is] a face, the most terrible face Harry [has] ever seen. (Rowling 315)

As these passages show, Harry displays normal-level fear in the face of danger, which is both not typical of a standard hero and not in accordance with what the traditional gender stereotype prescribes for men. When Dumbledore tells Harry that Quirrell could not kill him because the love of his dead mother saved him, Harry is moved to tears. The reader learns that Harry has to "dry his eyes on the sheet" of the bed he lies in when in the hospital wing (322).

This, however, does not keep Harry from showing psychological and emotional strength. Regarding his role in the wizarding world, Harry clearly is the hero of the story, which in itself already shows that he has taken a traditionally male role. Ironically enough – and this is the perhaps most tangible example of how his traditional-male-hero image displays little cracks –, the hero of the story needs to be saved by Dumbledore during his final encounter with Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and thereby falls into a role which is normally and stereotypically reserved for women.

As if this was not enough, Harry faints because the effort involved in holding Quirrell back nearly kills him. There is therefore a clear allusion to the fainting that frequently happens to women in nineteenth century literature. While Dumbledore appears like the proverbial knight in shining armour, Harry's role in this encounter with Voldemort is heavily reminiscent of the famous damsel-in-distress.

In having drafted a hero like Harry, who comes very close to what Nikolajeva refers to as "stereotypical 'new male' (*Power* 114, see chapter 1.1 of this thesis), a male who does not (fully) incorporate conventional masculine qualities, Rowling offers us a hero who allows himself to partly break with stereotypes. However, despite of the deficiencies Harry displays from a stereotypical point of view, he is regarded as the hero of the story, both within the wizarding world and, presumably, also by most who read his story. While he therefore offers us an alternative in terms of hero construction, not embodying a very typical male hero, the wizards and witches around him admire him for a very standard set of traits: bravery, courage and loyalty. It appears that his heroism is not perceived as heroism despite his deficiencies – which would be some kind of revolution of the image of hero –, but because of what is left once the deficiencies are ignored. What is more, most people never learn about the things that bring about the cracks in his hero façade: When he cries, Harry does not do so openly in front of Dumbledore but while he looks away, "which [gives] Harry time to dry his eyes on the sheet" (322). When Harry is most afraid, he is never seen by his admirers because he is always on his own: Malfoy has long run away when Harry is full of fear at the sight of the hooded figure in the Forbidden Forest (277), and when he faces Voldemort and Quirrel in the chamber where the Philosopher's Stone is kept, he is all on his own again because Ron and Hermione had to leave him earlier. Not even Dumbledore, who comes to save him from the villains, has had a chance to notice his fear because at the time he arrives, Harry has already fainted. Harry tells nobody about his nightmares, which leave him "sweating and shaking" (143). For this reason, Harry strikes the other characters as flawless hero, which in turn influences the readers' impression of him.

Taking all this into consideration, one has to conclude that, while the construction of Harry and some of the female characters could have been a good starting point from which to offer a different, revolutionary vision of gender and heroism, Rowling chose to stay "on the safe side" by almost pretending that there are no such cracks in Harry's

hero façade. Those who praise him as hero and saviour only know him as self-controlled and cool, and if they knew about his – absolutely normal and human – moments of fear or about his crying, they might possibly look upon him differently, even if he always manages to overcome these “weak moments” and show heroism. It is debatable whether Harry would be regarded as that courageous, heroic and strong if he allowed others to look at his human sides from time to time, and thus Harry Potter rests a conventional hero of a conventional story³².

³² The latter is also what Fenske concludes about Harry’s story when she says that *Harry Potter* is “[a] [v]ery [c]onventional [t]ale” (Fenske 95).

5. Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*

5.1 Lyra Belacqua and the traditional-structuralist school of thought

The following chapter will scrutinise the construction of the heroine in Pullman's *Northern Lights*, Lyra Belacqua. At the time her story is set, Lyra has approximately the same age as Harry, which allows me to look at her character using the same procedure that I have previously applied to Harry. Therefore, the first thing I will do is checking her compatibility with the hero patterns presented in chapter two, also including those which have been designed in order to describe the life pattern of heroines.

The first pattern I will take a look at is Otto Rank's. Lyra is the daughter of "most distinguished parents" (Rank 57). Even if Lyra learns this only in the course of the story, her parents are Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel, who are both very powerful and dominant. They are superior to their peers with regard to their intellect and with regard to their position in society, which is why one could say that they fulfil Rank's first pattern marker. The reader knows that there has been a prophecy about Lyra. In the course of *Northern Lights*, there are several allusions to her being "the chosen one" (Pullman 31, 176, 186, 310); she is the one who "is destined to bring about the end of destiny" (310). However, there is no indication that somebody is warned against her; if this is the case, the information might follow in one of the sequels. As the person usually warned is the child's same-sex parent, this would mean that Mrs. Coulter, if anyone, must have received the warning. Lyra has not been surrendered because she poses a threat to her mother's physical well-being but because she was born out of wedlock. Considering her story from this point of view, we can say that her conception was difficult because her mother and father had "secret intercourse [...] due to external prohibition or obstacles" (Rank 57): Mrs. Coulter was a married woman at the time she met Lord Asriel and bore his child, and she feared his reaction and gave Lyra away. This is how the girl was exposed, even if she was not exposed by the water. Lyra was then saved by the scholars, who are not really lowly people, but she was raised by a humble woman, namely Mrs. Lonsdale, the Housekeeper. In line with Rank's pattern, Lyra finds out the truth about her father and mother when she is older (at the age of about twelve years, the age she is at in *Northern Lights*), however she is never really accepted as and treated like their child. Lyra therefore does not achieve rank because of

her distinguished family background; she does so, to a certain extent, among the servants' children at Jordan College (after all, she is believed to be the niece of the great Lord Asriel), and it is also true that the Gyptians are willing to help and hide Lyra because they are in Lord Asriel's debt (see Pullman 135); her position as chosen heroine, however, has nothing to do with who her parents are. It has to do with fate and with her unique ability to read the alethiometer. It does not become very clear whether Lyra suffers greatly or is really embarrassed because of her descent from Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter because it seems that, for Lyra, life simply goes on. While she is unable to think of Mrs. Coulter as her mother from the moment she learns the truth about her parents, she seems to consider the possibility of thinking of Lord Asriel as her father:

To see Lord Asriel as her father was one thing, but to accept Mrs. Coulter as her mother was nowhere near so easy. A couple of months ago she would have rejoiced, of course, and she knew that too, and felt confused. But, being Lyra, she didn't fret about it for long, for there was the fen town to explore and many gyptian children to amaze. (Pullman 130)

When it comes to Campbell's hero pattern, one has to admit that it is difficult to detect parallels beyond the leaving-adventure-return schema one finds in most hero patterns. Like with Harry Potter, it would take wild imagination in order to fit Lyra's life and heroic journey into Campbell's schema. Of course Lyra leaves home, and "journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten [her], some of which give magical aid (helpers)" (Campbell 211), but this is because one can easily interpret this into most hero stories. Trying to fit Lyra's story to Campbell's schema, one runs into the same difficulties as when trying to apply it to Harry. All in all, one can say that Lyra's story contains too few of Campbell's traits in order for the reader to consider her as a Campbellian hero.

Lord Raglan's pattern is not equally problematic, but it also contains a number of plot points which hardly match young Lyra's heroic journey. Lyra's mother, Mrs. Coulter is not of regal origin, and from her having been married while pregnant with the young heroine, we can gather that she was no virgin anymore, which is why Raglan's first plot point stays unfulfilled. His father is probably aristocratic; in any case, he is described as being "well born" (Pullman 121) and he is a lord, however he is not a relative to Mrs. Coulter. There is nothing obviously unusual about Lyra's conception, and Lyra is not the daughter of a god as Lord Asriel can by no means be interpreted as a god-like

character. Also, no attempts are made to kill Lyra; her mother merely pretends that she is dead in order for her husband not to find out about her affair with Lord Asriel (see 121-124). As a result, Lyra is not spirited off. On the other hand, she is brought up by foster parents at Jordan College. According to Lord Raglan, the reader learns nothing about the hero's childhood; this is not true of Lyra as the reader encounters her while she is still a child and also because there are vivid descriptions of her favourite past times (Pullman 34-39); therefore, the reader learns quite a bit about the heroine's childhood.

Northern Lights ends at a point at which Lyra is still a child, and there is no kingdom she could return to as soon as she is grown up; therefore plot point number ten is also not given, which means that a number of other, related plot points cannot be fulfilled either. Equally, there is no marriage, and as Lyra is a girl, there is no chance of her following the traditional marriage pattern intended by Raglan. All in all, applying Raglan's pattern to Lyra is at least as problematic as applying it to Harry previously has been.

Next, I will check how compatible Lyra's life and Propp's fairy tale approach are. In line with Propp's pattern, *Northern Lights* starts out by presenting Lyra's family and life at Jordan College:

She knew the Scholars well: the Librarian, the Sub-Rector, the Enquirer, and the rest; they were men who had been around her all her life, taught her, chastised her, consoled her, given her little presents, chased her away from the fruit trees in the garden; they were all she had for a family. They might have felt like a family if she knew what a family was, though if she did, she'd have been more likely to feel that about the College servants. The Scholars had more important things to do than attend to the affections of a half-wild, half-civilized girl, left among them by chance. (Pullman 17-18)

In line with Propp's first function, Lord Asriel, her alleged uncle, leaves Jordan College to go on expedition to the North. Death, which is a variant of this function, also comes up when Lyra believes that her parents have died in an airship accident (Pullman 121), even though this later turns out to be a lie. Many bans are imposed on the heroine, both by the scholars who take care of her (see the above quotation) and by Lord Asriel who does not allow her to join him on his next journey to the North (Pullman 28). Lyra then manages to find a way to go to the North after all, and this is by joining Mrs. Coulter.

Due to this turn in the story, function number two and three can be considered as fulfilled. According to Propp, this is the moment when the hero's opponent appears; in *Northern Lights* this is the case because Mrs. Coulter is the leader of the Oblation Board, which will turn into Lyra's archenemy in the course of the story. Nevertheless, one should also consider Lord Asriel as Lyra's opponent. Mrs. Coulter tries to find out more about the hero by letting her stay at her flat and by having her monkey daemon spy on her in order to gain the alethiometer Lyra was given before leaving Jordan College (functions IV, V and VI). Lyra is partly taken in by Mrs. Coulter's tricks and at first believes her to be an admirable woman and a role model worthy of imitation. Equally, she believes Lord Asriel lies regarding their family relation and is betrayed by him when he kills her friend Roger to realise his experiments at the end of the novel (see Pullman 389-397). She discovers his betrayal all on her own and is terribly disappointed in him: "She felt wretched apart with unhappiness. And with anger, too; she could have killed her father; if she could have torn out his heart, she would have done so there and then, for what he'd done to Roger. And to her: tricking her: how *dare* he?" (Pullman 397)

According to Propp, this function represents the last function of the introductory part. The step that would usually follow after this is the harming of the hero. In this respect, however, *Northern Lights* does not follow Propp's schema because it breaks with the sequence intended by Propp. Depending on what one wishes to classify as the harm done to the heroine, there are two such incidences available. The first such incident is the initial harm Mrs. Coulter – who is synonymous with the Oblation Board, the so-called "Gobblers", because she is their powerful leader – does to Lyra by kidnapping Lyra's best friend Roger. Lyra regards him as part of her "family" (see Pullman 17-18), and therefore one could argue that this is how she finds her family damaged; this theory would also be supported by Propp's mentioning the kidnapping of a person close to the hero as one possible form this function can take. The second possible incident which could be seen as representing this function in Pullman's story is Lord Asriel's betrayal of Lyra at the end of *Northern Lights* and his stealing and killing of Roger for his own selfish purposes³³. Of course, it is debatable whether one may see this betrayal as the fulfilment of both function VII and function VIII. In fact, function VIII demands that the hero/heroine plays into the hands of the opponent, which is more apparent in the

³³ According to Propp, this function may comprise more than just one crime (Propp 39).

case of Lord Asriel's betrayal than in the case of Mrs. Coulter's deceiving Lyra, which might mean that if Lord Asriel's using of Lyra can be attributed to only one function, one would be well advised to see it as the fulfilment of function VIII. As function VII and VIII are closely related, I would suggest regarding them as one large merging function which is fulfilled both by Mrs. Coulter's and Lord Asriel's behaviour as Lyra's opponents.

According to Propp, the hero would, as a consequence, leave home in order to improve the situation (IX). If we consider Mrs. Coulter's kidnapping of Roger as the trigger, Propp's schema is followed chronologically; if we consider Lord Asriel's crime instead as Lyra's motivation, Propp's pattern is broken with once again. Lyra is ready to counteract and save Roger from the Gobblers (X) and leaves Jordan College (XI), ironically enough, with the help of the person who brought about the damage in the first place. As a consequence, the heroine is put to the test and attacked several time, but it is not because of this but at the beginning of her journey that she receives her magic aid, the alethiometer. In the course of her journey, however, she also gains magical helpers in the form of a speaking ice bear and witches. Lyra is taken to the place where the thing – the person, more accurately – she looks for is to be found: Bolvangar (XV). Also, she is almost separated from her beloved daemon Pantalaimon, which would have resulted in physical but, above all, in psychological pain (XVII). Interestingly enough, she seems to experience this event as something coming very close to this: “ The fear she felt was almost physical pain; it *was* a physical pain, as they pulled her and Pantalaimon over toward a large cage of pale silver mesh, above which a great pale silver blade hung poised to separate them forever and ever (Pullman 277).

Nevertheless, she manages to defeat her opponent, Mrs. Coulter, for the time being when she helps the children at Bolvangar to escape (XVIII), Roger being one of them. Therefore, the harm done to her “family” is done away with (XIX); however, Lyra does not return home, therefore function number XX is not fulfilled. Lyra and Roger are haunted when they escape from Bolvangar and also later by Mrs. Coulter (XXI) and saved by Iofur and the Gyptians (XXII). At this point, the hero of the fairy tale can get new tasks to fulfil; this is also the case in Lyra's story, because after a kind of airship accident she finds herself at Svalbard, the royal ice bear palace where she not only has to stay alive but also to supply Iofur with a chance to re-ascend to the throne which is

rightfully his. Moreover, Lyra intends to free her father and bring him the alethiometer. This is when a part of Propp's functions repeats itself, so that Lyra is betrayed by Lord Asriel and is tricked into involuntarily betraying Roger (functions VII and VIII). As far as one can tell without considering the sequels to *Northern Lights*, functions XXIII to XXXI are missing from the story.

The last traditional and purely structuralist pattern I would like to try and apply to this novel is Jan de Vries' model. In line with his pattern, Lyra is the result of an illegitimate relationship between Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel. About Lyra's birth, however, we know nothing. Lyra's youth is not really threatened because nobody intends to kill her, but her mother gives her away in order to prevent that anyone learns about the shame she brought over her family. According to Jan de Vries, there usually is a prophecy which warns one of the parents; as I have already mentioned when discussing Rank's schema, there is a prophecy about Lyra, albeit this prophecy is obviously not intended to warn anyone about Lyra. Indeed, Lyra is later adopted by the scholars of Jordan College, but there is no indication that she has previously been nurtured by any kind of animal.

Lyra gives away her ability to read the alethiometer quite early in her youth. Deviating from de Vries' pattern, she does not become invulnerable and she does not fight monsters in the classical sense; her main opponents are both human and there are – and it is by now known that this is atypically of a hero – only very few physical fights in the course of the story (an example of such a physical fight would, for instance, be the confrontation between Lyra and the supervisors at Bolvangar; see Pullman 275-277). Lyra has other means of fighting her opponents, and this is by deceiving them. This ability of Lyra's is brought up by Ma Costa when she says to Lyra: "Deceptive, that's what you are, child" (Pullman 112); a comparable and in this respect equally useful quality is mentioned by Iorek, who says: "Belacqua? No. You are Lyra Silvertongue" (Pullman 348). As already mentioned, being silver-tongued means being extraordinarily eloquent.

After having passed a number of tests, de Vries' hero is usually rewarded by conquering the heart of a young virgin. As with the *Harry Potter* book, this does not happen because it would be inept for the story of a child hero. In Lyra's case, this becomes even

more unlikely because she, as a female, breaks with the pattern altogether; but even if she won the heart of a young man, her young age would make this kind of reward inappropriate anyway.

De Vries' next plot point is interesting because it describes the hero's travelling to the underworld. In the third part of Pullman's trilogy, Lyra and her companion will indeed travel to the land of the dead. This plot point, however, as well as the two remaining plot points de Vries has drafted (the return of the hero and his/her death) are not part of *Northern Lights*.

Summary

Not all of the structuralist patterns that have been applied are equally suitable to describe Lyra's life. One can in any case conclude that neither Campbell's nor Raglan's pattern ideally describe Lyra's life. Most of Campbell's plot points cannot be detected in *Northern Lights*, and one also does not find too many parallels between her life and Lord Raglan's pattern, although – as with Harry Potter – Raglan's pattern performs by far better. If one applies de Vries' pattern, one quickly notices that there are several deviations, but not as many as when applying Lord Raglan's or even Campbell's schemata.

On the other hand, the bulk of Rank's plot points – that is, seven out of ten – can be successfully applied to Lyra Belacqua. Vladimir Propp's fairy tale pattern can be used almost as successfully to describe the life of the heroine. For obvious reasons, one can say that those patterns which refrain from restricting heroism to the hero's adult years are more fit than models for the construction of child heroes; apart from the evident advantage those patterns which choose not to specify the hero's age enjoy regarding their application to the heroine, Rank's and Propp's pattern suit Lyra's life better even at points where age does not play a role.

While Propp's and Rank's patterns have turned out to be superior among the structuralist schemata presented, one should bear in mind that some of the difficulties I have encountered when applying the five patterns were due to the fact that Lyra is

female and not male. From the general suitability of Rank's and Propp's patterns, I gather that it is not impossible albeit undesirable to simply use male patterns on female characters.

In the course of the theory chapters, my readers have, however, also encountered alternative views of heroism. One of these was Horn's approach, which distinguishes between active and passive fairy tale heroes; but there were also Lichtman's and Stephen and McCallum's approaches, which envision patterns specifically designed to describe the quest of heroines. These "alternative" approaches will be tested in the course of the following chapter.

5.2 Lyra and alternative views of heroism

The first alternative hero model I would like to consider for Lyra's analysis is Katalin Horn's not purely structuralist one (Horn 42-44) which has been elucidated in chapter 2.2 of this thesis. For Horn, there are inner and outer themes of the fairy tale, the outer themes being the single plot points of the hero story, the inner themes regarding the character and the character development of the hero in question. In Lyra's case, practically all of plot points mentioned by Horn – which could, again, be very briefly summed up as the hero's leaving of home, the passing of tests and several fighting scenes – are fulfilled.

Furthermore, Lyra's character is generally in line with Horn's characterisation of the fairy tale hero: She does all she can in order to save her best friend Roger and to stop the General Oblation Board, and she is definitely the chosen one, the one "to bring about the end of destiny" (Pullman 310). As Lyra has no classical family at Jordan College, she is free enough to turn her back on her old life and embark on new adventures³⁴. Lyra is able to concentrate on her tasks in that she is ready to give her everything for the sake of fulfilling them. Her adventure is much more important to her than worldly values, so she does not care about being dirty or losing all the comfort that is available to her at Mrs. Coulter's London flat, or about riches for that matter. When Lyra leaves Jordan College, where she enjoys a rather high status because of her being

³⁴ Lyra's freedom will be more closely considered in chapter 5.3.

related to Lord Asriel, and when she flees from Mrs. Coulter, she willingly chooses a disadvantageous position and a simpler and less prestigious life. According to Horn, this – relative – poverty is important for the heroine to be able to keep pursuing her heroic goals. Also in line with Horn's depiction is that Lyra does not have a profession. This, however, might of course also be due to her age or her gender. One might argue that it was considered rather inappropriate for women of a certain stand to work, and if not her age, then certainly Lyra's blood relationship with Lord Asriel had this circumstance as a consequence.

The young girl is, as Horn puts it (Horn 43-44), the maintainer of cosmic values, and this role is emblematised by the appearance of diamonds, gold and stars. In *Northern Lights*, all these elements are woven into the story: when the alethiometer first appears on the scene, it is described "as something like a large watch or a small clock: a thick disk of gold and crystal" (Pullman 73). Also, there is Mrs. Coulter's daemon, who has the shape of a golden monkey (Pullman 41). Stars and especially the Aurora are recurrent themes in *Northern Lights*, and there are vivid descriptions of these things available. One of these we find on pages 183-184:

At once she saw that something strange was happening in the sky. She thought it was clouds, moving and trembling under a nervous agitation, but Pantalaimon whispered:

"The Aurora!"

Her wonder was so strong that she had to clutch the rail to keep from falling.

The sight filled the northern sky; the immensity of it was scarcely conceivable. As if from Heaven itself, great curtains of delicate light hung and trembled. Pale green and rose-pink, and as transparent as the most fragile fabric, and at the bottom edge a profound and fiery crimson like the fires of Hell, they swung and shimmered loosely with more grace than the most skilful dancer. Lyra thought she could even hear them: a vast distant whispering swish. In the evanescent delicacy she felt something as profound as she'd felt close to the bear. She was moved by it; it was so beautiful it was almost holy; she felt tears prick her eyes, and the tears splintered the light even further into prismatic rainbows. (Pullman 183-184)

In spite of the fact that these aspects can be said to apply to Lyra, and although Horn stresses that even a fairy tale hero is never altogether flawless, one also should not turn a blind eye to the character flaws the basically positive character Lyra Belacqua has: she readily indulges in lying, boasting, stealing, playing tricks and generally disregarding

the rules at Jordan College (Pullman 34-35, 93, 130, 238). The just mentioned aspects of Lyra's character are not easily reconciled with Horn's portrayal of the fairy tale hero, but some of them, in fact, prove to be useful and necessary tools in Lyra's fight against the Gobblers and the evil in general. Therefore, the problematic facet is rather the joy Lyra seems to gain from indulging in this kind of things than her actual acting this way.

Before considering other alternative visions of (female) heroism, I would like to take a brief look at the type of heroine Lyra is in Horn's understanding. As explained in the theory part, Horn distinguished between the active and the passive hero. Although Lyra is accompanied by an animal, namely the ice bear Iorek, and in some situations depends on the help of others (the Gyptians, the aeronaut), Lyra clearly fits the category of the active hero: she displays a high degree of autonomy because her success is mainly due to her own intelligence, power and fearlessness. She could be described as the "strong and battlesome hero" and as the "intelligent and cunning hero", both of which are types of the active hero according to Horn.

Apart from Horn's approach I have also discussed other alternative views of heroism, among them Susan A. Lichtman's three-staged life cycle of the heroine (Lichtman, *The Female Hero* 11-12). According to Lichtman, the heroic journey of every female comprises the so-called "virgin phase", "mother phase" and "crone phase". The virgin phase is the phase during which the girl is separated from her mother and it is marked by the onset of menstruation. During this phase, the girl is usually guided by a more experienced woman. The second phase is about the initiation into a society, community or family and about the development of a sense of social criticism. The crone phase is the phase of wisdom.

Considering Lyra against the background of Lichtman's theory is immensely enthralling. Strictly speaking, Lyra qualifies for none of the three stages because she is too young even to find herself in the so-called "virgin phase": Lyra's daemon is still able to take various shapes, which shows us that Lyra has not yet reached puberty and is not yet at the threshold of womanhood; Lyra is still a child. Funnily enough, however, the attentive reader is able to detect a multiplicity of the symbols Lichtman allocated to the three stages of the heroine, which gives the impression that, regardless of her age, Lyra undergoes these three stages – metaphorically – at an accelerated pace. Rather at

the beginning of *Northern Lights*, when Lyra moves into Mrs. Coulter's London flat, the reader is confronted with a range of symbols which metaphorically represent the virgin phase. There are the blooming flowers Mrs. Coulter orders for her cocktail party (see Pullman 84), and in the film version of *Northern Lights*, there is even this room Lyra is not allowed to enter and which could be symbolically interpreted as what Lichtman refers to as the "secret room". Also, there is the alethiometer Lyra secretly keeps in her shoulder bag (Pullman 85). Lyra is even equipped with a more experienced female guide: one could interpret Mrs. Coulter as the wise female person who is supposed to prepare young Lyra for her initiation to society and for her life as a woman within a patriarchal world.

This is also where Lichtman's first and second phase seem to overlap. The second phase is about the heroine's integration into society. With the help of Mrs. Coulter, Lyra is introduced to London's society and meets the who-is-who of the city (Pullman 81). On the other hand, one could also read Lyra's introduction to the Gyptian society as a metaphor of this symbol. *Northern Lights* even features Lichtman's container imagery, which is not only represented by the alethiometer but also by the room under deck where Lyra is hid away from the authorities looking after her: "There was a secret compartment beneath Ma's bunk, where Lyra lay cramped for two hours while the police banged up and down the length of the boat unsuccessfully" (Pullman 111).

The gyptian boat can also be seen as representing the house Lichtman mentions as one of the symbols which can mark the second phase. Lyra and the Gyptians find themselves on the water during the first part of their journey to the north, so the water imagery is also apparent in *Northern Lights*.

Later during their journey to the north, there are a number of symbols which, according to Lichtman, represent the third stage. Among them is the bird imagery, which is introduced when Lyra first meets Serafina Pekkala's goose daemon Kaisa (Pullman 186). Speaking of Serafina Pekkala, who is the queen of some witch clan, already leads us to the next symbol which stands for the crone phase: witches. In *Northern Lights*, witches play an important role also during the fighting scenes after the children's escape from Bolvangar (Pullman 298, for instance). Furthermore, there are images of flying not only brought about by Pullman's embedding witches, but also by his embedding an

aeronaut called Lee Scoresby into the story. The reader easily notices how Lyra, in spite of her young age, becomes wiser and wiser.

Considering this high degree of consistency of Lyra's development in *Northern Lights* with Lichtman's theory of the life cycle of the heroine, one wonders whether an application of the pattern should be called fruitless just because Lyra's age contradicts Lichtman's model. As the discussion of the purely structuralist patterns of the hero life has demonstrated, heroism has always been something attributed to adults rather than to children, so applying ideas of heroism to child characters must always be done with special caution. Thanks to a subversion of what Nikolajeva refers to as aetonormativity³⁵ (see *Power* 13), the existence and creation of child heroes has become possible and quite frequent (see *Power* 9). As being a hero or heroine necessarily involves the young hero's incorporation of qualities one usually would not expect to find in an ideal child, among them certainly ranging wisdom, great knowledge and a healthy readiness for aggression, it is more than probable that child heroes – in order to actually be heroes – need to develop at an accelerated pace. The fantastic realm therefore enables a child hero like Lyra to undergo the personal growth and mental maturation, which to acquire would normally take a whole life, in as little as a couple of months.

The aspect which strikes me as problematic about Lichtman's approach is that, in spite of her criticism of patriarchal values, she regards physical changes as the companions and visible signs of mental changes and psychological development of the heroine. This linking up of physical and mental aspects could be regarded as determinist as it may imply that there is a natural link between body markers and psychological ones. Also, one might want to criticise Lichtman's reducing the female journey to a stereotypical feminine experience by including a number of activities which have, in the past, been regarded as typical of women. Examples of this would be the allusion to the stereotypical female vanity made by the mentioning of jewel cases as possible symbols for the virgin phase, or by establishing typical female past times such as making music or studying poetry (one may only think of the portrayal of Dorothea Brook in

³⁵ Nikolajeva explains her coinage "aetonormativity" as follows: "On analogy with the central concept of queer theory, heteronormativity, I propose the concept of *aetonormativity* (Lat. *aeto-*, pertaining to age), adult normativity that governs the way children's literature has been patterned from its emergence until the present day." (*Power* 8) It is the subversion of aetonormativity which makes the appearance of young heroes and heroines in children's literature possible in the first place (see *Power* 9).

Middlemarch) or simply motherhood as symbols standing for the so-called mother phase. Certainly, these symbols are not meant to be taken literally and are supposed to be understood only as metaphors for female development; equally, there is no point in denying that physical changes which are bound to happen at some point in a woman's life can be accompanied by mental development. The troublesome aspect of Lichtman's pattern is that she must have chosen to look for an alternative, allegedly feminist hero pattern in places where patriarchy would never allow a female to take the role of a hero; because in order to find symbols for femininity which are – partly at least – as traditional as the ones she chose to use, she must have considered a number of literary productions which hold a very stereotypical view of the female experience. Moreover, if one reduces her pattern to its very basics, there is not much left that would make her pattern differ from the normal developmental pattern of a male hero.

Even if one chooses to look at Lichtman's model through less critical eyes, thus not regarding her pattern as actually denying females the qualities necessary to be a hero in the wanted sense, one cannot but realise that there, indeed, is a highly problematic aspect to the creation of heroines in literature. Torn between the intention not to deny qualities such as strength or courage to female characters and the desire to avoid patriarchy's "beaten path" of heroism, one has to decide for the lesser of two evils.

The last alternative pattern for female heroism I would like to discuss with regard to Lyra is Stephens & McCallum's refined version of Jezewski's model. In line with Stephens & McCallum, Lyra's parents are aristocratic, either in the literal sense of the word, like Lord Asriel, or in their behaviour and through advantageous marriage, like Mrs. Coulter. Also, Lyra's conception and birth have indeed happened under special circumstances as both things were the result of Mrs. Coulter's extramarital relationship to Lord Asriel. In spite of the fact that there has been no attempt made to kill her, Lyra is indeed brought up by "foster parents" at Jordan College.

Before Lyra leaves Jordan College, she is neither described as very talented nor as very beautiful. Her ability to read the alethiometer, which is Lyra's one talent *Northern Lights* focuses on, only develops after her leaving home, and her looks are only mentioned with regard to her tattered clothes and her overall state:

The number of times you been told about going out [on the roof]...Look at you! Just look at your skirt – it's filthy! Take it off at once and wash yourself while I look for something decent that en't torn. Why can't you keep yourself clean and tidy ... [...] God bless me, girl, your *knees* – look at the state of them ... (Pullman 63-64)

Therefore, Stephens & McCallum's plot point number three can be considered as fulfilled. Equally, it is true that Lyra feels she needs to leave Jordan College and go to the North. Even if Lyra does not know about her role as saviour and her destiny at that point – and also must not know, as the prophecy about her would have it – , her main goal is making her way there, and when she learns that the Gobblers might have taken Roger, her will to leave Jordan College becomes only stronger. Although she might not be consciously aware of the role she will play (which contradicts Stephens & McCallum's fourth plot point), there is no doubt that "her story will pivot on the emergence of her innate qualities" (Stephens & McCallum 119) and that Lyra feels her place is elsewhere. This is best exemplified by looking at the conversation she has with Lord Asriel before he intends to leave Jordan College and go to the north:

"But where are *you* going?"

"Back to the North. I'm leaving in ten minutes."

"Can I come?"

He stopped what he was doing, and looked at her as if for the first time. His daemon turned her great tawny leopard eyes on her too, and under the concentrated gaze of both of them, Lyra blushed. But she gazed back fiercely.

"Your place is here," said her uncle finally.

"But why? Why is my place here? Why can't I come to the North with you? I want to see the Northern Lights and bears and icebergs and everything. I want to know about Dust. And that city in the air. Is it another world?" (Pullman 28)

According to the plot point which follows in Stephens & McCallums pattern, the heroine is supported by a female society which pursuits the same goals as she does. In *Northern Lights*, this is not actually the case. In fact, Lyra is surrounded by patriarchal values and even cooperates with the distinctly patriarchal society of the Gyptians. Even Iorek, who supports her greatly during her quest, is male. One could therefore say that, by staying with the Gyptians and accepting their help and the help of other males such as Iorek or the aeronaut, she – without any bad intentions – makes use of men for her kind-of-political intentions of saving those she loves. However, neither does she adopt male disguise at any point of her journey (6a), nor does she use her sexuality in order to achieve her goals. Regarding this plot point, I would like to refer back to my earlier

discussions of Campbell's and Raglan's pattern and the accompanying incompatibility of child heroes and sexuality/marriage.

On the other hand, we can say that Lyra is apt to fulfil deeds which are usually considered to be part of the male experience; in the same breath it seems pertinent to mention Lyra's general proclivity towards activities which are regarded as stereotypically male domains: She likes climbing the college roofs and regularly participates in the "wars" which are carried out between the kids belonging to different clans or living in different areas of Oxford (see Pullman 33-39).

One of the deeds usually expected of a hero is the saving of people. In Stephens and McCallum's schema, however, it is of course not a male hero who saves a woman or girl, but one finds the exact opposite, namely a girl who is determined to rescue apparently helpless male persons. This so-called "Ariadne theme" is obviously also apparent in *Northern Lights*, where one encounters a little girl who aims at finding and freeing her best friend Roger and even her own father (see Pullman 109). As has already been mentioned, this ambition to rescue those who are close to her – who happen to be male – represents one of her main incentives to leave safe Jordan College and go north. Interestingly enough, her saviour-gene in a way even extends to the mighty Iorek, who, without Lyra's help and support, would have never had the will power to regain his armour or fight his opponent Iofur in order to take his rightful position as the king of the Svalbard bears. As in Stephens & McCallum's schema, the rescued Roger in fact becomes Lyra's partner and accompanies her on her quest. Lyra even seems to expect the same development with Lord Asriel:

A bridge between two worlds ... this was far more splendid than anything she could have hoped for! And only her great father could have conceived it. As soon as they had rescued the children, she would go to Svalbard with the bear and take Lord Asriel and the alethiometer, and use it to help set him free; and they'd build the bridge together, and be the first across (Pullman 192)

Equally, there are moments in *Northern Lights* where Lyra is not absolutely free from character flaws and where she certainly does not live up to the romantic image of the innocent child: Lyra enjoys boasting (see Pullman 36) and lying (see for instance Pullman 93, 130, 238), and among her and Roger's favourite past-times range "spit[ting] plum stones on the heads of passing Scholars, or [...] hoot[ing] like owls

outside a window where a tutorial [is] going on, or racing through the narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market, or waging war” (Pullman 34-35). If one considers these facts, it becomes quickly clear why one has troubles classifying Lyra as a purely positive and intrinsically good character.

According to Stephens & McCallum’s plot points number twelve and thirteen, the heroine later becomes a ruler and creates laws before dying uneventfully. Although the last point, the heroine’s death, must not necessarily be part of the story – and of course does not take place in the first volume of Pullman’s trilogy –, Lyra is, in a way, a ruler and also a person who can be said to make laws. However, in *Northern Lights*, this is not presented as a result of her quest or her personal development but it rather seems to be a natural part of her identity. Already at the beginning of the book, the image of Lyra as a ruler is evoked when the reader learns how the little girl functions as a kind of commander for “her troop” (Pullman 36) in the wars the children wage against each other. At a later point in Pullman’s novel, Lyra is even literally described as a “natural leader” (Pullman 252), and it is also Lyra who plans and leads the children’s flight from Bolvangar (Pullman 286-290).

According to Stephens & McCallum, the markers three and four are the most relevant ones because they describe what they call the heroine’s strategic identity. In line with Stephens & McCallum’s notion, Lyra at some point realises that the people around her, among them Mrs. Coulter, want Lyra to “[inhabit] interpellated “female” roles” (Stephens & McCallum 119). A significant example of this is the following quarrel between Lyra and Mrs. Coulter, which takes place at the time when Lyra stays with her in her London flat:

“Lyra, if you behave in this coarse and vulgar way, we shall have a confrontation, which I will win. Take off that bag this instant. Control that unpleasant frown. Never slam a door again in my hearing or out of it. Now, the first guests will be arriving in a few minutes, and they are going to find you perfectly behaved, sweet, charming, innocent, attentive, delightful in every way. I particularly wish for that, Lyra, do you understand me?” (Pullman 86-87)

As Stephens & McCallum have put it, Lyra “recognize[s] the nature of [her] interpellation and subsequently construct[s] for [herself] alternative possibilities” (119): “Lyra felt like a universal pet, and the second she voiced that thought to herself,

Pantalaimon stretched his goldfinch wings and chirruped loudly” (Pullman 87). Lyra decides to run away and return to her old self (see Pullman 96), which marks the moment Lyra regains her voice and her power.

Summary

To sum up the results I gained from the analysis of the – as I chose to call it – “alternative” concepts of heroism, one can say that all of the three chosen models seems to suit Lyra well with regard to the plot points they include; problems tend to occur rather at the level of characterisation or general concept.

Horn’s approach is followed when it comes to the basic storyline and characterisation; also, Lyra is a great example of what Horn describes as active hero. However, Lyra displays severe character flaws such as a disproportionate joy of lying or stealing. In spite of the fact that Horn allows for a non-flawless character of her fairy tale hero, Lyra’s behaviour before leaving Jordan College goes far beyond the harmless. Nevertheless, her development and her later use of her flaws for a better cause serve as a justification and attenuation of this issue.

As I showed in my analysis of Susan A. Lichtman’s alternative hero pattern, Lichtman’s markers are rather well compatible with Lyra’s heroic development. Much of the imagery Lichtman mentions as representative of the various stages she speaks of can be detected when scrutinising *Northern Lights*. Nevertheless and as I have already discussed above, there are some problematic aspects to Lichtman’s approach. She links up physical appearance and psychological development, and she alludes to numerous activities which have traditionally been thought of as specifically feminine activities. Therefore, in spite of the fact that she is aware of the influence patriarchal images of heroism have had on hero construction, she at the same time partly works with the tools provided by the institution she criticises. Another troublesome aspect is her labelling of female heroism: Lichtman’s approach to heroism stresses that the male and the female heroic experiences differ largely for one another, the female heroic life cycle she portrays being heavily reminiscent of the traditional female life drafted by western patriarchal society. Even if her contribution is important in that she tries to distance

herself from the so-called female “hero in drag” often criticised in the discourse on hero construction, her approach remains problematic. Lichtman’s concept seems to deny the heroine certain – in western patriarchy superior – qualities such as heroic bravery and virtue, which is clearly problematic, too.

The alternative pattern which suits Lyra best is the pattern initially conceived of by Jezewski and developed and improved by Stephens & McCallum. Lyra fulfils almost all of the mentioned markers, first and foremost the markers three and four which Stephens & McCallum consider to be most important.

5.3 So what kind of heroine is Lyra?

Looking at both traditionally-structuralist patterns and “alternative” hero patterns and models, the previous chapter has attempted to demonstrate that there exist, both in the traditional and the alternative field, concepts of the heroic life which can be used in order to schematise Lyra Belacqua’s life as a heroine.

The part of Lyra’s life the reader is presented with in *Northern Lights* is well compatible with Rank’s schema and also with Stephens & McCallum’s model, which means that Pullman has heavily borrowed from models of the mythological hero. Equally, the high degree of compatibility with Propp’s and Horn’s fairy tale approaches means that Lyra can also be described as a fairy tale heroine, even if the popular “Cinderella motif” is not as pronounced as in *Harry Potter*.

As I did before with Harry Potter, it will be necessary to scrutinise Lyra’s character qualities in order to find out if whether she is a complex heroine or whether she is as flat a heroine as mythological and fairy tale heroes usually are. This, however, will be part of the following chapter, and before dealing with this aspect I would like to consider other important aspects. Frye’s displacement theory will be one of them; the second aspect to which attention will be directed is whether Lyra disposes of enough freedom to be a heroine.

According to Nikolajeva, the fact that Harry is not a descendant of a god makes it impossible to qualify him as a genuine mythological hero, even if most of the other criteria are given (see *Power* 13). It is known that Lyra, too, is not the daughter of a god, therefore the question arises whether she could be regarded as a romantic heroine.

As Nikolajeva has put it, a romantic hero is always marked by their “innocence and intrinsic benevolence” (*Power* 13). In the previous chapter, I have already discussed the reasons why Lyra cannot be considered to be either innocent or intrinsically benevolent; also, Lyra is not able to conquer the evil because of her innocence (see *Rhetoric* 31): in fact, the exact opposite is the case. Although Lyra is not presented as a negative character, she clearly disqualifies as a romantic heroine due to her failure to live up to the principles of romantic childhood. Therefore, *Northern Lights* is positioned further down Frye’s displacement spectrum, possibly being best described as a high mimetic narrative: Its heroine is superior to other human beings because she is the one destined to save the universe, however, she is not invulnerable or resistant to either natural forces or death. One could sum up her heroism as an amalgam consisting of mythological and fairy tale elements, with some constitutive elements being missing from both types.

The last aspect I would like to bring up at this point is the degree of freedom Lyra disposes of in the course of her quest. As Horn explains when describing what she refers to as the outer themes of the fairy tale, every hero has to be free enough to exercise their heroism. In his article *Is Lyra Free Enough to Be a Hero?*, Nicolas Michaud asks himself the very question the title of his contribution already betrays: Can Lyra be called a heroine even if her destiny is already determined? Michaud argues that this is debatable because the girl cannot make her own choices:

Generally, when we think of a hero we think of someone who, through her own choice, does what is right. A hero must overcome great obstacles and make tough decisions. Lyra has done exactly that. But, the philosophical question is, can someone who is not free really be a hero? In other words, imagine that you find out that your hero was forced to overcome those obstacles, and that those tough decisions were made for her. Can it still be said that she is a true hero? [...] Generally, philosophers think of having freedom as having the ability to do otherwise. [...] [C]an a slave to destiny truly be a hero? (Michaud 121-123)

Michaud is right to base his reflections on the known fact that Lyra herself will certainly fulfil her destiny unless someone tells her about her role as a saviour. Even if Michaud

is aware of the importance of this heroic characteristic and is right when he points it out in the first place, I would argue that he took a wise decision when putting this problem into perspective and concluding that most heroes depend on others when fulfilling difficult tasks:

Is Lyra a hero? The successes of all heroes are never solely dependent on the heroes themselves. Every hero has probably been subject to forces beyond her control and so, in the end, even though Lyra may not be solely responsible for saving the world, she's no different from any other hero in that regard. We tend to view heroes as acting by themselves, but where would any of our heroes be without all of the other less celebrated heroes who help bring about success?

Being a hero probably has less to do with single-handedly succeeding in a particular endeavour and more to do with strength of character and pursuit of good regardless of great self-sacrifice. In that way, even though Lyra had very little control over her own success, she is a hero because the choices she made, despite her control of the consequences, reflect upon her as someone who seeks to do great good, even at a great cost to herself. (Michaud 130)

Thinking of Harry Potter, one quickly realises that his situation is not so very different from Lyra's: he could of course theoretically surrender to Voldemort, but even this was only an option until he became the Dark Lord's hocrux, destroyable only by another hocrux able to bring this about. In *Harry Potter*, prophecy also plays an important role and destiny can only partly be avoided. Therefore, it appears to be necessary to think of freedom in less rigid terms. Lyra was free enough to leave Jordan College. For Lee Scoresby, "this child seems [...] to have more free will than anyone [he] ever met" (310), and according to Serafina Pekkala, "she is destined to bring about the end of destiny" (310), thus capable of overcoming even the ultimate obstruction to personal freedom.

Having therefore established that Lyra definitely is a heroic character and also having assessed which patterns are most congruent with the plot of *Northern Lights*, one should now scrutinise Lyra as a mimetic character as well. Therefore, the following chapter will look at the various layers of characterisation available in Pullman's oeuvre.

5.4 Towards a mimetic approach to the character Lyra Belacqua

5.4.1 Lyra according to the narrator

The narrator in *Northern Lights* is an authorial and apparently also omniscient one. As in the case of *Harry Potter*, there are some moments when the authorial narration seems to be interrupted by a third person figural narrative situation, thus allowing the reader to enter Lyra's thoughts and learn more about the feelings she effectively experiences in certain moments. The basic narrative situation, however, is, as in the *Harry Potter* novels, the so-called extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrative mode, with Lyra being the focaliser. However, the narrator one, as reader, finds in *Northern Lights* is far more reliable than the one one finds in *Harry Potter*. In spite of the fact that the narrator only very seldom leaves Lyra's side, one is never given any purportedly true information which, in the course of the novel, then turns out to be wrong and little more than the hero's subjective perception. Therefore, the reader may also trust the narrator's judgement as to Lyra's character, which means that if Lyra is a hero in the eyes of the authorial narrator, one may regard this as a fact within the opus' reality.

The first time the reader encounters Lyra, the young girl is already up to mischief, entering the Retiring Room which, as she knows, is reserved to males persons:

[Lyra] had lived most of her life in the College, but had never seen the Retiring Room before: only Scholars and their guests were allowed in there, and never females. Even the maid-servants didn't clean in here. That was the Butler's job alone. (Pullman 4)

This scene speaks volumes of Lyra's character and perfectly fits the rest of what the reader learns about her: she is adventurous, mischievous, and she heartily enjoys lying and having power over others. That Lyra is a little adventurer becomes clear right from the very first page, when she and her daemon Pan are in the middle of the very same turpitude which will not only create but also incite the young girl's interest in travelling to the North (Pullman 3-16). In the course of the novel, this quality never ceases to be stressed. Concerning her readiness to do forbidden things, the first chapter of *Northern Lights* is an equally good example; however, Lyra never really stops bending and breaking the rules (patriarchal) society has imposed on children and women, either by

downright ignoring them or by cleverly using and promoting existing stereotypes in her own invest. A great example of this is her arrival at Bolvangar, where she

decide[s] to play slow and dim-witted and reluctant, and dragged her feet as she stepped over the high threshold into the building. [...] Lyra had been told that she was small for her age, whatever that meant. It had never affected her sense of her own importance, but she realized that she could use the fact now to make Lizzie shy and nervous and insignificant, and shrank a little as she went into the room. (Pullman 237-238)

Here, Lyra clearly makes the image she has gained through her looks work for her. As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, this and similar qualities disqualify her as a romantic heroine, even if the same qualities have actually made her fit for her adventures in the first place.

In the course of the novel, Lyra is repeatedly described as a “natural leader” (Pullman 252). This impression is further strengthened by her behaviour during the war games in which the kids in and around Jordan College engage. *Northern Lights* includes vivid descriptions of how alliances and enmity are organised among the children, and Lyra always seems to hold a leading position in these confrontations. The children who fight together with Lyra are referred to as “her troop” (Pullman 36), a term which belongs to the lexical field of war, marking Lyra’s activities as untypical of girls. This, however, will be scrutinised more closely in the chapter concerned with gender.

There is one characterisation of her which allows insights into how important such activities are to Lyra and which, furthermore, foreshadows her adventures yet to come:

That was Lyra’s world and delight. She was a coarse and greedy little savage, for the most part. But she always had a dim sense that it wasn’t her whole world; that part of her also belonged to the grandeur and ritual of Jordan College; and that somewhere in her life there was a high connection with the high world of politics represented by Lord Asriel. All she did with that knowledge was to give herself airs and lord it over the other urchins. It had never occurred to her to find out more. So she passed her childhood, like a half-wild cat (Pullman 36).

Although Lyra is not usually easily influenced – the Scholars of Jordan College seem to have already accepted that there are things, such as religion or almost any kind of scholarly knowledge, which one cannot impose on this little girl (see Pullman 51) –, there is one person who manages to make Lyra shortly forget about her principles and

get to know other aspects of her personality and a different lifestyle: Mrs. Coulter. She lures Lyra into coming and living with her in her beautiful London flat, where the two of them indulge in past times perhaps considered as stereotypically female (see Pullman 75-87). Mrs. Coulter also tries to impose her lifestyle on Lyra, which seems to work out as long as Lyra believes that this will allow her to go to the north. Secretly, though, Lyra knows that she does not belong there:

She had been feeling confined and cramped by this polite life, however luxurious it was. She would have given anything for a day with Roger and her Oxford ragamuffin friends, with a battle in the claybeds and a race along the canal. The one thing that kept her polite and attentive to Mrs. Coulter was that tantalizing hope of going north. Perhaps they would meet Lord Asriel. Perhaps he and Mrs. Coulter would fall in love, and they would get married and adopt Lyra, and go and rescue Roger from the Gobblers. (Pullman 85)

This passage is highly interesting not only because it shows how determined Lyra is to go north, but also because it allows deep insights into how hard not having a real family presses on Lyra. Lyra, who at the beginning believes that her parents died in an airship accident, does not know what having a family feels like:

She knew the Scholars well: the Librarian, the Sub-Rector, the Enquirer, and the rest; they were men who had been around her all her life, taught her, chastised her, consoled her, given her little presents, chased her away from the fruit trees in the garden; they were all she had for a family. They might have felt like a family if she knew what a family was, though if she did, she'd have been more likely to feel that about the College servants. The Scholars had more important things to do than attend to the affections of a half-wild, half-civilised girl, left among them by chance. (Pullman 18)

As with Harry Potter, the absence of her parents as well as her destiny and her determination enable the young girl to leave Jordan College and be adventurous. Also, the very same qualities make it possible for her to run away from Mrs. Coulter – whom she knows to be the enemy – and become Lyra Belacqua again (see Pullman 97). In spite of the fact that Lyra feels that behaving the way Mrs. Coulter expects it from her means betraying herself, Lyra is young and therefore does not have a fully-fledged and fixed identity. This makes her easily impressionable and liable to the influence of people like Mrs. Coulter. However, her willingness to join Mrs. Coulter as well as her naïve and idealist thinking connected to Mrs. Coulter's intentions are not the only signs of Lyra's character still developing. It becomes also evident when one considers the fact

that her daemon has not yet taken a fixed form. In Pullman's universe, the settling of a daemon's form seems to indicate as well as parallel the process of finding out "what kind of person you are" (Pullman 167). The shape of one's daemon therefore can be seen as a metaphor describing a person's character: as long as Pan can take various forms, Lyra is a kind of shape shifter herself.

In spite of all the difficulties Lyra encounters during her heroic journey, Lyra is presented as an utterly optimistic little person. This becomes especially apparent when Lyra finds herself at Bolvangar:

It wasn't Lyra's way to brood; she was a sanguine and practical child, and besides, she wasn't imaginative. No one with much imagination would have thought seriously that it was possible to come all this way and rescue her friend Roger; or, having thought it, an imaginative child would immediately have come up with several ways in which it was impossible. Being a practiced liar doesn't mean you have a powerful imagination. Many good liars have no imagination at all; it's that which gives their lies such wide-eyed conviction.

So now that she was in the hands of the Oblation Board, Lyra didn't fret herself into terror about what had happened to the gyptians. They were all good fighters, and even though Pantalaimon said he'd seen John Faa shot, he might have been mistaken; or if he wasn't mistaken, John Faa might not have been seriously hurt. It had been bad luck that she'd fallen into the hands of the Samoyeds, but the gyptians would be along soon to rescue her, and if they couldn't manage it, nothing would stop Iorek Byrnison from getting her out; and then they'd fly to Svalbard and rescue Lord Asriel. (Pullman 247)

Her optimism is probably one of the qualities which mark her as a heroine, for a hero does not only need certain abilities which rend him or her superior to his enemies, but also – and this is presumably just as important – the stamina and conviction necessary to keep on fighting the evil even if backlashes occur from time to time. Lyra also displays this trait at the end of *Northern Lights*, when she loses her best friend Roger because she and Pan misinterpreted Lord Asriel's intentions (see Pullman 398-399). Instead of feeling sorry for herself and being irrevocably demotivated, Lyra wants to go to the world behind the Aurora, find out about Dust and "do better next time" (Pullman 398).

Apart from stamina and conviction with regard to doing the right thing, heroes are normally equipped with a standard set of qualities such as courage, aggression, chivalry, empathy, and – if the need occurs – also cruelty. Now I will check whether Lyra can be said to fulfil this character stereotype of a hero.

Lyra is eager for knowledge and is interested in things which actually are none of her business. Although her curiosity does not concern the things the Jordan Scholars try to teach the young girl, she is keen to learn about Dust and alternative worlds. This process of gaining knowledge is very important to her, and finding out about things that ignite her interest must be seen as a kind of quest for knowledge and should also be regarded as marking her as a heroic character. This trait of Lyra's is presented to the reader as early as in the first chapter of *Northern Lights*, when Lyra enters the Retiring Room (which, as Lyra exactly knows, is a men-only area) and hears bits and pieces about the north. Time and time again, Lyra takes risks in order to either gain knowledge, make her way to the north or rescue the people important to her. When she reveals her presence to Lord Asriel in the Retiring Room in order to save his life (13-14), she invariably knows the consequences; when she hides within the wardrobe of this forbidden room, she risks being found out by the Steward (7). Lyra fears both Lord Asriel and the Steward; however she masters her fear and proves to be brave enough to take that risk:

[Lord Asriel] was fierce: if he caught her in [the Retiring Room] she'd be severely punished, but she could put up with that. [...] And if she hadn't seen the Master tipping that powder into the wine, she might have risked the Steward's anger, or hoped to avoid being noticed in the busy corridor. [...] Lyra was afraid of the Steward, who had twice beaten her. (6-7)

While this might perhaps be considered only a minor act of bravery, Lyra fulfils a number of other brave deeds during her journey. Among them range the escape from Mrs. Coulter's flat (97), the liberation of Iorek Byrnison (197-200), her rescue of the "half-boy" (214-217), of Roger and of the children at Bolvangar (286-296), her deceiving of Iofur Raknison (339-353) and her attempt to save Lord Asriel (192; 360-369).

One might argue that the young girl experiences fear at a high rate and with great intensity and that this is not very typical of a character described as hero. Nevertheless, one should not fail to mention that Lyra is not necessarily always afraid for herself. At the beginning of the novel, for instance, the girl is anxious for Lord Asriel (9), while later on, her main fear is directed towards her disappeared friend Roger (60). Certainly, there are many moments when Lyra experiences fear: she is afraid of Mrs. Coulter and her monkey daemon (96; 265-266), she is afraid of Iorek Byrnison when she first sees him (180) and she is terrified when she and Pan are almost separated at Bolvangar (277-

279). Furthermore, Lyra is “in horror” (105) at the sight of blood, and at first, she is even intimidated by the power of the alethiometer and “[is] not pleased or proud to be able to read [it] – she [is] afraid” (147). In spite of these moments of intensive fear, however, Lyra manages to overcome her panic and do whatever is necessary in order to achieve her heroic goals. One of the most convincing examples of this is the part of *Northern Lights* where Lyra saves the half-boy and takes him to the gyptians. This part also very well demonstrates Lyra’s practice of conjuring up her own courage:

The alethiometer had indicated something and unnatural, which was alarming; but who was she? Lord Asriel’s daughter. And who was under her command? A mighty bear. How could she possibly show any fear? [...] She was horribly nervous. [...] There was no choice, and anyway, she didn’t want the bear to see her being afraid. He had spoken of mastering his fear: that was what she’d have to do. (210-212)

Lyra knows she has to master her fear. *Northern Lights* does not treat fear as something impossible or something that should best be kept secret, but as something perfectly natural, and exactly this attitude towards fear has been maintained for the narrator’s depiction of the novel’s heroine. As just hinted at earlier on, there are vivid descriptions of Lyra’s most fearful moments, and also Iorek Byrnison, the mighty bear, owns to experiencing situations in which he feels fear. The important thing is – exactly as Iorek once puts it – not the avoidance or denial of one’s fear but the ability to cope with it and overcome it: “When I am [afraid], I shall master my fear” (209). Being able to overcome one’s fear means being courageous.

In fact, Lyra does exactly this all the time, even in situations terrifying enough to terrify whole villages. When she finds the boy who has been separated from his daemon in a lonely hut close to a little village, she learns that none of its inhabitants has ever dared going somewhere near this place because they were too afraid of the child (see Pullman 211). While none of the adults seems to be able to control their fearful feelings and cannot bring themselves to find out more about the “half-boy”, Lyra even dares entering the hut to have a look at him. Lyra is very afraid herself, but again she masters her fear which makes her a brave, courageous and indeed heroic character:

Lyra’s heart was beating so fast she could hardly breathe. She raised her hand to knock at the door and then, feeling that that was ridiculous, took a deep breath to

call out, but realized that she didn't know what to say. Oh, it was so dark now! She should have brought a lantern... (212)

The young girl's degree of bravery exceeds not only the one the people in the village show but also the one displayed by the people in her more immediate social environment. Even at moments of great distress and terror, Lyra can bring herself to forget these very feelings in order to make space for heroically more productive emotions. There is one moment in *Northern Lights* in which Lyra seems to almost succumb to her fear for her friend Roger. She knows that Roger will probably die and that she can do nothing to change this. Nevertheless, she manages to get over these feelings and tries her best to fight on (see 387-393). Lyra's courage is further accentuated when even the gyptians, who accompany her on her way north, dare not touch the so-called half-boy. They serve as Lyra's foil characters and do so effectively. As if this were not enough celebrating the heroine's courage, Iorek chides the gyptians for their cowardly behaviour:

The men held back, fearful; but the bear spoke, to Lyra's weary amazement, chiding them.

"Shame on you! Think what this child has done! You might not have more courage, but you should be ashamed to show less." (216-217)

However, apart from her courage, Lyra also disposes of other qualities which make her a heroine. On the one hand, she is clearly able to empathise with others and seems to tend to stand up for those people who cannot speak for themselves. This becomes especially obvious when, after the half-boy's death, one of the gyptians takes away the dried fish which the boy used as a substitute for his lost daemon in order to give it to the dogs. When Lyra realises that the cut boy has been deprived of his substitute daemon, she becomes absolutely furious and rebukes the gyptians for behaving so thoughtlessly and disrespectfully. Lyra shows the same degree of chivalry when she finds out about what really happens to the children who are kept at Bolvangar and decides not only to help the gyptians' children and Roger, but also all the other ones.

On the other hand, Lyra can display traits quite opposed to these altruistic feelings. While Lyra shows so much empathy for those who are in need of help or who are her friends, the young girl is more than ready to punish those she feels need to be punished. There are two very significant moments in *Northern Lights* which present her in this

light. At one time, these feelings are directed towards the Oblation Board. Thanks to the third person figural narrative situation Pullman uses for this passage, the reader gains valuable insights into Lyra's thoughts at that moment: "[H]ow cruel it would be [...] if she perished without striking a blow at them!" (254). The second passage which presents Lyra's thirst for revenge concerns her father Lord Asriel:

She felt wretched apart with unhappiness. And with anger, too; she could have killed her father; if she could have torn out his heart, she would have done so there and then, for what he'd done to Roger. And to her: tricking her: how *dare* he? (397)

Lyra is also smart enough to be a heroine (see 237, for instance) and she is able to fight fiercely. The latter quality is substantiated by several fighting scenes, the most tangible one probably being the scene in which she fights against the guards at Bolvangar, "[sinking] her teeth into [one of the guards'] large freckled hand, [drawing] blood, [...] scratching, biting, punching, spitting in passionate fury" (275).

5.4.2 Lyra according to herself and what her daemon gives away

While the character Harry Potter offered at least a handful of instances of auto-characterisation, the reader gains practically no information on Lyra's character by auto-characterisation because the authorial narration is only seldom interrupted by a third person figural narrative situation, and the interruptions that do effectively occur do not represent any self-reflection. There exists only one moment in the novel where Lyra considers her own importance and the impression she gives to others:

It took some time before she was used to the movement, and then she felt a wild exhilaration. She was riding a bear! [...] So as he loped along, his great legs swinging tirelessly, she sat with the movement and said nothing. Perhaps he preferred that anyway, she thought; she must seem a little prattling cub, only just past babyhood, in the eyes of an armored bear.

She had seldom considered herself before, and found the experience interesting but uncomfortable, very like riding the bear, in fact. (Pullman 208)

In spite of this lack of auto-characterisation from the part of Lyra, the reader has the chance to analyse another, perhaps in a way closely related form of characterisation in *Northern Lights*: a characterisation via Lyra's daemon Pan. Pan can help to understand

Lyra's character by his own behaviour, as the way a daemon thinks and acts always sheds light on his or her human. The behaviour or feelings of a daemon can double and therefore reflect the human's feelings. When Lyra and Iorek find the cut child in the hut, Lyra's already quite intense fear is further stressed by Pan's behaviour, who seems to be even more stressed and fearful than Lyra, betraying the true degree of the girl's fear (212); And when Lyra and Pantalaimon almost get separated from one another, Lyra's desperation and anger towards her attackers reflect in Pan's desperate shape-shifting and fighting (277). The emotional link between the two characters is a major thread throughout the whole of the novel, and whatever shape Pan takes must be regarded as emblematic of Lyra's momentary mental state. Thus, Pan turns into a lion (277), an eagle (277), a white ermine (233) or a wildcat (277) whenever Lyra feels aggressive or pugnacious, or into a moth whenever the two of them want to appear innocent or inexpressive or want to stay unnoticed (see 3).

In some cases, however, human and daemon seem not to agree with each other. They then almost have arguments about what to do next (see, for instance, how Pan vehemently tries to stop Lyra from entering the retiring room (see Pullman 3-4) or wants to persuade her to leave Mrs. Coulter's flat (see 86-87). Then again, this could of course also be seen to indicate that Lyra is unconsciously aware that her behaviour and actions are not always impeccable but has trouble admitting it.

In Lyra's world, the forms daemons take as soon as their humans reach the age of puberty are reliable descriptors when it comes to the essence of the characters in question. Dogs, which are animals usually known to accompany and serve their humans in a practical way, are the kinds of daemons servants have (see 5), while people like Lord Asriel, whose daemon is a snow leopard, tend to have majestic and dangerous companions such as wild cats, for instance (see 11). Having a settled daemon means "[k]nowing what kind of person you are". (167)

As can be seen from all of this, daemons are very important means of characterisation in *Northern Lights*. As Lyra has not yet developed a fully-fledged character, Pan constantly changes, therefore always only reflecting certain facets of her character. Judging from the frequency with which Pan shifts into his brave fighting shape, however, one might argue that the young girl is very courageous herself.

5.4.3 Lyra according to other characters in the book

In spite of the fact that the reader gains most of the information about Lyra from the narrator, there is also a number of comments on and characterisations of Lyra by the other characters in the book available. What strikes immediately is that most of the direct statements made about Lyra describe her as a positive character. While Harry seems to dispose of an almost equally high number of supporters and opponents, the latter of whom also clearly voicing their hate of Harry, Lyra does not actually seem to have enemies the way Harry has. Even people like Mrs. Coulter or Lord Asriel, who by the end of *Northern Lights* have clearly earned their role as Lyra's opponents, do not really try to discredit the young heroine but, if at all, merely fail to realise her role and her true importance or to take her seriously. While Mrs. Coulter simply puts her down as "too coarse [and] too stubborn" (395), Lord Asriel does not "think [he] wants to be interrogated and condemned by an insolent child" (368) who is "going to be sentimental" (369) about their failed father-daughter relationship.

Therefore, while Harry definitely has enemies who try to damage his reputation and his life, Lyra – in spite of her sometimes taking the underdog-position –, generally seems to leave no doubt about her heroic capacities, neither in the eyes of the narrator, the eyes of the reader, nor in the eyes of the other fictional characters around her.

According to the Master of Jordan College, "Lyra has a part to play in [high politics], and a major one" (31); Also, he stresses that "[t]here's a lot of goodness and sweetness in [her] nature, and a lot of determination" (69). Even Lee Scoresby, who barely knows Lyra at that point, has managed to realise that "[t]his little girl's pretty important" (307), and Serafina Pekkala, who is a very wise and intelligent witch, states that Lyra is "[m]ore [important] than she will know" (307) because "she is destined to bring about the end of destiny" (310).

Lyra's role as saviour of the universe and heroine of the story is further supported by John Faa's and Iorek's praise of her courage: Apart from paying her a compliment for her ability to speak convincingly ("Belacqua? No. You are Lyra Silvertongue" (348)), Iorek stresses how courageous it was of Lyra to help Tony Makarios, the cut boy, when he chides the gyptians for showing less courage than Lyra in view of the little dying

creature: “Shame on you! Think what this child has done! You might not have more courage, but you should be ashamed to show less.” (216-217). John Faa, too, does not fail to remark that saving the boy was “a brave thing and a good thing” (218).

Even Ma Costa’s apparently critical assessment of Lyra’s character hides a compliment and a hint at Lyra’s ability to deceive her enemies whenever necessary:

‘You en’t gyptian, Lyra. You might pass for a gyptian with practice, but there’s more to us than gyptian language. There’s deeps in us and strong currents. We’re water people all through, and you en’t you’re a fire person. What you’re most like is marsh fire, that’s the place you have in the gyptian scheme; you got witch oil in your soul. Deceptive, that’s what you are, child.’

Lyra was hurt.

‘I en’t never deceived anyone! You ask...’ [...]

‘Can’t you see I’m paying you a compliment, you gosling?’ she said, and Lyra was pacified, though she didn’t understand. (112)

The ultimate proof of her courage, however, occurs when Lord Asriel, who is not particularly fond of his daughter and also does not respect her, tells Mrs. Coulter, who hesitates to follow him into the world across the bridge at the end of *Northern Lights*, off by saying: “You? *Dare* not? Your child would come. Your child would dare anything, and shame her mother.” (395)

Considering all these characterisations, one can say that most characters around Lyra tend to share the narrator’s opinion on the little girl’s heroic nature. While this alone could not be regarded as proving her being heroic in character, it clearly amplifies and confirms the narratorial presentation of Lyra’s qualities.

5.4.4 Lyra: A flat or a round heroine?

Having considered all the possible sources of hero characterisation, one can conclude that the impression the reader gains from the narratorial characterisation – namely that Lyra disposes of a number of typically heroic qualities – is supported by both the characterisation(s) coming from the other characters in the book and the analysis of her daemon Pan. Lyra fulfils all the criteria necessary to be called a hero(ine): she is strong with regard to her mind and her body, she is full of courage and she has a sense for right

and wrong. She is keen to help those who cannot help themselves and she is able to focus on her goal as the only thing that really counts. Lyra is not an absolutely conventional hero, though, as she, too, has a dark side: She is a practiced and talented liar who is not shy of using her talent, even if it is not always only for altruistic causes; needless to mention, this somewhat clashes with the conventional image of the pure and good-hearted hero. Also, she “[finds] her power over [Iofur] almost intoxicating” (343), being “sardonically pleased” (345) with the influence she has on the villainous bear king of Svalbard. Even if these deviations from the hero-norm are rather easily digestible for most readers because they always only concern Lyra’s enemies, they might strike some people as problematic with a hero.

Furthermore, Lyra is not “only” a hero. She is by far not as flat as traditional heroes have been conceived to be. In fact, everything that is good or bad about her is not simply and absolutely good or bad: Lyra is a round character full of facets, and everything she does is neither purely black nor purely white, but some greyish colour in between. She is a multi-layered personality who, living in an equally multi-layered, complicated world, allows practically endless analysis. She constantly oscillates between good and bad, never fully meeting any of these extreme points. Lyra clearly is a heroine, but she is a heroine with quite a realistic set of qualities, thus being a by far more credible literary persona than many of the very popular heroes of the past.

While Harry’s heroic success often seems to arise from luck, the people around him or simply from destiny and less from his making the right choices and taking the right steps, Lyra seems to be well equipped with her perhaps morally problematic talents and ways to cope.

5.5 General gender tendencies in *Northern Lights*

When reading *Northern Lights*, it immediately strikes that there are, in fact, no weak characters available: The male characters are all strong in their own way, but – more surprisingly perhaps – so are also the female characters. The world presented in *Northern Lights* is a patriarchal one with a basically perfectly traditional role allotment.

The men in *Northern Lights* tend to inhabit traditionally male spaces: The scholars at Jordan College indulge in their scientific work and all the rationality and spirit of research involved in such activities; Lord Asriel, too, has his scientific projects and goes on journeys to the far north, and John Faa is the leader of his clan. In spite of the fact that many of the women in the novel fulfil stereotypically female roles, as Mrs Lonsdale, the housekeeper, or also Ma Costa, who is the gyptians' boat mother, do, these women never appear to be weak, passive, very emotional or helpless. They do fulfil the functions the society they live in has designed for them, but they do not really incorporate the female stereotypes that are – in a patriarchal mindset – supposed to naturally come with their sex.

In fact, there are (apart from Lyra, who will be treated in the following chapter) only two female characters who have managed to escape a rather traditional female life and to break with the patriarchal gender norms: Mrs. Coulter and Serafina Pekkala. For these reasons, they are worthy of closer attention.

Mrs. Coulter is described as a person with an incredible impact on children, as “so gracious and sweet and kind” (Pullman 43) and as “beautiful and young [with] [h]er sleek black hair fram[ing] her cheeks” (65). Lyra (see 91), as well as Lord Asriel (see 373), describe her as a clever woman, which is also noticeable from her talent to talk people into doing what she wants. This is what she does to Iofur Raknison (see 357-358), and this is even what she does to Lyra until the young heroine decides to free herself from her influence. Mrs. Coulter knows what to tell people in order to flatter them, and she knows the constraints and limits but also the possibilities being a woman entails: “I thought we’d go to the Royal Arctic Institute for lunch. I’m one of the very few female members, so I might as well use the privileges I have” (76).

Her everyday life is a balancing act between living up to and breaking the norms of femininity. On the one hand, she lives in a very stylish and feminine flat (see 75), gives cocktail parties (see 84), goes shopping (see 81) and teaches Lyra the ABC of beauty (see 84); on the other, she literally infiltrates masculine spaces such as the church (she leads the General Oblation Board) and politics by using her femininity as a weapon against weak males such as Iofur Raknison or the even the magisterium, who, undoubtedly underestimating her power and the danger she might represent, was so

relieved at her offering a direct investigation into the nature of Dust “that they backed her with money and resources of all kinds” (374). Mrs. Coulter has gained a voice and power within a men’s world without altogether giving up her stereotypically feminine traits, being one of the “women so unlike female Scholars of gyptian boat mothers or college servants as almost to be a new sex altogether, one with dangerous powers and qualities such as elegance, charm and grace” (81):

At first she tried to get it the normal way, through marriage, but that did not work [...]. So she had to turn to the Church. Naturally she couldn’t take the route a man could have taken – priesthood and so on – it had to be unorthodox; she had to set up her own order, her own channels of influence, and work through that (374).

The danger and power that emanate from her nature are further illustrated by an interesting description of her corporeal state when feeling anger:

[Mrs. Coulter] bent a little and offered her cheek. Lyra had to stand on tiptoe to kiss it. She noticed how smooth it was, and the slight perplexing smell of Mrs. Coulter’s flesh: scented, but somehow metallic. [...] Mrs. Coulter seemed to be charged with some kind of anbaric force. She even smelled different: a hot smell, like heated metal, came off her body (87-91).

The metal metaphor used here interestingly alludes to Mrs. Coulter’s inhumane side, but it also evokes another enthralling connotation, namely the one of the so-called cyborg:

Technowissenschaften produzieren Verunreinigungen, Vermischungen und Hybride. Die Metapher für diese technologisch verstrickte Situierung und für das fragmentierte Subjekt in einer postmodernen Welt ist die/der *Cyborg*. Cyborgs stehen für die radikale Infragestellung traditioneller Grenzziehungen zwischen Subjekt und Objekt, Mensch und Maschine, Kultur und Natur. Sie sind die Metapher für eine partiale, fluide, situierte, fragmentierte, verunreinigte Subjektposition. Mit der Figur der Cyborg wird die Vorstellung von einer Ganzheit des Körpers ebenso wie die von einheitlichen Identitäten grundlegend erschüttert. (Singer 299)

Thinking of the revolutionary character of Mrs. Coulter when it comes to constructions of femininity, the evocation of the cyborg metaphor seems very appropriate and, in fact, gives a wholly new dimension to her character: Mrs. Coulter is not only a dangerous female exotic in a men’s world, she also unhinges the otherwise so very stable gender relations within the novel.

While Mrs. Coulter clearly represents a new kind of femininity within the society she inhabits, Serafina Pekkala is silhouetted against other female characters in *Northern Lights* simply through the fact that she is not human but a witch. In the realm of witches, the traditional gender roles as well as the stereotypical gender qualities do not apply. Pullman describes witches as strong beings, be it mentally or physically; they live for centuries (see 314) and therefore, they are able to accumulate knowledge and wisdom. All these qualities, which are so naturally part of a witch, would otherwise be rather allocated to male rather than female beings. The gender relations one would usually find in patriarchal societies do not apply in the apparently matriarchal society of witches: There is no male counterpart to witches, so they always take human males as their partners, who are very short-lived compared to witches. The following conversation between Serafina Pekkala and Lyra allows deep insights into the “upside-down world” of a witch society:

‘Are there men witches? Or only women?’

‘There are men who serve us, like the consul at Trollesund. And there are men we take for lovers and husbands. You are so young, Lyra, too young to understand this, but I shall tell you anyway and you’ll understand it later: men pass in front of our eyes like butterflies, creatures of a brief season. We love them; they are brave, proud, beautiful, clever; and they die almost at once. They die so soon that our hearts are continually racked with pain. We bear their children, who are witches if they are female, human if not; and then in the blink of an eye they are gone, felled, slain, lost. Our sons, too. When a little boy is growing, he thinks he is immortal. His mother knows he isn’t. Each time becomes more painful, until finally your heart is broken.’(314).

Serafina Pekkala is, however, is not only superior to men because of her status as a witch, but also because she is a queen among the witches. Thus, her position is twofold advantageous.

One might want to argue that Pullman introduced strong female characters such as Lyra, Mrs. Coulter or witches in order to counterbalance the gender inequality which predominates all the other societal groups he presents in *Northern Lights*. Although there is by no means any way to effectively prove this assumption, there is yet one more thing which might be seen to support this theory: the discovery that all the daemons the reader encounters in *Northern Lights* are of the sex opposed to their humans’ (or witches’, for that matter). In spite of the fact that this circumstance is never addressed in

the novel, it is more than just striking and could be interpreted as just another attempt made by Pullman to iron out or maybe even criticise gender inequality.

5.6 Gender and Lyra Belacqua

Having found out that Lyra grew up in a basically patriarchal society, the question that remains is: What influence did growing up in such a society have on Lyra? Did it actually have any influence at all?

As interesting and relevant as these questions may be, there is sadly no way of knowing how much of Lyra's character has actually been shaped by Lyra's fictional environment and how much of it is innate. Nevertheless, one can approximate these questions by taking a closer look at Lyra's own perception of gender (if there are any indications of this kind to be found within the text) and at how Lyra as a young heroine has been constructed with regard to gender. Has Lyra been constructed according to stereotypical images of femininity/masculinity? Is there any noticeable valuation of these gender markers from the part of the narrator?

Right from the beginning of *Northern Lights*, Lyra does not live up to the expectations and rules of patriarchal society, both consciously and unconsciously so. Lyra enters the Retiring Room although she is well aware that females are not allowed to do so (3-5).

Furthermore, Lyra is perfectly aware of what the scholars at Jordan College expect of her, yet she is simply not interested in spirituality (see 51) and does things like switching the coins in the skulls of dead Scholars (see 50), climbing on the roofs with the kitchen boys (see 34, 63), "racing through narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market, or waging war" (35), ruining her clothes (see 63) and getting dirty all over (see 63-64). She hates being dressed up like a doll (see 37), all of which are behaviours more readily accepted in a boy than in a girl and therefore subversive in the latter.

She knows that she is expected to behave herself and be "sweet, charming, innocent, attentive and delightful in everyway" (87) during the cocktail party Mrs. Coulter gives in her flat, and she refuses to live up to these expectations and frees herself both from

Mrs. Coulter and, by doing so, indirectly and unconsciously from the constraints of the patriarchal society she is part of; If one chooses to conceive of her time at Mrs. Coulter's as a metaphor of her accepting and living up to "stereotypically feminine behaviour", one has to draw the conclusion that, in spite of her initially being fascinated by indulging in stereotypically female activities and Mrs. Coulter's way of life, she quickly realises that she loses hold of the her old self: "And around the edge of the tinted mirror there were little pink lights, so that when Lyra looked into it she saw a softly illuminated figure quite unlike the Lyra she knew" (75).

Before realising this, however, Lyra is too fascinated and enchanted with Mrs. Coulter and her way of life to question anything (see 78) and effectively turns into something like Mrs. Coulter's daemon (see 81), becoming her "universal pet" (87). It is only a question of time, however, until she realises that "she had been feeling confined and cramped by this polite life" (85) and decides to run away from Mrs. Coulter (see 97). By doing so, she denies the role that society has intended for her.

Even when she joins the gyptians, she is unable to adhere to their gender rules and simply enters the gyptian's parley room, disturbs their political discussions and coolly explains that she wants to come to the North with them (see 139). When they tell her that her place is at home with the gyptian boat mother (see 140), she ignores this and finds a way to carry her point.

To a certain degree, Lyra refuses to accept male superiority and questions it by trying to overcome the constraints and restrictions that come with it. Even when Lord Asriel, after having found her in the Retiring Room at the beginning of the novel, gazes at her angrily, "she gaze[s] back fiercely" (28), not succumbing to the male gaze and refusing to accept her object position. Although Lyra should theoretically have realised her place in society, she is not content to simply accept her role.

This also shows in her – presumably unconscious – refusal of past times which patriarchy considers to be appropriate for girls: she does not need or want "female company [and] [...] guidance" (69), and she has never been one of the girls to play with dolls or teddies (see 240). Not that Lyra does not know or understand her role, she simply likes indulging in allegedly "male activities" better. It is only a little later during

her journey to the far north that Lyra seems to slowly develop a sense of which activities are considered as manly and which are considered as womanly and to find out

that even a job like scrubbing a deck could be satisfying, if it was done in a seamanlike way. She was very taken with this notion, and later on she folded the blankets on her bunk in a seamanlike way, and put her possessions in the closet in a seamanlike way, and used “stow” instead of “tidy” for the process of doing so. (165)

This passage makes it obvious that Lyra has started to actively go against the expectations of her society.

There is, in fact, only one way in which Lyra can be said to have ever tried to seek male approval: she wants to be loved and accepted by her father Lord Asriel as soon as she finds out who this man really is. While she did not waste any second thoughts on disappointing one of scholars at Jordan College, she greatly admires Lord Asriel (see 192) and dreams of a future in which they build the bridge to the stars together and are “the first across” (192). Lyra is consumed with an illusion, an ideal image of her father and their future relationship until she finally meets him in the north and realises his true nature (see 367-399). This disappointment brings about a change of mind in Lyra: she tells her father how disappointed she is in him and is finally able to free herself from the wish to be accepted and loved by him:

‘You en’t human, Lord Asriel. You en’t my *father*. My *father* wouldn’t treat me like that. Fathers are supposed to love their daughters, en’t they? You don’t love me, and I don’t love you, and that’s a fact. I love Farder Coram, and I love Iorek Byrnison; I love an armored bear more’n I love my father. And I bet Iorek Byrnison loves me more’n you do.’ (368)

By freeing herself from the wish of being loved by him, she metaphorically also frees herself from the desire for male acceptance, even if this feeling has never been very pronounced in Lyra. Interestingly enough, this step helps her to gain a voice and at least an ounce of respect on the part of Lord Asriel (see 370).

By being unconsciously involved in high politics, by having a high degree of influence on men (she rules over her friend Roger, for instance, who is described as “her devoted slave” (45)), by her choice of past time activities, by breaking the norms of patriarchal

society and by saving males from danger or distress (think of her saving Tony Makarios, Roger, Iorek and of her attempt to save Lord Asriel), Lyra manages to enter the masculine sphere. She also does so through her ability to read the alethiometer, which is ironic considering that a young girl, of all people, is able to access all the old knowledge actually reserved for men.

The irony involved not only emanates from the fact that patriarchal discourse has always regarded knowledge and science as something definitely male, it is further amplified by the importance of this knowledge (one must not forget that the knowledge in question is the ultimate truth of the universe) as well as by the effortlessness and instinctiveness with which Lyra accesses it. It lies in her nature to fulfil the role of the heroic saviour of the universe; a role which tradition might usually tend to allocate to male characters but which, instead, has been given to a little, underestimated girl, thus supplying her with unspeakable power.

Lyra gains a voice and power by being the chosen one, the one to read the alethiometer and by entering the masculine sphere as if it were the most natural thing for a little girl to do. She, who due to her sex and age would usually take a place rather far down the social ladder in a patriarchal society, is not only allowed but also destined to play a decisive role in international politics. Her being the chosen one enables her to prove her being capable of heroic deeds in the first place. Considering her unique position in society, it appears to be needless to say that there lies some irony in Lyra's own perception that female scholars represent an "anomaly":

Lyra regarded female Scholars with a proper Jordan disdain: there *were* such people, but, poor things, they could never be taken more seriously than animals dressed up and acting a play. (66)

In support of Lyra, one should, however, also mention that Lyra is perhaps not aware of the true implication of such statements, as "[t]he word female only suggest[s] female Scholar to Lyra [...]". (70)

Considering all that has so far been said about the character Lyra Belacqua, one can say that she does not really live up to the female stereotype of the helpless, weak, dependent, exaggeratedly emotional, passive or nurturing character. Instead, she seems

to have been constructed around stereotypically male qualities: she is strong, undoubtedly heroic, rational, intelligent, dominant and independent. She is the kind of person who saves others and who proves herself as warrior and leader. By being constructed in this way, the character of Lyra basically drifts into either the stereotype of the lesbian or the stereotype of the tomboy, both of which are basically negative stereotypes for a female character to fulfil (compare chapter one).

Interestingly enough, however, Pullman's writing never gives the impression that these character traits are to be considered as something negative in Lyra or any other young girl. The novel accepts and presents these qualities without passing any judgement on their implication, thus characterising them as something perfectly natural. In spite of the fact that gender is an important topic in *Northern Lights*, critique always seems to only refer to the patriarchal society presented and never to Lyra's way of performing gender.

Conclusion and prospects

We encounter heroes in all aspects of life, both in consent and in literary reality. A hero or a heroine is always marked by unusualness: they are different from the characters around them and they naturally stand out by incorporating values and traits which are widely appreciated.

The main goal of this thesis was the analysis of the heroic performance of two literary child characters, namely Lyra Belaqua, the heroine of Pullman's *Dark Materials*, and Harry Potter, the hero of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. This analysis has been conducted from various scientific points of view. While the first parts of this thesis have largely been dedicated to finding a working definition – or rather working *idea*, for reducing a concept such as heroism to a brief explanatory statement would not do justice to the multitude of aspects that are to heroism – of the hero/heroine, the latter have attempted to apply these newly gained information on hero construction to the protagonists of the chosen primary texts.

Among the theoretical aspects which I felt should be considered in order to be able to approach the paradigm of the hero/heroine theoretically was a general introduction to gender studies and gender stereotypes, an analysis of the literary genres from which Rowling and Pullman borrowed as well as a general overview of the used genres' tendencies in gender role allocation. The concept of the hero/heroine has furthermore been approached from a strictly structuralist plot-point-orientated angle, and from the point of view of general character description and gender stereotyping. I felt it was vital not only to introduce mimetic but also non-mimetic strategies for the analysis that was to follow.

The result of the analysis of the characters of Lyra and Harry might strike those as surprise who seek heroism exclusively in male literary characters. The analysis of the literary genres borrowed from by Rowling and Pullman showed that both books have been largely influenced by genres which are not traditionally considered as gender subversive and which thus strengthen patriarchal patterns of gender role construction. While Harry as a male character profits from the narratological conventions of the genres Rowling borrowed from, Pullman's Lyra has a harder time conveying the impression that she is a heroine. Therefore, Harry finds himself in a much better position to be perceived as a hero than young Lyra, who, as a female character, is less likely to be perceived as heroic persona both in the novel's world and in the real world, simply because both of these worlds have been shaped by patriarchy.

When it comes to the non-mimetic approaches of hero construction I worked with in this thesis, neither Harry nor Lyra can possibly be said to fit them all; judging purely from how well one could use the heroic patterns to describe their lives and disregarding Lyra's sex, Lyra and Harry can be said to perform equally good as heroes. Considering the mimetic or at least semi-mimetic approaches dealt with, the situation is slightly different. While there is no significant predominance between the protagonists in terms of basic character qualities, one of them clearly has the edge of the other with regard to the less obvious prerequisites of heroism. Both Harry and Lyra are courageous, worthy, audacious, altruistic and, therefore, heroic characters. It should, however, be mentioned that Lyra conforms more successfully to Horn's active hero model than Harry does, which means that Harry lacks one essential heroic quality which is clearly to be detected in Lyra. If, apart from Harry's tendency to stay passive, one further considers how often he misinterprets his own and Hogwarts' situation, and then observes Lyra's natural grasp for good and evil and her never-lacking courage, one could say that Lyra clearly exceeds expectations while Harry fails to live up to them.

Ironically enough, it must equally be admitted that Lyra appears to be more in line also with other stereotypically male qualities which have been traditionally longed for in the construction of heroic characters. While Harry Potter and the success of his heroic quest seem to be to a certain degree dependent on other people's help, and while he needs to be saved from danger and death several times in a way heavily evocative of the famous image of the damsel in distress, Lyra seems to be a lot more self-dependent. She is also better equipped for the tasks her life poses than Harry and always rather tends to be the saviour than the one who is saved. While Harry's misjudgement and ignorance of certain circumstances rather get him into trouble and make his life even more dangerous and complicated, Lyra never exceeds this certain degree of ignorance and innocence which is necessary for her to be able to perform as heroine within her literary world. In spite of Lyra's not being aware of her father's cruel plans for her best friend, she seems to have a better overall judgment of her situation and of the good and evil forces around her than Harry.

One might of course say that J.K. Rowling has created a hero who could be interpreted as incorporating Nikolajeva's "new male", a male who "lacks conventional masculine traits" (Power, 114), and has thus offered her readership an unusual and revolutionary view of both masculinity and heroism. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* would have certainly been popular enough to help society to get over its traditional ideas of how a hero has to be and has to behave. In this sense, the book could be seen as a gender-subversive work of

literature. This impression is, however, somewhat ruined by its still portraying a traditionally organised society, into which an apparently traditional male hero is born in order to save it from destruction. Even if one acknowledges J.K. Rowling's merit of daring to construct a hero who lacks certain stereotypically male qualities, one could still counter-argue that her choosing to create a male hero has allowed her to construct an imperfect hero in the first place: Given his passiveness and his semi-dependence on others, Harry actually had to be male in order to be clearly recognised as hero. In other words, Harry might have not stood any chance at all of being a hero had he been female. Hermione, for instance, could have easily taken his place if one considers her general ability to act courageously, her intelligence, her capability to acquire knowledge and learn and the degree to which she has helped Harry during his quest. It seems that her sex has been all that stood between her and heroic fame.

Lyra Belaqua is, therefore, more in line with the heroic image than Harry Potter. To put it bluntly, she is closer to the stereotypical male than Harry is. In a traditional understanding of heroism, this would automatically mean that she is also the better hero. This thesis ironically proves the fact that the sex of a character is insufficient to judge their ability to perform heroically. Pullman has managed to design a heroine who is more than able to meet all the tasks and challenges her life and fate have prepared for her, and she does so as a young girl. Yet there is a little fly in the ointment of those feminists who think of characters like Lyra as the ultimate antidote to patriarchy. In spite of Lyra's offering comfort to those who are unhappy with the male hero's dominance in literature, what Lyra has managed as a heroine has not entirely happened without the patronage of the male hero, lending the girl all of his standard characteristics except for his sex. Needless to say, none of the qualities which make the reader perceive Lyra as heroine are innately male; yet, they are perceived as stereotypically male in patriarchal societies. The reader's perceiving Lyra as a heroine has been achieved by the effective use of techniques and traditions that have been created by the very society that feminism seeks to criticise.

But does this make Lyra less of a heroine? Certainly, if one takes into account the long tradition of telling tales of male heroism such as Beowulf's or Achilles', it would seem quite unrealistic to expect that this narrative tradition can suddenly be altogether forgotten and replaced by a new one which is fairer to the female sex. This is also Hourihan's estimation:

There are now many excellent children's stories with female protagonists who combine strength with qualities such as sensitivity and compassion, but the hero story, especially the fantasy hero story, presents a particular problem because of the gendered nature of the protagonist's role, and because it is this story structure which

inscribes and naturalizes the ancillary roles of females. Stories in which a conventional heroic role is played by a woman do little to modify these meanings. The inference readers are likely to draw from such a story is that, if they wish their lives and deeds to be worthy of notice, women must strive to behave as much as men as possible. Nor do such stories pose any challenge to the heroic definition of ideal manhood, for the women display the same courage, prowess, arid rationalism and rigid sense of purpose. Retellings of the lives of female war leaders such as Boadicea and Joan of Arc in fact doubly devalue women, first by focusing on spheres of male action and thus implying the superior importance of men and their doings, and second by obliterating the women's specifically female qualities and reconstructing them as merely imperfect males (Hourihan 206).

The only possible solution to this problem would be a de-construction of the link between those qualities seen as heroic and the sex of the person who incorporates them. If people came to understand that these qualities are not male by nature, and if generations to follow grew up with the belief that things such as courage and strength are gender-neutral, the term hero would no longer automatically carry the male connotation. If heroes are supposed to serve society, then society – be it of the real or the fictional sort – should allow them to do so, irrespective of their gender and their techniques. However, should a revolution like the one just described ever occur, it will certainly take decades if not centuries for the first knell to appear on the literary horizon.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Helden begegnen uns in allen Aspekten des Lebens, sowohl in literarischen Werken, als auch in der realen Welt. Der Held oder die Heldin zeichnen sich immer durch ihre ungewöhnlichen Eigenschaften aus: sie unterscheiden sich klar von den Personen um sie herum. Das Hauptziel der vorliegenden Arbeit war eine Analyse der Tauglichkeit zweier Kindercharaktere, nämlich Lyra Belacqua und Harry Potter.

Die Analyse wurde von verschiedenen wissenschaftlichen Standpunkten aus durchgeführt. Während der erste Abschnitt der Arbeit sich mit dem Finden einer möglichen Definition des Terminus „Held“ beschäftigte, hatte der zweite es zum Ziel, die vorgestellten Theorien auf die beiden gewählten Kinderhelden anzuwenden. Im Zuge der theoretischen Einführung setzte ich mich mit Basiskonzepten der Gender Studies und Genderstereotypen, sowie mit Gattungstheorie und strukturalistischen Modellen für das Heldenleben auseinander.

In der anschließenden Analyse wurden die Charaktere sowohl im Hinblick auf ihre Kompatibilität mit rein- und halbstrukturalistischen Heldenmustern, als auch im Hinblick auf ihre charakterlichen Eigenschaften geprüft. Im praktischen Teil der Arbeit ging es weiters darum, Aussagen über die Geschlechterrollenverteilung der fiktiven Gesellschaften, die in den beiden Werken präsentiert werden, zu machen. Das finale Ergebnis meiner Untersuchungen könnte überraschen, wenn man bedenkt, dass Harry allein schon dadurch, dass er männlichen Geschlechtes ist, die besseren Voraussetzungen für eine Laufbahn als Held hat, als sein weibliches Gegenstück, Lyra hat. Obwohl Harry von Lesern tendenziell eher als Held akzeptiert werden müsste, als Lyra und auch von den erzähltechnischen Konventionen jener literarischen Genres her, die bei weitem günstigeren Voraussetzungen hätte, kann man Harry nicht guten Gewissens als „besseren“ Helden bezeichnen. Spricht man davon, wie gut die beiden Helden in die von den Strukturalisten vorgegebenen Heldenmuster passen, sind sie als ebenbürtig anzusehen. Auch im Hinblick auf die wichtigsten Eigenschaften, die ein Held besitzen muss, nämlich Mut, Tapferkeit und Nächstenliebe, gibt es keine signifikanten Abweichungen. Betrachtet man jedoch weitere Parameter, stellt sich heraus, dass Lyra nicht nur – laut Horns Auffassung – der aktivere Held ist, sondern auch, dass sie alles in allem unabhängiger ist und sich aus freien Stücken ihren Aufgaben als Heldin stellt. Ironischerweise erfüllt sie die stereotypisch männlichen Eigenschaften, die Helden laut gängiger Auffassung immanent sind um einiges besser als Harry.

Natürlich könnte man Rowlings Darstellung ihres Helden als weniger konventionell, als Versuch der Auflösung traditioneller Heldendarstellung loben; allerdings muss an dieser Stelle auch gesagt werden, dass sie dazu zu sehr an der Darstellung einer traditionell organisierten Gesellschaft, inklusive traditioneller Genderrollen, festhält. Pullman hingegen hat bewiesen, dass das Geschlecht alleine nicht ausreicht, um einen guten Helden auszumachen. Jedoch ist auch zu sagen, dass die erfolgreiche Darstellung Lyras als Heldin dadurch getrübt wird, dass ihre Heldenhaftigkeit nur deshalb als solche erkannt wird, weil ihre Darstellung als Heldin sich am Ideal des männlichen Helden orientiert.

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