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When demigods, spies and a princess are going to
school“

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The classic school story	3
2.1. <i>The origins of the school story</i>	3
2.2. <i>19th and 20th century: Boys' school stories and girls' school stories.....</i>	5
2.3. <i>The development towards the modern school story.....</i>	12
2.4. <i>Characteristics of the school story</i>	16
2.4.1. <i>Setting.....</i>	16
2.4.2. <i>Characters</i>	18
2.4.3. <i>Plot.....</i>	20
2.5. <i>The appeal of the school story</i>	23
3. The modern school story – Analysis	29
3.1. <i>Outline of the modern school story.....</i>	29
3.2. <i>Setting.....</i>	34
3.3. <i>Characters</i>	43
3.3.1. <i>Protagonists</i>	44
3.3.2. <i>Friends.....</i>	50
3.3.3. <i>Enemies.....</i>	55
3.3.4. <i>Parents</i>	57
3.3.5. <i>Headmaster/Headmistress</i>	63
3.3.6. <i>Teachers.....</i>	65
3.4. <i>Education system.....</i>	69
3.5. <i>The appeal of the modern school story</i>	72
3.5.1. <i>Values: Good vs Evil.....</i>	73
3.5.2. <i>Beyond realism</i>	79
3.5.3. <i>Reader identification and empathy.....</i>	83
4. Conclusion.....	91
5. Bibliography	94
6. Zusammenfassung	98
7. Curriculum vitae.....	100

Abbreviations

SST/s ... school story/stories

MT ... *First Term at Malory Towers*

ILY ... *I'd tell you I love you but then I'd have to kill you*

LT ... *The Lightning Thief*

PD ... *The Princess Diaries*

1. Introduction

Most children make the experience of going to school and children's books are often written to educate young people, which is why a connection between children's literature and school is only natural. The genre of the SST is rooted in Great Britain and is one of the earliest forms of children's and young adults' literature. In the 19th and 20th century, these school-based texts became popular and the conventions and features of the genre were established by well-known authors, from Thomas Hughes to Enid Blyton, who made the SST appealing and fascinating for many young readers. Then, by the 1970s, the popularity of the genre appeared to be in terminal decline and some critics¹ even claimed the genre to be dead. However, in the last two decades, the reappearance of contemporary school stories, above all the huge success of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, indicates that this forecast was false. The SST is still a popular genre in children's literature, even though the classic SST was refashioned and has undergone some changes in order to adapt to the living conditions of the 21st century.

Nowadays critics² agree that the genre's death was only temporary and the modern SST is still enjoyed by many young readers today. However, the old genre has definitely changed after its decline, which leads to the proposition that in addition to the traditional elements of the genre, new ones have been added in order to adapt the genre to the circumstances and readers' expectations of the 21st century. Even though some literary critics mention the addition of new elements to the genre³, they do not describe or analyse them in great detail. By analysing three representatives of the modern SST, this paper examines the refashioning of the genre and illustrates the similarities and differences of the traditional and the new model of the SST. The analysis shows which elements of the classic texts have remained in the modern version of the SST and which additional features have been added. These new elements include both unrealistic features and characteristics of fantasy fiction or fairy tales. However, I assume that it is not the type of newly added elements which

¹ See, for example, Musgrave's book "From Brown to Bunter: The Life and Death of the School Story" and Quigly's chapter about "The decline and fall of the school story" (261).

² For instance, Pinsent claims the forecast to be false (9) and Gosling explains the remaining appeal of the girls' SST in her article "The significance of the girls' school stories".

³ See Pinsent (17-20) who describes further developments of the genre.

is considered important for the popularity of the genre, but the mixture of the old, traditional and new, modern elements which determine the success of the modern SST. Through the maintenance of some features of the classic model, which are realistic and familiar to the reader, the authors offer young people something that they know and they can identify with. Then, by adding new elements to the SST, which are often unrealistic and unfamiliar to the young, the readers are attracted and their interest is awoken. To sum up, the purpose of this paper is to answer the questions how the classic model of the SST was refashioned so that the modern SST emerged and how the authors succeeded in making the genre modern and popular in the 21st century.

The thesis is divided into two parts, a theoretical and an analytical part. In the first part, I concentrate on the classic SST and show the genre's origins. Moreover, as in the 19th and 20th century, these stories were typically written for either boys or girls, the development of the two sub-genres, the boys' SST and the girls' SST, is illustrated. The genre's further development towards the modern SST and the most characteristic elements of the classic model are revealed. The last chapter of this part focuses on the appeal of the SST for so many readers in the last two centuries as well as in the present century.

In the second, analytical part of my thesis, the connection between the classic and the modern version of the SST is shown by analysing three representatives of the modern SST. The paper examines the elements which have been transferred from the old to the new model and elements which are newly added to the genre. Many of these elements are fantastic, unrealistic or fairytale-like and have helped the SST of the 21st century to become popular. I argue that the mixture of the traditional and modern elements has brought the modern SST to its success, as young readers can still identify with the characters but also enter a fantastic world which is new and exciting to them.

The conclusion summarises the research questions by illustrating the most important points that were made and highlights once again the appeal of the SST for young readers.

2. The classic school story

This part of the diploma thesis offers some theoretical background of the classic SST and shows the genre's history in order to give an accurate analysis of the modern SST in the next part of the thesis. It should be highlighted that the focus of this thesis is not on the SSTs of British authors alone, but as many British writers contributed to the genre (Ray 348) and the SST boomed especially in Great Britain in the 20th century (Townsend 111), this is also where the theory of the genre comes from. First of all, it should be defined what the genre of the SST consists of and the most appropriate definition, in my opinion, is given by Ray:

Many books written for children have scenes set in, or references to, school, but the term 'school story' is generally used to describe a story in which most of the action centres on a school, usually a single-sex boarding school. [...] A school story offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored. Events and relationships can be imbued with an air of excitement and the possibilities for humour are never far away. (348)

The author does not only emphasize the importance of the setting, but also mentions the centrality of relationships and events for the genre. The reference to the single-sex boarding school suggests that there is a division of the genre in boys' SST and girls' SST. SSTs were usually written for either boys or girls (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1806), but the basic characteristics were contained in both sub-genres and today they seem to have merged, as the distinction is not so present any longer. Therefore, this thesis will not differentiate between the boys' and the girls' SST and the mentioned features or characteristics concern the genre of the SST in general. However, as this distinction was important for the classic SST, one chapter focuses on the development of the boys' and the girls' SST.

2.1. The origins of the school story

Before answering the question of the origins of the SST, the thesis reveals the significance of the genre and why it even exists. Attendance at school is an experience most children and young adults share between the ages of 6 and 18. This close connection between young people and education, but also

between books written for children and the wish to teach lessons through stories, makes the relationship between children's literature and school natural. This is why the SST is one of the earliest forms of children's literature (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1805). As already mentioned, these stories should teach lessons and Reimer explains further that these lessons are important for the children's future success in society:

Since the very definition of childhood is often entwined with social norms for schooling, it is unsurprising to find the beginnings of a body of literature that might be identified as specially for children in the ancient and medieval schoolbooks designed to teach young people the manners and the linguistic skills the needed to be successful in their societies. (209)

Moreover, the reading of these funny stories has enabled children to “‘test the water’, [to] learn how people may react in specific situations and [to] see what lies ahead” (Ray 348). It can be seen in the SST's long history that the genre does not only picture the world of school in the stories, but has also influenced the schools themselves by showing the reader what a school is and what it does (Pinsent 8). Therefore, the history of the SST and the history of schools as institutions are always linked and the SST is “constantly evolving in response to new concepts of education” (Frith 127).

Being aware of the connection between schools and SSTs, it is obvious that the SST developed from the fascinating world of the English public school, even though its readers were commonly young people who did not attend the schools presented in the books (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1805). Stories of school life emerged in the 18th century and “had its origins in the domestic tales [...] whose object was to show moral development through personal hardship” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 405). Many critics⁴ mention Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or Little Female Academy*, which was published in 1749 and set in a girls' school with only nine pupils, as the earliest example of the SST and Pinsent even claims it to be the “predecessor of the entire school story genre” (10). However, this story and many following ones were also said to be no SSTs as we know them now and they were fitted into a school framework only for convenience (Townsend 112). The SST was not fully developed until 1857, the

⁴ See Zipes (*School Stories*, Oxford 407), Simons (178), Reimer (209).

publication year of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes, which had huge success and is probably the most familiar school story (Carpenter *School Stories* 470).

2.2. 19th and 20th century: Boys' school stories and girls' school stories

In the early 19th century, the SST was not dominant yet, but nevertheless schools were mentioned in some adult novels and “it must be remembered that by the 1850s the novel was entering what many would see as its great age” (Musgrave 21). The SSTs written between Fielding's *The Governess*; or *Little Female Academy* and Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* had small private schools as settings and conveyed messages about the negative results of mischief and the necessity of remorse and remission (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 407). However, these SSTs did not gain popularity to a great extent and the genre of the SST was only established after the publication of *Tom Brown*.

The most famous early example of a public school novel [...] is Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days*. While perhaps ninety other school stories had appeared between that first in 1749 and Hughes's novel in 1857, the popularity and influence of *Tom Brown's School Days* opened the floodgates to countless public school stories. (Steege 141)

As we saw in the previous chapter *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is generally considered as “the' school story” (Clark 323) and some contemporary authors still claim it to be “the most famous school story ever written” (Richards 23). Basically, the story is about the 10-year old school boy, Tom Brown, who enters Rugby and is proud to be part of this school. In his first year, he makes friends, is bullied, breaks rules and gains the other students' respect by winning several football matches. Later on, he treasures the school's values, protects younger students and becomes a leader under the support of the Doctor, who is the school's friendly headmaster (Steege 143). In his SST, Hughes stresses the importance of sport and “also became an advocate for ‘muscular Christianity’, a social movement for men that promoted the combination of spiritual devotion with athleticism and physical health” (Tribunella 455). The story was meant as a guide for new school boys because school life could be difficult and they probably needed help to adapt to its social, political and sexual dynamics (Tribunella 457). Most importantly, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* determined the

standards of the classic SST (Ray 349), because it “embodies many of the elements that would both establish the model for all subsequent boys’ school stories and inspire countless imitators in the decades that followed its 1857 publication” (Tribunella 457).

The development of the SST went hand in hand with the growing importance of schools in the 19th century Britain. With the industrial revolution in process, society was in need of knowledge and skills and moral education secularised further. Even though this change was not conscious and happened only gradually, the society’s virtues altered and neither the Christian virtues of piety and humility, nor the long valued bourgeois virtues of honesty and industry were adequate any longer (Petzold 17). “The new age of economic and imperialist expansion demanded new virtues, such as ambition and initiative, discipline and team spirit, readiness to take up responsibility, and a talent for leadership” (Petzold 17). However, the family or the church was not able to convey these virtues to the young and also the day schools were considered to be insufficient. This resulted in the rise of public schools in the 19th century, because only these boarding schools were believed to perform the essential character forming (Petzold 17). Manners Smith explains the status of public schools by saying that “British public schools were, and are, expensive private schools with limited enrolment, catering to the ruling elite [...] and also to ambitious members of the middle class. [...] In the highly stratified society in which the schools were founded, equal access to education was undreamed of” (73).

So in the 19th century, attendance at boarding school was not at all common in Britain and it was exactly this gap between lower and upper class education, and also between male and female education, which helped the British SST to develop and dominate the genre in English (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1807). The boys’ SST was most popular in its classic form and had the most readers from the 1850s to the 1920s (Watson ix), however, the largest audience of these stories were predominately middle-class boys, who had not and would never attend public schools. Reading about these schools was a wish-fulfilment and a substitute for the depressing reality of their own schools⁵ in the 19th and

⁵ See Chapter 2.5. concerning the appeal of the SST.

early 20th century (Richards 18). This gap between the classes and sexes also gives an explanation for “the development of two separate genres, boys’ and girls’ school stories, mirroring the separate educational provision for middle-class children in Britain and the Commonwealth until well after World War II, when coeducation became more common” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 407).

In addition to *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, F.W. Farrar’s *Eric, or Little by Little* is often referred to as the other great early boys’ SST, as it was published at the same time. The story deals with the moral fate of the individual and in comparison to Hughes’ everyday religion, Farrar’s faith is intense and passionate. The fine and noble schoolboy Eric is tempted by the evil and is portrayed as too weak to resist this temptation (Townsend 114). The story is often criticised because the author’s interest seems to be primarily on the hero’s moral development, and after several unfortunate events, Eric changes from an honest young man into a boy who runs away. Some critics regard Hughes’ greater influence on the SST as beneficial for the genre (Ray 449). Nevertheless, both *Tom Brown* and *Eric* are agreed to be “extremely important in the ultimate development of the genre” (Musgrave 47). After the publication of these two stories in the middle of the 19th century, the SST took three paths:

[T]he ‘penny dreadful’ melodrama (stories and serials in story papers and magazines, some later published in book forms); the evangelical school story put out by religious publishers with its delicate hero and fervent friendships; and, finally, the form that was to establish itself as the paradigmatic school story, which treated in a predominantly entertaining way the various facets of schoolboy code of honor in the context of sport, fagging, fights, dormitory feats, and breaking rules, with or without the addition of adventures or mystery elements. (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 407- 408)

These stories fascinated generations of boys and many of them appeared in story papers. The 1870 Education Act was a big step towards universal literacy and also helped to establish the market for both children’s books and magazines, of which especially magazines were popular as they were cheaper and more accessible. Many of these magazines were published in the late 19th century, but the most famous ones were the *Boy’s Own Paper* (BOP), first published in 1879, and the *Girl’s Own Paper* (GOP), first published in 1880. Talbot Baines Reed was a well-known author of SSTs in Britain and his story *My first football match* was published in the first issue of the BOP (Ray 349). It

is often argued that the subgenre of the boys' SST was basically brought forward through the publication of Reed's stories, with *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (1887) being the most successful one. This and many other stories contained characteristic elements of the genre and "defined readers' expectations of what a school story should be" (Musgrave 112). Interestingly, the authors of these boys' SSTs usually did not concern themselves with female characters and most of the time there were not any women mentioned in the stories of the 19th century (Clark 327). Further explanation is given by Clark:

For the canonical school story emerges when society separates 'public' from 'private,' 'public' schooling from 'private' family. The school story symbolically carves out a realm where a boy could move from a private to a more public area. And it does so by eliminating females. Excluding mothers and girls – boys were even chary of admitting that they had sisters – lent the boys to authority, an authority enacted in, for instance, the code against telling tales to adults. (324)

The only females who possibly occurred in the boys' SSTs were matrons or the headmaster's wife (Pinsent 10).

Many authors took up Reed's idea at the turn of the century and refined his formula of exciting events and noble ideals. However, at the same time the SST was remodelled by Rudyard Kipling and P.G. Wodehouse, two well-known authors of English literature (Watson xii). Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899) is the most famous one as the traditional formula of the SST is turned upside down and the protagonists Stalky, M'Tuck and Beetle are three natural rebels who do not respect the school spirit. "The irony is that while they are smoking, breaking bounds, collaborating on their prep and generally setting themselves up against authority, they are clearly in the process of becoming just the kind of resourceful and self disciplined young men that the public schools aimed to produce" (Ray 350-351). In the 20th century, the later publications of the boys' SST appeared to be more and more stereotyped and finally the genre became so limited and artificial that both experts and readers got bored with it. The heydays of the boys' SST were already over and Kipling's innovative ideas were also blamed, "for it was he who introduced the serpent into the Old School Eden. After the knowingness of *Stalky* it was difficult ever again to assert the innocent values of the classical school story" (Townsend 117-118).

In addition to SSTs for children, school fiction written for adults also existed and these books, for instance H.A. Vachell's *The Hill* (1905) or E.M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* (1907), either valued the boarding school experience or criticised it. Moreover, in the 20th century some school memoirs, for example H.G. Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), were also published by ex-servicemen, statesmen or successful British authors, who emphasized negative aspects of school life (Manners Smith 71-72). Authors of children's books in other English-speaking countries did not show much interest in writing SST. Even though some American, Canadian and Australian writers tried to imitate British authors in the 19th and 20th century, they lacked boarding schools as the typical setting of the genre (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1810), which might be one of the reasons why "the genre remained above all British" (Townsend 117).

The thesis has already claimed that girls and women have almost been absent from boys' SSTs in the 19th and early-20th century and most of these stories were also written by men. Quigly mentions in her book on the genre that girls have always read these SSTs of course, and at the turn of the century they got their own SSTs. However, she also states that girls' SSTs never became as popular as boys' SST and are often simply written off as kitsch (212). Despite the heavy criticism and the general belief that this subgenre developed in imitation of the boys' SST, the girls' SST established itself as an independent genre at the end of the 19th century, and it should not be forgotten that the earliest known boarding SST⁶ is actually a girls' SST (Gosling his10). Even though some books about girls at school had appeared before, the girls' SST had its real origin in the 1880s, which is a full generation after the rise of the boys' SST (Mitchell 74), and is probably linked to the education of girls at this time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, less than a quarter of all British girls aged between twelve and eighteen attended any kind of school, but by 1920 the number receiving a secondary education had risen from 20,000 in 1897 to 185,000. Similarly, while the fundamental elements of the genre can be discerned in stories published in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was only in the first quarter of the twentieth century that the genre of girls' school stories became established and the most popular form of reading for British girls. (Gosling his1)

⁶ See Chapter 2.1.

The girls' SST became popular at a time when schools and colleges for women were expanded, and also women's education in general was a subject of debate, which was especially important because it led to the re-definition of women's role (Frith 127). In the 19th century, Victorian middle-class boys were supposed to be successful in professional and public life and were therefore "educated 'for the world'", whereas middle-class girls "were educated 'for the drawing room'" and their education stressed the social rather than the intellectual value (Gosling his2). Writers of girl's SSTs in the late 19th and early 20th century promoted the equality in education by emphasizing the intelligence and high moral character of the female protagonists in their stories (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1807).

Girls' SSTs were written long before attendance at school became common for the middle-class and L.T. Meade was one of the earliest writers of the genre (Mitchell 80). The message, which these early stories of the late 19th century should convey, was still the wish of the traditional construction of femininity, or as Reynolds puts it: "[I]t becomes evident that her books are consistently structured so as to underline traditional images of femininity and to underline the attractions of changes to women's roles" (qtd. in Gosling his13). Although Meade did not mark the origin of the genre, her SST *A World of Girls* (1886), is often said to be the first modern girls' SST as it presents many elements which are linked to the rise of schoolgirl fiction. The book is about girls who are educated to become women of society in the small school Lavender House, an environment absent from the male-dominated world. The story's focus is on loyalty, friendship, the bonding of pairs or groups of girls, jealousy and the experience of dissociation (Simons 179-180). Meade was the precursor of many successful authors in the 20th century, but nevertheless she is criticized for focusing too much on the moral development of her characters. Therefore Angela Brazil is regarded as "the first major writer and populariser of girls' school stories" (Ray 350). Brazil influenced the development of the genre in the 20th century (Simons 180) and brought it to commercial success by making it appealing to generations of girls and women (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 408). Her first SST *The Fortunes of Phillippa* shaped the genre and marked the start of its mass popularity (Gosling his16). Generally, Brazil's SSTs are about

girls “studying together, organising together and playing together, and their relationships with other girls, often passionate, are of overwhelming importance” (Gosling his19). Despite the stress on realism in her stories, the school experiences presented were still fantasy for many readers of the genre (Mitchell 74). From the beginning of the genre, girls’ SST were especially read by middle- and lower-class readers, who did not receive the education presented in the books and were sometimes even educated at home⁷ (Gosling his9). This means that “[g]irls who would almost certainly never attend the kind of school described in the stories were nevertheless their audience” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1809). In the 20th century, the readers of Brazil and other authors did not expect an exciting plot, but “were fascinated by the minutiae of school organisation and a lifestyle which was probably somewhat different from their own experience” (Ray 351).

Even though in some of Brazil’s stories characters from earlier books reappear, most of the SSTs are not linked and independent. In contrast, three of her most popular successors in the 20th century, Elsie Jeanette Oxenham, Dorita Fairlie Bruce and Elinor M. Brent-Dyer, came to success through the publication of series (Ray 351-352). Oxenham is best known for her *Abbey School* series, of which the first one was published in 1914. Although the action of her books happens at school, the schooling itself is not really represented and the girls and their leisure activities are in the foreground. Gosling explains that “[p]erhaps Oxenham recognised that it was schoolgirl society rather than school itself which was central to readers’ enjoyment of the books” (Gosling his21-22). Through Bruce, the author of the *Dimsie* series, and Brent-Dyer, the concept of series became a characteristic element of the genre. In 1925, the first book of Brent-Dyer series *The School at the Chalet* was published, which was the longest-running series of the genre, lasting through 59 novels over 45 years (Gosling 23-24).

The heyday of the girls’ SST was in the 1920s, when it has become the most popular genre for girls (Simons 168). In the middle of the 20th century, when boarding school education was already declining, the stories of the well-known

⁷ See Chapter 2.5. concerning the appeal of the SST.

author Enid Blyton were still widely read, probably because her books were not as demanding as stories of other authors (Pinsent 15) and also described as “child-oriented narratives” (Gillis 304). Blyton’s first SST series, the *Naughtiest Girl* (1940-1945), was set in a mixed boarding school, which proved to be less popular among the female readers than girls-only schools. So Blyton’s next series *St. Clare’s* (1941-45) and *Malory Towers* (1946-51) were both girls’ schools and extremely successful. Even though she integrated some principles and actions in her stories which were familiar from earlier ones, her style and attitude differed because she had a more modern perspective and her schoolgirls enjoyed more freedom (Ray 354-355). Blyton has not only introduced a great number of readers to the genre of the girls’ SST, but was one of the few female authors who “made substantial amounts of money from her writing” (Gosling his36). The author’s reputation can still be seen today because her books, written in the 1940s, have been “constantly in print ever since” (Frith 114) and are also read by today’s generations of children, in Britain, as well as in other European countries.

What should be mentioned at the end of the chapter is the fact that most authors of girls’ SSTs did not have the same backgrounds as their protagonists and most of them did not even share similar school experiences, which means that “[f]rom the beginning, then, the world of girls’ school stories owed more to myth than to reality” (Gosling his26-29). Nevertheless, the genre remained popular until the middle of the 20th century, when other stories for girls developed, for instance adventure stories, ballet stories and pony stories (Gosling his38).

2.3. The development towards the modern school story

After the 2nd World War, the SST was seen as formulaic and was also “far less successful” than the pre-war stories (Watson xvii), a development which marked this time as the beginning of the genre’s decline (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 409). By 1960, the appeal of the classic SST decreased and even though some new stories were published, they were weak in comparison to earlier books (Ray 356). According to Zipes, the SST had become irrelevant and unrealistic (*School Stories*, Oxford 409), and some critics even went as far as claiming the

genre to be dead: “The genre was finished. [...] The school story flourished while the public schools, in their nineteenth-century form, flourished. When they joined the modern world the school story died” (Quigly 276). However, critics did not give enough proof for this “terminal decline” (Pinsent 9) and it can be contradicted by the genre’s presence in children’s literature today. Not only are versions of the classic SST still widely sold and read, for example Blyton’s girls’ SSTs, but new models of the SST are also published, of which Harry Potter is only the most successful example.

Nevertheless, the genre definitely “underwent a paradigm shift” in the second half of the 20th century (Pinsent 9) and the SST does not appear in its classic form anymore, as it went through changes and developments to establish itself as the modern school story. Zipes claims that even though certain characteristics of the SST remained the same, its outline has changed with the alteration of “educational theory, the roles of schools in society, and interpretations of children’s natures and of children’s needs” (*School Stories*, Norton 1805). As a consequence, this paradigm shift of the SST is not surprising because the 1944 Education Act initiated that secondary education was free for all children (Gosling 186) and “[c]hanges in society frequently act as the trigger of changes in literature written for children” and “[i]f school takes a different form in the real world, the books [...] featuring it tend also to change” (Pinsent 17). Authors did not refashion the SST consciously, but they were eager to breathe new life into the old and once successful genre by adopting it to the circumstances and readers’ expectations of the century. This chapter illustrates the changes of the SST which led to the emergence of the modern school story.

By the 1960s, it became obvious that the genre of the SST needed refashioning, which encouraged authors to give their stories a new setting and many of them were set in comprehensive mixed-schools (Reimer 223). A lot of authors continued to see “the enclosed world of school [as] an ideal framework within which to explore matters of concern to young people” (Ray 356). Day-school stories, for example Cormier’s *The Chocolate War* (1974), which were, until then, of little importance in the genre, became most popular and allowed or

even demanded authors to include issues of the outside world into the stories (Pinsent 18). As they wanted to deal with “matters of concern to young people” and set the stories within the larger context of the day-school, the SST became closer to real life and included all sorts of problems of young people.

Newer versions of the genre are set frequently in state-sponsored schools and deal with issues that confront today’s youth, including race and ethnicity, family problems, adolescent sexuality, and drugs. Coeducational school stories and stories set in day schools [...] dominate contemporary publications in the genre and reflect the normative experience of British children in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. (Manners Smith 72)

Some of the issues, like sexuality and relationships, did not arise in the single-sex boarding schools of the 19th and early 20th century, but the introduction of mixed education made it possible to write about these problems and helped to provide a more realistic picture of adolescence. The characters’ experiences at school became as relevant as their lives outside of school and the day-school story established itself successfully. In addition, the genre developed further and was also adapted in other media, for example films and television, as can be seen by the long-running BBC series *Grange Hill*, the US television series *Beverly Hills 90210* and many soap operas (Gosling 44-50).

A development which was probably initiated by the fact that the day SST is closer to the life of teenagers, is the negative portrayal of schools in some of the stories and the fact that “[s]chool is no longer viewed (in reality or in books) as special, wonderful, inspiring loyalty and affection, but rather as normal, mundane, often tedious, and sometimes an ordeal to be got through as quickly and as best one can” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 409). In the 20th century, schools were seen as “places of unrest and social unease for many children”, and they were sometimes even accused of “fail[ing] to support or nurture children” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1813). Even though schools are sometimes portrayed rather negatively and described as “impersonal, violent and oppressive places”, the SST is still “deeply reassuring” for young readers, because “even if school is a scary, boring, or alienating place, the ultimate message they convey is that you are not alone” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1816).

Even though some characteristics of the classic SST are still present in the day SST, the paradigm-shift is apparent. The next development in the 20th century represents a step back to the classic version of the SST: “Fantasy school fiction, a variation on the genre which became more numerous in the last third of the twentieth century, tends, however, to revert to a significantly greater extent to the typology of the earlier school novels, often including the setting of a boarding-school environment” (Pinsent 19). These SSTs are sometimes referred to as “outside mainstream school fiction”, but they also show that society was no longer enthusiastic about realistic novels and was in search of something new and unfamiliar. The addition of these fantastic, and therefore, unrealistic elements⁸ has awoken the fascination and appeal of a wide readership, as the fantasy school stories are still popular today. The books which are always mentioned in this context are the *Harry Potter* novels by J.K. Rowling, which combine several genres, but are agreed to be “first and foremost school stories” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 410). The author is praised for presenting the SST in a new form by successfully combining the SST with fantasy, maintaining the format and some characteristics of the classic SST and also adding new elements to the genre. Therefore Rowling “improves upon the model of the traditional boarding school story while drawing on it at the same time” (Tucker 224) and most importantly, she changes the traditional SST and makes it modern, so that it is more appealing to young readers (Steege 153). Indeed, the readership is fascinated by the unfamiliar and new elements which are added to the genre. “It is the fantastical fairy tale possibilities of the magic world which provide a frisson of the unexpected to the comfortable spaces of the school story” (Gillis 308). These “comfortable spaces” of going to school, breaking rules and getting punished, are needed as they present a familiarity to the readers and enable them to understand and even identify with the fantastical world (Manners Smith 80).

Fantasy school fiction is not the only subgenre of the SST and other genres, like mystery, spy fiction⁹ and horror have also mixed with the SST (Manners Smith 74), even though none of these combinations have been as successful as Rowling’s books. Nevertheless, the mix of the SST with other genres seems to

⁸ A definition of the term ‘Fantasy’ is given in Chapter 3.1.

⁹ The genre of spy fiction will be relevant in the analytical part of the thesis.

have saved the old genre from its terminal decline and proves that it is still enjoyed by many readers today. Ray summarizes:

At the end of the twentieth century, school, whatever its nature, remains an attractive setting for a story for young people, providing a stable and safe environment in which children from different backgrounds can meet, develop relationships and share experiences. School stories continue to appeal to children at the age when the peer group is all important, when they are seeking independence and curious about what lies ahead. (358)

The genre of the SST is definitely not dead, but has undergone considerable changes which, in consequence, have led to the emergence of the modern school story.

2.4. Characteristics of the school story

Many characteristic elements concerning the setting, the characters and the plot in general, reoccur in most of the SSTs. However, these characteristics developed and changed with the SST itself, as Pinsent points out: “The genre of school fiction has certain characteristics, though not every individual novel featuring a school automatically displays these. Some of these characteristics appear in the earliest examples of school stories, while others emerge during the course of the school story’s long history” (9). This means that the recurring elements, which I mention in this chapter, are not characteristic of the classic or the modern SST in particular, but have their origin in the classic model, developed further, and are sometimes still present in the modern version of the SST. To illustrate these characteristics more accurately, I will give some examples of the classic girls’ SST *First Term at Malory Towers* by Enid Blyton.

2.4.1. Setting

As the name of the genre already suggests, the setting of SSTs are schools, often boarding schools, and “the majority of the action must have taken place at school” (Watson xix) to consider them as SSTs altogether. The difference between SSTs and stories which are just set at schools is that “[t]he school itself often becomes a kind of additional character in the book” (Pinsent 13). Regardless of the students’ different personalities and the teachers’ authority in the story, the school conveys its ethos successfully and the action centres on the school. This strong sense of place is attractive for many writers because of its steadiness and familiarity to the readers, which makes a detailed description

unnecessary, and therefore “the school itself is as much the protagonist as the individual student” (Steege 142). For example, Darrell Rivers, the protagonist of MT, says goodbye to her school as if it were a person. “‘Good-bye – and good-bye Malory Towers!’ she said almost under her breath. ‘I’ll be glad to see you again’” (MT 182).

In every SST, the school is portrayed as “a world to itself, isolated from outside influences” and this outside world “is far less important than the microcosm of the institution” (Steege 145). The school setting is marked through this isolation from the outside world and critics often mention that it is this criterion which is needed for a successful SST, because the school is an independent world in which the boys and girls act as citizens (Townsend 111). The school in SSTs acts as “a microcosm of the world” and it is used to establish “places outside of normal time and space” (Pinsent 8). The specialness of these places is emphasized and “[w]ether literally or figuratively, these spaces are presented as magical”, especially when new students enter the school and they see the possibilities this environment offers (Steege 145). In MT, the building is described in great detail and Darrell’s admiration and fascination becomes clear at first sight of the school.

Darrell looked. She saw a big, square-looking building of soft stone standing high up on a hill. The hill was really a cliff that fell steeply down to the sea. At each end of the gracious building stood rounded towers. Darrell could glimpse two other towers behind as well, making four in all. North Tower, South, East and West. The windows shone. The green creeper that covered parts of the wall climbed almost to the roof in places. It looked like an old-time castle. My school! thought Darrell, and a little warm feeling came into her heart. It’s fine. How lucky I am to be having Malory Towers as my school-home for so many years. I shall love it. (MT 11-12)

Furthermore, the school’s isolation makes it impossible for the outside world to interfere, which is especially important for the girls’ SST. In the world of the SST, they can escape from “restrictive home life and a culture of compliance. They establish instead a definitive and distinctive world of girl power” (Simons 171). The girls in the stories often behave “more ‘boyish’” (Mitchell 88) than it would be approved in real life and this could also be a reason for the appeal of the SST for so many girls.

In this enclosed world, where the young rule and have priority, “adults were unquestionably relegated to the shadows” (Simons 169). Of course, some adult figures like teachers exist, but they are not as important as the pupils. However, in place of an actual family, the relationships between students get more intense and the school and its staff substitute the family. Nevertheless, the absence of parents is not demonstrated as something negative, but stresses “the importance of self-reliance and loyalty to peers” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1805). SSTs “emphasize fun” (Mitchell 90) and the genre in general depicts the school experience as something very favourable (Steege 142). Darrell Rivers does not worry about leaving her parents to go to boarding school, but looks forward to it and already makes friends with Alicia on the train to school. The spoiled only-child Gwendolyn, in contrast, cries and sobs in her mother’s arms until the train leaves (MT 4-5). This reference shows the view in SSTs “that homesickness is a sign of weakness or excessive sensitivity” which the protagonist fights or does not feel because s/he is normally enthusiastic about the new environment (Manners Smith 81).

2.4.2. Characters

A typical feature in many SSTs is the development of the characters, because they mature and grow up in the progress of the series (Pinsent 14). Even though SSTs portray an individual protagonist who experiences moral maturation (Petzold 20), the hero is never on his/her own but within a subgroup of pupils to make the plot more interesting for the reader. “Traditional school stories feature the hero (or heroine) and his (or her) best friend. A third companion commonly joins them, corresponding to the ‘rule of three’ policy that historically operated in many boarding schools” (Manners Smith 74). For instance, Darrell Rivers bonds with two friends at the end of the school year and claims: “well – I think if you don’t mind, I’ll stick to Sally and Mary-Lou [...] – and they’re my real friends now!” (MT 179). Sally is Darrell’s best friend and Mary-Lou is the third companion who is protected by the two older girls. Furthermore, the characters in the classis SSTs do not show specific signs of puberty, like falling in love (Gosling sig26), even though they are in their adolescence. However, the age group is a characteristic element for the SST, because despite the pupils’ differences, they are of the same age and determine the plot

of the story. "It is this age group and its evolutionary character that essentially determines the nature of the action" (Simons 172).

A stereotypical character in most SSTs is the new student, who "learns first to understand, then to accept, and finally to excel at, the ways of the strange world he or she is entering" (Reimer 224). The new pupil wants to be integrated into the school community and might struggle at the beginning, but succeeds by finding a friend or a peer group (Löfgren qtd. in Gosling sig17). Darrell, the heroine of MT, is a new girl herself and excited about going to boarding school, hoping that she will make some friends. Although she is a very nice girl, she has problems to control her temper but overcomes these difficulties by making friends with the calm Sally (see MT). When authors add a new character to the story, they introduce readers who do not know the SST series to its characters, while readers who are already familiar with the story, feel superior and get the feeling that they are meeting old friends (Pinsent 13). At this point, it is important to mention that the character of the new girl in the girls' SST should not be confused with the modern girl, who is a "distinctive creation quite unlike her antecedents in that she relishes her freedom from the bound of home, identifies with a community of peers rather than with her family, and during the process of the story, discovers herself as an independent and educated being" (Simons 179). The modern girl was introduced in the girls' SST at the end of the 19th century and was used to convey the values and images of society as well as the changing role of women. Also Darrell can be seen as a modern girl because at the beginning of the novel, she "look[s] forward to many terms of fun and friendship, work and play", hoping that she will make friends at school (MT 1). She is an independent girl who respects her parents highly, but does not speak of missing them and in the end "she was sorry the term was coming to an end" (MT 180).

Not only similar characters of pupils appear in different SSTs, but also the headmaster or headmistress and the teachers are often stereotypical. In a world where parents are not present, they are often the only representatives of the adult world. Headmasters or headmistresses are mostly represented as role models and are in close contact with the hero.

With remarkably few exceptions, traditional school stories present wise, fair-minded, and inspiring headmasters and headmistresses. Within the hierarchical system of the public school, they are the final authorities, and, at least in fiction, they seldom abuse this role. Usually they are exemplars of goodness and integrity, providing blueprints for the moral life. (Manners Smith 78)

Although headmasters are generally presented as virtuous, they often use their authority to bend the rules if the protagonists need their help. They see the good in the hero, help him to mature and “to develop into a functioning, useful young man of good character” (Steege 150). Also the headmistress in MT, Miss Grayling, emphasizes her values and expresses her wishes for the schoolgirls:

One day you will leave school and go out into the world as young women. You should take with you eager minds, kind hearts, and a will to help. You should take with you a good understanding of many things, and a willingness to accept responsibility and show yourselves as women to be loved and trusted. All these things you will be able to learn at Malory Towers – if you *will*. I do not count as our successes those who have won scholarships and passed exams, though these are good things to do. I count as our successes those who learn to be good-hearted and kind, sensible and trustable, good, sound women the world can lean on. Our failures are those who do not learn these things in the years they are here. (MT 25)

In contrast to the headmasters or headmistresses, the teachers do not always support their students and stick to the rules in a very strict way. However, teachers differ in their personalities and SSTs include both funny and mean teachers, but also ridiculous teachers, for example the French mistress in a lot of girls' SST. Many teachers are liked by the pupils and are seen as stereotypes today (Manners Smith 78).

2.4.3. Plot

As mentioned before, SSTs often share the same setting and picture stereotypical characters, but also a similar plot line, recurring themes and motifs are typical for the conventions of the genre. These plots are marked by their simplicity because they tend to have the same structure. SSTs normally follow their heroes or heroines through the school year, starting at home when they leave for school, describing the journey to the school and ending when the school year is over and they go home for the summer holidays (Manners Smith 80). Especially the train journey to the school is a very important scene in SSTs and “has been enacted in countless school stories with the train acting as a

transitional space between home and school” (Gillis 307). New pupils usually have their first appearance in the story and old pupils meet again rebuilding their friendships. The journey stands for the crossover from the ordinary world of home to school, which is almost an “alien country where [the students] and the staff are the inhabitants” (Pinsent 12). MT also features Darrell’s departure from home and the train journey to school. She leaves home, says goodbye to her mother at the railway station and gets to know the teacher and some other girls while travelling to school (MT 1-10).

The relationship between students, or the protagonist’s contact with friends and enemies, is probably the key theme in SSTs and provides “the most compelling fantasy of [...] immediate and unrestricted friendship” (Simons 172). But not the importance of friendship alone is central for the plot, but also the integration into the community in general is necessary for “human relations and character building”. On the social level, the protagonists usually want to fit into the community and be accepted by their schoolmates, and on a more private level, they want to find a friend they can trust (Löfgren qtd. in Gosling sig17). This “moral education and character forming, in other words: socialization” (Petzold 17) has already been important in the earliest forms of the genre. When the characters of the story are concerned with choosing a friend, another issue arises, according to Steege: “Certainly building friendships, providing a good friend, separating from those who hold the wrong values and thus showing one’s true character are all central to public school novels” (149). The centrality of values in SSTs becomes apparent through the characters’ constant struggle to choose between good and evil. The stories are packed with “elemental issues: weakness or strength, honor or shame” (Watson xiii), including moral issues, for instance “the familiar problems like bullying, cribbing, and sneaking, and the less familiar but more interesting ones that arise out of conflicting loyalties to the group, to one’s friends and to oneself” (Townsend 112). As the pupils in the stories are still young and have to mature and develop in the course of the series, they need time to see the importance of these values. The pupils themselves seem to differentiate between breaking rules or playing tricks, which is generally believed to be fun, and cheating or being disloyal to another pupil, which is despised by the community (Mitchell 87). Conflicts are also a

common theme in the SST and come up if a new student does not live up to these values, which does not necessarily mean that this character is a bad person, but that he or she needs some guidance to find the right path and to be integrated into the community. "The resolution of the conflict always involves public disclosure of what [the heroine] has born in silence for much of the story and, finally, her full integration into school" (Reimer 218). For example, when the little Mary-Lou is held under water by Gwendolyn, Darrell loses her temper and shakes Gwendolyn, a behaviour which the other girls do not approve either. So after a while, Darrell apologizes for her hot temper, which is one of her weaknesses, and the other girls admire her honesty and she becomes even more popular (MT 54-61).

Another theme in SSTs related to honour or strength, is the emphasis on games and sports which was seen as both "great character-builder" for the hero (Townsend 113) and "key to his acceptance by others" (Steege 148). The topic of sports is predominantly a characteristic of boys' SSTs, in which the games are always described in detail, probably because "physical strength is the form of power that boys best understand" (Orwell qtd. in Watson xiv). A late-nineteenth-century educator is quoted by Mitchell, who says that games encourage "development of powers of organisation, of good temper under trying circumstances, courage and determination, ... rapidity of thought and action, judgement and self-reliance, and, above all things, unselfishness, and a knowledge of ... working with others for the common good" (90). Even though, games and sports are not a very important part of the girls' SST, playing for the school was still seen as an honour and the most valuable act for the school community (Gosling sig13). In MT, sport is only mentioned in terms of tennis and swimming, but girls who are not good at it or do not like it are criticized (MT 74).

One aspect about the plot of the SST is particularly interesting, because even though the action of these stories takes place at schools, the education in these schools is disdained and sparsely depicted (Watson xiv). The reason is not only that the authors want to leave out the issues which are not so interesting for the reader, but also that the authors themselves are not interested in these aspects

(Petzold 21). However, this means that the picture of the universal school experience which the authors convey is not the reality, because some of the essential aspects of school life are omitted. The SST manages to combine the familiar parts like school, friends, lessons and rules in a different way, so that the image of school life is presented as more exciting and less complex than in real life (Frith 133). School is illustrated “as a place of socialization and of subversion, and as an educational establishment in which the lessons learned generally take place outside the classroom” (Pinsent 8). Therefore the plot of the SST focuses on more attractive issues like relationships, conflicts, sports and fighting, and most importantly “on the emotional (sometimes physical), psychological, and social development of the child character apart from the family’s influence” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1805).

2.5. The appeal of the school story

From the origins of the classic SST to the modern SST of today, the genre has always had a certain appeal and fascination for many young readers, both girls and boys, and also for some adults. The strong appeal of the SST is explained by Watson, who states that “[m]any readers over the years have been drawn into the deadly sin of gluttony by English schoolboy stories. These have the power [...] to attract followers, not merely loyal, but so greedy that even the most prolific authors cannot satisfy their appetites” (xi). The quote accurately describes the genre’s success and the fascination it has offered for generations of readers, the extent of which becomes even more transparent through the fact that SSTs have their own reference manuals, *The Encyclopedia of Girls’ School Stories* (2000) and *Encyclopedia of Boys’ School Stories* (2000) (Steege 142). As a consequence, the question which arises is, why did the genre of the SST remain popular and has not lost its significance today? The ongoing appeal of the genre “cannot be explained by its representations of reality of girls’ school lives, since the life of the characters have little to do with contemporary school experiences” (Gosling sig1). Very few children attend boarding schools today and the school life in general is quite different from that described in the SSTs. Maybe it is because of this difference that the genre is still appealing for so many readers, as they enter a world of school they do not know and which is fascinating for them. However, the reasons for this fascination and appeal

should be examined more closely, due to the genre's history and its important role in society, especially in the British one, but also because

in a society where literacy has never been more important and yet reading is declining, a greater understanding of how and why the genre has given pleasure in the twentieth century should be helpful in determining how to encourage young people – boys particularly, since they read the least – to continue to read in the twenty-first. (Gosling his57-58)

The factors which give the genre this “enduring appeal” (Simons 165) and have motivated young people to read the SSTs will be explored in this chapter, because the ongoing appeal of the genre is also an important argument in this thesis. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that the appeal is always an individual one and depends on the individual stories and its readers.

In general, the genre's popularity among readers can be observed in the publishing market, because genre fiction¹⁰ “develops largely as a result of demand from readers” (Gosling sig2). If a book is bought and read by many people, publishers and authors take advantage of the consumers' demand by taking the most characteristic elements of this book and including them in the following texts as well. “It could be argued that many readers purchase and read genre fiction simply because the books contain certain characteristic elements, placing more emphasis on these shared elements than on an individual story or the identity of the author” (Gosling sig2). Consequently, texts provide a connection between the author and the readers, because the author includes elements in a book which are typical for the genre, so that readers buy this book in the knowledge that these elements are contained in the text. Of course, these desired elements which stay the same in every book of the genre, are combined with differences to make every book individual and interesting. The fact that the readers of SSTs are expecting certain elements also contributes to the creation of so many series within the genre, because the books of one series are similar, and if the readers enjoy the first book of the series then it is very likely that they will enjoy the following ones too (Gosling sig2-4).

¹⁰ Genre fiction, also known as popular fiction, are plot-driven fictional works which are written with the intent of fitting into a specific literary genre, in order to attract readers who are already familiar with this genre (French).

To understand the SST's appeal and its position in the publishing market, the genre always has to be regarded in connection with education and the shift in the children's reading practices (Simons 175). In England and Wales, free secondary education for all was introduced only with the 1944 Education Act and therefore education was valued highly, especially by girls. The ambitious working and middle classes, who could not afford to go to school before this Act, saw school as a privilege which opened up new possibilities in life. "This goes a long way towards explaining the popularity of the school story in the first half of the 20th century and its subsequent decline when education was freely available and taken for granted, if not actively disliked" (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 407). So especially girls whose education and lives were quite different from each other, enjoyed SSTs because "fiction provided them with a common imaginary world" (Gosling 137). Most girls did not attend boarding schools themselves, but admired the fantasy of this school experience, even though the stories had nothing to do with their reality. Probably the SSTs "filled some need" and satisfied the girls' wish to attend a school themselves (Mitchell 90-93), because this fictional education was the closest access to education many girls could achieve (Gosling 137). So it is this very difference between the girls' own school experience and those of the girls in the books, which "is the key to [...] [the SST's] appeal" (Simons 168).

One central characteristic of the genre which the readers expect from the SSTs is the "fantasy of escape from the family" (Frith 133) and to find substitution for the family in the relationship with peers. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, friendship is one of the central themes in the genre and makes the fictional world of school even more desirable for children because "loneliness did not exist" and "unconditional loyalty was the norm" (Simons 172). In the 19th and 20th century, children who were taught at home were fascinated by the experience to choose their friends freely and without parental supervision (Mitchell 81). However, the absence of parents is also attractive to readers of today:

a college or a school setting appeals to [children] because it provides a separate world where their own interests and interactions can be carried on with little adult interference. The boarding-school fantasy lets [readers] imagine being free of parental control while not yet burdened by the hard work of supporting themselves. (Mitchell 95)

SSTs also provide a setting where a “greater measure of rebelliousness [is] possible” (Clark 323) which is another appealing feature of the genre, because “rebellion, breaking bounds, evading rules, and defying authority have no ill consequences” (Mitchell 99). In both the classic and the modern SST, the protagonists’ adventures are described in detail, but they never end in disaster, which reassures the reader that the fictional world is safe. Readers, who are familiar with the genre, know that all problems and conflicts are solved and that in the end “good will triumph over evil” (Gosling sig9-10). In general, authors have always tried to include elements in the SSTs which are interesting for the readers and which they can relate to, that is why especially issues of adolescence, such as friendship and rivalry, have always been important for the genre. In the classic SST of the 20th century, the characters in the books were older than its readers, but lingered in the early stages of adolescence because writers often applied “the trick of never letting characters become adults”, so that they had more possibilities but no restrictions or responsibilities of adults (Mitchell 101). As the readers of the stories were familiar with the concerns of this age group, they could identify with the characters and also envied them, because threatening issues like puberty and sexuality were not referred to (Frith 125-126). All characteristic elements of the genre taken together, the school experience is presented as something positive and appealing for the readers. “The school story selects aspects of school life and creates an attractive, acceptable image from them. It excludes unacceptable or dissident elements” (Richards 4).

It was already mentioned earlier that even the SSTs of the 19th and early 20th century did not present a picture of school life which was close to the lives of the readers, but that readers expected to find a fictional world which enabled them to “escape a depressing reality by reading about youthful spirits and successes” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1811). Therefore “[i]t must be assumed that the readers themselves desired to have access to these

alternative models of reality in their imaginary life” (Gosling sig30) and they did not want to read about experiences which were similar to their own, but about a world which was appealing and fascinating for them and which could simply be entered by reading a book. This imagination in the setting, action, and accurate character development is one of the reasons why the genre has been criticised, however,

[t]he genre’s importance [...] is not as realistic literature but in supplying materials for fantasy. School stories use a patently unreal world to expose desires and dreams about a real world. Like some recent science-fiction utopias, they create a [...] society where [young people] have power over their lives, choices, and experiences. Readers should enjoy the fantasy without guilt because the stories explicitly did not present the real world. (Mitchell 99)

So the literary style of these stories should not be criticised, because it was due to this “tangential relationship to ‘real life’” that the SST had such an appeal for young readers. The stories described a dream of young people which could not be realised by most of them, which shows that already the early versions of the genre presented “alternative models of reality” (Frith 132). Nevertheless, these alternative models were different from the ones in the modern SSTs, because real life and society changed, and with it, the readers’ wishes and dreams. For example, secondary education is free for everyone in Europe today and girls no longer have to fight for equal education, which is one of the reasons why the simple fictional world of school alone is not exciting for the readers anymore. Consequently, writers needed to come up with other fascinating elements and they started to include elements related to magic, fantasy, science-fiction and fairy tales in their books by writing about extraordinary children like spies, demigods and princesses who are going to school. The fictional world of school is a source of fascination again because the authors offer readers something they are not familiar with and they can dream about.

This chapter has focused on the various reasons for the SST’s appeal and it has outlined that the genre has always been fascinating for its readers. Nevertheless, critics have also found several factors to criticise the SST for its impact on children. For example, they did not approve of the literary quality of many stories in the 1920s and 1930s which had poor plots, unattractive characters and situations, and did not concentrate on any details. Especially

adults who valued the education and literacy of their children, considered the genre useless. The criticism was often justified, but the fact that so many SSTs were published at this time, sometimes lead to the ignorance of qualified versions of the genre (Ray 354). It was predominantly girls' SSTs which were accused of being "works of lower status" (Reynolds qtd. in Gosling his13). The authors of these stories were not taken seriously and even ridiculed or met with hostility for most of the 20th century (Gosling his 38). In general, the SST was not accepted by adults or teachers, because they feared that these stories might have "seditious tendencies" for the children, as parents were not present in the stories, the heroes often disregarded the rules and rebelliousness was seen as the source of fun and adventure (Simons 169). Furthermore, literary critics of children's literature tended to value experiences which were closer to the life of the readers and the fact that SSTs presented an imaginative picture of the world of school has contributed to the disapproval of the genre. However, the positive function of SSTs should not be forgotten because "authors have responded to changes in society, and time-honoured themes are adapted to new circumstances" (Ray 358).

3. The modern school story – Analysis

The next part of my diploma thesis deals with the genre's status today and analyses three representatives of the modern SST, *I'd tell you I love you, but then I'd have to kill you* by Ally Carter, *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan and *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot, all of them presenting the first volume of a series. The focus is on the characteristics of the novels, both the old elements, which were present in the classic SST, and the new elements which were added to the genre to refashion it. Moreover, it is discussed how these elements positively contributed to the success of the modern SST.

3.1. Outline of the modern school story

In chapter 2.3., the development towards the modern SST was revealed and it was illustrated that several subgenres like day, fantasy, mystery or spy school fiction have emerged. However, it was not directly elaborated what these different subgenres have in common to represent the modern SST. All of them do not only include elements of the classic version of the genre, for example, the setting, the characters and the formulaic plot, but they also contain new elements which are linked to fantasy, realism, horror and so on.

As elements of fantasy, fairy tales and spy stories are sometimes added to the modern SST and especially important for the further analysis of the genre, these terms should be defined more closely in this context. Even though it is difficult to find a comprehensive definition of fantasy, critics agree that works of fantasy fiction "involve the supernatural or some other unreal element" (Carpenter *Fantasy* 181). In my opinion, Zipes offers a good description of fantasy and its characteristics:

One element characteristic of fantasy is the presence of magic, or any other form of the supernatural, in an otherwise realistic, recognizable world. This presence may be manifest in the form of magical beings, objects, or events, and it may be unfolded into a whole universe or reduced to just one tiny magical bit. (*Fantasy*, Oxford 58)

According to this quote, fantasy fiction is always linked to reality and has its initial setting in the real world from which the characters enter another magical world. So the concept of a secondary world and the combination of the real and the fantastic world is an important element in fantasy, as well as the portrayal of

the characters as common people. Moreover, it is often argued that fantasy functions as escapist literature for the reader to forget everyday problems and enter a world of dreams. Otherwise, it is created as a metaphor for reality due to its “huge subversive potential” which makes it possible to “empower a child protagonist” or “interrogate the existing power relationships” (Zipes, *Fantasy*, Oxford 58-62). Apparently, the SST and fantasy fiction make a good mix, because a school setting can function as a world apart from reality, in which ordinary children have more power than adults and can fight their own battles.

Each culture and each part of the world has a different tradition of telling fairy tales, but all of them derive from a “particular oral storytelling tradition” (Zipes, *Fairy Tales*, Oxford 45). Even though these stories have never been told or written particularly for children, they are “usually made to demonstrate a moral point” (Bottigheimer). Fairy tales are defined as “narratives, set in the distant past, of events that would be impossible in the real world. They often include magical happenings and the appearance of fairies, but the supernatural does not always feature in them, and the heroes and heroines are usually mortal human beings” (Carpenter *Fairy stories* 177). Zipes stresses that fairy tales “serve a meaningful social function not just for compensation but for revelation” because they make children wonder and offer today’s society alternative worlds, in which children’s dreams and desires come true (*Fairy Tales*, Oxford 53). So altered elements of fairy tales sometimes appear in the modern versions of the SST in the form of magic or characters, like “a most beautiful princess” or “a prince of delights” (Carpenter *Fairy stories* 178). These elements tend to make the stories more fascinating for young readers, while reminding them of the fairy tales they were told when they were young.

The spy story is “a specialized and sophisticated form of fiction“, which is “devoted to various kinds of espionage“ and “at its best, is skilfully plotted, contains well-drawn characters, exciting action and a high degree of suspense and tension“ (Cuddon 908). The genre emerged in the years preceding the First World War, when the relationships between the countries were tense and scandals led to increased activities of spies and intelligence services. Spy fiction has always been at its peak in times of crisis or anticipated disaster,

which is why “the 20th century record of war, revolution, subversion, genocide, and the threat of nuclear war has sustained the appeal” of these stories (Drabble 962-963). The genre is related to novels of adventure, the thriller and the politico-military thriller (Cuddon 908) and is generally a hybrid form, as it often merges with other genres, such as the detective, crime, or even romance novel (Drabble 963). So elements of spy stories can easily be included into the modern SST, too, and the enduring trend of spy fiction of blurring “the line between fact and fiction to make spurious claims of authenticity and realism” (Drabble 962) can be a fascinating contribution to the genre of the modern SST.

All of the three primary texts are representatives of the SST, because they contain “hallmarks of the conventional school story” (Zipes, *School Stories*, Oxford 410), for example the school setting and the plot’s focus on character development and relationships¹¹. Moreover, each of them adds at least one new element to the genre to refashion it and mark it as a modern SST. *The Lightning Thief* belongs to the genre of fantasy school fiction because the author “took classic Greek characters and weaved them into the present day time and culture” (Akingbala 304). An alternate world, linked to the real world, is created, in which the Greek gods, their children and monsters exist, so the new elements added to this novel are of fantastic nature. The novel *The Princess Diaries* is written in diary format and connected with both the chick-lit genre¹² and day school fiction, because the story is about an ordinary teenage girl going to school. However, this girl finds out that she is the princess of the European principality Genovia, which is an invented country, but real in the novel as such. The story cannot be categorized into fantasy fiction because it does not include any supernatural or unreal elements, but next to the realistic elements of puberty and falling in love, which were not present in the classic SST, it also presents elements which can be claimed to be imaginative or fairytale-like. The other book which is difficult to classify in terms of genre, is *I’d tell you I love you, but then I’d have to kill you*. Of course, it is a school story, containing elements of spy fiction, but it is hard to define its subgenre, because it is not a fantasy story and not exactly a realistic story either. The book has a usual setting, the

¹¹ These classic elements are described in more detail in the next chapters of the thesis.

¹² Chick-lit are fictional stories “which all deal with the issues of modern women humorously and lightheartedly” (Hooten 21).

characters are human beings and it does not include any magic or fantastic elements. What is striking, is the fact that the girls in the novel are “all technically geniuses” (ILY 5), they “go to a school for spies” where “things like advanced encryption and fourteen different languages” (ILY 1) are taught. These factors are quite unrealistic for the real world and the girls’ skills seem to be superheroic, but are not claimed as such. Regardless of the exact subgenre of this book, it does definitely contain unrealistic elements, and like PD, it also adds the new elements of puberty to the genre. Consequently, the nature of the new elements in the primary sources is not important, as they can be fantastic, realistic, unrealistic or fairytale-like. The combination of these new elements with the old elements of the classic SST is relevant, because it is this mix which is the most dominant indicator for the modern SST.

Another innovation in the genre, which has always been predominantly British, is that all of the three primary texts are written by US-American authors. This expansion on the book market through the works of non-British authors has contributed to the increase of the SST’s success as a wider readership can be addressed. Concerning the readership, the modern SST seems to have abandoned the division in girls’ and boys’ SST and concentrates on children and young people in general. Even though PD and ILY might especially attract female readers because of the female protagonists and its themes of boys and love, male characters are also included in the books and the isolated world of girl power does not exist in its previous form any longer. I would argue that LT does not have a specific readership because no particular gender is foregrounded. The protagonist is male but the exciting scenes and funny dialogues might be enjoyable for both boys and girls. The reason why two of the authors aim at a female readership might be due to the fact that teenage girls represent a wider readership in the book market. However, the readership of the modern SST varies from book to book and cannot be constrained to one gender.

None of the books I’ve chosen for analysis has a traditional plot structure, beginning with the journey to school and ending with the school year. The only book which is close to a traditional scheme is LT because it does not start with

the main setting right away, but the protagonist, Percy, visits another school at the beginning of the novel. At the start of summer, Percy is attacked by monsters and has to flee to camp half-blood, which is the main setting and 'school' in the novel. Percy makes friends at camp and together they "have prophecies to fulfil, quests to compete, monsters to slay" (Akingbala 304). Carter's book starts at the beginning of a new school year, but Cammie, the protagonist, does not need to travel to her school, the Gallagher Academy, because she is the headmistress' daughter and has stayed at school in summer. She and her friends are not in their first year, so the action is brought on through the arrival of the new girl, Macey, who does not seem to fit into the school at first. The situation is even more exciting as Macey and her parents believe the Gallagher Academy to be a regular school and not a school for spies. The novel PD does not start at the beginning of the school year either but a few weeks afterwards when the protagonist, Mia, is already a freshman at the Albert Einstein high school. She struggles with several problems concerning school, her mother and boys, but the climax is reached when she finds out that she is the princess of Genovia and princess lessons with her arrogant and insensitive grandmother start.

The three books I have chosen for analysis and modern SSTs in general "have a distinctly backward-looking quality" and enable today's readership "to return to some of the popular themes and attitudes that used to be found in their fiction" at a time when wish-fulfilment and imagination were in the foreground (Tucker 221). So elements of the classic SST and other old-fashioned features, such as the boarding school setting in ILY and LT or the discovery of a princess in PD, awaken nostalgia, but are also an essential factor in children's literature, which "tends to rely on familiar and traditional elements as much or even more than on original elements to make its mark" (Eccleshare 288). However, the authors were looking for ways to refashion the genre and to "[retell] familiar stories in a fresh and engaging way" by combining the familiar elements with something unknown. Through the mix of these old and new elements, the authors managed to "transform the familiar into the spectacular" (Eccleshare 294) and the modern SSTs has helped the old genre to gain in popularity and has

motivated children and young adults to read, at a time when other activities are often found to be more fascinating.

3.2. Setting

Concerning the setting of the three primary texts, all of them take place in a different type of school and only ILY has the same setting like most of the classic SSTs, namely a boarding school. The Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women is a girls' boarding school for spies in Roseville, Virginia, and like the classic versions of the SST, it is separated from the real world and presented as a world of its own. Cammie mentions that "Gallagher Girls and town boys aren't supposed to mix" (ILY 231), because strangers are supposed to believe the Gallagher Academy's cover story of being "a snooty boarding school for bored heiresses with no place else to go" (ILY 2). Due to the school's isolation and reputation, conflicts with the outside world tend to arise and the girls even have the special name "*Gallagher Glare*" (ILY 97) for the look which people in town give them. However, camp half-blood in LT is even more isolated from the outside world and can be seen as an "enclosed space from which no escape is possible" (Petzold 19). The school is set in the woods and is actually a summer camp for demigods with the possibility to stay year-round. Human beings do not even have the opportunity to enter the school because it is separated from the real world through a property line which keeps off monsters and mortals. "[T]he borders are sealed to keep mortals and monsters out. From the outside, mortals look into the valley and see nothing unusual, just a strawberry farm" (LT 97). Similar to the classic SST, the world of camp is separated from the real world and "the isolation of the school within the country provides a reason for the external world not to intrude" (Gosling sig8). So it can be noticed that for the modern SST, it is not enough to present the school in isolation, but there needs to be a convincing reason for the isolation, which is to hide the students' special identity from the outside world. In contrast to camp half-blood, which is similar to a boarding school, the Albert Einstein High School in PD is an ordinary day school in Manhattan and therefore the setting is not as isolated and dominant as the other two schools. Nevertheless the school is "private property" and strangers are not allowed to enter without permission (PD 162), and it is free from the presence of parents. The students enjoy more

freedom while attending school, but go back to the outside world and to parental supervision everyday after school.

The powerful setting of SSTs is emphasized through the school building itself, which is often a gothic place with a lake and a forest nearby. Like the classic SST, the schools in both ILY and LT seem to be old and historical places. The Gallagher Academy is a “gorgeous mansion” with “ivy-covered walls”, “manicured grounds” (ILY 2) and the students are proud of its traditions and history, because Cammie mentions that “we’ve been around for more than a hundred years” (ILY 2). The fact that she says ‘we’ stresses the sense of community and makes clear that she sees herself as part of the school’s history. The summer camp in LT does consist of several buildings which are situated in the woods. “The landscape was dotted with buildings that looked like ancient Greek architecture – an open-air pavilion, an amphitheatre, a circular arena – except that they all looked brand new, their white marble columns sparkling in the sun” (LT 61-62). The Gallagher Academy and camp half-blood are presented as magical places which appear to be fascinating and full of secrets. This might be one of the reasons why the authors chose such a setting, but Gosling also states that “[t]he frequency with which schools occupy historical settings, generally in castles or manor houses, provide the fictional schools with romance and the promise of adventure, while stressing the isolation of the imaginary world” (sig6). Moreover, the setting of a traditional boarding school is an “old-fashioned aspect” in the modern SST, which was often associated with escapism and snobbery (Tucker 222). The “sense of an overall elite” is still present in ILY and LT due to its extraordinary students and the books convey “the notion of a different and exclusive form of education for a privileged few” (Tucker 223). As already mentioned, the high school in PD is not an isolated place and the building itself is not written about in the book, but it is probably quite modern because of its location in the city. The setting stresses the realism in this book and also adds the new element of the day school to the modern SST.

Although ILY and LT are set at a boarding school, they also bring some modernization to the setting due to its training facilities and high-tech

equipment. For example, camp half-blood offers its students a “climbing wall, which actually consisted of two facing walls that shook violently, dropped boulders, sprayed lava, and clashed together if you didn’t get to the top fast enough” (LT 93). In ILY, technological devices are prominent and “laser beams that read tire treads and sensors that check for explosives” (ILY 2) are used. The students have access to many technological devices which they need as spies, like “Evopopaper”, which is “paper that instantly dissolves when you put it in your mouth” (ILY 8). The combination of the old and ancient building with the modern elements of technology and fantasy makes a nostalgic setting interesting for the readers of today.

The students of the modern SST spend a lot or even most of their time at school where they have lessons or training and socialize with friends. Therefore the school experience contributes to the character development of the students and the school is often seen as a great place to be. When Cammie says that “[t]his place never ceases to amaze me” (ILY 85), the fascination and admiration for her school becomes obvious. Also Percy, who has only been at camp for a few days, expresses his positive attitude and describes the school as if he had been there much longer. “I liked camp. I got used to the morning fog over the beach, the smell of hot strawberry fields in the afternoon, even the weird noises of monsters in the woods at night” (LT 108). However, the schools in ILY and LT are not only great places for the students, but also places where they should be safe and feel at home. Cammie is happy to be back at school when all her friends arrive and they have dinner. “We settled at our usual table in the Grand Hall, and I finally felt at home” (ILY 7). At the beginning of the novel, Annabeth explains to Percy that camp half-blood is his new home because this is where he is safe. “You *are* at home. This is the only safe place on earth for kids like us” (LT 94). Then when Percy is on his quest and he speaks to Luke, he is longing for the camp and wishes he could be there. “It felt so good to see him, to feel like I was back at camp even for a few minutes” (LT 222). Mia, in contrast, does not consider her school as a very good place and thinks that “everyone else at this stupid school is completely NUTS” (PD 157). The reasons are especially some of the students who she does not like and her bad marks in algebra. This book proves again that it is closest to reality

because it does not present the school as a perfect place, but as a setting where conflicts arise and the students have to gain acceptance. Nevertheless, when reporters arrive at the school to stalk Mia, the headmistress calls the police to send them away (PD 162), which shows that Mia is safe at her school and protected from the outside world.

Despite the differences of the schools in the primary texts, the setting provokes a similar structure of the stories, which consist of several elements. The most crucial part is the hierarchical order of the people at school, consisting of headmaster or headmistress, teachers and students. However, a hierarchy is also present within the student body, depending on the position of students in the community.

The school community is a state with its own laws and its own hierarchies. There is the general hierarchy, recognized in each school, of headmistress, teachers, head girl, prefects, seniors, middle school, and juniors. The domestic staff are not included in this academic hierarchy [...]. This hierarchy is often further complicated by the existence of a house system. (Löfgren qtd. in Gosling sig14)

The hierarchy in LT is similar to a house system, because the students are assigned to a special cabin, depending on which god their parent is. “There are twelve cabins for the twelve Olympians” (LT 81) and the most powerful of them are Zeus, Poseidon and Hades who are called the “Big Three” (LT 113). So the “children of the Big Three have powers greater than other half-bloods” (LT 114) which means that they are positioned on the top of the hierarchical ladder. There are also some “minor gods” (LT 116) whose children do not have a lot of power and are not often mentioned in the book.

As the high school in PD is a regular day school, a house system does not exist, but there is definitely a hierarchical order concerning popularity. Mia describes different groups at her school who are sitting together at lunch:

There are only about ten tables in our caff [...]: there’s the table where I sit with Lilly, and then the jock table, the cheerleader table, the rich kid table, the hip hop table, the druggie table, the drama freak table, the National Honours Society table, the foreign exchange students table, and the table where Tina Hakim Baba sits with her bodyguard. (PD 126)

The jocks and the cheerleaders are said to be the most popular and “most beautiful people in Albert Einstein’s” (PD 174) and therefore they have a lot of

power at school. For example, Lilly's boycott has no effect because the popular groups are not supporting it and "[w]hen you can't get the popular kids on your side, you have to realise it's hopeless" (PD 143). Mia is often wondering why she is not more popular (PD 68), which shows the other students' wish to be part of the popular groups. The hierarchy among students, the division of the student body in certain groups and also popularity in general are elements which remained of the classic SST. Especially "'popularity', i.e. acceptance by the dominant peer group, constitutes a permanent temptation" (Petzold 19) and is probably still an issue in the modern SST, because it is an aspect the readers can understand and identify with.

In ILY, the hierarchy in the student body seems to exist only in terms of age and grade because the older students have more knowledge and experience than the younger ones. For example, Cammie and her friends are excited about studying the new subject "Covert Operations" this semester and "everyone knows sophomore year is the first time we get to do anything that even approaches actual field work" (ILY 8-9). The reason why the students are not divided into houses or popularity groups might be due to the fact that the Gallagher Girls have a very strong sense of community. "We were Gallagher Girls on a mission – doing what we do best" (ILY 266). Cammie often refers to her friends and classmates as "sisters" (ILY 3) with which the closeness and equality of the students is expressed.

Consequently, also in the modern SST, the hierarchy of the students often leads to bullying of the weaker and not so powerful students. Percy seems to have a lot of experience with bullies especially because he has attended so many different schools. "I hated being tricked. I hated being teased. And I had plenty of experience handling bullies who liked to do that stuff to me" (LT 241). The biggest bully at camp half-blood is Clarisse, the daughter of Ares, who has an "initiation ceremony for newbies" (LT 89) which Percy can avoid by using his powers. However, "[b]ullies and bigots in the school story genre do not merely harass heroes. Frequently, schoolboy and schoolgirl heroes find themselves defending their weaker comrades from school bullies" (Manners Smith 77). Percy acts like a typical schoolboy hero by protecting his friend Grover from

bullies and mean teachers. “All year long, I’d gotten in fights, keeping bullies away from him” (LT 24-25). Mia is also a victim of bullying, for example when Lana makes fun of her small breasts and it is her friend Lilly who comes to her defence: “Why don’t you do us all a favour and go curl up some place and die, Weinberger?” (PD 18). Surprisingly, when Lana insults Mia’s new friend Tina, Mia does something very untypical for her character and becomes defensive in return by thrusting ice cream on Lana’s sweater (PD 129).

In contrast, Cammie behaves very unusual for a protagonist of a SST, because she does not help her schoolmate Anna, who is harassed by some town boys. “I wanted to go to her, but I was frozen somehow” (ILY 231) because she is afraid that her boyfriend Josh and his friends might find out that she is a Gallagher Girl. Her friend Liz watches the scene and is shocked: “You’ve gone too far” (ILY 239), strongly disapproving of her behaviour. In the Gallagher Academy itself, no bullying appears to be happening among the students, because the community of the Gallagher Girls and their solidarity is their prime principle. “Gallagher Girls don’t fight in the hallways. We don’t slap and we don’t shove. But mostly, we don’t use the skills of the sisterhood against the sisters. Ever” (ILY 57).

Another issue of the SSTs is the portrayal of the school as a place where rumours are spread and people like to gossip. In all three modern SSTs, scenes are pictured in which the students gossip about a particular incident or person. For example, when Mia’s picture is on the cover of the New York Post, everybody starts whispering and giggling when Mia walks by (PD 149). Especially at the Gallagher Academy, rumours and gossip seem to be part of everyday life: “You think regular girls love gossip – try Gallagher Girls!” (ILY 284). Cammie mentions the “start-of-school rumor” (ILY 9) and the girls are particularly interested in new people, asking several questions about their new teacher. “Soon I was trapped under an avalanche of question like, ‘Where’s he from?’ and ‘Does he have a girlfriend?’ and ‘Is it true he killed a Turkish ambassador with a thong?’” (ILY 17). Moreover, the new girl, Macey, becomes a subject of gossip among the girls, who do not seem to care if they are telling the truth or not, because Cammie states that “it was almost a full-time job

keeping rumors separated from facts” (ILY 52). At camp half-blood, where Percy is a new camper, the other students are also interested in him and are looking at him when he walks by. “Several of the campers nudged each other. One pointed to the minotaur horn I was carrying. Another said, ‘That’s him.’” (LT 75). When Percy lets the toilets explode, the campers are gossiping even more, fascinated of the new boy. “Word of the bathroom incident spread immediately. Wherever I went, campers pointed at me and murmured something about toilet water” (LT 93).

The characteristic element of sport, which was of great importance in the classic SSTs, does still exist in the modern SSTs, but not in its usual way. In PD, sport does not play a big role in Mia’s own life, but the most popular kids at her school are cheerleaders and jocks.

Lana’s entourage consists of a bunch of other girls, most of whom are junior varsity cheerleaders like she is. They are all really pretty, with long hair and breast and stuff, like Lana. Josh’s entourage consists of a bunch of senior boys who are all on the crew team with him. They are all really large and handsome. (PD 174)

According to this quote, every girl would like to look like Lana and have a boyfriend like Josh. This admiration for the athletic kids and their popularity in the school community is not a new element in the SST, but in contrast to the classic SST, the games themselves are not described in the book at all. In ILY, sport is important in the sense that a good physical condition is necessary for the future profession of the students. Cammie wants to become a spy, which is why she has to take Protection and Enforcement classes in which the students are taught advanced martial arts and special defence techniques, like how “to kill a man with a piece of uncooked spaghetti” (ILY 170). Sport and games definitely play the most important role at camp half-blood, where the campers love to play the game capture-the-flag. This game has certain rules (LT 118) and two teams, consisting of cabin alliances, try to get the flag of the other team. Annabeth mentions the game immediately after she has seen Percy’s potential: “I want you on my team for capture the flag” (LT 92). The students are eager to win the game for their team and also Percy becomes a keen player. “I spent my days devising new strategies for capture-the-flag and making new alliances with the other cabins to keep the banner out of Ares’s hands” (LT

358). The element of sport was refashioned in the modern SST by presenting it differently or adding new aspects to it. The message of the importance of sport is still present, but the readers' interest is captured through the exciting training or new games which they are not familiar with.

Besides games and sport, food is another feature of the SSTs and Manners Smith even describes it as “the most important – almost obsessive – part of boarding school life and stories” (81). In all three modern SSTs, the students gather at lunch time and eat together. The Gallagher Girls have their meals in the Grand Hall and Cammie thinks that “the food here is great” and speaks of the “awesome crème brûlée” (ILY 33). The campers of camp half-blood eat in the “mess hall pavilion”, where “[e]ach cabin had its own table” (LT 103). “Lavish descriptions of food were once thought of as an important part of the appeal of children’s fiction” (Tucker 224), which is a method still used when Percy described “the ripest strawberry, the juiciest slice of beef, the warmest, most buttery roll” (LT 104). As already stated, the students at Albert Einstein High School have their lunch in the caff where each popularity group shares a table. Food has a special value for Mia, who is a vegetarian and appreciates when “her rights as a vegetarian” are respected (PD 3).

The different elements and features of the SSTs have been described, but a new element in all three modern SSTs is that they are not only set at school, but that the students visit other locations too. For example, the students of the Gallagher Academy like to go to town, which they are sometimes allowed to do. “I talked to your mom, and she said we can all walk into town on Saturday!” (ILY 227). Especially Cammie portrays the visits in town as something enjoyable because she likes to be surrounded by people who do not know her. “I suddenly missed my bench in Roseville. I longed for the noisy, anonymous chaos of the square” (ILY 84). She is also the one who often sneaks away from school to meet her secret boyfriend Josh in town. At the beginning of LT, Percy actually attends the boarding school Yancy Academy which he likes (LT 34), but he is expelled and not invited back after the summer (LT 33). Together with her husband Gabe, Percy’s mother lives in a “little apartment on the Upper East Side” (LT 17) in New York, where Percy goes back to after the summer

holidays. However, the majority of the book, Percy is on a quest to the Underworld with his friends Annabeth and Grover to return the stolen lightning bolt to Zeus. He wishes to be back at camp and also longs for his mother's apartment. "We passed [...] the Statue of Liberty, which was a pretty small replica, but still made me homesick" (LT 257). The high school in PD is a day school, so Mia also spends a lot of time at home in the loft in Manhattan which she shares with her mother. A place which is never an actual setting in the book but is relevant anyway, is the country Genovia. It is often the subject of discussion because Mia is the princess of this country, which is "between France and Italy" (PD 26). "Most people have never heard of Genovia" (PD 31) but it is described as "pretty small" (PD 15) and "beautiful (PD 32). As PD is only the first book of a series, it might be possible that the country Genovia is a setting in the following volumes.

Despite the other settings of the modern SST, the most dominant and significant setting for the story is definitely the school. Nevertheless, the author has to decide in which school the story should be set, as each type of school offers a different advantage and source of fascination. All of the three primary texts share the familiar aspect of going to school, while offering new, fascinating elements. For instance, "[t]he idea of a boarding school – the escape from at least parental authority, and the companionship of the dormitory – fascinates millions of children" (Manners Smith 69). Besides the "nostalgia for the boarding school setting" (Eccleshare 293) with its "hidden compartments and secret passageways" (ILY 8), ILY and LT are even more interesting because they are schools for spies and demigods. Furthermore, the fact that the schools cannot be detected from the outside and do not appear as what they are, adds to the fascination and gives the reader a feeling of belonging to the community of these special schools. The setting of a day school can still be "a pervasive setting [...], allowing the writer to incorporate themes from the everyday world while retaining the authorial advantages of an environment free from the presence of parents" (Pinsent 20-21). The readers know what to expect and find themselves in a familiar world in which they can still gain new experiences about the school life. All of the three authors added new elements to the setting

and made it appealing for its readers by integrating both realistic and extraordinary issues.

3.3. Characters

The school setting is an essential feature of the SST, but the most important components are the various characters who are responsible for the action of the whole story. In each of the three primary texts, the protagonist and his/her friends are students and in the foreground, but there are also some adult figures who are relevant for the plot.

In all three books, the students are special in one way or another as each of them represents a different group of teenagers who admit “if there’s one thing [they]’re not, it’s normal” (ILY 63). Whereas the students of ILY and LT are unique because they are spies and demigods, the student body of PD only consists of particular teenage groups and Mia is the only one of them who is really exceptional. Despite the specialness of the students, all of them belong to a group of teenagers who share certain aspects of adolescence with the teenage readers of the books. They are characterized by their uniformity because each group is depicted as a world of its own. “I followed my friend up the stairs, and I got lost in a sea of girls who were dressed like me, and were trained like I was, and who were entrenched in my same world” (ILY 284). Every student wants to be part of this special and uniform group and is sometimes afraid that he or she might not fit in. For example, Percy is devastated when the other campers exclude him after finding out that he is Poseidon’s son. “Just when I’d started to feel accepted, to feel I had a home in cabin eleven and I might be a normal kid – or as normal as you can be when you’re a half-blood – I’d been separated out as if I had some rare disease” (LT 127). Belonging to the group is important for every student and also an issue for teenagers in general who want to be accepted at school. Also Mia is eager to be more popular because then she would be invited to parties and have more friends. “Why am I so unpopular? I mean, I know I look weird and stuff, but I really try to be nice to people, you know? I mean, you’d think people would value me as a human being and invite me to their parties just because they like my company” (PD 68). In comparison to Percy and Mia, Cammie does not fear that she might not be

part of the student body of the Gallagher Academy, but worries about being part of the ordinary world in which Josh lives. “Somehow, I knew a spy would never belong there” (ILY 108). The reason for this is probably that Cammie has attended this school for a long time and knows that she has a place there.

The adults who are part of the stories are not as important as the students but seem to be more dominant than in the classic SSTs. Beside the teachers and the headmaster or the headmistress, the parents also play an important role in the modern SSTs and have some influence on the students. However, most of the protagonists still see the school community as a substitution for a family. Cammie even describes her schoolmates as “sisters” (ILY 264) and Percy mentions that the people at camper are his family. “I’d finally found a family, people who cared about me and thought I’d done something right” (LT 369). Mia is the only one who visits a day school and is surrounded by her family members every day. Even though her parents are divorced and her grandmother is a complicated person, she seems to enjoy the company of them “And as we stood there, I couldn’t help thinking how great it was that we could all put aside our difference and just watch a sunset” (PD 230). In the following chapters, both student and adult characters who are central for the stories’ plot are described in detail.

3.3.1. Protagonists

The authors of SSTs do not concentrate on all the students of the fictional school but they choose one particular student and his/her friends to be the centre of the storyline. In all three modern SSTs, the protagonist is not only part of a special student body, but also an exceptional person and different from all the other students. “In addition to being different from ordinary people, [they] also have something that distinguishes them from others in their own [...] world” (Smith 308). Cammie, for instance, is already a special person because she visits a school for spies and she describes herself as being abnormal. “[S]o I might have felt pretty silly if I were a normal girl and not a highly trained secret-agent-type person as I sat on that park bench, trying to act normal when, by definition, I’m anything but” (ILY 147). Nevertheless, she seems to be torn between her role as a girl and a spy, and often longs for anonymity and an

ordinary life¹³. “On the streets of Roseville I was just a regular girl, and it felt so good” (ILY 77). Moreover, Cammie holds a special position at school because her mother is the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy.

Times like this are when it's no fun being the headmistress's daughter, because A) it's totally annoying when people think I'm in a loop I'm not in, and B) people always assume I'm in partnership with the staff, which really I'm not. Sure, I've private dinners with my mom on Sunday nights, and sometimes she leaves me alone in her office for five seconds, but that's it. Whenever school is in session, I'm just another Gallagher Girl (except for being the girl to whom the aforementioned A and B apply). (ILY 7)

Cammie does not feel privileged but the other students think that she enjoys some advantages, which the others might not have, concerning information and having the latest news.

The protagonist in LT, Percy Jackson, is not an ordinary person either, because he discovers that he is a demigod, like all the other children who attend camp half-blood. “Percy is one of many children born to one human parent and one Greek god” (Smith 307). Furthermore, some campers think that he is “somebody special” (LT 102), when he arrives at camp, which proves to be true when Poseidon, god of the sea, claims him as his son. Poseidon is one of the Big Three, whose children are more powerful than other demigods and “have a strong aura, a scent that attracts monsters” (LT 114). Percy is Poseidon's only son, because

the Big Three agreed they wouldn't sire any more heroes. Their children were just too powerful. They were affecting the course of human events too much, causing too much carnage. [...] Zeus and Poseidon, made Hades swear an oath with them: no more affairs with mortal women. They all swore on the River Styx. (LT 113-114)

Of course, this agreement makes Percy even more exceptional because by claiming Percy as his son, Poseidon admits that he broke the oath. The other campers realize that he is special and unlike them, when a hellhound invades the camp to kill Percy. “The attack had scared everybody. It sent two messages: one, that I was the son of the Sea God; and two, monsters would stop at nothing to kill me” (LT 127).

¹³ This aspect will be analysed further at the end of the chapter.

In contrast to Cammie and Percy, who belong to a unique group of students, Mia is only part of a particular teenager group at her school, which is not very different from the age group of teenagers in general. Like many other teenage girls, she worries about her looks, wants to be more popular and hopes that she will have a date soon. Mia's specialness is represented in more than one way and first of all, she is very different from all the teenagers at her school due to her values and her special attitude. For instance, she believes in "strict vegetarianism" (PD 193) and does not go out because "[her] mom wouldn't let [her] go to a party" (PD 176). Moreover, she wants "to be respectful of [her] body, and not put a whole lot of toxins into it" (PD 178) which is why she does not drink alcohol. Mia sometimes wonders about her schoolmates: "Who *are* these people, and why do I have to be incarcerated with them on a daily basis?" (PD 19). The quote illustrates that Mia has a special character by choice and knows that she is different from most of the other students at her school for whom drinking and going out are usual things to do. Then, Mia becomes an even more exceptional character and different from all common people because she finds out that she is "Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, Princess of Genovia" (PD 35) and also "the heir to the throne of Genovia" (PD 29). She is not only an extraordinary character because of her special personality, but also because of her princess status.

The three protagonists of the modern SSTs share the feeling that they sometimes do not want to be special and different from the other students or ordinary people in general. In several situations, they try to justify their special status and show that they are worth being regarded as exceptional. Cammie once mentions that she feels guilty about having the special position of being the headmistress' daughter. "When I first came to the Gallagher Academy, I felt guilty about being able to see my mother every day when my classmates had to go months on end without their parents. Eventually, I stopped feeling bad about it. After all, Mom and I don't have summers together. But mostly, we don't have Dad" (ILY 45). Cammie justifies her status because in contrast to the other students, she does not have a father anymore and therefore she deserves to see her mother more often.

Percy also feels the urge to prove himself and asks questions like “How could I be the son of someone that powerful?” (LT 274). He asserts himself when the campers play the game capture-the-flag and he beats Clarisse and her siblings, which fascinates Annabeth because Percy has not had a lot of practise and is already a good fighter (LT 123). Especially at the end of the story, Percy proves that he is worth to be the son of Poseidon by fulfilling his quest and returning the stolen lightning bolt to Zeus.

‘The choice was unanimous,’ Luke announced. ‘This bead commemorates the first son of the Sea God at this camp, and the quest he undertook into the darkest part of the Underworld to stop a war!’ The entire camp got to their feet and cheered. Even Ares’s cabin felt obliged to stand. Athena’s cabin steered Annabeth to the front so she could share in the applause. (LT 359)

The campers accept Percy as Poseidon’s son and admire him for his achievements.

When Mia is told that she is the princess of Genovia, she mentions several times that she cannot be and does not deserve to be a princess, because she does not look like one and is afraid that people will make fun of her. “This is how NOT a princess I am. I am so NOT a princess that when my dad started telling me that I was one, I totally started crying. [...] You should see what I look like. You never saw anyone who looked LESS like a princess than I do” (PD 35). In the course of the story, she changes her looks, sees who her real friends are, manages to improve her marks in algebra and is proud that she has “finally achieved self-actualization ...” (PD 230). Mia feels more confident which also changes her attitude towards her princess status. “[I]t made me feel that maybe everything was going to be all right, you know? I mean about the whole princess thing” (PD 229).

The decision of the authors to choose so extraordinary students as their protagonists gives them the possibility to make the action more exciting for the readers because of a protagonist they can envy and admire. Apparently, the authors are aware of “[t]he preeminence of the imagination of childhood and the need for children to questions and dream” (Natov 127). Every child has a certain “need to be special” (Natov 127) and “young readers like to share the imaginary experience of feeling exclusively different from others” (Tucker 227).

Reading about these unique heroes and their adventures enables the readers to escape the feeling of being ordinary and to identify with a person which could not be more appealing in their personal fantasies (Tucker 227).

Even though the protagonists are special characters, different from common people, as well as different from their own kind, they are still represented as part of their group and share certain aspects with teenagers in general. In the classic SST, “the heroine [was] represented as ‘ordinary’ rather than exceptional” and also Cammie feels like “an ordinary-looking girl” (ILY 70), describing herself as looking like “the girl next door” (ILY 72). Due to her physical appearance, she thinks that she is not easily noticed by people and sometimes even feels invisible (ILY 60), which is why she is called “Cammie the Chameleon” (ILY 1). But also Mia is worried about her looks and thinks that she is a freak. “I’m practically the biggest freak in the entire school. I mean, let’s face it: I’m five foot nine, flat-chested, and a freshman. How much *more* of a freak could I be?” (PD 1). Although the concerns of the two female protagonists can be compared with the worries of other teenage girls, it should be noted that the description of their physical appearance is exclusively their own opinion and perspective, which cannot be said to be definitely true.

Percy, in contrast, does not worry about how he looks but has other problems which he has to solve. “Percy’s god powers don’t change the human difficulties he faces. He has dyslexia and ADHD. He has a hard time making friends. He faces bullies at school. He wonders how to impress Annabeth. His father isn’t around, and his stepfather is mean and stupid” (Smith 308). The worries and problems which the protagonists of the modern SSTs have to face, do not have anything to do with their special position at school, but are issues which every teenager might be confronted with. The fact that the characters are not special in every aspect, but also represented as one among others and “ordinary rather than exceptional” (Gosling sig26), brings them closer to the world of the readers. From time to time, every child feels “unacknowledged, unappreciated, unseen and unheard, up against an unfair parent, and by extension, an unfair world” (Natov 125). When the protagonists of the stories, who are usually the heroes and heroines of the readers, are not perfect and have to face the same

problems like common teenagers, it is easier for the readers to empathize and identify with them.

One can notice that the protagonists are still young and cope with problems of adolescence because their identity is not fully developed yet. The American writer Joseph Campbell “noted how the hero’s cycle corresponded to the dynamic movement through life stages, particularly the development of consciousness and the discovery of identity” (Natov 130) In the course of the stories, they go through different stages and have to “prove [themselves] through a series of tests” (Natov 130). Like regular teenagers, they have to worry about who they are and are insecure about their decisions.

For example, Cammie is very doubtful about her appearance and says that she is “not the kind of girl guys like” (ILY 117). She is constantly torn between being an ordinary girl and a spy which makes her desperate from time to time. “[T]he girl in me wanted to scream, but the spy in me just smiled” (ILY 194-195). When she meets Josh and falls in love, she pretends to be a regular girl and soon “leads a double life, and must decide which one is right for her” (Rev. of ILY 73). She is not happy about lying to Josh and thinks that she does not deserve such a nice boyfriend (ILY 214). Cammie is very unsure about her identity and often wonders who she wants to be, asking herself the question “if it came down to a fight between the real me and my legend, which one would I choose?” (ILY 238). However, Cammie is not the only one of the protagonists who is insecure and feels incapable, because also Percy does not think very good of himself at the beginning of the story. “I was nobody, from a family of nobodies” (LT 22). His world is turned upside down when he finds out about being a demigod. Even though he knows now who he is and comes closer to finding his identity, he is still worried that he might not be the powerful hero everyone believes him to be. “I couldn’t protect them, I was no hero” (LT 214). Also Mia finds out that she is not the person who she thought she was, when her father tells her that she is a princess. She already has many problems to worry about and being a princess is not what she wants. “Like I don’t have enough to worry about. I’m flunking Algebra, my mom’s dating my teacher, and I’m the Princess of Genovia” (PD 78). Nevertheless she tries to find a balance between finding her

identity and being a good princess for Genovia. “I really want to do what’s best for Genovia. I really do. But I also have to do what’s best for Mia Thermopolis” (PD 169). The quotes and statements of the protagonists prove that all of them have problems to solve and are unsure about their identity, which is a concern of teenagers in general. These issues have been added to the genre to enable the teenage readers of the books to identify with the characters and feel that they are not alone struggling to find out who they are.

3.3.2. Friends

In the classic SST, friendship was one of the most significant elements of the plot and “[students’] relationships with each other [were] very important” (Gosling sig26). Also the modern SSTs “focus on friendships within a fairly small subgroup of pupils” (Pinsent 14), which consists of the protagonist and his or her friends. Although the protagonists are in the centre of the action and most important for the stories, their friends are always by their side to support them and more opportunities for interesting, exciting or funny scenes are given.

Many children books, like SSTs, present a subgroup of three characters, which consists of the protagonist and two friends. “The use of threesomes [...] is a familiar fictional device which permits a variety of responses to any situation. [...] As a team, [the students] provide a range of responses to different challenges” (Eccleshare 293). All three authors of the primary texts use this device, for example ILY is about Cammie, Bex and Liz, and LT deals with Percy, Grover and Annabeth, which is even highlighted by Percy himself: “‘A trio,’ I said. ‘That’ll work.’” (LT 148). In PD, the use of a threesome is not so clear at the beginning, because Mia has only Lilly as her best friend, even if Lilly’s brother Michael sometimes joins them (PD 57). But then Mia and Lilly have a fight and Mia befriends Tina, a Saudi-Arabian girl who is an outsider at school. In the end, Lilly and Mia reconcile and Mia has a good friend in both Lilly and Tina, who support her when she is in trouble. “Lilly and Tina both want to know if I’m alright” (PD 218). Tina becomes part of their group and as PD is a series, consisting of several volumes, I would argue that in the next volume Mia, Lilly and Tina are represented as a threesome from the beginning.

Another criterion which is outstanding in all three modern SSTs is the illustration of one of the friends as the typical best friend and the other one as a character who does not really seem to fit into the group at first. The role of the typical sidekick is taken by Bex, Grover and Lilly. Cammie always speaks well of Bex: "I love Bex. She's my best friend" (ILY 94). She is a good friend to have, but a very strong and tough character, who could not bear to hear her friends suffer. "They know Bex can take the punches; what hurts Bex most is listening to her friend scream" (ILY 88). Bex would do a lot to save and support her friends and she is demonstrated as the person who knows Cammie best and understands her without words. "Bex read my reflection in the mirror, and I realized that the scanner wasn't the only thing that could see inside me" (ILY 117).

Percy and Grover have already attended the school Yancy Academy together, when Percy finds out that Grover is not only a satyr, which means that he is "a *goat* from the waist down" (LT 45), but also a keeper, whose job it is to protect Percy (LT 60). Grover reassures Percy that he is also his friend: "I wasn't faking being your friend. I *am* your friend" (LT 44) and after the first shock, Percy saves Grover from the Minotaur: "Even if you are half barnyard animal, you're my best friend and I don't want you to die" (LT 48). Percy speaks of Grover as "the only friend [he'd] ever had for longer than a few months" (LT 146) and thinks that he has "the biggest heart of any satyr ever" (LT 249). Grover is always by Percy's side and tries to keep him from trouble, which is why he also comes along when Percy is offered a quest. "[I]f you're serious about wanting me along, I won't let you down" (LT 146). He wants to protect Percy and Annabeth and saves them when they are in danger (LT 240).

In contrast to ILY and LT, in which the role of the typical best friend is clear, it is not so easy to tell who Mia's real best friend is, but I decided on Lilly because she is stated to be Mia's best friend for the majority of the novel. "Lilly is my best friend and I tell her everything" (PD 97). Lilly defends Mia when she is bullied (PD 18) and knows her better than anyone else. "Lilly could tell right away something was up" (PD 48). Even though Lilly is cheeky and often tells Mia what to do, Mia feels comfortable with her and says that "talking to Lilly makes [her] feel better" (PD 69). Then Mia and Lilly have a fight because of Mia's hair

and they do not talk to each other for several weeks. Mia gets to know Tina who is “a much more supportive friend than Lilly” (PD 190), but Mia still misses talking to Lilly (PD 185) and explains: “Tina is a fun friend, and everything, but I’ve known Lilly since kindergarten. It’s kind of hard to forget that” (PD 195). Despite their fight, when Mia’s crush Josh takes advantage of her, Lilly is by her side right away and defends her second to none. “Lilly said, in her meanest voice, ‘She’s a vegetarian, you sociopath.’” (PD 216). In the end, Mia and Lilly reconcile because Lilly apologizes for her behaviour and admits that she has done something wrong (PD 218-219).

As already mentioned before, the second friend of the protagonists is usually very different from the typical friend and does not seem to belong to the group at first. The author might use this technique of “creating similarities and contrasts” (Pinsent 16) between the characters to show different perspectives and personalities. Next to Bex, Cammie is also friends with Liz who is definitely the smartest one of the three girls and “had the highest score on the third-grade achievement tests ever” (ILY 5). In SSTs, the protagonists are often “bright but not superlative academically, and their stories, while including classroom experiences, do not center around their winning academic honors; concern about being the best scholar is left to others” (Steege 148). This position is occupied by Liz who is the kind of girl that writes an “extra-credit essay” over the summer (ILY 19), asks the teacher if there is any homework and takes notes in every possible situation (ILY 94). She seems to be obsessed with gaining knowledge and wants to do everything perfectly, for example, she “is a perfectly good swimmer and yet knows six different types of flotation devices” or she “once went to bed without flossing and couldn’t sleep the entire night” (ILY 121). Even though she is different from Cammie and Bex, hardly any problems or conflicts arise because the girls seem to know their strengths and weaknesses. “If I’m ever on a mission, I want Bex beside me and Liz far, far away with about a dozen computers and a chessboard” (ILY 5).

Percy gets to know Annabeth, another half-blood and the daughter of Athena, when he arrives at camp and she shows him around because “she’s been here longer than just about anybody” (LT 62). They seem to become friends but then

Percy is claimed as Poseidon's son and Annabeth is sure that they cannot live in harmony due to their parents. "Look ... we're just not supposed to get along, okay? Our parents are rivals" (LT 157). Since Annabeth joins Percy and Grover for their quest to the Underworld, a lot of arguing between Percy and Annabeth is going on (LT 185), with Grover making an effort to smooth down differences. "She's had a tough life, but she's a good person" (LT 191). However, as the quest continues, they are trying to work together (LT 202) and become friends after several dangerous incidents.

'So if the gods fight,' I said, 'will things line up the way they did with the Trojan War? Will it be Athena versus Poseidon?'

She put her head against the backpack Ares had given us, and closed her eyes. 'I don't know what my mum will do. I just know I'll fight next to you.'

'Why?'

'Because you're my friend, Seaweed Brain. Any more stupid questions?' (LT 251)

The fact that Percy and Annabeth are befriending after so many life-threatening adventures goes hand in hand with Löfgren's argument, who points out that "[s]hared danger, often combined with life-saving is a frequent and intrinsic motif in the school story, and the safest way to reconciliation and renewal of friendship" (qtd. in Gosling, sig11). In the end, Annabeth even gives Percy her necklace to bring good luck when he has to fight Ares. "'Reconciliation,' she said. 'Athena and Poseidon together'" (LT 326). They are still making fun of each other, but Percy has found a true friend in Annabeth who stays by his side until the end of the quest.

Mia's other friend Tina is not part of the protagonist's peer group at the beginning of the story because she is an outsider and ridiculed by the other students.

The only person at Albert Einstein High School who gets dropped off by a chauffeur is this totally rich Saudi Arabian girl named Tina Hakim Baba whose dad owns some big oil company, and everybody makes fun of her because her parents are all worried she'll get kidnapped between 75th and Madison, where our school is, and 75th and Fifth, where she lives. She even has a bodyguard who follows her around from class to class and talks on a walkie-talkie to the chauffeur. This seems a little extreme, if you ask me. (PD 46)

Tina strikes as a character because Mia does not really like her because of the special treatment she receives, but when Mia finds out that she is a princess, she reconsiders her attitude towards Tina and is ashamed that she judged her. "I used to think she was such a freak, because she rode to school in a limo and had a bodyguard. I don't think she's much of a freak now" (PD 127). When Mia has an argument with Lilly, she sits with Tina at lunch and finds out that she is actually a very friendly person. "And I kind of like her too. She's *nice* to me. It's nice to have somebody be nice to you" (PD 138). Due to their status, Mia and Tina are in a similar situation which is why they "stick together" (PD 157). They seem to enjoy their time together and Tina becomes a good friend as she is someone Mia can share her joy with (PD 190). Tina is also around when Mia needs her and worries about her when she is in trouble. "Tina wants to know if I'm alright" (PD 218). It is interesting to observe the relationship between these girls, because they come to like each other when Mia's princess status is revealed and she starts to make similar experiences to Tina. The readers will learn that it is not right to judge people without knowing them, because they might see the situation differently once they are in somebody else's shoes.

Most of the time, the protagonists have at least one friend by their side who supports them and joins them in their adventures. However, in each book, there is also a scene in which the protagonists are on their own and have to leave their friends behind. "I wished they could go with me, but that's something every spy learns early in the game – it doesn't matter how skilled your team is, there will come a time when you have to go on alone" (ILY 144). Cammie has to meet her crush Josh all by herself and also Percy wants to return the lightning bolt without his friends. "They protested, and it was hard to let them go after all we'd been through, but I knew I had to do this last part of the quest by myself" (LT 336). Mia is alone when she is on a date with Josh and she manages to stand up for herself without her friends when she finds out that he is only using her (PD 215). So all of the three protagonists prove to be strong characters who can also cope without their friends, which is an important trait and gives the readers even more reason to see them as role models.

3.3.3. Enemies

Both the classic and the modern SSTs feature the relationships of students which is one of the most relevant themes and also a topic which awakens the readers' interest. The thesis has already described the value of the students' friendships, but the story needs an exciting plotline and therefore the relationships cannot only be peaceful. According to Watson "[a] public school novel without beating scenes is hardly conceivable" (xv) which has not changed in the SST of today and "[t]he petty or profound cruelties children inflict – either unintentionally or willingly – on other children at school is [still] a consistent theme" (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1814) in the stories. However, the way in which the bullies and enemies are portrayed has altered and they are not demonstrated as exclusively evil. "Contemporary stories tend to explore the psychological dimension of the bully or to focus on the peer pressure that pushes children to hurt each other, rather than simply punishing the antisocial character" (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1814). The authors make the readers aware of the fact that the enemies of the stories also have a story to be told and that they do not act foolishly without cause. It is made clear that the bullies' behaviour is wrong, but there is always a reason why they behave like that.

All three modern SSTs approach the protagonist's relationship with bullies, but the analysis only covers the enemies of the student body, whereas the bad people or monsters, which the characters face in the outside world, are omitted. LT validates Zipes' argument that "[p]eer relationships are often nourishing, yet increasingly in contemporary fiction friendships have the potential to be devastating" (*School Stories*, Norton 1814), because Percy's biggest enemy, Luke, pretends to be his friend for the most part of the story. Luke is described as a good-looking boy who welcomes Percy at camp in a friendly way. "The guy was about nineteen, and he looked pretty cool. He was tall and muscular, with short-cropped sandy hair and a friendly smile" (LT 84). Percy seems to like him at first sight and Luke is eager to help and encourage Percy after his first days. "He seems to understand how lost I felt, and I was grateful for that" (LT 101). Percy thinks that he has found a true friend in Luke but when he is back at camp after his quest, Luke tries to kill him and Percy finds out that Luke has collaborated with Ares and worked against him all along (LT 365). Even though

Luke is illustrated as the villain of the story, the author tries “to examine why [he] act[ed] in certain ways”. Luke explains: “‘I’ve lived at Half-Blood Hill year-round since I was fourteen.’ he told me. [...] ‘I trained, and trained, and trained. I never got to be a normal teenager, out there in the real world. Then they threw me one quest, and when I came back, it was like, ‘Okay, ride’s over. Have a nice life’” (LT 364). He also tries to win Percy over to his side and wants to convince him that he did not do anything wrong. “Didn’t you realize how useless it all is? All the heroics – being pawns the gods” (LT 365). The reader understands why Luke feels mistreated and used, because Percy himself had similar thoughts when he was on his quest (LT 185-186). Luke flees but Percy can be rescued and explains the story to the others who agree that Luke “was never the same after his quest” (LT 371). It is obvious that Luke is not a purely evil character but a boy who feels ignored by his dad and wants to show what he is capable of.

Next to Luke who is a deceitful friend, Riordan pictures Clarisse, the daughter of Ares, as a cruel bully, whose behaviour is not reasoned in the story. Stereotypically for a bully, she is bad-looking and always accompanied by her siblings. “The big girl from the ugly red cabin was sauntering towards us. She had three other girls behind her, all big and ugly and mean looking like her, all wearing camo jackets” (LT 89). Several fights between Percy and Clarisse are described in detail and Percy is always the winner, while Clarisse looks ridiculous when she loses.

I turned just as water blasted out of the toilet again, hitting Clarisse straight in the face so hard it pushed her down onto the butt. The water stayed on her like the spray from a fire hose, pushing her backward into a shower stall. She struggled, gasping, and her friends started coming towards her. But then the other toilets exploded, too, and six more streams of toilet water blasted them back. (LT 91)

The author is using the popular formula of “cheering on the hero and booing the obvious villains”, which was often used in the past but is old-fashioned today as it illustrates the characters as stereotypically good or bad and does not give reason for their behaviour (Tucker 222). Similarly, Cabot also pictures Lana only negatively as a popular girl who is “obviously in love with herself” (PD 77) and makes fun of Mia. “Lana hissed in this really mean voice: ‘FREAK’” (PD 5). In contrast to Percy, Mia does not fight back because she seems to be afraid of

Lana's reaction. A reason for the bully's behaviour is not given, nevertheless, Mia feels sorry for her when Josh ends their relationship. "Lana was completely humiliated [...]. I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy" (PD 186). The technique of "empathy for the harassing student" (Zipes, *School Stories*, Norton 1815) is probably used to show the reader that Lana is penalized for her bad behaviour in the end and hopefully learns from her mistakes.

In ILY, a real enemy or bully is not depicted, but a character who is very close to it at the beginning of the story, is Macey McHenry, the new girl. She is rude to the other girls and it does not appear as if she would like to make friends. "'Don't touch me, b---.' (Yeah, that's right, she called Bex the B word)" (ILY 36). She is even called "the enemy" (ILY 132) by Cammie and her friends, but this might only be the case because Macey has invaded the world of the girls and they do not know her yet. Like in many other SSTs, the character has to "prove herself", because "nobody will be accepted who has not shown how she can contribute to the community" (Löfgren qtd. in Gosling sig17). So when the girls find out that Macey has information they need, they try to cooperate, even though they still do not trust her. "So that's what I had with Macey – an alliance. We weren't friends; we weren't enemies" (ILY 136). As the story continues, Macey proves that she belongs to the community and the other girls seem to accept and like her more and more. She is still not as a good friend to Cammie as Bex and Liz, but she seems to be close to becoming part of their group and definitely earns Cammie's trust. "I thought back on it, and for the first time, I heard the we. There were things I couldn't tell my mother, things I couldn't tell my boyfriend, and things I couldn't tell my friends. But sitting there with Macey McHenry, I realized for the first time that someone knew all my secrets – that I wasn't entirely alone" (ILY 223). It can be assumed that the next volumes of the series will illustrate Macey as a consistent part of the community and a friend of Cammie, Bex and Liz.

3.3.4. Parents

It was already mentioned that one of the classic SST's characteristics and source of fascination was the fact that "[p]arents [were] largely absent from the story; and family relationships [were] seldom important within it" (Gosling sig26).

Even though two of the primary texts have a boarding school as its setting, this is an element which has definitely changed in the modern SSTs because at least one parent of the protagonist is present and also the family relationships are relevant and have an influence on the characters. So the school is no longer “the only and therefore overwhelmingly powerful influence in the [students]’ moral education at school” (Petzold 19). Despite the parents’ presence in the stories, the students enjoy a lot of freedom when going to school and being one of many students.

In the three modern SSTs, each protagonist has a parent who is around and another one who is absent from the story or not around as much. Interestingly, for all three protagonists, it is the mother who is dominant in the story and the father who is absent. Unlike the classic SSTs, in which the parents are only absent because of the setting of a boarding school, the modern SST gives other reasons why one of the parents is not present. For instance, the absence of Cammie’s dad is not voluntarily but due to death as he went on a mission and never came home (ILY 20). Cammie still has to cope with the feeling of loss and is often sad when someone speaks of her dad. “My skin burned red. Tears filled my eyes” (ILY 20).

In contrast, Mia’s dad is still alive but she does not see him very often because her parents are not married and he lives in another country. “My mum and dad have never lived together. Unlike a lot of kids I know, who sit around wishing their parents would get back together after they get divorced, I’m perfectly happy with this arrangement. My parents broke up before I was even born” (PD 26). Mia usually visits her dad in the summer holidays, but he also plays an important role in the story. Even though he is present in the story, it is quite obvious that he does not know Mia very well and still sees her as a little girl. “‘Dad!’ I was horrified. ‘I’m NOT going to *Beauty and the Beast* with you tonight.’ Now he sounded sad. ‘But you used to love *Beauty and the Beast*...’” (PD 202). Mia seems to be aware of her father’s ignorance but appreciates his interest in her. “I love my dad, but he has no clue” (PD 35). The fact that Mia’s parents are not married makes the book even more modern and shows its adaption to the

circumstances of this century because there is no need to be married anymore and many children are raised by single parents today.

Percy has also been raised by a single mom and the relationship with his dad is definitely the most complicated one of the parent-child relationships, because his dad is Poseidon, God of the Sea, which is the reason for his absence. However, at the beginning of the story, Percy does not know that his dad is a god and thinks that he is lost at sea. "See, they weren't married. She told me he was rich and important, and their relationship was a secret. Then one day, he set sail across the Atlantic on some important journey, and he never came back" (LT 30). When Percy attends camp half-blood, he notices that many campers are longing for their parents but that the gods are usually unconcerned about their children's existence.

Annabeth ran her palm along the rail. 'The gods are busy. They have a lot of kids and they don't always ... Well, sometimes they don't care about us, Percy. They ignore us.'

I thought about some of the kids I'd seen in the Hermes cabin, teenagers who looked sullen and depressed, as if they were waiting for a call that would never come. I'd known kids like that at Yancy Academy, shuffled off to boarding school by rich parents who didn't have time to deal with them. But gods should behave better. (LT 96)

When Poseidon claims Percy as his son, Percy does not only resent his father for not caring about him and his mother (LT 159), but is also angry because he feels used. "I didn't know whether to feel resentful or grateful or happy or angry. Poseidon had ignored me for twelve years. Now suddenly he needed me" (LT 145). In the end, Percy meets Poseidon when he returns the lightning bolt to Zeus and both of them seem to be unsure about what to think of the other person.

I wasn't sure what I saw in his face. There was no clear sign of love or approval. Nothing to encourage me. [...] I got the feeling Poseidon really didn't know what to think of me. He didn't know whether he was happy to have me as a son or not. I was glad that Poseidon was so distant. If he'd tried to apologize, or told me he loved me, or even smiled, it would've felt fake. Like a human dad, making some lame excuse for not being around. I could live with that. After all, I wasn't sure about him yet, either. (LT 341)

Even though Poseidon hurts Percy by saying that he regrets his birth and apologizing for bringing the fate of a hero on him (LT 346), he seems to be

satisfied with their relationship so far. The author's decision to depict the gods as bad parents is an interesting one, as most readers possibly envy the demigods for having a god as parent, but then notice that this is not so beneficial because they do not care for their children at all. The mighty and powerful gods appear less special and the ordinary, mostly caring parents of the readers do not seem to be so bad after all. Even though some readers might admire Percy and his friends for their powers, they also see that the demigods do not have perfect living conditions and are satisfied with their own parents and lives.

Next to a father who is predominantly absent in the protagonists' lives, all of them have a kind and caring mother as their attachment figure for whom they have a lot of admiration and affection left. For example, Cammie often admires her mother's skills of being a good headmistress for the Gallagher Academy and a good mother for her daughter. "She smoothed my hair, and I wondered for the millionth time if she had one set of hands for work and another for moments like this" (ILY 46). Cammie is glad to have her mother around at school and loves her very much. "*And just when I thought I couldn't love her more*" (ILY 280). Moreover, she often talks about her mother's physical appearance and thinks her to be beautiful (ILY 189).

The issue of physical appearance is also addressed by Mia when she says "I can only wish that someday I'll be as pretty as my mom" (PD 67). Although Mia's mom, Helen, is a good mother to Mia, she is also an artist and sometimes appears to be confused and irresponsible because it is Mia who does the household all the time. This is also why it is not so easy for Mia to take her mother seriously when she tells her what to do.

I just about lost it right there. Responsibilities? *Responsibilities?* She's telling *me* about responsibilities? When is the last time it ever occurred to *her* to drop the laundry off, let alone pick it up again? When is the last time *she* remembered to buy Q-Tips or toilet paper or milk? [...]

She thinks she needs to tell *me* about my responsibilities?
HA!!!!!! (PD 53)

Mia loves her mom but sometimes wishes that she would not concentrate so much on being an artist but on being a good mother for Mia (PD 56). Nevertheless, Mia knows that Helen really cares about her and would never be

a reckless mother. “Even though she can be very irresponsible at times, it’s only with things like bills and the groceries. She’s never irresponsible about *me*” (PD 37). She admires her mother for being such a good artist and values that she “always has time for [her]” (PD 98). When Helen starts to date Mia’s Algebra teacher Mr. Gianini, Mia does not feel very comfortable about this but does not say anything because she wants her to be happy and thinks that she deserves it (PD 6). Of all the protagonists, Mia is definitely the one who has most parental supervision because despite her parents’ break-up, both of them are around and concerned about Mia’s well-being. “What I didn’t count on was getting it from BOTH my parents at the same time” (PD 40). Another reason why Mia’s parents are present is that she attends a day school and is home more often than the other protagonists.

Percy always speaks highly of his mother and does not criticize her even once. “A word about my mother, before you meet her. Her name is Sally Jackson and she’s the best person in the world” (LT 29). Percy seems to be the most important person for her because she even married the mean and unattractive Gabe so that his smell would protect her son. “Gabe was covering your scent for years. [...] Your mom stayed with him to protect you. She was a smart lady. She must’ve loved you a lot to put up with that guy” (LT 159). Percy did not know that for a long time and has always wondered why his mother stayed with Gabe because in his opinion, a nice woman like his mom would have deserved much more (LT 33). When Percy, Sally and Grover are attacked by the Minotaur and Sally disappears, Percy thinks his mother to be dead. Believing to be an orphan, he feels alone and is devastated. “My mother was gone. The whole world should be black and cold. Nothing should look beautiful” (LT 59). However, then Percy finds out that his mother is not dead, but has just disappeared into the Underworld and Percy feels determined to save her. “All I cared about was my mom. Hades had taken her unfairly, and Hades was going to give her back” (LT 159).

Even though the protagonists enjoy a lot of freedom when going to school, all of them want their parents, especially the parent who is not around as much, to be proud of them. Cammie, for instance, mentions that she has to come up to

certain expectations. “I guess there’s some pressure to follow in my dad’s footsteps” (ILY 161). She also wants the respect and admiration of her mother and is afraid that she might be ashamed of her. “I didn’t want you to be ashamed of me” (ILY 277). So when Josh compares Cammie with her mother, she sees it as an “amazing compliment” (ILY 155). Also Mia wants to be an obedient daughter and listens to her parents’ advice most of the time. “The whole way home from Lilly’s I worried about what my mom and dad were going to say when I got home. I had never disobeyed them before. I mean, really never” (PD 61). However, Mia is also a princess because she the heir of her father’s throne and even though she does not state it directly, she does not want to disappoint him and hopes that “[she] can get used to anything” (PD 39). Even Percy, who has a very complicated relationship with his father, is eager to “win the admiration of [his] parent [god] on Mt. Olympus” (Akingbala 305). For example, he wants Poseidon to notice his accomplishments which is also why he sends Medusa’s head to the gods, as Annabeth observes: “You wanted him to notice what you’d done” (LT 192). Furthermore, he is relieved when he comes back from the quest and his father is pleased (LT 355). Percy also wants his mother to be proud of him and does not leave boarding school when he is homesick. “I was probably going to be kicked out again. I wouldn’t be able to stand the sad look she’d give me” (LT 9). One can see that all three protagonists feel like they have to live up to the expectations of their parents and value their respect and pride.

The authors of the modern SSTs have not only increased the presence of parents in the books, but have also given a reason if one of the parents is not around, so that problems concerning family relationships are included in the stories as well. This is an issue which was not addressed to that extent in the classic SSTs because the parents did not have such an important function. By including this theme, the readers experience another element which they understand and know from their own environments.

3.3.5. Headmaster/Headmistress

The parents cannot look after their children when they are attending school, which is why the role of “a wise, all-knowing, but unobtrusive supervisor of the [students’] unconscious process of character formation” (Petzold 20) is important in the stories. In the modern SST, as well as in the classic version of the SST, this position is usually occupied by a headmaster or headmistress, so that the students “recognise that they could be, or are being, watched by school authorities” (Reimer 211).

Both ILY and PD introduce a headmistress who is on top of the hierarchical order at school and definitely represents an “idealized authority figure” (Tucker 223). Rachel Morgan is the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy and an exceptional woman as “she’s famous for defusing a nuclear device in Brussels with only a pair of cuticle scissors and a ponytail holder” (ILY 112) and “jumped off a ninety-story balcony in Hong Kong with a parachute made out of pillowcases” (ILY 117-118). Her past career as a spy does not only make her a role model for her daughter, Cammie, who describes her as “the best spy [she] know[s]” (ILY 46), but also a person the other Gallagher Girls can look up to. Also the headmistress of Albert Einstein High School, Principal Gupta, is a woman who the students respect because she “can be very scary, when she wants to” (PD 133). The headmistress’ position of power becomes obvious when Mia gets detention, which her father does not understand. “He says no one can give his daughter detention for defending the weak. I told him that Principal Gupta can. She can do anything. She’s the principal” (PD 133). As the reader gets to know the headmistress only from the protagonist’s point of view, who is not in close contact with her, the reader does not learn anything about her private life or her past.

Although both headmistresses are authoritarian and strict, “[t]hey are portrayed as moral, fair, kind, and unusual [women] who at times face criticism from within and without but always have the best interests of their school at heart” (Steege 151). This means that they also know when to act in favour of their students and bend the rules. For instance, Rachel Morgan broke several rules by making Bex the “only non-U.S. citizen Gallagher Girl in history” and this “had been [her] first

controversial act as headmistress (but *not* her last)" (ILY 13). The quote shows that Rachel might have been criticized for admitting Bex to the Gallagher Academy, but she did it anyway, considering Bex to be a qualified student for this school. But also Principal Gupta realizes when it is unnecessary to penalize a student any longer. "The only good thing that has come out of this is that Principal Gupta let me off detention for the rest of the week, claiming that having my picture in the Post is punishment enough" (PD 154).

Another feature of the SST in general is that the stories tend to "stress the important ties between the hero and the headmaster" (Steege 150). The headmistresses do not only care for the protagonists but for all students and give them a fair warning if they consider their behaviour inappropriate. Ms Morgan tries to explain to Cammie and her friends why she admits Macey to the Gallagher Academy.

Mom stopped short, and all three of us nearly ran into her. 'I don't run decisions past you, do I, Cammie?' Shame started brewing inside me, but Mom had already shifted her attention towards Bex. 'And I do make controversial decisions from time to time, *don't I, Rebecca?*' At this, we all remembered how Bex came to us, and even she shut up. 'And Liz.' Mom shifted her gaze one last time. 'Do you think we should only admit girls who come from spy families?'

That was it – she had us. (PD 42)

The headmistress wants her students to understand her decision and also to see the wrongness of their own attitude. However, not only Rachel is concerned about her students, but also Principal Gupta takes her time to talk to Mia when she has a fight with Lana. "Principal Gupta, didn't look mad, though. She looked concerned" (PD 133). She asks Mia about her problems and encourages her to have more self-esteem. "I want you to know that you are a very special person. You have many wonderful qualities" (PD 134). Even though Mia respects the headmistress and sees her as an authority figure, she does not regard her as a person she wants to talk to and sometimes even makes fun of her. "Principal Gupta called my dad Your Highness! If it hadn't been all serious and stuff, I would have wet my pants laughing" (PD 154). This might be due to the fact that Mia visits a day school and already has parental supervision, which is why she does not need another supervisor. Nevertheless, both headmistresses of the

modern SSTs “emphasize the necessity of strong, wise adult mentoring to the development of the students” (Steege 151).

The headmaster or camp director of LT, Mr. D, has not been mentioned so far because he is definitely not an authority figure and represents the opposite of the typical headmaster model of the SST. Mr. D is actually short for Dionysus, god of wine, but his appearance is not described as very god-like. “The man facing me was small, but porky. He had a red nose, big watery eyes, and curly hair so black it was almost purple. He looked like those paintings of baby angels – what do you call them, hubbubs? No, cherubs. That’s it. He looked like a cherub who’d turned middle-aged in a trailer park” (LT 62). Furthermore, he “hates his job” (LT 71) and his behaviour illustrates exactly how a headmaster should not behave as he is rude and disrespectful to the students. Mr. D is unfriendly when Percy first meets him: “Oh, I suppose I must say it. Welcome to Camp Half-Blood. There. Now, don’t expect me to be glad to see you” (LT 63) and when he introduces him to the other students, he calls him “Peter Johnson” (LT 105), showing his ignorance and unkindness towards a new student. Moreover, he does not care for the campers at all and does not support their achievements, for example, he does not even congratulate Percy when he returns from his quest. “Yes, yes, so the little brat didn’t get himself killed and now he’ll have an even bigger head. Well, huzzah for that” (LT 355). Consequently, the camp director’s misbehaviour leads to the students’ disregard, which becomes obvious when Percy immediately forms an opinion about Mr. D. “I was liking the camp director less and less” (LT 65).

3.3.6. Teachers

Next to the headmaster or headmistress, several teachers appear in the stories, who deal with the students on a daily basis. Even though these teachers are in regular contact with the students, the relationship between the protagonists and their teachers is mostly not as intense as the relationship to the headmaster or headmistress. This was the case particularly in the classic SST, in which the students “should regard their teachers as their natural enemies” (Petzold 20). The reason for this is probably that the teachers are the ones who are eager to follow the rules and encourage their students to do the same. The teachers still

occupy the same role in the modern SST, but many of them “are so stereotyped as virtually to become comic figures, and on the whole they lack empathy with the pupils” (Pinsent 20). However, one cannot describe the teachers as enemies any longer, as some of them have the students’ best interest at heart and represent important role models in the stories. In general, the teachers in the stories are quite different from each other and some of the most important types will be described in this section.

One of the various teacher models in the modern SST is the funny, odd or clumsy teacher who should make the story more appealing and is probably also used to criticize or ridicule the school system. Watson depicts that the SST, as well as the school experience itself, is “full of endearing freaks” (xv). In ILY, one of these freaks is Mr. Fibs who follows “the tradition of mad scientists” as he has “a tendency to be a little, shall we say, accident prone” (ILY 35). Also Mr. Smith can be described as a rather strange and paranoid teacher because he “always returns from summer vacation with a whole new look [...] disguising what he claimed was the most wanted face on three continents” (ILY 10). The students make fun of him by guessing how his face will change during summer. Moreover, an odd teacher in PD is definitely Mrs. Hill who “doesn’t care what [the pupils] do, as long as [they] don’t make too much noise. She hates it when she has to come out of the teachers’ lounge, which is right across the hall from the G&T room, to yell at [them]” (PD 6). So Mrs. Hill is too lazy to teach the students properly and is one of the negative examples of the teachers in the modern SST.

The modern SST does not only portray negative teacher models, but each of the books also contains a positive model of a teacher, who knows all of the students well and cares for them (Pinsent 14). For instance, Joe Solomon is a new teacher at the Gallagher Academy and described as “a man [...] who would have made James Bond insecure” and “Indiana Jones would have looked like a momma’s boy compared to the man in the leather jacket with two days’ growth of beard” (ILY 12). So from the beginning, Solomon captures the attention of his students because of his looks and is called “gorgeous” (ILY 37), “Mr. Eyecandy” (ILY 39) and “double-O-hottie” (ILY 207). He represents the image of an

attractive man who most of the female readers would like to have as a teacher at their school and therefore he functions to make the story's plot more interesting. However, the students also value Solomon's expertise because his lessons are fascinating and he prepares his students for their future career (ILY 141). His status as a new teacher leads to changes and new conditions in the existing structure of the Gallagher Academy. Not only does Solomon behave differently from the other teachers as he is late (ILY 17) and even cancels a class (ILY 53), but also the students themselves behave differently, skipping breakfast in order to primp themselves (ILY 15).

At the beginning of LT, the centaur Chiron, who is going to become Percy's favourite teacher and mentor, disguises himself as the Latin teacher, Mr. Brunner, to keep an eye on Percy. Already at Yancy Academy, Percy likes Chiron and is interested in his lessons. "[H]e was the only teacher whose class didn't put me to sleep" (LT 2). Due to the fact that Chiron knows that Percy is a demigod, he does not criticize him for his weaknesses but thinks that he is something special and that he can do better at school. "But Mr. Brunner expected me to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact that I have dyslexia and attention deficit disorder and I had never made above a C- in my life. No – he didn't expect me to be *as good*; he expected me to be *better*" (LT 7). Chiron's "faith that [he] could do well" (LT 18) encourages Percy and makes him work harder because he does not want to disappoint him. At camp half-blood, Percy finds out that Mr. Brunner is actually Chiron, "Trainer of Hercules" and "teacher of heroes" (LT 82). As before, the teacher continues to believe in Percy's powers and is eager to prepare him for his future in the knowledge that he will be a great hero (LT 371). Chiron can be seen as the protagonist's mentor, who listens to Percy's worries and supports his decisions. "Percy draws on [...] his centaur teacher, Chiron, as role [model] that he can emulate" (Akingbala 306). In the SST, this role is usually occupied by the headmaster, but as the camp director Mr. D is inappropriate for this position¹⁴, Chiron seems to take the place of him. The students need an authority figure at school and it might also be necessary for the readership to have at least one positive teacher model in the story.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3.3.5.

The Algebra teacher Mr. Gianini is a nice teacher at Albert Einstein and most students seem to like him. Nevertheless, the relationship between him and Mia is quite complicated at the beginning of the story, due to Mia's resentment.

Lilly's like, 'Mr. Gianini's cool.'

[...] He's not so cool if you're flunking Algebra, like me.

He's not so cool if he makes you stay after school EVERY SINGLE SOLIDARY DAY from 2:30 to 3:30 to practise the FOIL method [...]. He's not so cool if he calls your mother in for a parent/teacher conference to talk about how you're flunking Algebra, then ASKS HER OUT (PD 2).

The quote mentions the issues of this student-teacher relationship which is made more complicated by the fact that Mr. Gianini has started dating Mia's mother. The teacher tries to talk to Mia and even asks her if she feels uncomfortable about him dating her mom (PD 10), but Mia acts as if she did not care even though she is afraid that her classmates will find out (PD 1). However, when Mia gets to know Mr. Gianini better, she admits that "he's a really nice guy" (PD 164) and she "can sort of see how [her] mom likes Mr G" (PD 185). Especially in the end of the story, Mia's unease seems to stop when she notices that Mr. Gianini cares about her and does not want her to get hurt. "Mr G asked [Lilly] and Tina to go and check on me (wasn't that sweet of him?)" (PD 221). Above all, Mr. Gianini is a good teacher and sets a good example by also motivating the weak students. "He asks me a really easy question – I swear, he saves all the easy ones for me, like he doesn't want me to feel left out, or something" (PD 5). Even though Mia notices his attempt, it shows his effort to encourage all students to pay attention in his class. Furthermore, when Mia has improved her marks in Algebra, Mr. Gianini proves his didactic qualities by congratulating her, but also reminding her that she should continue to work hard (PD 222).

Another character in PD, I want to mention in this context is Mia's Grandmere. She does not occupy the role of a nice grandmother who admires her granddaughter (PD 92), but teaches Mia how to be a princess and can therefore be seen as a teacher. Grandmere does not seem to be a very likable person at the beginning as she is scary (PD 89) and very conservative, despising women who have children out of wedlock and having "a fit when she sees people of the

opposite sex holding hands” (PD 81). She is also constantly criticizing Mia for her looks and her behaviour:

Why are you wearing tennis shoes with a skirt? Are those tights supposed to be clean? Why can't you stand up straight? What's wrong with your hair? Have you been biting your nails again, Amelia? I thought we agreed you were going to give up that nasty habit. My God, can't you stop growing? Is it your goal to be as tall as your father? (PD 86)

However, Grandmere seems to care about Mia, because she is interested in her problems and offers advice, when she is fighting with Lana (PD 135) or dating Josh (PD 227). Grandmere is definitely not one of “the less formal, more amiable teachers found in today's schools and school stories” (Tucker 225), but represents the type of teacher who is a strict authority figure. She is a strong leader of her country, which is why it is so important to her to prepare Mia for her function as a princess. “I'm not afraid to sacrifice my time – or even myself – for the good of my country” (PD 88).

All of these teacher models mentioned so far, play a more or less important part in the modern SSTs and occur several times in the course of the story. But even more teachers appear in PD and ILY, such as, Dr. Mosckowitz, Professor Buckingham, Madame Dabney, Mr. Stuart, who are only randomly referred to and probably just included to convey the feeling of an actual school experience. Interestingly, in LT, Chiron is the only teacher mentioned by name and the other teachers are said to be satyrs and nymphs (LT 107). The campers also teach each other, for example Annabeth helps Percy with his Ancient Greek (LT 107) and Luke is the instructor in the sword-fighting lessons (LT 109). The reason for the minimal appearance of teachers in this story might be due to the setting, which is not an actual school but a camp. The campers are staying there in the summer holidays and even though they should train and learn to protect themselves, the rules are more liberal than at school.

3.4. *Education system*

The concept of education is quite different in each one of the three modern SSTs, but before going into detail about the lessons, the type of schooling should be explained. In general, PD and LT introduce a school system which was mostly unfamiliar in the classic SST, namely co-educational schooling in

which girls and boys are mixed and attend their classes together. It is mentioned that Albert Einstein High School was “made co-educational circa 1975” (PD 64) and at camp half-blood gender does not seem to be an issue at all because all of the students are neutrally called “campers” (LT 83). The authors of PD and LT have adapted their stories to the circumstances of today’s society and the educational system of most readers. In contrast, the Gallagher Academy is an all-girls school, just like the schools in the classic girls’ SSTs, which the headmistress sees as one of the school’s advantages. “By admitting only young women, our students develop a sense of empowerment, which enables them to be highly successful” (ILY 31). This quote represents a widespread belief of the 19th and 20th century¹⁵, when girls needed their own school because they learned entirely different things than boys, and were thought to need separation from the male dominated world to become competent and successful. Even though this book is old-fashioned in terms of its educational scheme, it illustrates other elements which were not present in the classic SST, for example the exceptional lessons, which will be discussed in this section.

In the classic SST, education was an aspect which was not very important for the action and therefore rarely mentioned for the most part of the stories¹⁶. The students’ schooling is still not relevant for the plot in the modern SST, but it is included in the stories anyway, to offer its readers the familiar framework of school to the unfamiliar worlds of spies, demigods and a princess. Nevertheless, the modern SSTs tend to include lessons which are unfamiliar and extraordinary for the reader, probably because the authors have “assumed that young readers already [have] enough of their own enforced periods of learning to want to go through anything similar in their favourite stories” (Tucker 224). So the authors just adopted the familiar school structure but substituted the regular subjects with more appealing ones. As these lessons are new to the readers and differ from their own school experience, the authors can describe them in more detail and make them to one of the most fascinating fantasies of the SSTs (Tucker 224). This aspect might be one of the reasons why the modern SST is so successful, because the readers can orient themselves in the

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.2.

¹⁶ See Chapter 2.4.3.

familiar framework of school, but also have the possibility to participate in a schooling which is far more interesting than their own.

In ILY, the headmistress explains to the new student: “I think you’ll find there are some things we teach that your other schools haven’t offered” (ILY 49). The special education of the Gallagher Academy includes, for example, the subjects Culture and Assimilation, Covert Operations, Countries of the World and Protection and Enforcement. In the lessons, the students learn things like reading body language, eye-clawing and the science of Garbology. The Gallagher Girls are also taught standard skills like Driver’s Education, calligraphy and languages, but to a more extreme extent than in regular schools so that they can only be mastered by genius spies. At camp half-blood, on the other hand, the teachers regard physical activities as more important than other subjects. Even though the students learn, for instance, Ancient Greek, the focus seems to be more on the outdoor activities like archery, foot racing, wrestling, canoeing and sword-fighting.

The protagonist in PD is the only one who does not have any extraordinary lessons at school because she attends a regular high school, where subjects like Algebra and Health are taught. Mia still enjoys a special education as her grandmother is giving her princess lessons every day after school, teaching her a large vocabulary, all the different forms of government and, most importantly, how to behave in public, including “how to sit, how to dress, how to use a fish fork, how to address senior members of the royal household staff, and how to say thank you so much, and no, I don’t care or that in seven languages, how to make a Sidecar, and some Marxist theory” (PD 166). The fact that Princess Mia goes to an ordinary school anyway, and is not one of the best students, makes it easier for the readers to identify with her. “Except for one lousy F in a class [...], I’m doing pretty well” (PD 62). Many readers might know the feeling of failing a test and understand Mia even though she is a princess.

Although the education varies from one modern SST to the other, all of these special subjects prepare the students for their future lives and professions. However, they are not prepared for an ordinary life, like most students in a good

school, but for the life of a spy, a demigod and a princess, which is why their education differs. At some point, the students will have to leave school and it is the schools' ultimate goal to prepare the students for their special life and for the problems and conflicts awaiting them in their world. For instance, Cammie and the other girls at the Gallagher Academy want to become spies and the subjects they have at school should help them to cope with their future missions, or as Joe Solomon expresses it: "Ladies, I'm going to get you ready for what goes on. [...] Out there" (ILY 19). But he also understands that you cannot teach everything as sometimes the plan does not work out and then spies have to act spontaneously (ILY 64). When Cammie gets to know her boyfriend Josh and has to hide the world where she comes from, she learns soon enough that there are situations "the Gallagher Academy had *totally* not prepared [her] for" (ILY 199). Furthermore, at camp half-blood, the physical activities are so relevant for the education of the campers, because they should be able to protect and defend themselves against monsters, who are often summoned to kill demigods. When Percy is given a quest, Chiron regrets that he did not have more time to prepare him for his task. "I should have trained you better, Percy [...]. If only I had more time" (LT 152). The reason why Mia is getting princess lessons is also because her Grandmere is "trying to prepare [her]" (PD 105) for the future profession of being a princess. So it can be observed that all of the students in the modern SSTs receive a rather good education and are prepared for their future life as a spy, a demigod and princess.

3.5. *The appeal of the modern school story*

The appeal of the SST has already been discussed in the context of the classic SST and many aspects of this appeal have remained the same in the contemporary version of the SST, but certain features have been added to the genre to make the modern SST in particular more fascinating for the readers of the 21st century. The last chapter of the thesis deals with this special appeal and names several aspects which make the SST of today successful and modern.

3.5.1. Values: Good vs Evil

It was stated at the beginning of the thesis that authors have always tried to teach lessons through their stories¹⁷, which is also the case in the three representatives of the modern SST. The authors seem to be eager to demonstrate what is good and bad to the readers, not only by incorporating certain values into the stories, but also by showing the consequences of the protagonists' decisions. These aspects ensure the appeal of the stories because the readers are confronted with a morality that they might know from other books and their daily lives as children and young adults.

Similar to the classic SST, the authors of the modern SSTs make an effort to convey a certain set of values to its readers, considering among others, morality, honour and respect. The protagonists learn different values and rules in the course of the story and the school system would not work properly without this "moral code" (Frith 118). In ILY, for example, "[t]he wrongness of taking advantage of being related to those in position of power" (Pinsent 14) is stressed out right at the beginning, because Cammie does not make use of her personal relationship with her mother, but lets the others know that she is treated like every other student at the Gallagher Academy. Another value conveyed in this SST is honour, which was already "the key word in [classic] girls' school stories. Honor means fair play, defense of the weak, honesty openness" (Mitchell 87). The Gallagher Academy seems to have its own code of honour, which becomes obvious in the headmistress's speech at the beginning of the school year:

'Women of the Gallagher Academy, who comes here?' she asked.
Just then, every girl at every table (even the newbies) stood and said in unison, 'We are the sisters of Gillian.'
'Why do you come?' my mother asked.
'To learn her skills. Honor her sword. And keep her secrets.'
'To what end do you work?'
'To the cause of justice and light.'
'How long will you strive?'
'For all the days of our lives.' (ILY 11)

Moreover, a sense of morality is also present in LT, particularly as the characters hold the gods in high regard. The campers drink "[t]o the gods" (LT

¹⁷ See Chapter 2.1.

103) and even drop a small portion of their meal in the fire because the gods like its smell (LT 104). The names of the gods and monsters must not be said out loud because it seems to be a sign of disrespect for these powerful creatures. “Young man, names are powerful thing. You don’t just go around using them for no reason” (LT 64). These rather old-fashioned values and codes of conduct are probably part of the stories for their familiarity to the readers, because some of them might know the values from other stories or their own upbringing. But then contemporary issues are also included in the SSTs to provide a link to the values of our society today. LT raises awareness through “the range of philosophical issues embedded in the tale” (Schneider 17), for instance, Grover’s search for Pan to protect the environment.

‘No. *This* makes me sad.’ [Grover] pointed at all the garbage on the ground. ‘And the sky. You can’t even see the stars. They’ve polluted the sky. This is a terrible time to be a satyr.’

‘Oh, yeah. I guess you’d be an environmentalist.’

He glared at me. ‘Only a human wouldn’t be. Your species is clogging up the world so fast ... ah, never mind.’ (LT 188-189)

In PD, it is the protagonist herself who has a similar set of values about the environment because she is “an environmentalist, and [doesn’t] believe in using make-up or chemicals that might be harmful to the Earth” (PD 103). She is also a vegetarian and defends the rights of animals by “not eating anything that once walked around” (PD 36) and wearing “Greenpeace and anti-fur badges” (PD 170). Of course, even more values are conveyed in the modern SSTs, but the values mentioned so far are the most dominant ones and most importantly, some of them represent issues which did not exist in the classic SST, but are relevant in today’s society. The moral code and the values of the stories were extended and have also been adapted to the circumstances of this century, so that problems of the outside world are no longer absent from the stories, but included to make the readers aware of society’s problems¹⁸ and to increase the appeal of the stories.

Generally, it can be noticed that the representation of good and evil has changed, because it was always linked to religion in the classic SST and “[t]he promotion of Christianity [was] another element which [was] characteristic of the

¹⁸ See Chapter 2.3.

genre” (Gosling sig17). All authors brought religion into their stories in some way or another, until Blyton was the first one who did not refer to religion in her stories at all. So one can come to the conclusion “that, while religious content is characteristic of the genre, it is not central to readers’ enjoyment of the books” (Gosling sig25), which is probably why it has been excluded from the modern SSTs. However, struggles between good and evil are still present in these books, but have been altered, so that they are more interesting for today’s readership. Instead of religion, the focus is on the protagonists’ decisions and their learning of what is right and wrong, which might help the readers in their own growth of character and add to the genre’s appeal.

For instance, it was already mentioned that Cammie is constantly torn between her relationship with Josh and her life as a spy. Apart from her friends, nobody knows that she is dating Josh, but she also keeps her real identity a secret from him. At some point, she is afraid that her secrets have grown to a considerable extent (ILY 223) and she “can hardly remember [...] [the truth]” (ILY 264). So she has to make a decision and realizes that a relationship which is based on a lie is not what she wants and what is good for her. So she decides in favour of the Gallagher Academy and her future profession. “I told myself that I was doing what I was put on this earth to do” (ILY 265).

Not only Cammie has to make a crucial decision for her life, but also Mia learns the values which are important for her life. At the beginning of the story, Mia’s “life is a convoluted web of lies” (PD 71) because she does not talk about her feelings and does not want anyone to know that she is a princess. Despite her father’s advice, that “you cannot quit being who you are” (PD 165), she is desperate when her princess status is revealed. Mia seems to be dissatisfied with almost everything and her greatest wish is to be more popular, so that she could date Josh who she sees as “the cutest, most sensitive boy in school” (PD 196). However, when Josh is asking her out, she finds out that he does not act sensitively at all (PD 204) and she recognises that she has more fun with her own friends even though they are not popular (PD 208). Then Josh kisses her in front of the reporters and Mia realizes:

He set you up.
He only asked you out so he could get his picture in the paper.
He's the one who notified the press that you'd be here tonight.
He probably only broke up with Lana just so he could tell his friends he's dating a girl worth three hundred million dollars. He never even noticed you until your picture was on the cover of the *Post*. [...] He probably thinks his chances of getting into Harvard or whatever are way enhanced by the fact that he's the Princess of Genovia's boyfriend.
And like a big idiot, I fell for it (PD 214-215).

Mia becomes aware of the fact that being a princess has helped her to a stronger personality, because she is no longer "unassertive, fearful of confrontation, an internalizer" (PD 215). She has the courage to confront Josh and decides that she would rather have no boyfriend than one who is only using her (PD 218). Furthermore, she sees what is important in life and is finally satisfied. "For now, I guess I'll settle for what I've got. Because it's actually a lot, now that I think about it" (PD 230).

Also Percy faces several difficult decisions in the course of the novel and it seems to be hard for him to find a balance between morality and his duties as a hero. For example, the most difficult decision he has to make concerns his mother, because when he is in the Underworld, only three pearls are left to save his friends and himself. Even though he only agreed to go on a quest to save his mother, he leaves her behind, knowing his heroic quest would prevent a war. "I turned and faced my mother. I desperately wanted to sacrifice myself and use the last pearl on her, but I knew what she would say. She would never allow it. I had to get the bolt back to Olympus and tell Zeus the truth" (LT 317). Nevertheless, he is also "developing a sense of morality" (Akingbala 305) when he decides not to use Medusa's head against his stepfather Gabe, because he does not want to lead the tragic life of a hero and realizes that he does not have the right to kill a person (LT 351).

The struggles between good and evil are an important characteristic of fantasy fiction (Zipes, *Fantasy*, Oxford 61) and therefore, most prominent in LT, in which monsters and other evil creatures try to harm Percy and his friends. These fights make the story's plot more exciting and the readers can also learn that evil is sometimes disguised as good and cannot be noticed at first sight. For

example, not only Luke is pretending to be Percy's friend while betraying him¹⁹, but also the god Ares tricks Percy. He acts as if he intended to help him, but actually hides the stolen lightning bolt in his backpack, so that Percy is thought to be the thief (LT 314). This means that the line between good and evil is not always clearly recognizable but blurred, and a person or creature is hardly ever purely evil or good. Even the monsters of the Underworld "[need] a little attention once in a while" (LT 298) and are portrayed as creatures with feelings and needs, of which Percy and Annabeth take advantage. For example, Percy talks to the security guard of the Underworld and shows his understanding for the problems and difficulties of his job, so that the guard leads them down to the Underworld. "'You deserve better.' I agreed. 'A little appreciation. Respect. Good pay'" (LT 287). After that, Annabeth does dog obedience school with the hellhound Cerberus, who longs for the attention and likes being treated like a dog, so that he lets Percy and Grover past him (LT 296). The interesting portrayal of the monsters in this book makes the story funnier and more appealing, but also teaches the readers that evil creatures have a personality and good traits²⁰.

Even though the values and portrayal of good and evil are important aspects for teaching lessons to the readers, it might be beneficial for the stories' appeal to bend the rules from time to time. As the characters of the books are still children, it is only natural that they sometimes make the wrong decisions, but the disregard of rules and values is also linked to the students' rebelliousness. The desire of rule-breaking was an important characteristic in the classic SST, in which "escaping from a dormitory by night" (Watson xiv) was one of the risks the students loved to take. Breaking rules, taking risks and testing boundaries in general are still significant elements in the modern SST, because it is part of a teenager's process of finding the identity. One more reason for the students' rebelliousness is their wish to find a place in the school system by indicating that they are not afraid of testing their personality and determination, which leads them to success. It shows the protagonists' ordinariness and their endeavour to become part of the community (Manners Smith 79). Most children can probably identify with the characters because they understand their wishes

¹⁹ See Chapter 3.3.2.

²⁰ The author has used the same method for the portrayal of the enemies: see Chapter 3.3.3.

and dream of the same adventures. These rule-breaking incidents increase the SST's fascination, as the readers can pursue their desires for rebelliousness by reading the stories.

The principle of rule-breaking can be observed in ILY, when Cammie is tempted to spy on Josh:

I knew instantly what the arguments against it should have been: we were too busy; it was against about a million rules; if we got caught, we could be risking our careers forever. But in the silence of the room, we looked at each other, our mutual agreement settling down upon us in the way of people who have known each other too well and too long.
'Okay,' I said finally. 'We'll do the basics, and no one has to know.'
Bex smiled. 'Agreed.' (ILY 101)

This quote also confirms the argument that "the hero or heroine possesses this rule-breaking spirit, and the best friend is usually the complicit" (Manners Smith 79), because Cammie's best friend Bex is said to be "rules-optional" (ILY 7) and often persuades her friends to take risks.

Next to character identification, another reason for including rule-breaking incidents is for the action of the story, because the readership desires "adventures which end in near-disaster" (Gosling sig9) and without them the plot would probably not be as fascinating as it is. Therefore, the authors portray their characters as rule-breakers to provoke excitement and conflicts which can be solved afterwards. The tension which the reader is longing for is also created through the consequences which the rule-breaking might have and the question if the characters get caught and what their punishment might be. For instance, Mia wants to cheat on her Algebra test and writes a formula on the sole of her shoes, but when she thinks about the consequences, she is "worrying about getting caught" (PD 74). The hero or heroine does not get special treatment and is "punished like an ordinary schoolchild for simple rule-breaking" (Manners Smith 80).

The worst and most thrilling consequence of rule-breaking is also the greatest fear of all students of the SST, namely, "suffering the ultimate consequence of breaking the rules or not living up to school standards by being expelled" (Steege 149). This fear of expulsion is often used as an effective threat by

teachers because “[t]he love of school and the feeling of belonging it gives students runs deep” (Steege 149) and the threat of losing it leaves the students hopeless and desperate. For example, when Bex does not show up after the holidays, the worst reason which comes to the Gallagher Girls’ mind is: “Did she get *kicked* out?” (ILY 6). But also Mia wonders if she is going to be expelled when she has to see the principal (PD 132) and thoughts like “Will I be expelled? I don’t want to be expelled!” (PD 74) are worrying her. So it can be seen that this device is frequently used by the authors to create tension in the plot, because also the readers understand the terrible fate of being expelled as not only the love of school, but also the lessons and “building friendships, proving a good friend, separating from those who hold the wrong values and thus showing one’s true character are [...] central” (Steege 149) and valuable to the students’ lives, helping them to find their identity and making them to who they are.

When analysing the modern SSTs, one can notice that the authors are eager to convey a certain set of values and rules to their readers, but by showing the characters’ rebelliousness, they also indicate that some rules can be broken in the process of finding one’s identity and a place in the community. These aspects have enhanced the genre’s appeal, because the plot is more exciting and the readers can not only find something familiar in the stories, but are also able to identify with the characters.

3.5.2. Beyond realism

When reasoning the SST’s appeal, it was already mentioned that “[t]he school story has always been a dream, a fantasy, has never had more than a tenuous connection with ‘real life’” (Frith 116) due to its distance from the real lives of the readers. Today school life is an experience almost all children are familiar with, therefore new fantasies have been added to the genre, so that also the modern SST gives the readers the opportunity to dream and enter an alternate world²¹. All of the three primary texts contain elements which are fantastic or at least unrealistic and this chapter focuses on these aspects and explains their fascination for the readers.

²¹ See Chapter 2.5.

Riordan's LT is a modern SST which also belongs to the genre of fantasy, and next to the fictional setting of school, which was already said to be an enclosed world with its own rules, a whole new world is created and attached to the world of school. This means that also outside the school setting, the students do not belong to our real world, but to a world connected to fantasy with its own system and regulations. In detail, the author added fictional creatures to his book which "make Greek mythology come alive" (Smith 307). The reader is introduced to this world step by step, because also the protagonist is new to "all the weird, scary things that [...] happened to [him]" (LT 40). For example, he encounters that his best friend is a satyr, he has to fight a Minotaur and finally finds out that the "[g]ods – the forces you call the Greek gods – are very much alive" (LT 67). Moreover, Percy learns that he is the son of one of the most powerful gods and therefore has special powers to control the water. Even though the readers are unfamiliar with this fantastic world, they usually do not question the system because the author explains its existence and makes it seem almost natural. The new world is hidden and people from the real world are left out of it because they are ignorant of the fantasy surrounding them.

Once I spotted a family of centaurs galloping across a wheat field, bows at the ready, as the hunted lunch. The little boy centaur who was the size of a second grader on a pony, caught my eye and waved. I looked around the passenger car, but nobody else had noticed. The adult riders all had their faces buried in laptop computers or magazines. (LT 198)

Furthermore, children "who read school stories are aware from the start that they are *fictions*" (Frith 117) which is why they adapt to this unknown world so easily and are excited about belonging to it while reading a book. The feeling that they are part of something which is hidden from the world they are living in, offers fascination and appeal to the readers.

Another reason why the readers usually do not bring the fantasy world into question is that this world is still quite close to our real world because certain aspects are maintained. For example, the students in LT still go to school, have friends, and make similar experiences to ordinary teenagers. The author has probably decided to leave these aspects in the story to help the readers to identify with the characters, because if all aspects of the fantastic world in LT differed from the real world, the readers would not be able to empathize with

Percy and his friends. The fact that “[t]he author is also expert in thinking up new ways of turning everyday reality on its head” (Tucker 231) gives the readers the opportunity to escape the issues of their world and enter a fantastic world. At the same time, they can look at these issues from a different perspective as the world in the book is still close enough to the real world to make a comparison possible. For example, a magical explanation is given why demigods have disorders like dyslexia and ADHD:

The letters float off the page when you read right? That’s because your mind is hardwired for ancient Greek. And the ADHD – you’re impulsive, can’t sit still in the classroom. That’s your battle-field reflexes. In a real fight, they’d keep you alive. As for the attention problems, that’s because you see too much, Percy, not too little. Your senses are better than a regular mortal’s. (LT 88)

In the course of the story, Percy learns “how to use his ADHD and dyslexia” (Akingbala 306) to his advantage, which might help children readers with the same problems to feel better. They can look at these issues from a distance which probably makes it easier to cope with their disorders too. In contrast to our real world, the issues of this fantastic world are pictured as more fascinating and exciting which motivates the readers to pick up the book and enter this world.

In the fantastic world, created by Riordan, certain aspects and issues arise, which are unfamiliar to the readers, because they are not at all part of our ordinary world. These elements are always linked to fantasy and the characters’ magical powers, which is also the reason why the students have to attend camp half-blood. It is important for demigods to learn to use their powers and to train so that they can defend themselves against monsters. Even though these issues are connected to fantasy, a comparison between the fictional world and the real world is sometimes possible. For instance, the USA and Western civilization altogether are described as “the life force tied to the Olympians” (Smith 307) which means that the gods are the source of the USA’s global power. However, the gods tend to control everything and often act in ways which are unprofitable for humanity. This aspect can be seen as criticism on the superiority of the Western civilization and its power over other nations.

The fictional world of the Gallagher Academy does not differ from our real world and even though the setting is isolated from the outside world, its students are supposed to be regular human beings. Nevertheless, with the school teaching so many different languages and exceptional subjects, the characters are unrealistic in terms of their skills and abilities, which seem to be almost superhuman. Even though the Gallagher Academy is said to be only a “school for *geniuses*” (ILY 1) and not for superheroes, the fact that the students are highly talented spies adds to the modern SST’s appeal and might be fascinating “[f]or anyone who has ever been tempted to spy on his or her crush” (Gaffney 446). The school’s real purpose and the students’ identity is kept a secret but the girls sometimes have problems to behave like regular teenagers as they have been trained to act like spies their whole lives. “I was perfectly trained, but our mission was to act normally, and that’s something I’m totally not qualified to do!” (ILY 31). The book features many issues which are similar to the problems common girls have²², but the most significant conflicts are linked with the Gallagher Girls’ education and their separation from the real world. The students mention that they “don’t know about regular girls” (ILY 142) and despite their special spy training and their high intelligence, they do not know anything about boys either (ILY 129), especially because they are attending an all-girls’ school. So when Cammie meets Josh, a boy from town, “she begins a new mission: learning to be an ordinary girlfriend” (Rev. of ILY 73). She is not only confronted with the anxiety of a first date, but does not really know how to behave around an ordinary boy either.

I searched my mind for something – anything – to say, but kept coming up with things like ‘So, *how ‘bout those new satellite-controlled detonators with the twelve-mile range?*’ Or, ‘*Have you read the new translation of Art of War? Because I prefer it in the original dialect. ...*’ I half wished he’d charge at me again or draw a knife or start speaking in Japanese or something ... but he didn’t, and so I didn’t know what to do. (ILY 156)

The book PD is set in our real world, but there are still elements added to the story which are very imaginative and fairytale-like and cannot be said to be common. In the course of the book, Mia finds out that her father is the Prince of Genovia and she is the princess and heir of his throne, which is information her

²² This aspect will be analysed in the following chapter.

parents have withheld to protect her (PD 29). This way of life does not have anything to do with Mia's school experiences, but with her private life which the New York Post describes as "*Fairy Tale Comes True For One Lucky New York Kid*" (PD 150). Mia remembers that she has always received special treatment when she was visiting her father.

A lot of things are beginning to make sense now. Like how when I fly to France, I just walk onto the plane from the terminal, but when I get there, I'm escorted off the plane before everyone else and get taken away by limo to meet my dad at Miragnac.

I always thought that was because he had Frequent Flyer privileges.

I guess it's because he's a prince.

And then there's that fact that whenever Grandmere takes me shopping in Genovia, she always takes me either before the stores are officially open, or after they are officially closed. (PD 30-31)

However, Mia is not happy about this development because she does not feel like a princess and does not want to be one (PD 35). From now on, she is accompanied by a bodyguard (PD 46) and has to take princess lessons (PD 84), but the fact that she tries to keep her princess status a secret causes even more problems.

One can see that different types of fascinating elements, such as a fantastic world, an unrealistic spy education and a fairytale-like lifestyle, are included in the modern SST. All of these new elements have increased the appeal of these stories and helped the genre to become more popular, because the readers can escape from their own world and read about experiences they are not familiar with.

3.5.3. Reader identification and empathy

This last section concerning the appeal of the modern SST focuses on the author's creation of empathy and identification with the fictional characters, even though the protagonists of the three modern SSTs are a spy, a demigod and a princess. Despite the addition of fantastic and unrealistic elements in the stories, the authors have also made an effort to include elements which enable the reader to identify and feel "empathy – a spontaneous sharing of feelings, including physical sensations in the body, provoked by witnessing or hearing about another's condition" (Keen xx). Both character identification and empathy

are included in the analysis because they seem to be linked and it is not clear which one triggers the other.

Character identification often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from each other in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization. Whether a reader's empathy or her identity with a character comes first is an open question: spontaneous empathy for a fictional character's feelings sometimes opens the way for character identification. (Keen xii)

Of course, the feeling of empathy for certain characters differs from reader to reader and also depends on the genre which an individual reader likes (Keen xiii). However, all authors tend to use special literary devices, such as first person narration, interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states to provoke responses like empathy and identification (Keen x). This chapter deals with the use of these narrative techniques in the three primary texts and also mentions their importance for the appeal of the stories.

One of these devices is the first person narration, which can be easily detected in all three modern SSTs and "more readily evokes feeling responsiveness" (Keen xi) than third person narration. The connection between the protagonist and the readership is closer because the reader experiences the plot and the character's narration first-hand. This link is intensified through the authors' technique of letting the protagonists speak directly to the readers by using the pronoun 'you'. For example, Percy begins to tell his story and expresses a warning to the readers: "Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood. If you're reading this because you think you might be one, my advice is: close this book right now" (LT 1). Also Cammie addresses the readers through phrases like "imagine if you were a fifteen-year-old girl" (ILY 153) and "but you get what I mean" (ILY 128) and Mia even asks the readers questions: "There are four million people in Manhattan, right?" (PD 1). The readership gets the feeling of being close to the protagonist, a confidant or even a friend, which increases empathy and identification.

Another technique, which can be found in the modern SSTs, is the use of humour, sarcasm and exaggeration, especially in the language of the

characters. These elements are probably used for the correct portrayal of the age group in the books, because sometimes teenagers tend, on the one hand, to ridicule situations and, on the other hand, to experience them more dramatically than other age groups. The readers might like the funny characters and feel empathy for them because they are familiar with their manner of speaking. Sarcasm is used in LT, for instance, when Percy is nervous and says “Relax, [...] I’m very relaxed” (LT 156). Nevertheless, the melodramatic expressions are more typical for the female protagonists of the modern SST. Examples of these exaggerations are Cammie’s thoughts when Macey compliments her: “I nearly passed out from the shock of such high praise” (ILY 145) or the situation when Macey helps her with her boy problems: “OH.MY.GOSH. It was as if the gray storm clouds had parted and Macey McHenry was the sun, bringing wisdom and truth into the eternal darkness” (ILY 134), which Cammie even admits to be melodramatic. One can see that especially when talking about boys and love, the girls tend to be overdramatic in expressing their feelings. Cammie calls Josh her “potential soul mate” and “the only man [she] could ever love” (ILY 145), but also Mia exaggerates her emotions when Josh asks her out: “I think I must have died and gone to heaven. Because it had happened. It had finally happened: Josh Richter had finally looked into my soul and saw the real me, the one beneath the flat chest. AND THEN HE’D AKED ME OUT” (PD 188).

Next to the use of special narrative devices, the characters themselves are the most important trigger for empathy and character identification. Every author should focus on creating “an easy hero for readers of all ages to identify with” (Tucker 227), which is why the protagonists in the three modern SSTs are not only a spy, a demigod and a princess, but also teenagers who make similar experiences to the readership. The characters are in the stage of adolescence and the fact they are portrayed as young people, who still have to mature and make mistakes, makes them more similar to the readership. Therefore the readers admire the protagonists not only for their achievements, but also and especially for their shortcomings and flaws, which enable the readership to feel empathy for and identify with them. This portrayal makes it possible that “[f]ictional characters can become mental companions to last a lifetime, and

relationships across generations can be built around affection for a character” (Keen xv).

The elements which make the connection between the characters and the readers more intense are the typical issues of adolescence which are included in the stories. These elements were not present in the classic SST, but they play an important role in the readers’ lives and therefore illustrate the genre closer to life. The modern SST gives the readers the possibility to look at their problems from a safe distance and a different perspective. However, these adolescent problems are not included in LT and similar to the characters of the classic SST, Percy and his friends “appear very young for their age – adolescence does not appear to have happened to them!” (Pinsent 16). This might be the case because the protagonist and his friends are only 12 years old and are not in the stage of adolescence yet. At this age, other issues are more important and included in the story, for example making friends and winning games. Typical problems of young people are probably also omitted out of consideration for the readership because the readers of LT are younger and the story tends to attract boys, who are not interested in themes like falling in love and dating. Even though these issues are not incorporated in LT or the classic SST, the problems of coming of age are typical features of the modern SST. These topics play an important role in our society and are part of the real lives of young people, which the authors are trying to copy in their stories, so that it is easier for the teenage readers to empathize and identify. In the other two modern SSTs, ILY and PD, the protagonists are already 15 and 14 years old and issues of adolescence occur to a great extent. Therefore the following analysis concentrates on these two stories and the problems of the young which are included in the texts.

First of all, the protagonists Mia and Cammie are female, which is why the authors mention many topics which are especially important for girls and therefore, attract the intended audience, consisting of girls in the same age group. Many female readers might understand when Mia says that “[t]here’s a lot of stuff about being a girl [she] never realized” (PD 192) or when Cammie admits that “[a]ll these years [she]’d thought being a spy was challenging. Turns

out, being a girl is the tricky part” (ILY 144). Despite the protagonists’ status as a spy and a princess, Cammie and Mia are girls who have to find their identity as women in today’s society. However, it is not always easy to be a woman because, as Mia’s mother criticizes, we live in a society “that [doesn’t] even accept women as equals to men and refuse[s] to recognize [a woman’s] rights as an individual” (PD 21). Whereas Mia’s mother indicates that a girl has to stand up for her rights, Cammie gives the readers hope by claiming that society’s view can be used to their advantage: “Sometimes the sexism in this country amazes me, but then I remember that society’s tendency to underestimate women is a Gallagher Girl’s greatest weapon” (ILY 163).

Other elements which can be found in the modern SSTs are topics which are relevant for many girls and women in general. The Gallagher Girls often talk about fashion and styling, complaining that they “didn’t have a thing to wear” and shouting requests like “Have you seen my black boots?” and “Does anyone have any hair spray?” (ILY 58) in the hallways. Even though Mia is not a fan of styling, she is unhappy when she is called a “fashion emergency” (PD 102) and gets herself perfectly styled for her date with Josh. “I’m sitting here in my new dress, my new shoes, my new nails, and my new pantyhose, with my newly waxed legs and underarms, my newly touched-up hair, my professionally made-up face” (PD 200). Also beauty is an important topic for the characters and, like ordinary teenage girls, the Gallagher Girls sometimes do each other’s make up (ILY 142). Particularly the protagonists seem to be concerned about their looks, because Cammie mentions that she is not as beautiful as her friends (ILY 98) and Mia is constantly complaining about her height and her breasts (PD 1).

One of the biggest issues in the modern SST, which is not related to girls alone but rather to the age group of the protagonists, is the theme of love and dating. Interestingly, this topic also occurs in LT, in which Annabeth seems to have a crush on Luke because she is constantly embarrassed and blushes when he is around (LT 85). Moreover, Annabeth seems to be more mature than the male protagonists which becomes apparent when Annabeth is worried about going to the ‘Thrill Ride of Love’, whereas Percy is too innocent to have any romantic thoughts.

‘Me, go with you to the ... the ‘Thrill Ride of Love’? How embarrassing is that? What if somebody saw me?’

‘Who’s going to see you?’ But my face was burning now, too. Leave it to a girl to make everything complicated. ‘Fine,’ I told her. ‘I’ll do it myself.’ But when I started down the side of the pool, she followed me, muttering about how boys always messed things up. (LT 234)

So it is obvious that the characters are still quite young and the issue of love is possibly indicated by the author to entertain the readers, but the story’s focus is kept on the adventures.

In the classic girls’ SST “[r]elationships with boys [were] [...] absent” (Gosling sig26) and also in LT, the theme of love is only a minor one. By contrast, in Carter’s and Cabot’s modern SSTs, falling in love for the first time is the most central theme and without it, few topics would be left to discuss. For example, the action in ILY is initiated when Cammie meets Josh in town and, with the help of her friends, she starts dating him secretly. She experiences special moments like her first kiss or going to a dance, but she especially enjoys the way Josh makes her feel: “I’d never felt less invisible in my life. I forgot about Bex and Macey and their great bodies. Liz and her gorgeous blond hair. Even my mother faded from my mind as I saw myself through Josh’s eyes. For the first time in a long time I didn’t want to disappear” (ILY 176). With Josh, Cammie feels unique, but she can also experience what it is like to be an ordinary 15 year-old girl who is in love with a boy. Also Mia claims that she is “completely and totally in love with [Josh]” (PD 60), a boy from her school, but is afraid that “[n]o boy will ever ask [her] out” (PD 141). The readers can probably feel empathy for the two protagonists because they understand their feelings or wish to make the same experiences.

However, the topic of love is also complicated and leads to several conflicts in the course of the stories. For example, sometimes a girl has to accept that she fell in love with the wrong person, and in the end of PD, Mia realizes that Josh is not the right boy for her and she wonders why she even wanted him to like her. “The guy really *was* a sociopath. How could I ever have thought he’d seen into my soul? How???” (PD 216). Furthermore, in connection with the theme of love, the feeling of jealousy tends to arise, too. Cammie, for instance, is jealous of the girl Dee Dee, who is a good friend of Josh and seems to have feelings for him

too. “[O]h yeah, guess who ended up being pressed up against Josh? DEE DEE! (Soooo not an accident!)” (ILY 179). Carter also deals with the issue of choosing between one’s boyfriend and friends, when Liz is criticizing Cammie: “Well, I never thought you were someone who’d choose a boy over her friends” (ILY 239). The readers might understand that this is a difficult time for Cammie, because her priorities have changed and she wants to spend time with her new boyfriend, which means that she does not have as much time for her friends as she had before. Moreover, another problem, which appears in the context of school, is having a crush on a teacher. The Gallagher Academy’s “sexy CoveOps teacher” (ILY 39) is the only attractive man at the school and is therefore confronted with “a lot of eye-lined and lip-glossed girls” (ILY 15) in his lessons. However, none of the girls is really in love with the teacher, but their admiration is probably comparable to having a crush on a celebrity.

Next to the issues connected to love, which are not only important for the protagonists but also for the readership, the stories feature other troubles of adolescence, such as the problems which some teenagers have with their parents. For instance, Mia feels wronged and does not understand why her parents think that she is “too young to date, and that [she] SHOULDN’T date” (PD 197). As parents were not present in the classic SST, these issues are completely new to the genre and possibly included to ease character identification because most readers have to deal with these problems. But also more serious troubles of the young, like smoking (ILY 32), losing your virginity (PD 58-59), going out without the parents’ permission and drinking far too much alcohol (PD 128) are addressed in the modern SST.

The modern version of the genre also incorporates elements of popular culture which play a central role in the lives of teenagers. For example, the characters speak of the “Home Alone II movie” (PD 27), an episode of “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” (ILY 178) and making a “Gilmore Girls marathon” (ILY 165). Mia even mentions that she “secretly [...] [wants] to be Britney Spears” (PD 167) and also Cammie feels like one of “Charlie’s Angels” (ILY 146) when wearing her black boots. These popular topics are also part of the experiences of the readers and included in the modern SST so that the readers can find themes they can relate

to. The feeling of empathy is increased and it is easy to identify with characters who talk about the same topics like people in the readers' environment.

This chapter has focused on the different literary devices to create empathy and character identification, but the reason for the importance of these empathic feelings has not been given yet. Especially children and young adult readers seem to desire identification with the characters of the books:

[M]iddlebrow readers tend to value novels offering opportunities for strong character identification. They report feeling both empathy with and sympathy for fictional characters. They believe that novel reading opens their minds to experiences, dilemmas, time periods, places, and situations that would otherwise be closed to them. [...] They unself-consciously judge success of novels based on how well they could identify with characters' feelings. [...] Empathy shapes their recommendations and judgements about fiction. (Keen ix)

This means that character identification increases a book's "success in the marketplace" (Keen vii) because it is read by more people (Keen x). Another reason is mentioned by Keen who states that empathy can have so much effect on the readers to influence their opinions and their lives (xiii). Some people even believe that "empathic emotion motivates altruistic action, resulting in less aggression, less fickle helping, less blaming of victims for their misfortunes, increased cooperation in conflict situations, and improved actions on behalf of needy individuals and members of stigmatized groups" (Keen vii). In short, the feeling of empathy and character identification "produces good citizens for the world" (Keen xv). So especially at a time, in which children and young adults often consider other activities more interesting than reading, it is valuable to believe that there are still some books which capture the children's attention and teach them important lessons for their lives.

4. Conclusion

This diploma thesis has dealt with the old and popular genre of the SST and three representatives of the modern SST have been analyzed. The introduction proposed that the thesis should answer the two main questions how the classic model of the SST was refashioned so that the modern SST has emerged and how the contemporary authors have succeeded in making the genre modern and popular in the 21st century.

In order to provide a scientific foundation for the analysis of the modern SST, I offered some theoretical insights in the first part of my thesis. This part did not only concentrate on the history and development of the classic SST, but also described some general characteristics and the appeal of the genre. The second part of the thesis covered the analysis of the three modern SSTs, *I'd tell you I love you, but then I'd have to kill you* by Ally Carter, *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan and *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot. By examining the setting, the characters, the education system and the appeal of these stories, the analytical part specifically tried to answer the research questions.

Concerning the question about the refashioning of the genre, the thesis has illustrated several elements which were not present in the classic SST, but have been added to the modern version of the SST. The times have changed since the popularity of the classic SST and some of its elements are no longer interesting for the contemporary readership. For example, the experience of going to school alone does not offer enough fascination for most of today's readers who are very familiar with the school life themselves. To refashion the genre and make it appealing again, the authors have added elements which are unknown for all readers. These elements are not only of fantastic nature, but sometimes just very unrealistic, imaginative or even fairytale-like. For example, the primary texts feature demigods with special powers in a summer camp, highly intelligent female spies at a boarding school and a newfound princess at a New York high school. Through the addition of these new and unfamiliar elements, the modern SST has emerged and represents the contemporary model of the genre.

The second question, which this thesis should answer, was how the authors have made the genre popular again or which factors determine the success of the modern SST in this century. The fact that it is successful can easily be observed in society when considering the number of sales and the huge amounts of money, which are earned by SST series like *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *The Princess Dairies* and *Harry Potter*. The success is also obvious when regarding the genre's adaption in other media, for example several high school TV-series and film adaptations of SSTs. The newly added elements are important characteristics of the modern SST, but it is especially the mix of old and new, traditional and modern, realistic and unrealistic elements which is most relevant for the genre's success. By maintaining some of the traditional elements of the classic SSTs, such as the setting and certain types of characters, the readers can read about something they already know. It was stated before that the new and unrealistic elements have been added to the genre to refashion it, so that the readers are confronted with unfamiliar features, which awaken their fascination and give them the possibility to escape from their own world. However, as the analysis has shown, the authors have also included certain literary devices such as first person narration and issues of adolescence to trigger empathy and character identification. These elements do not only enable the readers to identify with the characters, but also to look at their own problems from a different perspective, which increases the SST's appeal and its success, as a result. Consequently, the authors of the genre should provide the appropriate mix of familiarity, escapism and identification, because it is the combination of these different elements which make the modern SST so successful today.

As the modern SST seems to have a special appeal for children and young adults, further examination of its use in the EFL classroom might be fascinating for many teachers. The genre's popularity might be beneficial for young people and their reading habits, because then and now, "[s]chool stories, with a few exceptions, provide a positive picture of one of the almost universal experiences of childhood and, perhaps most important of all, show a respect for intellectual and personal achievement, preparing readers to play a responsible role in society" (Ray 358). Even though the protagonists of the modern SSTs are not

ordinary teenagers, but special in their identity and education, they share the school experience and adolescent problems with the readership. These aspects give the readers the opportunity to see the world through someone else's eyes and to look at their own problems from a safe distance. They might even learn from the protagonists' mistakes and gain positive insights for their own growth of character, which can help them to become responsible citizens. In conclusion, the modern SST should be appreciated for its educational value and enduring appeal, which has a positive influence on children and their reading habits in the 21st century.

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6. Zusammenfassung

Die Mehrheit der Kinder und Jugendlichen hat heutzutage die Möglichkeit eine Schule zu besuchen. Eine Verbindung zwischen Schule und Kinderliteratur ist offensichtlich, denn Kinderbücher hatten schon immer den Zweck junge Leute zu belehren. Das Genre der Schulgeschichten hat seine Wurzeln in Großbritannien und ist eine der ersten Formen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Diese Geschichten wurden im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert beliebt und die Konventionen und Merkmale des Genres wurden von bekannten Autoren, wie Thomas Hughes und Enid Blyton, festgelegt, welche die Schulgeschichten ansprechend und faszinierend für viele junge Leser machten. Doch die Beliebtheit dieses Genres schien in den 1970er Jahren immer mehr nachzulassen, und einige Kritiker behaupteten sogar, dass es nicht mehr existierte. Jedoch hat die Wiedererscheinung der gegenwärtigen Schulgeschichten in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten, und vor allem der große Erfolg von J.K. Rowlings Harry Potter Büchern, gezeigt, dass diese Vorhersage falsch war. Schulgeschichten sind noch immer ein beliebtes Genre in der Kinderliteratur, obwohl die klassischen Schulgeschichten umgestaltet und Änderungen vorgenommen wurden, um die Geschichten an die Lebensumstände des 21. Jahrhunderts anzupassen. Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit thematisiert die Umgestaltung des klassischen Modells der Schulgeschichte zur modernen Schulgeschichte und hinterfragt, wie es den Autoren gelungen ist, das Genre wieder modern und beliebt zu machen.

Der theoretische Teil der Arbeit befasst sich mit der klassischen Schulgeschichte und zeigt den Ursprung des Genres. Da diese Geschichten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert entweder für Mädchen oder Jungen geschrieben wurden, wird die Entwicklung dieser zwei Subgenres, der Jungen- und der Mädchen-Schulgeschichte, aufgezeigt. Im Folgenden werden die weitere Entwicklung zur modernen Schulgeschichte und die typischen Elemente der klassischen Schulgeschichte herausgearbeitet. Das letzte Kapitel dieses Teils konzentriert sich auf den Reiz der Schulgeschichte für so viele Leser in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten, sowieso in diesem Jahrhundert.

Im zweiten, analytischen Teil der Diplomarbeit wird die Verbindung zwischen der klassischen und der modernen Version der Schulgeschichte aufgezeigt, indem drei moderne Schulgeschichten analysiert werden. Die Arbeit untersucht die Umgestaltung des Genres und stellt die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede der traditionellen und modernen Schulgeschichte dar. Die Analyse zeigt die Elemente, welche vom alten zum neuen Modell übertragen wurden, aber auch die Elemente, welche neu zum Genre hinzugefügt wurden. Diese neuen Elemente sind nicht nur fantastischer Natur, sondern können auch unrealistisch, imaginär oder märchenhaft sein. Obwohl diese neuen Elemente wichtige Merkmale der modernen Schulgeschichte sind, ist vor allem die Kombination der alten und neuen, traditionellen und modernen, realistischen und unrealistischen Elemente verantwortlich für den Erfolg des Genres. Die Leser finden durch die Erhaltung mancher Elemente der klassischen Schulgeschichten etwas Vertrautes in der modernen Schulgeschichte, während die neuen Elemente dazu dienen, die Leser mit unbekannten Merkmalen zu konfrontieren, so dass ihr Interesse geweckt wird, und sie die Möglichkeit haben ihre eigene Welt für eine Zeit hinter sich zu lassen. Außerdem zeigt die Analyse, dass die Autoren bestimmte literarische Ausdrucksmittel und Aspekte der Jugend in die Geschichten einbezogen haben, um Empathie und Leseridentifikation auszulösen. Diese Elemente ermöglichen den Lesern sich mit den Charakteren zu identifizieren und gleichzeitig ihre eigenen Probleme aus einer anderen Perspektive zu betrachten, was den Anreiz der Schulgeschichten steigert.

Ich komme zu dem Schluss, dass das Genre durch neu hinzugefügte Elemente umgestaltet wurde und die Autoren eine passende Mischung aus Vertrautheit, Wirklichkeitsflucht und Identifikation anbieten sollten, da genau diese Kombination der verschiedenen Elemente die moderne Schulgeschichte so erfolgreich macht.

7. Curriculum vitae

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