Anne-Kathrin Höfel

Current Developments at the Intersection of Fantasy Fiction and British Children's Literature

Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung des Grades eines Dr. phil.

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Abgabe: 22-12-2009

Disputation: 12-10-2010

ဆဲ ၼ

"Isn't it odd how much fatter a book gets when you've read it several times?" Mo had said when, on Meggie's last birthday, they were looking at all her dear old books again. "As if something was left between the pages every time you read it. Feelings, thoughts, sounds, smells ... and then, when you look at the book again many years later, you find yourself there too, a slightly younger self, slightly different, as if the book had preserved you like a pressed flower ... both strange and familiar." (Funke, *Inkspell*, p. 61)

ဆဲ ၼ

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

0.   Foreword

For simplicity I have made the following definition: Whenever in this study *author*, *hero*, *reader* or any comparable term is used, I infer both genders.

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."[1] Simple as they are, these few memorable words introduce us to the most complex of all fantasy worlds created so far. When Tolkien scribbled the opening sentence of *The Hobbit, Or There and Back Again* (1937) onto a blank page found amidst exam papers, little did he know that what he had just penned was to become the symbolic turn of the tide for the success of modern fantasy literature. With *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) Tolkien has rendered himself and his creation, the universe of Middle-earth, immortal. Today, some seventy years later, Middle-earth still enchants millions of readers and now also viewers worldwide. Not only did Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) create a monument to the author and his work, but also to fantasy in general. It pays homage to a genre which, for many decades, had been met with literary critics' scant regard and stigmatised as nursery inventory.[2] Tolkien's literary achievement has earned fantasy confidence, respectability[3] and an ever increasing popularity.

At first glance, it seems that Tolkien created a paradox situation. Although his two major works ring in the modern vogue of fantasy literature and have gained the status of very influential model cases and trendsetters, they are deeply rooted in an ancient and thus conservative tradition. How then did the author manage to revolutionise a genre with a traditional concept? Very conveniently for Tolkien, the literary conventions and contents of fantasy have remained quite stable over the centuries. Above all, natural changes affect the actuality of the form fantasy takes. Varied as they may be, epic poetry, folklore, fairy tale, literary fairy tale or fantasy novel, the red thread running through them is the basic idea of a conflict between good and evil, to be solved by the triumph of man. From time immemorial fantasy has been an omnipresent component of world literature, oral or written. Sharing its

---

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien. *The Hobbit, Or There and Back Again*. London: HarperCollins, 1999 [1937], p. 3.

[2] In 1969, John Rowe Townsend deplores that children's literature has no status and is considered unfit for research. Compare John Rowe Townsend. "The Present State of English Children's Literature". In: Sheila Egoff; G.T. Stubbs; L.F. Ashley (Eds.) *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 417.

[3] Compare: Ann Swinfen. *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945*. London; Boston; Melbourne, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, p.4.

eventful history with all the ups and downs, stages of great achievements, wide circulation and esteem alternate with periods of neglect, disregard or even condemnation. Despite repeated temporary existence in the literary underground, fantasy has always resurfaced. Without its influence, many masterpieces of world literature would be unthinkable or would not have had such an impact.

In a kaleidoscope of diversified forms, the umbrella term *fantasy* encompasses the most varying literary works, ranging from poetry to drama and epic. Thus, *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied*, *Everyman*, Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, selected plays by Shakespeare, stories from 1001 Nights, but also *Gulliver's Travels* or *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are united by their involvement with fantasy. Undoubtedly, the big assets of these works are their adaptability and versatility, which allow varied employment in different epochs und genres.

Several reasons account for fantasy's magical appeal, its power to reach and touch people on a worldwide scale. This success can be attributed to the creation of worlds with sheer unlimited possibilities, permitting almost any theoretical or intellectual experiment. Fantasy provides a perfect forum for discussion, dealing with and analysing universal values, morals, traditions, politics, culture, human psychology, ethics and philosophy. Furthermore, it deals with existential anxieties, problems and otherness arising from social contacts, an enormous spectrum of topics the genre can address, discuss and offer solutions to. Fantasy has always provided humans with the necessary freedom for existential questions. If we combine this room for manoeuvre with our urge to creatively design familiar spaces and the yearning for the discovery of new ones, we find ourselves immersed in its equivocal realm. On entering, one is easily spellbound by one of its main characteristics: Its inherent timelessness.

Tolkien's success is inseparably linked to the period encompassing the Second World War. For millions, the world they had known had been thrown out of joint. In the aftermath of the war, people were in need of a new, adapted and balanced world view and outlook on life. With the prospect of an unknown, insecure future ahead, humans tend to seek comfort in familiar concepts before they are ready to embrace new ideas. Temporal and spatial distance as well as nostalgia can facilitate coming to terms with traumatic experiences in the present.

Tolkien revolutionised the genre by providing the reader with a secondary world which exceeds the aforementioned criteria by far. On the basis of the traditional conflict between good and evil the author erects an entire universe with its own history, mythology, philosophy, politics and languages. By projecting the "real" lethal battle over world dominion into an imaginary fantasy realm with medieval flair and magic, he revives epic fantasy. Long since written off emerges thus a genre from the depths of literary history which gives new

impulses to the field of fantasy in general. Inspired by Tolkien's vision, an ever growing number of dedicated authors, readers and now also viewers and players discover the huge potential of modern fantasy.

Certainly, with Tolkien's life's work, the sights are set high, but are not insurmountable. Despite occasional attempts of some fans and critics at idealising the author and raising him into fantasy Olympus, Tolkien is neither infallible nor his creation flawless. However, his influence on the direction of modern fantasy cannot be denied: At the author's instigation modern fantasy started to flourish. Today, the genre covers such a wide area and comes in so many different flavours that anyone can find something according to their taste.

1.   Introduction: Fantasy for British Children today

Anyone who has read a challenging work of fantasy before and submerged into its world(s) is bound to retain something of its charm, special qualities and the emotions it evoked. Usually, this kind of literature is first encountered in our early childhood, when we come across fairy tales and other stories involving magic. Not without reason are children known for their curiosity and vivid imagination; and with the help of these books they can playfully test game against reality. At first, anything seems possible to the small child because it has not yet learned to distinguish between fiction and the real world. With increasing experience, however, the child begins to differentiate between things possible and impossible until it fully separates the two worlds. Compared to adults, children are generally said to be more spontaneous as far as their willingness to believe is concerned. This is mainly due to young persons' relative impartiality and openness towards new things and the much shorter temporal distance to realms of unlimited possibilities. Small wonder that books with fantastic elements belong to the favourite reading matter of children. As these books, discovered and cherished in our childhood, have made deep impressions on us, as adults we assign them a special status often retained for later life. Who cannot name their favourites as a child, and who does not enjoy returning to them?

The fluctuation of readerly esteem of fantasy is mirrored in children's literature, albeit with smaller amplitude. Here too, fantasy undergoes cyclical stages between minimum and maximum public attention and reception, yet it does not slip into a subliminal status. At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century the genre's sinusoidal oscillations have reached another climax. Not only does the present boom of fantasy encompass already established classics, but above all an unprecedented number of new, high-quality publications bound to influence coming generations of children and parents. Never before was fantasy for British children more topical or varied than today, with thousands of publications each year contributing to the continuous development of a vast literary and increasingly popular public landscape. This enormous increase of fantasy's popularity is accompanied by a simultaneous distinct change in the composition of its readership.

1.1   Outline and aim of the project

Against the background of the current upsurge and popularity of fantasy in general, fantasy for children has become topical again. Just like fantasy for adults, fantasy for children has long been ignored and intentionally excluded from national and/ or high literature. Its

fancy worlds, topics, characters and addressees were considered unfit for serious study. Said to be lacking complexity and literary quality, i.e. *status*, the entire field of children's literature was labelled literature for beginners and got pushed aside into the corner of pedagogical early education. Instead of postulating a traditional strict segregation between a prestigious, elitist and possibly sterile literature for adults on the one hand and a base, vulgar one for children on the other hand, it is far more beneficial to acknowledge that children's literature *is* literature after all and needs to be treated as such. Adult "high literature" and children's literature are not incompatible or alien to each other. On the contrary: They have more in common than many think or consider safe to admit. In their increasing mutual points of contact lies dormant a potential which should be nurtured instead of ignored. However, at the turn of the millennium, fantasy has succeeded in firmly establishing itself as a discipline in its own respect. Whereas it may still be eyed suspiciously by some institutions, fantasy has cast off its stigma and emancipated itself.

At this point of the actual discussion our study sets in. Its aim will be a topographical one, namely projecting to survey and sketch a first rough draft of a map of the present territory of British children's fantasy. Given the hundreds of publications of fantasy novels for children in Britain each year, this work strives to present a cross-section of the dynamic field rather than a complete inventory. Among other things, more detailed stocktaking requires some temporal distance for the examination and evaluation of a huge dynamic field. So instead of claiming utopian completeness, the pioneering feat of the present format is fully intentional, with a view to providing a general idea and initiatory guidance as well as impulses for future research.

An overview of historically important developments and their influence on current children's fantasy introduces the topical discussion. The main part of this study is concerned with establishing the present position of British children's fantasy and exploring its contemporary contents, boundaries and specific characteristics. On the basis of our findings we can then venture a careful prognosis about the possible direction(s) in which children's fantasy is heading.

So far no publication has comprehensively analysed the current developments of British children's fantasy novels under the formulation of the topic. Certainly a great many books are being investigated. Also, singular phenomena are examined or specialist theories applied. In addition to comparative approaches to works and their translations extensive encyclopedias are drawn up. However, this does not go into the particular developments in the

field of British fantasy novels for children. This is where the present study seeks to make its contribution.

The focus of the topical research is shifting noticeably from a longstanding theoretical one towards a more practically oriented alignment. Accordingly, this study focuses on concrete phenomena. In order to be able to present a more neutral cross-section of the genre, I consciously fade out literary theories. With the help of this corpus or similar corpora future studies will then be able to apply literary approaches and methods to analyse specific phenomena. In the following, I would like to concentrate especially on three main areas of interest. These are, firstly, the discussion of traditional elements; secondly, modern elements and, thirdly, innovations in the field of the British fantasy novel for children. These three areas are subdivided into individual aspects, in the light of which the current situation and developments shall be demonstrated. While doing so, textual and stylistic but also moral phenomena are being analysed. Unlike many other works in the field, these selected areas are not determined by one or more set theories. Rather, the aim is to present and interpret the findings as neutral as possible. By offering a first, more open overview, future studies by various disciplines can be facilitated. However, the field is already wide. Boosted by the sustained boom current British children's fantasy witnesses especially around the turn of the millennium, it enlarges constantly further. Its vastness holds not only advantages in the form of diversity and inventiveness but it can also be a source of confusion and wooliness. What distinguishes the present approach from others is therefore its conscious admission that a complete stocktaking, desirable and needed as it would be, cannot and shall not be accomplished in this study. Rather, it is a matter of working out and analysing exemplary contents, forms and characteristics of one specific, tightly outlined area. By attaching great importance to introducing more structure and thus clarity in the analyses splintering in just this area may be prevented.

Fantasy as subject matter offers the mentioned vast field with a large number of yearly publications. Widely read, it is highly topical and carries increasingly social, philosophical, ethical and depth psychological implications. What makes studying fantasy such an interesting task is not simply its own potential but also its importance for its readers. Since fantasy literature mirrors, digests and comments upon the state of society, or, in the wider sense, of humankind in general, the impetus it can have on its readers' self-image and world view should not underestimated. As a strong genre, fantasy unites. Received as it is by young and old alike, it also supersedes social strata. As a result, the discussion of fantasy is diverse, animated and offers a broad spectrum for analyses of every kind.

In summary, the aim of this project is to portray the current developments of British fantasy for children. At the same time, it is my endeavour to offer a platform for future discussion and research of new children's fantasy. I am aware of the inherent yet ineluctable limitations of the scope of work. Nevertheless, it is just these gaps which underline and corroborate the urgency of further research.

1.2   Procedure

The present study is divided into two main parts. In the shorter first section, the focus is on essential definitions, concepts and theoretical problems of central aspects of the field of fantasy for children. Subsequent to this introductory theoretical part, the second, practical one carries the main emphasis. Here, we will investigate the state of contemporary developments in children's fantasy with the help of characteristic samples.

The first chapter of part one is concerned with compiling and suggesting definitions of fundamental terms. The second chapter outlines the historical roots of British children's fantasy, providing necessary background knowledge for the analysis of the modern texts. It is followed by the research report (chapter 3), which presents the current status of the object of out study. Linked to part one by the mediatory, stock-taking research report, the second part is practically oriented and subdivided into three main areas for analysis. Whereas the first section centres on traditional elements (chapter 4), the second one inquires into modern structures (chapter 5). The third section is concerned with formal innovations (chapter 6). This will enable us to trace the diachronic development of the selected aspects of modern fantasy for children in regard to their present as well as future development. In conclusion, a seventh chapter sums up the findings and theses, before proposing an outlook on the possible paths open to British fantasy for children in the 21st century.

1.3   Methodology

The procedure of this study is determined by its aim: Namely an analytical, empirical and hermeneutical one. A descriptive theoretical part provides the necessary definitions of working terms and traces the historical development of the genre. On this basis a cross-section of the inventory of British children's fantasy, represented by the corpus novels, will be analysed. Traditional approaches, contents and forms are compared to current trends and developments. Starting from the specific and moving to the more general, differences and common interests, but also special cases of contemporary children's fantasy shall be distilled in order to assemble them in an overall scheme.

1.4   Definitions

Any approach to children's literature is faced with the problem of working definitions. The starting point of this venture must therefore be the outlining of some borders and the filling and connecting of individual terms with contents and concepts. In the course of this study we will see to what extent these notions can be backed up or whether they require a redefinition. The provisional nature of some working definitions is thus intentional.

1.4.1   "Children", "young adults" and "adults": Phase-out models?

The title of the project, "Current Developments at the **Intersection** of **Fantasy** Fiction and British **Children's Literature**", necessitates a more detailed specification of its – highlighted -principal terms. In the following, we will attempt to outline these main components with regard to the situation of topical research. This means taking into account the present dissension over definite contents in view of an overall trend towards more openness, including definitions.

The term "intersection" can be defined as the set of elements which are common to two sets. In this study it is used to mean the components that are common to both children's literature and fantasy fiction.

The definition of the key term "children" already poses problems. Who exactly can be designated by this term? What are the characteristics of the members of this group? How and where can we draw a line between "child", "young adult" and "adult"? What if there is no clear-cut difference? All these problems have immediate repercussions on the next key term, "children's literature". Which area is covered by "children's literature" if the construct "child" itself might not be too stable an entity? In which respect then, if at all, does "children's literature" differ from that for "young adults" and "adults", and why?

1.4.1.1   "Children"

However woolly this category might appear to be, there is one absolute certainty. Independent of the further specifications of the spectrum of this term, the category "children" comprises both male and female members. The applicable age range poses more of a challenge. From which point or age onwards can we speak of "children"? Where does the term have its limits? When is a child classed no longer as a child but as a "young adult" or teenager?

First and foremost, a "child" is defined in biological terms. Commonly, it is classed as being "a young person from birth to the age of full physical development [...]".[1] Collins introduces the key word "puberty" in its definition of "child": "A boy or girl between birth and puberty".[2] Generally, puberty is seen as a decisive stage and widely believed to mark the end of childhood on both the physical and psychological level. As body and mind develop, the young person undergoes visible changes in this phase of gradual transition from childhood to adulthood. During this phase, the state of relative psychological innocence and naivety ascribed to childhood is slowly replaced by a self-conscious state of experience, yet to be refined in the years leading up to adulthood. A key feature of the term "child" is "development". A child is entangled in the process of formation, characterised by "trial and error."[3] Desiderata at the end of the period of childhood are maturation, independence and responsibility. In essence, a "child" is described as lacking these essential "adult" qualities, since it has not yet reached the state of mental and emotional maturity characteristic of its elders. Portrayed as incomplete, a "child" is subjected to a pedagogical forming process, namely education. In Western society, an aim of education is "remedying" the mentioned moral and intellectual deficits.

This definition *ex negativo* can be countered with a positive observation: Immaturity, flexibility and openness are not necessarily bad or reprehensible. On the contrary: Instead of stifling dormant potential and room for development as fast as possible by filling it with prefabricated content, it can also be treasured and carefully tended. Undreamt-of possibilities for creative development hold an enormous wealth. It is no exaggeration to say that the period of orientation in both childhood and adolescence forms the most important and crucial stage for all future development of a person. For this reason, cultivating an individual's potential should be regarded as a valuable chance, always bearing in mind that children need guidance, not patronage. Immaturity can be regarded as an asset, as only "immature" people can develop. Adults, in comparison, often portray themselves as stagnant, inflexible in their ways and fixed opinions.

In modern society, however, the distinction between children, young adults and adults becomes increasingly difficult, as biological markers are rejected, shifted or extended. In

---

[1] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995,[5] p. 192.
[2] *Collins English Dictionary*. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998,[4] p. 280.
[3] See Henry Maurice Saxby. *Books in the Life of a Child: Bridges to Literature and Learning*. Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia PTY LTD, 1997, p. 6.

some cases, "child" and "being young" have become a condition, a lifestyle or an attitude rather than a developmental stage.

1.4.1.2 "Young adults"

If the term "children" can be roughly framed by birth and puberty, then the latter marks the visible begin of a transition from childhood to adulthood. In any case, biological development is out of an individual's sphere of influence, whereas a person's "growth to maturity, to adulthood, is unique and determined by a complex of personal, family, environmental and social factors."[4] Still, in order to be able to come to terms with the new appearance of the body and with far-reaching changes in personality, young adults need role models and guidance for new orientations. Literature for this specific age group therefore has to accept the challenge of doing the splits between a certain degree of stability for its inherently insecure readership and the new, changing reality.

The niche of such a specific literature for "young adults", not only a more respectful, but also a larger term for "teenagers", was discovered in the 1950s.[5] Whereas "teenagers" are defined as persons "between the ages of 13 and 19 inclusive"[6], young adults nowadays are sometimes already in their early or even late twenties. What separates them both from the group of "children" and those of "adults" is their pronounced consciousness of being different. All along, juveniles try to point the way to the future by striving to distinguish themselves in as many ways as possible, especially from their elders, for instance by marking their group identity by fashion, language and behaviour. Within their peer groups, young adults start looking for their new individual identity.

Literature for young adults tries to serve the needs for its audience which finds itself in a phase of transition, of simultaneously not belonging any more and not belonging yet. Usually, the term "young adults" is narrowed down to the period between 12/14 up to about 17/18 years of age. Yet, especially the upper approximate threshold value becomes increasingly extendable in the direction of "twens". Strikingly, problems of young adults and adolescents differ only slightly from those of children, albeit on a larger scale. Even so, young adult literature meets the demand for the discussion of problems in a separate, perhaps more private category.

---

[4] Saxby, *Books*, p. 352.
[5] Ibd.
[6] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1572.

The more modern western society prolongs the periods of childhood and adolescence by intensified education, the longer those concerned are being kept in a state of limbo. Thus, this originally quite short transitional phenomenon is extended increasingly, forming a category of its own. Characterised by an all-embracing conflict of emotions, literature for young adults revolves around central points such as the desire for certainties and knowledge, construction of identity, awakening sexuality, friendship, further detachment from the parents, finding of individual perspectives, broadening one's horizon and the future position in society. It can be noticed that the perspective adopted in young adult literature "is more intense, more urgent"[7] than in literature for children. With puberty in full swing or just mastered, far-reaching decisions for the professional life are imminent. Special emphasis is given to resulting fears and uncertainties, as well as suggested solutions.

So far, literature for young adults further distinguishes itself from that for children by "the embracing of a consciously formulated personal philosophy".[8] Whereas children's literature is concerned with existential questions on a more universal level, "young adult" literature treats these topics on an individual scale, often suffused with philosophical elements. For example, the meaning of life is not the primary concern of children, who still need to explore and define their environment. Where children are said to still gather facts and experiences, actively constructing the fabric of their world; young adults question and interpret the very structures, functions and meaning of this world, checking for its flaws.

In addition to family and school, literature for young adults can give young people the support required for crisis management by providing test cases combined with guidance towards strategies of problem solving. Increasingly, first person narrators are introduced. More and more frequently, the young adult himself keeps a diary, or tells their own story like Byng's *Molly Moon* or Crossley-Holland's *Arthur*. A witty combination of traditional third person narrator and I-narrator, perfected in Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy, is only one possibility of current realisations. A new plurality of narrators is joined by the widening and removal of taboos from topics, so that the spectrum of young adult literature hardly differs any more from that of adults'.

Traditional children's literature, above all the classics, is frequently set in the countryside or in similarly secluded places. Famous representatives of this kind are for example *The Secret Garden, Alice in Wonderland; The Wind in the Willows, Winnie-the-Pooh*

---

[7] Saxby, *Books*, p. 352.
[8] Compare Saxby, *Books*, p. 354.

or *Tom's Midnight Garden*. In these manageable, closed miniature worlds the child can gradually come to terms with itself and its immediate surroundings such as friends or animals. By contrast, young adults are mostly shown in close contact with society. More and more frequently, the town replaces rural landscapes, with the scene of action shifting from the idyllic arcadia of childhood into the modern, anonymous bustling city life.[9]

1.4.1.3 "Adults"

As we have seen, exact and irrefutable definitions of the terms "child" and "young adult" evade increasingly a reliable categorisation. The permeability of the borders either questions the values of the adults or, at least, postpones them to an even later age. We can therefore define the term "adult" ex negativo: As that which is neither "child" nor "young adult". This leaves us with one of the least contested social assumption about adults, their alleged completeness. It is usually agreed that an adult has reached psychological, emotional and physical maturity and stability. Independence, personal responsibility, liability, rights and duties are some of the main characteristics an adult ought to have. Nevertheless, just as the terms for "child", "teenager" and "young adult" become more and more difficult to pinpoint, the term "adult" is by no means an invariable construct. The blurring of borders and concepts does not stop at "adult" either. Conspicuous is the dissolving of borders in two directions. Firstly, the prolongation of the period of childhood in Western Europe puts adulthood in a further distance from childhood as it used to be.[10] Secondly, there seems to exist a countermovement. Perhaps driven by nostalgic reminiscence of childhood some adults try to return to it by copying young people's demeanour and lifestyle. This phenomenon is also referred to as the so-called *infantilisation* of society. Is it opposed by an analogous *adultisation* of children? Are they peripheral phenomena or a serious development to be reckoned with? Would it be an exaggeration to ask whether the traditional concepts of childhood and adulthood are still desirable? Or do recent developments necessitate a re-evaluation of the matter?

Furthermore, the widespread belief is that mature adults are the intended readers of "serious" or "non-children's literature". In their assumed quality as educated, cultured and well-informed recipients, adults find the entire spectrum of literary output at their disposal.

---

[9] Ibd., p. 367.

[10] There is no universally applicable or fixed age limit for the entry into adulthood. Depending on the respective personal development, the margin for the transitional phase can move between the guide numbers of 18/20 and 30 years of age.

Today, literature for adults does no longer know any taboos. Any subject can be dealt with, no matter whether it breaches good taste, ethical standards, faith, values or other conventions. This development towards a permissive society is paralleled in literature for children, where the lifting of former taboos makes its arrival via young adult literature. Slowly topics such as sexual abuse are filtering through, putting the possible spectrum of children's literature on a par with that for adults. Could the textual und formal rapprochement be a reason for the heightened interest many adults take in children's literature, especially fantasy, these days?

1.4.2   What is "Children's Literature"?

In its rather short life,[11] literature intended for children has witnessed periods in which defining its target group may have been easier than today. For example, the common practice of banishing fantasies and fairy stories to the nurseries automatically defined its main readership, namely children. In his famous essay "On Fairy Stories" (1938),[12] Tolkien denounces this very state of affairs and demands a reversal. According to him, fairy tales are much more suitable for adults rather than children and should not be excluded from respectable "high literature".

Besides a restriction on account of the affiliation with a certain genre or topic there is another way of forming target groups. Guiding age suggestions on book covers and shop or library shelves attempt a pre-selection of readers. It remains to be seen in how far arbitrary recommendations in form of specifications such as "ages 9-12" are practical and in keeping with the times. In addition to genre and age ranges, educational aspects influence content and intended readership. By definition, values and traditions are conveyed, designed to teach children how to become a full member of society. Literature for adults may hand down a similar essence, but not as explicitly instructive as that for children. Adults have already developed their behavioural patterns and should not require intensive direction. Since books for children are handy instruments for socialisation, it would appear that they can easily be misused for indoctrination and patronising. Whereas nowadays these methods are scorned,[13] open moralising and indoctrination used to be perfectly natural practices in a book intended for children.

---

[11] For temporal key features of the history of children's fantasy see chapter 2.

[12] Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien. *Tree and Leaf*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

[13] The extreme opposite of total neutrality and lack of influence, however disposed, is just as undesirable and "arguably impossible". Compare Peter Hunt. *An Introduction to Children's Literature*. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 3.

Today, despite occasional strong objections, it is mostly agreed that there *is* such a thing as literature for children. Still, opinions are divided on as to what it encompasses exactly. Despite innumerable attempts at laying down the exact meaning of the term "children's literature" and its components, critics and scholars still have not reached an accord on a satisfying definition. Almost ironically, one consensus has been reached, though: An all-embracing, universal and lasting definition has not been found yet.[14]

This unsatisfactory situation is the point of departure for the current discussion. The focal point of the debate is constituted by central questions to which it is a matter of finding satisfying answers. As these questions are thematically and textually interlinked, new or re-definitions have far-reaching implications on other issues at stake. Thus, a consensus on the main components would facilitate laying down more precisely the cornerstones of the term "children's literature".

Possibly the most contested question is whether children's literature does have a literary quality comparable to that of literature for adults or whether it is just a preliminary stage of it. This immediately entails the next questions. If children's literature is therefore negligible, then why all this fuss? Can it be classed as an earmarked gateway literature and instrument for socialisation without any aesthetic qualities of its own?

If children's literature *does* possess literary quality of its own, does it nevertheless deviate from that of literature for adult and if so, in how far and why? Is it completely separable from adult literature? Could it therefore be classed as a literature in its own right? Or is this splitting not permissible and children's literature constitutes one of several subgenres of national literature? Central to this debate is the recurrent question whether literature for children is indeed essentially different from that of adults.[15] Here, opinions are divided, too. Naturally there exist numerous differences, i.e. linguistic, stylistic etc. Besides the age of the target group, textual features play a role in attempts at a definition of children's literature. Traditionally, texts intended for children are characterised by a fair amount of transparency. Preference is given to shorter sentence length, a manageable choice of vocabulary as well as a clear structure. Furthermore, a great majority of books for children

---

[14] Compare statements on this score by Susanne Gaschke. *Die Welt in Büchern: Kinder, Literatur und Ästhetische Wirkung.* Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995, p. 16; Peter Hunt (Ed.) *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism.* London; New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 1; Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, pp. 42, 43, 60.

[15] Compare Hunt, *An Introduction,* p. 11.

feature lively dialogue. Following the daily life of children, dialogue facilitates the reading and can transport complex contents more easily.

Amongst the textual features, the choice of topics for children's literature stands in the foreground. For a long time, it was a matter of protecting children by means of selection of the topics and thus preserving certain taboos such as abuse or to safeguard the naivety that adults attribute to children. So a noticeable turn of the tide has come to pass, since modern children's literature has renounced all taboos.

The obligatory happy endings which, from the fairy tale tradition, are associated with children's literature may not have had their day in modern works, but they have waned visibly. Moreover, the endings have become more contradictory, more open and pensive. Here too the influence of adult literature is obvious. Open endings in literature for children represent a new challenge and an enrichment of the spectrum, allowing for more variety. So in how far are the differences between adult and children's literature relative or surmountable? How can it be explained that even numerous renowned standard works of literary history omit children's literature completely, whereas others simply class it among the "also-rans"?

One characteristic feature often attached to children's literature is the age of its intended readership. As a result of the increasing dilution of artificial borders between the individual age groups and their preferred reading matter, it is nowadays no longer possible nor appropriate to regulate who should read what at what age. Under the present circumstances and developments, it is viable to say that an intentional children's literature roughly covers the period between a child's first encounter with literature and eighteen to twenty years. Depending on the various genres of children's literature, narrower or even wider age limits are also conceivable.

Readership, textual and stylistic features are exemplary and prominent bones of contention in the current debate. Lesnik-Oberstein for example clearly emphasises the problem of definitions. According to her, their wooliness impedes any sensible definition of the compound term "children's literature". What is more, she questions a possible separation of "children" and "literature" and points out that "[t]he disparities between the various definitions of 'children's literature', 'children' and 'literature', are problematic to children's literature criticism because they undermine the goal it sets itself."[16] Indeed, without an

---

[16] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. "Defining Children's Literature and Childhood". In: Peter Hunt; Sheila Ray (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature.* London; New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 17-31, p. 22.

unequivocal terminological basis any criticising and commenting on a discipline must necessarily appear strange. Following the lines of this argumentation one may conclude that no critic can provide absolute certainty, let alone claim to universal validity, of what exactly constitutes the construct of the "child". Even though Lesnik-Oberstein limits her critique to children's literature *criticism*, this dividedness over basic definitions naturally has the same implications for children's literature itself. Hazy elements inevitably entail an unclear compound. On the one hand, this is not beneficial to a serious discussion of the subject. On the other hand, the absence of a single, universally applicable definition does not only express the contradictoriness, but also the flexibility of children's literature.

In his pioneering work *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*[17], Darton defines books for children according to their benefit for the child. Like Hunt, he stresses spontaneous pleasure and not education as their aim.[18] From Darton's claim it can be deduced that the custom was then – and is for the most part still today - to consider all those young persons as children who have not yet completed their formative education.

The modern day children's literature critic Hunt picks up this thread. He too sets in at this specific point by emphasising the priority of play versus work. According to him, reading must be enjoyable, voluntary and unconstrained. Therefore, at the heart of this approach at a definition of children's literature stand recreational books, read out of interest outside any school curriculum.

For Ewers, readership is defined by textual features: He approaches the definition of children's literature from the angle of the text itself. On the basis of commonalities of such texts he distinguishes firstly between literature children have to read at school and literature they read voluntarily. Secondly, he then distinguishes this voluntary literature further, separating it into intentional, non-intentional, non-accepted, sanctioned, non-sanctioned literature for children as well as specific literature for children. Consequently, Ewers claims

---

[17] F.J. Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1982.[3] [1932]

[18] Compare Darton, *Children's Books in England*, p. 1.

that children's literature research and criticism is not based on a single, but on the above-mentioned several, overlapping corpora.[19]

For the definition of the readership the role of the publisher should not be underestimated, either. On the whole, it is not just the author's, but also the publisher's judgement that decides what is or will be children's literature. It can make a serious difference for the reception of a work whether the publisher has put it on the children's or the adults' list.

In her definition of children's literature, Ang highlights the thematic aspect. Combined with the social function of the initiation of new full members into society, literature for children consciously and deliberately offers engaging topics for a crucial and insecure period in the lives of the readers. Thus, it may serve as a guide to the strived-for self-enlightenment, the process of creating one's own identity.[20]

The functions of children's literature are mainly socialisation and education, paired with the playful discovery of the environment and its operational composition. In addition, values and points of view, i.e. traditions of the society, are either passed on uncommented or scrutinised critically. Today, enculturation is still one of the main concerns and purposes of children's literature. The more modern the text, the more critical and open for new views it will be.

Children's literature is often defined by stylistic features. By contrasting children's books and books for adults and looking for divergences in style, form, vocabulary, themes, age of the hero(es), narrative modes etc., one tries to differentiate between children's literature and adult literature. More often than not this results in the apparent lack of literary quality of children's books compared to those for adults. According to Saxby, differences between books for children and those for adults can be marked by a list of indicators. These differences do not simply consist of the ideology conveyed. In children's books, "child protagonists are the rule", conventions of the genre are observed, the story told is embedded

---

[19] Hans-Heino Ewers. *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche: Eine Einführung*. München: Fink, 2000, pp. 15-30. Whereas most of Ewers terms are self-explanatory, specific literature for children is defined to comprise all those texts which have been specifically written for children. Nodelman claims that "children's literature is whatever literature children happen to read". Perry Nodelman. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, p. 4. For an overview of a large spectrum of definitions of children's literature see pp. 133-244.

[20] Susan Ang. *The Widening World of Children's Literature*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 5.

within "a clear-cut moral code", positive rather than negative outlooks on life are favoured, and both structure and language are adapted to oblige the child's needs and abilities.[21]

No matter how divergent the single opinions may be, the unanimous demand for a poetics of children's literature – a very complex venture, when undertaken – unites researchers and critics alike. Unanimously, they have come to realise that there is a strong demand for a poetics of children's literature,[22] which takes up all these questions of definition, form, content, purpose and aesthetics. Even if this poetics cannot meet all the expectations, it can at least answer more questions and make the points at issue clearer and more straightforward.

In due course we will see whether these common assumptions and claims are justified or whether concessions to children's literature have to be made. What can already be stated is that children's literature has emancipated itself. In its development it undergoes permanent changes, thus making it harder to label it and to limit it. Does it have to be narrowed down at all? Or isn't it far more in keeping with the times to accept shifting forms and borders and being open for new impressions and views?

As with the other genres, modern literature for children has been influenced by globalisation and its implications. This further widening of its horizon allows children's books to traverse "all social and cultural boundaries."[23] In the course of the mutual penetration and fertilisation of the various literatures, children's literature profits from the softening and blurring of formerly rigid borders. On the way, it filters, adapts and applies tools, forms and topics of the so-called national literatures. One sign for this is its creative discussion of literary devices formerly reserved for the grown-ups. This leads for example to a "growing number of texts that are ambiguous and open-ended, lacking closure."[24]

Another indicator for the shifting values and the attempts at a rapprochement of children's literature to that of adults or the other way round are the publishing and marketing strategies in this sector. Nowadays, a book read by children does not necessarily comply with the expectations raised by the quoted indicators for children's literature. Likewise, a book whose cover explicitly addresses children, which is sold and marketed under this section in

---

[21] Saxby, *Books*, p. 20. Compare also Nodelman's extensive list of markers of children's literature in: Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult,* pp. 76-81.

[22] Despite the fact that Shavit published a poetics of children's literature in 1986, the current developments need to be taken into account and past findings adjusted to a larger, more international scope. Zohar Shavit. *Poetics of Children's Literature*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

[23] Saxby, *Books*, p. 10.

[24] Ibd., p. 11.

the shops, can show exactly the same features as one for adults and, consequently, is read by them. It all boils down to the respective definition of childhood and target group. An interesting phenomenon to be addressed later on is the ambiguity of this group of books, which, variable as they are, can easily serve both markets.

From this, it becomes clear that the term "children's literature" and all its implications remain elusive at the present moment in time. Under the influence of the new media and currents like globalisation, topical developments in society necessitate a re-definition of terms in order to open new ways to the unconstrained unfurling of children's literature. The most visible sign for the opening of the genre is the beginning dissolution of age labels on the shelves as well as in the minds.[25]

1.4.3   Fantasy

Since time immemorial fantasy[26] and its elements have permeated first oral traditions, then written literary history. For instance, Homers *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *Everyman*, but also some of Shakespeare's plays rely on the strong influence and fascination fantasy exerts on authors and recipients, be it as a mode of writing, a genre in its own right or simply as a narrative or dramatic element. During its long history, phases of esteem alternate with phases of marginalisation or neglect. This fluctuation is mutually linked to cultural and social factors such as the prevailing spirit of the age as well as the political, economical and religious orientation of the respective society. It is mainly during a crisis or comparably unstable times that fantasy experiences an enormous upsurge. In the face of catastrophes or other uprooting events fantasy may offer a liberating, more comforting point of view reality too often fails to provide. By introducing exotic features, worlds or entire universes, fantasy creates an area safely distanced from the current disturbing reality. It is in this fantastic realm that space is allowed for a detached discussion of actual issues. Transposition into another realm can facilitate a coming to terms with problems or offer a temporary escape[27] from real life.

---

[25] Compare Saxby, *Books*, p. 20.

[26] Fantasy can be defined as "texts depicting the impossible and/ or involving the supernatural or some other unreal element." Sarah Godek. "Fantasy – Postwar, Postmodern, Postcolonial: Houses in Postwar Fantasy". In: Kimberley Reynolds (Ed.) *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Basingstoke; New York: 2005, pp. 89-107, p. 91.

[27] This term is contested in criticism. In the majority of cases, critics pejoratively reduce "escape" in fantasy to describe a refuge for people out of touch with real life, implying starry-eyedness and cowardice. Tolkien opposes this interpretation by emphasising that escape can have a positive meaning: The liberation from restraints towards opportunities for development and freedom of the imagination in richer fields of fantasy which reality is unable to provide.

Its fascination lies within its possibilities. Fantasy literature frequently suggests different conditions of space, time, nature, economy, religion and society in general; realms or situations essentially different from "normality".[28] Yet, despite strange features, they remain recognisable enough to be of current interest to the reader. However, new or deviating physical or psychological realities, above all magic, expand the room for manoeuvres. Like this, potentialities can be tested, solutions sought, found or suggested. Through giving new insights and different points of view, fantasy contributes ways for discussing and shaping reality.

At the end of the millennium, fuelled by world-wide crises and terrorism, fantasy witnesses another periodical heyday. The instability and fragility of the present-day world is met with increasing uncertainty and fear by many of its inhabitants. Those feelings demand to be channelled, faced and eventually to be coped with. By offering hope and solutions, transferred into seemingly distant realms, this kind of literature may be more sustaining than portrayals of hopeless, bleak reality. So in the end, fantasy can help to cope better with reality.

1.4.4   Varieties of fantasy

Whereas in the Victorian Age, fantasy for children used to be marked by unspeakable taboos and a limit on its topics, range, literary techniques and styles, contemporary children's fantasy has enlarged its horizon enormously. Postmodern narrative techniques and topics, for example historiographical metafiction, have found their way into contemporary British fantasy for children. Far from being a homogenous field, fantasy fans out into many different subgenres, covering a wide spectrum for almost any taste. In the following, the main discernible kinds of fantasy relevant to this work are presented.[29]

---

[28] Horstkotte's claim that fantasy "floats free of all restraints of the real world" is not appropriate. Although "the reader's disbelief in the story is suspended without questioning the narrative, even if it is obviously not true", certain restraints of the real world like laws, hierarchical structures, interhuman communication and rules of conduct cannot easily be discarded, as fantasy requires structure and familiarity to at least some extent. See Martin Horstkotte. *The Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary British Fiction*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004, p. 36.

[29] For more extensive reading on subgenres of fantasy see for example David Pringle (Ed.) *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy: The Definitive Illustrated Guide*. London: Carlton, 1998; John Clute; John Grant (Eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. London: Orbit, 1997; Marcel Feige.*Das neue Lexikon der Fantasy. Xena, Conan, Artus und der kleine Hobbit – Mythen, Legenden und Sagen der Fantasy*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf und Schwarzkopf, 2003²; Helmut Pesch. *Fantasy: Theorie und Geschichte einer Literarischen Gattung*. Köln: Dissertation Universität Köln, 1982.

Animal Fantasy is traditionally a favourite form of children's fantasy and one of the most enduring. Its roots can be traced back at least to Aesop's fables from the fifth century B.C.[30] Very likely they reach down to oral traditions of even more ancient times, such as folktales and myths. An animal fantasy features a community of sentient[31] loquacious animals as its main characters that form structured societies comparable to humans. If they do have contact to single humans, these are mainly children. Characteristic of this type of fantasy is the anthropomorphisation of domestic or wild animals that are fitted out with human traits such as distinctive character, behaviour, foibles and outward appearance, first and foremost clothing. The degree of anthropomorphisation varies from author to author. Whereas Adams embeds and depicts the rabbits of *Watership Down* in a natural habitat, leaving them many animal instincts and patterns of behaviour, Grahame's Badger, Mole, Rat and Toad resemble humans very strongly. They don clothes, furnish their homes - in Toad's case, a huge country house - and Toad even drives a car.

Each in their own way, animal fantasies tell allegorical stories of the animal kingdom, easily transferable to human society. Usually, their cast is not subject to much fluctuation. From an established, well-tried and thus reliable pool of characters, authors choose their animals according to their natures and the kind of story they intend to tell. Popular stock characters are taken from the familiar environment of the reader, so domestic species predominate. A downside of this limited choice is that portrayals easily assume overtones of stereotype and cliché. Owl, cat, mouse, rat, rabbit, duck, donkey, pig, squirrel, weasel and fox are used by authors like Adam, Milne, Potter or Pratchett. Exotic and ferocious animals as in Kipling's *Jungle Books* with their cast of tiger, wolf, snake, panther, elephant and bear are seldom chosen. Interesting and challenging are those occasions when authors introduce entirely new or marginalised animals for more intense effects or new points of view. With badger, mole and toad Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* offers an unusual, but refreshingly new combination.

At the turn of the millennium, animal quests have not lost their attraction in British children's fantasy. Pringle highlights the influence which the booming heroic fantasy and its secondary realms exert over the structure and pattern of contemporary animal fantasy. According to him, the phenomenon of "the large-scale fantasy which utilises animals instead

---

[30] Caxton's printed version dates back to 1484; further adaptations for children followed. See Keith Barker. "Animal Stories". In: Hunt; Ray, *International Companion Encyclopedia*, pp. 282-294, p. 282.
[31] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 31.

of humans in the unfolding of a quest narrative or tale of an epic struggle, often supernaturally tinged", is best captured in Adam's *Watership Down*.[32] Animal Fantasy comprises a large spectrum which ranges from Kipling's *Jungle Books*, Potter's animal tales, the American White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) to Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Dolittle* (1920). Representatives of the thriving animal quest are Adam's *Watership Down*, Jacques' *Redwall* (from 1986 onwards), Dann's *The Animals of Farthing Wood* (1981), Baldry's *Eaglesmount* (2001), Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* (2001) and Jarvis' *Deptford Mice* (from 1989 onwards).

Whereas the main focus of animal fantasy lies on the special nature of its characters, **Historical Fantasy** centres on the historical dimension of the plot. This subgenre of fantasy takes a certain period in the history of mankind and develops a fantasy tale on this very basis. Background information may all be correct and very elaborately woven in so as to resurrect the past. The historical cast is partially or even completely invented or given new traits, positions or attitudes. Frequently, important or well known characters from history are chosen and paired with unknown ones. This combination facilitates a generation of new viewpoints or revaluations of the past. Popular characters to figure in this subgenre are Arthur or Merlin, whose mythical aurora allows much space for speculation and interpretation.

In historical fantasies, the sense of the past is evoked in two ways. Either a single, independent level of past time is introduced on which the action takes place, or there is an alternation between two time levels. Alternations occur between a remote and a more modern time and/ or vice versa. If no unique period is chosen, then transitions between time levels occur. In this case, authors can choose from a pool of options such as time-slips, dreams, portals and time windows, magical artefacts or supernatural events. It is especially fantasies of the Arthurian kind that are designed as a *bildungsroman* or at least show parallels to its concept, applied to historical and/ or mythical figures. Novels of this kind are often hybrids between historical and high fantasy. White's *The Once and Future King* certainly falls under this hybrid category. Other historical fantasies are for example Crossley-Holland's *Arthur* trilogy and Sutcliffe's Roman novels,[33] in which she revives Roman history with fictional characters. Perhaps not pure historical fantasies, yet novels with ample historical dimensions are Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence or Foreman's *Keepers and Seekers* pentalogy.

---

[32] Compare Pringle, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 23.
[33] *The Eagle of the Ninth*, *The Silver Branch* and *The Lantern Bearers*.

High or Heroic Fantasy constitute a large part in modern children's fantasy novels. For our purposes, High Fantasy and its sub-category Heroic fantasy do not differ too widely so as to make meticulous dissection necessary. Using them as synonyms here is to acknowledge their similarities in order to simplify. Nevertheless, it should be noted that critics consider them as two separate entities. High fantasy is well defined by Sullivan:

> "'High' can refer to style, subject matter, theme, or tone. It can also refer to the characters themselves – their elite or elevated social status or the moral or ethical philosophies which they espouse or exemplify. It can even refer to the affective level of the story itself. 'Fantasy', as a literary term, refers to narrative possibilities limited, at least initially, only by the author's own imagination and skill as a story-teller. When combined, high fantasy identifies a literary genre which includes some of the most universally praised books for young readers."[34]

High fantasy continues the traditions of old. Its themes, style, settings and protagonists are strongly influenced by the oral traditions of "myth, epic, legend, romance and folk-tale."[35] Conventionally, the story is set in a secondary fantasy world. The latter is presented as real, logical and coherent; thus totally credible in its own right. Over time, there distilled a strong preference for the Middle Ages on the part of both authors and readers. Far from being simply idealised Middle Ages romance, the era is portrayed in all its details. Against this background, the hero's deeds and honour gain additional weight and importance. The grandeur of High fantasy is further conveyed by the rest of the characters. Since the hero has to prove himself not only in his quest, but also in society, it is in his interest to be received into the circles of distinctive, respectable, noble or wise characters.

Whereas High Fantasy considers the creation of a world including its heroes as a whole, harmonious total art work, heroic fantasy focuses more on the hero and his adventures against a colourful background. According to Pringle, the protagonist in Heroic Fantasy faces adventures in a secondary realm where magic and supernatural events are nothing unusual.[36] Pringle understands "heroic" in its widest sense. For him, it is a characterisation of all the elements involved; a "whole world conceived on a heroic scale."[37] Eventually, "[w]hat matters most, and what gives the work its unity and consistency, is the world, and that is why it is typical for books of this kind to open with a map, or a whole set of maps."[38]

---

[34] C.W. Sullivan. "High Fantasy". In: Hunt; Ray, *International Companion*, pp. 303-313, p. 303.
[35] Ibd., p. 305.
[36] Compare Pringle, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 35.
[37] Ibd.
[38] Ibd., p. 36.

Today, most people associate Tolkien's work with High Fantasy. Indeed it was this author who "set the standard by which other high fantasy would be judged."[39] And he set it so high that later authors are still experiencing difficulties trying to venture out of Tolkien's shade and to write themselves free. One reason for this may lie in a prominent feature of Heroic and High Fantasy: its epic form. Nine times out of ten, especially in High Fantasy, the action is deployed on a large scale. Huge canvases of nature, society, genealogies, battles and so forth require several tomes; thus making the trilogy a favourite publishing format. The other variation on conveying the idea of an epic is to serialise novels.

Almost by definition, Heroic or High Fantasy looks back through time. The epic hero is intrinsically linked with a glorious or otherwise desirable past. Nostalgia for better, past times and a progressive, technicised future seem to be mutually exclusive. Yet, innovation is only possible by introducing something new, not by holding on to old forms. Therefore, Heroic Fantasy will not change significantly over time, "[b]ecause it is a form which draws so heavily on the past for virtually all of its context, content, and style".[40] High fantasy, which is not *as* inseparably linked with the past as heroic fantasy, has a greater scope, thus offering more potential for future developments.

High fantasy novels cover a spectrum between Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, White's *The Sword in the Stone*, Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle, in some aspects Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles*, Le Guin's *Earthsea*, Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* and, to an extent, the *Harry Potter* novels.

Interestingly, Sullivan claims that "high fantasy appeals to a kind of reader rather than a reader of a certain age."[41] If a reader enjoys High Fantasy, then it should not make a difference whether he is a child, an adolescent or an adult. Sullivan explains this by High Fantasy using traditional forms and contents[42] young people already are familiar with and deeper implications for more mature readers who can possibly discern more levels of meaning due to their greater experience.

Religious/ Christian fantasy tells heroic stories, mostly of parallel or other secondary realms, against a background of religious implications. The authors interpret and transfer the

---

[39] Sullivan in: Hunt; Ray (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, p. 311.
[40] Ibd., p. 312.
[41] Ibd., p. 311.
[42] Ibd.

Christian history of salvation onto the story being told. Christian values are conveyed on the basis of the heroes' behaviour during a quest. The latter feature a hard trial for the hero, who has to prove himself and live by humane criterions if he wants to save his soul. Love, friendship and caritas are main values, but also forgiveness and a noble heart. Classic examples of this subgenre are *The Chronicles of Narnia* and partially *The Lord of the Rings*. Pure religious fantasy for children is not part of the study's corpus, since there are not many popular representatives of this kind. However, there are strong philosophical allusions to religion, faith, authorities and values in modern fantasy novels such as *His Dark Materials*.

Dark or Gothic fantasy is a derivative of the Gothic novel, which had its heyday in Britain approximately between 1764 and 1820. This subgenre of fantasy is strongly influenced by the Gothic traditions and makes use of its main characteristics. Both share "props" such as medieval castles, catacombs, laboratories, cemeteries, towers, sombre atmosphere, evil characters and innocent victims. Death, decay, or pacts with the devil frequently colourise the plot. The appeal of fear and the lust for revulsion are still as topical as they were two hundred years ago, even if both their extent and form may have changed. Anyone naively assuming that Dark/ Gothic fantasy and children's literature are mutually exclusive could not be more wrong. Already fairy tales, one of the earliest reading materials of children, evoke and play with the fears of the youngest. Violence and death are no rarity. The evilness of the villains is proportionate to their respective draconian punishment. Current representatives of Dark/ Gothic fantasy included in our corpus are Taylor's *Shadowmancer*, *Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street*, *Wormwood* and *Tersias*, McNish's *Doomspell* trilogy as well as the *Silver* sequence, Delaney's *The Wardstone Chronicles*. Nix's Non-British *Ragwitch* and his *Abhorsen* trilogy, a prime example of this subgenre, fall outside the scope of this study.

Another famous British example is Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The first signs that *Harry Potter* is moving over to the Dark/ Gothic side of fantasy are already emerging in the second volume. From the fourth volume at the latest there can be no denying this fact any more. The intervals between deaths are diminishing and the violence becomes more and more graphic. Rivalry, threats and aggressive confrontation first turn into skirmishes, but soon into open warfare. However, the trendsetter *Harry Potter* cannot be classed unequivocally. Despite its many Gothic/ Dark elements it is a hybrid of *several* forms and influences.

A further, thriving subgenre of fantasy encompasses those novels which show a more or less pronounced humorous touch. An appropriate term for this subgenre is **Comic or Humorous Fantasy.**[43] What distinguishes these novels is not only their higher-than-average share of humour but also their diversified origin. Frequently, they are parodies of other subgenres, and play with genre forms, conventions and contents. Whereas in pure parodies irony - sideswipes to other works – is in the foreground, Comic Fantasy gives special emphasis to relieved laughter.[44] The main characteristic of Humorous Fantasy is therefore the predominant comic relief, which makes it resemble a fantasy comedy. Besides other forms of play, it is mainly jokes, puns and slapstick which structure and characterise the actions. Representatives of this category, even though they are not novels, are Rowling's two short books published in aid of comic relief. Firstly, Kennilworthy Whisp's *Quidditch Through the Ages*, a fictitious history of the fantastic sport and supposedly one of Harry Potter's schoolbooks. The second is Newt Scamander's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Apparently belonging to Harry, it is interspersed with handwritten comments scribbled between the printed text by both Ron and Harry, like a proper schoolbook might be.

Its close neighbour is **Pastiche/ Ironic fantasy.** A pastiche can be defined as a work of art that mixes elements, materials and styles and/ or that "imitates the style of another artist or period".[45] Steward/ Riddell's *Muddle Earth* is in a cleft stick between comic fantasy and pastiche. In the end, the decisive factor is the title and the rough structure of the novel, which is clearly recognisable as a parody of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. This categorisation entirely depends on the point of view and the reading experience of the respective reader. If Tolkien's work is known beforehand, then it is a parody; if not, comic fantasy. For the authors, it must be a parody, as they mould *Muddle Earth* on *Lord of the Rings*.

Bartimaeus and *Artemis Fowl* both have strong satirical and ironical implications side by side with comic aspects. Both works feature heroes which are not essentially good. On the contrary: Artemis, Bartimaeus and Nathaniel have conflicting personalities with the potential of good and evil. Yet, they incline towards the not so good side and prefer to move just

---

[43] As we have already ascertained with other subgenres, modern fantasy novels for children have a tendency to form hybrids. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to unequivocally pin them down on a single subgenre. Pure representatives decrease in number. Yet, this phenomenon does not necessarily signify a disadvantage.

[44] According to Manlove, Pratchett is one of its main representatives, whose comic fantasy provides enjoyment without moralising. Cf. Colin Manlove. *The Fantasy Literature of England*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999, p. 137.

[45] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1136.

beyond the border of legality or even further. I would not class these as comic fantasies in their own right. Rather, they are hybrids of various forms of fantasy. With an increasing amount of novels written as hybrids, *Bartimaeus* and *Artemis Fowl* mark a change in trend. However comical these works may be, it should be noted that magic as such is taboo for making fun of. Instead, comic situations arise from magic gone wrong, falsely applied or otherwise twisted, but never magic as such is ridiculed – especially not black magic.

Independent from the respective form of fantasy and the gradual blurring of the conventions, some fixed rules and taboos still prevail at the moment. A prime example for an existing strong taboo is the implicit agreement between author and reader that evil and fun ought to be mutually exclusive. Whereas it is easily possible to make fun of scatterbrained wizards and kleptomaniac dwarves, there won't be laughter drawn by ridiculing evil sorcerers. Voldemort or Sauron simply do not have any potential for comedy. In a pastiche like Stewart's and Riddell's *Muddle Earth*, the villain indeed turns out to be a neglected teddy bear, but this only works because the environment is just as harmless as the sorcerer himself, and the comic effect results from comparisons with other, truly evil wizards of literary history.

Our corpus encompasses pastiches of various forms of fantasy, which live off the conscious contrasts and parallels with the respective original. *Barry Trotter* or *Bored of the Rings* make no secret of the fact that they commercially exploit the current boom of fantasy literature. They have jumped on the bandwagon of a successful market niche, occupied by dominant originals such as Rowling's and Tolkien's works. There, these pastiches deliberately attempt to address those readers who either enjoy the originals but can also laugh about them or those who heartily dislike *The Lord of the Rings* and others. Like this, anti-novels are created which strongly resemble the originals in main conflict, characters etc. Yet, everything is designed to ridicule and reverse actions, deeds and situations. *Muddle Earth* for example roughly traces the battle between good and evil wizards. Eventually the villain is overcome with the aid of anti-heroes and singing curtains. Whereas some of its funniness derives from numerous allusions to *The Lord of the Rings*, knowledge of the original is not absolutely necessary for the comic relief. Doubtful is the extent to which child readers of *Muddle Earth* are familiar with Tolkien's work in the first place. Their parents are more likely to meet the requirements.

Ironic fantasy of a more serious kind can be found in Beddor's *The Looking-Glass Wars*. Carroll's children's classic is turned upside down and interlarded with violence and

cruelty. This does not leave much space for humour, as the heads actually do come off in this version.

Terry Pratchett and his Discworld novels[46] play in a league of their own. Invented from scratch, clearly structured and drawn up, Pratchett's secondary world even possesses its own map. Moreover, the author does not omit any characteristic feature of fantasy; nothing goes unheeded or uncommented. Despite the apparent ease of Pratchett's narrative, the reader often cannot help feeling that he is constantly overlooking allusions and overtones of subliminal comments or intertextual references. The author's humour is very individual; it covers and savours the entire bandwidth of the spectrum of fantasy.

In a **Time fantasy**, the protagonist(s) take up contact with a time level different from their own. More often than not this is the past, whereas the future is usually reserved for science fiction. Time can either be suspended, extended, sped up, shifted or travelled through.[47] By means of certain devices of entrance, be it a dream, an artefact or a location, the characters either cross into another time, or a character from another time makes an appearance in theirs. From the divergence between these two levels and the resulting difficulties the characters gain insight into the past as well as into their own time. Knowledge of the past and friendships across time strengthen the protagonists and help them understand their present reality. The time fantasy *per se* is Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*. Other works, such as Nesbit's *The House of Arden*, L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, Farmer's *Charlotte Sometime*, or Nimmo's *The Time-Twister* all offer creative approaches towards the same phenomenon.

In a **Toy fantasy** children's favourite playthings come alive, become sentient and have the power of speech. This either happens in the seclusion of a nursery, in broad daylight or in a little world of its own. *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *Paddington*, two teddy bears, are the main representatives of this subgenre of fantasy. Where *Paddington* remains the sole toy in the focus of attention, *Winnie-the-Pooh* is part of an entire menagerie of stuffed animals. Christopher Robin is their only human attachment figure to see them in action. To his father, they remain lifeless toys.[48]

---

[46] In our corpus, these are *The Wee Free Men*, *A Hat Full of Sky* and *Wintersmith*. *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* come under animal fantasy, since the main protagonists are animals.
[47] Compare Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 948.
[48] The same constellation is found in Watterson's comics *Calvin and Hobbes*, where the toy tiger Hobbes is only ever alive in front of six-year-old Calvin.

Modern fantasy is teeming with **hybrid forms**, i.e. mixtures of several genres. Back in the Golden Age of children's literature categorising fantasy novels for children was a comparatively easy venture. Topical fantasy novels for children make use of various subgenres, narrative forms and techniques, and combine them to new arrangements. What they tend not to do is restrict themselves to just one form or subgenre of fantasy. Borders blur or dissolve completely, thus allowing for wide-ranging fantasies. Instead of making this a deplorable fact, border traffic enriches the spectrum and offers new possibilities by combining elements from several varieties.

Applied to the present corpus this means that novels such as *His Dark Materials* or *Harry Potter* cannot exclusively be classed as high fantasy. As they also feature elements of Dark/ Gothic fantasy, detective novel, philosophy, *bildungsroman*, adventure story, school story etc., they are a hybrid form and have to be treated a such. Further hybrid forms on the basis of high/ low fantasy included into our corpus are for instance *The Faerie Wars Chronicles, The Valley of Secrets, The Edge Chronicles, The Secret of Platform 13, The Children of the Lamp, The Children of the Red King, Skellig, Clay, Stravaganza, Hellbent and Molly Moon.*

1.4.5 The intersection of contemporary British children's literature and fantasy: An outline of the field

As we have seen, children's literature is far from being as simple, clear-cut and easy-going as it is generally thought to be. This realisation leads to the extensive, possibly long-winded definitions or approximations of the terms involved. However, on account of the special nature and the fuzziness of the matter, definitions cannot be circumnavigated. So after the basics are more clarified, at least for the time being, we can now turn towards the main purpose of the study, i.e. the ambit standing at the intersection of contemporary British children's literature and fantasy.

With children's literature and fantasy we are dealing with two large domains of literature, so a commensurately extensive intersection of the two can be expected. It is therefore not surprising that the intersection is just as varied as the two main genres involved. The area which it covers comprises a far larger range than the smaller sector we can examine here. Not only does its spectrum contain all the principal genres of fantasy novels which have been presented in the last subchapter, but, just like children's literature and fantasy themselves, it encompasses all kinds of texts. From novels over short stories, graphic novels,

poems, drama, fanfiction, comics including mangas to magic cards, computer games or hypertexts on the internet, anything goes.

The specific feature of this intersection is that it unites within itself the characteristics of both children's literature and fantasy, thus creating a hybrid category. This hybrid combines the respective guidelines for style and topics. On the one hand, some of the main characteristics of literature for children such as the intended target group of young readers, a term open to interpretation, or the essential component of young main characters and their development are adopted. On the other hand, fantasy provides subject matter, too. Generally, the setting is a fantastic secondary world in which magic is an integral part and against the background of which the plot is deployed. Furthermore, the genre of fantasy contributes many characters, including magical creatures. Through a pooling of characteristics, new combinations are introduced.

At the intersection of children's literature and fantasy are those works which revolve around child or young protagonists in one or several fantastic secondary world(s) replete with magic, magical beings and/ or events, situations and circumstances that cannot be found as described in reality. Yet, not anything non-realistic is fantasy. For example, science fiction has high affinity with fantasy at first sight. However, as it explores technical possibilities of the future of humankind in this or other worlds, it provides rational and scientific explanations for seemingly magic events, machines and the like.

This study acknowledges and emphasises the complexity of the intermediate zone between children's literature and fantasy. However, on grounds of clarity, feasibility and not least because of profoundness, restrictive measures have to be taken. Obviously, the selected detail of the intersection cannot possibly reflect the entire bandwidth including every genre. By contrast, we shall examine one aspect more closely on a smaller scale.

1.5   The corpus

For reasons mentioned above, we will demonstrate the current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy in the light of one particular genre. Amongst poetry, drama and epic it is the latter which suggests itself as the focal point of the present study. Not only the market, but also the private sphere of children is dominated by the

epic narration, whereas plays and poems are less widely read.[49] Above all, quantitatively, neither a juxtaposition nor a close connection of fantasy and poetry or drama yield as much material as that of epic narration.

Short stories are neither long nor complex enough for our purpose. In its quality as the most common form, the novel is an ideal object for analysis. Firstly, this genre enjoys great popularity among children, mirrored by its wide circulation. Secondly, novels for children range from a basic level of complexity to very elaborate ones, which have multiple perspectives or entwined plots. In most cases novels for children make an effort to be suitable for less experienced readers by adapting word and sentence length, choice of vocabulary etc.[50] Thus their length remains either manageable or is distributed over several volumes.

The corpus of this work is designed in such a way that it encompasses selected topical British fantasy novels for children, on the basis of which the current developments at the intersection of children's literature and fantasy shall be traced. Ranging in complexity between Pullman's very short *Lyra's Oxford* (49 pages), Almond's compact *Skellig* (170 pages) to Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (766 pages), these texts thus allow analyses on a large scale. Besides offering a fixed text – in contrast to hypertexts or computer games for example – these novels have a complex setting, plot and, in some cases, a large number of characters. In addition, several texts are even illustrated with pictures or drawings. Current fantasy novels for children allow the detailed portrayal of setting, characters and conflicts. With the novel as a popular and the most widespread variety we can be sure of finding various general conventions and trends, which a smaller basis for analysis, i.e. a different genre, would not produce to this extent.

By examining the development, the various forms and characteristic features of British fantasy for children we expect to reveal valuable information about its current state. The spectrum of the corpus, a cross-section of contemporary British children's fantasy, is not intended as a bibliography of fantasy novels for children. Rather, the interest lies with the general perspective, characteristics and currents of a corpus limited to British fantasy novels

---

[49] As already mentioned, I consciously fade out other forms of children's literature such as comics, picture books, multimedia forms such as computer games, role playing games, fan fiction, audio books or film paraphernalia.
[50] Whether, and if so, in how far this statement can be applied to fantasy novels for children remains yet to be seen.

for children published between 1990 and 2007.[51] This period has been chosen on account of the inner developments and innovations. During this time span, fantasy novels for children experience a new heyday. Despite many an innovation, these texts also recall traditional values, fusing old and new alike. A fruitful combination of nostalgic and technocratic elements brings about an exceptional tension.

Altogether, one can observe that the novels of the mentioned period contrast with their precursors in several points. For one, they are complemented by a greater share of humanitarian concerns. In some cases, those matters even reach a global scale as the welfare of an entire world is at stake. Furthermore, the trend is towards well-defined heroes. Whereas, on average, previous characters were either strong on their own or acted as a more or less homogenous group, the modern characters are increasingly portrayed as strong individuals. Yet, it is within a heterogeneous group that they develop their greatest powers. Spiced with a pinch of irony and social criticism, texts of the period between 1990 and 2007 are very generous with philosophical implications.

So some of the raised prominent differences between novels of the selected period and their precursors are already discernible and mark the forming of a new era. Nevertheless, some temporal distance is required for passing more aloof judgement. For this reason, it remains to be seen whether the years between 1990 and 2007 will eventually crystallise from literary history as an established, characteristic stage in its own right and designation. Any developments in this direction should be followed closely. In any case, the necessary potential is there.

The study's limitation to British novels stems from their historically justified dominance in influential texts, especially children's classics, as well as their unfailing presence on today's international market. Despite a heightened activity and creativity on the European mainland, in Germany[52] for example, it is the British contribution to fantasy novels for children which provides the biggest share. For one, this is due to its numerical superiority, supported by translations into other European languages, but also for its inventiveness. Moreover, the omnipresence of British fantasy for children and the resulting trendsetting function also falls back on its quality. The novels which have been accepted into in our

---

[51] This period has been chosen because it covers important political and social changes and challenges such as the reunification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, The Gulf Wars, the war in former Yugoslavia, and 11th of September 2001, which all influence current British fantasy literature for children. 2007, the publication year of the seventh *Harry Potter* novel, marks the end of this selected period.
[52] Amongst important authors here range Ende, Funke, Isau or Hohlbein.

corpus[53] have been selected on the basis of the following criteria. Firstly, without exception, these texts possess their very own, characteristic kind of magic and its mechanisms. The majority of them introduce their specific fantastic world, replete with its own laws, realities and potential. Secondly, due to the popular widespread phenomenon of serialisation, the sequels can pick up the thread of a once created fantasy world. Like this, large-scale entire canopies of fantasy worlds are possible without having to squeeze everything in one volume. The advantage for both author and reader consists of the familiarity, as once the template has been presented, the sequels can concentrate fully on the plot. Thirdly, the selected novels distinguish themselves through their innovations. These can lie within the sphere of the macrostructure of the secondary world, but also in its microstructure, i.e. magical features, creatures, constellations, narrative techniques or plot. Another criterion is the diversity of the selected novels. On choosing the novels of the corpus attention was paid to cover a broad spectrum. On the one hand, it comprises the most important and influential forms of British fantasy novels for children. On the other hand, it also encompasses a wide choice of authors with their respective styles and convictions. Mirroring the numerical ratio of the field, the majority of the corpus authors are English, whereas the Irish authors Brennan, Colfer, Konlon-McKenna and Thompson, Canadian-Scottish author Foreman and the Wales-dwelling author Nimmo represent their respective country. What is more, the majority of the novels explicitly deal with philosophical, anthroposophical und ethical issues. For this reason, their topicality and profoundness constitute a further criterion.

A large number of the corpus novels already captivate with their exterior. Very elaborate, attractively designed book covers become works of art just by themselves. Of course, in the first place their task is to fascinate the potential reader on first contact. The selected period from 1990-2007 sets itself apart from its precursors[54] by producing increasingly polished as well as technically and optically demanding book covers. It is no exaggeration to say that the covers become works of art and thus suggest themselves as an object for study in their own right. Another commonality shared by the chosen texts is their high sales figures. Novels like *Harry Potter*, *Artemis Fowl* or *His Dark Materials* are bestsellers. This permits us to draw conclusions from their wide reception. Style, form, but

---

[53] For the respective titles of novels used and further bibliographical data please refer to the list of primary works in the bibliography.

[54] precious Victorian books/editions etc. excepted.

also themes appear to exactly mirror the taste and topicality, without which these novels would not reach such heights.

Not just external, but also textual factors are shared by the corpus texts. Even though these novels are almost all marketed as children's books,[55] they increasingly appeal to adults. The specific feature of these novels is rooted in their "fantastic" way of depicting the dichotomy between child and adult. In the process, the topic of maturation is given special emphasis. Couched in the fantastic background, the problems and conflicts arising from socialisation and learning are treated. Since growing up is tied to a quest and thus revalued as a prestigious fantastic adventure, the "horrors" of maturation are defused. Thus, the reader gets more readily involved.

Based on this quite large pool of novels found at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy, we are going to carry out a kind of spot check for the purpose of our survey. To this end, the field will be scanned for expressive works, which do not only have formative influence on others but which are also distinctive of the present time and full of character.

---

[55] With the exception of *Harry Potter* and *Northern Lights*. The first can be obtained in two editions, one adorned with a colourful cover for children, and the other with a sober cover for adults, whilst the text itself remains unchanged. In America, by contrast, *Northern Lights* is called *The Golden Compass* and is sold as a book for adults.

2. A historical survey: The development of British children's fantasy

For a better understanding of the current situation of British fantasy novels for children a closer look at the historical developments is indispensable. This chapter therefore outlines important diachronic changes and innovations. As this historical survey is tailored to both corpus and alignment of the present project, it does not encompass the development of the entire field. Comprehensive treatises of the history of British children's literature have been presented by M. F. Thwaite, F.J. Harvey Darton, and Humphrey Carpenter, to name only a few.[1] These explore the general history in depth and give a good overview of the broadband developments, dealing with the various genres of children's literature.

Here, we will concentrate on the historical milestones of British fantasy for children,[2] limiting the extent of this chapter to publications which proved turning points, giving new impulses and directions to children's fantasy. Many of these now classic works employ traditions of old on the one hand, while introducing innovative, original and creative changes on the other hand.

The development proper of novels specifically written for children can be traced back to the seventeenth century. According to Darton, there "were no children's books in England before the seventeenth century, and very few even then."[3] In its beginning, early children's literature consisted mainly of Horn books, primers and so-called chapbooks. From the 16th up to the 19th century[4] the latter were popular reading material. Sold by pedlars or "chapmen", these cheap booklets consisted of only a few folded pages without cover, mostly containing

---

[1] For extensive reading on the history of British children's literature the following selection can be recommended: Humphrey Carpenter. *Secret Gardens. A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature.* London; Sydney: Unwin, 1985; Marcus Crouch. *Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in Britain 1900-1960.* London: The Library Association, 1962; Marcus Crouch. *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel 1945-1970.* London: Ernest Benn, 1972; Alec Ellis. *A History of Children's Reading and Literature.* Oxford; London; Edinburgh et al.: Pergamon Press, 1968; Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life.* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1982[3] [1932]; Peter Hunt (Ed.) *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; M.F. Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure: An Introduction to the History of Children's Books in England, From the Invention of Printing to 1900.* London: The Library Association, 1963.
[2] Any separation of the history of fantasy and other children's literature may appear artificial since they are tightly interwoven, yet necessary if we focus on fantasy. This necessitates the omission of works not directly linked to the project outline.
[3] Darton, *Children's Books*, p. 1.
[4] Compare Humphrey Carpenter; Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature.* Oxford; New York et al.: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 106.

popular stories. Chapbooks were not specifically designed for children, but proved easy reading material.

Under the dominant influence of Puritanism in the 17th century, parents, teachers and clerics declared the spiritual welfare of the child to be the main concern of religious education.[5] Religious reading was strongly promoted in order to allow as many people as possible access to the Holy Scriptures. These books were "strictly utilitarian and instructional",[6] as piety and salvation[7] - and not enjoyment - were regarded as the ultimate aims. *The* Puritan classic is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). Originally, this work of spiritual fantasy was not intended for children, yet adopted by them over time. If one sets the religious allusions and motifs of Christian's journey to salvation aside, *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be read as an adventure story with fantastic elements. Two other classics of the eighteenth century, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), were not written for children, either. [8] From this arises an initially paradox situation. In the eighteenth century, the young and still developing genre of children's literature had three bestsellers[9] - *The Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels* - sold as books for adults. Yet, providing a quest, fantastic or exotic adventures and a happy ending, they appealed to the young, who skipped the political and sociocritical dimension. Soon, abbreviated, "defused" versions of these novels could be obtained, tailored to the new target group. From a political satire for adults, *Gulliver's Travels* were thus cut in length in order to obtain a tightened fantastic adventure story for children.

According to Darton, "[c]hildren's books did not stand out by themselves as a clear but subordinate branch of English literature until the middle of the eighteenth century".[10] For him, a landmark of children's literature, this time intended and written for them, was the publication of John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744). In London, John Newbery was a pioneer in the newly developing field of publishing for children. When devising attractive offers for children's books, he relied on modern merchandising strategies. With certain books came gender-specific toys, encouraging a purchase of the "product" book. In contrast to the stern and austere seventeenth-century Puritan books for children, Newbery's

---

[5] See Thwaite, *Primer*, p. 23 as well as Darton, *Children's Books*, p. 51.
[6] Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 1.
[7] Ibd., p. 4.
[8] Darton, *Children's Books*, p. 106.
[9] Ibd., p. 8.
[10] Ibd., p. 1.

concept consisted of making reading - and education along with it - enjoyable.[11] In honour of his achievements for the development of children's literature and the impulses he gave to this genre, the "John Newbery" Medal was created in the USA in 1921 in order to annually distinguish America's most meritable book for children.

With the close of the eighteenth century, religious strife slowly gave way to secularisation. Religion was to be complemented by the values of the Age of Reason, such as logic and empiricism. Consequently, the spectrum of topics for children's books opened up. Spiritual literature, with its focus on afterlife and salvation, fell behind worldly education and learning. Rousseau's pedagogical oeuvre *Émile* (1762) and Locke's theoretical tracts had great influence on the ideal education of that time. As the pioneer Newbery had propagated earlier referring to reading, it was now demanded that education be a joyful experience.[12] However, logic and empiricism tend to exclude or hinder imagination, so the Age of Reason was far from being the ideal breeding ground for fantasy. Only after the heyday of the Enlightenment did fantasy slowly begin to be admitted to and tolerated in literature for children, until such a point where, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, it even played an important market role.

Critics call the period spanning from about 1860 to 1930 the *Golden Age* of children's literature.[13] During these eventful 70 years most of today's classics were conceived and published and fantasy managed to leave its marginal position. Arguably, the achievements of this fruitful era with a qualitatively high output have not yet been met again.

In 1863, a milestone publication rang in the Golden Age of children's literature when the English clergyman[14] Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) published *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby*. In the novel, a precursor of the subgenre of modern British "Christian fantasy", Kingsley blends contemporary Victorian attitudes with his own, personal views on culture, society and education, touching on fairy tale, philosophy and biology. His children's book serves as a vessel for his discussion of a post-Darwinian revaluation of the Christian belief in the wake of evolution theory. On the basis of the fate of the chimney sweep Tom, representative of innumerable children cruelly abused by adults, Kingsley denounces child

---

[11] Ibd., p. 2.
[12] Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 64.
[13] Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, preface.
[14] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 540.

labour.[15] Marking a transition between past traditions and the gradual introduction of new concepts, the author combines old and new elements in his novel, paired with philosophical depth and intuitive understanding of the basic fears of the child. Thus in line with the spirit of the time, Kingsley's novel influenced many later children's authors in intention and style. Despite his modern interest in social issues, the author adheres to the then still traditional convention of open moralising.

Two years later, in 1865, **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**'s (1832-1898) revolutionary novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* appeared, making a deep impact on children's fantasy. The dream fantasies[16] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its 1872 sequel *Through The Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* soon became all-time children's classics. In the wake of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1842), Dodgson alias Lewis Carroll created one of the "earliest works for children to be written for the entertainment and delight of the child rather than for instruction and improvement."[17] One of the reasons for the *Alice* novels to reach bestselling status was their intentional apparent purposelessness. In contrast to Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* Carroll's works were seemingly free of moralising undertones. Already aimed at by Kingsley, this concept was perfectly implemented by Carroll and quickly gained universal acceptance among authors and readers.

What makes the two *Alice* novels so special is their complexity. Superficially, more or less loosely joined episodes describe the fantastic adventures of a little girl in Wonderland and in the Looking-Glass land. As soon as she enters these worlds, all fixed concepts such as physical laws, moral and social codes, but also meaning and chronology of time can no longer be relied on. Points of reference become slippery, eluding Alice's and the reader's grasp by means of constant transformation. Every attempt at making sense of what is said or done has to fail. Paths lead into nowhere, grins exist without any cats behind them and free seats are all taken. This intentional deconstruction or deliberate non-use of traditional forms of storytelling in children's fantasy is Carroll's main contribution to the development of the genre. Due to the reversal of forms of storytelling, conventional reading methods can no longer be applied, either. Both novels thus prove a challenge, asking the reader to leave common ground and reason behind and to enter this new world of wonder without reservation. Throughout the two

---

[15] Bernice E. Cullinan; Diane G. Person (Eds.) *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature.* New York: London: Continuum, 2001, p. 442.

[16] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 169.

[17] Victor Watson (Ed.) *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 20.

works, Carroll constantly toys with the readers. Adults and children suddenly find themselves on the same level: The adults have to throw their accumulated reading experiences over board, whereas the children have not yet acquired many of their own yet, still trying to make sense of their own world. Under the cloak of silly adventures in a topsy-turvy world, the author confronts the reader with essential questions about the nature "of identity: what forms it, whether it is a thing externally constructed by society, its categories, rules and behavioural patterns, or something that is internally made."[18] According to Watson, the novels examine "how identity is affected when the usual rules governing the individual are removed."[19] As soon as Alice leaves her ordered "real" world by falling through the rabbit hole or by entering a mirror, she literally loses the ground under her feet. With all reference points invalid, the girl is threatened with the loss of her own identity – a central concern of fantasy literature for children. "Who am I?" "What makes me special?" "What defines me in relation to other beings?" Those are questions every young person is confronted with when growing up, and they still apply to adults. By means of estrangement, the fantastic elements in *Alice* show identity conflicts reflected on a magic plane, and can thus facilitate the finding of solutions for the everyday world. Exposed to changeability and impermanence,[20] Alice's own identity becomes the last bastion, permanently threatened by annihilation. Remarkably, the girl never changes in essence, even if her physical body undergoes the strangest transformations. Amidst all instability, consistency *does* exist. For example, the mathematician Carroll based the chaotic, nonsensical worlds with their exotic inhabitants on two logical principles: Volume One is modelled on a game of cards, and Volume Two on a chess game. When a cake gets distributed and eaten before being cut, the actions are reversed, but still correspond. Their reversal challenges the reader to view everyday-experiences from an unusual angle. Even today, Carroll's alienation effects have not lost their actuality – this very "trick" is still being used in modern children's fantasy.[21]

With *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through The Looking-Glass*, Carroll introduced a variety of innovations into British children's fantasy, pointing the way to the future: A new openness and playfulness, no discernible educational aims, apparently no moral messages and a literary nonsense-world populated by timeless, immortal characters. Alice's

---

[18] Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 20.
[19] Ibd., p. 21.
[20] Ibd.
[21] Contemporary author Terry Pratchett happily employs this strategy in his Discworld novels, too.

quest for meaning and identity sparkles with word puns and innuendos, twisted words and meanings, situational humour and talk at cross-purposes, so that both content and form challenge the reader. Carroll's nonsense poems are famous, and the fantastic characters of the novels are unforgettable. This is why the magical appeal of the two *Alice* books has attracted many a later author, for example Dahl. Even today, the "matter of Alice" has not ceased to inspire modern re-workings.

George MacDonald (1825-1905), Scottish author, poet and minister,[22] published works for adults and for children. He influenced British children's fantasy with three classics: *At the Back of the North Wind*, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883). Like Kingsley, MacDonald was strongly influenced by the fairy tale tradition. His first classic children's novel, *At the Back of the North Wind*, "a sentimental fantasy with evangelical allusions",[23]appeared in 1871. The main character Diamond's travels with the North Wind and his experiences in the paradisiacal land he enters change and positively influence him. Embedded in a dream structure as in *Alice*, the novel challenges the reader to decide whether the boy has actually undertaken this journey or whether his adventures are due to feverous hallucinations. Yet, in contrast to a conventional fairy tale happy-ending, the protagonist dies, his longing for Paradise and salvation being too strong. Modern British children's fantasy has taken to accepting such unhappy endings, thus breaking free from traditional fairy tale conventions of "happily ever after". Harmony and balance are by no means discarded completely, but problematic endings in the style of MacDonald are becoming more and more frequent, mirroring the spirit of the time.

The Scottish author **Sir James Matthew Barrie** (1860-1937) created one of the most outstanding works of the Golden Age of British children's fantasy. Among uncounted adaptations in the form of novels, drama and film, the 1904 London production of *Peter Pan* was "hailed almost unanimously as the finest play ever written for children, and a classic of imaginative literature".[24] Peter Pan made his first appearance in Barrie's novel *The Little White Bird*, published in 1902.[25] *Peter Pan* proved a landmark publication in children's fantasy and soon became one of its central classics. Having formed generations of children since its publication, *Peter Pan* never lost its appeal. What makes it highly attractive for

---

[22] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 603.
[23] Cullinan; Person, *The Continuum Encyclopedia*, p. 506.
[24] Carpenter; Prichard, *The Oxford Companion*, p. 48.
[25] From this, Barrie developed a play, *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* (1904) and also adapted the matter for a novel, *Peter and Wendy* (1911).

young readers are the exotic setting, the characters and the adventures. *Peter Pan* offers a world without responsibilities and unlimited possibilities – seemingly all the wishes of children come true. Restrictive parents are absent, school is unheard of, and playtime is only interrupted by self-imagined meals. At first glance, the ideal place to be as a child. Yet, the light of the unearthly paradise is dimmed by the price the children have to pay. The central thread running throughout the novel is a deep sense of loss; best expressed in the "Lost Boys". Behind the happy façade Peter Pan is melancholic and sad. Once he has committed himself to his new world, he lacks the willpower to break free from it again in order to accept life and grow up. Instead of an active, critical confrontation with his fate he chooses a passive escape into an unchanging dream world. Ironically, the eternal boy shows eternal immaturity by being trapped in his childhood and his world.[26]

Barrie's achievements lie in the creation of a unique, almost mythical secondary world, pieced together by combining different motifs of children's literature favourites. Initially similar to Edith Nesbit's concept, magic intrudes into the everyday life of children, but then guides them into a different world. Depending on their preferences, Peter Pan's realm offers various possibilities of identification for children: The genre of the adventure story is covered by the pirates, the Indians and the Lost Boys, the fairy tale genre by the mermaids, fairies and the ability to fly, embedded in the frame of domestic story. With the strong personalities of Hook, Peter, Tinkerbell and Wendy, Barrie has provided children's literature with another set of immortal characters, firmly anchored in the minds of children and grown-ups alike. It has become a "cultural myth".[27]

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924) also strongly influenced children's literature. Her main works were published between 1899 and 1911, which makes her late Victorian and Edwardian at the same time. New about Nesbit's approach to fantasy are her ways of letting magic intrude upon the domestic reality of children and then solving the problems arising from the resulting clash. Just like real children, Nesbit's protagonists only live in the here and now. Due to their lack of farsightedness, consequences are only thought of when they arise. A high percentage of dialogue renders the liveliness of their playful explorations of possibilities, facilitating children's identification with the characters. Three of her best novels strongly influenced the development of British children's fantasy: *Five Children and It* (1902), *The*

---

[26] See also Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 754.
[27] Compare Jacqueline Rose. *The Case of Peter Pan, Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 5.

Phoenix and the Carpet (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906). The technique of letting magic intrude upon reality, established in her first fantasy novel *Five Children and It*, "has been a fruitful tradition in fantasy ever since."[28] Nesbit's contribution to the development of children's fantasy was to establish humour as an essential part, together with realistic renderings of child play and language. Like Carroll before her, she was not prone to heavy moralising and open didacticism, either. According to Cullinan and Person, Nesbit was also "one of the first to use the idea that time progressing within the fantasy has taken up no real time at all upon the return to reality",[29] a feature to be used in many subsequent novels, from Lewis's *Narnia Chronicles* to *Harry Potter*. Deepened in her time travel novel *The House of Arden* (1908), Nesbit set the rules for following time fantasies. Usually, objects cannot be taken from one time level to another, time travellers understand all languages effortlessly and must not or can not change history.[30]

Kenneth Grahame, (1859-1932), born in Scotland, was a "banker and writer."[31] The Edwardian author initially became famous for his 1895 publication of *The Golden Age*, addressed to adults, yet also read by children. According to Carpenter, the anthropomorphic novel *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) combines children's innocence and adults' experience whilst remaining "largely accessible to children."[32] Like other children's fantasies before it, *The Wind in the Willows* developed from invented stories told by the author to his little son. Now a children's classic, *"[it]* is one of the most popular and famous children's fantasies of the 20th century." [33] According to Hunt, Grahame's allegorical work has an ambivalent status. Like so many other children's fantasies, it is a hybrid between two reader levels, that of children and that of adults.[34] Illustrated by the very personal, sensitively narrated initiation of the mole the central, traditional values of *The Wind in the Willows* are made accessible without slipping off into sentimentality. Whereas children learn about initiation, forming bonds of friendship, widening the personal horizon, internalising socially accepted behaviour, establishing and respecting boundaries, the adults have already made all these experiences and can now judge and compare.

---

[28] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 680.
[29] Cullinan; Person, *The Continuum Encyclopedia*, p. 538.
[30] Compare Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer. *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein Internationales Lexikon*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004, p. 781.
[31] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 426.
[32] Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, p. 169.
[33] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 427.
[34] Compare Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature*, pp. 96, 99.

The Wind in the Willows had a strong influence on children's fantasy, especially animal stories. Most of Grahame's followers honour the same values of friendship, warmth, security and idyllic cohabitation.[35] Later authors rely heavily on Grahame's pattern, finding it exactly the right mixture of components. Conforming to the still prevailing conventions of children's fantasy, the ending, not only of Grahame's but also of future animal stories, tends to be a happy one: Troublemakers either adapt to peaceful cohabitation or have to leave again. In most of these animal stories pre-industrial conditions are favoured, casting humans and their destructive inventions in a negative light. Animal communities are often depicted in idealised medieval settings, for example in *The Silver Horn* or *Redwall*, thus reinforcing the author's and reader's nostalgia of better times.

The First World War marked a sharp break in children's fantasy, the Golden Age slowly petering out after this shock. As in all times of social and political instability, the literary output was inhibited. Yet, thematically, these times favour an escape from an all too painful reality. Consequently, during such periods, this kind of fantasy experiences a boom.

In his famous *Pooh* novels, the British playwright, novelist and poet[36] **Alan Alexander Milne** (1882-1956) created such an escapist fantasy world. Set in a pastoral, idyllic play-world, Milne's two fantasies relate the adventures of a small boy, Milne's son, and his stuffed plush animals. Two prose novels, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), and two poetry collections, *When We Were Very Young* (1924) and *Now We Are Six* (1927), established the lasting fame of the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh and its young owner Christopher Robin. Although Milne considered himself primarily a writer for adults, nowadays we associate him exclusively with his novels and poems for children, including the play *Toad of Toad Hall* (1929), an adaptation of Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.[37]

Almost 80 years after their first publication, the *Pooh* books have not lost their initial charm and "continue to be best-sellers."[38] With loving detail, Milne draws the picture of an idyllic community of Christopher Robin's talking toy animals. Like in real life, every animal has its own distinctive character, including all its flaws. Due to their own little foibles, harmless misunderstandings and problems arise, always to be solved in the end. So on the one

---

[35] Compare C.S. Lewis. "On Stories". In: Margaret Meek; Aidan Warlow; Griselda Barton (Eds.) *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*. London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1977, pp. 76-90, p. 85.
[36] Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 483.
[37] Ibd., p. 483.
[38] Compare Cullinan; Person, *The Continuum Encyclopedia*, p. 548.

hand, Christopher Robin is the child of the frame-story, on the other hand the fatherly, adult figure within the story. Yet, he is still child enough to enjoy all the little things that make up childhood: Friends, food, social pick-nicks and exploration parties.[39]

In *The House at Pooh Corner* the animals, just like the children*,* have to learn how to cope with their animosities, how to deal with jealousy, how to make compromises and how to apologise after a quarrel. All this is done in a simple, clear language which small children can easily understand and follow when read to or when starting to read for themselves.[40] Furthermore, the fact that these lessons are disguised in an animal story makes it easier for the children to accept the moral values conveyed. It can be noted, however, that *The House at Pooh Corner* is not as carefree and light-hearted as *Winnie-the-Pooh*. At the end of the playful book looms a serious future. Christopher Robin will leave the nursery and his toys behind, go to school and eventually grow up. The spell will soon be broken. Yet, in the meantime, we revel in the nostalgic and melancholic illusion of eternal youth and bliss. What stays behind is the loving memory of the cute bear of very little brain, a symbol of carefree childhood, inspiring later authors such as Richard Adams for their own animal fantasies.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit, Or, There and Back Again* (1937) marks the next highlight after Milne. Standing at the beginning of the Oxford professor's literary career outside university, the children's novel lays the foundations for an entire fantastic universe to be developed over several decades and volumes.[41] It is no exaggeration to say that, with his works, Tolkien set a high standard for fantasy. Through his creation of an entire secondary world complete with its own distinctive geography, mythology, history and languages, meticulously planned and designed down to the last detail, Tolkien shaped modern high fantasy's form and content. *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), undisputedly the author's flagship,[42] can be called a genuine watershed of the genre. Due to its formative influence it allows works to be classed as pre- or post-Tolkienian. The author's approach of creating a scrupulously coherent and consistent new world, unprecedented in this form, proved an almost indispensable model for fantasists to come. However, only a few have managed to equal his achievements to this extent.

---

[39] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 728.
[40] Compare Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 647.
[41] Such as *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, The Book of Lost Tales* and *The Silmarillion*.
[42] Compare William H. Green. *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity.* New York et al.: Twayne, 1995, p. 8.

Nowadays often smiled at condescendingly, sometimes "degraded" as the children's prequel to Tolkien's epoch-making epic of the Ring, *The Hobbit* has been eclipsed by the fame and cult of its adult sequel. Originally, *The Lord of the Rings* modestly set out as a second book about hobbits. However, it soon "grew magnificently out of control",[43] transferring and developing *The Hobbit*'s world and its conflicts on a larger scale into a complex, global war between good and evil. *The Hobbit* introduces us to the now legendary Middle-earth, the fictitious geographical setting of both works, and tells the story of the eponymous hero, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins. In many ways he resembles a child, for instance in statue, in material and emotional needs and inexperience. Once he sets out on the quest with his mentor Gandalf and the dwarves, every step further away from home brings him a step closer to experience and maturity. *The Hobbit* is therefore a *bildungsroman* of Bilbo, which takes him "there and back again", i.e. into the wide world and back home. The journey takes the form of a rite of passage. In several stages, Bilbo gradually grows into an independent adult. Responsibility, decision-making, personal bravery, loyalty and knowledge are only a few of his new assets. So on his return, the hobbit has learned his lesson in life, developed his character, widened his horizon and become susceptible for and tolerant towards others. *The Hobbit* made an important contribution to modern fantasy by reviving heroic fantasy for children. In his essay "On Fairy-Stories" (1938) Tolkien provides the theoretical background to his literate defence of fairy tales and fantasy, rehabilitating the genre. Like a manifesto, it assembles and lays down a set of "successful" conventions for later authors. Thus, traditional fairy tale, myth and folklore components such as the journey, the companions, magical artefacts, fantastic beings and the central conflict between good and evil are today almost indispensable for any fantasy for the young. In contrast to static fairy tale or mythical heroes, the young and unmoulded hero has potential to develop his character. Character studies give us insight into the protagonists' inner conflicts and allow a more challenging discussion of key questions, for example psychological, ethical and moral issues. Another element which distinguishes Tolkien's fantasy novel is the fact that "*The Hobbit* carries great conviction".[44] The feeling of honesty and, strange as it may sound, vivid reality create the magic of *The Hobbit*, to be surpassed in this form only by *The Lord of the Rings*. Even after so many years, the topicality of Tolkien's concern, openness towards otherness, has not yet worn off.

---

[43] Green, *The Hobbit*, p. 8.
[44] Crouch, *Treasure Seekers*, p. 67.

1938 saw the publication of **T.H. White's** (1906-1964) reworking of the Arthurian matter, *The Sword in the Stone*. Shrouded in mystery, the legendary king[45] has always inspired and challenged writers. This elusiveness proves advantageous, as sparse historical evidence opens the way for creative interpretation and imagination. Such a versatility makes Arthur one of the most interesting figures in literature. *The Sword in the Stone* is the first novel in a series of four, assembled in *The Once and Future King,*[46] and intended as a kind of prequel to Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). Perhaps comparable to the missing years in Jesus' life between his appearance in the Temple and his preaching as an adult, the curriculum vitae of the mythical king Arthur shows an important gap, which inspired White to write an introduction to the Arthurian matter. By focussing on Arthur's early years, the author reassesses the formative influence of childhood and youth on later life. Still, *The Sword in the Stone* cannot simply be said to be an adaptation of the epic tailored to children.[47] As we have already seen with other classics, this novel is another example of double address. Whereas intertextuality and theoretical excurses aim at older readers, children delight in the funny adventures and witty humour.[48] White shows us that even the venerable mythical king must have started off small. When the wise but scatter-brained wizard Merlyn takes Arthur on as a pupil, magical lessons help the page boy to see the world with different eyes. Merlyn, "who lives backwards in time",[49] is an endearing yet tragic figure because he is the only one who knows about Arthur's fate. This knowledge of Arthur's further development looms over carefree and playful episodes of White's novel and, for the mature reader, dampens the joy over the boy's achievements.

With his witty and sometimes very ironic historic fantasy *The Sword in the Stone*, White criticises society itself. In this parodistic "tradition", a speciality of the late 20th century,[50] established epic conventions such as codes of knightly behaviour, heroism and the

---

[45] Classed as a "Traumfigur aus Historie, Sage und Wunschvorstellung" in: Heinz Ohff. *Artus: Eine Biographie*. München; Zürich: Piper, 1993, p. 10.

[46] The latter refers to the Glastonbury inscription "Hic iacet Arturus rex quondam rexque futurus". Compare Fran Doel; Geoff Doel; Terry Lloyd. *König Artus und seine Welt*: *Ein Streifzug durch Geschichte, Mythologie und Literatur*. Erfurt: Sutton, 2000, p. 138; as well as Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 1010.

[47] Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 1151.

[48] Ibd.

[49] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 1011.

[50] If Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha* was still an exception, parody nowadays has almost become a convention, especially in children's fantasy. Overcome conventions are parodied or ridiculous fantastic worlds designed. Intertextuality plays an important role here, as the knowledge of the original is taken for granted with parody. As we will see later on with parasitical literature, the high level of the original work is no obstacle for parody. Social criticism has also become a central issue of children's fantasy.

quest are targets for the author's sideswipes. Disillusionment is one of the results of his parody: Merlyn's and the narrator's anachronisms[51] obstruct any consistent portrayal of medieval society. Past, present and future become blurred, producing a comical effect. Once Arthur has completed his education, drawing the magic sword from the stone becomes a test of his newly acquired abilities. This proves to be the crucial moment in Arthur's life, since it is irrevocable. Neither can childhood be re-entered nor the sword be returned. This symbolic act of taking on a deadly weapon entails power and responsibility; for example conscious, moral decisions about sparing or forfeiting the lives of others. As we will see, the question of power is one of the central issues in children's fantasy. In his novel, the convinced pacifist White consequently discusses advantages and disadvantages of power and how to use it best. The later parts of the tetralogy *The Once and Future King* elaborate even more on this aspect. Interestingly, White's manifesto for a peaceful world without war is far from being antiquated, since the author's concerns about the implications of power have lost neither their volatile nature nor their topicality.

Whereas White wrote with the threat of the Second World War looming over Europe, Lewis' Narnia novels were published in its aftermath. As we have seen earlier with Milne, traumatic impressions of a war favour the genre of fantasy; first and foremost of the nostalgic kind. The latter turns its mind back to traditional values, to religion and spirituality. At the same time, nostalgia can express itself in utopias, too.

With *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the Oxford scholar **Clive Staples Lewis** (1898-1963) published a fantasy series for children whose seven volumes have long since attained the status of children's classics. Despite their name, the *Chronicles* were neither written nor published in the linear order of events. It was only after the completion of the seventh tome that the author puzzled them together to establish a chronology. The recommended reading thus starts with *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), via *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader* (1952) and *The Silver Chair* (1953) to *The Last Battle* (1956). All seven volumes work on the same principle. Children protagonists in need of spiritual help, i.e. siblings and friends in various combinations and points in time, cross the magical border into the fantastic realm of Narnia, ruled by the majestic lion Aslan. There, the children have to prove themselves in several adventures, gaining experience and knowledge. Some of them even

---

[51] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 1153.

grow up in Narnia and become kings and queens. Yet on returning home they are children again. Here, Lewis uses Nesbit's concept of suspending time to allow for fantastic adventures. No matter how long the duration of their stay in the magical country, the children always return to their present.

Like his close friend and co-Inkling Tolkien[52] Lewis was a believing Christian. With the *Chronicles* he adapted the Christian doctrine of salvation into an allegorical adventure series recapitulating key episodes from the Bible. Amongst others, Lewis reworked Temptation, Sin, the Fall, Jesus' Stations of the Cross, apocalypse and eternal life after death. Central character of the series is the charismatic lion Aslan, who embodies purely positive qualities. In the course of events we encounter him as Creator of Narnia, friend of the children, mentor, protector, magic helper, father figure and saviour.

Despite its cast of fantastic beasts and wondrous characters sprung from fairy tale and myth combined with a touch of medieval romance, the series boils down to a very traditional core: The eternal struggle between good and evil. Almost naively, right and wrong, darkness and light are clearly set apart. Such transparent structures are intended to guide the reader's empathies towards the good characters. Judgement is passed on the bad and, as Lewis emphasises, only the good ones are rewarded with eternal life. Imbued with Christian faith, values and symbolism as the novels are, their allegorical character is paradoxically not easily detected by children. It is even possible to leave the Christian implications aside and to concentrate on the mere "action". Above all, great importance is attached to *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Last Battle*. The first novel re-enacts Jesus' Stations of the Cross. Aslan sacrifices himself to keep evil at bay and rises from the dead. The second novel suggests the possible magnitude and course of events of the apocalypse. Lewis' rendering of the Judgement Day classically leads to salvation. *The Last Battle* ends with the death and entry of the children's and their relatives' souls into eternal paradise. In accordance with the Christian doctrine of salvation, the author casts his eyes on the hereafter. Consequently, Narnia can be regarded as a kind of preparatory antechamber to eternal life.[53] As MacDonald or Kingsley before him, Lewis does not shrink back from taboos in traditional children's fantasy.[54] On the contrary: He consciously discusses topics such as violence, suffering, pain

---

[52] The Inkling-Society is described by Coren as one of the "produktivsten und interessantesten Literaturzirkel unseres Jahrhunderts". Michael Coren, *C.S. Lewis. Der Mann, der Narnia schuf. Eine Biographie.* Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1998, p. 45.

[53] Compare Coren, *Der Mann, der Narnia schuf*, p. 55.

[54] See Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 623.

and death. The collective death scene at the end of the last battle is very unusual for a children's fantasy, even today. After his roundhouse blow, Lewis clumsily tries to limit the damage done. Nevertheless, instant harmony, peace and hope, intended to outweigh the violent deaths, fail to appease.

Like many other authors of children's fantasy, Lewis believed that good stories for children should appeal to the parents as well. Even when grown up, the ex-children should still be able to read the Narnia novels and gain something from them: Good literature addresses people on various levels.[55]

Mary Norton's (1903-1992) contribution to the modern classics of children's fantasy is her series about *The Borrowers*. With her novels about tiny people living secretly alongside humans, Norton alludes to the fairy tale tradition of the undetected presence of house elves in human dwellings. The size of the minuscule Borrowers reminds us vaguely of Swift's Lilliputians, allowing them to live behind grandfather clocks or under floorboards. Their euphemistic[56] name derives from their one-sided "symbiosis" with people. Daily needs are satisfied by taking lost or discarded things from humans. Taking it very seriously that their existence remains a secret to the unsuspecting hosts, the Borrowers craftily secure their supplies: Things of manageable size, which have a nasty habit of disappearing. Pins, buttons or pens for example[57] are easily misplaced and lost for good. Norton playfully suggests an explanation for this daily "magic": The Borrowers are behind it all. Years later, Rowling picks up on this suggestion in her Harry Potter series, but substitutes the little people by magic. The appeal and popularity of *The Borrowers* (1952) was Norton's incentive to elaborate her idea in further volumes: *The Borrowers Afield* (1955), *The Borrowers Afloat* (1959), *The Borrowers Aloft* (1961) and *Poor Stainless: A New Story about the Borrowers* (1971).

Together with Lewis's and Norton's works **Philippa Pearce's** (*1920) time fantasy *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) had formative influence on the development of British children's fantasy in the 1950s. Carpenter characterises Pearce's mature work as "one of the few post-1945 books that can measure up to the best Victorian and Edwardian writing in its

---

[55] Lewis' following statement is highly topical even today: "I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story." C.S. Lewis. "Three Ways On Writing For Children". In: Egoff; Stubbs; Ashley (Eds.) *Only Connect*, p. 210.

[56] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 792.

[57] Ibd., p. 793.

emotive power and the strength of its images."[58] Pearce created a fantastic, moving story with the help of simple ingredients. An old, unreliable grandfather clock opens a connection between present and past events, the house and the garden and the children Tom and Hatty. Just as the thirteenth hour stands outside time itself, Tom's presence in the garden is not subject to time as we know it. Cleverly, Pearce never states clearly whether Tom dreams his nightly escapades or whether the garden really appears during the magic hour. Time, space and the children's magical friendship resemble a dewdrop, always in the unsteady balance between existence and vaporisation. As Tom can only access the garden when Hatty needs him or dreams of him,[59] there are gaps in time. Whilst Hatty grows up, the boy remains unchanged. Over time, Tom's appearance becomes fainter to Hatty, until he completely fades away from her life and cannot re-enter the garden any more.

Pearce surprises the reader with a very unusual ending. We learn that Hatty is the younger version of old Mrs. Bartholomew, the owner of the house. The author leaves us with the mystery of how Tom could possibly have been part of Hatty's youth so many years ago. Not many other novels can claim to touch their readers so deeply and to stimulate their imagination in such a way.

According to Carpenter and Prichard, **Alan Garner** (*1934) is "the most widely discussed British children's writer of the 1960s and the 1970s".[60] In the 1960s, when Garner started writing and publishing fantasy novels for children, siblings as protagonists were the literary fashion of the genre.[61] Consequently, his first two novels, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) and its sequel, *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), feature brother and sister as "heroes": The characters are flat and cliché-laden, without any personality. Set in rural Cheshire, the fast-paced works are partially based on Celtic mythology and folklore. Both evolve around a quest, during which magic intrudes upon the lives of children. Strongly alluding to Merlin, Garner introduces the wizard Cadellin, the children's guide during their struggle against evil. The children are no more than bit players in a power-struggle between good and evil beyond their control or influence. In their walk-on parts, the siblings are only steered through the novel because – as protagonists – they must win.

---

[58] Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, p. 218.
[59] Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 836.
[60] Carpenter; Prichard, *The Oxford Companion*, p. 198.
[61] Ibd., p. 199.

Whereas in Garner's "apprentice works"[62] *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and *The Moon of Gomrath* other-world magic breaks into reality, the children never actually leave the real world. Garner's third novel *Elidor* (1965) works on the same principle of intrusion of myth and magic into reality. Here, Garner shows himself far more concerned with the realistic rendering of characters and a challenging magic quest. The four siblings become guardians of magic treasures from the wasteland realm of Elidor, which they hide from the enemies in their own world. In Garner's third novel, the domestic life at Manchester is thrown off balance when the other side tries to retrieve the treasures, causing mayhem in the procedure.

Garner clearly matures over time from his debut work to *The Owl Service* (1967), an elaborate fantasy based on the Welsh *Mabinogion*. With *The Owl Service*, the author produced a demanding novel. The complexity of the work makes it a challenge for readers of all ages. Garner focuses on adolescence, a difficult phase of transition between childhood and adulthood.[63] The three teenage protagonists of *The Owl Service* are in the middle of this critical period of time. It reveals itself to be an explosive cocktail of youthful uncertainty, emotional instability, waking sexuality and raging hormones, resulting in irregular, unpredictable violent eruptions. Caught up in a conflict-laden constellation of a love-triangle, fate and mythology the three protagonists struggle to find their own way. Several factors work towards the complexity of Garner's novel. Intentional gaps in the narration, a distant narrator and various unassigned dialogues complicate the understanding of an intricate plot of three interwoven levels: Firstly a mythical story from the Welsh *Abinogion*, secondly the same constellation a generation earlier, and thirdly the present-day conflict. The interconnection of all three levels evokes the impression of a literary puzzle.[64]

Over time, from *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* to *Red Shift* (1973), Garner detaches the narrator more and more from the story, giving less and less clues and guidance. An overall, deliberate indeterminateness climaxes in ambiguous and controversial endings.[65] With his mature works, Garner thus introduces structures and techniques otherwise reserved to adult literature into children's fantasy. Garner's approach of writing about a certain geographic area, its historical and mythical heritage combined with the influence of magic

---

[62] Ibd.
[63] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 378.
[64] Ibd.
[65] Compare Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 537.

affecting a group of children or teenagers, favourably siblings, has for example inspired Susan Cooper's successful *The Dark is Rising* sequence.

Roald Dahl (1916-1990), British writer of Norwegian parentage,[66] has marked children's fantasy of the second half of the twentieth century with his unforgettable characters and ruthless treatment of adults. No other author has been so contested because of his portrayals of children and adults in his works. Even today, Dahl divides readers in two distinct, incompatible camps. Whereas mainly children and adults with a good sense of black humour adore his anarchic figures and enjoy the various conflicts between evil adults and mischievous children, there are those who simply dislike him heartily. Between these two positions no shades of grey seem to be discernible. Dahl's novels[67] live off the crass representation of the daily battle between children and adults. In accordance with the "traditional childhood fantasy that children will prevail in battles with evil adults",[68] the author's child protagonists heroically ward off nasty grown-ups. Many critics take offence to this harsh treatment of adults as representatives of authority, respect and order. However, very much to the delight of his fans, the author presents heavily exaggerated specimen of cruel and abusive adults to the readers, only to ridicule them mercilessly afterwards, paying no heed to any possible consequences.

What fascinates his admirers is his "uncanny ability to think as a child".[69] For young readers, memorable characters like Jack, Charlie or Matilda are very easy to identify with, since the logic motivating them is stringent and understandable for every child and supported by short, clearly structured sentences. Clear-cut, over-exaggerated black and white contrasts between good and evil draw the reader onto the side of the "good" child protagonists and the narrator – a pact of mutual understanding between narrator and reader is formed.

Despite marvellous incidents, magic as such is used only sparingly in Dahl's low fantasy novels. When applied, however, magic has a huge impact on the events, resulting in rather brisk changes from realism into fantasy and back[70] with radical turns of the story. The author's recipe for success is complemented by a lot of action, farcical as well as pantomimic

---

[66] Compare Carpenter; Prichard, *The Oxford Companion*, p. 143.
[67] *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964/ 1967), *Charlie and the Glass Elevator* (USA 1972/ UK 1973), *Jack and the Giant Peach* (1961), *The Witches* (1983), *BFG* (1982), *The Twits* (1980) or *Matilda* (1988), to name the most famous ones.
[68] Cullinan; Person, *The Continuum Encyclopedia*, p. 216.
[69] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 245.
[70] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 270.

elements,[71] absence of moral undertones with a tendency towards anarchy, vulgarity, malicious joy, black humour and a vast amount of word-play and nonsense. Lear's and Carroll's influence is discernible, yet taken a lot further into Dahl's own direction. What Monty Python is to adults, Dahl is to children. With his characteristic irony and black humour he sketches rather bizarre and paradox, even grim scenes, following through to sometimes very wayward and unexpected solutions. Although the scope of fantasy may allow for more rule-breaking than realism, there are limits. Even a Roald Dahl cannot write about everything: Sexual abuse of children is taboo.

UK-born writer **Susan Cooper**'s (*1935) main contribution to children's fantasy is her *The Dark is Rising* sequence. Ordered chronologically, the series opens with *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), *The Dark is Rising* (1973), *Greenwitch* (1974), *The Grey King* (1975) and *Silver On The Tree* (1977). Noticeably influenced by Tolkien's works, Celtic mythology and Arthurian legends, Cooper develops a world caught in the struggle between good and evil, Light and Dark. Each novel sets a quest whose solution brings the protagonists one step closer to victory and peace. In the course of the novels the children fulfil prophecies and gather symbolic objects of power. Cooper suggests the existence of a magical, timeless world besides the real one, enlarging the spectrum of her narrative considerably and adding a mythical dimension. The Dark may be rising, but in due course it is defeated by the Light. In her sequence, the author fuses and presents a medley of fantasy, sometimes dimmed by her drifting off into clichés.

However, from the end of the 1970s onwards, **Diana Wynne Jones** (*1934) slowly established herself in the genre. Inspired by authors such as Lewis or Tolkien, Wynne Jones pointed the way to the future of fantasy in the 1980s and 1990s. She can look back onto a rich output of intriguing fantasy novels for children. Despite Wynne Jones' relatively high output of books, we do not find much repetition. Each of her many-faceted and imaginative novels is based on a new idea or concept and is composed in its own, carefully chosen style. Typical of her suspenseful story-telling are concise sentences, irony – often conveyed through stark contrasts of good and bad – and the indispensable humour; the latter tailored individually to the respective situation. Of the contemporary writers of fantasy for children in Britain, Wynne Jones' spectrum is huge, covering a multitude of worlds and creatures, as well as many styles and topics. In her own individual way, the author treats the central issues of children's

---

[71] Compare Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 192.

fantasy: Good versus evil, rite of passage, initiation, friendship and choice-making. The author is probably best known for her *Dalemark* series[72] and her *Chrestomanci* series.[73] In *The Lives of Christopher Chant* Wynne Jones suggests the intriguing possibility of a universe replete with entire "series of alternate worlds;"[74] a topic which has always fascinated writers and readers of fantasy and science-fiction, for example C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Fire and Hemlock (1984) portrays the immersion of the female main character in a mysterious puzzle of myth and reality, which can only be solved once "she comes to a recognition that she must recreate the travails of the heroine of the Tam Lin ballad."[75] This mysterious, skilful intertwining of fact and fantasy is Wynne Jones' speciality. Like Garner's *The Owl Service*, the mystery of *Fire and Hemlock* withstands many readings, turning it into a quest itself. The multiple layers of her novels draw upon psychology, sociology and even politics,[76] adding even more facets to the narrative.

---

[72] Consisting of *Cart and Cwidder* (1975), *Drowned Ammet* (1977), *The Spellcoats* (1979) and *The Crown of Dalemark* (1993).
[73] *Charmed Life* (1977), *The Magicians of Caprona* (1980), *Witch Week* (1982) and *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988).
[74] Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 522.
[75] Ibd.
[76] Compare Watson, *Cambridge Guide*, p. 150.

3.   Research report

In the previous chapter, both origins and historical development of British fantasy for children have been sketched. Elements, forms, themes and issues but also didactic concepts were outlined in their respective contexts, showing important currents, trends, changes and innovations. As we have seen, the rich potential of the field has been growing steadily, enlarging its spectrum and widening its horizon.

On the temporal scale we have now reached the present. As any stocktaking of topical events reveals, their simultaneousness complicates their analysis and classification due to the lack of temporal distance. As contemporaries, authors, readers as well as critics share the same socio-cultural environment and can actively respond to mutual impetus, whereas previous publications and later generations of readers and critics are denied this possibility of interaction. Yet, a stocktaking despite the genre's dynamic development leads to the initially provisional nature of a concurrent study's findings and theories, which future studies will have to prove and to confirm with the help of temporal distance. The same holds true not only for an overview of the genre but also for its criticism and interpretation, as the critics judge contemporary developments. With the initial landscape being the same for everyone, the exploration of the genre's current developments becomes a joint venture: A litero-geographical quest for orientation, identification, classification[1] and mapping but also of comparison to already established values.

3.1   Situation of the contemporary research in British Children's Literature

Against this background we are going to inquire into the situation of the contemporary research in British children's literature and present an overview of current views held by researchers and critics of the field. The current situation is characterised by a cross between forms and contents, tradition and innovation, past and present as well as present and future. As we will see later on, this hybridity is an important feature of the current state of the genre. In order to accommodate for the multi-layered diversity and polyphony of the current publications of British fantasy novels for children, both criticism and research are required to adjust to this phenomenon by means of combined approaches, disciplines and methods.

---

[1] Time and future studies will tell whether the traditional means and parameters of classification and definition can or should still be applied to the genre, or whether the developments necessitate a restructuring and adaptation to new circumstances.

Although there are studies which inquire into single aspects, they cannot neglect the fact that, for a global examination, the novels' blending of forms and styles requires an analysis and criticism which takes this interdisciplinariness into account. However, by consciously extrapolating one or more selected aspects, literary researchers and critics can analyse and discuss them in more detail.

There are as many aspects of study as there are aspects in British children's fantasy novels. With the genre's widening horizon their number and diversity are constantly increasing. As we will see in the following, the more children's literature and literature for adults approach each other, the more their topics do, too. With an increasing adult interest in reading, analysing and criticising children's fantasy, disciplines and theories stemming from adult literary criticism are introduced and applied to the genre.[2] The situation of contemporary research in British children's literature, and, in our case, fantasy, tallies that of adult literature in so far as all currents, disciplines and theories are represented. Some approaches have been present since the very beginnings of children's literature itself, for example social criticism, educational theories or religious aspects. Others, such as feminist, environmentalist or Marxist theories, reader-response theory, psychological approaches, post-/ neo-colonialism, Hunt's childist criticism or comparative studies of international children's literature have only been recently transferred from adult literature to the genre.

Yet, there is one aspect which, from the very start, has not ceased to occupy everyone involved with children's literature, be it authors, teachers, parents, children or critics. Each group quests for their grail: The good book.[3] **Authors** attempt to write books which appeal to children in both form and content. At the same time, they also need to meet the educational demands of parents[4] and teachers as well as comply to marketing strategies. **Children** define a good book by its readability. For them, it has to be enjoyable, suspenseful and imaginative; i.e. a good pastime. For the **parents** and **teachers**, a good book literally has to be worth it by providing quality for money. Educational aspects stand in the foreground: How does the book positively influence the development of the child's cognition and their social skills? How well does it prepare them for "reality"? **Teachers** are also concerned about the quality of

---

[2] Vice versa, in how far disciplines and literary theories of children's literature in turn can nowadays be applied to *adult literature* is an interesting question. Unfortunately, it cannot be pursued within the scope of this study.

[3] Naturally, the definition and interpretation of this term depends on the respective generation and its self-image, morals, values and view of the world. It therefore changes over time.

[4] As long as children do not have any income of their own, in most cases the way to the bookshelf of the children leads via the demands, expectations and the wallet of the parents.

children's books. For them, the pedagogical value of children's books is the deciding factor. The **critics** quest for the good children's book as well, focussing their attention on the many aspects the book as an art form can have on the one hand and on judging and interpreting it on the basis of one or more theories on the other hand.[5] Among the latter are for example all kinds of literary criticism such as historical or comparative approaches, social, political, religious, ethical or gender-oriented aspects. This quest for the good book has formative influence on the situation of contemporary research in British children's literature, which is mainly characterised by the multeity and interweaving of forms, contents and genres on the one hand and a corresponding multeity and an entwining of approaches and disciplines on the other hand.

3.2   Children's literature criticism

In order to make allowances for the fact that children's literature is so variform, its current critics must be just as versatile as their subject. This feature of polyphony, which characterises the genre's current situation, is therefore also found in its criticism. Whereas this versatility is the great potential of both literature and its criticism, the sheer amount and the simultaneity of approaches and views render the field less lucid. In order to give a structured overview of the situation we will thus focus on main theories and their representatives only.[6]

The broad range of children's literature criticism offers an ideal vantage point for the aims of our study, the analysis of the current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy. As it examines the developments and phenomena of the field, children's literature criticism is an important indicator for transformations of the current trends influenced by social, political and ecological progress. Differences of opinion contribute to a many-facetted analysis, which, in turn, helps to construct a multi-dimensional overall picture. Whereas from concurrences generalisations can be deducted, the divergences reveal interesting touchstones.

---

[5] Critics inquire not only into a book's quality aspects, but for instance also examine reader address, morals and messages, i.e. the current ideology, conveyed.

[6] So as not to go beyond the scope of this study, minor or more specialised theories, irrespective of their originality, have to be discounted here. More extensive studies still need to examine the entire bandwidth of topical children's literature criticism.

3.3   Important representatives and their influence

In its diversity the field of current British children's literature can take adult literature on any time. Not too long ago children's literature was smiled at condescendingly and treated as a mere gateway literature for beginners. However, today's literary scene faces a phenomenon which sceptics did not believe children's literature to be capable of: Its emancipation. The more demanding topical publications become, the more literary critics become aware of its potential. They commence applying theories to literature for children, be they literary, social, political, gender-oriented or other, which so far have been limited to "serious" adult literature. This development can mean two things. Either, children's literature has established itself as a literary form of equal rank with that of adults and is being respected and appreciated as such; or it diffuses with adult literature. It can therefore be observed that the landscape of children's literature resembles that of adult literature in its diversity. As varied as the field are its researchers, its critics as well as their media. Whereas classically new theories and approaches are either published as monographs, articles in anthologies or magazines,[7] a new mouthpiece for children's literature has emerged online. An increasing number of contributions like reviews, background information on authors and their work, fan club websites or fan fiction can be found on the internet.

As the twentieth century progresses **in Britain**, more and more authors and critics become self-confident of their work, its aesthetics, its use and importance. As a result, they venture into new areas of criticism, applying "adult" approaches to the maturing genre. Watson claims that with the changing notion of childhood the adaptation of a topical definition of children's literature was made the focal point of criticism in the 20th century.[8] At the beginning of the 21st century, however, with fantasy literature for adults and that for children developing towards each other, critics start questioning the necessity for such a possibly outdated enterprise. Educational approaches have been complemented by social, cultural, philosophical, ethical and psychological ones. Also, more and more literary theories, either established or new, are being transferred to children's literature, thus shifting the focus of attention increasingly towards textual criticism.

---

[7] Among the many critical magazines on children's literature of quality which focus on interesting phenomena and provide a platform for discussion of current topics are for example the American Books for Keeps, Children's Literature, Children's Literature Association Quarterly, The Horn Book Magazine, The Lion and the Unicorn; The Times Literary Supplement, Signal, Children's Literature in Education or the German Eselsohr.
[8] Compare Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*.

It can be observed that at the turn of the millennium a concurrence of the pioneering works of children's literature critics is their urge to classify, structure and define the genre so as to reveal its patterns and special features. So it is no wonder that regulative, standardising contributions to the genre are in demand at the time of academicism of children's literature, on the basis of which further studies can be conducted.

Gillian Avery examines the long-term development of main characters in children's fiction in order to reveal an inherent structure and regularity.[9] **John Rowe Townsend** also published one of these pioneering works in 1971, when children's literature and its criticism was generally still considered unfit for serious research, academic or otherwise. With "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature"[10] he introduces a structure to the then mostly unregulated field of criticism. By setting up rules for criticising the genre, Townsend constructively bundles and clarifies it. Thus giving children's literature criticism a theoretical basis and a direction, Townsend supplies the necessary tools for future concerted action.[11]

Another important study, *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*[12] testifies to the growing self-confidence of the genre's critics. Focussing on children's reading, among other things *The Cool Web* examines the issue of texts and their readers. Assuming a universal nature of narrative, the contributions pursue the question why children and adults appear to read and to respond to the same texts differently. Together with **Victor Watson**, **Margaret Meek** also inquires into a sensitive topic of children's literature, namely its end. In *Coming of Age in Children's Literature*,[13] one of the genre's core subjects, the authors analyse the representation of an irreversible process in literature. In respect of the current phenomena of children wanting to come of age and adults trying to remain young, this topic concerns the entire spectrum of children's literature. Therefore it requires further studies in order to cover larger parts of the genre and compare the various forms and interpretations of coming of age.

---

[9] Gillian Avery. *Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975.

[10] John Rowe Townsend. "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature". In: Hunt (Ed.), *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*, pp. 57-70. With his *Standards of Criticism*, Townsend suggests that critics ought to accept any texts' inherent meaning and respects its own quality independent of its addressees. Even today this realisation has not yet managed to gain general acceptance.

[11] He has also coined a memorable definition of the term "children's book"; claiming that the decision to market a book either for children or for adults is up to the publisher. Cf. Townsend in: Hunt (Ed.), *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*, p. 197.

[12] Margaret Meek; Aidan Warlow, Griselda Barton. *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading.* London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1977.

[13] Margaret Meek; Victor Watson. *Coming of Age in Children's Literature. Growth and Maturity in the Work of Philippa Pearce, Cynthia Voigt and Jan Mark.* London; New York: Continuum, 2002.

Among the psychoanalytical approaches to children's literature criticism are for instance **Nicholas Tucker**'s *The Child and the Book* and his developmental psychological approach to the definition of the term "child",[14] and **Rosemary Jackson**'s psychoanalytical approach *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*.[15] Illustrated by her examination of *The Case of Peter Pan*,[16] **Jacqueline Rose** concludes that fiction for children is absolutely impossible due to the incompatibility of adults and children in respect of their literature and the imbalance of their relationship. Analogous to Rose's argumentation, any criticism of children's literature should be null and void as well, as – with the production, publication and marketing - it is *adults* who judge children's books, not the children themselves.

The experimental novelist[17] **Aidan Chambers** represents a narratological approach to children's literature criticism. Transferred from its adult equivalent and applied to children's literature, this kind of criticism focuses on the development and the effect of the use of various narrative modes, whilst underlining "the constructedness of texts."[18] **Joanne Marie Golden** also examines narrative discourse in children's literature, inquiring into discourse analysis, the structure and purpose of narration, the kind of narrator and the relationship between author and reader.[19] The role of the narrator in children's literature is analysed by **Barbara Wall** in *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction*;[20] the dilemma consisting of the issue of its addressee. A linguistic approach on ideology and narrative for children is undertaken by **Murray Knowles** and **Kirsten Malmkjær**'s *Language and Control in Children's Literature*.[21]

Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, Director of CIRCL,[22] pursues Jacqueline Rose's approach of a discrepancy between children and adults further. However, she discusses the relation between criticism on the one hand and the construction of the term and addressee *child* on the

---

[14] Nicholas Tucker. *The Child and the Book*: *A Psychoanalytical and Literary Exploration*. Cambridge; New York; Port Chester et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Nicholas Tucker. *What is a Child?* London: Fontana/ Open Books, 1977.

[15] Rosemary Jackson. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London; New York: Routledge, 2003. [1981]

[16] Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan.*

[17] Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 186.

[18] Ibd.

[19] Joanne Marie Golden. *The Narrative Symbol in Childhood Literature: Explorations in the Construction of Text*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990.

[20] Barbara Wall. *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan, 1991.

[21] Murry Knowles; Kirsten Malmkjær. *Language and Control in Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

[22] CIRCL is the abbreviation for the Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture and Media, based at Reading University.

other in *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child.*[23] As the editor of *Children in Culture*,[24] she compiles approaches to childhood from various angles, such as deconstructionism, psychology, pedagogics or linguistics. With *Children's Literature: New Approaches*[25] Lesnik-Oberstein acknowledges the fact that not only the literary genre has developed, but also its criticism. These new approaches by a second generation of critics comprise literary theories transferred from adult literature criticism to that of children's literature; for example reader response theory, intertextuality and otherness.

Peter **Hunt** from the University of Cardiff is a specialist on children's literature and an established authority in the field. His studies comprise theoretical as well as practical approaches to a definition of children's literature,[26] its history,[27] the development and importance of criticism in children's literature,[28] the co-editorship of extensive compendia on children's literature[29] as well as contributions to adjoining fields of research.[30] Hunt distinguishes between theorists and practitioners of children's literature and its criticism, the latter of which he gives his preference. Notwithstanding the tendency of academia towards theory, Hunt supports hands-on approaches and even goes one step further by his unorthodox acceptance of the wide-spread amateurism in both children's literature and its criticism.[31] Despite all the seriousness of research in the extensive and important field, Hunt points out the fun factor in children's literature.[32] Thus relaxed about the subject and its proceedings, he works out the strong points with self-confidence. Whereas to some academics children's literature "is a non-subject"[33] due to its fuzziness, Hunt justifies its popularity with its many

---

[23] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

[24] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Ed.) *Children in Culture: Approaches to Childhood.* Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.

[25] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. *Children's Literature: New Approaches.* Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

[26] For example in Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature.*

[27] Hunt (Ed.), *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History.*

[28] Hunt, *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*; and Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature.*

[29] Hunt; Ray (Eds.) *The International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, and Jack Zipes; Lissa Paul; Lynne Vallone; Peter Hunt; Gillian Avery. *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*: *The Traditions in English.* New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

[30] For instance Peter Hunt; Millicent Lenz. *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction.* London; New York: Continuum, 2001.

[31] Cf. Hunt, *The Development of Criticism*, p. 6. This amateurism is strongly opposed by Nodelman. According to him, as far as children's literature is concerned, "everyone's an expert. Everyone knows already." Perry Nodelman. "There's Like No Books About Anything". In: Sebastien Chapleau (Ed.) *New Voices in Children's Literature Criticism.* Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004, pp. 3-9, p. 3.

[32] See Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature,* p. 17.

[33] Ibd., p. 6.

assets. According to him, issues like the definition and interpretation of the terms "literature" and the "value" of a publication, reader-response criticism or multi-disciplinary approaches had already been long since the basis for the practitioners before they were eventually accepted by the academic apparatus.[34] An advocate of "DIY criticism",[35] yet without "suggesting educational anarchy",[36] Hunt requires an adequate term for his own approach to children's literature criticism which takes into account its uniqueness, potential and its being of equal rank with any other adult approaches. This term he finds in *childist criticism,* which enhances the child-oriented aspect whilst retaining the academic claim to quality and status by a transfer of "arguments for 'feminist' reading to the area of children's books".[37] With his demand for an opening of theory and practice towards the child and all its interests in literature, the demand for a shift of relative importance from the book towards the reader,[38] and the call for a comprehensive poetics of children's literature,[39] Hunt gives impulses for the further development of children's literature as well as its criticism. As we will see in the following, this opening of the genre towards current publications which Hunt propagates[40] is one of the points of departure for the present study.

In **North America**, **Canada** and **Australia** children's literature criticism also applies approaches and theories from adult criticism to children's literature, thus acknowledging the genre's claim to equality. In 1986, when modern children's literature criticism was still struggling for acceptance, **Zohar Shavit** published the *Poetics of Children's Literature*.[41] Yet, her stocktaking of the genre and a historical survey of its canonisation lack the poetic aspect announced in the title of her work. This is why authors and critics today are still demanding a poetics of children's literature, preferably on an international basis, which actually lays down aesthetical, formal and content-related elements of the genre.

---

[34] Compare Hunt, *The Development of Criticism*, p. 6.
[35] Ibd., p. 8.
[36] Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature,* p. 199.
[37] Ibd., p. 192. In *The Hidden Adult*, Nodelman criticises this approach by claiming that adults cannot possibly read as children would, since they cannot fade out their adult knowledge. Compare Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, p. 84.
[38] Compare Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature,* p. 198.
[39] Ibd., p. 14.
[40] Such an opening concerns any non-canonical children's literature, the existence of which Hunt denies. Compare Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature,* p. 116.
[41] Zohar Shavit. *Poetics of Children's Literature*. Athens/ Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Marxist critic **Jack Zipes**,[42] co-editor of *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*, focuses on social aspects and structures in children's literature. In *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*, [43] Zipes traces the development of landmark publications within a "post-industrial consumerist culture".[44] Feminist criticism is represented for example by **Roberta Seelinger Trites**' *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Literature,*[45] *Reading Otherways*[46] by **Lissa Paul** and by **Lynne Vallone**, co-editors of *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*. Compiled by **Perry Nodelman** and **Mavis Reimer**, the study guide *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*[47] presents a detailed cross-section of the many aspects of the genre's criticism, covering illustrated texts, feminist, ideological, psychoanalytical, metafictional, intertextual, structuralist, narratological, ethnical and reader-response approaches.

The historical development and origin of most of the above-mentioned approaches and theories is analysed by **Roderick McGillis'** *The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*.[48] In *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*,[49] he pursues the forms otherness can take in the genre. Studying other cultures and ethnicities can reveal valuable insights in and new views of structures – social, political, religious, economical, ecological or other - values and morals. Such comparative approaches are especially interesting with regard to fantasy, since otherness – worlds, beings, value systems etc. – plays an important role there. Otherness is for instance also taken up by Brian Atteberry's *Strategies of Fantasy*.[50] The highly topical areas of crossover literature are for

---

[42] Compare Watson, *The Cambridge Guide*, p. 186; Lissa Paul. "Enigma Variations: What Feminist Theory Knows About Children's Literature". In: <u>Signal</u> 54 (September 1987), pp. 186-201. In: Hunt, *The Development of Criticism*, p. 156.

[43] Jack Zipes. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York; London: Routledge, 2001.

[44] Daniela Caselli. "Reading Intertextuality. The Natural and the Legitimate: Intertextuality in *Harry Potter*". In: Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Ed.) *Children's Literature: New Approaches*, p.172.

[45] Roberta Seelinger Trites. *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Literature*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997.

[46] Lissa Paul. *Reading Otherways*. Stroud: Thimble Press, 1998. Honig's study on the development of feminist issues in 19th century children's fantasy traces the historical conditions for present approaches. See Edith Lazaros Honig. *Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in Victorian Children's Fantasy*. New York; Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1988.

[47] Perry Nodelman; Mavis Reimer. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. Boston et al.: Allyn and Bacon, 2003. [1992]

[48] Roderick McGillis. *The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. New York: Twaine, 1996.

[49] Roderick McGillis. *Voices of the Other. Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. New York; London: Garland, 2000.

[50] Brian Atteberry. *Strategies of Fantasy*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.

instance analysed by Sandra Beckett[51] and Rachel Falconer[52] respectively, while an internationalisation of children's literature, particularly by means of translation, is treated for example by Gillian Lathey.[53]

The Australian **John Stephens** investigates the linguistic aspect of children's literature criticism in *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*,[54] focussing on polyphonic discourse, narrative structure and its implications on the enculturation of children, whilst in *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture*[55], he and Robyn McCallum deal with fantastic metafiction.[56] **Jill P. May**'s *Children's Literature and Critical Theory*[57] applies prominent schools of literary criticism to children's literature, examining areas like interpretation, rhetorics, style and reader response.

Outside Britain, Northern America, Canada and Australia, the critics of children's literature are just as aware of the current developments as their English-speaking colleagues, if not maybe even more so through their contact with their native children's books. In 1988, Russian-born **Maria Nikolajeva** embarked on children's literature and fantasy with *The Magic Code,*[58] a structuralist approach to the field. Her contributions comprise not only articles on children's literature in relevant journals, but she is also the editor of *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature,*[59] an anthology on selected developments and changes in the genre. *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic*[60] for

---

[51] Sandra L. Beckett. *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

[52] Rachel Falconer. *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

[53] Gillian Lathey (Ed.) *The Translation of Children's Literature: A Reader*. Cleveland; Buffalo; Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2006.

[54] John Stephens. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. London: Longman, 1992. A study which approaches the concept of the narrator via contrasting views of authors and critics was published only three years prior. Cf. Charlotte F. Otten; Gary D. Schmidt (Eds.) *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989.

[55] John Stephens, Robyn McCallum. *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture*: *Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*. New York et al.: Garland, 1998.

[56] More detailed information about the landscape of children's literature criticism provide for instance Watson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English;* Jack Zipes (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, as well as the many literary journals like The Lion and the Unicorn, Papers, Signal, Children's Literature, Children's Literature in Education, Canadian Children's Literature or Children's Literature Association Quarterly.

[57] Jill P. May. *Children's Literature and Critical Theory: Reading and Writing for Understanding*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[58] Maria Nikolajeva. *The Magic Code: The Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children*. Stockholm: University of Stockholm, doctoral dissertation, 1988.

[59] Maria Nikolajeva (Ed.) *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*. Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1995.

[60] Maria Nikolajeva. *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*. New York et al.: Garland, 1996.

instance takes up the notion that current, post-modern children's literature, having emancipated itself and matured, should therefore be analysed and criticised by means of the same critical, post-modern approaches and techniques as adult literature. As we will see later when examining differences and commonalities between children's literature and literature for adults, this idea of a maturity of children's literature, seemingly paradox at first, is legitimate. In *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*[61] Nikolajeva pursues the theory that the time structure in children's literature develops away from a circular towards a linear structure, i.e. away from an unchanging innocence in Arcadia towards progressive maturation beyond a point of no return. Her *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction*[62] are intended as a study guide, conveying approaches and guidance towards practical criticism for beginners with the help of examples.

Hans-Heino Ewers may work on *German* literature for children and young adults, yet – due to their universality - his findings and theories can also be applied to British children's literature. Not only does his introduction to children's literature, *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche: Eine Einführung*,[63] thoroughly explain the many parameters of the genre like definitions, mechanisms, characteristics and subject matter, but it also differentiates between the various kinds of reader. The latter is of particular interest as far as the reader-response approach is concerned, as the different kinds of reader imply different reader-identities. Furthermore, according to the respective type of reader, the nature of the relation between children and adults, readers and authors varies. Together with **Maria Lypp** and **Ulrich Nassen**, Ewers inquires into the aesthetics of children's literature of the twentieth century,[64] asking for challenges of the genre. The temporal proximity of this and Nikolajeva's publication on aesthetics of children's literature indicates the topicality of this issue for the genre, which is perceived on an international level. Another current aspect Ewers analyses are the influence and implications of the new media on children's literature.[65] The collision of print and digital media is one of the great challenges children's literature is facing at present.

---

[61] Maria Nikolajeva. *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*. Lanham, MD; London: Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press, 2000.
[62] Maria Nikolajeva. *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005.
[63] Ewers, *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche: Eine Einführung*.
[64] Hans-Heino Ewers; Maria Lypp; Ulrich Nassen (Eds.) *Kinderliteratur und Moderne: Ästhetische Herausforderungen der Kinderliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert*. Weinheim; München: Juventa, 1990.
[65] Hans-Heino Ewers (Ed.) *Lesen zwischen Neuen Medien und Pop-Kultur: Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Zeitalter Multimedialen Entertainments*. Weinheim et al.: Juventa, 2002.

Time will tell whether their relation will be a respectful coexistence, a cross or, eventually, dominated by digital media, not least due to an increasing circulation of ebooks.

With *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik*,[66] **Emer O'Sullivan** contributes to a revealing field of children's literature. By comparing international publications she examines mutual influences, concurrences and national differences. This approach enables her to establish general, international elements of children's literature on the one hand and individual, national features on the other hand.

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer edited an analysis of *Current Trends in Comparative Children's Literature Research*[67]*,* which compiles the main aspects of the comparative approach and its merits. Moreover, she has published an international encyclopedia of classic children's literature.[68] In contrast to other encyclopedias before, she does not simply include the traditional English classics, which admittedly constitute a large proportion, but explicitly draws up an international inventory. By collecting and making public the spectrum of children's literature classics from all over the world, Kümmerling-Meibauer facilitates and encourages access to yet unfamiliar classics of other nations.

As most researchers and critics observe, the internationality of the genre's literature and the academic exchange about it is reinforced by globalisation. Comparative studies of national literatures play an important role for the latter's international classification and can support the formation of an international canon. However, it remains to be seen in how far the practice of canonisation will have to be adapted to today's highly dynamic information society. The parameters of any such canon will have to be flexible and fast-reacting, which may appear to be a contradiction in terms. In *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*[69] Kümmerling-Meibauer inquires into those issues, offering new impulses. Only time can tell whether individualisation, standardisation and globalisation are somehow compatible or whether new paths have to be trodden as far as expectations of quality, form and content, messages, but also literary tools, theories and approaches are concerned. At present, desiderata are an international canon of children's literature as well as an

---

[66] Emer O'Sullivan. *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2000.
[67] Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (Ed.) *Current Trends in Comparative Children's Literature Research*. Bern: Lang, 1996.
[68] Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*.
[69] Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer. *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*. Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 2003.

international poetics which take into account the current developments on the tide of globalisation.

In summary it can be said that children's literature is a fast-evolving field with a large potential. Having managed to emancipate itself, the genre has successfully defended itself against the prejudices of immaturity and triviality. The fact that it has been accepted into the academic apparatus and is being approached by means of high literature, i.e. "serious" theories, shows that children's literature has overcome arbitrary restrictions and has grown up, so to speak. The increasing dissolving of borders and definitions necessitates new approaches which specialise on the emerging fringes, as is the case with crossover literature and *allalderslitteratur*.[70]

Taking these latest developments in the field and its criticism as a starting point, the present study focuses on the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy. In the following, we will endeavour to transfer some of the above-mentioned findings and impulses to this subgenre of children's literature and to raise further issues. By selecting fantasy of all subgenres, we take up the challenge to examine an area which, by name, is the furthest away from "serious" reality. Yet it reveals the potential of current British children's fantasy very well through its progressiveness and innovativeness.

---

[70] The 1997 special issue of *Children's Literature* deals with such border theories in detail. Sandra Beckett addresses the issue of fringe-areas and their criticism in children's literature in Sandra Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997, and crosswriting, bordercrossing in respect of target group, age and geography in Sandra L. Beckett (Ed.) *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*. New York; London: Garland, 1999.

4.   Traditional elements in children's fantasy

As we have seen in chapter two, British children's literature is firmly anchored in literary history and its origins. Particularly fantasy novels for children, through their close affinity with fairy tales, are founded on a sturdy basis of traditional elements originating in folk tales and heroic epics but also in myths and legends. This literary heritage possesses stable and reliable elements whose longevity and popularity are not without reason. Amongst these traditional elements are fixtures in the inventory of fantasy narration for children, for example the motif of the lost or orphaned child. Other fixed guidelines for patterns call for a dichotomy between good and evil, replete with the ensuing conflict between its respective representatives, the villain and the hero. On his obligatory quest and accompanying journey, symbolising his acculturation and initiation, the hero is frequently helped by a benign mentor, but also by friends. A combination of magic and a pinch of humour usually round off the narration and make possible the events in the first place. As far as narrative techniques are concerned, current British fantasy novels for children do not simply throw established principles overboard. The majority of the novels analysed in this study retain, amongst others, the chronological rendering of past events, a third person narrator as well as the change between narration and dialogues.

Even the most recent and innovative publications of British fantasy novels for children cannot get around an adoption of at least some of these conventions, since the latter constitute the basic elements of the genre. To a certain extent modern authors rely on the virtually inexhaustible pool of traditional elements for the characteristics of their narration. At the same time, they may introduce some variations, combined with entirely new or sufficiently alienated components. However new and original a bestseller might appear at first sight, on closer inspection familiar ingredients reveal themselves. This is not to say that any new author merely revamps traditions of old. However, especially today, the creation of absolute ingenuity and entire novelty become more and more difficult.

In this chapter, a selection of the most frequent and dominant traditional elements in British children's fantasy shall be presented. On the basis of this customary handling of the elements magic, evil, violence and humour we can then draw conclusions for the present situation.

4.1   Magic

Along with evil, magic is one of the oldest elements in fantasy literature. It is one of the most popular and productive, that hardly any children's fantasy can do without. In comparison with the lack of clarity encountered at the terminological qualification of children's literature, magic reveals a more uncomplicated nature. *Collins* defines magic as

> 1. The art that, by use of spells, supposedly invokes supernatural powers to influence events; sorcery. 2. the practice of this art. [...] 4. any mysterious or extraordinary quality or power.[1]

Standing in close connection with the adjoining fields of sorcery and witchcraft, magic belongs to the supernatural. It enables beings to exceed their otherwise limited powers and to accomplish deeds they would not normally be capable of. According to the respective intended effect, magic can take miscellaneous forms. As an ever-present law of nature in a secondary world, magic can also be especially evoked. In that case, supernatural forces are used either by people, for example wizards, witches or necromancers of some kind, or other beings like fairies, elves, etc.

The respective ways of access to magic are just as diverse as its forms. For one, access can be gained via the evocation of spirits or elemental forces. Other usages are the control of magic powers by means of artefacts such as crystal balls or wands, either paired with or without incantations or spells. Pure psychological forces such as telepathy or telekinesis are another option. Expressing itself by shaping time as well as space, magic is thus an entity which permits a widening of the horizons of expectation and action, since it creates new or otherwise impossible constellations and situations.

4.1.1   Traditional magic

In British children's fantasy, traditional magic takes a central position. All the customary forms and modes of operation derived from myths, folk and fairy tales come under it. These range from magical artefacts such as wands, cauldrons, magical weapons, crystal balls or flying brooms over fields of application like scrying, weather making, levitating things, prophesising or soothsaying. Traditional magic is also used for cursing, for controlling time, space, creatures or fate and for necromancy. It is applied either by solitary beings or by special, elitist groups of people, who set themselves apart from others by their secret knowledge and usage of magic and its sphere of activity. In the majority of the cases a circle

---

[1] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 934.

of those in the know gains a special status. Single persons or representatives of these groups are witches, wizards, sorcerers, necromancers, alchemists or ambitious rulers, to name the most common. When appearing in the forms described, traditional magic can be either black or white. Black magic is exclusively employed by villains in order to gain power or to defend and extend it. By contrast, white magic is at the disposal of the good side in order to keep evil at bay. Even though the categorical division of magic into black and white is widespread, in the end the choice lies with the user's intention and conscience.

As traditional magic is endowed with a high degree of power, precautions have to be taken so that it is not accessible to everyone and protected from abuse. Access is controlled and granted by authorised instances only. Since the exertion of traditional magic commonly requires other magical artefacts or spells, its correct usage has to be learned or at least be supervised by wizard-mentors or spell books. The latter either choose themselves who can open or read them, or access is coupled with a key. It transpires that an unregulated handling of magic holds great danger.

Characteristic of traditional magic is its age. Hierarchies - such as wizard-apprentice relationships for example - are very clear-cut and firmly established. This also holds true for rules and rituals, in which ancient or exotic languages play an important role. Through its roots, which in many cases are portrayed to reach back to the beginnings of mankind or even further, traditional magic obtains a strong legitimation. The ensuing authority is met with respect and awe. Even if magic is abused by villains it instils fear, but respect nonetheless. Above all, traditional magic, often portrayed as a precious legacy, embodies wisdom. Furthermore, its strict regimentation combined with an apparent omnipresence contribute to its fascination. Comparable to a mark of distinction, magic thus becomes a much sought-after and exquisite luxury good.

In fantasy novels for children, traditional magic personifies the bridge between past times and modernity. Seemingly lost traditions or powers of old reveal their topicality in the present, thus emphasising the relation and mutual dependency between old and new. Aided by magic, time travel can take place or ancient rituals survive time and generations. Moreover, traditional magic offers guidelines of an ethical code, structures as well as fixed rules for behaviour. Discipline is required since any disobedience is swiftly and seriously punished.

In the present age of the new media the fascination with ancient – even if fictitious - records and magical heritage has not waned. Not just the *Harry Potter* phenomenon but also role-playing games in their tangible or virtual forms show that traditional magic, represented

by witches and wizards, is still present. Today, the various forms of old magic hold the lion's share of the magical events, even if combined with modern elements.

4.1.2   Modern Magic

Although a large part of magic consists of traditional elements, innovation and change make their arrival. With the new media and their influence manifesting themselves in fantasy for children, modern magic mirrors their progress. For most lay people the new media do indeed work in a truly magical way. So far from being completely disenchanted, modern society now allows for technicised magic.[2] Authors who move with the times often produce challenging and interesting new ways of looking at magic. On the one hand, magic has to satisfy those who turn to old forms and ways in search for magic's conservative quality. Here, a reassuring world is created in which traditional elements figure exclusively. On the other hand, magic has to explore new forms and possibilities if it wants to keep up with the changing times and not accumulate clichés. In our highly technicised world children can expect to be confronted with magic just as technicised as their own reality. For instance, its progression can be expressed in the form of entirely new devices or alternative views on those already in existence. Innovative forms of modern magic will be discussed under section 4.1.4.

4.1.3   Fantastic creatures

As we have seen, the majority of the pool of elements at the disposal of authors of fantasy for children consists of traditional aspects. The same holds true of the novels of our corpus. Whereas many an author is anxious to satisfy the demand of originality, genuine innovation and creativity prove to be an ambitious venture. Of those writers aiming high only few succeed in designing entirely new creatures. By contrasting the latter with traditional elements, the alien nature of the new creations is emphasised.

Rowling is one of a small circle of authors who – besides employing traditional creatures - create a selection of novel ones. With her invention of unique beings such as Dementors, thestrals or blast-ended skrewts, Rowling contributes memorable new creatures to the fantastic inventory. Yet, the majority of Rowling's magical cast is firmly anchored in tradition. With a multitude of creatures originating in myths and folklore, the author draws on

---

[2] However, not every author or reader can get used to the idea of modern magic and nurtures nostalgic feelings. Instead, retro-magic in the form of "handmade" spells etc. are favoured. It goes without saying that many narrated magical events are for this reason firmly set in an appropriate environment, i.e. modifications of the conditions found in the Middle Ages.

plentiful resources. On a large and colourful canvas familiar beings roam around, for example centaurs, house elves, dragons[3], basilisks, a three-headed dog, flying horses, unicorns or were-wolves. The recent past of fantasy literature has produced a number of exceptional fantastic creatures spread over the entire canvas of the genre.[4] Compared with the total stock of magical creatures populating fantasy literature, outstanding representatives constitute a relatively small share. Yet, their strong presence compensates for it.

With witches, Cliff McNish's *Doomspell* trilogy[5] takes up prominent magical creatures of fantasy. Even so, his individual interpretation of their appearance and nature deviates considerably from the traditional picture. McNish's witches do not have anything in common with old, wrinkled women clad in black, hunchbacked and replete with familiar and broomstick. Instead of a gingerbread house McNish's witches favour soaring towers that dominate the eternal winter landscape of their planet Ithrea. Atypically, they do not live as hermits, but in groups of females, held together by the firm hand of a leader and waited on by slaves. In cruelty, these witches exceed any fairy tale witch by far, so for example Dragwena's prophecy to the main character Rachel – herself a child: "[y]ou will kill lots of children, and, I promise, you will enjoy it."[6] The phenotype of McNish's witches reflects their cruelty and undoubtedly stems from the horror genre. The head witch Dragwena is described as having "blood-red skin", tattooed purple eyes, and four sets of teeth, in between which armoured spiders live.[7]

An interesting and unique array of fantastic creatures is presented by Pullman in his *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Embedded in philosophical challenges, the nature of the various beings of Pullman's secondary worlds is just as outstanding as their role in the novels. Probably the most remarkable physical entity introduced in *His Dark Materials* are the soul-

---

[3] Particularly dragons are still very popular with both fantasy authors and readers. Their topicality manifests itself in a number of high-quality fantasy novels. A modern trendsetter is the young American Paolini, who is strongly influenced by precursors Tolkien and Le Guin. Consequently, Paolini's high fantasy *Inheritance* cycle is modelled on their literary legacy.

[4] The prime example here is Tolkien's monumental work *The Lord of the Rings*, preceded by *The Hobbit*. The secondary world of Middle-earth is populated by a vast amount of original fantastic creatures. Beings like the Hobbits, the Ents, Tom Bombadil, the Balrog, Gollum or the Orcs represent the varieties the wide spectrum between good and evil offers. Not only are they endowed with distinct, individual and vivid traits, but also these fantastic creatures are credible. Later authors such as Le Guin take up Tolkien's baseline and develop their own fantastic beings. Memorable specimen are for instance Earthsea's dragons, Dahl's Vermicious Knids, Pullman's daemons and mulefa or even Pratchett's box made from intelligent pearwood.

[5] Cliff McNish. *The Doomspell*. London: Orion, 2000; followed by *The Scent of Magic*. London: Dolphin, 2002 [2001] and *The Wizard's Promise*. London: Orion, 2002.

[6] McNish, *Doomspell*, p. 108.

[7] Ibd., p. 2.

daemons of humans in some of the secondary worlds, which take on an animal form – unsettled during the human's youth, and in a fixed form when the human has reached maturity. Another of Pullman's unique creations are the mulefa. Living in a peaceful, idyllic community, these beings are presented as a model society. Over time, the mulefa have adapted perfectly to their environment. Through their specialisation, they occupy a niche in their world's ecosystem. Avoiding any ecological overexploitation, the mulefa only use natural products for their own purposes, without changing the shape of their environment. Comparable to park rangers, they look after their environment and ensure its smooth functioning. Avowed pacifists, these gentle creatures live in a world without conflicts. Despite their obvious superiority over other, belligerent life forms, the mulefa remain modest and noble creatures. Not only their harmonic community, but also their calmness and organisation contrast sharply with the hectic real world; thus underlining and promoting their values. Unity and teamwork are imperative for the mulefa's survivability, as their anatomy necessitates constant interaction between the members of the group. To them, it comes naturally and with an ease humans can only dream of. So the mulefa are not just fantastic in respect of their appearance and nature, but also in respect of their functioning society. By showing how life could be for everyone these beings sharpen the awareness of just how far human society is still away from this ideal.

On the basis of their innovation, both daemons and mulefa hold an outstanding status among the fantastic creatures in Pullman's trilogy. Other, perhaps initially less obvious fantastic creatures populate *His Dark Materials*; some of which are drawn from more traditional beings[8] and some are entirely the author's own inventions. It is these new creations which fascinate by their originality. In the icy regions of the North of Lyra's world live armoured bears. These talking polar bears forge their own armour. Another of Pullman's inventions are the tiny gallivespians, who, mounted on dragonflies, are perfect spies.

Of all the inventive authors and works in the corpus of this study, none manages to reach the creative diversity of the fantastic flora and fauna devised by the author team Stewart and Riddell. Their *Edge Chronicles* take the reader to an independent fantastic realm. The Edge itself is segmented in different characteristic zones, each replete with their own creatures and plants. These are, in ascending topographical order from closest to furthest distance from the Edge itself, Undertown, Sanctaphrax, the Mire, the Twilight Woods and the

---

[8] As in the case of the witches, the angels and the ghosts (cliff-ghasts and spectres) are rooted in literary traditions. Still, even in their cases Pullman takes care to add individual traits.

Deepwoods. In the light of the individual plot of the novels, one or more areas of the Edge World are presented and examined more closely. As a rule, the further away from the Edge, the more fantastic and spectacular the creatures of *The Edge Chronicles* become. The sole exception are Sanctaphrax and Undertown. Whereas the city of Sanctaphrax, erected on top of a buoyant rock and firmly anchored by means of a chain to Undertown, has developed into a sanctuary of an elite of academics, Undertown has become the crowded melting pot of the entire Edge. Here, diversity is at its greatest, albeit this motley crew is estranged from their natural habitat and thus has to adapt to the entirely different circumstances town life necessitates.

In its quality of the most remote region of the Edge, the Deepwoods provide the greatest biodiversity. They are the stomping ground for a very large selection of the most different fantastic creatures, drafted from scratch for this secondary world. Both Stewart and Riddell appear to be infinitely creative as far as the invention of new species is concerned. Consequently the *Edge Chronicles* captivate with a menagerie of unique fantastic creatures in British fantasy literature for children. All sizes, forms and colours are represented amongst the ranks of the inhabitants. Among the vast array figure for instance fromps, ratbirds, prowlgrins, banderbears, the shryke sisterhood, slaughterers, nightwaifs and trolls.[9] The individual creatures are described in much detail,[10] and splendid pen-and-ink drawings support their plasticity as well as the reader's imagination.

Whereas *The Edge Chronicles* are teeming with fantastic creatures, Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* trilogy[11] uses fantastic or magical creatures only very sparingly. Nevertheless, these few specimen leave a lasting impression due to their dangerousness and uniqueness: The Old Children[12] and the Morah.[13] Designed as a cross between individual and swarm, the Morah combines the strong and dominating hand, authority, mind, will and strategy of a

---

[9] Other creatures comprise transparent six-hearted spindlebugs (Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. The Curse of the Gloamglozer*. London: Corgi, 2002, p.15), cloddertrogs and razorflits (Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. Vox*. London: Corgi, 2004, pp. 27, 272) and snickets (Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. The Last of the Sky Pirates*. London: Corgi, 2003, p. 171). Ironwood trees (Stewart; Riddell, *The Curse of the Gloamglozer*, p. 158), bloodoaks or lullabee trees are plants exclusive to The Edge.

[10] Not only their appearance but also their specific habits and nature are often meticulously noted without weighing down the plot.

[11] William Nicholson. *The Wind on Fire. The Wind Singer*. London: Egmont, 2000; William Nicholson. *The Wind on Fire. Slaves of the Mastery*. London: Egmont, 2001; William Nicholson. *The Wind on Fire. Firseong*. London: Egmont, 2003 [2002].

[12] Nicholson, *The Wind Singer*, p. 241.

[13] Ibd., p. 278.

single absolute leader with a body of innumerable members. It is only within the swarm that the members form a functioning entity. Like her fantastic predecessors[14] the Morah thus gains an enormous advantage through numbers and fighting strength. Yet, at the same time, the entity in charge is the weak link. Once eliminated, the symbiosis comes to an abrupt end due to its instantaneous incapability of acting. In *The Wind on Fire*, The Morah commands the army of the Zars.[15] Frightening are not only its numbers but also the nature of its soldiers: Children. Robbed of their individuality, identity, reason and feelings, these children are a perversion. As soldiers, they are a negation of everything they normally stand for or are associated with. Instead of indulging in play, the dynamic army of the Zars kills mercilessly and unblinkingly. Dramatised even more through the non-palpability and the resulting anonymity of the swarm, the soldiers show an unparalleled cruelty which should be alien to children in this form.

In respect to the uncanny and the eeriness of fantastic creatures, Nicholson's oppressive Morah finds her match in Nix's *Abhorsen* trilogy.[16] As far as the format of our corpus is concerned, the Australian author Nix goes beyond the scope. Yet, as a "non-official" competitor, his contribution to fantastic and magical creatures is considerable and should not be underestimated. A quick glance over the rim reveals that his *Abhorsen* trilogy and the *Keys to the Kingdom* heptalogy introduce interesting and mighty fantastic characters, both good and evil. Yet, it is the latter which enthral immediately; typically enough because of their repulsiveness. Influenced by the horror genre, Nix favours dark and gothic elements.[17] Both impressive and alarming illustration of this demonstration of support are not only the unscrupulous necromancer Hedge, but also his minions, the Dead Hands. Either already dead or purposefully killed, these zombie-like creatures are mere tools, existing only for serving the necromancer. Comparable to the Morah in respect of purpose and haunting images, the Dead Hands can gather in great numbers in order to form an army of decomposing corpses.

Their reign of terror is opposed by the most outstanding character on the good side, the eponymous Abhorsen. His or her main task is to prevent necromancers from disturbing

---

[14] Such as for instance Ende's Ygramul die Viele in *The Neverending Story* (1979) or the Borg in *Star Trek*.

[15] Nicholson, *The Wind Singer,* p. 292. This naming is possibly an ironic comment on or allusion to the demonisation of the enemy during the Cold War.

[16] Garth Nix. *Sabríel.* London: HarperCollins, 2003 [1995]; Garth Nix. *Lírael.* London: HarperCollins, 2003 [2001]; Garth Nix. *Abhorsen.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2004. [2003]

[17] The Gothic in children's literature is examined in detail in Anna Jackson; Karen Coats; Roderick McGillis (Eds.) *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders.* New York: Routledge, 2008.

the peace of the dead,[18] thus keeping the spiritual balance of the Old Kingdom. Support comes in the form of magical tools and artefacts, above all the seven bells on the Abhorsen's belt. These bells, in ascending order from small and relatively weak to big and strong like organ pipes, carry the same names as the entities they stand for in the Old Kingdom,[19] whose characteristics and abilities they possess. When working together, the bells as well as their personifications amalgamate and can unleash incredible power. Of this association, two bells and their respective entities are portrayed in detail.

The character Mogget alias Saraneth is a very powerful being.[20] After a former incident, Mogget has been bound by co-entities with the help of magic Charter signs into the manifestation of a white cat. On the one hand, the cat's collar symbolises this present domestication; on the other, it suggests an instant return to former power once this collar is cast off.[21] His evil potential and his destructive streak are only controlled and suppressed, but not transformed. A cat is a very appropriate animal form to express the dichotomy between gentle companion and ferocious predator in just one being. So in order to hold Mogget's stray and highly ambiguous character in check, much attention and caution are therefore necessary from the representatives of good entities. Acting as supervisor, the good entity Astarael, manifested as the Disreputable Dog, ensures that Mogget is not offered a chance to escape from his bondage. In his quality as decisive pointer, Mogget's defecting to the evil side would irrevocably tip the balance in the wrong direction.

In the *Abhorsen* trilogy, Nix skilfully combines the dual traits of the two main magic entities, Mogget and the Disreputable Dog. Like this, the author builds up a strong tension between their animal and their magical side. As pets, their behavioural patterns are easily understandable. Taking up the common conception of cats as strong personalities; Nix endows the rogue Mogget with all the facets of a cat's nature, from playful and appreciative to selfish and arrogant, from headstrong to self-confident and deceitful. By contrast, the Disreputable Dog stands for unreserved loyalty, combined with the canine protector-instinct, without forfeiting its dignity. In a way, their animal form serves as a mediator between their ancient magical and untameable power on the one hand and the comparably weak humans on the other hand.

---

[18] Compare Nix, *Sabríel*, pp. 27, 103, 200.
[19] For the seven names and their traits see Nix, *Sabríel*, p. 65.
[20] Ibd., p. 92.
[21] His true self is a "blazing, blue-white creature". Nix, *Sabríel*, p. 143.

In Nix's heptalogy *The Keys to the Kingdom*,[22] the author establishes parallels between the plot, setting and the Christian story of creation. Heaven is presented in the form of The House. In contrast to the rather abstract celestial realm of the Bible, Nix drafts Heaven as a building, albeit with magical accessories. Epicentre of the Universe,[23] The House is hierarchically structured like an office building, from its own administration over its various departments, distributed over several floors, to its employees, Denizens and even its own calendar. During the mysterious absence of the female Architect, the seven Weekdays have usurped her power, left behind in form of Her Will. Over the millennia, her seven trustees have high-handedly extended their authority, each taking over the complete control over their own area of The House. Their lust for power has developed a certain momentum, resulting in nepotism and general chaos. Consequently, the quest of the human pupil Arthur Penhaligon consists of putting a stop to the Weekdays' machinations. For each defeated or reclaimed Morrow Day Arthur obtains one of the seven Keys and frees one more part of the Architect's Will.

During his quest, the young boy moves through all the departments of The House and encounters many a fantastic being on his way. It seems that the further away from the Atrium of the Lower House, the more fantastic these creatures become. Mainly employed in the Lower House, the Piper's Children only differ slightly from normal human offspring. Suspended in their natural growth and life expectancy, these eternal children are the life form which resembles most the main character's image of man. Among the fantastic creatures he meets in The House are for example Nithlings, creatures made from Nothing, or Not-Horses, whose skin is made from flexible metal.[24] Apart from the seven Weekdays, the most refined creatures of The House are their helpers. Each Weekday has at their disposition three personal assistants, Dawn, Noon and Dusk. The Weekdays and their assistants have adapted in appearance and nature to their respective sphere of control within the House.

In Germany, the bestselling children's author Funke is above all known for her *Inkheart* trilogy.[25] In the style of Ende's *The Neverending Story*, the main characters of Funke's trilogy travel between a literary secondary realm and a realistic primary world. A

---

[22] Garth Nix. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Mister Monday*, *Grim Tuesday*, *Drowned Wednesday*, *Sir Thursday*, *Lady Friday*, *Superior Saturday* and *Lord Sunday* London: HaperCollins Children's Books, 2004-2009.]
[23] Nix, *Sir Thursday*, p. 261.
[24] Ibd., p. 271.
[25] Cornelia Funke. *Tintenherz*. Hamburg: Dressler, 2003; Cornelia Funke. *Tintenblut*. Hamburg: Dressler, 2005; Cornelia Funke. *Tintentod*. Hamburg: Dressler, 2007.

story literally comes to life when the characters appear in the fictitious reader's world and vice versa; thus intensifying the magical traits of the fantastic beings. Whereas Funke's concept of a fictional cross of fantasy and reality is not unprecedented, her characters are originals.

4.1.4   High-tech magic

As we have seen, the juxtaposition and/ or combination of traditional elements with innovations are widespread and popular phenomena of modern British fantasy for children. Above, the general outlines of both traditional and modern magic, the use of traditional fairy tale elements as well as the contact with fantastic or magical creatures in modern novels were subjects of our analysis. In the following, a further interesting aspect of developments shall be examined: Magic in use. On the basis of selected examples we will inquire into the nature of technology and its compatibility with magic.[26]

In this respect, Rowling's *Harry Potter* heptalogy sheds light on the junction between conservative magic and its modern interpretation. In its role as a mediator between the two approaches, *Harry Potter* depicts two seemingly independent parallel societies. The non-magical one operates with the help of technology, whereas the wizarding community relies on its magic potential. Both function in their individual ways and have only few points of contact. On the rare occasion, contact is established through the wizards' initiative. Frequent and intense cross-border traffic sets in with Harry Potter's evacuation into the non-magical world. This has far-reaching implications; involving breaches of the respective borders and direct confrontations of the two societies.[27]

The main characters Harry, Ron and Hermione embody these cross-border contacts in various stages. Born and bred wizard Ron is slowly introduced to the ways and technological achievements of the non-magical society through his contact to Harry and Hermione. In return, Ron helps Harry and Hermione to gain a foothold in the wizarding world. Ambassadors of their respective societies, the three children depend on mutual help and

---

[26] As a result, this approach therefore excludes inevitably and explicitly those novels which voluntarily confine themselves to traditional elements of magic. In this connection, the often lively mutual exchange on an intertextual basis does not influence the inventiveness of magic and technology this study is interested in here. A representative of this kind of novel is for example Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle.

[27] Even if those incidents are hushed up times and again by the wizarding community, they take place all the same.

understanding.[28] Their friendship bridges all gaps and overcomes prejudices, thus uniting the two societies on a personal level.

Whereas the normal humans or Muggles, as Rowling calls them, live with technological progress, the witches and wizards rely on magic instead. Means of travel and communication[29] are just as effective, if not swifter than their technical equivalents. Through the presentation of both views, the lifestyle of the other group is experienced as the alienation of one's own. This effect is well reflected upon and illustrated by Ron's father. The employee at the Ministry of Magic dedicates his life to the study of Muggles and their strange way of life; researching into exotic apparatuses like the telephone, the car or plugs.

Serving as an original and exemplary connecting link between old and new, i.e. magic and technology, *Harry Potter* unites and embodies current trends of modern British children's fantasy. While Rowling's series obliges the nostalgic wish of a preservation of traditional magic with all its medieval charm, *Harry Potter* does not exhaust itself by an exclusively backward alignment. Rather, Rowling ensures a simultaneous exploration of future ways in the form of progress in "real life". Thus, tension arises and is held by the conscious clash between two seemingly incompatible stages. The contrast between old and new works in a dual way. Either the main emphasis lies on a retrospective point of view, or it is directed towards a possible future.

Noticeably, a great number of the novels in our corpus retain and/ or develop this retrospective aspect; either by being set entirely in a medieval-like, conservative world, or at least for the main part. However, this preservative effect is shifted from past to present once the main emphasis is put on progress and innovation. Then, the modern primary world can be depicted as underdeveloped compared to a further advanced fictitious parallel, future or other-dimensional civilisation.

In the following, the focus will be on the analysis of this very phenomenon of a conscious innovation of magic and technology in British fantasy novels for children. Technicised fantasy novels may still be the minority, but several courageous and creative

---

[28] Interestingly, only Ron has an unambiguous sense of belonging. By contrast, Harry descends from a mixed union of pure wizard and magically talented human. Raised as a "normal" human, Harry is initiated to the magical society at the age of eleven. Hermione is a magically talented girl with two "normal" parents.

[29] These include for instance floo powder, port keys, the magical version of beaming, Apparating or the Knight Bus. Written correspondence is sent and delivered by post owls, whereas the equivalent of a tele-conference takes place in the participants' own fireplaces. Depending on the respective interpretation as either accident or intention, the active witnessing of someone else's thoughts stored in a pensieve can quite possibly be part of communication, too.

breakaways open up new perspectives and horizons. Those authors have realised the advantages of a replenishment as well as a restructuring of constellations. Pioneers, they have pegged out new claims and proceed to dig below the surface. What has been unearthed so far is promising, but a huge potential for innovations still lies dormant. Ready to be awakened, it can point the way ahead to possible new directions of fantasy novels for children.

In those innovative novels, magic as the core "discipline" is directly contrasted with technology and its possibilities. Conspicuously, not only a rejuvenation,[30] but also a mechanisation of magic takes place. More and more frequently traditional magic is nowadays substituted or at least supported and extended by machines, media or other devices. Such a mechanisation of magic can for instance be found in Brennan's series.[31] In three novels so far, the Irish author develops connections between two parallel worlds; a realistic primary one and a fantastic fairy realm. Interactions between these worlds take place via *Stargate*-like portals. However, access to these portals is limited. On the fairy side, only selected members of the royal family, above all Prince Pyrgus and Princess Blue, use these portals intentionally, whereas the human teenager Henry and the ex-bank-robber and pensioner Fogarty only accidentally stumble across one of them.

In the primary world, old Fogarty is a tinkerer and inventor. His chaotic workshop is bursting at the seams, as in its unfathomable depths lie dormant innumerable technical marvels and treasures. Often genius can be close to madness, and Fogarty is the prime example for this. Very distrustful and eccentric, the pensioner has developed a persecution complex. Due to this vein, he appears much more susceptible to abnormal or exotic occurrences. So the appearance of the fairy Prince Pyrgus in his back garden does not clash too much with his world view.

On contact with the alien fairy technology of the realm Fogarty is immediately in his element. Fascinated by the new technology, the pensioner quickly acquires the complex

---

[30] The term *rejuvenation* encompasses the combination of traditional, "retro-style" magic elements with new, highly topical technological innovations or gadgets. Current British fantasy for children has discovered and begun to make good use of the magic inherent in ultramodern technical devices. Since their mysterious complex and specialised mechanisms in themselves resemble the effects of ancient magic, no inconsistencies arise. The rejuvenation process invigorates fantasy at the cost of a partial loss of the nostalgic flair of ancient magic. Considering the enormous gain through mechanisation, this loss seems a small price to be paid for the development of the genre.

[31] Herbie Brennan. *Faerie Wars*. London: Bloomsbury, 2003; Herbie Brennan. *The Purple Emperor*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004; Herbie Brennan. *Ruler of the Realm*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006; Herbie Brennan. *Faerie Lord*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

know-how, which he can now develop further for his own purposes.[32] Even though the fairy realm offers many technological inventions and spells, these devices and the magic involved do not clutter the plot, but fit in well with the overall concept. By contrast, novels such as *Artemis Fowl* concede to fairy technology a comparatively dominant position. Here, the plot is strongly influenced by the technology, which therefore stands in the foreground.

Of the fairy technology Fogarty and Henry are confronted with, the above-mentioned portals stand out as extraordinary. Without them, the contact between the worlds would not be possible.[33]

Besides the portals, other fairy technology encompasses weapons, defence systems, communication and intelligence. Reminiscent of Pullman's Will in *The Subtle Knife*, fairy prince Pyrgus owns a Halek knife with a crystal blade,[34] lending him extraordinary strength and superiority over opponents.

A third branch, the forest faerie, distinguishes itself from the fairies of the Light and those of the Night by their pronounced pacifism and neutrality. Reminiscent of Tolkien's Lothlórien-elves, these forest faerie voluntarily withdraw from the ordinary everyday life of larger settlements. Instead, like Pullman's mulefa, those faeries form an alternative, harmonic community, living in line with nature in remote regions of the forest. It is only with the explicit consent of the forest faerie that selected members of the outside world are granted access, particularly in crisis situations. By means of their voluntary isolation, these fairies can therefore keep their powers hidden from the general public. Whereas vague allusions to their incredible spell technologies[35] are made, the full scope cannot be fathomed. One can give them credit for playing their cards close to their chests. Nevertheless, it transpires that if they so desired, these fairies could not only easily take over and control the entire fairy realm, but the primary world as well.[36] Here, the point made is their deliberate and wise abandonment of confrontation and violence. These noble traits raise the Forest Faerie – comparable to Pullman's mulefa – above the petty quarrels of the others.

---

[32] In this respect, his versatility matches that of Artemis Fowl. Both understand and work with fairy technology without any problems whatsoever.

[33] An exception from this rule is a potion which, when drunk, has the same effect of translation into a parallel world. However, this is no standardised method in the series and limited to one incident so far. Compare Brennan, *The Purple Emperor*, p. 297.

[34] Ibd., p. 27.

[35] Compare Brennan, *The Purple Emperor*, p. 245.

[36] Ibd., p. 232.

Despite the above-mentioned innovations, the relation between the latter and the plot is well balanced, which ensures that the plot is enriched by the addition of interesting new dramatic elements and that the plot itself remains the centre of attention and not the extras. Other authors, above all Eoin Colfer, are also enthused by this new possibility. Yet, they have to pay heed to a possible predomination of the dramatic effects over the story they intend to tell.

A high level of mechanisation of magic can be found in the bestselling series of *Artemis Fowl*. Although he is Irish, its author, Colfer, illustrates the topical redefinition of magic's field of application in modern British fantasy for children in a special way. By combining traditional elements of magic with ultramodern and futuristic technologies,[37] Colfer ventures into new areas, thus enlarging the horizon of possibilities. With his intelligent and resourceful inventions the author becomes an influential pioneer of modern magic. This commitment is not restricted to *Artemis Fowl*. Instead, Colfer's involvement with original concepts extends to further novels penned by him, in which magic treads new paths. In *The Supernaturalist*, the plot is set in a futuristic town controlled by one satellite. There, a gang of young people quests for allegedly evil blue creatures with the help of numerous technological marvels so fantastic that they resemble magic.

Eoin Colfer's *The Wish List*, first published in 2000, narrates the story of 14-year-old Meg Finn and explores the consequences of world-crossing cooperation and interference in the light of a transfer of technical and magical achievements.[38] Meg and her accomplice have broken into the flat of the widowed pensioner Lowrie McCall and have injured him in the process. On the run, they accidentally get killed in a gas explosion. Whereas the accomplice Belch goes straight to hell, Meg's good and bad deeds are equal. So the girl's salvation depends on her conscious choice between good and bad. Her acid test for admittance to heaven consists of augmenting her good potential. In case of failure, she must go to hell. Ironically, once back on earth, her quest is to help her terminally ill victim McCall to tick off his last wishes, compiled in the eponymous Wish List. Together, they are bound up in a race against time and their hellish pursuers, since McCall's time is running out just as quickly as Meg's.

---

[37] For instance technologies of communication, information or weaponry.

[38] In this objective, Colfer's *The Wish List* and McGowan's *Hellbent* share many similarities. Eoin Colfer. *The Wish List*. London: Puffin, 2003; Anthony McGowan. *Hellbent*. London: Definitions, 2006.

Even though the two adversary sides are equipped with the latest technology, only hell appears to make use of their means. Interestingly, God does not play a role in this case. The victorious good side remains composed, while the defeated Devil and his minions are much more present and active. For instance, Beelzebub phones Saint Peter, not the other way round. This one-sided relationship is maintained throughout the book. Whereas heaven does not take any measures against the possible corruption of Meg's soul, the evil side actively attempts to influence the events by putting the girl's former criminal acquaintance Belch onto Meg and Lowrie. Admittedly, Belch as an adversary poses a threat, but he also has much comical potential. Fused with his bull dog Raptor to an only mildly intelligent entity, Belch is supported by a kind of virtual fairy, the schizophrenic computer program Elph.[39]

With a twinkle in his eye, Colfer presents the Devil as a businessman, replete with filed nails, jet-black goatee and pinstripe suit.[40] Hellish business transactions are settled via the ectonet,[41] mobile phones or emails. Moreover, commercial campaigns and deals such as "Own your own soul after a century"[42] emphasise the company-like structure of hell. Yet, despite its technical potential, the evil side hardly progresses at all. For one, this disproportionate unproductiveness stems from the sheer incompetence of the hellish personnel involved. Secondly, technical equipment becomes useless if it cannot be operated and maintained correctly, particularly as an abundance of means also entails a host of sources of error. Whereas *The Wish List* employs technical gadgets in more carefully measured doses, Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series lets off a true cascade of ideas.

With *Artemis Fowl*, Colfer has enriched modern children's fantasy with a witty anti-*Harry Potter*. Whereas Rowling's eponymous hero, in keeping with tradition, clearly stands on the good side and fights evil, Colfer's main character, also a teenager, is above all an unscrupulous criminal mastermind.[43] Having discovered the existence of the Little People, Artemis is bent on exploiting them and their technology for his own benefit. Where Harry Potter acts nobly for the benefit of others, Artemis focuses initially solely on his and his family's prosperity. Instead of learning the use of magic like Rowling's wizard, Artemis Fowl

---

[39] Colfer, *The Wish List*, p. 51.
[40] Ibd., pp. 14, 16, 17.
[41] Ibd., p. 16.
[42] Ibd., p. 18.
[43] Already Artemis' only thinly disguised surname *Fowl* alludes to criminal energies, underworld contacts and little honesty. In Greek mythology, *Artemis*, the Roman equivalent being Diana, is the – female - goddess of both hunt and moon. The teenager of the same name does her name and hunting instinct credit at first in his pursuit of the People, then tracking down opponents, other criminals or magical beings. See also Thomas Kullmann. *Englische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Eine Einführung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2008.

relies on technical and mechanical means in order to pursue his goals. Even though magic remains beyond the personal reach of the young boy,[44] he devises a strategy to circumvent this hindrance. If the active use of magic is denied him, Artemis chooses the indirect way of using the magic powers of the fairies for his projects.

In a series of six volumes to date, Colfer deploys a magical underground subculture which exists undetected by humans. Below the surface of the earth, elves and other magical beings inhabit cities which are interconnected by an elaborate infrastructure network. Besides the already mentioned traditional magic powers, the fairy society and its organs make wide use of advanced technology and its devices. In particular, their operational fields are situated in areas of communication, including security and, closely linked to it, defence.

On creating the fantastical store of technical possibilities and devices Colfer orientates himself by the newest technical and scientific developments and inventions of the real world and combines them with fantastic fairy technology. Of all the real or imaginary devices employed in *Artemis Fowl*, the kaleidoscope of inventions stands out. In fact, it does to such an extent that the author's creativity in gadgetry cannot but remind one strongly of James Bond, especially the films. With all the trimmings of the secret agent's equipment, both the fairies and their young adversary Artemis Fowl can draw from a huge pool of gadgets. Among the most innovative and creative range electronic contact lenses,[45] optionally mirrored, but also the good old artificial finger with an inbuilt dart.[46] Persiflage or homage,[47] the effervescent source of devices contributes – in combination with the situational comic and linguistic word plays of both centaur Foaly and kleptomaniac dwarf Mulch – to the amusement of the reader; providing for some funny moments in between the rush of action.

Communication between the Little People is based on the latest "real" inventions such as internet, including email, sms and mobile phones (with www.horsesense.gnom as a parody on the website-suffix *.com.*)[48] Devices the reader might still marvel at due to their novelty, for example access to the internet via mobile phone, appear perfectly natural to the fairies. In general, Colfer suggests that - compared to the human state-of-the-art developments - fairy

---

[44] It is only in *Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony* that Artemis usurps some magic. Which consequences this will have for sequels yet remains to be seen. Eoin Colfer. *Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony*. London: Penguin, 2006.

[45] Eoin Colfer, *Artemis Fowl*. London: Puffin, 2002, p. 150.

[46] Ibd., p. 149.

[47] The phonetic resemblance of Colfer's Cube to Fleming's tinkerer Q is just one of many potential allusions to *James Bond*. Sandra L. Beckett argues along the same line when she points to the references to James Bond. Beckett, *Crossover Fiction*, 2009, p. 149.

[48] Eoin Colfer. *The Opal Deception*. New York: Miramax-Hyperion Books for Children, 2005, p. 1.

technology is far ahead. Nevertheless, the Little People avail themselves of human technology, even if only for reasons of convenience.

By transferring authentic primary world technology into fairyland and simultaneously endowing it with unattainable, unheard-of modifications, the author achieves an astounding effect of alienation. Hard on the heels of this disenchantment follows re-orientation: The breathtaking speed at which the introduction and basic explanation of modified or entirely new devices and their functions takes place hardly leaves any time to genuinely miss the under-representation of traditional magic. The latter is edged out of its accustomed territory by high-tech, which appears just as fantastic as magic, if not more so.

Illustrative of this observation is Colfer's adaptation of the new media in *Artemis Fowl*. On the basis of the explosive spread of communication media in the real world, the author devises a scenario in which he thinks ahead of the present potential and presents a possible future outlook. As to what efficiency, bandwidth and top performance are concerned, the Little People's success is enviable. Fully computerised, their ramified communication system relies on high-performance machines which support the use of the most varied means of communication. Like Brennan, Colfer invents elaborate communication devices which make use of the latest as well as future scientific inventions and discoveries, especially on the sector of nano-technology, surveillance and weaponry. However, Colfer surpasses Brennan by far with the wealth of technical gimmicks he introduces in the *Artemis Fowl* series. The fairies work truly magical things, but with technological devices. This way, Colfer, stressing the eco-friendliness of the fairies' inventions, suggests that technical progress takes over traditional magic.

It is only over time and by degrees that Artemis performs a change of heart from fairy-hunter, "public enemy number one",[49] to fairy-protector and supporter. Inconsiderately, the young boy initially has ulterior motives for his discovery and planned exploitation by means of extortion of the Little People. Driven by self-interest and profit, Artemis displays exactly that strategic and commercial calculation which the narrator denounces here in place of those humans with comparable attitudes. Negative light is not only thrown onto the main problem of aggressive and voracious greed, but also onto its consequences.

Primarily, this concerns ecological issues[50] such as the overexploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, through pollution, ecosystems are destroyed and the natural balance

---

[49] Eoin Colfer. *The Arctic Incident*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2002, p. 78.
[50] See for example Colfer, *Artemis Fowl*, p. 68 and Colfer, *The Arctic Incident*, p. 16.

destabilised, thus impairing, curtailing or even extinguishing entire habitats. This actually means that the humans concerned deliberately ignore and often successfully escape the responsibility towards their planet. In *Artemis Fowl*, the negligent dealing with environmental care shows an essential aspect of social criticism. The issue of social criticism will be addressed and examined in more detail in 6.3.

Authors such as McGowan who, in *Hellbent*,[51] equips hell with the latest high-tech devices, Brennan and especially Colfer take on the challenge of contemporary science. With their new and original ideas of combining magic and science, these authors usher in a rejuvenating "living cell therapy" for this traditionally moulded area. While time-honoured magic is still paid tribute to, the mechanisation of magic points the way ahead.

The *Artemis Fowl* series illustrates this development. Here, traditional magic is limited to healing, becoming invisible and the necessary ritual for replenishing the fairies' magic powers. As to what technology and science are concerned, it becomes clear that traditional magic has its limits and that the future of the fairies, already so unlike the cliché of Victorian fairies, lies in scientific progress.

Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony emphasises that the fairy genius Foaly has to manage entirely without magic.[52] However, his intelligence, expressed by his inventions, easily compensates the lack of magic. Not only the centaur, but also the fairy Holly Short experiences the limitations of magic herself when fatally wounded by a demon. Whereas magic alone cannot save her, "a combination of magic and science" can.[53] The goblin Opal Koboi resorts to science instead of magic for her evil deeds, and claims: "[s]cience will be my magic".[54]

Tolkien's noble elves and Colfer's fairies couldn't be more different. Middle-earth's Rivendell or Lothlórien clash with the bustling and crowded underground Haven City in Colfer's novels. Whereas Tolkien is often said to be world-weary and escaping civilisation in his fantasies, Colfer meets the challenge of urbanising the fairy community. By transferring modern social realities to the fairy realm, the Irish author bets on a conscious confrontation and its possibilities. So far unprecedented in this form in British fantastic novels for children, this conflict is argued out between the two most intelligent representatives of their respective

---

[51] McGowan, *Hellbent*, 2006.
[52] "Centaurs didn't have magic. Not a drop. They got on by brains alone." Colfer, *Arctic Incident*, p. 148.
[53] Colfer, *Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony*, p. 338.
[54] Colfer, *The Opal Deception*, p. 27.

species, with Artemis on the human and Foaly on the fairy side. Both genii, the boy and the centaur strive to outdo each other. Their scientific rivalry takes advantage of the other's achievements and knowledge, resulting in an extensive compatibility of the technologies involved. Thus, both parties profit from mutual espionage. Yet, for Artemis, this inter-species exchange grants him access to advanced technological inventions. Without their knowledge, the teenager would lack the necessary fundamentals for his creative flights of fancy. Interestingly, the boy does not merely copy fairy inventions but alters, adapts, combines or develops them even further for his own purposes; a fact which makes Artemis at least Foaly's equal.

Above, we have identified magic as one of four selected traditional elements of British fantasy literature for children. Firstly, traditional elements of magic were discussed and compared to their modern facets. We then inquired into the application of magical creatures before addressing topical innovations in the field of magic. Despite the fact that magic has been justly classified as a traditional element, it is no contradiction in terms to pursue current developments at this point. By means of a direct comparison between traditional old and innovative elements, their particular prevailing characteristics and mechanism emerge more clearly, thus permitting more discriminating individual studies.

Possibly the most graphic example of the ongoing development from old towards new is the portrayal of fairies. As we have seen, the Victorian interpretation of the Little People as cute butterfly-like creatures at the bottom of the garden has had its day. With the help of creative and innovative magic in the form of high-tech special effects and breathtaking action modern fairies escape from hackneyed clichés of old.

4.2   Evil

Besides magic, evil is one of the most traditional elements not only of children's literature, but of literature in general. In fantasy in particular, the polarisation of good and evil is a very distinct and prominent feature. A bedrock as it were, the dichotomy of the highest-ranking ethical categories[55] of good and evil contains and permeates all central elements such as the structure, plot, characters, moral and social criticism.[56] In its function as a moral

---

[55] Kulik, Nils. *Das Gute und das Böse in der phantastischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Frankfurt/ Main: Lang, 2005, p. 5.

[56] The concept of good and evil in fantasy literature is subject to the prevailing value system of society, i.e. its topical ideology. Consequently, over time, the interpretation of good and evil requires readjustment to the changing reality of society.

guideline, the current attitude advocated by society regulates acceptable behaviour on the one hand and reprehensible behaviour on the other hand. Obviously, due to the interrelation between society and its literature, statements made in form of the nature of literary main characters comment on the situation of society and vice versa. For this reason, great importance is attached to the judgment of fictional characters on the basis of the above-mentioned parameters.

Eternal confrontation between the binary poles of good and evil is the central thread running through the history of mankind, and it is against this background that literary and historical heroes and villains raise and fall. Above all, fantasy literature reflects those tensions, presents, adapts and interprets them in manifold ways. Be it God and Satan, Cain and Abel, Beowulf and Grendel, or, more recently, Gandalf and Saruman, Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, Harry Potter and Voldemort, the formula appears universal. Over the millennia, the polarised antagonism of personified good and evil has revealed a very stable essence, vital for both structure and form of modern fantasy literature.

4.2.1　Traditional roles of evil

Any purposeful analysis of evil in current British children's fantasy requires a preliminary definition. As one part of a dualistic concept, evil can only exist in its opposition to good. The connotations of these two terms always depend on the respective social parameters, i.e. moral and ethical standards, within which they are employed. In our case the relevant parameters are those of the prevailing value system in North-West Europe. Accordingly, the main focus is on the interpretation of and the passing of judgment on human characters, deeds and intentions in view of their compliance with social conventions and values. Religious implications are taken into consideration, yet do not preponderate.

Evil can be defined as "morally wrong or bad; wicked", "causing harm or injury".[57] Whereas Collins equates moral wrong with evil, Kekes sees a problem with such an identification. In his opinion, a distinction should be made between "morally bad and evil actions",[58] as he claims they are not congruent. Rather, Kekes proposes a gradation of nuances of evil, which he classifies according to their intensity in internal, external, active and passive explanations in their various combinations. According to him, evil, "a permanent threat to

---

[57] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 536.
[58] John Kekes. *The Roots of Evil*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 139.

human well-being"[59] is worse than mere badness, because it "involves serious harm"[60] which befalls body and/ or soul. In summary, for Kekes it is viable to talk of evil if "malevolent motivation" leads to "serious, excessive harm" without "any morally acceptable excuse".[61] For our purpose of defining evil in children's fantasy, these definitions are a valuable contribution to an overall picture.

In *On Evil*, Morton too takes up the approach of gradation. Occasionally committed morally bad or wrong acts do not automatically make someone evil. Instead, with the freedom of choice between good and evil engrained in human nature, it is only natural that such faux pas do happen sometimes. Therefore, Morton argues that evil goes beyond everyday-wrongs, thus forms a category of its own in which evil labels deeds or people that cannot be classed within normal moral and understanding.[62] Just like Kekes mentions a lack of excuse for evil deeds, Morton stresses the factor of deliberation. According to him, evil is intimately connected with atrocity. Symptomatic for it are "death, pain, and humiliation imposed on others" as well as a total lack of respect towards their brethren.[63] Favourable prerequisites for evil deeds are therefore ruthlessness, cold-bloodedness and selfishness in combination with a low inhibition threshold.

Traditionally, the roles of evil in fantasy literature for children are clear-cut. In its quality as the opposite of good, evil embodies and unites all the negative characteristics the noble hero lacks by definition. That way, the hero is artificially elevated and purified, whereas the villain is reduced to wickedness. With pure good as one extreme and pure evil as the mutually exclusive other, evil is exaggerated and condensed to a deterrent and a negative showcase model. This way, the qualities of the hero are underlined. In traditional fantasy literature for children, this strong polarisation is intended to simplify matters by avoiding ambiguities. In such a literary cosmos of only extreme good or evil, everything is geared to encourage the reader's identification with the hero. Nevertheless, even an overabundance of positive qualities of a hero of traditional British children's fantasy cannot obscure the fact that evil and its representatives exert a certain fascination on the readers. Depending on the

---

[59] Kekes, *Evil*, p. xi.
[60] Ibd., p. 1.
[61] Ibd., p. 4. Compare also Marcus G. Singer. "The Concept of Evil". In: <u>Philosophy</u> 79 (2004): pp. 185-214. However, Kekes unfortunately undermines his own theorem of distinguishing between good and evil by adding the postulate that "there is no convincing reason for supposing that the good is basic and evil is derivative and there is no more reason to think that evil is interference with the good than that good is interference with evil." Kekes, *Evil*, p. 4.
[62] See Adam, Morton. *On Evil*. New York; London: Routledge, 2004, p. 4.
[63] Ibd., p. 13.

intensity with which the characters of hero and villain are presented, there can be a shift of emphasis in favour of the villain. Against an impending pallor and smoothness of a flawless hero a villain with a prominent profile prevails in all probability. This – not unprecedented - "paradox" of sympathy or even identification with the villain instead of the hero can be explained by the larger degree of freedom.[64]

Since weaknesses are something the traditional fantasy hero lacks, his adversary steps in. A villain in pursuit of basic instincts, indulging in every vice forbidden to the hero by decency, secretly satisfies our vein of sensationalism and voyeurism. Many a virtuous hero is thus eclipsed by the reprehensible yet somehow appealing breaking of taboos. The lure of evil consists of wilful licentiousness, expressed by permissiveness, selfishness, disrespect, scrupulousness, violence, destructiveness, unlimited, absolute power as well as arrogance.

Whereas positive but harmless good does not pose a threat to personal or social welfare, evil does so by definition. In both reality and literature, evil may be met with occasional secret admiration for the villains, but it is always subject to general suspicion and critical vigilance. Independent of its respective interpretation, abstract evil requires a tangible shape in order to be discussed. A proven and very effective method for a concretisation is personification, as it creates and conveys presence. The latter again permits characterisation and identification, in its course revealing both strong and weak points. Eventually, the knowledge of the vulnerability of the personification is the key to its defeat. Since the author and his world view are directly influenced by society, the conception of the villain therefore represents the current social concept of evil. Thus, an analysis of evil figures in literature reveals historical changes of values and morals.

Traditionally, the role of evil and its personifications define themselves over their direct contrast to the hero. Yet claiming that the villain is the exact negative mould of the hero would be an over-generalisation.[65] A fixture in the dramatis personae of a fantasy novel for children, the evil character puts the hero to a test in form of a confrontation. By vanquishing his adversary, the hero terminates the menace and restores harmony. It is through the negative example of the evildoer that the hero's own positive qualities are emphasised. The traditional villain of British children's fantasy is noted for his constant violation of good taste and

---

[64] Probably the most famous example for this "paradox" is the role of Satan in Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Although the main focus is intended to lie on God, Satan seems to upstage him.

[65] Parallels between hero and villain do exist. For instance, both have their pride, their specific goals, their motives and their helpers.

decency. In the history of fantasy literature for children we encounter several prime examples for such unmistakeably bad figures. They range from Carroll's violent Queen of Hearts over Lewis' White Witch to Tolkien's Smaug. Common to all those personifications is their unilateral malice over which they define themselves. Lacking psychological motivation, moral and/ or internal conflicts as well as defined, individual traits, they remain superficial types rather than characters. It is only in the more modern and in the current fantasy novels for children that these traditional roles and representations of evil are replaced by complex character studies. Simultaneously, the same development can be observed with the hero, who develops from a mere figure towards a three-dimensional character.

It is customary for personifications of evil in British children's literature to dispose of specific visual as well as behavioural markers, which are intended to ensure a prompt and indisputable identification of the villain. In the course of their long history, many of these markers were used so abundantly that they turned into clichés or were almost flogged to death. As a rule, external and internal features are intimately linked, dark clothing or repulsiveness mirroring inner conditions. This way, undesirable sympathy or even identification with the villain shall be prevented or at least be made more difficult.

Current publications which feature traditional roles of evil are for example Baldry's *Eaglesmount* trilogy, Jacques' *Redwall* series, Conlon-McKenna's *In Deep Dark Wood* or Booth's *Doctor Illuminatus*.[66] Baldry's animal fantasy takes over the well-tried cast replete with its unequivocal, yet rigid roles of both good and evil. Such fixed constellations lead to the predictability of plot, role behaviour, ending and moral. With clichés of old confirmed, innovations are hindered, as there is no room for development. Baldry's trilogy therefore strictly follows the guidelines when she assigns the roles of evil to those animals which since times immemorial embody the villain. Obviously, wolf, weasel and snake are predestined for the part of the rogue. Accordingly, in the *Eaglesmount* novels, they embody cowardice, violence, cruelty, ruthlessness and tyranny. Prime motivation for the evildoers is their hunger for power and its conservation. Emotionless, these animals do not show respect for anyone but their most senior. Even then, overthrowing the latter is actively schemed for. Needless to

---

[66] Cherith Baldry. *Eaglesmount: The Silver Horn*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001; Cherith Baldry. *Eaglesmount: The Emerald Throne*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001; Cherith Baldry. *Eaglesmount: The Lake of Darkness*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001; Brian Jacques. *Redwall*. London: Hutchinson, 1986; Brian Jacques. *Mariel of Redwall*. London: Hutchinson's Children's Books, 1991; Marita Conlon-McKenna. *In Deep Dark Wood*. Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1999; Martin Booth. *Doctor Illuminatus*. London: Penguin, 2003.

say that - in this hostile environment - friends are nonexistent. Their place is taken by temporary accomplices or servants. The fox or the owl, with their cunningness and cleverness have potential for both hero or villain. By contrast, the squirrel, the rabbit and the mouse are cute and good-natured. Eagles eclipse all other animals with their wisdom and strength.

Jacques' *Redwall* animal fantasy series works with the same traditional roles of evil as Baldry's. Picking two novels at random, one is met with a very similar picture. Both *Redwall* and *Mariel of Redwall* work with traditional roles of evil and the direct contrast between villains and heroes. Whereas badgers, hedgehogs, moles, otters or rabbits are on the good side, the roles of evil are occupied mostly by rats, but also snakes. By direct contrast between domestic mice and wild, nomadic rats, the wickedness of the latter is emphasised. In *Mariel of Redwall* for instance the villain is an insane, belligerent megalomaniac driven by greed and lust for power.

The Irish author Conlon-McKenna's novel *In Deep Dark Wood* also works with traditional roles of evil. An old woman clad in black, replete with long skirt, cape and boots, Bella Blackwell matches the typical picture of the wicked witch. Although she lives at a castle and runs a dragon school, she might as well inhabit a gingerbread house.

Booth's *Doctor Illuminatus* owes to the same traditional roles of evil as Baldry. This implicates that he falls back on the fixed roles and the clichés they entail. In *Doctor Illuminatus*, the representative of evil is De Loudéac, who "seeks to do terrible wrong in the world by his creation".[67] It is not only his destructive vein that brands him as evil, but also the fact that he pursues his aims with a fanatic energy. Unfailing external signs of his evilness are his bad body odour, mirrored in his nickname "Malodor", and his cruelty when he casually disembowels a dog.[68]

In Nimmo's *The Children of the Red King*[69] series, three sisters, the Bloor family as well as some of the endowed children are outright evil, yet without the potential to develop. They remain static throughout the series, thus allowing Charlie Bone and the good endowed children to thwart their plans.

Delaney's *The Wardstone Chronicles* rely on the traditional evilness of spirits, boggarts, witches and necromancers that the Spook and his apprentice have to face. However,

---

[67] Booth, *Doctor Illuminatus*, p. 52.
[68] Ibd.; p. 117, p. 129.
[69] Jenny Nimmo. *The Children of the Red King*. London: Egmont, 2002-present.

the rigid roles of good and evil are broken up by the young witch Alice, who mediates between the two extremes.

Dale's *Whispering to Witches*[70] is built on traditional clichés of evil – of witches in particular. By relating the events from the point of view of a good witch clan that has to fight an evil one, Dale's novel – interlarded with allusions to *Harry Potter* - humorously demonstrates the relativity of evil.

Further traditional roles of evil can be found for example in McNish's *The Doomspell* trilogy (the witches), Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* trilogy (above all the Master), Nix' *Abhorsen* trilogy (the necromancer Hedge), *The Keys to the Kingdom* series (the Morrow Days and their minions, the Skinless Boy) and *The Ragwitch* (the eponymous doll), Paolini's Galbatorix of the *Inheritance* cycle and Rowling's Voldemort.

As we have seen, traditional British children's fantasy polarises and fixes the roles of good and evil so as to exclude any ambiguities. Such black and white contrasts are meant to facilitate the child's understanding as well as to help it classify good and evil. On the assumption that children need obvious guidelines and role models for the development of their own character and world view, one thus insinuates that - at their respective stages of intellectual development, cognition and experience – children cannot yet cope with the full truth. As is the case with one-sided approaches, clear-cut yet artificial categorisations support the formation of stereotypes rather than the depiction of authentic circumstances.[71] Too radical a simplification may lead to an overall lifelessness which then results in too naïve and predictable plots with an obligatory happy ending.

4.2.2   New roles of evil

In current children's fantasy, an increasing number of authors break with popular traditions. Not only do they scrutinise and revise conventional role models for good and evil but also other customary parameters. These comprise for instance the idealised, firmly established premises of aimed-for brevity, simplicity and conciseness. Further parameters are a clearly structured plot accompanied by a straightforward moral message. On account of the pedagogical alignment of children's literature, within whose framework fantasy is no exception, moralisation has established itself as an obligatory feature for education. In some

---

[70] Anna Dale. *Whispering to Witches*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.
[71] Not only in reality but also in fantasy literature human behaviour follows realistic conventions. As a rule, human behaviour cannot be reduced to artificial simplifications, but proves to be a very complex system.

cases, however, so much attention is attached to the moral message that the harmonic overall design, especially the textual consistency, must make concessions. A prime example for such an imbalance are C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Here, much of the textual consistency is neglected in favour of the religious world view the author urges to convey.

It can be observed that in fantasy for children there is a current movement away from these traditional but largely standardised parameters towards more individualisation. In the first place, this concerns developments of character-conception and the closely connected heroic portrayal, and also includes the elements of violence and humour. Without a doubt, the most prominent cases are those of the hero and his antagonist, the villain. Both gain from the detachment from traditional restrictions and the simultaneous opening towards complex characters with an individual psychology. A shift in emphasis from external to internal conflict can be observed, i.e. from physical combat to psychological duel. Consequently, the direct conflicts may decrease in quantity, but they increase in intensity and quality and gain depth. It is no longer clear right from the outset that the hero is purely good and his adversary purely evil. As in reality, the truth lies somewhere in between.

On the basis of the traditional roles of evil we will now take a closer look at the new roles of evil in British children's fantasy. In the following, we will analyse the developments in the light of selected examples of modern villains and see in how far innovations influence for instance the antagonistic role of the hero or the moral message.

The new roles of evil are manifold and reveal different grades of detachment from the basic traditional ones. Fantasy novels which work with moderate changes of evil largely adhere to the traditional roles, yet introduce deviations from them. Contrary to the cliché of the fair hero versus the dark villain, the latter can for instance be portrayed as blond as in the case of Rowling's Draco and Lucius Malfoy. Any reversals of the colour conventions for the representatives of evil affect the figure of the hero, too. At Hogwarts, teachers and pupils wear black, so that traditional colour coding becomes unreliable. Another example for this is C.S. Lewis' White Witch, who, by donning white, feigns purity and innocence. With external markers becoming null and void, internal features are given more emphasis and judgement is passed on the deeds rather than the appearance of a character.

As moderate new roles of evil already show beginnings of a move towards psychological evaluation for a distinction between good and evil, they portray developments of the evil psyche, strive for a more structured personality as well as for an understandable motive for the villain's deeds. Just as the hero is defined over his subjectivity to moral standards – which, depending on the respective classification become more and more open to

interpretation – the villain is free from these moral constraints.[72] His main task is to negate the positive values represented by the hero by pursuing wicked ends, thus forming an antithetical counterbalance. Since his room for manoeuvre encompasses everything evil, i.e. "non-good", the villain delights in inflicting physical and/ or psychological pain on his fellow beings. More often than not, the representative of evil holds a high post – usurped, as is fitting – which procures him the necessary means needed for scheming and plotting.

Beleth, the lord of hell in Brennan's series, is a prime example of the personification of such new roles of evil. As far as his behavioural patterns and his external appearance are concerned, he can be ranked with other traditional villains of demon or devil-origin.[73] Like them, Beleth is obsessed by power and its lustre. As head of the daemons, he must by definition exceed his fellows in strength, readiness to resort to violence, and power. Motivated by his lust for absolute control, he eats his father[74] in order to replace him on the throne. Beleth surpasses other megalomaniacs and their greed by far by not just wanting to dominate hell and the faerie realm, but also reality, the so-called Analogous world. New is not only the globalisation of the threat and the ensuing conflict but also the means by which the demon operates.

For Beleth, harnessed technological achievements are the key to his planned conquest. He either relies on portals, artificial connections between two worlds, or employs demon ships,

(mis-)interpreted by humans as UFOs. However, his delusions of grandeur are his downfall. As a rule, the more traditional the role of the villain is drafted, the more obvious his weak spot becomes. In contrast to others, Beleth *does* have a master plan and a meticulously elaborated strategy. As good as his preparatory work may be, the demon is not yet enough modern villain to succeed. In the end, he fails because of his traditional hubris and blindness to anything else but power. In Beleth's case, he is defeated when he least expects it: At the apex of his power. Instead of a triumphal celebration of his assumption of control over the Faerie realm through a marriage to Blue, Beleth meets his end through the hands of his bride.

---

[72] At least in this stadium of new roles of evil the villain is only subject to the condition that he does not perform any positive deeds. However, these constraints can be transgressed by a villain who performs good deeds. He then does not turn into a good villain (a contradiction in terms), but gets transformed into an - admittedly contested - hero.

[73] Brennan, *Ruler of the Realm*, p. 407.

[74] Brennan, *Faerie Wars*, p. 277.

The closer authors orientate themselves at traditional patterns of the fantasy villain, the less room there is for development. This is due to the static nature of the traditional villain, whose evilness remains unchanged throughout. Tied up in rigid patterns of behaviour, he cannot possibly be flexible in his ways or adapt to changing situations. As the villain's weak spot is the predictability of both his actions and goals, his plans are soon thwarted by the farsighted hero. Yet, there is no denying the fact that a more pronounced psychology renders the representative of evil more interesting and challenging. Moderate new roles of evil have realised the potential of variety. As a result, they are undertaking the first steps towards a more complex and fanned out, less predictable and thus more ambiguous psychology.

Whereas moderate new roles of evil are still firmly rooted in traditional forms of fantasy and only use new features sparingly, more complex ones can be found in current, innovative publications. The more innovative the villain is portrayed to be, the less predictable and the more ambiguous he becomes. His development is similar to that of the hero and can equal the latter in such characteristics as individuality, complexity, psychology and even intelligence. Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* starts out as a three-dimensional villain, a criminal mastermind. It is only in the course of the first novel that he changes sides, i.e. his attitudes and ways towards the more positive. However, despite the fact that in the later novels Artemis Fowl, now converted, fights against evil, he remains an ambiguous character since he has not fully renounced his criminal energy.

The case of Stroud's Nathaniel illustrates how a good child can turn evil when exposed to bad influence. Throughout the trilogy, he increasingly turns into a villain, only to convert the instant before his death. However, this change of mind at the last minute makes him an ambiguous character, comparable to Almond's Stephen Rose in *Clay*.[75]

In Foreman's *Keepers and Seekers* series, good and evil adhere to traditional concepts at first sight. Yet, like the Malfoys, Odin and his minions deviate from them in several ways. Firstly, they are blond and have blue eyes. Furthermore, they seem to have eternal life and, throughout history, are always on the highest technological level as far as their weapons are concerned. Although their goal, world dominion, is a traditional one, their means are not: New high-tech weapons render them invincible, which aggravates the treat.

In Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, evil is shown as being ambiguous. Whereas the Oblation Board and Father Gomez correspond to traditional roles of evil, Lord Asriel and Mrs

---

[75] David Almond. *Clay*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2006. [2005]

Coulter are highly complex characters who have various facets, just like the heroes Lyra and Will. Here, the dissolution of borders becomes apparent again. An increasing number of villains can no longer be judged as either fully good or fully evil. Rather, villains and heroes alike distinguish themselves by complex, three-dimensional characters that do no longer permit sweeping judgement. It can be observed that the younger the date of the publication, the more refined and intricate the composition of the characters, villains and heroes alike, becomes. Roles of good and evil merge.[76]

4.2.3   Evaluation

Current British fantasy novels for children cover the entire spectrum of available roles of evil. The traditional villain is still a widely accepted since well-tried concept, since its frequent and long-term use has the advantage of being a familiar and "safe" since unerring element of narration due to its clear outlines. Current traditional roles of evil therefore take their place in a long genealogy of villains. In spite of the mentioned merits, a major disadvantage has crystallised though: With both his external and internal features ossified into restricted, two-dimensional and general stereotypes, the concept of the traditional villain is prone to repetition and stagnation.

Progress, by contrast, in form of changes and innovations, allows for development and creativity. Spurred by the challenge, the majority of the corpus authors thus take a sincere interest in dynamic new roles of evil. Whereas the aims of the villain might not have changed too much,[77] his personality certainly has. As the examination of the corpus novels revealed, a clear trend can be discerned in British children's fantasy. There exists a decisive movement away from traditional two-dimensionality, tainted with flatness of character and often cliché-laden, towards a complex and psychologically demanding three-dimensionality of the villain.

With the villain as well as the hero developing complex since multi-layered personalities,[78] their conventional transparency is clouded by the emerging ambiguities and inconsistencies for which there is now room. More enigmatic, the character of the villain gains in attraction. In their quality as counterbalance to the hero, the villains are indispensable for the equilibrium of the two forces. Ever since, personifications in form of a specific villain

---

[76] The analysis of such ambiguous characters must be subject of future studies, as it is far too extensive for the present study.

[77] More often than not, the representatives of evil strive for absolute power, its attainment, stabilisation and expansion either on a micro scale (i.e. regional) or macro scale (i.e. world domination) and/ or immortality.

[78] For the development of the hero in current British fantasy for children see chapter 5.4.

have provided the required plasticity for the impersonal and abstract overall concept of evil. Individual adaptations over time, concerning political or social situations and the zeitgeist of the different periods, may be made, yet the concept of a tangible representative of evil remains universal.

Especially in times of global terror, which has reached new, so far unknown dimensions, one feels an even stronger need to pinpoint the aggressors of impersonal and abstract violence. In real life as well as in literature arises the need to channel one's feelings. For this purpose, a concrete threat in form of individual persons is identified, who then give terror a face. Naturally, these developments do not leave British fantasy for children untouched. In the aftermath of the 11th of September 2001 humanity has lost its basic trust as well as its sense of security. It goes without saying that these far-reaching developments make themselves felt in children's fantasy. A case in point is for instance Rowling's *Harry Potter*. Not without reason does the series drift towards an atmosphere of gloom and doom, heralding a last battle reminiscent of Lewis' ending of *The Chronicles of* Narnia, conceived after the traumatic experience of the Second World War. The world is at stake, not just for adults but also for children.

It would appear that in the future terror and its dangers will influence the shaping and confrontation with evil decisively. Parallel to its dynamic development in reality, literary evil will eventually shift from its selective, either regionally or temporally limited, often isolated occurrence towards a more general and seemingly more timeless phenomenon. Accordingly, its new roles will involve threats on a global rather than a more individual scale. From the point of view of its magnitude and implications for humanity, new roles of evil in children's fantasy will orientate themselves even stronger at models and panoramas that Tolkien or Le Guin have drawn.[79] Thus, the topic focuses increasingly on recurrent or resident evil. Its challenge consists of a new slipperiness caused by its strong, paralysing since overpowering presence. The latter either results from its numerical superiority or from the abnormal power of a single individual. Also, threats to humanity in form of political or social terror or ecological catastrophes range among potential roles of evil. With the menace becoming universal, resistance must adapt to this new situation. The hero, instead of remaining largely a single combatant, has to organise and mobilise a group of allies. Just as the trauma of evil is a global one, its digestion is, too.

---

[79] In *The Lord of the Rings* and *Earthsea* respectively.

4.3   Violence

Like magic, humour and evil, violence ranks among the traditional elements in British fantasy literature for children. Violence can be defined as an aggressive behaviour with the intention to inflict pain on human or animal and works either on the physical, the psychological level or combines these two channels. Also, violent acts can be the result of controlled plans, carried out with deliberation, or uncontrolled, unintentional emotions, vented in the heat of the moment. It is certainly a moot point in how far the intention to harm someone is the deciding factor or the sole outcome of the act. Collins bases their definitions on physical violence and leaves the question of intention open to interpretation of the respective situation.

> "1) The exercise or an instance of physical force, usually effecting or intended to effect injuries, destruction, etc. [...] 2) powerful, untamed, or devastating force [...] 4) an unjust, unwarranted, or unlawful display of force, esp. such as tends to overawe or intimidate 5a) to inflict harm upon; damage or violate [...]"[80]

At first glance, violence in books for children may appear mutually exclusive with the myth of childhood innocence. On a second glance, however, one realises that it forms indeed an integral part of literature for children. As early as in the nursery children first come in contact with violence in literature, particularly in folk tales and fairy tales. Murder[81] and mutilations[82] are nothing unusual in these genres, since, on the whole, both heroes and villains treat each other none too gently. Violence on the part of the heroes is justified with the urgency to put a stop to the villain's machinations; i.e. it is treated as a necessary evil. By contrast, the representatives of evil virtually define themselves through their liberal dealing with violence. In order to render the extent of evil, drastic and graphic accounts are employed. For the villains, violence is thus both a means of expression and an inherent characteristic. This also holds true for the majority of British fantasy literature for children where, as we have seen, the various roles of evil take it as their basis.

Well into the twentieth century physical violence was still an applied and tolerated disciplinary measure and reflected in literature for children of the time.[83] With physical

---

[80] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1701.

[81] As in *Snow White*, where the murder of the princess is only temporary, but the wicked stepmother dies in the end.

[82] Prime example for mutilations in a fairy tale is certainly *Cinderella*, where the stepsisters cut their toe and heel off respectively; or *Rapunzel*, where the prince is blinded by thorns.

[83] In *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (1984) for example, Roald Dahl among other things vividly writes from the perspective of a beaten schoolboy about the then still widespread caning.

violence banned from education, modern times witness an increase of violence in other areas. Phenomena like "happy slapping" nowadays replace caning teachers. Yet, with the expansion of the new media, the form and extent of violence in Western society is shifting from open, individual confrontation to more psychological, anonymous aggression such as (cyber-) mobbing. Instead of single, identifiable aggressors more and more frequently dynamic and therefore fuzzy groups of aggressors emerge.

Recently, this anonymous confrontation is gaining ground in Western Society. The geographical presence of terrorist attacks on civilians, for example in London and Madrid, is intensified by the almost instantaneous and worldwide circulation of graphic pictures via TV and internet. On the news, within seconds geographic distance is bridged. This current all-pervasiveness of violence in the various media certainly favours a heightened insensibility. Of course, this very real situation has implications for its representation in literature.

Temporally delayed for reasons of the literary production process, yet nonetheless intense, the events of and after the 11th of September 2001 have reached British children's fantasy. Initially, this might sound surprising for a genre famous for its supposed escapism. On a closer look though it becomes apparent that fantasy of all genres facilitates a discussion of topical issues to a higher extent than would be possible in realistic literature. The framework of the fantasy world provides the distance required for a more objective occupation with these realistic topics. Parallel to the developments in reality, fantasy literature for children experiences the process of de-individuation or gathering of both good and evil. Current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy reveal that individual heroes or villains increasingly distance themselves from the role of the single combatant. Simultaneously, more importance is attached to the interaction within the group and its unity. While there have always been helpers of both hero and villain, in recent publications the interaction between one or several "figureheads" and their helpers is stressed as teamwork. Contrary to the customary usage, the helpers do not remain pale and insignificant figures reduced to the benefit they bring to the hero or the villain. Instead, it can be observed that the helpers move more into the foreground and are more clearly defined. Like this, they approach the complex main characters, allowing the helpers to form true teams with them. In return, this teamwork has consequences for villain and hero. Where a single hero and villain sufficed to portray a conflict, nowadays we encounter an increasing number of clusters of equally valued main characters on both sides.

This development emerges in a particularly clear way in two significant representatives of current British fantasy novels for children. Both Rowling and Pullman

employ this technique of clustering in respect to heroes and villains in the *Harry Potter* series on the one hand and in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy on the other.

Rowling's series concentrates the amount of individual, active team workers to a large, yet manageable and clearly defined group centred around the three main hero characters, Harry, Hermione and Ron. In their fight against evil, the trio is stood by characters such as Dumbledore, McGonagall, Sirius as well as the entire organisation of the Order of the Phoenix. What is more, benevolent magical creatures like the centaur Firenze support their cause. However, clustering also applies to the villains, who appear in a group rallied round their leader Voldemort: The Death-Eaters. Just like the heroes, the villains are supported by magical creatures, above all the Dementors.

Whereas this trend towards individual clustering in Rowling's series is already quite polished, Pullman's epic trilogy surpasses it in its degree of sophistication. Despite the high number of characters in the trilogy, Pullman manages to portray a vast array of characters disposing of the extraordinary feature of being genuine individuals who can act independently of groups. Yet, at the same time, they are compatible with groups in which they blend in well. Within the group, they experience support and feedback. Differing from previous fantasy novels for children, the heroes' helpers are no longer considered mere bit-players. Instead, the helpers have been promoted to serious, indispensable team workers. As we will see in more detail further on in chapter 5.4, this development away from individual heroes as single combatants towards an increased formation of more or less equal and balanced teams enlarges the spectrum of the cast as well as its geographical reach. It makes allowances for the fact that the conflicts themselves increasingly take place on a global level.

As the composition and assessment of the heroes' and villains' characters change and conflicts are argued out and settled on a far larger scale, these developments have immediate effects on the kind and portrayal of violence in British fantasy literature for children. Whereas formerly violence was limited to regional dimensions, nowadays it seems to know no more bounds. Current publications follow the trend of replacing traditional conflict-solving in form of duels between just two individuals with comprehensive conflicts to be solved by larger groups. Violence addressed to either an entire continent, peoples or even worlds must necessarily be far more complex, dangerous and awesome than violence between individuals. For this reason, current British fantasy novels for children introduce global violence such as weapons of mass destruction – the magic origin or mode of operation of which does not legitimise them in any way - and other immense threats such as ecological catastrophes. This is done against a background of a general sombre mood, marked by widespread hopelessness,

despair and helplessness in view of the paralysing superiority of evil. Yet not only the extent, but the intensity of the violence portrayed has increased. Our corpus novels, representatives of the current genre situation, reveal a discernible trend towards graphic violence. In this respect, British fantasy for children is by no means an isolated instance. Rather, it follows the general current of topical children's literature. There, parallel to violence representation in mass media such as television, internet and virtual reality environments[84] such as computer games, the portrayal of violence in all its atrocious and above all gory details is continually intensified. So much so that one inevitably gets the impression that, as far as violence is concerned, authors as well as readers class its frequency and intensity as a mark of quality. With one publication trying to outdo the other with an even stronger presence and impact, the spiral of violence is turned incessantly faster. So in current British fantasy for children a fair bit of violence appears to be a vital ingredient for the overall recipe for success. Its intensity may be subject to the latitude given to the various authors, but the influence of the extensive daily occurrence as portrayed by the various media is unmistakable.

Our corpus novels mirror this tendency towards an increase in quantity and quality of violence, leading to an unprecedented graphicness in the genre. As our corpus spans the entire spectrum of violence in British children's fantasy, there results an enormous differential between its two extremities. Whereas the most moderate forms of violence consist of single incidents between two or more individuals, in which little harm is done, the most extreme cases revel and escalate in veritable orgies of brutality and bloodlust.

Considering the observed developments, we find, as expected, the most harmless and infrequent forms of violence in the smallest number of corpus novels.[85] Their intensity is such that both psychological and physiological welfare of the individuals involved – both characters and reader - are not disturbed irreversibly.

At the lowest end of the open-ended scale of violence we can therefore range novels which do contain sporadic incidents of violence and which refrain from employing too many graphic details. So for instance Terry Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*. In this novel, violent incidents are used in moderation, culminating in graphic

---

[84] Cf. Noga Applebaum. "Electronic Texts and Adolescent Agency: Computers and the Internet in Contemporary Children's Fiction". In: Reynolds (Ed.) *Modern Children's Literature,* p. 257.

[85] The only corpus novel exempt from a classification of violence is Paul Stewart; Chris Riddle. *Muddle Earth*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2003. Besides mentioning "Killer daisies" (p. 84) and squeezing sheep (p. 101), its most violent act consists of the warning that "any resistance is to be met with extreme tickling – to the death, if necessary!" (p. 429).

descriptions of rats eating each other in a cage,[86] rats being massacred in a rat pit[87] and, after a fight, severed body parts of them strewn around.[88] Paradox and macabre as it may seem, this exemplary extent of graphic violence typifies the minimum content for a gripping plot. As far as it can be judged at the moment, the minimum bounds of graphic violence comprise some bloodshed, forms of physical and/ or psychological suffering and/ or murder. Entirely pacifist works are generally denied admittance to literary glory. The literary Olympus of British children's fantasy is therefore currently occupied by and reserved for those novels which dare to openly and liberally deal with the various forms of violence. Consequently, this element of tangible graphic violence has established itself firmly in the inventory of children's fantasy literature.

Further novels characterised by their moderate use of violence are Hussey's *The Valley of Secrets*[89] or McCaughrean's *The Stones are Hatching*.[90] In her novel, Hussey invents a secluded, enchanted place in a rural Cornish valley. Well shielded from the public eye, it has become the safe haven for a variety of exotic flora and fauna from the Amazon. The contrast between the present situation of the animals and plants in the valley and the situation of the native Indians in Brazil in the past could not be more extreme. Whereas the valley has become a paradisiacal refuge for the rescued animals in the present, flashbacks into the past denounce terrible human offences towards the natives in Brazil. Old diaries reveal atrocities by degrees, reporting the abrupt destruction of the former idyll of the South-American jungle by the arrival of "civilised" white people and their criminal machinations. In the wake of the slave trade, expulsion, flight, capture and mass murder befall the natives, destroying their home. Since these conditions are disclosed gradually in the diaries – extracts of which are embedded within the story - their impact is cushioned by some temporal as well as geographical distance. Through this reduced immediacy of violence the main focus shifts from the emotionality of the eye witness report towards a more rational, distanced and objective view. Whereas the modern practices of the production of Brazilian corned beef and the ensuing destruction of the primeval forest are denounced,[91] the focus lies on the past atrocities in connection with the slave trade. The previous harmony contrasts sharply with the

---

[86] Pratchett, Terry. *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*. London: Corgi, 2002 [2001].
[87] Ibd., p. 154.
[88] Ibd., p. 218.
[89] Charmian Hussey. *The Valley of Secrets*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2005. [2003]
[90] Geraldine McCaughrean. *The Stones are Hatching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
[91] Cf. Hussey, *Valley of Secrets*, p. 284.

death and destruction[92] brought to the natives via the hypocritical missionaries. Not only are they shown to force their belief on to the Indians,[93] but, apparently men of God, they also play unscrupulously into the traders' hands.

Whereas Hussey's publication is ecocritical,[94] McCaughrean's episodic novel *The Stones are Hatching* cannot be placed easily. Loosely strung together around its main thread of the search for and elimination of an ancient dragon, this quest radiates a sense of strangeness. Embedded in a sombre general tenor and dream-like structures, the plot of McCaughrean's *The Stones are Hatching* unhinges the traditional concepts of straightness, logical consequences and inferences in British fantasy literature for children and shows what is possible outside of them. Explanations are withheld, expectations run into empty space and acts either don't entail immediate consequences or, if they do, not necessarily logical ones. Within this postmodern framework, McCaughrean's concept of violence blends in with the surreal events. In the novel, therefore, violence does not necessarily correlate with actions or aggressive behaviour. On the contrary, it can occur out of its own accord; seemingly for no apparent reason. Alien in an even more alien world, violence in McCaughrean's novel elucidates its perverseness and innate hollowness. On account of its incoherence, aloof violence in her novel can strike in a much more direct way than if it was integrated in a more structured story based on a principle of unambiguous cause and effect.

On a similar level with the novels mentioned above range Kerr's novels about *The Children of the Lamp*. Modern-day teenagers, John and Philippa, the twin main characters of the novels discover their djinn heritage, origin and endowments. In the course of their explorations, the twins embark on adventures, soon finding themselves surrounded by an atmosphere of the oriental 1001 nights. In *The Akhenaten Adventure*[95] its dangers become apparent. Not only do people fall victim to poisonous snakes[96] but also feral mutilations are mentioned almost casually in passing.[97] In *The Blue Djinn of Babylon*,[98] Philippa finds herself in the same situation as the legendary Scheherazade. At the mercy of a French djinn, Philippa

---

[92] Ibd., p. 287.
[93] Ibd., p. 294.
[94] Ecocriticm, ecotopia and ecopoiesis as approaches to readings in children's literature are for instance discussed in Clare Bradford; Kerry Mallan; John Stephens; Robyn McCallum. *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 79-104.
[95] P.B. Kerr. *The Children of the Lamp. The Akhenaten Adventure*. London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2004.
[96] Ibd., pp. 189, 252.
[97] Ibd., p. 206.
[98] P.B. Kerr. *The Children of the Lamp. The Blue Djinn of Babylon*. London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2005.

stays alive as long as she has a story to tell.[99] This act of psychological violence is soon topped by John's dilemma. As a test, he has to kill his own father.[100] Certainly, his act of parricide is moderated by the following realisation that it was not his own father after all. Nevertheless parricide, in a book intended for children, presents a serious breach of a taboo. More graphic violence is not long in coming: The so-called *Bocca Veritas*. Instead of being made from stone like its Roman counterpart, in Kerr's novel it consists of a human head severed from its body,[101] condemned to eternal life.

Apart from the heroic death of a squirrel, Tyler's *The Time Wreccas* do not show a high death toll, but the frequency and intensity of graphic violence increase in contrast to the publications mentioned previously, Tyler's novel portrays much physical violence and verbal abuse, such as bullying, mobbing and systematic beatings. Amongst the barbaric Wreccas acts of violence are used either for purposes of scare tactics, punishment, for abreacting or just for fun. The second volume, *The Time Apprentice*, follows up this fundamental separation of the two levels, above and below ground, and their inhabitants, Guardians and Wreccas. Whereas in the first novel only Sofi and Seth change sides from Wrecca to Guardian, *The Time Apprentice* permits at least a partial cross-over when the Wrecca women find refuge above ground and some Guardians venture into the Wrecca domain of the Underneath. Only Wreccas can overcome class barriers and improve their status – Guardians do not sink below their level. As the moral of *The Time Apprentice* strives to show, willpower, openness and the willingness to make the first move help getting rid of prejudices and further mutual misunderstanding. Apart from psychological threats, intimidations and cruel but failed plans, the most memorable scene of graphic violence in the novel is that of Stench's death. He unintentionally gets in the way of a swinging pickaxe.[102]

In current British fantasy for children it can be noticed that the higher one moves on the open-ended scale of violence, the more likely it is that the novel in question is a popular book or even a bestseller. This suggests a reciprocal relationship between the popularity and success of a topical novel on the one hand and its extent and form of violence on the other. Obviously, this development is at its most conspicuous where British fantasy novels for children possess a high sales volume. This raises the question why they are so successful and

---

[99] Ibd., p. 219-220.
[100] Ibd., p. 256.
[101] Ibd., p. 268.
[102] Val Tyler. *The Greenwich Chronicles. The Time Apprentice*. London: Puffin, 2007, p. 95.

popular. On analysing the content of violence in British fantasy novels for children it becomes apparent that violence is the outlet via which this sensation hunger is stilled, and that the sales potential of a publication rises exponentially to the content of violence.

Graphic violence has become an essential element of the form and structure of the fantasy novel and is used to emphasise the conflict and the difference between antagonistic characters and their philosophy towards their fellow beings. Indifference and thirst for power further violence and its use. However, graphic violence is not restricted to evil characters. The heroes can also avail themselves of quite dubious methods and forms of violence against evil, only distinguished by their intention, interpretation and aim.

A good example for the symbiosis between detailed cruel deeds and literary as well as commercial success in the subgenre of animal fantasy is Jacques' *Redwall* series. The author's recipe for success follows the same basic pattern in the single volumes. One or several villains unlawfully threaten the abbey of Redwall and/ or its protégés. They thus pick a battle, only to lose it every time. Unable to learn from mistakes, the villains pay with their lives for their wicked deeds. As peaceful and idyllic some scenes of the secluded life in the forest are portrayed to be, the obligatory battles dominate the events. Even if Jacques tries to re-establish the harmony at the end of the novels, the endings appear artificial. What remains is the impression of the respective battles and the numerous losses, behind which the story suffers. Sometimes one cannot help feeling that these excesses of violence are intended to compensate for weaknesses of the plot. In Jacques' *Redwall* series, the villains are associated with tyranny, lust for power and a taut pecking order. The latter entails unquestioning obedience towards seniors on the one hand and merciless behaviour towards juniors on the other. Outside the hierarchy, the mob is dominated by chaos and despotism. So it does not really come as a surprise that short work is made of anyone not complying with the evil leader's will. On the agenda are the taking of hostages, mutilations, executions and massacres.

Other novels from our corpus can take Jacques' *Redwall* series on any time. There still seems to be much leeway at the upper, open-ended scale of graphic violence when we look at publications such as Foremans's *Keepers and Seekers*, Baddor's *The Looking-Glass Wars* or Rowling's *Harry Potter* heptalogy. Further fantasy novels with prominent graphic violence encompass Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Taylor's *Shadowmancer*, *Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamanderstreet*, *Wormwood* and *Tersias*, to name only a few. This trend of an increased brutalisation of customs, behaviour and their ways of representation is not limited to the more mature readers, but establishes itself in the younger ones as well. In Stewart and Riddell's *The Edge Chronicles* for example the detailed realisations of one novel try to

outclass those of another, i.e. increasing both frequency and graphicness. This phenomenon is by no means peripheral or insular. Rather, it fits into the general, global development of the genre. Far from being limited to Britain, it also manifests itself in publications on other continents. Prominent representatives are the *Inheritance* cycle of the American Paolini or the *Abhorsen* trilogy of the Australian Nix.

Like Jacques' *Redwall* series, Stewart and Riddell's *The Edge Chronicles* are sold for a younger and more restricted target group as for instance *Harry Potter*. The readers are confronted with a considerable degree of graphic violence. Admittedly, at first the authors are a dab hand at wrapping it up skilfully in a gripping and interesting story, interspersed with artistic illustrations. With every volume, however, the number of violent scenes and their goriness increase. In *Beyond the Deepwoods*,[103] the first novel of the series, graphic violence is limited to the sounds of a banderbear being eaten alive by wig-wigs.[104] Its sequel, *Stormchaser*,[105] continues treading the adopted path of violence. Screed Toe-Taker kills his victims and nails their mummified toes as trophies to the wall of his abode.[106] More mutilations comprise cut-off ears and a beheading. Whereas in *Midnight over Sanctaphrax*[107] a captain of the sky pirates is devoured in an arena, *The Last of the Sky Pirates* confronts the reader with someone being eaten alive from within. The next volume, *The Curse of the Gloamglozer*, uses even more graphic violence. Again, mutilations take place; Quint has a terrifying encounter with a mummified corpse, only to realise that "the entire floor was littered with dead bodies".[108] In *Vox*, an assassin on his way to work is cut in half, and Undertowners unfit for slavery are killed while the survivors are forced to bury the dead in mass graves.[109] Whenever one is convinced that the climax of violence must have been reached and that it cannot possibly get any worse, the authors put the screws on even further. In chapter seventeen, "Bloodbath on the Blackwood Bridge",[110] blood flows copiously everywhere but within its accustomed vessels. Amongst other atrocities, carnage and cannibalism are fixtures in *Freeglader*,[111] too.

---

[103] Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. Beyond the Deepwoods*. London: Corgi, 1999 [1998].
[104] Ibd., p. 151.
[105] Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. Stormchaser*. London: Corgi, 2000 [1999].
[106] Ibd., pp. 107-109.
[107] Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. Midnight over Sanctaphrax*. London: Corgi, 2001. [2000].
[108] Stewart; Riddell, *The Curse of the Gloamgloazer*, pp. 221-224.
[109] Stewart; Riddell, *Vox*, p. 309.
[110] Ibd., p. 352.
[111] Paul Stewart; Chris Riddell. *The Edge Chronicles. Freeglader*. London: Doubleday, 2004.

> And she had been merciful, she remembered. Rather than linger over the flayed, tortured body longer than she'd needed, she had torn out the heart with a single stab of her beak and swallowed it while it was still beating. Delicious! The librarian had just lived long enough to see it. [112]

Compared to *Freeglader*, *The Winter Knights* contains just as much graphic violence, albeit with fewer gory details. All in all, *The Edge Chronicles* may present a well thought-out secondary world replete with its own flora and fauna, physical laws and occupations resulting from them, but this abundance of creativity comes at a high price. Highly original fantastic creatures on the one hand are countered with death and slaughter on the other. Inevitably, this leads to the question whether such a high degree of creativity and invention necessitates a simultaneous loss or conscious abandonment of good taste. Is graphic violence the price that has to be paid for entertainment?

The bloody cover illustrations of Foreman's *Keepers and Seekers* already anticipate that reading the novels is far from being a bloodless or harmless pastime. By dividing the main strands of the plot into modern times on the one hand and Early Middle Ages and Second World War on the other, the author reveals the diachronic change of forms and practices of violence. The main conflict focuses on the possession of Amera's stone of power. Whilst the Keepers around the respective Stone Keeper – led by the immortal gods Myroy and Tirani – hide the stone over the centuries, the Seekers – under the command of the gods' brother Odin – search for it. Both parties have allies who support them in their cause. One of its crucial phases takes place in the Britain of the Early Middle Ages. In numerous battle scenes between Scots, Picts, Irish, Welsh etc., the slaughter and destruction[113] worked with contemporary weapons is rendered in great detail. In these unstable times where looting, pillaging and raiding are presented as being nothing unusual, many innocent villagers are murdered or maimed. Not only are the Early Middle Ages a decisive phase for the fate of the stone but also the period with the most incidents of graphic violence. Among the carnage portrayed, the poisoning of the Irish king Patrick appears almost harmless.[114] In more modern times, the frequent mutilations on the archaic one-to-one basis recede more into the background. Instead, weapons of mass destruction are used. Certainly, the casualties still happen, and, due to the wide-range weapons, exceed those of the Middle Ages by far in numbers.

---

[112] Ibd., p. 144.

[113] Colin Foreman. *Keepers and Seekers. To the End of the World*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2005 [2004], p. 33.

[114] Colin Foreman. *Keepers and Seekers. Killer in the Dark*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2006, p. 347.

The period of the Second World War contrasts sharply with that of the Early Middle Ages. Even though both strands of the narration are concerned with war, their strategies and weapons differ fundamentally. In the Middle Ages, even in battle, the tactility of duel combat at close range prevails, whereas the fighting of the Second World War takes place over a distance. Without immediate contact with the enemy, the killing seems to become more anonymous and abstract. It is in the present that the conflict around the stone culminates. In present-day Britain, the main character Peter has become the Last Keeper of the Stone. Although the second volume ends with the death of Peter's girlfriend, the third volume reveals that the killings were nothing but an illusion. Nevertheless, the graphic violence continues in the third volume.

A special feature of Foreman's novels is the interweaving of the above-mentioned different time levels. Even if it may not become apparent at first glance, everything is connected. Present and past are shown to be dependent on each other, especially when their borders are crossed in both directions in crucial moments for the future of the stone. Not only the Gods but also Keepers and Seekers can traverse the borders of space and time. As a result, people from the present can meet those of the past and vice versa: For instance, Scottish warriors from the Early Middle Ages or Second World War soldiers around Peter's granddad are shifted through time and actively participate in battles fought long after their own death, and the Scottish warriors Donald and Hamish fight Odin's Valkyrie on a train of the Metropolitan Line in London without batting an eyelid. The fact that the train they are on is being pursued by a longship only adds to the fantastic consequences of the overlap of times.

It is already in the foreword that Beddor's *The Looking-Glass Wars*[115] draw the reader's attention to the fact that this supposedly original version of the story of Alice in Wonderland is not intended for readers "of a more sensitive disposition".[116] Indeed, this is no understatement. We are informed that "the true story of Wonderland involves bloodshed, murder, revenge and war."[117] This admittedly unusual start of a fantasy novel for children outlines and anticipates the developments and events to follow. The latter revolve around a general mood of explosive aggression and violence. A flashback into the past of the related events reveals that twelve years before the story sets in, in the wake of carnage and

---

[115] Frank Beddor. *The Looking Glass Wars*. London: Egmont, 2005. [2004]
[116] Ibd.; foreword.
[117] Ibd.; foreword.

destruction, "unbridled bloodshed spattered the doorstep of every Wonderlander."[118] On her way to power, Redd murders everyone but Alyss standing in the way of her succession to the throne. Her niece only escapes death by leaving Wonderland. Twelve years after Redd's seizure of power, she has firmly established her reign of terror: In labour camps, she has prisoners tortured, slaughtered and thrown into mass graves. A strong reminiscence of such parallel atrocities for example committed under the Nazi regime during the Second World War cannot be overlooked.

Violence, just like magic, is one of the threads running through Rowling's series. This is not to say that positive values such as love, courage, trust, respect and friendship do not play an important role. As the moral message of the novels, no doubt they are intended to outweigh any evil deeds in the end. Still, as the series progresses, the intensity and frequency of violent acts increases parallel to the threat personified by Lord Voldemort. The positive aspects are heterodyned by an increasingly gloomy, laden atmosphere, which eventually discharges during the Last Stand. Even after the successful defeat of the dark wizard and the end of his reign of terror, numbness and shock prevail. Too many people have lost their lives in the series, especially in the seventh volume, leaving no room for any exuberant celebrations in honour of the final triumph. For good reason, the epilogue is set nineteen years after Voldemort's defeat. Yet in the chronological order of both print and reading the epilogue nevertheless follows immediately after the final chapter, so that the intended distance cannot really make itself felt. Since the necessary digestion of the events is suspended, the light-hearted, nostalgic family scenes at the Hogwarts' Express appear artificial and their cheerfulness forced.

In Rowling's *Harry Potter* series there is no shortage of incidents where graphic violence is used. It is already in the first volume[119] that we learn about the violent death of Harry's parents by the hands of Voldemort. At the end of the same novel, Harry himself faces his archenemy for the second time in his short life, and, as before, Voldemort tries and fails to kill the boy. This duel between Harry and Voldemort repeats itself in the other volumes, in all but the seventh with the same result.

In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Harry is repeatedly threatened by the Basilisk's murderous thoughts, but he is also injured physically during sports. Slowly, the intensity and significance of incidents of graphic violence increase, influencing the further course of the series. Right

---

[118] Ibd.; p. 7.
[119] J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury, 1997.

from the beginning, with an allegedly dangerous criminal on the loose, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* marks the transition of the series to darker themes, for instance Dementors are introduced in this volume. Used as guards in the prison of Azkaban, these blind creatures disseminate an atmosphere of fear and death wherever they appear. Sucking all the happiness out of their victims, in an act perversely called the Kiss, Dementors, depression personified, only leave human shells behind. Psychological terror is not all, however. Peter Pettigrew mutilates himself and stages his death, killing people in the act; and the execution of the hippogriff Buckbeak can only be prevented by means of a time-reversal the second time round.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire testifies of the sinking inhibition threshold as more and more incidents of graphic violence are reported. Put into perspective, the many injuries become harmless and negligible. The auror Moody is the prime example: Incessant exposure to physical violence has wrecked his health. As it were, the maltreated body symbolises the prevailing potential within the series for violence. The Death Eaters' march through the camp during the Quidditch world-championship[120] for instance reminds one strongly of activities of the Ku-Klux-Klan or other smear campaigns against minorities. It is alarming that disrespectful and unemotional atrocities are committed by the villains for the most trivial reasons, such as the fun factor.[121] Cedric's unnecessary death is only the prelude for the arguably most dark and gory scene of the entire series. Surrounded in a cemetery by hooded devil worshippers assembled to witness the re-incarnation of their master Voldemort, Harry realises that he is intended as a human sacrifice. In a cauldron reminiscent of old sagas,[122] the evil wizard is resurrected to his old grandeur. In the course of the ritual, the grave of Voldemort's father is desecrated, some of Harry's blood forcibly taken and Voldemort's servant Wormtail cuts off his own hand to add it to the concoction in the cauldron.[123] As soon as the revival is completed, Voldemort proceeds to torture one of his followers before torturing and then attempting to kill Harry.

It is difficult to imagine any worse, as these scenes are unsurpassed in their goriness and graphic violence. Yet, this is only the fourth of seven novels, and the course is set. As expected, the fifth volume therefore continues the development. Consequently, *Harry Potter*

---

[120] J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000, p. 108.
[121] Ibd., p. 128.
[122] Taken up again for example by Lloyd Alexander in his Prydain-Chronicles: Lloyd Alexander. *The Black Cauldron*. New York; Chicago; San Francisco: F. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
[123] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, pp. 556-557.

and the Order of the Phoenix[124] is lavish with graphic violence on both physical and psychological levels. The teacher Umbridge punishes pupils' rebellious behaviour by physical torture and Sirius Black dies from Bellatrix Lestrange's curse.[125] In the fifth volume, Harry experiences psychological violence through his vivid dreams inside Voldemort's snake. On one occasion he even attacks Mr Weasley. Under Voldemort's evil influence the young wizard develops an urgent and strong desire to harm and maim.[126] Last but not least, Voldemort tries and fails yet again to kill Harry.

The sixth' novel follows suit. Reminiscent of a scene in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Harry encounters Inferi in a lake, ready to drag him into the waters. After many incidents, volume six climaxes with Dumbledore's death at the hand of Snape.[127]

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows[128] brings the series to a close. Right from the beginning of this volume everything works towards the final showdown between Harry and Voldemort. The time for requitals has come, but "justice" comes at a price. Serious injuries on the one hand but also many deaths on the other hand increase the frequency and intensity of graphic violence, which erupts in the final battle. Yet again, it is the Death-Eaters who are responsible for the majority of murders, which include many people dear to Harry, for instance Fred Weasley. Ultimately, the villains are vanquished for good by the death of their leader Voldemort.

Embedded in an atmosphere of mutilations and deaths, special emphasis is given to the phenomenon of systematic persecution of dissenters in the seventh volume. Certainly the previous novels have touched on the racist tendencies and shown their dangers, but it is only in the last novel that we become fully aware of their extent. Here, Rowling addresses a sensitive topic. Racism and its connotations awaken unpleasant memories of previous campaigns that have taken place in world history and emphasise their presence even in today's world. By transporting this topic into the world of wizards, Rowling reveals that even the magical community is not immune to it. So instead of escapism into a sugar-coated world, as could perhaps be expected, the author chooses – at least partially - open confrontation. With the death of Voldemort racist ideology, reign of terror, megalomania and the accompanying graphic violence come to a sudden end. All that is left of him is an empty

[124] J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury, 2003.
[125] Ibd., p. 710.
[126] Ibd., pp. 419, 726.
[127] J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury, 2005, p. 556.
[128] J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.

shell.[129] Even if a happy ending is suggested, emphasised by a merry epilogue, the years of violence have left their mark.

Set in a fictitious English past in the 1700's, G.P. Taylor's dark fantasies *Shadowmancer*, its sequel *Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street*, *Wormwood* and *Tersias* are demanding, quick-paced and, as seems to befit a current fantasy novel for children - interspersed with graphic violence.

In *Shadowmancer*,[130] the first of four loosely interconnected fantasy novels so far, the paths of two children, an angel and several adult individuals cross. They are caught up in the fast-moving events around the possession or protection of a precious artefact, symbol of the power of God. In this novel graphic violence, the expressive form of evil, is a fixture of the plot, too. As expected, the majority of cruel deeds are performed by the villains, yet the heroes are not abstemious either. Ironically, the main villain is a parson. Instead of following the ways of God, Demurral rebels and claims the power of God for himself. The golden statue of the Keruvim, guarded by the angel Raphah, symbolises the key to this power. Therefore, the villain does everything in his power to obtain it. Since the priest's profession is nothing but a façade behind which he hides his dark ambitions, Demurral feels free to further his efforts with the help of a mixture of dark magic and violence. Running a workhouse under inhuman conditions, he rules with a rod of iron. Not only does the parson torture the angel Raphah, guardian of the Keruvim, but he also brands him with his mark.[131] Fuelled by his delusions of grandeur, the villain experiments with dark magic and will stop at nothing, not even deadly experiments with children. Appropriately, the novel's showdown takes place in a church. With the help of the archangel Raphael, Raphah's violent death is reversed and Pyratheon, the devil, Demurral and his henchmen are temporarily defeated.

The events of Taylor's *Wormwood*[132] take place in London against a backdrop of the threatening arrival of the eponymous comet. Wormwood, the sky dragon,[133] turns out to be a highly ambiguous phenomenon. Seen either as a sign of evil or symbol for a new hope, the comet confuses the masses. In their panic, they follow their instinct rather than logic. Caught within the turmoil between the fronts is the fallen angel Tegatus. Degraded to a mere object, Tegatus is kept like an animal, chained up and abused. Whereas he interprets all the

---

[129] Ibd., p. 596.
[130] G.P.Taylor. *Shadowmancer*. London: Faber and Faber, 2003.
[131] Ibd., p. 90.
[132] G.P. Taylor. *Wormwood*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.
[133] Ibd., pp. 7; 17.

humiliation, the graphic psychological and physical violence he is subjected to as the punishment for his fall, it becomes clear that he is merely regarded as a safe investment by profit-seeking humans. Their derogatory and disrespectful treatment of the angel emphasises their own repulsiveness and baseness, their greed and corruption. The comet Wormwood thus also symbolises the anarchy into which humankind is in danger of drifting. Whilst mass hysteria reigns in the streets of London and people are trampled to death, the evil queen of darkness tries to seize power. Tegatus prevents this, taking her with him through a gateway into another world. However, more deaths follow still. The Sekaris, a form of golem, murders Yeats in a scene similar to the shryke in *The Edge Chronicles* and casually eats his heart "like a fresh apple."[134]

Taylor's *Tersias*[135] centres on an eponymous blind boy with visionary powers, who is a living memorial against graphic violence and cruelty to which he is exposed in spite of or as a result of his extraordinary skills. Even though graphic violence is amply used throughout the novel, Tersias' sufferings stand out against those of others. Thus, at twelve years of age, the boy already possesses the experience of more than a lifetime. To top it all, he is also haunted by a demon. Whereas childhood is usually characterised by feelings of love, care, safety and trust, Tersias is deprived of all this. Instead, it is at the instigation of his own mother that he is blinded and sold as a beggar so as to be more profitable. Amidst the chaotic situation caused by the approach of the comet, the paths of the other main characters Jonah, Tara, Malpas and Solomon cross that of Tersias and his master Malachi.[136] Tara and Tersias are abducted by the charlatan and self-proclaimed messiah Solomon to his Citadel, the headquarters of his sect. Outwardly the kind-hearted saviour of mankind, inwardly Solomon is a fanatic, power-hungry and sadistic tyrant who does not care about anyone's welfare but his own. Dissenters or disciples who have come to question Solomon's authority are for instance fed to carnivorous locusts,[137] or locked into the same cell with an insane, cannibalistic prisoner. Eventually Solomon falls victim to his own invention when he is eaten alive by his own locusts and only his bones remain.

---

[134] Ibd., p. 236.

[135] G.P. Taylor. *Tersias*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.

[136] In contrast to other heroes of fantasy novels, Tersias remains more passive due to his handicap. What he cannot see, he compensates by his visionary powers. However, his active participation remains somewhat restricted. His name and function as a seer links him closely to the mythical Tiresias of Thebes.

[137] G.P. Taylor, *Tersias*, pp. 105; 107.

Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street[138] is designed as a sequel to *Shadowmancer*. On the whole, the main characters correspond. In contrast to *Shadowmancer*, the sequel is influenced by the events related in *Wormwood*, especially by the destruction and the chaos caused by the comet and its meteorites in London and the resulting general confusion of the country. Set only three days after the coming of the comet, the plot takes up the paths of Jacob Crane, Thomas and Kate, Raphah and Beadle, but also of the villain Demurral and his helpers. Instances of violence are abundant and it is interesting to see that violence is not restricted to the villains, but is also employed by "good" characters. People get stabbed to death, strangled, shot through the eye, speared, burned and tortured on an electric chair. All these incidents of violence, by no means exhaustive, reflect the general tone in Taylor's novels and show the degree to which graphic violence has become a fixed and not to be underestimated element in British fantasy novels for children.

According to a sticker on the book cover, Delaney's *The Wardstone Chronicles* are extolled as the perfect reading material "for those who have outgrown *Harry Potter*". Set in a remote England of a fictitious past, Delaney's series focuses on the work-related adventures of a spook[139] and his apprentice. The aim of their daily chores is to keep evil at bay in their local district of the County. Naturally, malevolent boggarts, witches and other creatures of the dark have no intention of being caught and bound for good, so they do their utmost in order to resist capture. In direct confrontation with the spook and his apprentice Thomas as well as during their wicked pursuits, the evil creatures bring violence into play. By contrast, both the spook and Thomas only resort to violence if all other means have failed.

In the first volume, *The Spook's Apprentice,*[140] Thomas Ward becomes the new apprentice to the spook. As part of his initiation, the boy is made to spend a night alone in a haunted house, where the ghost of a miner walks. Thrown in at the deep end, the apprentice learns about his new profession the hard way. For instance, he broadens his knowledge of witches not only by means of theoretical instruction by his master, but also by direct contact to the involuntary clients. Among other things, Thomas can now corroborate the old stereotype that witches do indeed murder children to supply her need for blood.[141] The spook's job is thus one where the slightest mistake or carelessness is a matter of life and

---

[138] G.P. Taylor. *Shadowmancer. The Curse of Salamander Street*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006.
[139] Here, Delaney uses the term "spook" not in its usual context, but as a job description.
[140] Joseph Delaney. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Apprentice*. London: Red Fox, 2005 [2004].
[141] Ibd., p. 158.

death. At the centre of *The Spook's Curse*[142] stands the quest to kill the Bane, a very powerful and dangerous creature trapped in a subterranean cave. Its favourite method of killing is squashing its victim. To end all the killing, the bane needs to be stabbed in the heart. *The Spook's Secret*[143] revolves around the Spook's and Tom's fight against the evil necromancer Morgan, who has set its mind on invocating an ancient heathen God by means of a grimoire so as to establish a reign of terror with the God's help. Also, Thomas is to be sacrificed by Morgan during a ritual to invocate this God. Yet, Morgan fails and the God kills Morgan on the spot. The necromancer shatters like an ice stalactite and when he thaws, the grimoire is "lying in a pool of blood."[144]

The Spook's Battle[145] centres on the impending invocation and manifestation of the devil. While witches ravage Thomas' home, abduct and imprison some of his family members, the apprentice and the Spook try to prevent the witch covens from raising the devil. At the end of the novel, however, the devil walks the earth. In view of all the graphic violence in the novels it is not without good reason the warning "Not to be read after dark" is printed on the book cover. This good advice can also be applied to some non-British fantasy literature for children. In particular two popular and bestselling publications stand out here. Firstly, the Tolkien-like, epic *Inheritance* cycle by the American Paolini and secondly the *Abhorsen* trilogy by the Australian Nix. Inspired by Tolkien's work, Paolini follows the tradition of epic fantasy and sees to it that the majority of deaths in his cycle result from heroic battles and duels. Treacherous acts and cold-blooded murder are meant to be the exception. If they occur, then villains are responsible for such acts.

Nix' *Abhorsen* trilogy comprises the novels *Sabríel*, *Lirael* and *Abhorsen*. Since the trilogy centres on necromancers and their field of activity, the novels inevitably deal with the dark and unnatural. Associated with the wilful and wrongful disturbance of the dead, necromancers in fantasy literature destabilise the natural balance between life and death and thus endanger the living. Instead of raising the dead like necromancers, the Abhorsen in Nix' novels restore the balance by sending and binding the dead to their realm.[146] Dealing with the dead and death, usually a social taboo, is therefore part of their daily life. However, unnatural

---

[142] Joseph Delaney. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Curse*. London: The Bodley Head, 2005.
[143] Joseph Delaney. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Secret*. London: Red Fox, 2007. [2006]
[144] Ibd., p. 409.
[145] Joseph Delaney. *The Wardstone Chronicles.The Spook's Battle*. London: The Bodley Head, 2007.
[146] Nix, *Sabríel*, p. 14.

deaths or transgressions of the border from death into life immediately call the respective Abhorsen into action.

In *Lirael*, the necromancer Hedge raises as many dead refugees from the South as he can. When this method does not suffice any more, the refugees are killed on purpose so that he can control them. As zombies they become his mere tools. Rallied by the evil necromancer, the dead reach the size of a small army and turn against the Abhorsen and her supporters. In order to slow the advancing ranks of the dead down, Sameth has wooden stumps with metal spikes driven into the zombies' arms and legs.[147] In return, the necromancer Hedge inserts a piece of metal into Nick's hand that autonomously wanders to the boy's heart and lodges there, ready to kill the boy in an instant when Hedge regards it necessary. In the meantime, the necromancer uses dead refugees from the South, the so-called Dead Hands, as workers for his project of digging up and freeing some ancient evil creature. After the battle with the Abhorsen, there "were bodies everywhere, sprawled on the blood-soaked ground. The cast-off remnants of the Dead Hands piled up with the slaughtered people."[148]

The last novel of the trilogy, *Abhorsen*, fits in with the overall concept. After a bomb attack on the royal convoy, the violence soon reaches an exhaustive extent when the necromancer raises the dead from all over the realm. Decomposing, they are still used for digging but also for killing refugees to enlarge Hedge's army. Considering the dead as nothing more than cannon fodder, the necromancer is responsible for a brutal and gory scene of death and destruction: "The white mass was like a curtain of a horror show, briefly drawing back to show piles of corpses, bodies everywhere, bodies hanging on the wire and piled on the ground."[149] After the death of the necromancer, Lirael faces Orannis, the evil creature of Free Magic that Hedge has freed from the pit. Whilst fighting the creature, immense forces melt the sword and burn her hand so much that the Disreputable Dog has to bite Lirael's hand off to save her life.[150]

As we have seen, entire volumes could be filled with just the examination of violence in British fantasy novels for children. Other, future studies may find this approach well worth researching in more detail. The many cases of violence in the corpus novels show not only

---

[147] Nix, *Lírael*, p. 165.
[148] Ibd., p. 488.
[149] Nix, *Abhorsen*, p. 257.
[150] Ibd., p. 390.

that it is a basic element of current British fantasy novels for children but also that there are no taboos any more as to the forms violence can take. Just like television news have taken to showing scenes of disaster and violence in great detail and computer games feature realistic three-dimensional animations of bloodshed and slaughter, contemporary British fantasy novels for children take over this practice. Focusing on snapshots during which time seems suspended, the quantity of graphic violence recedes and is replaced by its quality, i.e. intensity and gruesomeness. Times and again, one cannot believe one's eyes witnessing what scenes are taking place between the book covers of novels for children. For this reason, the thesis suggests itself that the status of a fantasy novel for children as a bestseller depends firstly on the number of bodies which pave the path of the characters, and secondly on the physical and psychological harm inflicted.

The question is whether this amount of graphic violence is justified, or whether less brutality and gruesomeness would devalue the respective plot. Does children's literature need its own version of reality TV? Does this really augment its entertainment value? Where does all this violence come from? For one, no contemporary author can write without the knowledge of human atrocities committed throughout the history of mankind. Of course, recent events in history are given special emphasis as they still have more immediate effects, for example the two World Wars. Literature provides a forum for the reflection, digestion and, in the end, the coming to terms with such events and the collective traumatisation they entail.

4.4   Humour

As we have observed in chapter 4.3, graphic violence and cruelty play an important, growing role in current British fantasy literature for children. In order to counteract a fusion with Horror fiction, the momentum of its own that graphic violence develops must be controlled. However, this requires conscientious action. It stands to reason to try and counterbalance the horror with humour so as to somewhat cushion and relax the situation of fright. That way the horror is not undone but put into perspective and made more bearable. The purpose of calm, humorous intervals is to avoid an overload of aggression and goriness. Through this momentary distance aggression and tension, pent-up during the reading, can be at least partially abreacted. Considering the distinct violence- potential of the genre, humour thus acts as a counterpoint to scenes of horror, carnage and destruction. Therefore, its soothing and relaxing properties make humour an indispensable element given the relative importance of graphic violence in the genre. Where comic relief as a counterweight is absent, the violence stands in the foreground. In this case, the novel obtains a much darker touch and

general impression. By intentionally limiting or even refraining completely from the use of humour, an author actively controls both seriousness and darkness of his work.

In the corpus of the present study such truly dark fantasies or those with a strong dark colouring are represented by fantasy novels like *Keepers and Seekers, The Edge Chronicles*, volumes four to seven of the *Harry Potter* series, G.P. Taylor's four novels or the *Abhorsen* trilogy. In these novels either the absence or the sparse occurrence of humour leads to an intentional accumulation of aggression and tension; the task of which is to either reflect or to distort reality. Often enough reality does not need any exaggeration as far as graphic violence is concerned – it is terrible enough as it is. By portraying dark, menacing events and situations, the authors of such fantasy novels can initiate thought processes concerning the state of society and the world in general; for instance those with respect to value standards, behaviour, politics, power-relations and esteem for the individual. Through their uncanny and violence-laden atmosphere, for some people dark fantasies can elicit feelings of discomfort and alarm. For others, by contrast, this is what constitutes the attraction and thrill of those novels. The other side of the coin is therefore the danger of becoming insensible given the practice of the constantly growing potential of violence and the mounting competitive pressure within the genre.

By definition, dark fantasies hardly provide any opportunities for development for humour. Humorous incidents or characters may be slipped into the novels, yet their relative importance is clearly subordinated to the events. Since in dark fantasies no long-term brightening up of the gloomy atmosphere is desirable, the comic relief is, if existent at all, only momentary and short-lived.

Stewart and Riddell's *Edge Chronicles* are a good example to illustrate this point. The series is not broken up by humour but by artistic and elaborate drawings that often visualise acts of violence from the text. So far from offering some distance from the cruelty of the story, these pictures intensify the effect of the text. Rather than getting a break, the reader is therefore confronted with even more stimuli when not only the textual-imaginary channel is addressed but also the visual one. So if the reader has not imagined a scene as gruesome as intended by the authors, then the added drawing ensures that their imagination is helped along. With just a few choice happy moments or witty replies, fantasies of this kind can leave quite a sour aftertaste, as the proportion between seriousness and play is not balanced.

Humour that deserves its name can be found in more light-hearted fantasy novels. This is not to say that these novels do not contain any graphic violence. Rather, violence and humour are more balanced. Just like violence, humour is an essential element of British

fantasy literature for children. Ever since children's literature started breaking away from the straight path of strict schooling, indoctrination and moralising and turned towards the "amusement" of its readers, comic relief became a popular, integral part of the genre. Whereas in former times humour was used to playfully relieve monotonous didactics or to even mock them,[151] nowadays it can help put graphic violence into perspective. However, the spectrum of comic relief varies considerably between the humorous fantasy novels.

4.4.1   Traditional humour

At the beginning of the comparatively short history of literature for children, education,[152] learning and the passing on of traditions, conventions and values held an important position. The early textbooks and writings intended for religious edification did not yet take into account the individual needs or even preferences of children. Today, childhood is seen as an important stage in an individual's life, during which the child should be given the optimum support for its development and playful discovery of its surrounding structures. By contrast, in the infancy of children's literature, childhood was considered a phase of transition on a child's way to maturity that should be got over and done with as sensibly and quickly as possible. The indoctrination of the young was therefore designed in such a way that it prepared them for the serious side of the life of an adult with all its duties and responsibilities.

In time and with newly stimulated insights through and subsequent to the Enlightenment, the individual needs of the child were gradually discovered and taken into consideration. Also, it was found that, if combined with humour, play and fun, education and guidance can be much more effective than strict indoctrination. The modern level of knowledge advocates a relaxed environment – in both educational establishments and teaching material – which positively influences the learning process and fosters cognition. Until then, however, it has been a long way. Instead of forcing children into a corset of stiff and frequently antiquated maxims, the majority of the Victorian authors for children come to realise that their genre can and ought to have a certain entertainment value. The latter is attained first of all by means of the selection of the treated subjects but also by their realisation. For this, humour is indispensable. Revolutionary at the time, the humour of the Victorian authors for children has attained classic status and is nowadays in turn considered

---

[151] Many classics of British fantasy literature are well known and remembered in particular for their humour or humorous characters that often mock social conventions, traditions or attitudes; for example Toad or the Cheshire Cat.

[152] Religious or secular

traditional. The Golden Age of children's literature has produced many classics, which are remembered not least because of their various humorous characters or scenes. Outstanding representatives of the period are without a doubt the authors Carroll and Lear. With their special kind of humour, nonsense, Carroll and Lear are in the vanguard of innovation within children's fantasy literature of the time. Even though other forms of humour such as word puns, situational humour, slapstick, irony or exaggerations are far more common in the Victorian period, nonsense compensates its proportionate inferiority in numbers by quality, creativity and individuality. Above all, this is expressed by its uniqueness. Like no other form of humour in children's literature, nonsense adopts an extreme opposition to the value system of the time. This phenomenon criticises the rigid organisation and control of society, turns against old-established power structures and hierarchies and scrutinises conventions and rules in respect to their meaningfulness. Reason, one of the cornerstones of the Victorian society, is systematically undermined by this form of humour. Yet, in the *Alice* novels, Carroll cannot fully deny his roots in logic. Despite all the absurdities the mathematician bases his works on underlying logical rules, so that even in apparent chaos and anarchy the sense does not get completely lost. For all his creativity and innovation this feature reveals that Carroll can neither escape his time nor break with all conventions.

Nevertheless, Lear and Carroll symbolise the breakthrough of humour as well as its establishment as an important element of modern children's fantasy literature. In the wake of their works humour prevails against exclusive seriousness, so that fun, jokes and joy are no longer functional but exist for their own sake. Far from being superficial, it can be quite sophisticated and challenging. For instance, the intertextuality in Carroll's works enables depth whilst at the same time providing possibilities for persiflage and caricatures. With the increasing acceptance of these - at the time - new forms of humour, the literary landscape of the genre obtains more possibilities. Among other things, the latter are expressed by increasing freedom, openness, tolerance, flexibility, individuality and creativity. Part of this opening are also the conscious abandonment of overabundant seriousness and a simultaneous move towards play and experimentation. Alternative views permit a revaluation of reality and broaden inflexible concepts on the one hand and the personal horizon on the other hand. As a result, the powers of imagination are stimulated and cultivated. Children are encouraged in their play, and adults can be temporarily transported back in time right into their very own childhood.

What was considered revolutionary and refreshingly new in the Victorian period has become traditional at the beginning of the 21st century. This humour distinguishes itself by

strong and characteristic representatives, figures and unforgettable scenes but also by its forms. Humoristic figures are for example – to begin with Carroll's novels – the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, Humpty Dumpty or the Cheshire cat. Due to the interplay of their nature, behaviour and confusing verbal output each of these characters is either involved in or the cause for absurd situations. The characters' nonconformism shakes the reader's expectations to their very foundations time and again since they approach the novels on the basis of existing conventions. Humour is the result of these frequent, unpredictable departures from the norm, the surprising turns of events and imaginative possibilities in the secondary world. It arises from the discrepancy between the reader's horizon of expectations and the novels' reversal of those norms, i.e. humour works through the constant comparison with reality and normality.

Besides Carroll's outstanding *Alice*-novels other humoristic characters of the Golden Age have made a lasting impression. For example, it is hard to imagine British nurseries without Milne's eponymous *Winnie-the-Pooh*. The humour in the Winnie-the-Pooh novels frequently depends on the situation. Similar to the talk at cross-purposes in Carroll's *Alice* – novels, the characters in Milne's novels fall victim to numerous misunderstandings. Thus well-meant actions tend to temporarily wreak more havoc than to have an intended positive effect. Each time, a favourable turn of events can avert impending "harm". At no point is there a true danger for any of the characters involved. These incidents are comical because their tendency towards chaos is predictable, yet no one doubts the happy ending.

In Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, a further combination of situational humour and humorous character can be observed. The rise and fall of the arrogant, yet endearing Toad is presented in a very entertaining way,[153] worked into the overall far more pensive structure of the novel. This way, a balance is achieved between amusing elements and thought-provoking ones.

Another traditional form of humour in the Golden Age is word play. The majority of humorous classic fantasy novels for children employ this technique or variations of it. Here too, the *Alice* novels act as a trailblazer for word puns and words of equivocal nature. Allusions, neologisms, ambiguities and innuendos run through Carroll's novels. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* also employs those tools, but not as extensively as Carroll. His speciality are malapropisms. Many a comical situation between Christopher Robin and the animals arises

---

[153] On the part of Toad, the humour is unintentional, yet inevitable due to his clumsiness.

on account of words that have been picked up from either adults or Christopher Robin. Not yet equipped with sufficient linguistic ability, the speakers either do not understand words correctly or misinterpret their meaning. By using those words all the same, they claim linguistic authority and competence so as not to expose themselves. This gap between innocent conceitedness and reality is so obvious that the mistakes can be spotted by young readers, thus ridiculing the main characters' false pretences in a kind and charming way without ever turning nasty or gloating.

Further possibilities for humour are also irony, exaggerations and persiflage. The latter are for instance popular techniques for designing characters such as the eccentric Toad of Toad Hall. Yet it is not only characters and their traits that can become the target of ridicule but also social structures. Exaggerated social rituals, traditions and conventions can scrutinise forms and rules of old and reveal absurdities.[154] Such humour can stimulate reflections on social conditions.

4.4.2 Modern humour

As we have seen, the traditional forms of humour in British children's fantasy distinguish themselves by their universal applicability and timelessness. They provide and examine typical situations, patterns and constellations as well as appropriate types and characters. Covering such a large spectrum, it is the traditional forms which supply the main part of modern humour. Society and its conventions may change over time, but the adaptability of traditional humour parry those developments by modifying its context. So it appears that it is not the humour itself that changes, only its parameters. Contemporary allusions of the Victorians, nowadays not necessarily recognisable at first or even second glance, are substituted in modern humour by an updated or entirely new reality. In its turn, modern humour will have to be adapted by following generations to their own situation and needs. Again, this concerns the context, not the basic framework of humour itself. Based on the structures of traditional humour, its modern version amplifies the progressive mechanisation. It takes into account the phenomena of society's digitalisation and global linking-up, which provide new scenarios, possibilities and situations for humorous approaches whilst largely preserving the traditional structures and guidelines.

---

[154] Yet again, a prime example can be found in Carroll's work: The tea party of the Mad Hatter and the March Hare upturn the famous tradition of English afternoon tea. The traditionally calm, ordered and well-mannered ceremony gets completely out of hand and ends in chaos – thus thwarting the reader's expectations.

Today like in the past, there have always been instances where humour is impossible. Whereas violence against children was not yet as shunned as it is today and child labour was still practiced,[155] it was never made fun of. As we have observed, the inhibition threshold for graphic violence in current British children's fantasy is sinking. Yet, graphic violence and the physical and psychological injuries caused by it are taboo for humour. For obvious reasons, another firmly established taboo is that of sexual child abuse. Consequently, on behalf of the genre, the corpus of this study does not comprise any cases of sexual child abuse, as the handling of such sensitive topics takes place in realistic novels and autobiographies.

Humour in current British children's fantasy distinguishes itself from traditional forms by its context; i.e. its references to modern developments of society and its values, religious beliefs, science and so on. As the socially acceptable human behaviour is redefined over time, humour has to adapt to new values accordingly.[156] Areas touched by this change are for example the relaxation of society's attitudes and high moral standards. With constraints regarding moral behaviour being dropped, this leads to a more casual contact between the sexes and allows for playful banter and first romances.[157] At the same time, humour is introduced to this field, where it can help to relax tensions in relations between the sexes and to moderate uncertainties.

As far as religious beliefs are concerned, modern humour has begun to penetrate this quasi-taboo sphere. Despite some slackening, religion or religious convictions are still not readily associated with humour or fun. Even if today – compared to more conservative past times – an increasing number of people in Western society distance themselves from religion itself and/ or its contents,[158] it is something completely different to make religion the subject of humour. While faith is one thing, its ridiculisation is another. This makes works such as Pullman's trilogy so controversial; particularly so if its reversal movement, a radicalisation and instrumentalisation of faith, adds fuel to the fire.

---

[155] In *The Water-Babies*, Tom the chimney-sweep is a good example for the denouncement of such injustices.

[156] According to Lypp, laughter as an established element of current literature for children "is pedagogically desirable and profitable for the publisher". Maria Lypp "The Origin and Function of Laughter in Children's Literature". In: Nikolajeva (Ed.), *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*, p. 189.

[157] Still unthinkable in classic works such as the *Alice*-novels, *The Wind in the Willows* or *Winnie-the-Pooh*, where the sexes either underlie strict moral codes or where mainly male societies are portrayed.

[158] For the shift in priorities away from religion towards rational natural science see Paul Yates. "Conclusion, Part I: Death, Sex and God: Sociological and Religious Accounts of the Death of the Young". In: Gillian Avery; Kimberley Reynolds (Eds.) *Representations of Childhood Death*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 2000, pp. 217-224, pp. 218-219.

Where contemporary science is concerned, the development and adaptation of humour take a less problematic course. Modern humour excels by its capacity to successfully make fun of the swift progress of science and technology. By playfully dealing with up-to-day devices, real, fantastic or not yet invented, humour furthers their acceptance and takes away the fear or awe of the unknown.

In the following, we will examine various approaches to modern humour in current British fantasy novels for children on the basis of specific examples and under the aspect of the symbiosis between traditional and new elements. Traditional elements are used whenever a successful, effective and reliable concept of humour is required. This way, comic relief can be guaranteed almost free of risk, without the need to experiment. A widespread traditional technique for generating humour is the use of comical characters; especially odd-match-duos in the style of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Asterix and Obelix, Laurel and Hardy or Gimli and Legolas. Tension arises by the pronounced difference between two entirely opposite characters, to be vented in quick-witted dialogues, verbal skirmishes, jokes, slapstick comedy and situational humour. In current British fantasy novels for children such guaranteed comic relief plays an important role, since the respective subject matter often does not provide many funny aspects itself. In view of doomsday atmosphere and other existential threats treated by the genre, humour is vital for a more balanced mixture between seriousness and play.

Foreman's *Keepers and Seekers* is a series which treats an existential threat of global extent. Considering the frequency and intensity of graphic violence portrayed in the novels, humour does not find many points of departure. Strikingly, in Foreman's series comic relief works in the past. By contrast, in the portrayed present time humour is only possible every now and again when past and present coincide for a fraction of time. For humour to function in the present, characters of the past have to leave their own era, which implies the present's lack of potential in this respect. Two comical odd-match-duos in the past make up for this. Firstly, the mixed-race couple of the scientist-mage Archie and his pet-like Ghilly Dhu, and secondly the two warriors Donald and Hamish. As far as their physical size is concerned, the latter are the Scottish version of Asterix and Obelix, whereas their verbal skirmishes and slapstick interludes resemble those of the comedians Laurel and Hardy.

With the Ghilly Dhu perched on his shoulder, the eccentric, backwards-walking Archie outwardly represents a persiflage of the traditional picture of a witch and her familiar. Undisguised mock-parallels between Leonardo da Vinci's genius and Archie's inventiveness emphasise how far he is ahead of his own time: His environment is clearly not yet ready for his inventions.

The warriors Donald and Hamish by contrast distinguish themselves not only through their courage and bravery in battle, but also by their earthy humour. Reminiscent of Legolas and Gimli,[159] the pugnacious odd-match duo attract attention through their pally teasing. The good-natured Hamish has to defend himself against Donald's incessant gibes and digs. These challenges end with Hamish being at a loss for words and engaging in direct physical contact. Their more or less harmless verbal or physical skirmishes take place against a background of loyalty, camaraderie and trust. Thus their boylike, friendly exchanges of arguments with their fists form a sharp contrast to the scenes of graphic violence in the series. Given the high proportion of violence in *Keepers and Seekers*, humour finds itself in a difficult position. The question is how much comic relief is possible without slipping into the macabre and how much is necessary to allow for relieved laughter.

Single comedians can be an alternative to a duo if those individuals dispose of a truly funny personality that can compensate for the missing partner of a duo. Traditional single humorous characters are for instance the Psammead, the Cheshire cat, Tom Bombadil, Winnie-the-Pooh or Toad. Famous for their strong charisma and personality that can even be eccentric at times, these characters possess a far larger autonomy and independence than others. Lacking a counterpart, single characters have to resort to other techniques. The latter comprise for example interactions with other characters, either verbally or non-verbally, where their personality frequently clashes with norms and expectations. Their different or strange nature is often expressed through individual, sometimes exotic views, clothing or behaviour and emphasised by inner monologues, asides, opinions, comments etc.

A prime example for a single humorous character in this tradition in current British fantasy novels for children is the djinn Bartimaeus in Stroud's eponymous trilogy. Summoned by the boy Nathaniel, the charismatic individualist finds himself involuntarily locked into a master and servant relationship and finds it challenging having to resign himself to an uneven balance of power to his own disadvantage. Both boy and djinn enter a passionate competition about their mutual sense of superiority and lie in wait for the other to make a wrong move. At first, the djinn does everything in his power to cut the young parvenu down to size, who, as an absolute beginner, is far too arrogant for his liking. In turn, Nathaniel considers this

---

[159] A striking difference in size between the two Scottish warriors reminds one of the similar differences in proportion between the dwarf and the elf in *The Lord of the Rings*. In *Keepers and Seekers*, tension arises through this apparent imbalance between the strong and huge Hamish and the smaller and less powerful Donald.

provocation a challenge to put the djinn in his place and to prove his talent. The careers of the two main characters stand in sharp contrast to each other. Whereas Nathaniel, his star being in the ascendant, works his way up the hierarchical ladder in society, Bartimaeus' star is on the wane. The djinn desperately tries to hold on to his powers, influence and fame of Babylonian times so as not to slip into insignificance. Nathaniel compensates his own lack of experience with ambition. Likewise, Bartimaeus uses his experience to make up for his dwindling power and influence. It is during this countermovement that their paths cross. However, before the main characters can tolerate each other, they first have to make peace.

Despite their differences,[160] the boy and the djinn share many traits. For instance they are both headstrong, proud and have got a very a high opinion of themselves. Over the course of the trilogy it emerges that Nathaniel and Bartimaeus are of equal rank; therefore their competition ends in a respectful draw. On account of the adventures and experience that the odd couple share, the once declared opponents and involuntary partners mature and become more tolerant before they eventually develop something like friendship. When their paths separate again, debts are settled and mistakes are forgiven. Still, the boy and the djinn do not miss any opportunity to tease the other. In particular it is Bartimaeus whose talent for repartee is unequalled. In Stroud's trilogy, tension and humour alike are largely based on verbal skirmishes between the two main characters on the one hand and Bartimaeus' remarks to others on the other hand. Not only puns, but also allusions, irony, persiflage and situational humour add to everybody's amusement which, in turn, is balanced by serious topics, intrigues, dangers and violence.

The character of the djinn is based on traditional models from oriental fairy tales. Like the latter, Bartimaeus can be invoked and bound by humans, disposes of magical powers and returns to limbo in between invocations. In contrast to traditional djinn, he is not confined to any magical artefact such as a bottle or lamp and he distinguishes himself from them by his strong personality and humour. Whereas a djinn's role in fairy tales is often limited to granting three wishes Stroud's version deviates from the traditional pattern. Instead of being a mere means to an end, Bartimaeus is the eponymous main character. An impulsive daredevil, he reminds the reader strongly of the djinn from the 1992 Walt Disney cartoon *Aladdin.* Combining the flair of 1001 nights with the cool sobriety of an alternative modern London, the author fuses past and present in the character of Bartimaeus. An experience of life

---

[160] These differences encompass for example the race (djinn and human), their position, their mentality and attitude, their respective experience – and, inseparably linked with it, their age.

spanning several millennia enables the djinn to put events into perspective and to draw parallels between developments, attitudes and mentalities.[161] With the help of direct comparisons, mostly concerning incidents involving himself, Bartimaeus attempts to emphasise times and again his past achievements and the fame and glory resulting from them not only for him but also for his distinguished masters. Indeed, referees such as Gilgamesh and Ptolemy would increase the djinn's value and merits if they were only his merits. However, it is a prominent trait of Bartimaeus' personality to palliate his faults and failures. Intent on cultivating his image, the djinn only reluctantly admits to predicaments or discredits. Yet it is just these faults which make him seem so endearingly human, often even more human than his current master Nathaniel. Vain and biased as he may be, his remorsefulness in view of defeats ensures that no one can really be angry with the djinn for long.

In Stroud's trilogy, irony contributes considerably to the humour. Many instances of irony can be found in the dialogues between the djinn and the boy, but also in Bartimaeus' soliloquies. Here, he comments bluntly on situations, events, other characters and their behaviour. These soliloquies and direct reader addresses in the form of asides can either be found embedded in the text or set off of it for more emphasis as footnotes. As their content is destined for the reader instead of the characters of the novel, they give the impression of a conspiracy. Bartimaeus steps out of the story and, in private, – behind the back of Nathaniel and the other characters – takes the reader into his confidence. At the same time, he comments on his comments, thus either intensifying or qualifying his statements and observations. However, the distance created this way is immediately destroyed again through his comments, which – coming from Bartimaeus himself – cannot possibly be objective. In particular, the focus of attention is on his master, to whom he tries to appear superior whenever possible.[162] Taken with the necessary pinch of salt, Bartimaeus' remarks reveal critical approaches, the interpretation of which is left to the pensive reader. The latter, before they know it, are also made a laughing stock, as the following example illustrates. Here, we have a prime example for the splitting between a comment embedded in the text "It wasn't healthy to be encased in a body for so long. How humans can stand it without going completely mad, I'll never know."* and an additional reflection or second thoughts on it in the accompanying footnote "Then

---

[161] Self-conscious as he is, Bartimaeus even compares djinni fashion now and back then. The mere thought of the existence of such trends and styles is intended to be funny, but Bartimaeus tops this by revealing himself to be a connoisseur of en vogue haute couture. Cf. Jonathan Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Amulet of Samarkand*. London: Corgi, 2004, p. 228.

[162] Compare Ibd., pp. 279, 368 and Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Golem's Eye*. London: Doubleday, 2004, p. 541.

again... maybe that explains a lot."[163] Spread over three volumes, a great number of these comments and footnotes contribute with their ironic contents to the overall humour of the trilogy. Amongst them are also metatextual insertions and observations, for instance when Bartimaeus comments on his commenting skills.[164]

The strong presence of the single eponymous hero Bartimaeus is kept in balance by the two other main characters, Nicholas and Kitty. According to the situation, the teenagers support or oppose the djinn, thus either helping him or causing friction. All three advocate points of view which could not be more different. This detail is taken into consideration as a stylistic element in the division of chapters, which are named after the character playing the most important role in it and narrate it from his or her perspective.[165] With almost every chapter, the perspective and the narrator change, thus allowing a more multi-facetted view on the events. These personalised chapters are characteristic of the trilogy and contribute substantially to its versatility as the reader is offered three angles from which the events are presented. From the characters' subjective assessments, judgements and introspection the forming of the reader's personal impression and opinion is facilitated. Whereas the events of the *Kitty* and *Nathaniel* chapters are rendered by a more distanced third-person narrator, Bartimaeus speaks for himself as a first-person narrator. This technique, enhanced by the conversational tone and colloquial speech of the djinn, engenders a far more direct, vivid and intimate relationship with the reader than the third-person narrator of the other chapters is capable of establishing. The djinn's frequent short sentences are ideal for livening up his narration, comments and additional remarks. The high proportion of direct speech approximates the djinn's first-person narration and his frequent comments and asides directed to the reader to (child-like) authentic discourse situations, while the third-person narrator disposes of a calm and circumspect nature. His narration is characterised by (adult) objectivity, reason and distance. Furthermore, his style is constant, not erratic, and more elaborate and formal, expressed by comparatively longer and more complex sentences.

As we have already seen, Bartimaeus' version is not necessarily reliable as he likes glossing over the facts in his favour so that even defeats or embarrassing incidents are given an air of grandeur. When trying to show off by casually throwing a chimney into the road, the

---

[163] Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Amulet of Samarkand*, p. 54.
[164] Ibd., p. 232.
[165] I.e. either *Nathaniel*, *Bartimaeus* or *Kitty*.

djinn justifies his poor performance in a footnote, insisting that although the chimney did not make it very far, at least the intention was there.[166]

In Stroud's trilogy, further elements of humour comprise complacent self-adulation[167] as well as the voluptuous wallowing in macho-clichés. Coming from a djinn, misogynous statements[168] obtain a completely different perspective. Bartimaeus, belonging to an entirely different species altogether, is forgiven this general lashing out on all sides, because - like a fool - he holds up a mirror to us. Despite the djinn's vanity self-irony can be found, too. With a metatextual sideswipe directed at the tradition of *deus ex machina*, Bartimaeus alludes to his own dramatic situation. However, he considers this cliché-laden technique as rather cheap since so predictable.[169] Like self-irony, situational comedy also plays an important role in the emergence and composition of humour. We meet the djinn at his best when he is summoned unexpectedly. Always intent on style and lasting impression, he chooses to manifest as a pretty woman. On materialising as such, complete with visual, olfactoric and audio-effects, Bartimaeus finds to his great dismay that no other than Nathaniel himself has summoned him.[170]

From the discrepancies between the djinn's biased version and that of the reliable third-person narrator results a more balanced picture. Inconsistencies and conceitedness on the part of Bartimaeus are put into perspective for the reader by the following chapters without making the djinn lose his face or confronting him directly with his embellished truths. This way, the amiable djinn himself becomes a figure of fun. The clash of these opposite perspectives is particularly noticeable at their points of transition: I.e. between consecutive chapters or, more effective still, within one single chapter, when both third-person narrator and first-person narrator collide for a short instance. Such a change of narrative perspective occurs for example in the second novel at the end of a *Bartimaeus* chapter.[171] Here, the first-person perspective is momentarily suspended while the third-person narrator provides an external view on the disappearing djinn, before the following chapter continues with the first-person narrator. Also, these transitions are noticeable through an abrupt change of style.

---

[166] Stroud, *Bartimaeus. Ptolemy's Gate*. London: Doubleday, 2005, p. 82.
[167] Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Amulet of Samarkand*, p. 371.
[168] Ibd., p. 27.
[169] Ibd., p. 236.
[170] Cf. Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Golem's Eye*, p. 112.
[171] Cf. Stroud, *Bartimaeus. The Amulet of Samarkand,* p. 23. The differences between two perspectives are especially well captured at the end of the trilogy. During the showdown, the perspective – comparable to a camera position - keeps changing rapidly between Nathaniel and Bartimaeus, thus enhancing speed of action and suspense.

Yet another way of creating humour in the trilogy are the djinn's deliberate actions which do not require any verbal explanation or comment to reach their full effect: His deeds speak volumes when he expresses his aversion to his master Nathaniel. Technically obliged to obey the boy, the djinn rebels wherever he can. For instance, he makes sure he carries and helps as little as possible during their missions. When his master is laden with parcels, Bartimaeus casually strolls alongside, with great relish carrying nothing but a minuscule box.[172] However, the djinn does not only excel in malicious joy but also displays an enormous potential for pathetic self-pity. In situations such as the one where he is pinned down by a public toilet[173] Bartimaeus' sufferings have ironic potential.

In the dramatic ending of the trilogy, the two rivals have to share Nathaniel's body. Even then the djinn upstages his master by clowning about until the end, thus weakening the impact Nathaniel's martyrdom might have had. When Nathaniel eventually gives his life to set the djinn free, the significance of his final act is thus at least partially lost. However, the ending corresponds to the consequent pursuance of the trilogy's humorous overall concept in which Bartimaeus' clownery and too much pathos and pensiveness simply do not go together too well. This is not to say that Stroud's novels lack depth. On the contrary, they are very sociocritical, in particular where the imbalance and social injustice between the elite of magician-politicians and the non-magical working class people are concerned. It lies in the nature of the djinn not to take things too much to heart, so he exits "his" trilogy more light-heartedly than anyone else.

A further example for single humorous characters can be found in Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series. Outstanding representatives are the kleptomaniac dwarf Mulch Diggums and the gadget-crazy centaur Foaly. Both are strong individuals with marked personality traits. Teamed up more or less voluntarily for their various missions, they may have to cooperate but keep their independence. For this reason, they are classified as single humorous characters. In *Artemis Fowl*, humour can be mainly found in statements of the funny characters, situational comedy and the often ironic and witty comments made by the third-person narrator.

The humorous character Foaly, famous for his bone-dry black humour, distinguishes himself particularly by his statements. With them, the centaur is walking a tightrope; always on the limit between decency on the one hand and respectlessness and tactlessness on the other. Due to his amiable nature at heart and his eccentricity one cannot really be cross with

---

[172] Ibd., p. 398.
[173] Stroud, *Bartimaeus: Ptolemy's Gate*, p. 12.

him for long. Since the centaur works for the intelligence service, he is right at the source of the information. His knowledge gives him a sense of superiority, which he tries to bring to bear with his comments. Prone to using irony and sarcasm generously, Foaly can be very annoying if he so desires. However, Foaly's critique is not limited to actions. His attention – and with it, his teasing - are also easily drawn by the outer appearance of others.

In the *Artemis Fowl* novels, situational comedy is inseparably connected with the dwarf Mulch Diggums and his body functions. Among the latter range the amazing qualities of dwarf hair, his ability to bite through rock or jaws which can be unhinged. Mulch's diet of earth, rock etc. entails extreme side-effects during digestion, above all explosive gaseous mixtures set free via the dwarf's bumflap. Unaware of Mulch's explosiveness, his adversaries are easily put out of action by means of the surprise effect. This discrepancy between expectation (harmlessness) and actual result (high danger) ensures situational humour.

Furthermore, the comments made by the third-person narrator contribute decisively to the overall humour in the novels. As with the centaur's comments, the narrator's remarks employ irony. With his comparisons and assessments, the narrator seems to be a soul mate of the centaur. Thus, a similar tenor is maintained.

In other corpus novels, we can find more single humorous characters or couples who work on the same principles. Amongst others, such characters providing comic relief are the anarchic twins Fred and George in Rowling's *Harry Potter* heptalogy or even the comic situations arising in parodies of known works by clashing with the original. Here, it is the knowledge of the original and its adaptation which create tension that often is resolved by laughter. Examples for this kind of humour are Stewart and Riddell's *Muddle Earth*, *Bored of the Rings* or Gerber's *Barry Trotter* and *Blarnia* novels. In chapter 6.8, the issue of parasitical literature and its humour will be addressed in more detail.

As we have seen, not only duos or individuals provide comic relief and humorous situations, but also the way in which the narrator, if applicable, tells the story. Humorous commentaries can thus be made by the narrator, by the characters themselves or a combination of these two possibilities. Pratchett for instance introduces his very own variation. On the one hand, his eponymous *Wee Free Men*, the Nac Mac Feegle, form a large and rather confusing group. On the other hand, this is compensated for by single individuals who set themselves apart from the mass of Pictsies. This way, in contrast to other authors who tend to settle for a either a duo, a single comedian and/ or a humorous narrator, Pratchett can combine humorous collective actions with those of single characters and small teams of one group. Against the background of the collective and with the use of narrator commentaries,

the author draws on plentiful resources. With the actions of the Pictsies entire novels could be filled without a problem - and without the need of any supplementary characters, too.

Pratchett puts remarks into the narrator's mouth that can be quite daring at times and often are very cheeky – or *cheesy*, as in Horace's case – yet, these images are not only original associations but also easy to understand. Whereas the author can state things quite bluntly, he also wraps brilliant pieces of humour in subordinate clauses, where they acquire a terse effect. As complex and varied as their occurrence are the situations in which humour plays a key role. From the author's inexhaustible cornucopia also spills non-aggressive black humour.

So far, Pratchett has published three novels featuring the Nac Mac Feegles: *The Wee Free Men*, *A Hat Full of Sky* and *Wintersmith*. In all three novels, the endearing Pictsies care for the well-being of the young witch Tiffany. The interplay between her and the Pictsies frequently results in chaotic, hilarious situations caused by the unasked interference of the little blue men with the events. Selfless and brave as they are, the Wee Free Men always attempt to make amends, often causing even more trouble by doing so. One contributing factor might be that the term "discretion" is not part of their vocabulary. Whatever their enterprise, the belligerent Pictsies never mean any real harm.

The Nac Mac Feegle easily succumb to any temptation in the form of a chance for looting, fighting or drinking. Stopping off for stealing whenever possible, the Pictsies "will in fact steal anything that is not nailed down. If it is nailed down, they will steal the nails as well."[174] They benefit from their incredible strength permitting them to transport loot which is their size and weight many times over, for example sheep. Yet it is not only the stealing, but also the fighting that the Pictsies love. If by chance there aren't any opponents available, they quite happily start a passionate brawl among themselves. As for alcohol, the Wee Free Men can take a lot more than anyone else would be capable of, shrinking back from nothing. Even the mysterious concoction "Special Sheep Liniment" is unable to get at them. Furthermore, the Nac Mac Feegle tend to avoid telling the truth if it is not captivating enough. A prime example for this is the following quotation: "Er...would you accept a wee bitty lie? [...] It's interestin'. There's dragons an' unicorns in it –."[175] In this connection, their very own and unique logic is unrivalled and irrefutable, especially when they try to arrive at conclusions all

---

[174] Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*. London: Corgi, 2004, p. 9.
[175] Terry Pratchett. *Wintersmith*. London: Corgi, 2007, p. 76.

by themselves. All in all, the Pictsies leave a lasting impression. Whoever makes their acquaintance cannot forget them, even if they wanted to.[176]

Still, it is not only the Nac Mac Feegle themselves who contribute to the overall humour of these three Discworld novels. The narrator also plays an important role commenting on events or explaining details, traditions or conditions or providing background information. In doing so, he makes fun of almost anything he can get hold of. For instance, the narrator picks on society's hypersensitivity to allergies and its subsequent paranoia with food labels, or on misnomers. A scullery is thus not used for storing skulls, even if it would be only logical to infer this from its name.[177]

Whereas other authors of fantasy novels for children portray wizards mostly as venerable wise men worthy of being paid tribute to, Pratchett's humour does not share this view. Very down to earth, he treats wizards none too gently or respectfully. Far from granting them a mystic aura, he invents Ankh-Morpork's Unseen University as the not very flattering scholarly centre of the wizards. Yet it is not only the wizards who are made fun of. Irish mythology is ridiculed or a ham sandwich endowed with an immortal soul.[178] Even Discworld animals have the potential to be funny. Nanny Ogg's tomcat Greebo is always good for a surprise and a laugh, especially when his prey is several times his size. Incidents like this contribute to the novels' humour since they are so incredible in reality, but they are narrated with such a matter-of-factness in the novel. Even during excursions into the spiritual world of the Discworld gods one searches in vain for venerable representatives. Rather, there exists a multitude of entities for even the smallest thing or circumstance, for example a god for lost buttons.

Even Discworld cheese has potential for humour. In *The Wee Free Men*, the narrator introduces the reader to the secrets of Lancre Blue, which has a life of its own and can be quite aggressive towards other cheeses. Horace is probably its most famous representative. It is only natural that a cheese with its own characteristic personality receives an individual name. In order to encourage his independence further, the free range Horace gets his own cheese flap.[179] As a Lancre Blue, the cheese is eventually admitted to the clan of the blue-skinned Nac Mac Feegle, where he sometimes even wears a kilt.

---

[176] Ibd., p. 245.
[177] Ibd., p. 97.
[178] Ibd., p. 171.
[179] Ibd., p. 100.

There is hardly any area of life in Discworld which is not somehow linked with humour. Discwordly wisdom, collected in the *Almanack*, a compendium of the sum total of experience and useful tips, is at least par with the wealth of information found in the trusty handbook *Diseases of the Sheep.* In the latter, the entry "turpentine" reveals an essential piece of knowledge as far as the handling of sheep is concerned. A universal cure, turpentine can be applied to everything and anything: "Recommended treatment is daily dosing with turpentine until there is no longer either any trembling, or turpentine, or sheep."[180] Needless to say that there exists probably not a single Wee Free Men that has not drunk it yet.

---

[180] Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*. London: Corgi, 2004, p. 173.

5.   Modern structures

The previous chapter focussed on traditional elements in British fantasy novels for children, above all on the four main categories magic, evil, violence and humour. We saw that these selected elements can be traced back to the very origin of children's literature and that their long tradition had a strong formative influence on the development of the genre. On the basis of these observations, we will now discuss modern structures in British fantasy novels for children under several aspects. The main focus is on the structure and features of both primary and secondary world(s), the nature and substance of the modern quest as well as the latter's implications for the personality structure of modern child heroes. Further aspects intimately linked with modern child heroes concern their background, the process of socialisation and enculturation with its high potential for conflict as well as the roles of gender, role models and authority.

5.1   Computergamisation of fantasy novels?

Topical British fantasy literature cannot escape the strong influence of the current mass media such as TV formats, the internet, mobile communication and home entertainment products, above all computer games. Since authors and readers alike deal with them on a daily basis, it is only natural that these media find expression in fantasy literature. Concrete technical devices worked into the respective story are a direct adoption of the new media. Even if modified or alienated in their adaptation to the requirements of the secondary world, they remain recognisable in outline. Prime examples for such adaptations are Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*; Brennan's three faerie novels and McGowan's *Hellbent*. In contrast, *indirect* adaptations of the modern media manifest themselves in the novel's form, namely its structure, rather than in its content. In one respect, British fantasy for children has an affinity to the structure of contemporary computer games and TV formats, notably series: The widespread and popular practice of serialisation. In fantasy novels as well as in TV formats or computer games, a distinctive trend leans towards economical recycling. For example, a captivating setting thus only needs to be invented once in the first novel of a series. In the sequels, it can be reused time and again. This way, the time and energy that usually go towards the maintenance and actualisation of the secondary world can ideally be used for the shaping of complex characters instead. Yet, any series can only benefit from such an economic handling of its setting if the complexity of the characters manages to unperturbedly parry this shift of priorities. Only then can the author focus on content rather than structure.

As a result, the production process is sped up significantly, thus entailing an increased productivity and output capacity. Provided that serialisation does not take its toll on the quality, it can positively affect an author's commercial success. A further bonus is the setting's familiarity to both author and reader, which permits a continuation ad infinitum.

This clear increase in serialisation in British fantasy novels for children is particularly discernible when we look at the frequency of trilogies (*Arthur*, *Bartimaeus*, *Eaglesmount*, *His Dark Materials*, *The Wind on Fire*, *Doomspell*, *The Silver Sequence*, Augarde's trilogy, *Switchers*, or even larger projects such as pentalogies (*Keepers and Seekers*), heptalogies (*Harry Potter*, *The Keys of the Kingdom*) and entire series (*Artemis Fowl*, *The Children of the Lamp*, *The Edge Chronicles*, *Stravaganza*, *The Wardstone Chronicles*, *Redwall* and *The Children of the Red King*).

In view of the amount of topical British fantasy novels for children on the market the corpus has been chosen in such a way that it represents a balanced cross-section of the field. Since within the scope of this study numerous ideas, directions of thought and developments that are well worth examining can only be raised and broached, further studies are required for a comprehensive analysis of the exact distribution of single versus serial novels of the entire genre. At present, everything points to the fact that the genre of current British fantasy novels for children experiences a pronounced trend towards serialisation. As far as serialisation is concerned, a rapprochement of current British fantasy novels for children and contemporary platform computer games[181] and TV series -above all sitcoms and daily soaps - can be observed. Are the parallels so strong and numerous that one could speak of a "computergamisation" of British fantasy novels for children?

Parallels and correlations in the structure of TV series and computer games on the one hand and fantasy novels for children on the other hand can be noticed. With the average duration of a daily soap instalment between 20-30 minutes and its increasing suspense until either its solution or until a cliffhanger, the attention span is standardised. Especially young people grow accustomed to this structuring of information. In this respect it remains to be analysed whether the new media influence literature or the other way round.

---

[181] Here, a restriction has to be made. Strategy or role playing games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*© or *Age of Empires*© are not designed in levels of a certain duration. For this reason, non-platform games are not part of the analysis.

Despite its volume[182] the *Harry Potter* series attracts millions of children all over the world. For one, this is due to the gripping and suspenseful story but also to the manageable length of the single chapters. This comprehensibility encourages many children as well as adults to read the novels in spite of their length, since the chapters are relatively short. Most contain a climax and frequently end with a cliffhanger. Generally speaking, the structure of a fantasy novel's single chapters resembles that of the structure of a TV instalment or a computer game level. Every chapter and instalment reveal something new and further the action or the story.

Meanwhile, British fantasy literature for children has been complemented by various film adaptations. This circumstance entails different implications. Firstly, a film based on a novel can facilitate the access to the subject matter for those children that are not eager readers. Secondly, it can promote the contents of the novels. Again, for others, a film adaptation represents an irreconcilable contrast to the novels, since a film inevitably must commit itself to, if not one single, then still a limited number of interpretations. It goes without saying that the interpretations of innumerable individuals cannot possibly all be covered by the statement of one film version. Not only can the imagination of an individual take offence at the guidelines of the film, but it is among other things also confronted with and possibly undermined by set and tangible characters.

However, as far as the affinities between fantasy novels and their film as well as computer game adaptations are concerned, it would be interesting to study their parallels and differences in particular in respect of the comparison between the corresponding scene lengths. Research in this direction of comparative studies is bound to yield revealing conclusions concerning the underlying concentration span of today's consumers of mass media. Since the number of film adaptations of fantasy novels for children is currently increasing noticeably, not only the films but also the original novels are thus much sought after.[183]

5.2   Primary and secondary worlds

With roots reaching far back to the beginnings of British children's fantasy, primary and secondary worlds represent a vital modern structure, too. It is against the background of

---

[182] 3407 pages in my hardcover novels.
[183] *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2006), *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), *Harry Potter 1-6* (2001-2008), *Eragon* (2007), *The Golden Compass* (2007) or *Inkheart* (2008).

these worlds, usually by means of direct contrast and alignment, that their respective advantages and disadvantages can be distilled and discussed. From this, food for thought regarding new possibilities and their consequences, i.e. fresh impetus for the author's and reader's own reality can be gained. Primary and secondary worlds in fantasy literature thus offer an opportunity for criticism whilst simultaneously suggesting improvement and alternatives.

The primary world in fantasy literature frequently tallies with or differs only slightly from the world known to the reader as reality. A great number of fantasy novels for children take as their starting point this primary world. Here, the story unfolds in a relatively familiar environment, permitting the introduction to the plot and the hero(es) in their usual surroundings. This way, both main characters and reader are gradually prepared for the contact with fantastic beings and worlds, which reduces the abruptness of a transition. Often guides facilitate such a transition from a primary to one or several secondary worlds.

Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is a special case. Divergent from the above observations, the first volume opens with an introduction to the - from the viewpoint of the reader *secondary* - world of the heroine Lyra. The reader's reality and Lyra's world share many traits, yet they are distinctly different, too. By contrast, the second volume of the trilogy starts with the introduction of the hero Will, who lives in the reader's world, i.e. the primary world. From the perspectives of the two main characters, the definitions of primary and secondary worlds are reversed. For Will and the reader, Lyra's world is a secondary one, whereas for Lyra, Will's world is secondary. Congruent with the announcement of the various settings made at the beginning of the trilogy, this dualism of primary and secondary worlds is one of the central threads running through Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. Secondary worlds other than their own, for example Cittàgazze, are recognised by both hero and heroine as truly secondary.

Any contemporary attempt at a definition of the term "secondary world" ought to consider "On Fairy Tales", J.R.R. Tolkien's revolutionary essay. His observations, which, already made in 1936, still influence the fantasy genre, illustrate in particular the understanding of the role of the author and the kind of creative act he performs. Similar to the divine act of creation, the author – as suggested by Tolkien – when inventing his story and characters, moves on a god-like level. However, since an author is only human, he cannot be

but a "sub-creator".[184] If he succeeds, the result of his work is a secondary world whose properties come very close to or even match reality. Ultimately, his aim should be to endow this world with such an individuality and plasticity that "[i]nside it, what he relates is "true": It accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside."[185] The secondary world's exotic otherness becomes very distinct in terms of specific laws of nature, unknown elements and life forms, evolution, social and religious structures, history and, only very rarely, mythology. In a coherent, logical, well thought-out concept of a secondary world it is conform to the laws of nature.

Saxby suggests five possibilities for outward forms of a secondary world. Firstly, the secondary world can be "a well-defined entity"[186] with its own characteristic name that coexists with a primary world. Both keep up mutual relations and exchange. What Saxby fails to mention here is that these two worlds are not joined physically, so that travel in one way or another is necessary. Novels that fulfil this criterion are for example Brennan's faerie novels or Funke's *Inkheart* trilogy. Secondly, the primary and the secondary world can be physically adjacent,[187] so that crossing between the worlds occurs by means of apertures such as doors, gates or mirrors, with the other world being directly behind. C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Carroll's *Alice* novels, and more recently Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* and Pullman's *His Dark Materials* belong to this criterion, where Will uses the Subtle Knife to open and close windows to adjacent worlds. Thirdly, both worlds can overlap in such a way that "to enter it characters have to penetrate the interface".[188] The only corpus novels which feature such an interface is Crossley-Holland's *Arthur* trilogy, in which the Seeing Stone fulfils this function. According to Saxby, a further possibility is that the secondary world is part of the primary, realistic one. The existence of this sub-world is usually only disclosed to a select few who distinguish themselves through extraordinary powers, which Saxby calls the "Gift".[189] To everyone else, life forms of this secondary world are either invisible or disguise themselves. This is the case in novels such as *Artemis Fowl*, *Harry Potter* or *The Greenwich Chronicles*. Finally, the fifth outward form a secondary world can take according to Saxby is that of reality. This is the case when there is only one – fantastic – world in which the novel

---

[184] http://brainstorm-services.com/wcu-2004/fairystories-tolkien.pdf, pp. 1-28, p. 12. 19-12-2009.
[185] Saxby, *Books*, p. 234.
[186] Ibd., p. 235.
[187] Ibd., p. 236.
[188] Ibd.
[189] Ibd., p. 237.

takes place, so that the secondary world becomes the primary one. Here, the otherness stems from the divergence between the reader's own reality and that of the novel. Prime examples for such a secondary world "that simply is"[190] are Le Guin's *Earthsea* quartet, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Stewart and Riddell's *The Edge Chronicles* or Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle.

5.2.1   Structure and function of primary and secondary worlds

In British fantasy novels for children primary and secondary worlds play an important role. In many novels it is against a relatively stable background of a real world that the heroes are introduced and initially portrayed, before further events lead them to one or more secondary realms and, in most cases, eventually back to their real world. This tripartite, cyclical arranging of events in different levels and worlds (i.e. primary > secondary > primary) corresponds to and mirrors the three phases of the heroes' quest.

Novels which feature such a tripartite **structure** parallel to that of the quest set out from a primary world in which the laws of nature and society either closely match or are identical with our own reality. Exceptions like Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy surprise the reader with their unexpected reversal of both worlds through subjective perception. By not complying with the norm, such novels achieve a far stronger effect. "Regular" fantasy novels for children rely on the primary, "home" > secondary "there" > primary "and back again" structure that facilitates the introduction of the main characters in a relatively familiar environment. From this normality they set out into the unknown secondary world where fantastic adventures take place, strange creatures are met and magic is encountered. The sometimes strong discrepancy between primary and secondary world causes a momentary uprooting and deep sense of insecurity for the hero who has to re-orientate himself and cope with the new situation. Starting out from a familiar background may lead to an abrupt rupture during and immediately after the transition, but it also ensures that fantastic events and beings are limited to the level of the secondary world. If they can be befriended, the latter might follow the hero back to the primary world. However, this step is not indispensable. It can be observed that in many cases it suffices to sketch the structure of the primary world in outline, since it is more or less identical to the reader's own reality. The secondary world, by contrast, requires considerably more detail and explanation, as it is entirely new for the hero and has

---

[190] Ibd.

yet to be explored. Therefore, the structure of the primary world in British fantasy novels for children tends to match the hierarchies and issues of our own, whereas the structure of the secondary world is left to the imagination of the respective author as well as the specific requirements for the otherness of its setting.

Novels consisting only of a single, fantastic secondary world turn it into the primary world for the characters. If this is the case, then details about and explanations of the various institutions, beings, elements and laws of nature are of great importance because such a world frequently differs strongly from the reader's reality. Still, the otherness does not apply to all aspects. A venture of this complexity would be far too costly in respect of the time it would take the author to create it and also in respect of the many volumes this would fill.

As we have already mentioned, the function of primary and secondary worlds in fantasy novels for children is to provide the background for the story being told. It depends on the weight that the author attaches to these worlds and their detail to what extent they can influence, support and explain the events. As a rule, the more complex the worlds, the more closely entwined they and the characters are. In current British fantasy novels for children, the scope comprises worlds with just a hint of otherness in the form of some special feature(s), such as *Skellig*, *Clay*, *Doctor Illuminatus* or *Switchers*, worlds which show a balanced mixture between familiar and new, such as *Harry Potter*, *Artemis Fowl*, *Bartimaeus* or *The Keys to the Kingdom*, and those which surprise the reader with a wealth of original characteristic features like *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Edge Chronicles*.

5.2.2   Parallels and differences between primary and secondary worlds

In the genre, one encounters various degrees of familiarity between primary and secondary worlds. Yet, no matter how exotic or fantastic such a world is portrayed as and how incompatible it may seem at first glance to either the character's or the reader's normality, parallels between a realistic world and a fantastic one can always be established. Concurrences of this kind constitute the basis for interworldly comparisons by permitting at least some familiarity for orientation. As with any expedition, the explorer sets out from familiar turf into unknown terrain and compares their discoveries to their own store of experience. Such an alignment is required for the purpose of assessing new phenomena. Transfers are only meaningful if classifications can be made into familiar sense and value systems. This is why areas that tend to remain untouched by otherness are for instance fundamental social contacts in the form of parenthood, friendship, love, hierarchies as well as

patterns of human behaviour. Political, religious or ethical aspects of society can already differ from the basic framework.

Outside this stable key area, the degree of familiarity can vary greatly. The more familiar the respective world, the more emphasis is laid on the characters and their development rather than an exotic setting. Slight variations support the comparison of contrasts without deflecting too much from the main conflicts and issues. Nevertheless, they suffice to encourage thought about implications and consequences of otherness. By contrast, the more unknown the portrayed primary or secondary world, the more important it is for the main character(s) to counterbalance this by facing disconcerting beings, events or other features in an understandable, consistent and thus recognisable way. This circumstance facilitates a more intense identification with the main character(s) on the part of the reader, as well as the drawing of conclusions about the own situation. Compared to the reader's reality, the fictional worlds and the societies are either better, the same or worse than their own. Therefore social criticism is an essential component whenever parallels and differences between primary and secondary worlds are concerned.

A further aspect revealing parallels and differences between primary and secondary worlds is - if available - the existence, nature and mode of operation of mutual points of contact. The latter possess a particular innate expressiveness: It is here that the first impression of another world is formed and that correspondences and divergences become apparent. The nature of a specific point of contact between worlds already permits the drawing of conclusions concerning the way of life as well as the level of the technology used by the inhabitants of the other world. So the gateway in the primary world, the interspace between the worlds and the corresponding gateway into the secondary world give clues as to what is given priority to there. In current British children's fantasy novels, the design of these gateways is as manifold as the secondary worlds. Classic points of transition like a hole in the ground or a mirror are complemented and enriched by a wealth of imaginative variations. From portals and magical artefacts, often books, invocations and self-made cuts in the thin layers of adjacent worlds to the medium of water used for geographical as well as chronological travel between worlds, anything seems possible. In the following, a selection of such original secondary worlds and their points of contact to others will be presented, analysed and compared.

5.2.3   An exemplary comparison of different secondary world models

As we have already seen in chapter 5.2, Saxby suggests five possibilities for the design of a literary secondary world. This practical division shall be retained for the following analysis and comparison of secondary worlds in selected corpus novels, which distinguish themselves by their originality and creativity in that respect. Accordingly, the first group of corpus novels to be analysed are those in which the secondary world is "a well-defined entity" with its own characteristics. It coexists with a primary world, albeit without immediate physical contact, and engages in direct contact with it. Brennan's *Faerie Wars*, *The Purple Emperor* and *Ruler of the Realm* are exemplary for this category.

In Brennan's novels, two world models clash on the day that the boy Henry, who lives in the primary world, i.e. reality, finds a faery[191] in Fogarty's garden. It turns out to be Pyrgus Malvae, the heir to the throne of the faery realm. After the first surprise, Henry and Fogarty are interested in the faery realm, and Fogarty manages to build a portal of his own. Two-way traffic is possible again between the two worlds, as the pensioner and Henry prove by following Pyrgus to his realm. Unfortunately, Pyrgus uses the portal Mr Fogarty created without it having been thoroughly tested or calibrated. So instead of returning home into his world, the prince finds himself in Hael.

Pyrgus' world distinguishes itself from the primary world by various pronounced characteristic features. Above all, its life forms are not human. Not only faeries, but also beings like the orange dwarf Kitterick, animals like lie-detecting endolgs or psychotronic spiders populate the secondary realm. Its otherness is furthermore expressed by exotic means of locomotion. In the realm, magic is a law of nature. Naturally combined with a touch of religion and science, it is not only used by the technician priests who maintain the portals but also by the other faeries, who can use spells as weapons. The twin moons of the realm[192] underline the world's otherness against the primary one. As in novels such as Pratchett's *Discworld* series or Rowling's *Harry Potter*, reinterpretations of phenomena occur. In *Ruler of the Realm*, Henry is abducted in his own world by a flying saucer or so he believes. However, it turns out that the UFO is not manned by aliens, but by demons from a parallel world to Henry's own as well as the faeries', namely Hael.

---

[191] It can be observed that the spelling of the word "faery" differs from the normal "fairy". This phenomenon is no isolated case in current British fantasy novels for children. It seems very likely that authors who follow this practice want to distance themselves and their work from the cliché-laden word "fairy", which is intimately linked with "fairy tales". In his essay "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien also uses the "faerie" spelling.

[192] Brennan, *Faerie Wars*, p. 195.

It is worth noting that the outcome of the social and power-political conflicts in the realm are decisively influenced by the appearance and the active intervention on the part of the boy Henry, and, less directly, by Fogarty. Without their arrival in the realm, the conflicts between the faeries themselves on the one hand and the demons on the other hand would certainly have led to a different result. So in these novels, the existence of the portals and the possibility for travel and exchange between various worlds is vital for the solving of conflicts by means of otherworldly input and different ideas and strategies.

Novels of **the second group** feature physically adjacent worlds,[193] where transition takes place via gates or mirrors. From our corpus, *His Dark Materials* fulfils these requirements in the style of Carroll's two *Alice*-novels, Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* or Ibbotson's *The Secret of Platform 13*.

A prime example for fantasy novels of this kind is Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* heptalogy. Even though the author is not British but Australian, his work matches Saxby's definition very closely. Consequently, we are going to take a glance over the rim. Nix' novels are bestsellers in Britain, not least because he introduces innovative ideas. With the creation of the House the author gives an impulse to the genre by demonstrating a new possibility for the form of a secondary fantasy world.

On the first day at his new school, the main character Arthur Penhaligon is given a strange key and a notebook by a man just as strange. From this moment onwards in which the House has made contact with Arthur, his encounters with unusual beings occur more and more often. Having come into possession of both the Key and The Atlas, Arthur is now closely connected to the House. The latter manifests itself in the form of a huge, ancient-looking building[194] somewhere in town, where Arthur is sure it only appeared very recently. Its unusual mix of many architectural styles on the exterior mirrors the diversity of its various areas, denizens, rulers and their style of leadership. It transpires that, from the viewpoint of the House and its inhabitants, Arthur's world is a secondary realm; for Arthur it is just the other way round.

From the Architect's Will and by studying the *Compleat Atlas*, Arthur learns about the origin, structure and the self-image of the House. Built from Nothing by the Great Architect, it houses Her servants and the entire administration and its purpose is to record and observe

---

[193] Saxby, *Books*, p. 236.
[194] Nix, *The Keys to The Kingdom. Mister Monday*, p. 59.

Her work.[195] Within the House, illness, hunger and thirst are unknown, so as to permit the denizens to fully concentrate on their tasks. Also the fact that the denizens live for hundreds or even thousands of years means that time plays a far less important role than in Arthur's world. In more than one sense, the House therefore is subject to differently measured dimensions.

It can be observed that it takes up a current trend in British fantasy novels for children, namely the occupation with and discussion of biblical models, motifs and stories by a growing number of authors. In this respect, Nix' heptalogy takes its place among Taylor's doomsday atmosphere, demons and angels, Almond's angel Skellig, Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* trilogy and its parallels to the biblical exodus, and Pullman's fallen angels, Lucifer and the dying God in *His Dark Materials*, a modern retelling of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.[196] Nix' House of *The Keys to the Kingdom* is interlarded with references to the Bible, too. For instance, the parallels to God and the creation of the world in seven days are obvious. Even though the Architect, i.e. God, is female, the creation of the worlds and the biblical number seven play an outstanding role. The Seven Keys of the House, also called the Seven Keys of Creation or the eponymous Seven Keys to the Kingdom, are held by the seven Weekdays. During the Architect's absence, the personified days, who can be compared to archangels, are entrusted with observing Her Will and with overseeing those areas of the House that they are entrusted with. Outside their world, they rule on their respective weekday.

Despite the vastness of the various areas such as the Great Maze or the Border Sea they are but floors of an even vaster building. The central thread running through all levels of the House is not only the unity of the trustees in their rebellion against the absent Architect but also the extreme bureaucratisation. As exotic as some denizens are with silver tongues, blue blood, wings or the ability to shift shape, or as sophisticated the means of transport within the House, i.e. the Improbable Stairs or the many elevators, as slow is its administration. From the many parallels with biblical topics it would appear that the author has devised a very tangible version of heaven. Its front door, the Gates of Heaven, is guarded by the Gatekeeper, who controls access to and from the House. However, the front door is not the only way in, as Arthur learns. It can be circumvented by the weekdays on their respective

---

[195] Ibd., p. 192.

[196] In chapter 6.6.3 this phenomenon of a return to biblical themes as in Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* will be analysed in more detail. In a highly technicised age of communication and information technology, such a recalling of set and stable traditions of old and literary as well as spiritual heritage expresses the insecurity of people in view of innovations as well as changes of value systems at great speed.

day during the week, thus permitting Arthur and his friend Leaf to enter the House unnoticed. Once inside the House, one finds that it may already be huge from the outside, but its inside exceeds the physically possible room by far.[197] As in many other fantasy novels for children, appearances are deceiving. Here, the vastness of the House makes concessions towards the traditional concept of heaven, whose limits are unknown, too. All in all, Nix' conception of the secondary world of the House as heaven is refreshingly new and well-thought out in its many details.

According to Saxby's division, group three comprises novels in which primary and secondary worlds can overlap. In order to move between the two, travellers must "penetrate the interface." In our corpus, Crossland-Holland's *Arthur* trilogy matches this definition. His Seeing Stone permits him to pursue the events around the mythical Arthur and link them to his own situation in the Middle Ages. Although the boy Arthur cannot engage in direct contact with his namesake, he can learn from what he sees and experiences.

In group four, the secondary world is contained within a primary, realistic one and its existence only disclosed to a chosen elite. Above all, this applies to the following corpus novels: *Harry Potter*, *Artemis Fowl* and *The Greenwich Chronicles*. A significant part of the suspense and the fascination of Rowling's *Harry Potter* heptalogy arises from just this difference between a non-magical primary world and a magical subculture contained within it, yet only visible to members of this parallel society.[198] At first glance, this magical subculture does not suggest any spatial separation from the rest of the primary world. Wizards as well as Muggles inhabit the same planet, the same countries and share many typical national characteristics. On closer inspection, some peculiarities become noticeable. For instance, the wizards and witches see to it that their buildings or sporting events such as the Quidditch World Cup are disguised in such a way that, for those uninvolved, their true identity and purpose cannot be recognised. Access to these buildings occurs via ways that are as inconspicuous as possible,[199] and frequently the building in question only materialises on

---

[197] This element of surprise of the interior being by far larger than the exterior is popular in current British fantasy novels for children. For instance, in *Harry Potter*, the tents at the Quidditch World Cup contain far more rooms than the outside suggests. In *The Children of the Lamp*, Mr Rakshasa's small djinn lamp offers him the comfort of an entire flat. Compare Nix, *Lady Friday*, p. 88.

[198] In the series, some non-magical people may involuntarily have some strange encounters with magic; however, the magical people see to it that the Muggles either quickly forget about the incident or that they find another explanation for it. The wizards and witches are intent on preserving the exclusiveness of their community.

[199] A prime example for daily amenities converted into a concealed entrance is the telephone booth that serves as a lift downwards into the Ministry of Magic.

demand. At all other times, it remains squashed and invisible between other houses, however, without losing any space within, or is disguised as a ruin etc. So in *Harry Potter*, portals do not lead to an entirely different secondary world but grant access to the parallel society for their members. Contact between the two communities is one-sided: Whenever possible, the wizards avoid direct contact to the Muggles. If they do establish any, then only if it is absolutely necessary and out of their own free will.

The parallel world of the wizards and witches accommodates beings which, for the rest of the primary world, belong to the realm of folklore, fairytales and myth. Above all it is the Forbidden Forest at Hogwarts which provides the stomping ground for mythical creatures of all kinds: Dragons, giants, unicorns, hippogriffs and centaurs, to name only a few. Yet it is not only magical creatures, magic as such, its inherent laws and possibilities, but also their combination with a touch of the archaic but nostalgic flair of medievalness that contribute to the otherness of the parallel society. Exotic and elitist as this parallel society may seem at first, it has to struggle against the same problems as its Muggle counterpart. Far from being an ideal community, the wizards and witches are faced with criminality, violence, fights for power as well as racial discrimination and aggression. Particularly revealing is the fact that it is a wizard, the eponymous Harry Potter, who selflessly frees not only the magical community, but also the entire mankind from the tyranny of Voldemort, even if the Muggles remain unaware of his deed.

Whereas the attractiveness of the *Harry Potter* novels can be partially explained by the successful combination of magic with the *archaic*, Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series treads a path in the opposite direction, combining traditional magic with *futuristic* elements. In this case, the secondary world contained within the primary one corresponds to that of the fairies in the same location as the human world. Still, both spheres are clearly segregated spatially. In order to elude the destructive humans, the fairies have transferred their realm from above ground to underneath it, thus living in exile as it were, but they are left alone by the humans. By disappearing from the earth's surface, the fairies avoid observation, control, conflicts and even extinction. Out of sight, they have become mythical creatures to the humans and are now part of folklore. However, Colfer's fairies could not be more different from the gentle, lace-winged beings at the end of the garden. Far from being docile and cute, Colfer's fairies live in a bustling underground city with its own sophisticated infrastructure, where the fairy police are equipped with high tech weapons and gear to fight against trespassers and criminals. The clash with the traditional cliché of fairies could not be any greater. Certainly the author

populates Haven City with other mythical creatures sprung from fairy tales, like dwarfs, trolls, pixies or a centaur, but embedded in this high tech setting they have a rather strange effect.

Both worlds or areas of life are connected via various openings in the surface,[200] and until the eponymous Artemis Fowl discovers the fairies, traffic between the surface and the underground is one-sided since limited exclusively to the fairies. The latter only set out to the surface for two reasons: Firstly, this concerns any missions to arrest criminal fairies that have escaped to the surface, and secondly, the fairies need to perform rituals in order to renew their magical powers in regular intervals. During their short stay on the surface, camouflage is the top priority so as to avoid discovery by humans. All the same, Artemis Fowl manages to take Captain Holly Short by surprise and to overpower her before she can replenish her powers. From this point onwards, Artemis and Holly become mediators between the two worlds and re-establish a link, even if this happens on a very small scale and in secret. Once contact is made between the two worlds, Artemis as well as Holly and their respective assistants are forced to work together. Still, so far, the two worlds remain separate but for the contacts between Artemis and the fairies.

Tyler's *The Greenwich Chronicles* also fit into Saxby's pattern of a secondary world contained within a primary, realistic one. The novels even go a step further, since they subdivide this secondary world into two halves and two kinds of inhabitants. Spatially, their world is not separate from that of the humans. Both Guardians, who live above ground, and Wreccas, who live underground, share the same geographical area. Whereas the Wreccas live in a subterranean cave and tunnel system, the Guardians reside in Greenwich Park. However, the Guardians remain invisible to passers-by, thus avoiding any harmful influences from the outside, i.e. on the part of humans.[201] As in *Artemis Fowl*, it is only by accident that they can be seen by humans – in Tyler's novels *children* – and that contact can be established. This way, they can live peacefully in creative seclusion, in a crowded park of all places, and fully concentrate on their task, the guarding of time. Their democratic community, wisdom, friendliness and gentleness are portrayed as the cornerstones of an ideal society.

The Wreccas and their style of life, by contrast, differ strongly. As dark and gloomy as their habitat, their life is dominated by dirt, violence, cruelty, oppression and

---

[200] Most of these openings are the entrances or exits of the magma chutes. They serve as means for transport, and their extensive network - which runs through the earth - permits the fairies to travel swiftly to any destination.

[201] Here as in *Artemis Fowl*, the social criticism is aimed at the negative influence of mankind on nature and other creatures, but also on itself. As we will see in chapter 6.6, this is a motif which – in varying intensity – runs through almost all of the corpus novels.

mischievousness. What is more, their barbarism is emphasised by their speech, too. Grammatical rules are constantly violated and the vocabulary just covers the Wreccas' basic needs. Even if judging by appearances is usually disapproved of as being not politically correct and stereotyped, Tyler implements this technique and applies it to the vast majority of the underground-dwellers. The name is already self-explanatory. Despite the fact that in the preface Tyler annotates the origin of the word as signifying "outcast", the first phonetic association is that of "wreck".

So the spatial segregation of the secondary world into an above and an underneath matches the status and development of the respective community, i.e. a higher and a lower life form. The clichés are added to by the use of extreme goodness on the part of the Guardians and extreme badness on the part of the Wreccas. An escape from the system, obviously from negative to positive life form, is considered possible. Still, this remains rather unlikely due to the inner attitude of the Wreccas. If it does happen, as shown in the novels, then positive changes can only be expected by young, still malleable individuals.

On the basis of extremes, the secondary world with its split society shows an ideal model case – the Guardians – and a deterrent – the Wreccas. However, a drawing of conclusions for the primary world from the comparison between high and low social forms in the secondary one should not be attempted, since the two sides are too stereotyped.

According to Saxby, the fifth group consists of novels whose setting is to all appearances a secondary world. However, without a primary world to contrast it to, the secondary world is portrayed like a primary one. Corpus novels matching this classification are the *Wind on Fire* trilogy and *The Edge Chronicles*. Here, no gates are required as there is no other world and consequently no points of contact. Such single worlds exude a touch of exclusivity due to this ambiguity.

Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* trilogy is set in a secondary world which does not know any parallel worlds beside itself and which, due to its own complexity, does not require such a world, either. Instead, tension arises from the strong discrepancy between the harsh and violent reality of its inhabitants and the prophesied future in paradisiacal harmony and peace. Illustrated by the organisation of the city of Aramanth in *The Wind Singer* and, in the second novel, the realm of the Mastery, the negative aspects and implications of totalitarian systems are being pilloried. At the same time, they are contrasted with a free and self-determined life how it should – and could – be.

In *The Wind Singer*, the totalitarian order and hierarchy of Aramanth is reflected by its rigid and austere geographical structure. Laid out in the ideal form of a circle, the city is

divided into concentric sub-circles, each of which represents a specific district. The latter are colour-coded from inner to outer circle, with the buildings and their inhabitants uniformly painted and dressed in this colour. With the most respected and aligned members of society at the very centre in the white district, the exclusivity, rights and power of the citizens diminishes with their increasing distance from the centre from scarlet, orange and maroon to the social outcasts in the grey district.[202]

From childhood, all citizens of Aramanth are subjected to the very strict social order and hierarchy and drilled to function in the totalitarian performance-oriented society. Constant control, competition, pressure, testing and re-ranking are meant to ensure stability and uniformity by suppressing any free will. In a style reminiscent of Orwell's *1984*, repetitive slogans such as "We strive harder, and reach higher, to make tomorrow better than today"[203] are calculated measures of indoctrination. Should they fail, the ensuing public punishment, the humiliation, the shame as well as the liability of the entire family for crimes of its members are deterrent enough to prevent further lapses. However, despite all this psychological terror, Aramanth's caste system and seemingly perfect society cannot suppress the rebellious behaviour of the Hath family. First and foremost it is Kestrel, Bo's twin sister, who angers the regime: Most effectively so when she protests verbally in the centre of the city. This way, her nonconformism is witnessed by many people. Her swearwords, characteristic of the secondary world,[204] emphasise the fact that Kestrel despises Aramanth's social system. Despite all the efforts made by the regime, Kestrel's will cannot be broken.

The second novel, *The Slaves of the* Mastery, is set five years after *The Wind Singer*. As if the totalitarian system of the city had not been cruel enough, Aramanth is conquered and destroyed by enemy forces. The inhabitants are all enslaved, branded and taken to the Mastery. The Master is a self-proclaimed absolute ruler and tyrant, who uses his army to stifle any acts of rebellion with utmost cruelty and psychological terror. In the Mastery, the suffering and the barbarism the citizens of Aramanth are subjected to surpass everything that they have experienced so far. It is only with utmost desperation and determination that the Master can be defeated and the cruelty is ended. The martyrdom of the slaves in the realm of the Mastery shows strong parallels to the biblical slavery of the Israelites in Egypt. Once the

---

[202] Cf. Nicholson, *The Wind Singer*, p. 28.
[203] Ibd., p. 20.
[204] Such as Sagahog, Bangaplop, Pocksicker and Pompaprune (ibd., pp. 6, 9). For the reader, these exotic and mostly meaningless words underline the world's otherness in contrast to the reader's reality.

Master – the biblical pharaoh – is overcome, a small group of people around the Hath family leaves its involuntary exile and, as prophesied by Ira Hath, sets off for the promised land. After the oppression in Aramanth and the Mastery, freedom and peace finally become a distinct possibility.

In *Firesong*, the third novel, the exodus from slavery into freedom begins. Guided by her visions, Ira Hath leads a small group of people as Moses led the Israelites. Just like the latter in the desert, they face a long way full of privation and danger on their way to the Homeland. They too are tempted in the desert when they reach an oasis which turns out to be just as idyllic as it is deadly. Having escaped the mass murderer inhabiting it and freed some females of the group who were abducted by bandits, the travellers finally reach a very high cliff. From this vantage point they can see the promised land, whose two rivers parallel the biblical paradise.[205] Yet, as there is no way down for them into the valley Kess gives up her life to save the group. She becomes a part of the rising Wind on Fire, the eponymous phenomenon, the highest power in that world. It is the force of the wind that carries the small exodus-group from the high cliff down into the promised land. Although flying may be restricted to a few chosen individuals, yet it appears to comply with the laws of nature of this world. Not only can an entire group float down from a cliff unharmed, but also a few single individuals like Bo can fly out of their own accord. This way, the promised homeland is only accessible to the chosen ones. Everyone else would not have survived the descent.

Apart from its very own characteristic features such as the social structure in the city of Aramanth, the Mud People, dangerous insects, the existence of the Morah and the army of the Zars, the trilogy's secondary world is designed for the strong affinity between the message of the trilogy and its biblical counterpart. The secondary world's oppressive social system in the city of Aramanth and, even worse still, the martyrdom of the abducted citizens in the realm of the Mastery, parallel the enslavement of the Israelites. In the course of the trilogy, the violence and cruelty against the slaves and their suffering is pictured in great detail and pilloried. It is only at the end of the second novel that the Master can be overcome. After this long time of misery and despair, the greater part of the third novel finally mirrors the biblical exodus from Egypt (the Mastery) through the desert, led by Moses (the prophetess Ira Hath). The small group around the Hath family symbolically stands for the people of Israel, and they willingly let themselves in for the odyssey through unknown, barren land in order to find the

---

[205] Nicholson, *Firesong*, p. 284.

Promised Land. On their way from slavery into freedom, they are put to the test several times. Having mastered all the strain and suffered great losses, the group finally reaches the Promised Land. Again, like Moses, Ira Hath dies before she can enter the homeland. Their haven stands for a new beginning and a new and life in peace and harmony. Biblical allegories, in this trilogy as well as in other British fantasy novels for children, suggest a transfer. Motifs like uprootedness, the search for the Promised Land, martyrdom, expulsion and flight suggest parallels to people's quest for spiritual healing despite all adversities of present-day reality. Similar situations can be found around the globe.

The strong discrepancy between the horrors of years of oppression and loss on the one hand and the prospect of a fulfilled life of work and happiness on the other speaks for itself. The totalitarian, inhuman society, first in Aramanth, then even worse in the realm of Mastery, summarises those aspects which are detrimental to a healthy, democratic community that allows as much freedom for everyone as possible without restricting the rights of other individuals. By means of this polarisation on the basis of two extremes an enormous tension arises.[206]

In *The Edge Chronicles,* Stewart and Riddell offer an elaborate and well thought-out panorama of a secondary world, whose pronounced feature is its three-dimensionality. Not only does it stretch in width and length from the Stone Gardens on the outermost cliff over Undertown, the Mire and the Twilight Woods to the remote Deepwoods, but it also comprises the factor of height, namely the sky above and underneath the Edge. Each area of the Edge distinguishes itself fundamentally from the others by its very own characteristics, that is to say its specific flora and fauna that have adapted to the living conditions of this area.

In their quality of the burial ground for Sanctaphrax' academics, the secluded Stone Gardens on the outer Edge symbolise the eternal cycle of life and death, of old and new. Here, new buoyant rocks grow, which are used either as flight rocks for the ships of the sky pirates, or which, if large enough, can one day replace the rock Sanctaphrax is built on. Bordering the Stone Gardens is the bustling Undertown. The difference between the calmness, remoteness and the solemnity of the Stone Gardens and the loud and dirty Undertown, the melting pot of the Edge, could not be any greater. Home for a motley crowd, Undertown conglomerates

---

[206] Obviously, there would have been real totalitarian, inhuman regimes in the light of which this subject matter could have been treated. However, embedded into the structure and the events of a fantasy world background the subject is taken out of its everyday context. This way, it can be viewed in a more global way than in its original context. The fact that such a subject, topical and serious as it is, is an integral part of a fantasy trilogy contradicts the widespread opinion that the genre distinguishes itself mainly by daydreaming and escapism.

representatives of all races of the Edge in cramped surroundings. As the economic centre, the attraction of the town is mainly due to the thriving trade and service industries and the profit that can be made from them. Yet, goods and money always attract shady characters and criminality. High above Undertown with all its civilisation problems floats the "university town" of Sanctaphrax, held in place with the help of a sturdy anchor chain. The campus accommodates the social elite of the Edge. Elevated high above the town, Sanctaphrax, the place of research and teaching, literally permits the scientists and their scholars to have their head in the clouds. From Undertown, access to the other areas of the Edge is only possible by means of the dangerous Mire Road. This toll road, controlled by the cruel and violent Shrykes, is the only way to distant regions. The Mire itself is a desert of mud hostile to life, and home to murderers and thieves. The Mire Road continues through the Twilight Woods, which disturb many a traveller by means of hallucinations and strange enticing voices, sooner or later driving them into insanity. Consequently, the Twilight Woods harbour innumerable beings that – in their mental derangement – are buried alive, as they wander around aimlessly until they eventually die without ever having found the way back out. Adjoining the Twilight Woods are the Deepwoods, the rural part of the edge. Not only are they the source for the raw materials of Undertown's daily life, but they are also the home and origin of most of the flora and fauna, above all the inhabitants of the Edge. The sky above and underneath is the element of the sky pirates who transport raw materials from the Deepwoods to Undertown and set out on quests for Stormphrax, the substance used to counterweight the buoyant rock of Sanctaphrax. The safety of the air above but mainly underneath the Edge is threatened by the presentiment of the existence of the Gloamglozer, the Edge's version of the devil.

The otherness of the secondary world of the Edge is based on its many exotic life forms, which are illustrated by Riddell's brilliant and very detailed drawings. Meat-eating trees like the Bloodoak, transparent spindlebugs or prowlgrins testify to the laws of nature specific to the Edge, and laws of physics such as the properties of cold and hot stone are used for aviation. Due to the fact that the secondary world of Stewart and Riddell's series is not connected to one or several primary ones, it has to compensate for the missing exchange by its own otherness. In the first novel, the latter is explored by an inhabitant of the Edge itself. Comparable to the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*, in *Beyond the Deepwoods*, the young Twig sets out to discover the rest of his world. This strategy of an outsider entering either an entirely new world or an unknown part of their own is a very popular stylistic device in the genre, as novels such as *Harry Potter* illustrate.

Current publications of British fantasy novels for children enjoy playing with the definitions and perspectives of primary and secondary worlds. One can observe a distinct trend towards a perspective-reversal which allows seeing the primary world or reality with different eyes as something exotic and strange. With the help of this distancing technique the own world can be seen and reflected upon in a more critical light. In Hoffman's *Stravaganza* novels the differences between the modern primary world and the more medieval parallel world of Talia are experienced by the travellers between the worlds, especially intensive and irreversibly by those children who translate permanently into the respective other world. In Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy, the djinn is the main character, but also belongs to the demon world. Seen through his eyes, various human habits considered normal or natural are thus scrutinised. The perspective-reversal is also a prominent feature in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, where both main characters explore the other's world. By reversing the traditional approach of Alice belonging to the primary world and literally stumbling into a strange secondary one, Beddor's *The Looking Glass Wars* reveal the "true" origin of Alice. Alyss actually belongs to the secondary world, not the primary one she has grown up in. Provided that they are original and creative, such reversals of perspective have a great potential.

As manifold as the possibilities that arise from perspective-reversals are the current methods for establishing contact between two or more worlds. Traditional means such as gates or doors are still used, often in combination with further means as in Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* series. Natural or artificially opened and maintained connections can for instance be found in Brennan's novels, whereas Harry Potter receives a formal invitation to Hogwarts which introduces him to the world of magic. A further way of establishing a passageway between worlds are artefacts or other objects with special powers, such as the talismans in Hoffman's *Stravaganza* or Will's Subtle Knife in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

A special case of secondary worlds are alternative worlds. The latter will be examined separately in the following since they offer highly interesting possibilities for enlarging the spectrum of secondary worlds in current British children's fantasy novels. By walking down alternative paths and offering what-if-scenarios, such worlds can give valuable impulses to the genre.

5.2.4 Alternative worlds

Alternative worlds are a special kind of secondary world. In current British fantasy novels for children, this subcategory is becoming increasingly popular with authors such as

Pratchett, Pullman or Wynne-Jones. Other fantastic secondary worlds tend to break away from the normality of a primary one in more than one aspect. No matter how advanced their degree of otherness may be these worlds dispose of their own specific reality and inherent laws, thus forming an intrinsic whole. Alternative worlds also form an intrinsic whole, yet their point of departure is a very special one. First of all it is not a matter of simply setting one world off as being different from another. Rather, they toy with different outcomes, decisions and possibilities of real events which, theoretically, could have happened in reality. By inquiring into the question of "what would have happened if X had occurred instead of Y?" alternative worlds thus create tension. The latter arises from the fact that the reader already knows the respective result of a situation and that they are now confronted with a thought-through alternative. Whenever history comes to a fork[207] in the road, such approaches become possible. Taking such a fork as a starting point, authors can explore the other path(s) that, at the time, remained untrodden and offer thought-provoking scenarios. A prime example for what could happen if history had taken different paths in several places is Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. Illustrated by the town of Oxford the author presents two versions. Will's Oxford is shown as being identical with the real town, whereas Lyra's home town differs noticeably from Will's. Located in a parallel world, Lyra's Oxford was subject to other decisions and developments at crucial points in the tide of history, which have left their traces in its current appearance and society. So it is not the government which holds the authority in Lyra's town but the Church. Also, various names and terms for institutions, persons or inventions do not match those of Will's world. For instance, some colleges in Lyra's Oxford are called differently, gypsies are called gyptians, electric lights are anbaric lights and there are no planes but zeppelins. Outside of the town of Oxford, the alternative world differs more widely from Will's own. Beings such as the tiny, dragonfly-riding Gallivespians, the Lapland witches or the talking armoured bears have evolved in Lyra's world but not in Will's. A further, very important difference between the worlds is the external personification of a person's soul in Lyra's world compared to the internal, invisible soul of a person in Will's world.

---

[207] For this phenomenon, the fantasy author Pratchett has coined the term of "the trousers of time". The alternative fork can be imagined like the other trouser leg. The trousers of time illustrate how a different choice brings about two different possible outcomes. See Terry Pratchett; Stephen Briggs, *The New Discworld Companion*. London: Gollancz, 2004, p. 390. The quantum theory by Hugh Everett (1956) labels those incidents splits of reality. Compare Richard Poole. "Philip Pullman and the Republic of Heaven". In: The New Welsh Review 14.1, 53 (2001), pp. 15-22, p. 20.

All these differences in the alternative world encourage inquiring into the meaning of life, the question why things are how they are and whether they could or should be different. In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman suggests one of the many interesting faces the world could have taken if nature had developed in an alternative way and if other decisions had been taken at decisive forks. In Lyra's world, Calvin became pope, moved from Rome to Geneva and introduced "the Consistorial Court of Discipline",[208] which ever since exercises the absolute power of the Church.

Such alternative worlds can give impulses to reality. They do so by reflecting upon the importance of history, time and decision-making and by analysing the advantages and disadvantages of the present reality by means of comparison with alternatives. With these sometimes playful and comical, sometimes serious reflections the reader's horizons are broadened, since alternative worlds show both improvements as well as deterioration, whereas paradisiacal utopias remain a rare exception.[209] Better or worse concepts than reality can serve as either an encouragement or as a warning, depending on the statement the author wants to convey. Among the concerns that authors of current British fantasy novels for children share is the general decline of values and morals, expressed for instance by abuse of power, oppression, violence, loss of respect, cold-heartedness and disregard of basic human needs such as friendship, trust and love. Positive and negative examples of alternative worlds, be they optimistic, humorous, neutral or even menacing, in the end lead to a recalling or remodelling of stable and functioning values and morals. Thus, they can elicit an active discussion of reality, where the search for meaning becomes increasingly important in view of fading guidelines.

5.3   The modern quest

Considering these signs of disintegration of guidelines, a gap is created where stable reference points are missing. So as not to lose all orientation, one needs to fill this gap again. This phenomenon explains the increasing importance of a search for meaning, which has always been expressed by the concept of quest. So it is not surprising that current British

---

[208] Philip Pullman. *His Dark Materials. The Golden Compass.* New York: Ballantine 1997, p. 27. [GB: *Northern Lights*]

[209] As long as there are gaps in the tissue of the worlds, the existence of the harmonious mulefa community in *The Amber Spyglass* and their paradise-like world is threatened. It is only after the balance is restored and in seclusion from any harmful exterior influence that their world becomes stable again. However, no such a seclusion is possible on Earth nor a harmonisation of the entire planet. See Philip Pullman. *His Dark Materials. The Amber Spyglass.* London et al.: Scholastic Children's Books, 2001.

fantasy for children is inseparably linked with the quest. The implication of the latter is twofold: Firstly, children try to find and establish the meaning of the world, and secondly their own position in it. Therefore, the quest has always played an important role; in unstable times even more than in stable ones. Due to its universality and applicability to all people, the concept of the quest disposes of a long tradition. Originating from myth and folk tales, it is primarily found in heroic/ high fantasy, yet also runs through less spectacular forms. As an indispensable element, the quest stands at the core of the story and carries the plot.

5.3.1 Definition of the traditional quest

The traditional quest can be "found throughout world literature [and] is one of the most vital of literary archetypes".[210] Due to its universality, the quest follows the same basic structures and principles in the genre. It can be defined as

> 1. the act or an instance of looking for or seeking; search: a quest for diamonds. 2. (in medieval romance) an expedition by a knight or company of knights to accomplish some prescribed task, such as finding the Holy Grail. 3. the object of a search; goal or target.[211]

Traditionally, the quest encompasses the set task of a search, in many cases for one or several specific objects or artefacts. The hero or quester is either predestined or otherwise appointed in the run-up, or chosen on the basis of his experience, aptitude or social position. It can be observed that social outsiders are given more chance in a quest than in reality. Accompanied by one or more helpers, the quester sets out on a "purposeful journey",[212] during which he has to overcome obstacles and adversaries in order to reach both goal and reward. The departure from home is indispensable for the hero's initial destabilisation and opening for new things and impressions. It is only by leaving his familiar environment, family and friends behind that unknown territory and dangers can be explored. Whereas within his usual boundaries no further development is possible, strange places and beings offer a challenge to the hero and allow him to extend his limits and horizon.

The hero's journey can be divided into three main phases: The departure, the adventurous journey itself and the return. The transition from the quester as he sets out and as he returns is often marked by his spiritual death. In a symbolic rebirth, the old self and social

---

[210] William Calin. *The Epic Quest. Studies in Four Old French* Chansons de Geste. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966, p. 182. Cf. also Dieter Schulz. *Suche und Abenteuer: Die "Quest" in der englischen und amerikanischen Erzählkunst der Romantik.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1981, p. 6.
[211] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1265.
[212] Pringle, *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 250.

position are cast off and symbolically renewed by physical signs of the adventure (in the form of scars etc.), spiritual maturity and a new, usually more prestigious social position.[213]

In the foreground of the traditional quest stands the external, physical journey, whose successful completion – often the rescue of a person or the saving of a community or even entire country - is rewarded with an acclaimed return, social initiation, fame and glory as well as material gratifications. By contrast, the hero's internal, psychological journey to the inner self is usually less important and thus subordinated to the external one.[214] Since the deeds matter and not so much the personal development, one can say that the traditional quest follows cyclical rather than linear structures and is designed for a harmonious, happy ending.[215]

5.3.2   New elements and aims of the quest

Having defined the basic elements of the traditional quest we can now take a look at new quest elements in current British fantasy novels for children. The traditional ones are still widespread, popular and a reliable and effective stylistic device, since they have retained their universality and timelessness throughout the centuries. Yet, as time went on, new elements have emerged on the basis of the traditional ones in order to take new social developments and the changing spirit of the time into consideration. Both old and new, often inseparably linked, coexist in current British fantasy literature for children.

It can be observed that the traditional quest focuses more on general human primordial fears, desires, behaviour, socialisation and the rites, tests and challenges involved. One or several tasks and their successful completion stand in the foreground, i.e. the *external* journey. By contrast, new elements of the quest reveal a shifting of its priorities from predominantly external to internal values. With the psychological, *internal* journey of the hero becoming more important than the external one, the focus lies on the development and maturation of individual characters. Although the journey as well as the successful completion of tasks are still of interest, adventures and tests are interpreted as challenges for the development of specific and complex characters, not primarily as selfless attempts at saving the world. Much is to be gained for the individual, whose personal psychological development, not that of physical strength, enables them to devote their attention to problems of general interest. In

---

[213] Schulz, *Suche und Abenteuer*, p. 8.
[214] For the internal and the external quest see Clute; Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 796; Joseph Campbell. *Der Heros in Tausend Gestalten.* Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer*, 1953.*
[215] Compare Schulz, *Suche*, p. 9.

current British fantasy literature for children this pronounced individualisation in favour of the salvation of mankind may appear to be a contradiction in terms at first glance. However, at second glance, distinct, mature and complex personalities are much more convincing and plausible and their actions become more understandable if their motivation is transparent compared to those heroes who simply seem to function and whose psychological inner self is kept under lock and key.

A different interpretation of "saving the world" is one new element of the quest. Whereas the traditional quest understands by this motto that a world and/ or a society has to be freed from harmful influences such as war, power-hungry tyrants or dangerous beasts such as dragons, its new element is the fight against the total destruction of the planet, world or society. The public awareness of a progressive destruction of the environment – in the worst case ecocide - through pollution and ruthless overexploitation of nature is reflected by the growing importance of the aspect of pollution control and environmental awareness in current publications. It is in *The Lord of the Rings* that Tolkien urgently and repeatedly places particular emphasis on the irretrievable loss of the old harmony and order. The elves leave Middle-earth forever, Saruman destroys all nature around Isengard, and Mordor, hostile to life, symbolises hell itself. With the disappearance of the elves and the dawning of the age of man Tolkien mourns past glory, as he knows what will follow. Outstanding publications from our corpus that take up this view are for example Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series and Tyler's *The Secret Valley*. Both authors take up the cudgels for the protection of the environment and denounce the thoughtless destruction of nature. Whereas Colfer lets the elves make ironic sideswipes at humankind and their careless behaviour, Tyler openly pillories the irresponsible clearing of the Amazonian rain forest. In both cases, today's profit-seeking entails severe consequences for nature, not least because future generations are deprived of a healthy and intact environment. Considering this acute and serious problem, "saving the world" as an aim for a successful quest in current British fantasy novels for children has reached a more specific, complex, immediate and urgent dimension than the traditional quest.

From this shift of prioritisation of the aspect of environment arise further new elements of the quest. Against a backdrop of an impending total destruction of the world – be it primary, secondary or both – and the basis for a quest, but also its external circumstances alter significantly. For one, this has implications for the character and motifs of adversaries as well as the threat they pose. It can be observed that a considerable number of villains from the corpus novels strive for absolute power, showing an increasing emotional coldness and stand not just for the ruin, but for the total destruction of the respective world. As Tolkien has

already warned, evil, personified by the villains, is no longer restricted to local areas or communities but has assumed global dimensions. This development reflects the current globalisation of the real world, which does not only bring advantages. Conflicts which used to be limited to one or several areas of the world can now spread easily across entire continents and not only deeply disturb the delicate balance but even destroy it completely. The fear of such a maximum credible accident underlies more or less directly the majority of our corpus novels. So it is not surprising that new elements of the quest frequently involve a threat of a tremendous magnitude which, in its intensity, surpasses that of the traditional quest by far.

Accordingly, the kinds of obstacles change which the hero has to overcome on their way to a successful completion of the quest. The obstacles too are no longer local and relatively calculable. Instead, they can stretch over the entire globe, so that the journey of the hero can easily and quite literally become a world-tour. As Pullman's *His Dark Materials* demonstrate, such a journey can encompass several worlds, turning the hero(es) into world-trotters. With the dimensions shifting, the events take place on a larger scale and tend to become more complex and less lucid. However, not only the obstacles and the adversaries are influenced by the new elements of the quest. The hero too has to adapt to the new circumstances. For this reason, the heroes of current British fantasy literature for children turn their minds back to their inner strengths, since physical strength alone does not suffice in order to take on and deal with the challenges. A different initial situation, a quest with new elements, evolving enemies and obstacles require adjustments on the part of the hero, too.

With the quest shifting more towards the internal, psychological and spiritual aspect, the external journey graphically symbolises its inner counterpart. The new elements of the extended, longer journey with its increasing difficulties represent the more and more complex inner conflicts the hero is exposed to. A further innovation is a marked tendency towards a plurality of worlds. The more different and numerous the worlds are that the hero passes through on his journey, the more he can broaden his horizon. New impressions and findings gathered can lead to comparisons, conclusions and new impulses. Authors like Paolini, Nix and Pullman demonstrate how the journey can be the goal. Observing that the external quest increasingly becomes a global one and the internal one of the hero a more and more personal and individual one might seem rather paradox at first. However, this is to be explained by the fact that these two extremes are opposites and countermovements; individualisation being the answer to the progressive globalisation. As distinct borders – and with them clear categorisation, order and structure decrease and blur, inner structures on an individual level

are reinforced and developed in order to counterbalance this phenomenon and not to lose important reference points – and with them all orientation.

Even though many current publications still rely mainly on the traditional quest, the trend goes towards a fruitful conscious combination of external and internal quest, of traditional and new elements. In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo's quest is a prime example for the duality of inner and outer journey, where the physical agony mirrors the mental anguish and vice versa. Even today demanding novels are modelled on this profound duality of the quest.

5.4   Child heroes

Bound up with the quest is the hero as its mainstay. Without him neither quest nor novel would exist. Since time immemorial the hero has been the central figure of fantasy, no matter whether he is a genuine or an anti-hero. In the following we will examine the concept of the hero in fantasy. First of all the traditional hero shall be defined, before we move on to modern child heroes in current British fantasy for children.

In order to analyse the hero and his modern aspects, many factors need to be considered. Apart from their role, their character and personality, their behaviour, motivation, morals and guidelines it is also indispensable to see who the mentors are, what kind of enemies and obstacles have to be faced and what the quest is aimed at.[216]

In view of the wealth of issues our study inevitably needs to be selective. For this reason those areas have been chosen which, in standard works, are either not treated in this form or at least do not take current developments into consideration yet. Seen as the genre is very innovative at present, the following selection deals with such aspects which play a key role and are thus of great significance for the appreciation of the new elements which enrich the concept of the hero. Firstly, an aspect which is vital for the hero's self-image as well as for the reader's opinion is his background, i.e. his culture, society and parents. In this connection

---

[216] Further, more extensive information about and studies on the hero can be found for example in Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*; Margery Hourihan. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature.* London; New York: Routledge, 1997; Klaus Doderer (Ed.) *Neue Helden in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ergebnisse einer Tagung.* Weinheim; München: Juventa, 1986; Gerhard R. Kaiser (Ed.), *Der Unzeitgemäße Held in der Weltliteratur.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1998; Corinna Kehlenbeck. *Auf der Suche nach der Abenteuerlichen Heldin: Weibliche Identifikationsfiguren im Jugendalter.* Frankfurt; New York: Campus, 1996; Dean A. Miller. *The Epic Hero.* Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000; Otto Rank; Fitzroy Richard Somerset; Alan Dundes. *In Quest of the Hero. The Myth of the Birth of the Hero; The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama, Part II; The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

a conspicuous phenomenon has to be mentioned: A striking absence of authority on the part of the legal guardians of underage heroes, something that can already be seen for example in *Alice* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. From this results the necessary scope for both quest and development. Such a lack of stability has to be compensated, which is why instead of parents or family friends and helpers play an important role. Still, even the best friends are not family after all, and so the hero is confronted with a serious crisis. The feelings of loss and the accompanying insecurity are the prerequisite and decisive impulse for the hero's search for meaning and identity. On his way to maturity, he passes through a phase of transition and orientation, during which several tests and rites of passage eventually lead to a successful initiation. Once completed, the latter entails responsibilities, duties and a new position in society. Another aspect which must not be neglected is the gender of the hero(es) and their number. In current British fantasy novels for children the traditional – mostly male - hero is the main character, supported by his helpers. Current developments show a new trend: The hero is no longer mainly male, but frequently also female. Additionally, he or she is no longer solitary. The concept of the hero can also be split between several characters such as siblings or a pair of male and female, whenever one character alone would not be able to meet the expectations of the entire burden of responsibility and versatility. So instead of being concentrated on just one person, skills and weaknesses are spread among several characters, which again complement one another. This way, a couple or a small group of individual heroes become much more credible than just one superhero – as in Tolkien's fellowship of the Ring, for instance.

5.4.1   The traditional child hero

First of all, a hero can be defined as the main character in a literary work. In this quality, the term does not imply a specific feature but rather the function of that character within the work. However, traditionally the term "hero" is associated with more subjective matters, namely the personification of positive values and ideals embodied by a main character. In this study, the term "hero" comprises both of these aspects. Obviously the heroes are the main characters in a fantasy novel, yet they cannot be reduced to a mere function. Rather, they fill it with charisma and with emotions because they are – the exception proves the rule - sympathetic figures that carry the hopes not only of their community but also those of the readers, for whom they are a role model. One main aspect of the hero is their courage which distinguishes them from their fellow human beings and allows them to accomplish

tasks other people would shy or even fail at. Further qualities a traditional hero is associated with values such as altruism, discipline, physical strength and success.

The average age of the traditional child hero in British fantasy novels for children is that of a schoolchild, with Christopher Robin and Alice as their most famous representatives. Child heroes also function as the main character of a fantasy novel, but first of all they address the emotional level. Since the juvenile readers experience a comparable phase of search and orientation, the visible parallels to fantasy heroes can facilitate coping with their own situation. Being corroborated by the hero's fate, child readers can find support and eventually regain their stability.

What makes child heroes special is the fact that they are not yet adults. Therefore typical values of a grown-up fantasy hero such as discipline, experience of life or physical strength cannot possibly be transferred unaltered to child heroes. Discipline is something they are still in the process of learning, experience of life and being a child tend to be mutually exclusive and physical strength is not one of their assets, as a child's body has not yet fully developed.[217] Hence they are generally considered weak, which is why independent decisions are often taken away from them. For this reason traditional child heroes need to be separated from the influence, authority and protection of their parents or legal guardians so as to be able to experience adventures. Frequently it is for the first time that they have to fend for themselves and that they are confronted with an adventure. Without weapons, child heroes must rely on other means of defence. As Alice proves, wit, presence of mind, inventiveness, freedom from prejudice, sense of justice and honesty can get a child hero just as far in the end as its adult counterpart, without any bloodshed. As opposed to the physical qualities of an adult hero, a traditional child hero has to rely on mental talents.

The traditional child hero in British fantasy novels - a few girls excepted - is male. This nowadays very stereotypical phenomenon can be explained with the long and unchanged tradition of virile heroes such as Beowulf, Ulysses or Arthur. Their quests are male, too, since they consist of battles, fights with beasts, the rescue of maidens in distress and so on. In contrast to fairy tales, which appeal to both boys and girls, traditional fantasy adventures are tailored to the interests of boys rather than girls. Just like their adult role models, traditional

---

[217] A sword-wielding child hero is thus not the first association with the term. At best they are conceded a wand as in the current publications of *Harry Potter* or *The Children of the Red King*, or a wand-like object as in Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* series. However, traditional child heroes mostly have to make do without weapons.

child heroes have the urge to explore unknown territory, seek adventure and prove their worth by trials of strength in quest of acknowledgement.

Inferior in numbers to the male ones, girl heroes either act singly like Alice or are shown being part of a mixed group as in Nesbit's novels. The aim of Alice's quest is to find her way in a world full of crazy adults without becoming insane herself and eventually to return home safe and sound. In contrast to the marked character of Alice, the girls in Nesbit's novels are a part of a mixed group. They can only be distinguished by being more careful, i.e. less prepared to take risks than the boys, which might be due to their superficial characterisation. Furthermore, their quests are female, too. Instead of battles, fights with beasts, trials of strength or rescues of boys in distress, girl heroes pursue harmless, defused goals such as finding the way back in Alice's case.

5.4.2   Modern child heroes

Just as traditional child heroes, modern ones are central to the plot of current British fantasy novels for children. However, a shift of prioritisation can be observed away from the mere function of the hero as carrier of action towards a role model. The increasingly detailed and sophisticated and therefore much more understandable portrayal of the hero's inner conflicts achieve that he no longer simply furthers the action but also gives it depth. Thus heroes can become more interesting as individuals rather than mere questers. Today, traditional male child heroes, longing for strength and acknowledgement, still exist. Yet, seen as morals and values are changing, nowadays the priorities have shifted. On account of his less pronounced individuality as well as the lower rating of the aspect of psychological depth the traditional hero cannot meet the new priorities to the necessary extent. Therefore the traditional child hero can be found mainly in those current standard fantasy novels which either consider the overall story more important than sophisticated characterisation or those which do not address the issue of contemporary concerns and developments, thus wanting to keep their novels more universal and timeless. So the traditional child hero is not an overcome model as such. However, considering demanding topics like the latest global developments, a more complex, individual and sensitive characterisation of the child hero is required.

The priorities in his characterisation are shifting from external towards internal values in order to respond to the change of situation. As the early examples of Christopher Robin and Bilbo Baggins demonstrate, the modern child hero still focuses on everyday heroes who are not predestined. Here the traditional child hero already deviated from its mythical predecessors that were predestined by origin or birth. Traditional or modern concept,

everyone could be a potential hero. This way, they become more tangible, lifelike and authentic. In *Neue Helden der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* Doderer defines the image of the modern child hero quite aptly when he says that the heroes' weaknesses and desires are being focussed on, as well as their growing awareness of their environment.[218] This transition from macro- to microlevel, i.e. the individualisation, can be found in all aspects of the concept of modern child hero.

5.4.3   Their background

In British fantasy for children, the background of the traditional hero is determined by a stable family as well as the social fabric. As a rule, families are intact.[219] Due to the still strict and clearly defined morals and values separated or even divorced parents are a scandalous, hardly tolerable peripheral phenomenon of conservative Western European society. Within a functioning network of family and friends, traditional middle-class child heroes need to find room for their adventures, in which they tend to get involved in by accident. Alice falls into the hole when following the rabbit, Tom unintentionally into the chimney and then into the river and the children in Nesbit's novel dig up the Psammead whilst playing outside. As we will see in the following, those adventures only become possible when the children are not being observed by adults or have momentarily escaped their reach.

By contrast, the background of the modern child hero is not portrayed as stable. Current publications take into account the changing social structures from the traditional extended family to today's small families, single parents and patchwork families. In addition to the increasing number of critical or even dysfunctional family structures in reality as well as current British fantasy novels for children, a strong tendency towards isolation is discernible. One of the consequences of the rural exodus and the urbanisation is the anonymity of the city which supersedes the idyllic country atmosphere of Nesbit's novels, *The Wind in the Willows* or *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

The growing globalisation influences the hero's as well as the reader's cultural background. With the cohabitation of different cultures in a heterogeneous society and the opening of the Western Europeans towards other cultures multinationality has established

---

[218] Doderer, *Neue Helden in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 9.
[219] Even if the family is not portrayed as a whole and often members are temporarily absent, they are at least mentioned for the sake of completeness.

itself in a once homogenous society. So as to make allowances for this fact, current publications of British fantasy novels for children have begun to hesitatingly introduce either more multicultural characters or a secondary world in which this ethnic diversity is only natural and even an ideal state of affairs. Hesitatingly, since so far characters with an ethnic background are a minority – with only one or a maximum of two per novel - especially as heroes. A trailblazer in this direction is Le Guin's *Earthsea* quartet with the dark-skinned Ged as a main character. Current publications which follow up this innovative development are for instance McNish's *The Colours of Magic* trilogy, in which an African toddler turns out to be a very powerful magician, or Taylor's novels – above all *Shadowmancer* and *Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street* featuring the African angel Raphah. In the course of the *Harry Potter* series Rowling tentatively introduces the Asian girl Cho and the dark-skinned Angelina. Yet, not being portrayed in depth, both girls are more of a multicultural accessory rather than genuine characters. Even attempts at enlarging the Western European perspective by having visitors from France and East Europe in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* or occasional references to dragons in Romania do not manage to convincingly establish ethnic diversity or even create a multicultural atmosphere. As far as the realistic portrayal of a culturally mixed background of fantasy heroes for children is concerned much work is yet to be done. Possible reasons for this situation could be the lack of experience on the part of the authors – as well as the readers - caused by the late occupation with this topic.[220]

On the macrolevel, the heroes' background is strongly influenced by the culture they are exposed to but also by the society they grow up in. The social background is influenced by the dominant world view, given and accepted standards, values, traditions and the code of conduct. Within these parameters control is exercised so that too strong a deviation from the set rules is either not possible at all or restricted to a minimum. This way, the macrolevel sets the valid parameters for the microlevel: The hero's family background. It is within the immediate structures the hero is integrated into, i.e. their family and friends or peers, that they are acting. Seen as he is a product of his environment, this network socialises the hero and decisively moulds his character, attitudes and ideals. Nowadays heterogeneous or alternative family models no longer have any scarcity value and this development is reflected by current publications of fantasy literature. An increasing number of British fantasy novels for children expand on this issue by relating the absence of one or even both parents and the insecurity and

---

[220] This is where current approaches of neo- and postcolonial criticism set in.

lack of guidance resulting from it. Such an unusual amount of freedom can be used for development opportunities. Yet, with some heroes it leads to a state of blockade and fear, which need to be faced in the course of the quest. In their function, absent parents cannot be substituted fully, but an intact group of friends or peers of the same age can establish family-like structures and thus order for modern fantasy heroes, many of whom are affected by separation, divorce, new partnerships or even the loss of both parents.

In this connection, a very recent development is the preoccupation with former taboos. Psychological illnesses, for instance depression, are on the advance these days and do not spare the family of fantasy heroes, either. Artemis Fowl's and Will's mother suffer from depression and other mental impediments, thus at least temporarily losing control of their own situation and their child. The latter therefore has to face an unusual role reversal of the parent-child- relationship and now has to try and provide the missing structure, security and guidance that he needs himself. The responsibility that the parents have for the child has to be taken over by the child for the parent, at least for a while. Whereas no dramatic differences can be discerned regarding the social background, the cultural background of the modern fantasy hero is being extended by multiculturalism and globalisation. What is more, the modern child hero's family background distinguishes itself by an increased complexity and problematic, sometimes even vague relationships.

5.4.4   Absence of authority

Even though the traditional hero lives in an intact social and family environment, his parents or guardians need to be temporarily absent for him to have the necessary freedom for adventures. Since freedom means space, many fantastic adventures take place outside of the house, the symbol of enclosure and security. In order to engage with unknown situations, environments and beings, known territory has to be left behind. Where this is not physically possible, a fantastic encounter such as that of Alice or Diamond can be experienced within the framework of a dream. Its advantage is obvious: Reality, its conventions, norms and laws of nature are suspended or overruled, and other restrictions are more easily overcome. Another reason for the absence of adults and their authority is the fact that their rationality is often incompatible with imagination and play and would only hinder the children's creativity.

From the start, the modern hero in British fantasy novels for children enjoys substantially more freedom than the traditional one due to different family structures and the less strict education system. This circumstance renders dreams as a framework or background for fantastic adventures superfluous. With the increased amount of freedom, more possibilities

for fantastic encounters arise. The reasons for the absence of parents and their authority vary from holiday, work-related trips, divorce or separation to illness or even death. Whether real or temporary orphans,[221] the total absence of authority is only given if there is no guardian involved.

A large number of corpus novels are based on such an absence of parents and authority for various reasons. Whereas Artemis Fowl's father has been kidnapped, his mother suffers from depression and is thus incapable of looking after him. In view of this unusual freedom combined with Artemis' cleverness, the teenager is given a free hand for his decisions and activities. His bodyguard, aptly named Butler, is exactly that, not a guardian. Artemis is clearly the master. Brennan's hero Henry is troubled by the separation of his parents and his mother's new lesbian relationship and spends his spare time with the pensioner Fogarty, who acts as a mentor but cannot replace the parents. In Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* series, Arthur has been adopted. In addition, his mother has a stressful job as a doctor, thus often being absent. When a highly contagious epidemic disease breaks out, his family is affected and put under quarantine. This separation permits Arthur to be separated from his family and to enter the House without his parents coming to look for him. In *His Dark Materials*, Will's father has disappeared, and his mother is mentally incapable of looking after him. Rather, he has to look after her until he enters the secondary world, but not without making sure that his mum is being taken care of by someone else during his own absence. It is only shortly before his father's death that Will is reunited with him. Lyra, by contrast, is raised as an orphan, before her true origin is revealed to her. She learns that Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel, whom she knew all along in other functions, are in reality her parents. Eventually, the girl loses both again and then is truly orphaned. Molly Moon is an orphan, too, and can do away with guardians thanks to her gift of hypnotism. With his parents murdered by Voldemort, Harry Potter is also an orphan. While his last living relations, his aunt and uncle, keep their distance and shun him whenever possible, the Weasley family makes him feel welcome and part of their clan right from the beginning. All the same, the theme of the lost parents runs through the entire series, and Harry never overcomes his pain. This shows that even though parents are often absent, this is not always seen as a good thing and the children miss their love and care. Guardians or friends can only ease the situation but they cannot substitute the parents. In Hoffman's *Stravaganza*, we come across a rare case of

---

[221] One day, a temporary orphan's true origin is revealed and the parents are either newly found or recognised for what they really are if they have been present all this time, but in a different function.

role reversal. In the primary world, Lucien's parents are orphaned by their son's death from cancer, and in the secondary world, a Talian boy leaves his parents behind as well. Instead of dying, the two boys change between the two worlds, and live on in the respective other world. Lucien's parents are partially consoled by the arrival of a foster son – the boy from Talia.

As all the above examples demonstrate, the absence or loss of a child's parents – or, as in Lucien's case, the loss of a child – leaves a void which cannot be fully bridged or filled. Despite today's changing family structures towards less complex and looser bonds and a general openness in dealing with them, the traditional core family is still something which both parents and children long for. No matter how strained the daily routine might be, all those fantasy novels directly or indirectly mourn the traditional family concept.

5.4.5   The fellowship

Considering the trend towards an increasing absence of authority in current British fantasy novels for children, parents, *the* authority per se, fade even more into the background. At the same time, the gap they are leaving behind needs to be compensated for. As we have already seen, this only works to some extent as there is no true equivalent. People who come closest to family are guardians, friends, peers, companions and helpers. Whereas a guardian can be defined as a protector, defender or mentor, this term frequently implies the addendum "of a minor" or another person who cannot yet fend for himself. A friend is someone the child hero knows well, likes and is loyal to, independent of their age, origin, rank etc. By contrast, a peer distinguishes him- or herself by the fact that they are "equal in social standing, rank, age, etc.",[222] especially in peer groups of children of the same age. Whereas a companion can be defined as an associate or a comrade, a helper is emotionally distanced and not as intimate as a friend, since his actions or skills and not his character stand in the foreground.

Without the support of a fellowship, "a society of people sharing mutual interests, experiences, activities, etc.",[223] the child hero in fantasy would not succeed in his quest. His companions dispose of specific skills and qualities which they can place at the hero's disposal as the need arises. By distributing several extraordinary skills among several people, hero and helpers become more credible; especially so if the fantasy hero is still a child, who is

---

[222] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1144.
[223] Ibd., p. 563.

generally not considered capable of doing much.[224] Yet again it is Tolkien who provides the prime example for such a fellowship;[225] the famous Fellowship of the Ring. Instead of possessing all the necessary qualities himself, Frodo can rely on the support of his companions, their strength, their intelligence, their hope and their trust. Without them, both he and his quest would be lost. Also, a group or at least a pair of heroes permit the confrontation of good and bad traits outside of the body of just one hero. Frodo and Gollum or Ged and his shadow point out the unity of good and bad elements in everyone. As with Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, two persons can demonstrate the clashing polarisation more adequately than a single character.

Current British fantasy novels for children adapt the concept of the fellowship and mould it to their specific needs. Many of our corpus novels feature guardians, friends, peers, companions and helpers, without the help of whom the child hero would fail his or her quest. Just like Bilbo would never set out on his quest without his guardian and mentor Gandalf and the dwarves, Harry Potter would not be able to defeat Voldemort without the support of his guardians Dumbledore and Sirius Black, his peers Ron and Hermione and his numerous friends.

In our corpus novels we find a remarkable number of child heroes who appear in pairs, and who are still part of a fellowship. Here, specific skills are distributed on a duo, sometimes even a trio, which is then complemented by further skills provided by the fellowship-members. In Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, the heroes Lyra and Will are initially portrayed as two independent characters in their respective surroundings. Once they have found each other, they become a duo and can fall back on the talents of Lee Scoresby, the armoured bear, the Gyptians, the Gallivespians and the Lapland witches. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the various beings and their abilities are pieced together so as to form a heterogeneous, yet harmonious whole. In their very own way, each of them contributes precious characteristics that benefit the public interest, for example physical strength, intelligence, loyalty, a network of information, security and family structures. Like this, the motley fellowship, loosely connected via the main characters, become allies in Lyra's and Will's quest for the successful founding of the Republic of Heaven.

---

[224] For example a child superhero capable of rescuing the world single-handedly would appear irreconcilable with the picture of weakness associated with a child.

[225] This is not to say that Tolkien was the first author to invent a fellowship. Rather, he revived this ancient epic tradition and applied it to the post-Second-World-War fantasy genre. Therefore, Tolkien as well as C.S. Lewis for instance can be considered pioneers of a tradition of old in a new age.

Another fantasy novel which features a hero duo is Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire trilogy*. Being twins, Kestrel and Bo are connected via a special tie. As soul mates, the siblings are highly receptive to the feelings and thoughts of the other. Nevertheless they have different characteristics, skills and interests, allowing them to complement each other. In the course of the trilogy, a fellowship forms around the twins that encourages and strengthens them so that they can fulfil their quest.

Kerr's *The Children of the Lamp* is also a fantasy novel with twins as main characters. One day, Philippa and John are initiated into the secret of the existence of djinn and their own descent from them. From this moment onwards the child heroes are confronted with an entirely new culture, its heritage and conventions as well as special djinn powers that they now develop. On their quests, the twins are supported by their parents, their djinn uncle as well as other djinn, above all Mr Rakhshasas. Again, without the support of their companions and helpers, the heroes' quests would be doomed to failure.

Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy introduces two heroes which could not be more different. Bartimaeus and Nathaniel, a djinn and a human magician, cooperate only grudgingly on the basis of a love-hate relationship. Whereas djinn and magician appear to have nothing in common at first, the course of the trilogy reveals that they resemble each other more than they really want. Both try to vie with one another in the size of their ego and consider themselves God's gift to djinn- and mankind respectively. The two quarrellers are slowed down and counterweighted by the human girl Kitty, who complements the heroes forming a trio with them.[226] Her perspicacity, mellowness and rationalism oppose the frequently instinct-driven skirmishes of the two male characters. Even though the trio is supported by other djinn and magicians, no real fellowship is formed around the three individualists. Without any guardians, family or close friends, there are only a few helpers that cooperate just as reluctantly. Yet, in our corpus novels, such circumstances remain an exception.

By contrast, Foreman's *Keepers and Seekers* series focuses on the fate of the Stone Keeper, who would not stand any chance against the powerful Seekers without the continuous support of the fellowship. The latter turns out to be a very special one as it is composed of various generations of Stone Keepers, for example Dougie and his warriors and Peter's grandfather and his soldiers. Due to their respective experience and skills the fellowship can face almost any situation adequately and choose those Keepers who are the fittest for

---

[226] Another trio of main characters are Harry, Ron and Hermione in the *Harry Potter* novels. However, Harry is clearly the dominant hero, while Ron and Hermione have to accept less prestigious positions beside him.

protecting the stone. As the fellowship comprises mainly family members and close friends of the guardians, the bond is very strong. One peculiarity is the fact that even though young Peter himself is the Guardian of the Stone, he is still supervised and guarded by a mentor. Another peculiarity is the diachronic composition of the fellowship, which expresses its unique, original and creative features.

In current British fantasy novels for children the heroes are part of a fellowship of variable size that gives them mental and physical support. At the same time, its members rectify an otherwise implausible and unconvincing accumulation of special skills and abilities by distributing them over several characters. This technique ensures a more lifelike, down-to-earth portrait of the fantasy hero or the heroes.

5.4.6 The hero's crisis of identity, his transition and initiation

Something all modern fantasy heroes in children's literature[227] have in common is the fact that they are confronted with a severe crisis. If this crisis is not the direct cause of the quest, it arises at the latest after the hero's setting out on the quest. It is only through its successful conclusion – coinciding with the positive outcome of the quest and symbolised by it – that the hero can overcome the situation of crisis and transition in order to reach the ultimate goal of initiation and socialisation. As it turns out, the individual crisis and quest for meaning, identity and initiation are much more important, revealing, extensive and constructive than any external one possibly can. Triggered by external circumstances, exceptional and extreme individual situations arise. In most cases, the child hero has never before encountered difficulties of such an extent that he had to master on his own authority. However, with the help of such challenges he can develop and prove not only his worth but also his strength of character – thus literally growing to maturity with the task.

A hero's internal crisis concerns two areas. Firstly, it consists of a more general search for the meaning of life, during which existential questions and insecurities emerge. Secondly, the hero searches for his own place within the overall system. In various nuances this crisis of personal identity is common to all child heroes in fantasy, who are walking a tightrope from childhood over the transitional phase of puberty towards maturity. Especially puberty poses serious psychological as well as physical problems. In its quality as a phase of deep-rooted change, of breaking away from parental authority and previous behaviour patterns, puberty

---

[227] This observation is not limited to the selected representative corpus novels of this study but can be extended to the entire genre.

entails a far-reaching disorientation caused by the partial and abrupt abandoning of past habits without having yet found something new to replace them with. Without the authority and protection of parents or guardians, the fantasy hero experiences the phase of temporary instability that puberty is with all its so far unknown emotions, impressions and encounters that have to be digested first. The crisis of identity is closely connected with a pronounced feeling of loss and a yearning for fulfilment and completion. Sometimes it is even experienced as a trauma, as some kind of psychological mutilation and the ardent desire for healing.

In our corpus novels the main focus of attention lies on the hero's personal development, which is expressed by the internal quest: Crisis of identity, transition and maturation. During their transition from childhood to adulthood the heroes have to undergo trials, i.e. rites of passage, in order to be initiated, i.e. accepted and respected as a full member of society. Not only do they have to make sense of their environment but they also have to find and settle with their true selves after a period of pending, uncertainty, orientation, experiments and fears. Puberty as a time of upheaval is therefore the phase of development which most of the corpus novel authors choose for their heroes. It is during this period that future characteristics take shape, are strengthened and the way ahead is pointed. During this phase of transition young people are exposed to innumerable impressions, experiences and formative influences which they now no longer adopt passively, but reflect and judge actively.

Learning and education – something all child readers are confronted and familiar with – naturally rate highly in their life. Since their situation matches that of fantasy heroes who are either still at school, a comparable institution or in training, stories about education or apprenticeship are very popular, as for instance Harry Potter's school days at Hogwarts or the apprenticeship of spook in *The Wardstone Chronicles*. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that the majority of our corpus novels feature such heroes on the edge of or during puberty, the neither-child-not-yet-adult phase. Of course there are exceptions. Just like Alice or Tom the Chimneysweep are portrayed in a state of innocence before puberty, current British fantasy novels like *The Amazing Adventures of Raincoat Man*, *The Bogwater Witches*, *Jessica Haggerthwaite - Witch Dispatcher* or *Whispering to Witches* do not comply with the general trend to adolescent heroes.

Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is the prime example of a fantasy hero who develops from pre-pubescent boy unaware of a magical world to a grown-up wizard who, by defeating his arch-enemy Voldemort, saves the wizarding world. As the series is designed like a long-term study, its scope of seven volumes permits to portray the complex development of the hero clearly and in great detail. On the occasion of his eleventh birthday, the prepubescent

Harry is suddenly confronted with his true origin and heritage and introduced to the world of the wizards and witches. This discovery – in combination with the ensuing radical changes in his life – plunges the boy into a crisis of identity, from which he recovers only slowly. He has to find out who he truly is, and where his place is within the wizarding community. As long as the traumatic loss of both his parents paralyses him, this process of development from childhood to maturity is hindered. It is only when he realises that their loss has also been his gain that Harry comes to accept his life fully. Over the years, he grows older and wiser through making his own experiences. On account of the series' special feature of a long-term study, the young reader almost grows at the same speed as Harry. Far from being detrimental to grown-up readers, this feature still works for them, as they have already experienced this stage of development and can still remember the process of maturation. Educational and private tests are spread out over the school years and allow enough scope for improvements of ability.

One could therefore assume that the longer a series, the more complex the detail. Whereas this may apply to *Harry Potter*, the large amount of trilogies among the corpus novels demonstrate that a tripartite concept suffices for an in-depth study of a child character's crisis of identity, transition and maturation. For instance Nix' *Abhorsen* trilogy, Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire*, Stroud's *Bartimaeus* or Pullman's *His Dark Materials* portray their main characters' complex development condensed in three volumes without having to renounce important phases or incidents.

In *Northern Lights*, Pullman's Lyra starts out as an alleged orphan. In the care of Oxford's Jordan College, the tomboy appears to be treated more like a mascot rather than like a girl in want of education. At the beginning of the trilogy it is very difficult for any authority to get her under control. Carefree, wild and thoughtless, she lives from day to day. Mercurial as Lyra is, she cannot sit still and is always out for mischief. However, in the course of the trilogy the girl does not eventually succumb to a taming from the outside as one might suspect, but rather opens up herself from the inside and contributes actively to her socialisation. Through the experiences she makes on her travels across the worlds and the new impressions she gathers, the heroine undergoes a radical change of her personality with consequences for her attitude. The focus shifts from the microcosmos of Lyra's closeness with her soul-daemon Pantalaimon over her relationship with Will to the macrocosmos, the larger perspective of humankind. Having discovered that there are innumerable parallel worlds interdependent on each other, Lyra realises the enormous responsibility of the people in each world. At the end of the trilogy Lyra has come a long way from the self-centred girl

that she was at the beginning. Through the heroine's metamorphosis her understanding, reason and social competence have developed enormously and she has broadened her horizon. Having left the unconscious mastering of the alethiometer behind, the heroine has become conscious of her responsibility and potential. Furthermore, she now has a fixed mission, a new quest, namely to build the republic of heaven. In order to be able to do so she has come to the conclusion that "you must not put yourself first".[228] As the child she was at the beginning of the trilogy, she would not have been mature or prepared enough to do this. Now she is able to selflessly sacrifice her love for her vision.

The second hero Will, who makes his entry in the second volume of the epic trilogy, does not fully manage to catch up with the lead that Lyra has since the first volume as far as strength of character and sympathy are concerned. As her male counterpart, Will complements her development through a further point of view and a different potential. Like Lyra, he has not got any stable family background, but cares for his mother who is incapable of looking after him. Will's and Lyra's paths to maturation have fused for a mutual stretch in their biographies. During this time, they learn a lot from each other, give mutual support and grow together until they have to part again. Both succeed in overcoming their crisis of identity after a phase of transition and in finding not only their true selves, but also their individual place in society. An unmistakable sign for their maturity is the fact that Lyra and Will, despite having fallen in love with each other, consciously abandon the possibility of a joint future in one world. Instead, they deliberately decide on living apart, each in their own world, united by their joint quest. Whereas a future together would have been possible, Lyra and Will prove their courage and willpower by taking a very adult decision of self-denial for the benefit of the cause. No child would choose this path.

In *Keepers and Seekers*, one fine day the boy Peter is confronted with his heritage as a Stone Keeper. As with the long line of Keepers before him, his life is predestined for this task and does not leave him much choice. This knowledge and the dangers this new situation exposes him and his family to bring about a crisis of identity: Peter's old and new life clash. He feels uprooted and thrown in at the deep end – and it takes him some time before he can truly accept his legacy. Once he has taken this hurdle, numerous tests and hardships are required before he fully identifies himself with his quest. Peter's mentor Myroy always makes sure that Peter does not forsake his quest. Isolated, the hero finds that gaining responsibility

---

[228] Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass*, p. 548.

means that he has to come to terms with loss and the ensuing feelings of pain, sufferance and grief. In retrospect he learns that everything was part of a higher plan. The harsh methods were chosen to clear all possible distractions and to make him concentrate fully on his task. Yet it remains questionable whether such draconian measures are necessary in order to reach the goal.

Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy also deals with the subjects of crisis of identity, transition and maturation. Illustrated by the controversial hero Nathaniel, the process of growing up and development is traced. Taken away from his parents at a very early age, the boy is raised in the household of a wizard. This rupture troubles him deeply but he soon develops strategies to hide and sometimes even to suppress emotions. Having to fend for himself, Nathaniel becomes more independent than other children at his age. However, this costs him dearly. His cruel master deprives him of his freedom and childhood, traumatises the boy and punishes him harshly for the smallest mistake. Caused by this severe lack of love, affection, respect and understanding Nathaniel's personality changes towards bitterness and selfishness. As a result, he develops a strong hate which is expressed by Nathaniel's urge for revenge and his inability to forget and to forgive. Unable to define himself through social values and competence, the boy strives for recognition through ambition and outstanding achievements. Therefore the reader increasingly feels that the boy is heading the wrong way. It is only at the very end of the third novel that the boy, now visibly grown up, has overcome his crisis of identity and has left behind the phase of transition and orientation. However, Nathaniel's purgation is short-lived: As soon as he realises his mistakes, he dies. The final step to maturity, brought about by his own conscious decision, stands in a sharp contrast to Nathaniel's usual arrogance. Nevertheless, even on the brink of death the wizard cannot truly admit his feelings. Instead, he dies with a final sideswipe at Bartimaeus.[229] Due to his emotional frigidity making Nathaniel put tactics before emotions, his death does not have anything heroic.

With Nathaniel lacking a kindness, the reader's sympathy inevitably turns towards the cowardly but charismatic djinn Bartimaeus, who has everything that the boy lacks: A positive personality, cheerfulness, humour, impulsiveness, spontaneity, bonhomie, coolness and a loose tongue. In contrast to his cold and calculating master Nathaniel, he appears more human even though he is a djinn. What is more, he has so much genuine affection, respect and maybe

---

[229] Stroud, *Bartimaeus: Ptolemy's Gate*, pp. 514-515.

even love[230] for his former master Ptolemy that he frequently takes on the Egyptian boy's outer appearance. By contrast, Bartimaeus would not even dream of doing something similar for Nathaniel. However, even the djinn's behaviour alters in the course of the trilogy. Under the positive influence of the courageous, morally steadfast and convincing girl Kitty and the mostly negative impulses he gets from his master Nathaniel Bartimaeus becomes more mellow and serious.

As for Kitty, the third member of the hero trio in *Bartimaeus*, the girl distinguishes herself right from the start by her charisma, intrepid nature, courage, sense of justice and steadfastness. For this reason, she does not experience such a crisis of identity like Nathaniel. Rather, she is already in an advanced phase of transition as she is portrayed as the most mature of the three heroes. Against any prevailing clichés it is Kitty who is the most responsible and serious of the trio, not the two male members. A commoner and a girl at that, Kitty has to fight against many prejudices and discrimination in a world dominated by – mostly male - wizards. Her origin and her own problems help her understand Bartimaeus and the other demons that rebel against their masters and servitude. Her belief in justice and equality for all beings[231] cannot be shaken by setbacks. Rather, they strengthen her self-confidence even more. Intrigued by Bartimaeus' special relationship to Ptolemy and the trust the boy summoned up for the djinn by stepping through the eponymous gate and crossing over into the demons' world, Kitty forms her own vision. Impressed by Ptolemy's deed, the girl undertakes the transition through Ptolemy's Gate into the demon world on her own initiative. Kitty's initiation is successful, even if she has almost given her life for it. Aged visibly, she is now trapped in a marked body but has also gained enormous wisdom. By pursuing her vision and not shying from the consequences, Kitty demonstrates that she is already very mature at the outset. Her return makes her wise. In contrast to Nathaniel, the girl has a backbone and is capable of respect and trust. This is why she succeeds in establishing a relationship with the djinn and Nathaniel fails.

Delaney's *The Wardstone Chronicles* are set entirely in a secondary fantasy world which resembles closely a medieval England but for its magical beings. It is against this background that the twelve-year-old hero Thomas Ward is taken on as an apprentice by a spook, whose task is to bind evil spirits and witches. In order to take up his new position, young Tom has to leave his home and family behind and has to travel with the necromancer.

---

[230] Ibd., p. 214.
[231] Ibd., p. 217.

This rupture causes a crisis of identity for the young boy, who is no longer a real part of the farmer family Ward and still far from being a spook himself. Torn between family bonds and vocation, he has to decide for one or the other. In the ensuing phase of transition Tom needs to become aware of the path he wants to tread in his future life, find his true self, choose as well as accept his new situation and set his goals. He is emotionally supported by his mother and practically by the Spook. The latter passes on his knowledge and prepares Tom well for his future tasks. With his father dead, his mother returned to her home country and the Spook leading a hermit's life, the boy must concentrate on his education and personal development. Once the seventh son of a seventh son has mastered his tasks and successfully completed his apprenticeship, he has not only reached maturity but has been fully initiated into society. Then he can be released from his articles and become an independent spook.

Representative of the general trend of the genre, the fantasy heroes of our corpus novels go through a pronounced crisis of identity and a phase of transition from childhood to adulthood. Either the heroes have become fully independent by the end of the novel or series or at least they are well on their way. They all have to tackle far-reaching changes of their situation, both concerning their social contacts and their own personality. Without their quest, the heroes' development would have been either delayed or could have taken an entirely different path. Therefore the quest serves the function of a catalyst and impulse-giver for their successful individualisation and initiation into society.

During the phase of their development, the fantasy heroes are repeatedly challenged over time. At least one particularly demanding test has to be mastered by them, for example the defeat of an arch-enemy as in the *Harry Potter* heptalogy or *The Looking Glass Wars*, a conscious decision for a global, even transworldly vision and against individual desires as in *His Dark Materials* or the attainment of salvation by means of a fundamental change of heart in combination with amends for havoc wreaked as in *The Wish List*.

What all fantasy heroes of the corpus novels have in common is their visible individual development over the course of the novel(s). Varying from case to case, they all reach a higher developmental level than they had at the outset of the novel(s). This phenomenon can be attributed to the formative experiences of and influences on the heroes over the course of their crisis of identity, the phase of transition and their eventual initiation into society.

It can be observed that the majority of current British fantasy novels for children have a happy ending. Nevertheless, since many novels address momentous problems, injustices, violence, environmental pollution etc., the positive development of the heroes is frequently

dampened by a strong pensiveness, doubts, distress, oppressive feeling or a bitter aftertaste. A positive outcome for the hero does not necessarily make up for the complex of problems and the emotions caused by it. Given the tense, conflict-ridden situation of the real world, current fantasy literature cannot credibly portray an ideal world where evil is always defeated and good always triumphs.

5.4.7   Responsibilities, duties and conflicts

As we have seen, the fantasy hero's crisis of identity, the ensuing phase of transition and the subsequent initiation represent crucial events in their life. A lot of upheaval is caused by fundamental changes of the previous way of life, habits and attitudes. In most cases, the crisis of identity shatters the hero's world picture. It is during the phase of transition and until the moment of initiation that the respective hero has to piece it newly together in a different constellation adapted to his new needs and experiences. With the often abrupt end of childhood, its shelter, play and carefreeness are swept aside and the hero is suddenly confronted with a seemingly hostile environment bristling with confusing conventions, traditions, habits, new dangers, conflicts, responsibilities and duties.

The initial feeling of freedom quickly yields to an oppressive feeling, a deep sense of insecurity, forlornness and disorientation. In addition, for the first time the hero is confronted with the consequences of acting on his own authority. He has to fend for himself as well as answer for his deeds. From now on no one relieves him of this responsibility. What is more, new skills have to be acquired, tested and honed and the respective place in society has to be found. Conflicts provide occasions for trying out social competences, judging sources of danger, controlling emotions and learning crisis management. In this phase of deep-rooted change and transition, the heroes begin to discover and form their true self, values and aims. Even if the sudden assignment of responsibility and duties more often than not comes as a surprise for the characters involved and initially seems to be too much for them to handle, it helps them to form and strengthen their character as well as to find and defend their new position.

Not only have the conflicts to be solved, but also to be digested. What is more, the heroes' first reaction to their new role and quest is outright refusal. This pattern of behaviour runs right through the corpus novels. Just as Bilbo is very reluctant to set out on an unwanted adventure in *The Hobbit* and only does so when Gandalf and the dwarves use gentle force, current fantasy heroes refuse their new role and quest at first.

Harry Potter finds it hard to believe the news that not only his parents but also he himself is a wizard and is now to attend the boarding school of Hogwarts. On his first encounter with Hagrid on his eleventh birthday, Harry is confronted with a vast amount of so far unknown information about his origin, his parents and his identity as a wizard. He is most troubled by the fact that he seems to be the only one ignorant of his fame. In view of his special status the boy is tormented by self-doubt and tries to interpret it as a dream. Therefore his first reaction of denial is understandable.[232] As the chosen one, he is subject to predestination. In order to fulfil his quest of freeing the wizarding world of the evil Voldemort, Harry needs to accept his fate with all its implications, duties and responsibilities. The conflict with the murderer of his parents is inevitable. Each volume culminates in a dangerous encounter between the two adversaries. With every confrontation mastered Harry becomes more self-confident, sure of his aims and powerful, so that he eventually succeeds in his quest and saves the world from evil. Comparable to a messiah, Harry is confronted with the people's expectations, hopes and trust which are conferred upon him and should not be disappointed.

In *The Wardstone Chronicles*, Tom has also been predestined for his quest by his mother. The boy is part of his mother's prophecy, but the Spook is intent on not letting the boy assume he is someone special.[233] Even though Tom does not refuse his task of becoming a spook himself and keeping the Country's population from harm, he does not see any other sensible alternative for a profession. The boy's duties and responsibilities are clearly lined out for him by his mother and his master; the latter making sure that his apprentice identifies himself with them. On the one hand, external conflicts arise when Tom and his master face, fight and bind evil spirits and witches which threaten not only their own, but also other people's lives. On the other hand, unforeseen internal conflicts arise when the Spook falls in love with a lamia witch and his apprentice with the young witch Alice. Whereas their profession ought to forbid them any close contact with these beings, both Spook and his apprentice succumb to emotions instead of reason. Knowing that they are doing something forbidden torments their conscience and leaves them torn between duty, responsibility and desire.

In *Endymion Spring*, Blake and his sister are involuntarily drawn into the emotional and geographical separation of their parents. The conflict of the latter leads to grief and

---

[232] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 47.
[233] Delaney, *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Apprentice*, p. 59.

sufferance for the children as well as a strained relationship to their mother, with whom they move to Oxford. In the course of the novel this conflict recedes to the background, making way for new a new kind of conflict. Duties and responsibilities gradually transpire once Blake gets bitten by a strange book with apparently blank pages, entitled *Endymion Spring*. Strangely enough, the boy is chosen by the book, not the other way round[234] and thus drawn into the story. Intrigued and challenged by the riddle that suddenly appears on the pages, Blake sets his mind on solving it and the mystery of the book. However, *Endymion Spring* turns out to be more than just paper bound between two covers. Not only does it have a life and will of its own,[235] but it is also one of the most precious books in the world because it foretells the future and retells the past.[236] The more Blake inquires into the mystery of the book, the more he is drawn into the story himself and influenced by it. Over time, it becomes apparent that Blake, who lives in the present, and Endymion, who was apprenticed to the German printer Gutenberg in the Middle Ages, are connected by the book over the centuries. New conflicts arise when Blake becomes aware of the fact that he is not the only one fascinated by *Endymion Spring*. Chosen by the book as its rightful guardian,[237] Blake's duty and responsibility is to safeguard the tome from those evil people that attempt to abuse its powers and knowledge for their own purposes. Confronted with the quest set to him, Blake initially refuses to take on the responsibility he is given. He wonders why the book would choose him of all people, as he has not got anything heroic about him.[238] Nevertheless, the boy finally proves his worth by defending the book at the risk of his life, thus preventing its abuse by evil and power-hungry people. He has come to understand the importance of his guardianship and has accepted his duty and responsibilities. After having successfully defended the book, Blake is rewarded with the positive outcome of the initial conflict: His parents are back together and harmony is re-established.

In Hofmann's *Stravaganza: The City of Masks* young Lucien Mulholland suffers from a brain tumour in his own world, reality. A blank book with a nice cover, a magical talisman, permits Lucien to travel to the secondary world of Talia. There, he finds himself in Bellezza, a 16th century secondary world version of Venice. The boy takes to spending his days as a

---

[234] Matthew Skelton. *Endymion Spring*. London et al.: Puffin, 2006, p. 89.

[235] *Endymion Spring* consciously thinks and acts for itself, can crouch like a living being (Skelton, *Endymion Spring*, p. 329), guides and bites. (pp. 338, 388). The name refers to the eponymous character, Gutenberg's apprentice, to the magical tome itself and to the novel the reader holds in his hands.

[236] Skelton, *Endymion Spring*, p. 179.

[237] Ibd., p. 432.

[238] Ibd., p. 256.

cancer patient in present-day England and his nights as a "Stravagante", i.e. "a wanderer between worlds".[239] As long as he is travelling between the worlds, Lucien does not have a shadow in Talia, only in England. The phenomenon of not having a shadow is symbolic for his non-belonging. The more involved he becomes in the events of the secondary world of Talia, the less the boy can participate in his old life. It goes without saying that this situation entails a severe conflict of interests. His parents are unaware of the fact that their son spends most of his time in a secondary world and therefore only see his worsening health condition in their own world. Lucien himself is torn between the two worlds: His family and his newfound friends. Still, he knows that in his own world, his life will only be short, whereas in Talia he does not have any signs of an illness. So when his talisman is stolen from him during one of his stays in Talia and not returned in time, he falls into an irreversible coma in the primary world. When his parents and the doctors agree to switch off the life supports, Lucien dies in the primary world and from then onwards is trapped in the secondary world.

Whereas in his primary world the boy did not have any duties and responsibilities due to his poor health condition, the situation in Bellezza compensates for this. Once he gets involved into the events there, Lucien is pursued by evil, power-hungry people who desperately try to reveal the secret of the stravagante and to abuse it for their own interworldly travels. Even though it was by mere accident that he came across the talisman, he becomes a member of the stravagante brotherhood. Like the others, he is expected to guard the secret of travel between worlds and to protect the other members against enemies. Lucien may not reject his new role, yet, like Blake, he is bewildered why and how he of all people was chosen to become a stravagante.[240] Initially, the boy is at a loss when he is confronted with the unknown secondary world and innumerable new impressions. Yet, over time, Lucien begins to appreciate his life in the secondary world and sees it as a second chance he would not have had in his own world. In Talia he lives on, even if he has to pay a high price for it. Knowing he has died, Lucien treasures his second life much more.

In Crossley-Holland's historical fantasy, young Arthur is given a black obsidian, the Seeing Stone. In it, he witnesses the rise and fall of the legendary King Arthur. Over time, the boy discovers that King Arthur's and his own life have many striking parallels. Despite some differences the similarities predominate. In the light of the legendary Arthur's mistakes and decisions shown in the stone, the young Arthur can learn and reflect his own actions and

---

[239] Mary Hoffman. *Stravaganza. City of Masks*. London: Bloomsbury, 2002, p. 65.
[240] Ibd., p. 64.

situation. Great importance is attached to one's own conscience and its influence on and interaction with responsibilities, duties and conflicts. As a king-to-be, the legendary Arthur of the Seeing Stone is confronted with high expectations of his surroundings, especially Merlin. However, the young Arthur of the year 1199 has his own duties and responsibilities, even if on a smaller scale. One of them is to guard the precious Seeing Stone that Merlin has given to him.[241]

Whereas *Endymion Spring* links the two boys via a magical book, Crossley-Holland's two Arthurs, adult and child, are connected via the stone. Yet, no direct interaction is possible. Step by step, the legendary Arthur's story is revealed in video-clip-like episodes to the young boy, who – with increasing age – is confronted with similar situations. The stone reveals to him how King Arthur comes to decisions and what implications they have for his later life. Despite the fact that these provide guidance for the boy, young Arthur still has to go his own way and make his individual decisions, as the stone does not relieve him of any responsibility.

Young Arthur's crisis of identity and phase of transition are described in great detail. Crossley-Holland even finds his own term for the phenomenon of transition between childhood and adulthood: The crossing-place.[242] Deceptively simple as it may seem, this term suits the multi-layered implications very well. Not only does the boy grow up in the border area between England and Wales, but his and the legendary Arthur's lives are crossing in the stone, in actions and also across time. Furthermore, in the year 1199, the boy Arthur stands on the brink of a new century. The crossing from childhood to adulthood, expressed by Arthur's physical growth and intellectual development, is symbolised by his first name and the expectations it evokes. Where his namesake King Arthur left him a demanding legacy in that respect, the boy has the difficult task of having to grow into and fill out the name. As with other fantasy heroes, a quest symbolises his way to adulthood, during which he is expected to fulfil this duties and responsibilities. In Arthur's case, his quest consists firstly of a search for his true mother, secondly of his participation in the fourth crusade and its aim to recapture Jerusalem[243] and thirdly to establish his aims in life and to overcome his uprootedness and regain his lost sense of belonging. As long as he is at the crossing-place, Arthur cannot really belong anywhere. He needs to take conscious steps and to make decisions so that he gives his life a direction. A crossing-place is a junction, where the decision for one path and against

---

[241] Compare Kevin Crossley-Holland. *Arthur. The Seeing Stone.* London: Orion Children's Books, 2000, p. 54.
[242] Ibd., pp. 130, 162, 191, 269.
[243] Ibd., p. 223.

another shapes the entire life of someone. It is during numerous conflicts, both at home with his family and friends and abroad on the crusade with other knights and Saracens, that Arthur comes to find his own way and goals in life. Although the Seeing Stone has the advantage of providing guidance, it also blurs the identities of the two Arthurs. Therefore the boy needs to disentangle himself from his legendary namesake by readily choosing his own way at the crossing-place.[244] Representative of the other fantasy heroes torn between childhood and maturity, Arthur has to overcome his inner conflict of dichotomy. "I'm between my child-self and my man-self. My squire-self and my knight-self. Between Caldicot and Gortanore ... Between my life here and the world of the stone."[245] Once he has chosen his path, he accepts his duties and responsibilities. Symbolic of Arthur's completed maturation process, he has managed to fill his name with his very own meaning.

The Looking Glass Wars' main character Alyss is the daughter of the Queen of Hearts, and therefore predestined to become Queen of Wonderland herself one day. In order to do so, she has to mature and to train her imagination. Her education, but also her duties and responsibilities are thus geared towards her future position. Having fled into the primary world exile, Alyss directs her enemies towards finding the way back into Wonderland and to overthrow her evil aunt. During her involuntary stay in reality, Alyss has to adapt to the unimaginative environment and behave in an inconspicuous way. On her return to Wonderland Alyss is no longer seven but twenty years of age and expected to lead her loyal supporters in battle against Redd and her minions. Like the other heroes, the girl is tormented by self-doubt and initial rejection of her new and expected role.[246] It is only when she agrees to entering the Looking Glass Maze that she accepts her duties and responsibilities and actively contributes to the defeat of her aunt. Her willingness to sacrifice her own life for the benefit of her people is the formative experience that permits her to find her way back out. Having mastered the maze, symbolic of losing and finding your own way and identity in life, Alyss is ready for challenging Redd in a duel. Self-control and confidence contribute to her victory which is crowned with her ascendancy to the throne of Wonderland. Having learned her lesson of life and what it means to be responsible for the welfare of a people, Alyss now disposes of both experience and wisdom and can become Queen of Wonderland.

---

[244] Kevin Crossley-Holland. *Arthur. King of the Middle March*. London: Orion Children's Books, 2003, p. 300.
[245] Kevin Crossley-Holland. *Arthur. At the Crossing-Places*. London: Orion Children's Books, 2001, p. 191.
[246] Beddor, *The Looking Glass Wars*, p. 235.

With the quest, the respective fantasy hero takes up the challenge of maturation and coming of age. Above all, the transition from childhood to adulthood becomes especially apparent with the leaving of a relatively carefree period and the entering of a demanding, regulated and structured period. The assumption of duties, responsibilities and the rational dealing with conflicts indicate the fantasy hero's progress on his way to maturity. Usually, the hero's successful accomplishment of the quest symbolises his initiation and integration into society. On the one hand, he thus earns society's respect and equanimity; on the other hand, his crisis of identity, the phase of transition and the often pronounced feeling of loss and insecurity are replaced by a newly gained strength, confidence and pride in the achievements. What is more, the hero has filled his life with a new meaning and obtained the feeling of having arrived at his destination. Thus, having to fend for oneself, taking on responsibility and – ideally – living up to expectations proves to be very beneficial to external character-moulding and internal personality development.

5.4.8   Gender

Gender is an interesting feature of the contemporary hero. Whereas the traditional fantasy hero used to be mainly male, this imbalance has since shifted in favour of a more balanced distribution, so that in current British fantasy novels for children there are various possibilities for the hero-constellation. In the course of emancipation, female heroes were admitted into the ranks of potential heroes and considered fit to set out on quests as well. Seen as girls are physically weaker than boys, the traditional, external, male and often dangerous quests with swords and beasts are out of the question. Rather, the female quest's main focus lies on an internal, intellectual and physically less demanding content. At first, instead of being the sole heroine of a novel, girls were admitted into a group of male fantasy heroes. Such mixed groups – typical of Blyton's adventure stories of the Famous Five – also feature in Nesbit's *Five Children and It* or Garner's *Owl Service*. Other authors, for example Pearce in *Tom's Midnight Garden*, prefer a balanced hero duo of both girl and boy.

Current British fantasy novels for children cannot be accused of discrimination against one or the other gender. Even though there are still a number of fantasy novels with exclusively male heroes, more and more often the hero is complemented with a female counterpart. Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle does not only introduce a female main character but also pairs the male hero off with the female dragon Saphira. Nix' *Abhorsen* trilogy connects Sabríel with Touchstone and Lirael with Mogget, thus ensuring that the gender of the duos is balanced. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy sets out as a fantasy epic with the heroine

Lyra, before the second volume introduces her male counterpart Will. However, Lyra is inseparably linked to her male soul daemon Pantalaimon, who again ensures the balance of the duo girl-daemon.

Pairs of siblings, particularly twins, represent a special case of this counterbalance of gender. Kestrel and Bo, the twins of *The Wind on Fire* trilogy, and Philippa and John, the twins from *The Children of the Lamp*, are good examples of the close connection of both sexes. In their quality as twins, these heroes and heroines are immune against falling in love with each other. At the same time, they share a strong bond that frequently works without words. Despite the fact that their personalities differ, their familiarity often causes them to be regarded as an entity.

Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy introduces the reluctant twosome of the wizard Nathaniel and the djinn Bartimaeus. Their volatile relation is slightly defused by the fact that Bartimaeus, even though he is presented as male, is a djinn and not a human. Consequently, like an arbitrator, he stands in the middle between Nathaniel and the heroine Kitty.

Whereas traditionally male heroes appeal to male readers and heroines to females, their balance in a duo or at least mixed in a trio as in *Harry Potter* appeals to readers of both sexes. By combining the gender of the heroes, the respective novel can cover the various interests and thus double or at least enlarge the readership.[247]

It is true that for the most part heroines are not engaged in any direct, physical battle with enemies. Rather, like Hermione, they investigate, do intellectual work and contribute their knowledge, whereas Harry as the male hero directly faces the basilisk.[248] Another example is the Abhorsen, who may have to bind the dead and their spirits, yet does so with the help of bells and Charter magic. This does not necessarily require physical strength but rather the intellectually demanding task of selecting the appropriate tools. Thus the gender-related distribution of theoretical and hands-on approaches manifests itself in the equipment of the heroes. In *His Dark Materials* for example, Lyra is the only person able to read the alethiometer with her natural intuition. By contrast, Will becomes the bearer of the Subtle Knife. Mutilated by the sharp blade, the hero is physically marked and fully aware of its

---

[247] This phenomenon also holds true for the name of the author. Since boys are said to prefer novels by male authors and girls by female ones, writers who simply put their initials on the cover attempt to reach a larger readership. Joanne Rowling therefore published the first *Harry Potter* novel as J.K. Rowling, thus trying to appealing to more readers.

[248] Every now and again, fantasy heroines are engaging in direct battle, but then their adversaries tend to be female, too. In *Doomspell*, the heroine fights an evil girl and the witches.

dangerousness. While Lyra's alethiometer is an indirect, theoretical and intellectual device which requires interpretation, Will's knife is a direct, practically oriented tool for immediate action. Both devices are as important and demanding as each other – each in their own way.

An interesting subject for further investigation which cannot be undertaken within the scope of the present study is a comparative analysis of the gender in respect of author and hero. How often does the gender of the hero comply with or differ from that of the author? What does the result reveal about the current social roles of girls and boys, men and women?[249]

5.4.9   The contemporary hero: A stocktaking

As we have seen, the hero or the heroine of current British fantasy novels for children is influenced by many different factors, notably background, absence of authority, fellowship and gender. All those contribute substantially to the personal development of the hero. A crisis of identity, which marks the end of childhood, is followed by a period of transition before maturity and initiation can be reached. Whilst growing up, the hero is acquainted with the duties and responsibilities he has as a full adult member of society. At the same time, he has to learn adult conflict-solving. All these aspects are contained within the quest, whose main task is to prepare and to qualify the hero for his new social position. With its external and internal elements, the obligatory quest symbolises the hero's journey from childhood to maturity. Another function of the quest is the definition and the outlining of the hero's goals in life.

Although the gender of current fantasy heroes can still be influenced by stereotypes of old and thus have an effect on the kind and the prioritisation of the quest, the British fantasy novel for children increasingly strives for more neutral and balanced, less prejudiced characters, either by a relative strengthening of heroines and a relative weakening of the hero,[250] or by the balancing combination of hero and heroine in a duo. As the stereotypical roles of weak females and strong males are phasing out, other qualities are given special emphasis. In view of the changing demands a globalised primary or secondary world makes,

---

[249] An interesting approach to a further study into the relationship of the gender of the author and that of the heroes would be to include the influence of the gender of the author's own sex on the concept and the sex of the fantasy heroes.

[250] This is not to say that in current fantasy novels girls are generally presented as more boyish and boys as more girlish. Rather, any extreme differences in the portrayal of the heroes are moderated in favour of a harmonious general effect.

the heroes' skills have to adapt to the new circumstances. In a primary world which is linked with a global communications network and dominated by mass media, fantasy heroes for instance need to hone their communication skills so as to be able to use the latest technology. Current fantasy novels for children which deal with this phenomenon are for example *Hellbent* and *Artemis Fowl*. Whereas in *Hellbent*, Hell is fully technicised and equipped with all modern communications devices, Colfer's Artemis Fowl and the fairies are engaged in an arms race during which they vie with one another in technical refinement. At the same time as these new technologies make their arrival in fantasy novels, an infrastructural linking-up takes place. Trans- or even inter-worldly ties immensely enlarge the room for manoeuvre by allowing for contact between beings which would otherwise be separated by space and/ or time.

With evil taking up so far unknown dimensions, the hero has to react in an appropriate way. Although the spreading of evil and the dimensions of one or several worlds may become less clear, the hero can rely either on modern means of communication and transport or their magical equivalents. This way, he is on par with the villain. During his conflict with one or several representatives of evil, the hero may fight for his personal victory but also for the public welfare which is endangered by the global threat. In doing so, the hero simultaneously defends global values, morals, norms and traditions.

The hero of current British fantasy novels for children stands for values which distinguish themselves by their universality and timelessness. Besides friendship and/ or love, honesty and courage in the face of danger, a pronounced sense of justice prevails in combination with a strong desire for harmony and peace. The message conveyed is that it does not take any extraordinary skills or predestination in order to become a hero. Saving the world, a topic of current interest, is not the exclusive right or duty of a chosen elite but is open to "everychild", so to speak. More often than not initially inconspicuous children get involved in a quest and the role of the hero without intending it and, as we have seen, actively reject the sudden demands, duties, responsibilities and conflicts at least for a while. Once they accept their special situation, those fantasy heroes can grow with their tasks and quest, without which they would most probably have remained insignificant. As Nester observes, such heroes develop from young, naïve, inexperienced and dependent children to responsible, sensible and

mature members of society.[251] As a rule, the respective hero or heroes grow with their tasks. Some develop more than others, yet none remains unchanged.

As far as the conveyance of educational goals is concerned, current British fantasy novels for children are didactic. Even though exemplary behaviour – courage, virtue, selflessness, reliability and esprit de corps - on the part of the hero is highly estimated and also shown, it is not presented as the ultimate truth. Today heroes and villains are portrayed as complex characters moving between many shades of grey. For this reason, a rigid categorisation is neither practicable nor wise. Instead of holding the hero up as a paragon, importance is attached to showing him with all his strong and weak points alike, rendering him more plausible. With the hero not being entirely free from negative traits, the still prevailing adjustment towards good rather than evil is ensured by other methods. These comprise for instance happy endings, or at least the prospects of hope and the improvement of intolerable situations at the end of a novel or a series.

In the children's classics as in the current fantasy publications, great hopes are placed in the hero and his quest. As expected, the respective hero is under pressure to succeed so as not to disappoint these hopes of trust, security, harmony, peace and the restitution of order. If he failed, the inevitable consequence would be a world marked or even controlled by evil that would shatter all this ardent desire. Consequently, current British fantasy novels for children either establish or at least attempt to hold out the prospect of a world as intact as can be that permits individual opportunities for development for everyone and which is not threatened by social, political, ecological or other destruction.

[251] Holle Nester. *Shadows of the Past: Darstellung und Funktion der geschichtlichen Sekundärwelten in J.R.R. Tolkiens The Lord of the Rings, Ursula K. Le Guins Earthsea-Tetralogy und Patricia Mc Killips Riddle-Master-Trilogy.* Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1993.

6.　Formal innovations

Subsequent to the analysis of modern content structures, we will devote our attention to formal innovations in modern British fantasy for children. For this purpose, expressive aspects have been selected which illustrate the development of formal innovations through time. Each of these aspects will be examined in respect of its development from the past until today as well as its relative importance for current fantasy literature for children. In the following, we will investigate the following current issues and their equivalents in the past: The canon, the phenomenon "*allalderslitteratur*", the blurring borders of the readership and target groups, single versus dual address, crossover literature and "infantilisation". It is in these areas that far-reaching changes can be observed that influence and decisively set the tone of the genre's present landscape.

6.1　Canon

Canon and children's literature – one may ask whether this combination is not mutually exclusive. Indeed, in connection with children's literature, the term "canon" may strike people as strange or even as inappropriate at first, as it is normally used exclusively in connection with literature for adults. A canon, which can be defined as

> 2. (often pl) a general rule or standard, as of judgment, morals, etc. 3. (often pl) a principle or accepted criterion applied in a branch of learning or art. 6. a list of writings, esp. sacred writings, officially recognised as genuine. [...] from Greek *kanōn* rule, rod for measuring, standard [...][1]

unites selected works of a high literary quality and thus serves as a seal of quality. Having been established, tried and tested over time, a canon is very stable as it sets a standard. Any changes, i.e. additions to or subtractions from it are not decided on spontaneously but are subject to a long selection procedure before they are accepted.

The possibility that children's literature can dispose of high literary quality as well has long been and frequently still is denied. Considered as learner's literature and designed for didactic and educational purposes, children's literature was – and is – seen as functional. For this reason, it has been – and often still is - denied the status of a poetic work of art.[2]

Although in the field there is much dispute going on whether there can be, is or should be a canon of children's literature at all, from the start children's literature has been regulated

---

[1] *Collins Dictionary*, p. 235.
[2] Compare Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*, pp. 4-5.

and controlled – a fact which contradicts the impossibility or non-existence of a canon. Ironic as it may seem, it is adults who decide what is written, published and sold as a book for children, and often they also buy the books for the children, too.[3] As long as children's literature has been in existence, many have tried to establish a certain general framework of standards for the genre. This framework creates a selected and fixed horizon of expectations and demands, thus setting the parameters within which acknowledged - since considered good and practical – literature for children can range. Whether this is officially referred to as a canon or simply considered as guidelines, its effect remains the same. Such a regulated canon or framework that defines what can be counted as children's literature and what cannot helps adults as custodians of good taste and decency to set standards. Yet once a novel has established itself within an official framework it attains quite a stable position as it requires not only considerable effort, but also changes over time in areas such as politics, religion, society, morals and taste in order to change the parameters – and with it the elements - of a canon.

6.1.1   Is there a canon in this genre? - The classics

Kümmerling-Meibauer writes chiefly about and with German children's literature in mind. Yet, her findings and theories concerning the association and interplay of children's literature and canon can be for the most part applied to British literature, too. Above all, this concerns her thoughts about the notion of "canon" and its existence and form. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer, stimulated by the impulses of deconstructivist approaches, established literary canons for adults all over the world are on trial. Whereas their contents, parameters, values and legitimacy are being scrutinised,[4] in the field of children's literature it is still being vehemently discussed whether there already is or whether there should be a canon for children's literature.

If one wants to establish whether there is such a thing as a canon of children's literature, then surely the most obvious thing to do is to take a look at the classics. Within the scope of this study, we will not consider children's literature in general but restrict the investigation to British fantasy literature for children. Here, if there was a doubt concerning the existence of a canon, the classics would be the prime candidates for admission, since they

---

[3] Kullmann labels this phenomenon the asymmetry of literary communication in children's literature. Kullmann, *Englische Kinder- und* Jugendliteratur, p. 15.

[4] Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*, p. xxv.

are firmly established in the literary landscape, are widely read and popular and convey social and moral values.

Classic fantasy novels like *Gulliver's Travels*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Peter Pan*, *Winnie-the-Pooh, The Hobbit* etc. share the characteristics of conveying values and morals whilst offering children fascinating, fantastic adventures. What makes them a classic is the fact that they radiate timelessness, thus appealing equally to children of many generations without forfeiting their attraction. Since the basic needs of children remain the same over many years, the stability of these fantasy novels is experienced as being reassuring and comforting. Not only have the children accepted these novels as children's literature but also the adults who mainly buy them. The criteria of stability and universality argue in favour of the classics' affiliation to a potential canon, just as the fact that with such a large readership over many generations the classics have become an inventory or standard. Consequently, if there is a canon of children's fantasy, then the classics - in their quality of models even for current publications – are definitely part of it.

As far as current British fantasy novels and their integration into a canon are concerned, it remains to be seen which works will prevail over the years. In this connection, Kümmerling-Meibauer states that children who do not yet have access to the adult canon still require and are entitled to high quality literature. Since this is exactly what a canon attempts to establish, they are entitled to their own canon of children's literature and literary socialisation.[5] However, according to Kümmerling-Meibauer there is still some disagreement in the field as to whether or not there actually is a canon of children's literature and if so, what it should comprise.[6]

As stable and reassuring an established canon may be, representing a selection of works which are considered a collection of high quality literature, it also has an immanent disadvantage. Considered a bastion of good taste, any changes in the form of removals or additions of works take place with a temporal delay. With a canon being the last thing to change, current developments of a genre and society are not mirrored in real time. Therefore topical publications can influence the future development of a canon but will only be reflected out of sync with their temporal and social context.

For now, the question is whether there can be or there actually is such a thing as a canon of British children's fantasy classics. In an overall context, fantasy is part of children's

---

[5] Ibd., p. xxv.
[6] Ibd., p. 3. The question of canon is a current issue in children's literature criticism.

literature in general. Yet, the fantasy classics form a complex group which clearly distinguishes itself in style and content from other literature for children like picture books, fairy tales, detective stories, historical novels etc. With the fantasy classics transmitted over time and grouped together in a more or less standardised "list" of novels most children read, it would appear that a canon of British fantasy classics does indeed exist. Although the experts in the field may be in disagreement on the issue, everything seems to indicate that at least the fantasy classics form a canon. In the following we will inquire into the issue of the existence of a contemporary canon of British fantasy literature for children, its possible form, content and parameters as well as its implications for the development of the genre.

6.1.2   Towards a (new) canon in British children's fantasy

Whereas the affiliation of the classics of British fantasy literature for children to a canon – be it either a general canon of children's literature or even a more specific one of the fantasy genre – should not give rise to much dispute or opposition, the situation of current publications of fantasy novels turns out to be more difficult. Among experts and researchers in the field the current situation is contested. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer, whose study provides a clear and detailed overview and stocktaking of the ongoing debate, the key questions concern the generally desired establishment of an internationally sanctioned canon of children's classics as well as a consensus of opinion with regard to canons on a national level.[7] The assumption is that, at least on an international level, the wealth and variety of children's literature would become clearer and more structured by the introduction of standards. Here, a canon is clearly understood as a literary seal of quality.

As long as on both national and international levels binding canons have not yet been fully established and accepted, temporary, makeshift ones are being set up by magazines, literature awards, publishers etc. in order to compensate for the lack of standardisation. Kümmerling-Meibauer labels this phenomenon as the process of "secret canonisation."[8] This reveals that there is a demand for a canon which offers certainty, reliability, stability and obligation in a world which becomes increasingly uncertain and non-committal through its crumbling norms, standards and values. Against this background one can understand the demand for regulations, order and guidance. Yet focussing on censorship,[9] i.e. the sifting out

---

[7] Ibd., p. 3.
[8] Ibd.
[9] Ibd., p. 29.

of non-elitist works, ought not be the motive. Rather, a topical canon should include those works which are frequently and willingly read and inquire into the reasons for their popularity. These are for instance the spirit of the time, the topic, the main conflicts or the characterisation of the heroes. Almond's *Skellig* or Crossly-Holland's *Arthur* are prime examples for profound works that despite the shortness and simplicity of their sentences are convincing on account of their concise wording and contents.

While there is still disagreement concerning the existence, form and content of a general international canon of children's literature, a national canon of British literature for children is less comprehensive, and fantasy as its subgenre again reduces its extent. Nevertheless, the fact that current British fantasy for children has moved into the limelight not only of national but also of international literature because of the worldwide export of popular novels like *Harry Potter* or *His Dark Materials* makes it an interesting subject of substance.

In the following, we will limit the examination of the current status of canon to the subject of the study, British fantasy novels for children, and leave the definition and classification of national and international canons to further studies that deal with children's literature in general and not specifically with fantasy. As Kümmerling-Meibauer has argued there still remains a need for clarification, definition and order, especially seen as there remain many sceptics in the face of a canon for children's literature.[10]

Contested as the subject of an established and binding canon in general children's literature may be, the fantasy classics represent a sound basis for the existence and the investigation of a specific contemporary canon of British fantasy novels for children. Just as the classics of the genre form a stable assembly of characteristics, norms, values and messages to be conveyed, current British fantasy novels for children can be classed according to those parameters. Yet, historical events and their influences divide the classics from current publications, as they have changed society, its attitudes, priorities and views. The two World Wars and their traumatising aftermath required several decades of literary digestion. Only slowly did the gloomy tenor prevailing in the after-war and Cold War-period clear up, before threats of a different nature made their arrival. The atomic catastrophe of Chernobyl showed mankind how sensitive the planet's equilibrium is and that it is man's own responsibility to preserve it. Since then the latest the environmentalist movement has been gaining increasing

---

[10] Ibd., p. 4.

influence on fantasy literature for children.[11] Deep-rooted changes in the political structure of Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990's, but above all the 11th of September 2001 with all its implications have an immediate impact on contemporary fantasy literature. On the basis of the classics an updated canon of British children's fantasy should take this undulating development of tenor into consideration, which moves from hopeful (the classics) to sinister (Second World War and aftermath) to more positive (1970's-1980's) again, before the 1990's and 2000's swing back towards gloominess.

A current canon of British children's fantasy should not merely focus on adult quality assurance, but also take into account what today's children find interesting. Once the concept of canon has been agreed upon and it has been stabilised, the specific novels that should be included into this canon have to be discussed and decided upon. So far one can only outline the general requirements that such works should fulfil. A rejuvenated canon of British children's fantasy does not have to abandon its classics.[12] On the contrary, it should be proud of them and take them as a basis for the incorporation of further works, above all potential new classics, into its spectrum. Such candidates are for example *Harry Potter*, an instant classic, which already today has cult status,[13] but also *His Dark Materials*, *Artemis Fowl*, Taylor's novels or the *Abhorsen* trilogy. Novels to be included into a new, rejuvenated canon of British fantasy for children should at least meet the criteria of individuality, thematic, philosophical and character depth, of expressiveness, special features, presentation as well as solving of topical problems, whilst being innovative by exploring new paths. Therefore, in order to do justice to these requirements, the concept of a topical canon should be formulated as openly as possible so as to cover a very wide spectrum, since only the latter can appropriately reflect the current developments.

---

[11] Again it is Tolkien who can be considered a trailblazer for the environmentalist philosophy in fantasy literature.

[12] Kümmerling-Meibauer points out that even in view of the (German) classics there are still disagreements and uncertainty as far as terminology and the coverage of the corpus are concerned. Cf. Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*, p. 6. Yet, for British children's literature, the situation is more straightforward, with the status of the classics being more or less undisputed.

[13] Anelli emphasises Harry Potter's iconography. According to her, the phenomenon of "Harry Potterdom" was unprecedented. The "global salivating" and hysteria, midnight launch parties after countdowns on set publication days, online communities' fan fiction, wizard rock music inspired by the series (for instance *Harry and the Potters*) and the so-called *spoilers*, prematurely published pieces of information, reveal new dimensions fantasy for children can take. Melissa Anelli. *Harry, A History*. New York: Pocket Books, 2008, pp. xi, 10, 66, 68, 159, 115-116, 212, 290. Harry's global presence as a brand is also discussed by Stacy Gillis. "The Brand, the Intertext and the Reader: Reading Desires in the *Harry Potter* Series". In: Julia Briggs; Dennis Butts; M.O. Grenby (Eds.) *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 301-315.

With the current trends of cross-writing and *allalderslitteratur* – genre-border-crossing literature for readers of all ages – signs are emerging that in the foreseeable future canons for children and canons for adults approach each other. What may still sound like speculation today might one day even lead back to the initial starting position of a merging of literature for children and for adults. So whilst at the moment the canons can and should be considered separately, in the future this may change.

So far, the increasing insecurity and the blurring of borders require reassuring liabilities and stability – which can be provided by one or several binding canons. What can be observed though is a tendency to increase the permeability of existing canons by means of a swifter verification of the terms of admission and thus faster canonisation than in the past. It remains to be seen whether this new pace of children's fantasy can be perpetuated in the future and even become the new standard.

6.2 Allalderslitteratur

In the previous chapter, we have looked at the changing conditions for an updated canon of British children fantasy literature, its interaction with external influences and the consequences this entails for its content. Another important factor for the current and the future development of the canon is the recent phenomenon of *allalderslitteratur*. A specific canon for children and a canon for adults do not just differ in their respective contents, topics, literary preferences and priorities but also in their target group. The term *allalderslitteratur* takes up the new development of the crossing, loosening or even dissolving of borders, in particular that of the increasing fuzziness or even merging of target groups.[14]

Kümmerling-Meibauer defines *allalderslitteratur* as a crossing of age borders between literature for children and literature for adults, which results in the fact that works cannot be easily categorised any more as one or the other, since they comprise both at the same time. The term is either Norwegian (*allalderslitteratur*) or Swedish (*allålderslitteratur*) and means that those works that can be classed as *allalderslitteratur* address all age groups, not just one

---

[14] Kümmerling-Meibauer traces the term allalderslitteratur back to U.C. Knoepflmacher; Mitzi Myers. "From the Editors: 'Cross-Writing' and the Reconceptualising of Children's Literature Studies". In: <u>Children's Literature</u> 25 (1997): *Special Issue on Cross-Writing Child and Adult*, vii-xvii. See also Deborah Cogan Thacker; Jean Webb. *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 9.

specific one. Kümmerling-Meibauer mentions Jostein Gaarder and Peter Pohl as typical representatives of this approach.[15]

In *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Cogan Thacker and Webb also address this phenomenon. They point out that "the attraction of children's fiction for an adult audience can be seen as part of the postmodern condition."[16] This means that adults are starting to become genuinely interested in children's literature, not just as mediators but as readers in their own right. This reorientation is more and more frequently taken up and implemented by the authors of the genre. In contrast to past practices nowadays authors tend to refrain from a certain pinch of arrogance by no longer trying to address adult readers without the child noticing[17] and at its expense. As a popular example Cogan Thacker and Webb cite another example of *allalderslitteratur*. The ever-present *Harry Potter* series, which appeals to adults and children, is typical of this new phenomenon. Despite the fact that the series is artificially separated into a children's and an adult edition by the publishers, classed by the authors as "a cynical marketing ploy",[18] the popularity of *Harry Potter* with an adult audience is unfailing. This mutual crossing of borders implies that adults and children explore and test the permeability of their literature in both form and content. Such a reorientation on both sides fuels the debate of the definition of children's and adult literature and could even suggest their possible merging at some point in the future. Alongside with the literary definition arises the query into the change of the understanding of the concept of both childhood and child on the one hand and that of adulthood and adults on the other.

Mortimer also openly opposes any artificial age limits for literature. Supporting the concept of *allalderslitteratur*, she vehemently contradicts the forcing of the reader into a rigid pattern and points out that the construct of average children does not exist.[19] Consequently, if there is no average child, then there cannot be any average adult, either. Thus questioning the validity of age groups for readers and their arbitrary arrangement and polarisation, Mortimer

---

[15] Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*, p. 249. Complex novels as rich in content and depth and intertextual as *Sophie's World* or *His Dark Materials* have a wide appeal to all age groups.

[16] Cogan Thacker; Webb, *Introducing Children's Literature*, p. 147.

[17] Ibd., p. 146.

[18] Ibd., p. 147.

[19] Penelope Mortimer. "Thoughts Concerning Children's Books". In: Egoff; Stubbs; Ashley (Eds.) *Only Connect*, pp. 97-101, p. 98. See also Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, 1984.

infers that good books must appeal to a universal audience, not one specific group.[20] According to her, this inherent universality ensures that readers of all ages read and reread children's literature. In reaction to the permeability of children's literature, literature for adults should be just as permeable, i.e. be read and reread by children, too. However, this represents the weak point of Mortimer's thesis, as topics for adults are not always to the taste of children or written in a style that children enjoy. Also, adults can think back to their childhood, their preferences and interests at the time, whereas children cannot possibly think and feel the same yet as the mature adults that they will be one day.

By saying that as an adult, a reader can invest more into a story and therefore profit more from it,[21] C.S. Lewis at the same time implies that children lack this ability. Then again he defends the basic concept of *allalderslitteratur* by claiming that no reader should obey to arbitrary, set age groups.[22]

In *Reflections of Change*, Griswold observes and comments on the current development of the blurring of the notion of childhood and a simultaneous interest of adults in books for children.[23] The author discovers that for adults there is a trend away from mere purchaser and reader to children towards deliberately acquiring books for children for personal use.[24] According to Griswold, a simultaneous countermovement can be detected. Not only do adults take an increased interest in literature for children but also the children themselves appear more mature.[25] Whereas children thus emancipate themselves, adults make concessions towards children as far as tolerance, openness and involvement are concerned. Openly admitting their interest in fantasy is new to many an adult. It reveals that a reinterpretation and revaluation of the child-reader/ adult reader relationship is currently taking place. Griswold labels this phenomenon not as texts written for "children of all ages" but for "adults of all ages".[26] This implies that children and their literature are upgraded in hierarchy whilst for adult readers a possible loss of high standards and demands, i.e. a depreciation of values, is kept at bay. In the long run, the author predicts a merger between

---

[20] Mortimer in Egoff; Stubbs; Ashley (Eds.), *Only Connect*, p. 99. Also compare Anne de Vries. "Literature for All Ages? Emancipation and the Borders of Children's Literature." In: Sandra L. Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change*, pp. 43-48.
[21] Compare Mortimer in Egoff; Stubbs; Ashley (Eds.), *Only Connect*, p. 211.
[22] C.S. Lewis. "On Three Ways of Writing for Children". In: Egoff; Stubbs; Ashley (Eds.), *Only Connect*, pp. 207-220, p. 213.
[23] Jerry Griswold. "The Disappearance of Children's Literature (Or Children's Literature as Nostalgia) in The United States in the Late Twentieth Century". In: Sandra L. Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change,* p. 38.
[24] See Griswold in: Beckett (Ed.), *Reflections of Change,*p. 39.
[25] This does not only apply to the child readers but also to the child heroes in the fantasy novels.
[26] Griswold in: Beckett (Ed.), *Reflections of Change*, p. 39.

children's and adult literature with its signs already visible today.[27] On account of this merger, an eventual disappearance of impermeable borders would enable the use of one text for all readers. The assumed revaluation of children's literature and its reintegration back into adult literature therefore implies a quasi-return to pre-children's literature times. Although Griswold awards a heightened quality to the current literature for children compared to their predecessors,[28] he does not draw the logical conclusion from his argumentation. Despite his words of praise for the development of children's literature, he still does not accept children as equal partners for adults but denies children's books the same intellectual quality as books for adults. This statement proves untenable, though. As this study attempts to show, the fantasy novels analysed reveal literary quality in their own right, proving that they can take on adult fantasy any time.[29] What is more, denying children's literature the same status as adult literature whilst speaking of a merged story is contradiction in itself. If the story was really shared, none of the two parties involved would have to lower or heighten sights at all. Implying a loss of quality when an adult acquires and reads books for children whilst simultaneously attributing this quality to children's books is incompatible.

This current trend of children's literature towards adult literature is also observed by Meek, Warlow and Barton in *The Cool Web*.[30] As early as in 1977, they discovered the development of a rapprochement between children's and adult literature at the expense of children's literature. Already then they found "adult-eration" worrying.[31] Their term is very appropriate for describing the ongoing development. Be it because of adult-eration or childification, age recommendations on the spine of the books or on the shelves in shops or libraries may become redundant. With the readers coming from so many different age groups, the customary categorisation in rigid age phases is invalidated. Particularly in fantasy the reader target group covers all ages. So instead of suggesting narrow age gaps like from 9-12 years of age, future spine labelling will need to adapt to the changing circumstances. It can either completely refrain from making any age suggestions or simply label them "for all ages".

---

[27] Ibd., p. 40.
[28] Ibd., p. 54.
[29] Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy for instance has got structural and psychological depth that quite a few fantasy novels for adults can only dream of. Poole calls it "the most densely intertextual work for children one is ever likely to read". Richard Poole. "Philip Pullman and the Republic of Heaven". In: The New Welsh Review 14.1, 53 (2001), pp. 15-22, p. 16.
[30] Meek; Warlow; Barton (Eds.), *The Cool Web*, 1977.
[31] Ibd., p. 334.

Dependent on the respective interpretation, this development away from meticulous categorisation towards a more general and liberal approach can either be interpreted as a retrograde step or as progress. It can be considered retrograde in that respect that there seems to be a return to the time when the separation into literature for children and literature for adults was yet unheard of. However, the levelling of the reader's age can also be regarded as progress because it reveals that the parallel development of children's and adult literature has come full circle. The open scissors between the two fields can close again, now wiser through the past experience of separate ways. Such a reunion takes into consideration the homogenisation of the readership in the course of globalisation. Whether precocious child, childish adult or some form of universal childult, again time will tell how exactly the new reading landscape, influenced by the trend *allalderslitteratur*, will develop. Its influence on and interaction with other genres will be a rewarding subject for future studies.

One aspect that illustrates the trend of *allalderslitteratur* is the current design of fantasy book covers that addresses readers of all ages by means of extraordinary and creative design features. Amongst those range holograms, cut-outs in multi-layered covers like Hoffman's first *Stravaganza* novel, embossed structures and ornaments, glitter or changing colours. The three-dimensional effect is very popular. For instance, embossed goose pimples (as in Stine's *Goosepimples* series) create a more intense since tangible moment. With all those printing and designing techniques the literary landscape is livened up optically. Current publications attach great importance to universal appeal which they attain even without any illustrations inside the novels. Typical of the fantasy genre are geographical maps for orientation or embellished majuscules. Minimalist illustrations encourage the reader's imagination. At the same time, applied to novels for children, this feature makes them resemble more books for adults than children. Yet, there are also a number of fantasy novels which do not forego illustrations. A prime example for such works are Stewart and Riddell's *The Edge Chronicles*, which captivate with their quality and detail.

6.3   Single versus dual address

Closely linked to *allalderslitteratur*, the aspect of address has been a crucial since contested issue among the critics for quite some time now. Whereas *allalderslitteratur* is based on the concept of literature for all ages without distinguishing between age groups, levels of competence or numbers of addressees, the approach of single versus dual address assumes that each book for children has one or more specific addressees. Single address means that either children *or* adults are addressed, whereas dual address implies that two

groups, children as well as adults, are addressed at the same time but on different levels according to their experience and knowledge. Consequently, the aim of the approach of single versus dual address is to analyse, establish and then to categorise the specific person(s) addressed by children's books.

In *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction*, Wall investigates this aspect of different addressees in children's books. Together with the approaches of *allalderslitteratur* on the one hand and that of crossover literature on the other, single versus dual address dominates the current discussion in the field. Its main focus lies on analysing what makes a children's book a children's book and whether just children are addressed or whether adults are reached at the same time. In her work, Wall sets the parameters of "children" as not exceeding the age of twelve or thirteen; thus purposefully excluding young adults from her investigation.[32] As we have already seen, attempting to set up clear dividing lines between age groups can be quite problematic. Nowadays borders are blurred or even dissolving so that one cannot necessarily draw unambiguous conclusions on the basis of a book's first impression or its ostensible target group. Aware of the problematic situation, Wall nevertheless sets out to establish a sound definition of a children's book. For this purpose, she requires a reliable method with the help of which categorisation parameters for children's books can be laid down. Even though Wall admits to the impossibility of a precise definition of both children's and adult literature,[33] she attempts to compensate for this fuzziness with the aspect of address. According to the author, both content and form, i.e. subject matter and readability,[34] have always been key parameters here. However, she assigns more weight to the form rather than the content[35] and emphasises the role of the addressee.

Traditionally reliable indicators such as simplicity, transparency and brevity define a book for children, as well as direct reader address. Since these structural features are mostly absent in literature for adults, a distinct differentiation is being made regarding the respective reader's competence and demands. Here, Wall claims that under no circumstances children and adults are considered equals.[36] What is more, they should not be, either, as their experience of life diverges considerably. This problem has already been encountered in the subchapter of *allalderslitteratur*: Whereas adults can be transported back into their childhood,

---

[32] Wall, *The Narrator's Voice*, p. 1.
[33] Ibd., p. 2.
[34] Ibd., p. 3.
[35] Ibd., p. 2.
[36] Ibd., p. 15.

even if allowances have to be made for the temporal distance, children cannot anticipate their future development. On this basis, Wall argues that in children's literature, authors have to write down to the children.[37] However, this downward slope should not be too apparent. Rather, according to the author, it has become a rule that in qualitatively outstanding works for children the addressees cannot be identified as children.[38] This statement is self-contradictory. If one cannot disguise the fact that a book is addressed to children, then how can a qualitatively good book for children ignore the child-reader address? Should it at all?

Again, this leads back to the question of prestige and esteem. As literature for children is still frequently considered as something for beginners and thus of inferior quality, then a book explicitly addressed to children is regarded as being nothing more than that. If it happens to be not recognisably addressed to children, however, then it may not be considered a book for children in the first place. From this situation Wall has drawn the conclusion that the resulting discrepancy of address represents a very crucial point which requires to be solved in order to reach a satisfying solution. Consequently, she outlines her own concept of single versus dual address in children's literature. According to her, single address turns out to be very obvious and straightforward. In the case of books for children there is no visible sign of adult co-readers.[39] Single address puts the needs, demands and interests of children, its target group of the genre, firmly in the foreground. Analysing dual address appears more challenging to Wall since it is more complex and profound. Therefore, Wall focuses her attention on dual address, i.e. the controversial role of adult readers of children's literature. Here, she discerns three possible roles adults reading literature written *to* children can take on: These are the "child-addressee, teller-surrogate, and observer-listener."[40] The first possible role of the child-addressee reflects the condition of an unprejudiced adult reader who either gets fully involved in the story and can forget or consciously suspend his adulthood for at least the duration of the lecture. By remembering back to childhood and by adopting the role of the child reader, the adult temporarily finds himself on the same level as the obvious child addressee. As the teller-surrogate, the adult reader takes on the role of an intermediary between the actual narrator and the child addressee. He does not class himself as an unconcerned adult or as the child who is addressed. Rather, the teller-surrogate finds himself

---

[37] Ibd.
[38] Ibd.
[39] Ibd., p. 35.
[40] Ibd., p. 18.

on an intermediate level since he is no longer a child. Yet, at the same time, he does not want to be an adult on the outside. This role of the adult can be interpreted in two ways: Either as an only half-hearted commitment or as a lack of self-identification. As the observer-listener, the adult reader keeps emotional distance instead of participating actively. This way, he does not limit himself to one fixed role. The latter role is the most passive one an adult reader can take on during the reading of a book addressed to children.

In summary, *allalderslitteratur* describes the phenomenon of literature intended for or at least read by readers of all ages. Single address is the term for literature which is consciously aimed at only one specific reader target group. This specification is visibly anchored in the respective novel, be it by means of allusions exclusive to one reader group or for instance by direct reader address. Dual address addresses two different reader target groups at the same time, each in their own way. A further topical phenomenon in fantasy literature for children is the so-called crossover literature.[41] Presented in more detail in the following, crossover literature deals with the merging of literature for adults and that for children in form as well as in content. With these characteristics, crossover literature bridges "the gap between books for adults and books for children".[42]

On the basis of her distinction between single and dual address, Wall concludes that the topical challenge is to move away from an imbalanced double towards an equal dual audience.[43] Equality of readers touches upon the question of what constitutes a "good" book for the respective readers. In children's literature criticism, the question and judgement of quality criteria is one of the hard-core issues. Intended for children but produced, sold and often also read by adults, a book for children is judged by adult criteria. However, adult satisfaction alone cannot be an adequate criterion for judging the quality of children's literature. Among the various contributing factors ought to be child interests and demands.

Yet, *allalderslitteratur*, single and dual address are not the only stylistic forms current British fantasy literature for children can take. A further aspect is the so-called crossover literature which we will examine in the following.

---

[41] Crossover literature can be found in other genres as well. However, within the scope of the present study we will limit ourselves to fantasy literature only.

[42] Dieter Petzold. "Spaß für Jung und Alt: Cross-writing in den 'William-Büchern'". In: Christiane Bimberg (Ed.) *Perspektiven der Englischsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur./ Perspectives on Children's Literature in English*. Internationale Studien zu Literatur, Musik und Theater/ International Studies in Literature, Music and Theatre. Vol. 3. Kamen, Vilnius, Thessaloniki et al.: Karthause-Schmülling, 2000, pp. 90-116, p. 90.

[43] Cf. Wall, *The Narrator's Voice*, pp. 22, 36.

6.4   Crossover literature

Together with *allalderslitteratur*, single and dual address, crossover literature belongs to the current styles employed in British fantasy novels for children. A direct result from the blurring and even dissolving of borders in modern society, crossover literature reflects the current developments and changes in the genre. As securities, constants such as fixed parameters blur or disappear and are no longer reliable, insecurity and disorientation increase not only in reality but also in literature, which digests reality. Whereas such a marked lack of reliability usually causes uneasiness, crossover literature profits from the new openness on account of an increased permeability, transparency and curtness of borders. This way, crossover literature has access to the entire spectrum of genres, styles and subjects without having to having to make allowances for congruencies. Specific affiliations and features can be united and combined – a fact which intact and impermeable borders would not have permitted easily. However, despite the fact that all genres are open to crossover literature and it can mix them at will, the single elements can still be traced back to their respective origin. Once this is no longer possible, crossover literature may even form new, open categories. It remains to be seen whether those categories will be classed as genres or whether the concept of the genre will eventually peter out.[44]

Therefore, at present and for the time being crossover literature can be defined as exactly that: A cross, i.e. mix, of various genres, styles and contents, according to the respective aim and intention of the author on the one side and the demands of the reader on the other.[45] Not only does crossover literature bridge the gap between adult and children's literature[46] but also between genres. By definition, crossover literature makes a point of combining that which so far has been set apart, as in the case of literature for adults and that for children. With the combination of established, typical elements of literature for children (child protagonist, process of learning, maturation and initiation, the establishing of an individual social network and one's place in it etc.) and adult demands and expectations of complexity, intertextuality and depth, crossover literature manages to link both.

---

[44] Where this development leads exactly and whether the single elements will or should be able to be recognisable at an advanced stage of crossover will have to be examined by future studies.

[45] The demands and expectations on the part of the reader belong to the field of reader-response criticism, where an analysis in respect to crossover literature in British children's fantasy would provide interesting new aspects and approaches.

[46] Petzold in: Bimberg, *Perspektiven der englischsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, p. 90.

In *Perspektiven der englischsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* Petzold acknowledges the phenomenon of crossover literature and traces it back to a shift of interest in the discussion.[47] According to him, the main objective is no longer to achieve exact definitions as it used to be the case in the past. Nowadays, he notes that in literature in general the main focus has shifted away from the result, i.e. the problem of definition, towards the cause, i.e. the reasons for the difficulty of definition.[48]

Under the new viewpoint of hybridity and liberalism, crossover literature fits in well with the topical general globalisation. The dissolving of strict demarcations between literature for children and literature for adults does not necessarily mean that children's literature itself disintegrates and becomes one with adult literature.[49] This is only one possibility. Crossover literature playfully tests the waters by introducing adult criteria and topics and adapting them to plots and characters of interest to children. This way, the spectrum of children's literature is broadened by subjects such as environmentalist concerns, politics or philosophy.

As far as crossover literature is concerned, Petzold states that the term cross-writing tends to be used according to Ewers' definition of the "doppelsinnigen Kinderbuch" or Wall's definition of dual address. He claims that sometimes cross-writing is used as an umbrella term for the various ways and forms writing across genre and convention borders can take.[50] Crossover literature being the result of cross-writing, albeit not a new but a strong current trend in British fantasy novels for children, it has become an important feature. Especially in children's fantasy crossing borders is becoming more and more natural and establishes itself as an accepted way of varying the genre and its parameters. The more frequently fantasy literature crosses once-established borders, the easier it gets to shrug off limitations of its readership. By definition fantasy actually encourages liberalism more than other genres, as its core consists of imagination and play with possibilities. With its conscious, playful mix of form and content of many different genres, Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is exemplary for this development of border crossing in literature. As umbrella terms, cross-writing and crossover literature are interpreted individually by authors and critics in respect to how far the crossing may go. Whereas in this study, the term crossover literature encompasses both reader

---

[47] Ibd., p. 91.
[48] Ibd., p. 91.
[49] The thesis of a possible end of children's literature through its merging with adult literature can for example be found in Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age* and Griswold in: Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change*, pp. 35-42.
[50] Petzold in: Bimberg, *Perspektiven der englischsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, pp. 93-94.

address and genre borders, Kümmerling-Meibauer's definition focuses on reader address.[51] Centering on canon and canonisation, she makes an interesting discovery when she notes that cross-writing influences canonisation. Depending on the publisher, a novel can be published for children and adults, as is the case with the Harry Potter novels, which are available in an adult edition, or a novel which changes target group when translated into a foreign language, as Kümmerling-Meibauer found to be the case with Jostein Gaarders *Sophie's World.* (1991) In Norway, the novel was published as a book for children.[52] These practices of crosswriting, intended by the author or unintended if carried out by a third party such as the translator or the publisher, can thus entail a strong influence on the canonisation of the respective works. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer, three scenarios are possible. Firstly, the author is canonised in either children's *or* adult literature only. Secondly, he can be marginalised in both, or thirdly, he can be canonised in both.[53] In the light of the aspect of canonisation, the importance and implications of crossover literature become apparent. As we have seen, this phenomenon of crossing and even dissolving borders is not just limited to literature but, as a contemporary trend of the late 20th and early 21st century, comprises many aspects of life, be it fashion, music, art, media etc. Future British fantasy novels for children will demonstrate how far the crossing of borders can be pushed. However, it seems unlikely that crossover literature will remain a temporary trend, since its potential is far too big. Eventually, even an entirely new genre may develop from this.

6.5   Infantilisation or rejuve-maturation?

The phenomenon of crossover literature and its liberal crossing and mixing of borders, standards, rules, norms, expectations and reader groups implies a form of merging of adult and children's literature; independent of the question from which angle or direction it may be viewed. Despite the fact that this rapprochement concerns both sides, it is often considered as being only one-sided. Children's literature moving closer to adult literature is guaranteed to be considered a natural maturation and a growing up of the reader through the assumed higher demands of the lecture. By contrast, any concession of adult literature towards that of children's is very likely to be frowned upon, since it implies an assumed lowering of

---

[51] Compare: Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung*, p. 249.
[52] Ibd., p. 250.
[53] Ibd., p. 250.

standards, demands and quality. As a result, this possible second aspect is either avoided, or, if acknowledged, then connotated in a negative way.

The question that poses itself is whether one side-effect of crossover literature can be an infantilisation of literature for adults. Does the rapprochement between adult and children's literature, in our case fantasy, ring in the approaching end of high quality literature? Or is for some people the fact that it concerns fantasy already a loss in quality, since they do not consider the genre high literature in the first place? As the study's analysis of selected fantasy novels has revealed there is no indication for a discernible "threat" of a slip of adult literature into infantilisation. Rather, the structure and quality of this study's corpus novels show that such concerns are unfounded. In particular the work of Pullman is a prominent example of highly demanding fantasy literature for children as well as adults. With its complexity, depth, philosophical and ethical potential, the trilogy – on behalf of a large number of the current publications in the genre – takes the wind out of the sails of anyone who sees an infantilisation in the fantasy genre. Far from losing out by opening up towards children's literature, adult literature can gain by the impetus of children's literature in respect of minor protagonists, structure and themes.[54] As much as children can gain by reading adult literature, adults in reaction may profit from the more direct, hands-on perspectives and emotions children's literature offers.

As we have already seen, the corpus novels of this study do not justify the negative labelling "infantilisation". On behalf of other novels of the genre, they actually show the opposite and do not fail to impress by the maturity of their subjects and, eventually, their characters. Be it Lyra, Will, Harry, Kestrel, Bo or Nathaniel, young heroes in current British fantasy reveal a potential and depth that equals that of adult counterparts in the genre. The fact that the main characters are minors does not imply that they are incapable of great deeds. Instead, their courage at their young age is outstanding and thus more admirable than a comparable performance by an adult. Consequently, the term "infantilisation" has no justification for current British fantasy novels for children. Rather, their present development suggests a possible future merge with adult fantasy. So there should not be any talk of

---

[54] Themes of children's literature such as maturation, initiation, socialisation or finding one's true self also concern adults. The latter have already experienced those processes first-hand during their own childhood. With today's interpretation of childhood extended sometimes even into the early twenties through longer education timescales and adults having to adapt to new socialisation processes through moving, a change of job etc., those themes never cease to be topical, even for adults.

"infantilisation", but of "rejuve-maturation".[55] This term combines the potential of both sides by taking into consideration the rejuvenating effect minor main characters and their quests can have for adults as well as, for children, the importance of play for the development of a mature personality. In this respect, crossover literature offers possibilities for identification with youth for adults conform to the current trend of a pronounced youthfulness of the adult world. At the same time, it fulfils the wish of children for more knowledge and experience, i.e. maturity, without having to give up play.

6.6   Social criticism

At first glance, social criticism and fantasy for children do not seem to have much common ground. Firstly, fantasy is frequently considered being escapist literature and therefore out-of-touch with reality. However, the otherness of its worlds and the comparison with reality offers sufficient possibilities and fuel for social criticism. Secondly, due to their lack of experience children are just as often believed not to be capable or entitled to criticism of adult structures. Yet, it is through the eyes of children that injustices can become more obvious. Children already dispose of a marked sense of justice and are quick at detecting discords. In their world of a still manageable size discords carry much more weight than in the adult world. Current British fantasy for children is very conscious of social and ecological injustices. Representative of the genre, the corpus novels of this study cover a large spectrum of social and ecological criticism. The differences lie in the focus of their concerns and in the vehemence with which they are addressed.

Yet again, Tolkien's fantasy novel *The Lord of the Rings* is a pioneering work in respect of the combination of social and ecological criticism in fantasy. Condescendingly smiled at as a tree-hugger, Tolkien was highly conscious of the progressive, wanton and mindless destruction of the planet by man and his boundless profit-seeking. Isengard and Mordor have become symbols of this ecological catastrophe. Current British fantasy novels for children also address various aspects of the ongoing exploitation and destruction of nature. Hussey's *The Valley of Secrets*[56] denounces "the daily devastation of forests"[57] illustrated by

---

[55] The term "rejuve-maturation" which I propose for this phenomenon would take into account this bilateral rapprochement free of value judgement. Petzold suggests the term adultisation; yet this does not take the rejuvenating effect into account that reading children's literature can have on adults. Cf. Dieter Petzold. "Große Kunst, *juvenile trash* oder kollektives Spielzeug? Zum Erfolg der *Harry-Potter*-Bücher bei Jung und Alt". In: Maren Bonacker (Ed.) *Peter Pans Kinder: Doppelte Adressiertheit in phantastischen Texten*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004, pp. 82-93, p. 83.

[56] Hussey, *The Valley of Secrets*, 2005.

the clearing of the Amazonian rainforest by contrasting the destruction of the Indians' and the animals' habitat with the eponymous Valley of Secrets. Here, a variety of Amazonian animals and an Indian have found an idyllic refuge and can continue their lives in harmony and peace. The novel is interlarded with critical comments on man's careless behaviour towards his fellow men as well as nature and attempts to heighten the reader's awareness for these issues. In the novel topics such as human rights, lack of respect towards man and nature, exploitation, slavery, violence and murder are illustrated by the Amazonian rain forest and its inhabitants. The pacifist life of the Indians in line with nature, represented by the hermit Murra-yari, is held up as an example. It is suggested that were all men like him, life in harmony with man and nature would be possible.[58] A deep regret is voiced that only a small part of humankind has chosen a peaceful way of life like the Indians. The extent and intensity of the suffering and injustice are emphasized by means of an eyewitness report. In the form of a diary, the main character's relative has left him a legacy which captivates and shakes up by its urgency and authenticity. Furthermore, the – albeit secret - presence of the exotic animals and of the Indian in the UK shows more immediacy than the distant Amazonian rain forest ever could. Recurrent appeals to reason concerning a restoration of the balance between man and nature constitute Hussey's ecologically oriented social criticism.

In the *Artemis Fowl* series, a comparable concern about world ecology, in particular the relation between man and nature, is voiced. Repeatedly it is pointed out that the human race forced the faeries to hide underground and that the discovery of the latter by the humans would mean their end. Whereas the narrator in Hussey's novel appeals openly to the reader, Colfer's narrator uses satirical sideswipes and irony for his social criticism. With acerbity injustices are denounced and it is made understood that mankind should know better than to behave how it does.

In an allusion to Rowling's *Muggles*, humans are called Mud People by the fairies.[59] This open depreciation and resentment is not without reason, since the humans are blamed for the state the planet is in. Amongst other things, the ruthless exploitation and pollution of nature is criticised. As a countermeasure, the narrator suggests using eco-friendly technologies such as recycling and the use of solar power. Humans are portrayed as socially incompatible with nature on the one hand and with themselves on the other.

---

[57] Ibd., p. 176.
[58] Ibd., p. 346.
[59] Colfer, *Artemis Fowl*, p. 68.

The violation of nature is also addressed in Nix' *The Keys to the Kingdom* series. Even within The House, which ought to serve as a role model in every aspect, the overexploitation of resources leads to a dramatic instability of the inner balance of the realms. With Grim Tuesday turning his realm into a huge pit in which he makes his workers mine Nothing, his profit-seeking almost causes a catastrophe.

In Nicholson's *The Wind on Fire* trilogy, the social criticism opposes various aspects like customs and practises of the presented society. Above all, society's prevailing socio-political structures are denounced. The most prominent example for this is the main city of Aramanth's circular structure which reflects the hierarchical order and achievement-oriented status of its inhabitants. According to their social rank and the varying results of the unrelenting performance tests they have to take,[60] the citizens are assigned to the respective colour-coded district. There, clothing, colour of the buildings and living standards match the citizens' position in society. Whereas the most distinguished and powerful inhabitants live in the very heart of the circle, the lower someone's status, power and rights, the further away from the centre he lives and the less respected is his occupation. In *The Wind on Fire*, social criticism is directed towards the colour-coded ghettoisation as well as against the discrimination resulting from it. This injustice is emphasised by society's punishment of the Hath family. In particular, Kestrel's conscious and vehement rebellion against the totalitarian system and the ensuing punishment of her father pillory comparable situations in the real world. Further points of departure for social criticism are not only human rights and their violation but also abuse of power and oppression through despotism. The latter is the main theme of the trilogy's second volume *The Wind on Fire: Slaves of the Mastery*. While the megalomaniac Master considers himself a sensitive musician and aesthete,[61] the fallen Singer, parallel to a fallen angel, is unsurpassed in his cruelty. Instead of creating a state of harmony, the Master effectively causes nothing but fear and destruction.

Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is also concerned with despotism, injustice and human as well as wizard and elf rights. Hermione's campaign for elf rights and their liberation may

---

[60] The constant pressure to perform to better or just to maintain one's social rank is seen as being very discriminating against people. Aramanth's performance-oriented society thus reduces humans to their performance and functioning in the system only. As in reality, incessant competition and the psychological pressure can cause burnout syndrome and depression. This negative side-effect of modern society and its high-speed-living is illustrated by the treatment and the suffering of Hanno Hath. Interestingly, the slogans "Better today than yesterday", Nicholson, *The Wind Singer*, p. 11, and "Harder. Higher. Better", Nicholson, *The Wind Singer,* p. 20, remind one of Orwell's socio-critical *1984* and the social engineering in form of the caste system of Huxley's *Brave New World*.

[61] Nicholson, *Slaves of the Mastery*, p. 236.

seem bizarre at first sight and, as a consequence, is ridiculed by Harry and Ron, yet it underlines the significance of social injustice even in the wizarding world. On a larger scale, the evil wizard and tyrant Voldemort also operates with means of oppression but imposes his will through his reign of terror. Ignoring compassion and mercy, Voldemort does not shrink back from torture and murder. Rather, his cruelty gives him pleasure. Not only is the social criticism in *Harry Potter* directed against such despotic oppression but also against racism in any form. The latter is one of the central threads of criticism running through the series. It is not without reason that the fanaticism with which evil wizards persecute "impure" wizards and humans is alluding to the ethnic cleansing during the Nazi regime. Spinelessness and cowardice, best impersonated by the character Wormtail, are presented as despicable, whereas values like courage, protection of the weak, friendship, love and trust, impersonated by the positive main characters, are highly esteemed.

Likewise, Pullman's metaphysical *His Dark Materials* trilogy criticises social injustices, despotism and cruelty. Comparable to a polyphonic canon, various social systems of the different worlds are presented. Through contrast and comparison their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages are illustrated. Examples are the sub-community of the children in Lyra's Oxford, the children of Cittàgazze, the Lapland witches, the Gallivespians, the community of the armoured bears or the mulefa. Each group has their own social system, ranging from the bears' Darwinistic survival of the fittest, the witches' plurality of individuals against the background of a common mentality to the pacifistic ideal community of the mulefa. Against such a cross-section of the trilogy's social landscape science and the Church are two "institutions" which, each in their own way, contrast with the various social systems. Representing and pursuing opposite views on the universes, their structure and purpose, both parties compete with each other to explain, to interpret and lastly to control phenomena. Whereas in *His Dark Materials* science is primarily interested in the research into nature's scientific phenomena and their possible exploitation by society, the Church instrumentalises those phenomena in order to integrate them into its interpretation, i.e. doctrine, of the worlds. In Pullman's trilogy Dust is the novels' central phenomena that advances to the point at issue on which the opinions of science and Church are divided. On the scientific side, the mysterious characteristics, origin and purpose of Dust are explored independent of each other by Lord Asriel and Mary Malone, and on the side of the Church by Mrs Coulter. Whereas Lord Asriel is open-minded and inquisitive, Mary Malone first has to overcome her initial distrust and scepticism in view of the matter with the help of the mulefa before she can get truly involved in it. The side and the attitude of the Church are represented by Mrs Coulter.

With its unyielding dogmatism, this institution lays claim to exclusive truth whilst condemning wholesale the unknown and uncanny. By demonising any phenomenon which does not fit the concept or could entail unpleasant concessions, *His Dark Materials*' Church stirs up reminiscences of practices and attitudes of the Medieval Church.[62] Since the complexity of Dust makes it elude exact definition, the Church at least tries to gain control over it by means of repression on the one hand and cruel experiments on the other in order to investigate its nature. As long as Dust remains mysterious, the Church declares it equivalent to human sin. Due to this ignorance and fear Dust is rashly condemned as being something evil and therefore a danger to the people. In Pullman's trilogy social criticism denounces such dogmatism. The hypocritical, censured control of society by the Church, against better judgement and under the cloak of spiritualism hardly manages to disguise its power-politics and the wish for omnipotence.

In Tyler's *The Greenwich Chronicles*, social criticism primarily attacks unjust and anti-social behaviour. The Wrecca's version of a social system, a totalitarian reign of terror based on violence and oppression, serves as a negative example and is contrasted with the Guardians' ideal democratic society by means of black and white extremes. The Wreccas' way of life is presented as contemptible for several reasons. Not only does it not acknowledge the individual but it also denies the single Wreccas any rights or respect. Absolute power is given to a strong and despotic leader who then bullies his subjects as he sees fit until he is forced to abdicate by someone even stronger. Living underground in a filthy, smelly, unhealthy and dark environment and lacking any manners, the Wreccas resemble more sewer rats than anything else. With the Wreccas' standards being that low,[63] they represent the underprivileged extreme. The Guardians, by contrast, represent the other extreme. Living above ground in the bright, open space of Greenwich Park, they are clearly elevated. Clean, civilised and pacifistic, the Guardians value the rights of every individual. What is more, they practise equality and grant freedom to everyone. Encouraging learning and thus helping to unfurl skills and talents, the Guardians actively work on a harmonious coexistence in which values are created and respected. Contrasted to the Wreccas, the Guardians provide the very positive example of a model society.

---

[62] Pullman's critical and offensive portrayal of such an institution and its dogmatism, for which the Church serves as an example which could be replaced by some political parties, already provides sufficient material for a study in its own right.

[63] Visualised by their subterranean existence which can be compared to a vertical scale: The Guardians have a much higher standing.

By means of such contrasts, albeit most of them not as black and white as in *The Greenwich Chronicles*, current British fantasy novels for children discuss advantages and disadvantages of various social models. Through their physical or chronological distance[64] to reality fantasy worlds and their societies permit and encourage direct comparisons between reality and fantasy. Positive as well as negative phenomena in this as well as in other worlds sharpen the awareness of social structures and problems and their implications for the members of the respective communities. At first glance, social criticism in fantasy novels for children may thus seem a strange since outspoken adult topic. However, all children are born into a social network and need to learn its rules so as to be able to meaningfully navigate in it. The process of learning about the social structures and their workability includes scrutinising the purpose of the system and the comparison to others in order to draw conclusions for one's own society. With its other worlds, fantasy literature can go through manifold social forms. Thus providing new aspects and utopias, it can give impulses for possible changes for the better of existing societies.

Social criticism in current British fantasy novels for children constitutes one of the central points of formal innovations. This is not to say that novels like *The Water-Babies* or *Alice in Wonderland* are far less sociocritical. Whereas their approach is characterised by allusions and irony, in *The Water-Babies* sometimes even by bitterness at existing conditions, nowadays social and increasingly ecological injustices are addressed far more directly and thus in a more offensive way. Both authors and readers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of balanced and just social structures for the welfare of the entire world.

6.6.1   Morals, values and messages of current British fantasy novels for children

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is said to be the first British children's fantasy novel free from open Victorian moralising and indoctrination. Up to its publication, the moral instruction and constant lecturing of the readers as well as their spiritual edification and consolidation were the main concerns of literature for children. *Alice* introduced the fun factor on a wider scale. Its contents and style are intended to be enjoyed, not studied or learned by heart. In the aftermath of *Alice*, fantasy for children slowly abandoned open indoctrination, the writing for purely moral, religious or educational purposes. This turn of the tide towards

---

[64] Transported into a different framework, yet recognisable earthly, explosive issues can be accosted and discussed with the necessary distance.

more indirect and moderate moralisation took time to establish itself. Even today, children's literature is far from being purpose-free or without morals as, imparting the existing system of values, it is still ascribed an educational purpose. What has definitely changed is the way of upbringing of children. Over time, the definition of socially acceptable behaviour has shifted and adapted to the current circumstances, manners, morals and values. Today, education favours active and voluntary understanding. Violence and cruelty are no longer punishments for naughty children but external, even alien and unjust threats. The latter either are rooted in society itself, nature or beings from parallel or other worlds. Modern violence thus appears in different combinations, situations and degrees of intensity and has become something like a general mood against the background of which education takes place.

As a countermeasure against such a minimising and depreciation, all current British fantasy novels for children, in varying degrees, impart and pass on traditional morals and values. In a time in which focal points dwindle noticeably, manners and values are not exempt from this development. A recalling of traditions in literature mainly intended for children makes sense in so far as young readers are still more open to new impressions and suggestions than older readers who have already formed their opinions and are more unlikely to change them. Since time immemorial, unstable periods of innovation and radical change have always alternated with phases of stable retrospection. It is therefore not surprising that the current development is characterised by a longing for stability. Yet at the same time, the demand for progress is so strong that it cannot be given up either. Trying to combine traditions with progress, current British fantasy novels for children somehow have to do the splits and to make concessions to both. Given the progressive instability of values, authors try to counteract this by upholding morals and values in their novels. As a result, the messages conveyed by current fantasy publications are concurring. Great importance is attached to human relations and the harmonious relation of beings, above all humans, to their surrounding environment, be it a world, a planet, a dimension etc. As far as human relations are concerned, communication is the key competence. With the help of the novels' main characters, basic values are defined. Applied to concrete situations, they are practised and strengthened over time. Ideally, a mentor is a living example of desirable behaviour. Not only does he teach manners and values, thus providing orientation and guidance, but he also gives feedback to the progress of the main characters' education. The main values conveyed are friendship, love, trust, courage, loyalty, solidarity and respect. They should not only be paid to one's fellow beings but also to an increasing extent to one's environment. Circumspect behaviour is considered a prerequisite for desirable harmony and peace. At the same time, the fantasy

novels appeal to the responsibilities and duties everyone, not just the main characters, has. The importance of the forward-looking preservation of one's environment rates highly,[65] as well as the courage to defend one's convictions. Individuality is fostered, however irksome or embarrassing it may be, and the courage, ability and perseverance to act against comfortable trends by making your own, sometimes unpopular, decisions. Another message is the responsible-minded dealing with power and the outlawing of its abuse. In current British fantasy novels for children exist innumerable negative examples. Rowling's Voldemort, Nicholson's Master, Beddor's Queen Redd, Foreman's Odin, Mc Nish's evil witches, Nimmo's three aunts and the Bloors or Taylor's villains are just a few of them. Connected to this issue is the question of the topical definition of power, its influence on people and the profile of an ideal wielder.

Particularly in Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels morals and values are passed on through the deeds of the three main characters and the recurrent philosophical talks of Harry with Hogwarts' headmaster Dumbledore at the end of the first five novels.[66] Here, Harry is taught how to come to terms with what has happened, to digest the events and experiences and to fit them into the overall picture of life the boy is forming. Dumbledore assists and guides this evaluation process with worldly wisdom, explanations and answers to Harry's questions as well as advice, pointing the way ahead. Illustrated by means of the competitive point system of the four houses, correct and desirable behaviour such as courage and bravery are rewarded, whereas unacceptable behaviour is punished. A true hero is shown to distinguish himself by consciously deciding to make positive, individual choices and by standing in for the consequences. The older Harry gets and the more experience he gathers, the more subtle the worldly wisdom conveyed to him becomes. Whereas the introductory novels cover basic values and allow room for funny aphorisms,[67] the later, more serious ones focus on moral obligations, matters of conscience and existential problems and do not allow this room any more, even though they could.

Yet again it is Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy which serves as an example for morals, values and messages passed on in current British fantasy novels for children. Although the judgement of good and evil is highly important for both works, Pullman's more

---

[65] As for instance in Hussey's *The Valley of Secrets*, Brennan's *Faerie* novels and Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series.
[66] Also, the obligatory villain-talk at the end of each novel, i.e. the respective final confrontation of the two sworn enemies Harry and Voldemort, reveals negative behaviour; thus showing how not to behave if you do not want to be evil.
[67] For example in Rowling, *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 242.

complex and profound novels contain a greater variety of crucial points. They do not permit straightforward judgement but require intense consideration, thus compounding the coming to a satisfactory conclusion to matters of conscience. Right from the beginning, the overall tone of *His Dark Materials* is more serious as in the first *Harry Potter* novels. The above-mentioned morals, values and messages can all be found in *His Dark Materials*, too. Honed to the biblical subject of the Fall, the behaviour of the main characters Lyra and Will, and, in a mitigated form that of Lyra's parents Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel, is presented and judged under the aspects of good and evil, trust and betrayal, sin and atonement as well as love and loss. Against this background Pullman's trilogy makes use of the many occasions offering themselves for discussing morals, values and messages. In *His Dark Materials* too, the right of self-determination and making choices is considered an important feature, thus emphasised repeatedly.[68] As the trilogy shows, sometimes the best, yet most difficult decisions have to be made against one's own desires or preferences.

In order to be able to defeat the angel, Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter have to unite their forces, overcome their past and any negative feelings and to sacrifice themselves for the benefit and the future of the next generation, symbolised by Lyra and Will. Similarly, the latter too have to work together so as to first understand and then to fulfil their fate. Love gives them the necessary strength to bear their future life-long separation and to actively build the Republic of Heaven in their respective Oxford. It unites them in their separation, permitting them to grow with their task. As in other current British fantasy novels for children, the message is clear: If required, one has to learn to give up one's own happiness for the benefit of humankind, even if it is painful since it comes at great cost. Also, putting oneself last instead of seeking personal advantage is revealed to be true heroism as it takes a lot more courage than being selfish.

A further crucial point concerns the awareness of one's acts, its sharpening and control. Whereas young children tend to do things without consciously thinking about them, adults are expected to always know exactly what they are doing and for which purpose. In *His Dark Materials* it is suggested that a child's playful, instinctive mastering of its world has to be revised when growing up, since then learning and hard work supersede play and easiness. This development is illustrated by Lyra's ability to read the alethiometer. As long as she is an innocent child, she can interpret it instinctively. Once she becomes conscious of her actions

---

[68] Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass*, pp. 503, 525.

and falls in love, Lyra leaves this innocence behind when she grows up and faces difficult studies in order to remaster reading the alethiometer.

Morals, values and messages play an important role in Crossley-Holland's historical *Arthur* novels, too. Set in the Middle Ages, this trilogy is firmly rooted in chivalry and its code of conduct. A marked sense of justice, noble-mindedness, honour, bravery and faith belong to the knightly ideals[69] at the time of the crusades, supplementing the values already mentioned above. On their mission to spread Christendom, the knights' conduct is expected to be governed by responsibility und duty to the weak and the poor. Ideally, a knight should be a role model: Strong and unyielding, yet also charitable and merciful. Young Arthur is confronted with the morals and decisions of the mythical king Arthur as well as the real life of the crusader-knights and has to draw his own conclusions from what he experiences. The clash between ideals and reality makes him reflect, judge and revise morals and values and adapt them to his own situation.

6.6.2   Theology and Ethics

For many people in modern Western society, religion is losing the strong influence it used to have and, consequently, recedes more into the background. The resulting gaps in traditional forms of religion are filled increasingly with ethical issues. Even if religion is more and more denied its all-embracing importance, humans still have a strong need for spirituality and comfort. The philosophical approach of ethics, i.e. moral principles, resembles religion in many ways, yet is not based on any dogma. In a way, it can be a more open forum for the discussion of moral questions, behaviour and decisions for those who might feel restricted by traditional forms of religion of irrefutable nature.

This social development is mirrored in children's literature, too. The latter used to be *the* instrument for religious indoctrination of the young and until the middle of the twentieth century Christian values were firmly anchored in children's literature. In his works, Tolkien is unobtrusive and less explicit than C.S. Lewis in the religious fantasy *The Chronicles of Narnia.* Ever since then, the open presence of religion in children's fantasy has been waning. In recent years, Christian doctrine is more and more substituted by partly very profound

---

[69] Jacques' *Redwall* series and Baldry's *Eaglesmount* series, both animal fantasies, try to pass on the chivalric ideals, too. However, with their stereotypical distinction of good and evil and the overall generalisation, even of the main characters, *Redwall* and *Eaglesmount* do not exhaust the potential which suggests itself here.

philosophical discussions of moral values. In our corpus, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is the best example of this development so far.

The approach of the millennium, with its anxieties, insecurities and doubts in its wake, caused a resurgence of spiritual concerns. The cinema adaptations of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* novels in 2005 and 2008 and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in 2001-03 fit in well into this context. In how much their religious aspect takes second place behind dominating iconoclastic action and battle-scenes remains to be discussed elsewhere. While *Harry Potter* for instance fuels the discussion concerning witches, Satanism, occultism, magic and faith,[70] Pullman's *His Dark Materials* openly and offensively discuss God, religion and ethics on a more philosophical level. Despite statements and portrayals very disrespectful of Christian traditions and beliefs Pullman's work is not as contested in public as the mass phenomena *Harry Potter*. It seems that the most fervent critics have become totally absorbed by Rowling's heptalogy and, in the heat of the moment, overlook more radical works.

6.6.3 Theology and children's fantasy: The modern role of God and angels

In the following, we are going to examine the important role religion, ethics, god, angels and the entire theological background play in contemporary fantasy novels for children. In our multi-media age where society's spiritual disorientation is being lamented everywhere, British fantasy for children occupies itself increasingly with philosophical and ethical issues. The profoundness with which these topics are discussed often takes on that of "high literature". Important elements are questions concerning the existence, absence or interference of God, the nature, tasks and meaning of theology, but also the preoccupation with the phenomenon of angels. Contemporary authors often inquire into the possible existence and nature of those heavenly beings, their manifestations and roles, as well as their influence on the spiritual well-being of the modern human. In our corpus, several novels concern themselves with these issues, foremost angels. Each has its very own strategy and approach. By comparing and contrasting them, we get a wide spectrum of contemporary views on angels and the role they can play in our lives.

Almond's debut novel *Skellig* confronts both characters and readers with perhaps the strangest version of an angel in current British children's fantasy. The eponymous Skellig

---

[70] See for example Richard Abanes. *Harry Potter: Fantasy oder Magie*. Paderborn: Christliche Verlagsbuchhandlung Wedel, 2001, and Anelli, *Harry, A History*, pp. 177-202.

initially shocks by his degree of differentness. Discovered by the main character Michael[71] in a derelict garage, he looks very dirty and nothing points to the fact that he is an angel. [72] Skellig contradicts every picture one might have formed about angels. The author does away with the cliché of a radiant being in a long gown adorned with wings. Instead, Almond's dark-haired and black-suited angel is as run down as his surroundings. Apathetic, he vegetates in a dark corner, covered in dead flies and has stinking breath.[73] Skellig's hunger is only partially stilled by insects, beer and the odd Chinese takeaway. Strangely enough, not only does he suffer from human ailments like hunger and thirst, but also from severe arthritis and chronic pains. This negative mould of traditional angels strikes as essentially alien. Yet, it is this abnormality which fascinates and spellbinds the reader. Skellig is stranded, abandoned and hopeless. The initial feelings of disgust and revulsion, which are rather paradox in face of an angel, soon yield to pity and compassion for his hard lot. It would seem that the angel himself is in desperate need for help. Literally hungry for human warmth, Skellig's needs almost outweigh those of the main character and his family, who fear for the life of Michael's newborn sister. In addition to the baby's severe heart condition and the family's instability resulting from it, Michael cannot rely on a stable environment outside his home, either. After a recent move, the boy is uprooted and still friendless. Despite all these adverse circumstances, the apparently hopeless venture develops into a rescue-mission not only for the baby, but also for Michael and Skellig themselves.

Where traditional angels are either prayed for, called or sent, Skellig is stumbled across. Still, he is needed and requires help in return. The relationship between Skellig, Michael and his new-found friend Mina is one of mutual support for a new start in life. On the one hand, Skellig performs the classic task of comforter and consoler, giving moral stability to the persons in need. On the other hand, he too benefits from charitable acts. Rather unconventional for angels, the attention Skellig receives consists not only of immaterial love and affection but also of cod liver oil and food. Optically more human tramp than angel, Skellig has very down-to-earth needs. This is what makes him so interesting and believable, since they are universal experiences for all humans. Hunger and pain having subdued him, he just wants to be left alone in his misery. By sharing the secret of the angel and by looking

---

[71] The author's naming of the main characters, Skellig and Michael, hints at the islands in the South-West of Ireland. The largest, Skellig Michael, is a listed UNESCO site. Thus distinguished, Skellig and Michael's symbiosis forms an inseparable whole.

[72] David Almond. *Skellig*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 1998, p. 1.

[73] Almond, *Skellig*, pp. 7, 28.

after him together, Michael and the neighbours' girl Mina become friends. Mina rightly suspects that there is more to their foundling than meets the eye. Her curiosity is rewarded when she takes off the angel's jacket that concealed his wings as an ugly hump.[74] Against tradition, Almond's angel conceals rather than shows off his wings. When they are eventually unfurled, what we see is not a transcendental being in all its splendour but an extremely sad and tormented one. Touched by this picture of misery, the children resolve to alleviate Skellig's suffering. Still children, they do not have much power themselves but do what they can for their newfound friend. In order to avoid the angel's detection, Michael and Mina remove him from the garage and take him to the attic of an abandoned house in the neighbourhood. By transferring Skellig from a very low level to a higher one, the children symbolically elevate him, instinctively taking him closer to heaven.

With a sure instinct for stark contrasts, the author produces strong effects in his novels by the intended clashing of expectations and encountered realities. Accordingly, both atmosphere and setting of the key scene of *Skellig* are discordant. Littered by owl droppings, the attic, just like the garage, is far from being a special place. As inadequate a site for any spiritual experience as it appears to be, it is here that Michael, Mina and Skellig find inner peace. Suspended between heaven and earth, angel and children share the most intense moments together. With their sorrow momentarily taken off them, they can concentrate on their innermost feelings and concerns.

Above all, the attic is a place of transition. Firstly, it offers shelter to the coming and going tawny owls. Secondly, for Skellig, the place is one step closer to healing, heaven and eventually to his next task. Thirdly, for the children, the time in the attic has a big impact on the further development of their characters and lives. It is a crucial experience of inner healing. In combination with the intense feelings of community, friendship, self-awareness and belonging this furthers them on their way to maturity. Their unity and close bond are expressed by the three of them taking hands and forming a circle. Having neither beginning nor end, the ring is *the* symbol of eternity and perfect harmony. Whatever lies outside of this circle momentarily fades out, allowing them to find the way to their innermost selves. The intensity of their shared feelings is symbolised further by the strong allusions to the Holy Trinity.[75] Still holding hands, all three rise into the air, where, adorned with transparent wings, the children strongly resemble angels themselves. This levitation marks their lightness

---

[74] Ibd., p. 89.
[75] Ibd., p. 110.

and conveys their edifying emotions. Love indeed gives them wings. All this happens against the unconventional background of the lofty setting. Skellig knows the inner truth when he tells Michael and Mina: "Pair of angels, he said. That's what you are."[76]

Fed by the owls and looked after by the boy and the girl, Skellig regains his strength and even starts flying again. In his own way of saying good-bye, Skellig has carved a heart shape into the floorboards. Three small white feathers, the symbol of their trinity, lay in its centre. Just as Skellig works wonders within their intimate circle, he heals Michael's baby sister. During a nightly encounter with the angel the Mother witnesses the dreamlike "transformation" of the infant.[77]

On Skellig's leave, everybody's situation has improved. The angel has found the comfort he needed. Michael and Mina have become friends, thus giving Michael the stability he lacked. The baby sister has overcome her dangerous illness and the parents have re-found their peace. So Skellig's presence has culminated in a successful family reunification after a serious crisis. Not only did he bring back balance and harmony but also love and hope. His future remains cloudy, yet one can expect him to appear again in the strangest of places, to be stumbled across by someone else in need. The story continues, only elsewhere. Almond's angel may satisfy the needs of all those involved; yet, despite the happy ending, the reader is left with many unanswered questions. No one can satisfactorily explain Skellig's nature or presence. Again it is Mina who offers a wise and mature insight into the things between heaven and earth that elude man.[78] Sometimes too many questions do not lead any further and it is wiser to accept strange things without having to know their innermost secrets. This is what keeps life mysterious and interesting.

In the current landscape of British Children's fantasy, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* stand out as novels with a most complex and profound philosophical background. Particularly inspired by John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* (1667/ 1674), Pullman questions the power and role of God, inquires into the nature of angels and explores the possibility of an underworld. Throughout the trilogy, allusions, parallels, re-workings or open contradiction to the word of the Bible are the main thread by which the author orientates himself. The main characters Will and Lyra are modelled on the biblical Adam and Eve. Whereas their biblical predecessors forfeited their chance, Lyra and Will can and should seize theirs. However, they

---

[76] Ibd., p. 157.
[77] Ibd., p. 150.
[78] Ibd., p. 131.

are to be kept unaware of their roles, so that they act in an unbiased way. Pullman's couple appear in reverse order and priority. Will does not figure until the second volume, so Lyra clearly dominates the couple as well as the plot. Unlike the biblical Eve, the girl does not seduce Adam, i.e. Will, by means of a forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. Instead, they mutually discover love and realise that Dust means understanding. Therefore, in *His Dark Materials*, there is no Fall but a conscious and voluntary katabasis by both main characters. Furthermore, Lyra does not betray Will on purpose. It is his own decision to follow her, and, like Lyra, to temporarily leave his soul behind for the journey into the underworld. Having plucked up the courage to face her fears and to engage the truth, something Lyra has had great difficulty with so far, the girl has an epiphany in the underworld. From the harpies she learns that telling stories does not automatically mean lying or letting your imagination guide you. Honesty and truth may not be as spectacular or exciting as invented stories, yet they reveal someone's feelings. Since the latter make people vulnerable, being honest requires courage, whereas telling lies is something for cowards. This is one of the important lessons that Lyra has to learn. Freeing the souls from the underworld is a selfless deed which comes at great cost for her but proves to be immensely rewarding. Lyra has closed the circle of life and become wiser. Knowing her weak points and having met her true self, she is strengthened by this encounter. As with the biblical predecessors, there is the question of guilt, too. Both Lyra and Will have to leave everything in the form of their daemon or soul behind in order to be able to undertake the journey into the underworld. So the guilt they experience is not passed on through the generations as original sin requiring lifelong penance because they have betrayed themselves, no one else.

As long as they are still children, the daemon and the soul are still malleable and shift shape easily. Thus symbolising childhood, Lyra's and Will's daemon and soul had to be left behind. On their return from the underworld, the two main characters have changed and grown up. Consequently, their sudden and profound development causes a clash with the daemon and the soul. The latter have to come to terms first with having been left behind and need time to adapt to their estranged "owners". Having learned the true nature of Dust and gained the knowledge of what is important in life and for the world, the main characters now have to put this into practice in their lives. At the end of the trilogy, Lyra's and Will's daemon and soul settle for good: The external indication that childhood is irretrievably lost now. Just like the girl and the boy can never return to their childhood, Pantalaimon and Will's soul can never have the same intimate relationship as before. The guilt and the pain have caused wounds on all four of them.

The role of God and the angels in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* does not mirror that of Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Although Milton's God may appear surprisingly passive and reserved, thus permitting Satan to show extensive physical presence in the epic, he nevertheless does not forfeit the authority and respect that should be paid to him. By contrast, the god in *His Dark Materials* is portrayed in a very disrespectful way.[79] God's appearance, in a chapter soberly titled "Authority's End", is more than disappointing. The Authority against whom Lord Asriel rebels is far from being the powerful usurper and enemy he has been presented as throughout the trilogy. Encased in a travesty of Snow-White's coffin, he is already treated as dead and only kept alive as long as Metatron, the Regent, pleases. Completely lacking glory, power and aura, this God turns out to be an empty shell and cannot live up to his name. Paradoxically, he makes his entry on the brink of death, thus causing disillusionment: A mortal God. What is more, he does not die a heroic death in battle against his enemies. He simply wilts away once freed from his crystal litter. Instead of fear or at least some respect, this demented, terrified and helpless being evokes only pity.[80] Neither his position nor his death carry any weight. Once out of the litter, God dies from his frailty without any dignity. To him, death comes as a relief. Not only are God and a feeble, demented and dying person stark contrasts, but also the death of God becomes meaningless. Leaving no impact at all, he simply vanishes. However, the shock and disbelief this scene evokes is heightened even more by the terse statement that this scene takes less than a minute.[81] Whereas the death of God, for many people scandalous and unthinkable, should be an event with an immense magnitude, impact and repercussions, this God is so insignificant that his disappearance is only noticed by Lyra and Will because they happen to witness it. In the greater perspective it is nothing more than a peripheral phenomenon during battle; and even Lyra's and Will's attention is taken immediately afterwards by the grief over the death of the two Gallivespians. God is dead and no one notices nor cares.[82]

In Pullman's *His Dark Materials* angels play a more important role than God itself, as it is the rebel angel Metatron who dominates the evil side and Baruch and Balthamos who represent the good side. Although Metatron is modelled on Milton's Satan and shares traits such as lust for power and refusal of servitude and obedience to a higher being than himself,

---

[79] This offensive, disrespectful portrait of God and the dealing with the institution of the Church in Pullman's trilogy ought to have called into action more critics than Rowling's supposedly occult heptalogy.
[80] Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass*, p. 431.
[81] Ibd., p. 432.
[82] This statement and all its implications alone would provide enough material for a study in its own right.

Pullman's rebel angel is not as charismatic as Milton's. He does not have to be, since Metatron is not an antagonist of equal rank of an almighty God. God is inferior to him, and Metatron has seized power long since. The angel's defeat by Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel puts an end to his despotism.

The good angels, by contrast, represented by Balthamos and Baruch, belong to a lower rank in the hierarchy and are weaker than human beings. The couple of angel lovers[83] have their own character, with the older female Balthamos being dominant and Baruch reserved and docile.[84] Despite her good nature, Balthamos cannot help making ironic and sarcastic remarks, which expose Will's relative innocence to her experience of life. In their relationship, the two angels show unconditional loyalty, trust and love, thus setting an example for Will's and Lyra's tender bonds. Having discovered the secret about God,[85] Balthamos and Baruch decide to support Lyra and Will and to take them to Lord Asriel, so that they can unite their forces in the battle against Metatron. Rather than remaining mere watchers,[86] the angel couple intervenes and tries to positively influence the outcome of the battle. In *His Dark Materials*, angels are portrayed as pilgrims independent of space and time.

Taylor's dark fantasy novels *Wormwood, Shadowmancer, Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street* and *Tersias* are marked by the eternal struggle between good and evil. These two poles are represented by demonic forces and corrupt, power-hungry human helpers on the one hand and children, teenagers and angels on the other hand. Raphael is the most prominent of these good angels. On earth, he is supported by Raphah.[87] Together they stand for all those positive values mentioned earlier. Despite the violence and the constant threat of evil good prevails, even if its representatives are the minority. Faith, loyalty, love and trust towards each other and to God, who is called Riathamus,[88] weld the companions together. They are led by the angels Raphael and Raphah, who set the example of a good life. Like the Christian God, Riathamus is presented as omniscient, good and just, yet remains unfathomable for humans.[89] The main characters are shown to lead a life which pleases God by following His will and are rewarded for fighting against evil. As in *His Dark Materials*, in

---

[83] Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass*, p. 27.
[84] Ibd., p. 18.
[85] Ibd., pp. 33-34. God being nothing more than an impostor, his death is somewhat moderated. Yet, it is still shocking because he stands for the entire concept of veneration, belief and respect that religion is, impostor or not.
[86] Philip Pullman. *His Dark Materials. The Subtle Knife*. New York: Ballantine, 1998, p. 287.
[87] Coloured and without any exterior sign of his true nature, Raphah is a refreshingly alternative angel.
[88] Taylor, *Shadowmancer*, p. 277.
[89] Ibd., pp. 278-279.

Taylor's novels God's antagonist is the devil, the fallen angel Pyratheon. In an apocalyptic showdown between the representatives of God and the devil a symbolic darkness falls before the sun can rise again.[90]

In Taylor's novels, the role of God and the angels is of salutary nature. They bring positive values one can believe in and the gospel into a world of chaos and evil. Functioning as role models, the good angels rescue people in despair and guide them towards a Christian life and inner peace. However, even the angels themselves are not exempt from making mistakes, as the example of the suffering angel Tegatus demonstrates. Even so the angel still serves as a model, albeit a negative one. His state is so deplorable that he evokes pity. At the same time it ensures that his behaviour will not be copied.[91] With emphasis being put on honesty, hypocrisy is punished.

In *Tersias*, the megalomaniac fanatic Salomon sets himself up as leader of his own sect. Not only does he abuse a wise biblical king's name, but he also brainwashes and controls his disciples and even aspires to obtain the power over life and death. With the help of a "homemade" apocalypse, Salomon plans to set an example and to punish all the misguided who happen not to be his disciples. In the end, Salomon in turn is punished for his hypocrisy and fanaticism. Ironically, he dies from the same apocalyptic plague in the form of carnivorous locusts that he devised for his adversaries. So in Taylor's novels, following the ways of God is rewarded, whereas adhering to evil convictions never pays off.

Nix' *The Keys of the Kingdom* heptalogy may not be British but Australian, yet the novels use an interesting allegorical approach to heaven (the House), God (the Creator) and Adam (the Heir). Nix designs heaven like a building, with its own storeys, hierarchy, power politics, administration and infrastructure. During the absence of the female Creator,[92] the seven Weekdays, the rebel angels, act as governors or trustees, each for a certain area of the House. Before her departure, the Creator has left Her Will. However, the trustees have rebelled against Her, divided the personified Will in seven parts and have taken control of their respective area. Arthur Penhaligon, a human boy, has been chosen Heir to the Kingdom (of heaven) and given the task to reunite the Will as well as take the Keys of power from the Weekdays, thus winning back the Creator's authority and realm. In contrast to Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, God is not dead, just absent – and, to top it all, female.

---

[90] Ibd., p. 299.
[91] Taylor, *Wormwood*, pp. 113, 160, 163-164.
[92] Having erected the House, the Creator is also called the Architect.

At first glance it may seem paradox that in the modern age of mass media and communication traditional convictions and ideas are so popular. Yet, increasing instability brings about a demand for security. God and the angels symbolise people's longing for guidance, shelter, support, love and consolation. In times of need and crisis they remain symbols of hope – a quality which exceeds the competence of any artificial intelligence.[93] In current British fantasy novels for children, not only God and the angels are en vogue as characters but also comparable transcendental, i.e. non-human, beings like djinn, as in Stroud's *Bartimaeus* trilogy or Kerr's *Children of the Lamp* novels. Depending on the desired effect, the fantasy authors also introduce demons, witches or ghosts, which can be either good or evil.

Whereas the good representatives can boost the humans' confidence, pass on values and morals, thus seeing to a happy ending for the main character(s)' quest, the evil ones fascinate by their wickedness and ruthlessness, their intrepidity when striving for power and their dark visions. Furthermore, these evil beings stand for a mystical and psychological dimension, people's unconscious fears and destructive desires unleashed. Delaney's evil witches, boggarts and other creatures, Pullman's cliff-ghasts and spectres and Nix's dead hands in the Abhorsen trilogy explore the depths of the human soul. As inescapable personifications of menaces and existential fear, these beings require a direct confrontation. This does not only concern the respective hero(es), but also the reader. By giving negative feelings such as depressions a form, the internal problem becomes external. Now it is concrete and can be destroyed. Rowling's Dementors for example are designed as monsters. With their frightening outward appearance and the dissemination of an atmosphere of pure fear, these hunters of tormented souls clearly originate from the horror genre. Any encounter with them has traumatic qualities. [94]

Be it the various versions of angels, demons, ghosts, Dementors, djinn or whichever form they may take, these beings embody the mystical dimensions of magic and a parallel world of spirits. Yet, as all current British fantasy novels for children that introduce such beings emphasise, like good and evil, they prove to be a double-edged sword. Whereas their involvement permits humans to achieve the otherwise unattainable, be it extraordinary power, wish fulfilment, riches, performance, skills etc., it also holds a large potential of danger. As

---

[93] Interestingly, topical computer games like *Diablo, Black and White* or *Devil May Cry* set in at this point: The characters are good and rebel angels, demons and the devil.
[94] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 281.

welcome as their assistance may be for certain projects, as destructive or even lethal those beings can be when they get out of control.

In this connection death is becoming an important subject in current British fantasy novels for children. Seemingly a strange topic for children, who are just beginning to live and for whom death should still be far away, death is a part of life just like birth and should not be a taboo topic. Current novels have discovered its potential and scope out modern interpretations. In particular these concern philosophical and ethical questions such as right and wrong, sin and punishment, the concept of heaven and hell and life after death in general. The localisation of a possible afterlife, its form and the beings in this kind of place oblige the otherness of fantasy worlds. With the exploration of death and its realm(s), fantasy literature for children broadens its horizon, i.e. the latitude for inventions. Certainly the idea of exploring death in fantasy literature for children is not new, but its extent and frequency are.

Novels such as *At the Back of the North Wind, The Chronicles of Narnia* or the *Earthsea* sequence consciously inquire into death and its implications, yet they are few and far between among fantasy novels for children. With death being pervasive in the media, this development is reflected in literature and children's fantasy is not exempt from this development. Consequently, an increasing number of fantasy novels for children include death as a subject of importance. In his *Discworld* novels, Pratchett approaches it from the comical viewpoint with his character of DEATH and its smaller version for rats. In the *Harry Potter* novels, death also plays an important role. Harry loses his parents as well as his godfather, and this trauma is one of the threads running through the novels. It is emphasised by recurring memories, appearances of his parents in the Mirror of Erised, their ghosts emanating from Voldemort's wand in the cemetery, their photographs, memorabilia such as the cloak of invisibility or Harry's physical resemblance to his parents. Death is presented as a rupture of life, not of feelings. Through the presence of hope, its horrors are moderated. The ghost of Nearly Headless Nick is even intended to show that death can have a comical side. In Delaney's *The Wardstone Chronicles* death is a constant companion of both the Spook and his apprentice due to their profession. Over time, death's initial horrors are put into perspective. Although it becomes an everyday occurrence dealing with ghosts, necromancers and dead witches, the subject always remains a dangerous one which calls for respect and never lapses into the banal or ridiculous. In Jacques' *Redwall* series, death is treated as part of a package deal. If a villain cannot be brought round to reason, then death is presented as his just punishment. "Be good or die" is the motto Jacques' concept boils down to, entailing a dulling in view of capital punishment.

By contrast, Hoffman's Stravaganza novels handle this sensitive topic in a very well-thought-out and subtle way. Here, death is not seen simply as the end of life or an evil threat. Rather, it becomes a second chance for terminally ill Lucien and also for a handicapped boy from Talia. In our world Lucien dies, yet he translates to the parallel world of Talia, where he lives on. The boy from Talia dies in his world and carries on his life, albeit under new circumstances, in our world. In this alternative concept to heaven, the Stravaganza novels suggest a continuation of life in a different form in a secondary world.

In Nix' *The Keys of the Kingdom*, the House represents heaven. Its denizens tend to live for thousands of years if they are not killed, especially the ones of high rank. As a human, the main character Arthur starts out much more frail. Suffering from asthma, he is about to die from an attack when he is suddenly appointed heir to the House. Within the House, his ailment is gone. With every key that he gathers, Arthur turns more into a strong and immortal denizen himself, so he has literally been saved from death in the secondary world.

By contrast, in Nix' *Abhorsen* trilogy death is the central idea for the entire plot. The three novels are dominated by death and the dead, as they focus on the life and work of necromancers. The task of the Abhorsen is to ensure the separation of the world of the living and that of the dead. Unsettled or risen again by evil necromancers, those dead have left their own realm, now threatening to overthrow the natural order of life and death. By binding the dead, evil spirits and zombies and by leading them back beyond the seventh gate the Abhorsen restore the balance between the two realms.

Pullman's *His Dark Materials* eventually approach death from a classical point of view. In the third volume of the trilogy Lyra and Will set out to the mythical underworld, which strongly resembles the classical Greek model. Here too, an imbalance of life and death causes serious problems. Lyra and Will have to close the interrupted circle of life, i.e. the unhindered flow of the life particles called Dust. Particularly interesting from a religious point of view is the fact that in Pullman's trilogy God is revealed to be nothing but an usurper, after the death and instant dissolution of whom life in all the worlds continues as before. For the resurrection of the souls from the underworld no powerful or almighty God is required: To put it bluntly, two teenagers suffice. So in this version, God is superfluous for a functioning system of worlds. The recycling of souls and their particles back into the circle of life is presented as being of paramount importance; most probably inspired by modern, sustainable ecology. God is dead and no one notices or cares – this provocative message challenges faith.

6.7 The current trend

The recent turn of the millennium preoccupies the authors of British children's fantasy to a great extent. Particularly clear is the demand for spiritual material. Here, conservative, moderate or hybrid as well as rebellious ways of approaching theology and ethics are juxtaposed. An ethical approach is often considered a more liberal and open, less specific way in contrast to a stricter, confession-oriented point of view. Whereas the themes of the discussions remain very traditional ones, there is a new openness with which different angles are examined and awkward questions are being asked. Rhetoric, philosophy and their discourses play an important role in this, as they provide the tools for an ingenious occupation with these issues.

In the selected novels the treatment of faith, the existence and role of God and angels, the threat of evil as well as the place of man in this fabric are the primary concerns when it comes to spirituality. Various possibilities are addressed and followed through and it transpires that, in times of upheaval and crisis as these, the individual search for personal happiness and well-being is rated highly. Despite - or perhaps because of - the strong influence of globalisation, the role of the individual and his quest for truth[95] and story in view of the glut of pieces of information are emphasised. Faith and spirituality, serving as anchors, are revealed to provide support and meaningfulness for the individual's quest.

6.8 "Parasitical" literature

Wherever there is literature that is successful with critics and audience alike, people are trying to imitate it. Of those jumping onto the bandwagon, there are only a few who profit from the original work and get new ideas or develop suggested ideas further, finally finding their own style in following a model. Le Guin for example was inspired and influenced by a fruitful reading of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* before she created her own distinctive *Earthsea* cycle. However, there are also those who try to make the most of a trend in literature. Mainly for pecuniary advantage these authors plagiarise originals, introducing only a few changes of names and places whilst keeping most of the original plot and structure. Due to a high degree of conformity of original and imitation the prospects are good for the latter:

---

[95] Fictional fantasy novels for children and truth are by no means mutually exclusive. On the contrary – the otherness of the fantasy worlds introduces so many novelties that consistency, reliability and truth (in the form of verifiable facts) are necessary to re-stabilise the individual. In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman takes up the question and the importance of truth. The main character Lyra, "liar", has to learn that telling the truth is often more difficult than telling lies, but also far more rewarding.

Readers who enjoy the original novel might buy the imitation since it is apparently so similar. These "parasitical"[96] authors and their books thus profit from actual trends and seem to constantly be on the outlook for new gaps in the market, quickly filling them with their novels.

6.9   Parodies

Yet, there are authors who parody popular forms or works of fantasy and who are very successful since very original. Terry Pratchett for instance has created a whole universe and each volume features a large range of parodistic elements. Pratchett's *Discworld* series is so refreshing since he parodies everything and anything without simply copying other novels. Instead, the author works with subtle allusions, parallels or opposites, embedded in the fabric of a dense network of intertextuality within and outside of fantasy literature. The novels are interlarded with dropped hints, so that the reader becomes a detective, embarking on a treasure hunt for clues. Amidst all those déjà-lus the reader is facing a constant challenge: One cannot get rid of the impression that no matter how meticulous the reading, one still misses many allusions and puns. Layered as Pratchett's novels are, a superficial reading of them will reveal superficial aspects. Like an archaeologist, one has to expose the lower strata of the work. Such discoveries are two-edged swords: Any achievement, however rewarding it may be, is accompanied by the nagging feeling that something far more precious has been overlooked.

Among current British fantasy novels for children range many originals and a growing number of parodies of such works. Qualitatively there are big differences between what we have labelled "parasitical" literature and parodies. Whereas "parasitical" literature either bluntly imitates content and/ or structure of an original or thinly disguises the imitation by means of other names, places or through the introduction of a new character, well-made parodies can even have the potential of becoming an original in their own right. It is only natural that parodies follow the current trends of the genre. By basing themselves on popular original works, they aim at a correspondingly large readership. In the first place parodies are

---

[96] The term "parasitical" is offensive. It was chosen to point out the common practice of imitators in fantasy literature who attempt to sell their novels to the fans of the genre. By largely copying contents and structure, yet not keeping the demanding style of originals, those authors write for the sake of profit, not of craftsmanship, aesthetics or conviction. Still, not every apparent imitation is a poor spin-off of an original. Parodies can be witty and original in their own respect. Although parodies can be parasitical, humour requires hard work. Parasitical works are written with the aim of quick success with the least effort input possible, whereas parodies have the potential of success in their own right if they are well done.

intended to amuse those readers who already like the original novel and who can now see it from a new, humorous angle. Yet there are also those readers who do not like the original and who therefore enjoy fun being made of it.

Since our corpus novels also include bestsellers,[97] which follow or even set current trends of the genre, they are bound to be parodied by other authors. In the majority of these cases the parodies modify the original's title slightly so as not to openly plagiarise whilst keeping the resemblance as an eye-catcher. This way, *The Lord of the Rings* becomes *Bored of the Rings* in one version and *Muddle Earth* in another, *Alice in Wonderland/ Through the Looking-Glass* are the basis for *The Looking Glass Wars*, and *Barry Trotter*'s origin is self-explanatory, too. As with all parodies, they can only work to their full extent if the reader is already familiar with the original novel. Otherwise allusions, parallels and puns are lost. Due to their high affinity to fairy tales, the classic literature for beginners, fantasy novels are a popular continuation for advanced young readers. Therefore many children are familiar with the bestsellers of the fantasy genre and consequently understand the parodies.

The rapprochement of fantasy for children and fantasy for adults raises an interesting issue regarding the spectrum of parody. Aided by the current trend of screen adaptations of bestselling fantasy novels,[98] children rapidly expand their knowledge of "adult matter" and its respective parodies. It goes without saying that more children will have seen the three *The Lord of the Rings* films than read the novel. Yet, subsequent to watching the films, they are already familiar with the complexity of the plot and can understand the novel better. At the same time, adults watch and/ or read children's fantasy either in connection with their children or to serve their own interests. Due to this mutual rapprochement of adults and children through films and texts in the fantasy genre and the resulting widening of the spectrum towards adult literature on the one hand and towards children's literature on the other parody already is and will become even easier. The advantage of writing a parody of a popular classic is the readers' familiarity with the original. Plot, characters and setting are

---

[97] These are for instance *Harry Potter*, *His Dark Materials*, *The Edge Chronicles*, the *Inheritance* novels or *Redwall*.

[98] These comprise for instance *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2007), *Eragon* (2007), *Inkheart* (2008), *Prince Caspian* (2008) and *The Golden Compass* (2008). A remarkable feature of this current development is the fact that the interval between the publication of the novels and their film adaptations diminishes noticeably. Whereas in the case of both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* almost half a century separates novels and films, in the cases of the others the film follows the novels in quick succession with only 5 years between novel and film for *Eragon* and *Inkheart*. Unlike traditional classics, their modern equivalents gain this status quasi over night rather than over decades – an interesting characteristic which needs to be analysed elsewhere.

already outlined. Not having to design an entirely new story, the author of a parody can dedicate their attention to the parody itself, i.e. the allusions, puns and satire. Based on Carroll's *Alice* novels, Beddor's *The Looking Glass Wars* modify some of the characters, yet never beyond recognition. Aware of the prejudices against parody compared to original works, Beddor takes the offensive. In the preface to *The Looking Glass Wars*, the American author turns the tables on critics by passing the accusation of imitation on to Carroll. With this brazen reversal of the roles Beddor wards off any reproaches of cliché parody is tainted with: A humorous since self-ironic wink at the practice he is consciously using himself. As far as the Queen's violence is concerned, Beddor surpasses Carroll's model by far. Whereas parody is usually comical and funny, the author gives a serious, belligerent title and tone to his novel.[99] By permanently rectifying and correcting Carroll's minimised novels, Beddor alleges that Carroll was not able to grasp the gravity of the situation. In his novel, Alyss, so the "correct" spelling, is not surrounded by strange yet harmless beings like the cute white rabbit or the Cheshire cat. Instead, the Queen's assassin hunts Alyss and Redd personally decapitates her rival, Alyss' mother. The girl is shocked and outraged when she learns that Dodgson, whom she trusted with the account of her adventures, has changed important details of her memories, turning them into "foolish stuff of children. He was just another in a long line of unbelievers and this – this stupid, nonsensical book – was how he made fun of her. She had never felt more betrayed."[100] Reversing the roles of original and parody, Beddor thus gives Carroll's novels a new twist.

Whilst Beddor has chosen to parody a traditional classic of children's fantasy, new classics are just as suitable for this purpose. Such a modern work with a high degree of familiarity, thus predestined for parody, is the *Harry Potter* series. Gerber's *Barry Trotter* is made to look very much like the original,[101] even if it is of a much smaller format, as far as its actual size and its plot are concerned. As the title already suggests, Gerber's novels do not go to great lengths to contribute own ideas. Some twisted letters in combination with a liberal since crude interpretation of the events of the original series have to suffice. However, this uninspired text is fully intentional and does not aspire to literary praise. In order to ridicule *Harry Potter* anything seems viable in the parody. The author's favourite means of scorn are

---

[99] This fact challenges the compatibility of *The Looking Glass Wars* and parody. Indeed, the novel can be considered a borderline case.
[100] Beddor, *The Looking Glass Wars*, p. 3.
[101] Colours, font and last but not least the name of the hero speak for themselves.

word puns, snide remarks and wickedness on the part of the characters. Here, Gerber sets up a cascade of pyrotechnics for everyone ready to laugh about the original without any flights of fancy. Barry is the negative mould of Harry, representing everything Harry is not. Although this Dirty Harry is naughty, he is far from being clever and cultivated like an Artemis Fowl. Rather, he moves on a base, sometimes even vulgar level.

Interlarded with innuendos, the novels relate the mediocre life of Barry, who, in contrast to Harry, enjoys sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. Like *The Looking Glass Wars*, *Barry Trotter* reverses the order of original and parody. Lazy and selfish, Barry wins fame only because a certain Mrs Rolling writes over-exaggerated books about a fictitious Barry. In line with the relaxed attitude of Barry, who through no fault of his own happened to become famous, the unpretentious preface already explains the author's intentions with an ironic wink. He tries to jump onto the bandwagon as long as money can be earned with contributions to the *Harry Potter* craze. Having declared his point of view by this straightforward statement of not striving to write a novel of comparable rank, the author does not feel obliged to bind himself to quality standards of the genre. The reader accepts this by reading on. Even so, the jokes do not manage to level out a very sketchy plot. Unperturbed by this obvious weakness and having given himself carte blanche, Gerber generously avails himself of ideas and motives from other bestsellers of children's literature and implements them into his novels. As the authors of *Bored of the Rings* (1969) have already done before him, he openly confronts them with his calculated, insolent demand to purchase the book.

Book covers of respectable novels of the genre advertise for their contents in various ways. These are for instance an interesting, mysterious and/ or catchy title, an expressive scene from the novel as a cover picture or an elaborate, imaginative and creative presentation in the form of an intricate design and colour scheme. Current publications of British fantasy novels for children increasingly work with a combination of tactile and optical features. Books glow in the dark, are covered in three-dimensional goose pimples (*Endymion Spring*), have multilayered front covers which by the means of recesses permit glimpses into the inner (*Stravaganza: City of Masks*), holographic elements as in *Molly Moon*, *The Children of the Red King*, *Abhorsen* or *Artemis Fowl*. Parodies of such novels, however, are not designed as costly as the originals. It is in the nature of a parody that it does not reach the same broad readership as an original, so an elaborate cover is too expensive. Still, parodies tend to imitate at least the colours or a characteristic feature of original covers, symbolic of the textual similarities.

Whereas an original tries to break new ground in form and content, a parody provides a new, funny viewpoint on the basis of the given literary prerequisites. Since jokes and puns only work to their full extent if the allusions are noticed, parody lives off intertextuality. Combined with its inherent permissiveness, parody can lay claim to poetic licence and go through constellations and possibilities the parodied work does not feature. This can also apply to novels which are originals in their own right but which in parts parody other works and the characters therein. An example for such intertextual parody is Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*, an anti-*Harry Potter* that explores the main character's negative traits.

In contrast to serious fantasy novels, where fun is made of others, yet neither of the hero nor of the villain, parodies permit to laugh about them. Whereas it would be unthinkable to laugh about Voldemort or Sauron, *Muddle Earth* features a clumsy hero and a teddy-bear villain. Against a backdrop of nonsense-elements like singing curtains, Dr Cuddles' megalomania and madness are minimised.

With some temporal distance, when the potential of current British fantasy novels for children will have fully crystallised, many parodies will still be written. However, it is interesting to note that there are a number of immediate parodies of just as immediate bestselling originals. It remains to be seen whether instant parody is a result of instant response in the age of communication and whether it will gain acceptance. As with anything, additional time allotted for reflection can also be an advantage as to what quantity and quality are concerned.

7.   Summary and evaluation of research results

An aim of the present study is to compile a topographical cross-section of the current landscape of British fantasy literature for children. On the basis of corpus novels chosen on account of their large spectrum of characteristics selected aspects have been examined. Those reveal traditional as well as modern elements in the development of the genre. Aspect-related analyses and comparisons of the corpus novels' composition with distinctive precursors on the one hand and among themselves on the other hand have illustrated a dynamic process of progress. The latter becomes apparent in the shift of emphasis in focal points.

Whereas the traditional elements of magic, evil, violence and humour, integral parts of all fantasy novels, remain stable in their characteristics, their individual interpretation can vary. As we have seen, changes in society influence the form those traditional elements can take. With changes in political systems and social attitudes, the parameters of evil and violence shift, whilst technical progress first and foremost finds expression in the field of magic. Whilst at the time of industrialisation the substitution of man by machines was an issue, today the potential, but also the danger of the relation between man and artificial intelligence is given special emphasis. Strange as it may seem at first, current British fantasy novels for children succeed in bringing together magic and technological progress[1] without breaking the spell of the enchantment.

On the basis of the selected aspects of primary and secondary worlds, the modern quest and the modern child hero and his milieu, we have examined modern structures in current British fantasy novels for children. It could be demonstrated that two contrasting movements, individualisation and globalisation, influence the above aspects decisively. As the analysis of our corpus novels with regard to these issues has shown, the genre endeavours to balance them out by portraying individual heroes on a simultaneous inner and outer quest to save the entire world. In the tradition of Carroll's Alice, modern fantasy heroes still share a significant feature: Instead of actively aspiring to become a hero and having a proper sense of mission, they start out as nondescript children. Thus taken by surprise when accidentally becoming involved in the fantasy adventure, a large number of them initially refuse to take on the responsibility as a hero. Feeling far from special, these child heroes voice their doubts

---

[1] For laymen, many technical devices like virtual keyboards are literally magical. The intellectual as well as technological contest between Foaly and Artemis Fowl, spread over the entire series, illustrates the fascination of magical technology.

about their fate before they eventually accept their new role and grow with their task. The examination of the genre's modern structures – above all the hero and his or her quest - permits an insight into the spirit of the time, since the selected aspects reflect society's guiding principles, demands and expectations, but also its fears and concerns.

The modern structures are closely linked to the third thematic section of this study, the formal innovations of the genre. Here, we have inquired into the definition, the existence and the possible form of a canon of British fantasy novels for children. In this connection the aspects of *allalderslitteratur*, single versus dual address and crossover literature were analysed. It could be found that, as with other study-related definitions before, the borders between these kinds of reader address are blurred and resist binding, clear-cut definitions. Yet, considering the current development, fuzziness challenges traditional forms on its way to establishing itself as a new form in its own right. Against this background of an impending topographical as well as social disorientation, fantasy heroes are endowed with individual traits intended to withstand the surge. Social criticism has always been an issue in literature for children. Yet, it was addressed mainly to the parents, with some direct appeals to the children with respect to injustices, manners and morals. Novels like *The Water-Babies* are critical but too theoretical. As we could demonstrate, current British fantasy novels for children grant their readers, be they beginners or more experienced, their own authority. In this respect, children have become emancipated and are now actively involved in as well as called to account for responsibility towards other people. What is more, social criticism has been enlarged by another aspect: The responsibility for the environment, i.e. the planet. With the increasing importance given to ecology, current British fantasy novels for children implement Tolkien's concept of preservation instead of exploitation, i.e. of circumspection instead of thoughtlessness. Further aspects of formal innovations are the morals, values and messages conveyed by the fantasy novels. In times of upheaval and instability such as these, shaken by economical and financial crises, political anxiety and the threat of global terror, hard-core issues are being recalled. Therefore, traditional values such as respect, love and faith are focussed upon. In this connection we observed an increasing occupation with and interest in theology and ethics. A large number of corpus novels work with biblical themes and figures. While the antagonistic constellation of good and evil looks back on a long tradition in literature for children, other issues periodically, as the need arises, become of current interest. This, for instance, holds true for the appearance and role of angels, death and a possible afterlife. Other aspects of interest are the meaning of life, sin and atonement, forgiveness and belief in one's own capabilities.

The subject of the modern hero interlocks modern structures and formal innovations, since his doubts and even refusal as far as his responsibility and quest are concerned are governed by his education and creed. By passing on a certain message through his deeds, the hero sets an example for expected good social behaviour, i.e. the morals and values he stands for are influenced by society. No matter how strong their resentments are at first, all fantasy heroes eventually take on their fate. In order to gain credibility, a hero needs support in the form of helpers who allow him to delegate tasks and skills.[2] Self-assurance and the belief in values lead to a happy ending which shows how important perseverance can be for oneself as well as society. Joy and pride in view of the achievement are the reward for not having given up. With the world(s) and their inhabitants saved and things set right, the hero returns home from his journey there and back again. The novels' message could not be any clearer: No matter how humble your background, as long as you believe in yourself and the meaningfulness of your quest, anything is possible. With the help of a new spirituality hope for the future is thus given in a rather bleak present, be it in fantasy or reality.

Since the aim of this study is to give a cross-sectional overview of the current developments in the genre, its scope is defined by this approach. Many aspects are broached which require further, in-depth examination and discussion elsewhere, as each of the above-mentioned aspects examined here provides enough material for studies in its own right. With regard to current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy the corpus novels were chosen, presented and analysed, and their commonalities, differences and special features worked out. On the basis of the observations we could then conclude that, independent of the respective form of fantasy, there exist global traits which reflect contemporary social, political and ecological influences that we integrated and presented in the proposed theses. Time and again we encountered the same characteristic: The trend goes towards a dissolving of borders as we know them. This feature poses a challenge for anyone trying to define current terms and phenomena, since working definitions, parameters as well as the subject of the study elude set standards. Already at the outset we had to determine the working definitions with the proviso that they may alter in the course of the study. The questions were of a rather problematic nature: Where to set limits? What is the course of

---

[2] In current British fantasy novels for children, superheroes are disapproved-of and, as a result, rare. Being overly competent, strong, popular, powerful etc. is highly unrealistic, even in a genre which is based on magic and its potential. Human traits are in demand which permit an identification of the reader with the hero and the sharing of a similar situation, namely maturation and socialisation.

action if limits cannot be bindingly established due to fuzziness? Is it therefore not only inappropriate but also impossible to set fixed limits? Shouldn't one accept the blurring of forms and contents and adapt norms and expectations accordingly to this new situation of openness and the invalidation of clear-cut definitions on the tide of change? In this phase of transition between old and new the provisional nature of things does not necessarily imply a loss of clarity. It can also mean a reshaping of the genre with new potential.

For our study of current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy this means that the areas of children's fantasy novels on the one hand and adult fantasy novels on the other hand can and should no longer be treated as fixtures. Instead it has to be acknowledged that borders have become permeable. The permeability is bi-lateral, permitting adults to extend their youth and children to partake in "serious" matters. As a result, the intersection between children and adults enlarges, thus offering more commonalities as far as form and content, but also where interests, possibilities, responsibilities, hopes and fears are concerned.

7.1   Outlook

The present study has revealed current trends in the genre on the basis of which a prognosis about its future direction can be attempted. In accordance with the topical development of an opening of once set borders, the genre tends towards opening itself even more for new stimuli. By fanning out, fantasy incorporates elements of other genres – the prime example being *Harry Potter* – thus widening its spectrum. This leads to a fruitful coexistence of a plurality of elements. In addition to the liberalisation, the mechanisation of magic, spearheaded by Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series, is already in full swing. Over the next few years the mechanisation of magic will increase, leading to an interesting symbiosis of old and new. Incompatible as traditional and innovative magic may seem at first glance, the two "schools" complement one another. While old magic provides an ancient, mysterious side, new magic contributes an innovative, more rational since technical side. High-tech gadgets spice up the sometimes stale image of magic. Familiar features of old magic, be it spells, magical accessories like wands, cauldrons, cloaks of invisibility or grimoires, are already used in various combinations side by side with new magical-technical accessories like neutrino lasers, mechanical wings, camfoil etc. In Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series, the fairy Holly Short illustrates this state of hybridity. Despite the fact that her equipment is fully technicised, she is required to perform an ancient ritual at Tara for replenishing of her magic force. No fantastic area is exempt from new kinds of magic. While authors like Colfer or Brennan arm their

fairies to the teeth, McGowan even makes hell go online. As far as magic is concerned, future novels will increasingly introduce and develop fairyland's equipment with new media, thus uplinking fairyland and reality. However, this does not mean that traditional magic is being made redundant. Fantasy novels à la Tolkien will always be written and read, as for instance the American Paolini shows with his bestselling *Inheritance* cycle. Here as in popular topical computer games nostalgia for archaic ways of life is kindled. If the characters of the novels live simple lives devoid of today's stress and hectic, they can concentrate on the essentials in life; i.e. their own personality and development as well as their social network. In those historical fantasy novels, conflicts are solved with the sword or the wand instead of futuristic weapons, and the overall slower pace of life offers time out from reality's current speed of life. While the current trend of introducing gadgets involves the risk of overlaying the plot, historical fantasy novels such as Crossley-Holland's *Arthur* trilogy compensate for the lack of special effects by their art of storytelling.

As ever, fantasy novels centre on the eternal battle between good and evil, which is now being fought in new dimensions and with the help of new weapons. It can be observed that an increasing number of fantasy authors use biblical motifs, figures like Adam and Eve, good and fallen angels, parables and commandments. Among those authors it is undoubtedly Pullman who, with *His Dark Materials*, pursues this path most persistently with his re-working of Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Adapted to social, political, ethical and religious realities at the turn of the millennium, Pullman's trilogy updates the biblical story of Adam and Eve according to a new, individual rendering. On account of the given views on temptation, knowledge, responsibility and choice but also on the demonstrative death of a powerless puppet that usurped the role of God, Pullman's trilogy intentionally provokes a discussion of controversial and unorthodox statements. By implying that God is dead and Heaven must be rebuilt as a republic, the traditional view of the Kingdom of Heaven is presented as overcome.

In our time religious and ethical issues will continue to play an important role, since the search for meaning and stability is intensified in times of crisis. As a result, future fantasy novels will continue to incorporate supernatural beings in order to meet the demand for guidance, support, sense of security and hope. Even if one views the idea of a god with scepticism or even denies his existence, angels or comparable beings may be easier to accept. In general, angels are depicted as possessing more affinity with human nature and therefore being more approachable than a rather abstract god. Novels like Almond's *Skellig*, Taylor's gothic fantasies or even djinn-stories such as Kerr's *The Children of the Lamp* or Stroud's

Bartimaeus trilogy point the way ahead for future fantasy novels. As long as reality does not regain balance, religious and ethical novels will continue to contribute a higher-than-average share of the genre than as in more peaceful times.

As already stated in the outline of the study, definitions are becoming elusive as the genre opens up for new stimuli. Not only are styles and forms influenced by hybridity but also the target groups. In the course of the mixing and merging of the latter, age suggestions for fantasy novels may one day become superfluous. As we have seen, this new phenomenon is aptly labelled *allalderslitteratur* and describes the move towards only one big group of readers. One can claim that fantasy literature for children shows distinct tendencies for a possible fusion with adult fantasy literature.[3] Time will tell whether this merging will be complete or remain partial. Given radical social changes, this development may be reversed. Yet at present, such an incident is unlikely. Should literature for children and literature for adults indeed fully merge one day, with the mutual consent of both children and adults, then the development will have come full circle; the difference being that this time the unity will not be due to ignorance, but to conviction.

We have seen that in current publications of fantasy novels for children traditional concepts underlie the structure, the elements of plot as well as the constellation of characters. Upon such stable foundations modern structures are erected; be it the splitting of one supernatural hero into two or three more natural main characters, the contemporary colouring by the implementation of topical issues and problems, but also of progress, above all the role of the new media. Contrary to the wide-spread prejudice of being out-of-touch, current British fantasy literature for children is up-to-date. The overall globalisation influences the modern fantasy heroes as well as the worlds they move in. As everything becomes interlinked, be it fairyland or hell, fantasy is moving away from micro- towards macrocosm. This widening of the horizon entails implications for the quest. Instead of being the difficult task for a single hero within a limited or even isolated world, the quest increasingly requires more responsibility. Through the splitting of one hero into several, the latter can be distributed onto more shoulders. What is more, there is much at stake. No longer an isolated part of a world is

---

[3] Manlove emphasises the market-orientation of current publications of children's fantasy. (p.181) Whereas it cannot be denied that authors observe market parameters by gearing the elements of their texts towards reader expectations, Manlove's claim that children's fantasy is a simplifying literature which does not reflect postmodern changes such as changing social realities or the plurality and interconnectedness of texts could be disproved in the present study. Compare Manlove, *The Fantasy Literature of England*, pp.181f., 184.

threatened, but everything; be it the entire world, planet or even universe. In this battle over everything or nothing, special emphasis is given to ecological issues.

A further current trend of British children's fantasy novels must not be underestimated, either. On the tide of an increasing blending of forms and genres, hybrid forms[4] will constitute a large share of the market until one or more new forms establish themselves. As much as experiments are needed in times of social as well as literary instability, in the end more stable forms will prevail again. In the wake of such a reconsolidation of matters, one or even more new forms of literary art may emerge. Just as the genre undergoes changes, so do its traditional definitions. The latter are disintegrating at present and will continue to remain vague until their future reconsolidation. Due to this current phase of transition, the preliminariness of the introductory working definitions given at the beginning of this study was expressly stressed. In time one will have to reconsider the parameters for a definition of "British" itself; whether in decades to come "British" will then mean the multi-ethnic background, the geographical setting, the philosophy of life or something else. At first glance, this vagueness may seem a major drawback. However, it also offers new approaches and points of view adapted to the social, cultural and political needs and demands of generations to come. As we have seen, the current change with its innovations holds a large potential for the genre. Its opening towards external influences permits it to incorporate new elements and impressions, thus actively rejuvenating itself.

With English as the global language of communication and the media it is not surprising that English books dominate for instance the German market. Fantasy for children has always been very Britain-oriented, as many classics were written by English authors in the Golden Age of children's literature and spread all over the world. An imbalance can be seen to emerge as the respective markets import English literature for children, yet the non-English exports into the English-speaking area are rare. One of these exceptions of a non-English import into British children's literature is the German author Funke, who, over the last few years, has established herself as a serious contributor to the fantasy genre. *The Thief Lord* and *Inkheart* have already been adapted for the screen and the sequels to *Inkheart* are bound to

---

[4] As we have seen, hybridity also concerns the forms of texts. In the future, traditional print media will have to compete even more with electronic narratives. Hybridity further concerns its elements, for instance the secondary world or the hero(es). In *Brisingr*, the third novel of the *Inheritance* cycle, Paolini emphasises this very point. By being no longer a boy and not yet a man, no longer a human and not an elf, the hero Eragon has become a hybrid form himself. Compare Christopher Paolini. *Inheritance. Brisingr.* London: Doubleday, 2008, p. 659.

follow suit. Ralf Isau is also a promising candidate, particularly with the novel *Pala.* Compared to the genre's share of original English-speaking novels, very few non-English novels, albeit in translation, make it into English literature. Yet, once they do, those fantasy novels for children gain popularity.[5]

The future development of British fantasy novels for children will be decisively marked by the new media and other technical innovations, which play an increasingly important role.[6] Having become essential parts of everyday life, they will become integrated into the fantasy texts as naturally as online role playing games such as D&D feature old magic and new technology side by side. While traditional forms of fantasy, such as animal fantasy, historical fantasy or heroic fantasy will continue to exist, represented for instance by Jacques' *Redwall* or Baldry's *Eaglesmount*, Crossley-Holland's *Arthur* or Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle, the current developments of the genre reveal a gaining in strength of dark fantasy as well as the new hybrid form of high-tech fantasy. At the same time crossover forms, an active exchange between forms, will become even more frequent, perhaps even the norm one day, before new parameters will be laid down. Those will then testify the shift in definition, content and form of fantasy. In the meantime, the current developments at the intersection of British children's literature and fantasy already show many interesting facets and potential of their own that future novels will have to consider when taking on the challenge set by the present.

Meanwhile, we have come full circle. Not only does no one have to apologise and justify themselves for reading or studying children's literature any more, but interestingly critics like Linda Hutcheon apologise for *not* having developed a serious interest in children's literature any sooner.[7] Furthermore, the memorable opening sentence of *The Hobbit* now has a competitor. In Rowling's version, the message "In a cupboard under the stairs there lived a

---

[5] In this connection, a highly interesting field of study suggests itself: The analysis of how much national colouring of original works gets lost in translation in order to make the text more accessible to readers with a different cultural background. Keenan points out the loss of Irishness in *Artemis Fowl* through translation and the ensuing implications globalisation has on culture-specific references in non-English national literatures. Cf. Celia Keenan. "Eoin Colfer". In: Valerie Coghlan; Siobhán Parkinson (Eds.) *Irish Children's Writers and Illustrators 1986-2006*. Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education Publications and Children's Books Ireland, 2007, pp. 25-26.

[6] Compare Andrew Burn. "Multi-text Magic: Harry Potter in Book, Film and Videogame". In: Fiona M. Collins; Jeremy Ridgman (Eds.) *Turning the Page: Children's Literature in Performance and the Media*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006, pp. 227-249, M. Mackey. *Literacies Across Media*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002, as well as G. Kress; T. van Leeuwen. *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold, 2000.

[7] Linda Hutcheon. "Harry Potter and the Novice's Confession". In: <u>The Lion and The Unicorn</u> 32.2 (April 2008), 169-179.

wizard", is rendered by "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much."[8] Banal as they are, the beginnings of both traditional and new classic open the door to a magical world that fascinates young and old alike and will continue to do so for years to come.

---

[8] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 7.

8.   Bibliography

Primary works

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. London: Puffin, 1973. [1972]

Alexander, Lloyd. *The Black Cauldron*. New York; Chicago; San Francisco: F. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

Almond, David. *Skellig*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 1998.

Almond, David. *Clay*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2006. [2005]

Augarde, Steve. *The Various*. London: Corgi, 2004.

Augarde, Steve. *Celandine*. London: Corgi, 2006.

Augarde, Steve. *Winter Wood*. London: Corgi, 2009.

Baldry, Cherith. *Eaglesmount. The Silver Horn*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001.

Baldry, Cherith. *Eaglesmount. The Emerald Throne*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001.

Baldry, Cherith. *Eaglesmount. The Lake of Darkness*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001.

Barnes, Emma. *Jessica Haggerthwaite – Witch Dispatcher*. London: Bloomsbury, 2001.

Beard, Henry N.; **Kenny**, Douglas C. *Bored of the Rings: A Parody of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings"*. The Harvard Lampoon. London: Gollancz, 2001. [1969]

Beddor, Frank. *The Looking Glass Wars*. London: Egmont, 2005. [2004]

Bond, Michael. *A Bear called Paddington*. London: Collins, 2001. [1958]

Booth, Martin. *Doctor Illuminatus*. London: Penguin, 2003.

Brennan, Herbie. *Faerie Wars*. London: Bloomsbury, 2003.

Brennan, Herbie. *The Purple Emperor*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Brennan, Herbie. *Ruler of the Realm*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006.

Brennan, Herbie. *Faerie Lord*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Byng, Georgia. *Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2002.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Penguin, 1994. [1865]

Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking-Glass*. London: Penguin, 1994. [1872]

Chichester, Imogen. *The Witch Child*. Harmondsworth: Kestrel, 1995. [1984]

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl*. London: Puffin, 2002. [2001]

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl. The Arctic Incident*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2002.

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl. The Eternity Code*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl. The Opal Deception*. New York: Miramax – Hyperion Books for Children, 2005.

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony*. London: Penguin, 2006.

Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl and the Time Paradox*. London: Puffin Books, 2008.

Colfer, Eoin. *The Supernaturalist*. London: Puffin, 2004.

Colfer, Eoin. *The Wish List*. London: Puffin, 2003. [2000]

Conlon-McKenna, Marita. *In Deep Dark Wood*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1999.

Cooper, Susan. *The Dark is Rising Sequence*. London: Puffin, 1984.

Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *Arthur. The Seeing Stone*. London: Orion Children's Books, 2000.

Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *Arthur. At the Crossing-Places.* London: Orion Children's Books, 2001.

Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *Arthur. King of the Middle March.* London: Orion Children's Books, 2003.

Dahl, Roald. *James and The Giant Peach*. London: Puffin, 2001. [1961]

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*. London: Penguin, 1998. [1964]

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. London: Puffin, 2001. [1973]

Dahl, Roald. *Matilda*. London: Jonathan Cope, 1988.

Dahl, Roald. *Boy: Tales of Childhood*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1990. [1984]

Dale, Anna. *Whispering to Witches*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Apprentice.* London: Red Fox, 2005. [2004]

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Curse*. London: The Bodley Head, 2005.

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Secret*. London: Red Fox, 2007. [2006]

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Battle*. London: The Bodley Head, 2007.

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Mistake*. London: Red Fox, 2008.

Delaney, Joseph. *The Wardstone Chronicles. The Spook's Sacrifice*. London: Bodley Head Children's Books, 2009.

Ende, Michael. *Die Unendliche Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Thienemann, 1979.

Foreman, Colin. *Keepers and Seekers. To the End of the World*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2004.

Foreman, Colin. *Keepers and Seekers. Killer in the Dark*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2006.

Foreman, Colin. *Keepers and Seekers. A Moment Comes*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2006.

Foreman, Colin. *Keepers and Seekers. The Rise of the Red Empire*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2007.

Foreman, Colin. *Keepers and Seekers. The Gora Moons*. Glenlomond: Myroy Books, 2009.

Funke, Cornelia**.** *Tintenherz.* Hamburg: Dressler, 2003.

Funke, Cornelia. *Tintenblut*. Hamburg: Dressler, 2005.

Funke, Cornelia. *Tintentod.* Hamburg: Dressler, 2007.

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkheart*. Frome: The Chicken House, 2003.

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkspell*. Frome: The Chicken House, 2006.

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkdeath.* Frome: The Chicken House, 2009.

Funke, Cornelia**.** *Herr der Diebe*. Hamburg: Dressler, 2000.

Funke, Cornelia. *The Thief Lord*. Frome: The Chicken House, 2003. [2000]

Funke, Cornelia. *Drachenreiter*. Hamburg: Dressler, 1997.

Funke, Cornelia. *Dragon Rider*. Frome: The Chicken House, 2004. [1997]

Garner, Alan. *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen.* San Diego; New York; London: Magic Carpet Books/ Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999. [1960]

Garner, Alan. *The Moon of Gomrath.* San Diego; New York; London: Magic Carpet Books/ Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999. [1963]

Garner, Alan. *Elidor.* San Diego; New York; London: Magic Carpet Books/ Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999. [1965]

Garner, Alan. *The Owl Service.* San Diego; New York; London: Magic Carpet Books/ Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999. [1967]

Gerber, Michael. *Barry Trotter and the Shameless Parody*. London: Gollancz, 2003. [2002]

Gerber, Michael. *Barry Trotter and the Unnecessary Sequel*. London: Gollancz, 2003.

Gerber, Michael. *Barry Trotter and the Dead Horse*. London: Gollancz, 2005. [2004]

Gerber, Michael. *The Chronicles of Blarnia*. London: Gollancz, 2006.

Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*. London: Egmont, 2000. [1908]

Hinton, Nigel. *The Finders.* London: Viking, 1993.

Hoffman, Mary. *Stravaganza. City of Masks.* London: Bloomsbury, 2002.

Hoffman, Mary. *Stravaganza. City of Stars.* London: Bloomsbury, 2003.

Hoffman, Mary. *Stravaganza. City of Flowers.* London: Bloomsbury, 2005.

Hoffman, Mary. Stravaganza. *City of Secrets*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Hughes, Thomas. *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Barcelona: Fabbri, 1992.

Hussey, Charmian. *The Valley of Secrets*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2005. [2003]

Ibbotson, Eva. *The Secret of Platform 13*. London: Pan Macmillan, 2001. [1994]

Isau, Ralf. *Pala und die Seltsame Verflüchtigung der Worte*. Stuttgart; Wien: Thienemann, 2002.

Jacques, Brian. *Redwall*. London: Hutchinson, 1986.

Jacques, Brian. *Mattimeo – A Tale of Redwall*. London: Hutchinson, 1989.

Jacques, Brian. *Mariel of Redwall*. London: Hutchinson's Children's Books, 1991.

Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp. The Akhenaten Adventure.* London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2004.

Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp. The Blue Djinn of Babylon*. London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2005.

Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp. The Cobra King of Kathmandu.* Scholastic Children's Books, 2007.

Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp. The Day of the Djinn Warriors.* Scholastic Children's Books, 2008.

Kerr, P.B. *Children of the Lamp. The Eye of the Forest*. Scholastic Children's Books, 2009.

Kingsley, Charles. *The Water-Babies*. Barcelona: Fabbri, 1992.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Earthsea Quartet*. London: Penguin, 1993.

Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. London, 2001.

McCaughrean, Geraldine. *The Stones are Hatching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

McGowan, Anthony. *Hellbent*. London: Definitions, 2006. [London: Doubleday, 2005]

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Doomspell*. London: Orion, 2000.

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Scent of Magic*. London: Dolphin, 2002. [2001]

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Wizard's Promise*. London: Orion, 2002.

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Silver Sequence. The Silver Child*. London: Dolphin, 2004. [2003]

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Silver Sequence. Silver City*. London: Orion, 2004. [2005]

Mc Nish, Cliff. *The Silver Sequence. Silver World*. London: Orion, 2006.

Milne, A.A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. London: Egmont, 2003. [1926]

Milne, A.A. *The House at Pooh Corner*. London: Methuen, 1994. [1928]

Milton; John. Elledge, Scott (Ed.) *Paradise Lost*. New York: Norton, 1975.

Nesbit, Edith. *Five Children and It*. London: HarperCollins, 2004. [1902]

Nicholson, William. *The Wind on Fire. The Wind Singer*. London: Egmont, 2000.

Nicholson, William. *The Wind on Fire. Slaves of the Mastery.* London: Egmont, 2001.

Nicholson, William. *The Wind on Fire. Firesong.* London: Egmont, 2002.

Nimmo, Jenny. *Children of the Red King I. Midnight for Charlie Bone.* London: Egmont, 2002.

Nimmo, Jenny. *Children of the Red King II. The Time Twister. London:* Egmont, 2003.

Nimmo, Jenny. *Children of the Red King III. The Blue Boa.* London: Egmont, 2004.

Nimmo, Jenny. *Children of the Red King IV. The Castle of Mirrors.* London: Egmont, 2005.

Nimmo, Jenny. *Children of the Red King V. Charlie Bone and the Hidden King.* London: Egmont, 2007.

Nimmo, Jenny. *The Snow Spider Trilogy.* London: Egmont, 2005. [1986, 1987, 1989].

Nix, Garth. *The Ragwitch.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2005. [1990]

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Mister Monday.* London: Collins, 2004. [2003]

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Grim Tuesday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2004.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Drowned Wednesday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2005.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Sir Thursday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2006.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Lady Friday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2007.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Superior Saturday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2008.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom. Lord Sunday.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2009.

Nix, Garth. *Sabríel.* London: HarperCollins, 2003. [1995]

Nix, Garth. *Lírael.* London: HarperCollins, 2003. [2001]

Nix, Garth. *Abhorsen.* London: HarperCollins, 2004. [2003]

Nix, Garth. *The Creature in the Case*. London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2005.

Nix, Garth. *The Fall. The Seventh Tower*. London: HarperCollins, 2008.

Paolini, Christopher. *Inheritance. Eragon.* London: Doubleday, 2004.

Paolini, Christopher. *Inheritance. Eldest*. London: Doubleday, 2005.

Paolini, Christopher. *Inheritance. Brisingr*. London: Doubleday, 2008.

Peake, Mervyn. *The Gormenghast Trilogy*. London: Vintage, 1992.

Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's Midnight Garden*. London: Puffin, 1976. [1958]

Pratchett, Terry. *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*. London: Corgi, 2002. [2001]

Pratchett, Terry. *The Wee Free Men*. London: Corgi, 2004. [2003]

Pratchett, Terry. *A Hat Full of Sky*. London: Corgi, 2004.

Pratchett, Terry. *Wintersmith*. London: Corgi, 2007. [2006]

Pratchett, Terry; **Briggs**, Stephen. *The New Discworld Companion*. London: Gollancz, 2004.

Pullman, Philip. *Clockwork or All Wound Up*. London: Transworld, 1996.

Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials. The Golden Compass*. New York: Ballantine, 1997. [GB: *Northern Lights*, 1995]

Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials. The Subtle Knife*. New York: Ballantine, 1998. [GB 1997]

Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials. The Amber Spyglass*. London et al.: Scholastic Children's Books, 2001. [2000]

Pullman, Philip. *I was a Rat! Or the Scarlet Slippers*. London: Doubleday, 1999.

Pullman, Philip. *Lyra's Oxford.* Oxford, New York: Fickling, 2003.

Robshaw, Brandon. *The Amazing Adventures of Raincoat Man.* London: Scholastic, 1995.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* London: Bloomsbury, 1997.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* London: Bloomsbury, 1998.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.* London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* London: Bloomsbury, 2000.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.* London: Bloomsbury, 2003.

Rowling; Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.* London: Bloomsbury, 2005.

Rowling, Joanne K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Rowling, Joanne K. *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Sage, Angie. *Septimus Heap. Magyk.* London: Bloomsbury, 2005.

Sage, Angie. *Septimus Heap. Flyte*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Sage, Angie. *Septimus Heap. Physik*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Sage, Angie. *Septimus Heap. Queste*. London: Bloomsbury, 2009.

Sage, Angie. *Septimus Heap. Syren*. London: Bloomsbury, 2009.

Scamander, Newt. (**Rowling**, Joanne K.) *Fantastic Beasts and where to find them.* London: Bloomsbury, 2001.

Sedgwick, Marcus. *The Dark Flight Down*. London: Dolphin, 2005. [2004]

Skelton, Matthew. *Endymion Spring*. London et al: Puffin, 2006.

Skelton, Matthew. *Cirrus Flux*. London et al.: Puffin, 2009.

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Twig Trilogy. Beyond the Deepwoods.* London: Corgi, 1999. [1998]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Twig Trilogy. Stormchaser.* London: Corgi, 2000. [1999]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Twig Trilogy. Midnight over Sanctaphrax.* London: Corgi, 2001. [2000]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Quint Trilogy. The Curse of the Gloamgloazer.* London: Corgi, 2002. [2001]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Quint Trilogy. The Winter Knights*. London: Corgi, 2006. [2005]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Quint Trilogy. Clash of the Sky Galleons*. London: Corgi, 2007.

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Rook Trilogy. The Last of the Sky Pirates.* London: Corgi, 2003. [2002]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Rook Trilogy. Vox.* London: Corgi, 2004. [2003]

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Rook Trilogy. Freeglader.* London: Doubleday, 2004.

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *The Edge Chronicles. The Lost Barkscrolls*. London: Corgi, 2008.

Stewart, Paul; **Riddell**, Chris. *Muddle Earth*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2003.

Still, Kathy. *The Bogwater Witches*. London: Dolphin, 1998.

Stroud, Jonathan. *Bartimaeus. The Amulet of Samarkand.* London: Corgi, 2004. [2003]

Stroud, Jonathan. *Bartimaeus. The Golem's Eye.* London: Doubleday, 2004.

Stroud, Jonathan. *Bartimaeus. Ptolemy's Gate*. London: Doubleday, 2005.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Eagle of the Ninth*. Oxford; New York et al.: Oxford University Press, 2004. [1954]

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Silver Branch*. Oxford; New York et al.: Oxford University Press, 2001. [1957]

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Lantern Bearers*. Oxford; New York et al.: Oxford University Press, 2001. [1959]

Taylor, G.P. *Shadowmancer*. London: Faber and Faber, 2003.

Taylor, G.P. *Wormwood*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

Taylor, G.P. *Tersias*. London. Faber and Faber, 2005.

Taylor, G.P. *Shadowmancer: The Curse of Salamander Street*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006.

Thompson, Kate. *The Switchers Trilogy. Switchers. Midnight's Choice. Wild Blood.* London: Red Fox, 2004.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit, Or There and Back Again*. London: HarperCollins, 1999. [1937]

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. London: HarperCollins, 1995. [1954-1955]

Tyler, Val. *The Greenwich Chronicles. The Time Wreccas.* London: Puffin, 2006. [2005]

Tyler, Val. *The Greenwich Chronicles. The Time Apprentice*. London: Puffin, 2007. [2006]

Whisp, Kennilworthy. (**Rowling**, Joanne K.) *Quidditch Through the Ages.* London: Bloomsbury, 2001.

White, T.H. *The Once and Future King*. London: Shaftesbury, 1976.

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Chrestomanci Series. The Magicians of Caprona*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. [1980]

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Chrestomanci Series. Witch Week*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. [1982]

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Chrestomanci Series. The Lives of Christopher Chant*. London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2000. [1988]

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Chrestomanci Series. Mixed Magics*. London: HarperCollins, 2000.

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Chrestomanci Series. Charmed Life*. London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2005. [1977]

Wynne Jones, Diana. *Fire and Hemlock*. London: Collins, 2000. [1984]

Wynne Jones, Diana. *The Merlin Conspiracy*. London: HarperCollins, 2004.

8.1   Secondary works

This bibliography of secondary works comprises works mentioned, quoted and/ or commented on in the text and in the footnotes as well as selected further reading on the issues broached. A comprehensive bibliography of anthologies, lexica and literary histories of international children's literature can be found in Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina. *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein internationales Lexikon.* Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 2004. [1999]

Abanes, Richard. *Harry Potter: Fantasy oder Magie.* Paderborn: Christliche Verlagsbuchhandlung Wedel, 2001.

Anatol, Giselle Liza (Ed.) *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

Anelli, Melissa. *Harry, A History. The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon.* New York; London; Toronto; Sydney: Pocket Books, 2008.

Ang, Susan. *The Widening World of Children's Literature.* Basingstoke; London: Macmillan, 2000.

Applebaum, Noga. "Electronic Texts and Adolescent Agency: Computers and the Internet in Contemporary Children's Fiction". In: Reynolds, Kimberley (Ed.) *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Basingstoke; New York, 2005, 250-262.

Arbuthnot, May Hill; **Sutherland**, Zena. *Children and Books.* Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1972.

Ariès, Philippe. *Geschichte der Kindheit.* München: Hanser, 1975.

Armitt, Lucie. *Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction.* New York; London: Continuum, 2005.

Atkins, Laura. "A Publisher's Dilemma: The Place of the Child in the Publication of Children's Books". In: Sebastien Chapleau (Ed.) *New Voices in Children's Literature Criticism.* Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004, 47-54.

Atteberry, Brian. *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

Atteberry, Brian. *Strategies of Fantasy.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Avery, Gillian. *Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975.

Avery, Gillian; **Briggs**, Julia (Eds.) *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Avery, Gillian; **Reynolds**, Kimberley (Eds.) *Representations of Childhood Death*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 2000.

Bak, Sandra. *Harry Potter: Auf den Spuren eines Zauberhaften Bestsellers*. Frankfurt/ Main; Berlin; Bern; Wien: Lang, 2004.

Barker, Keith. "Animal Stories". In: Peter Hunt; Sheila Ray (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 282-294.

Barnes, Clive. "Charting the Territory: The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English". In: Signal 98 (May 2002): 102-110.

Barron, Neil (Ed.) *Fantasy Literature: A Reader's Guide*. New York; London: Garland, 1990.

Bauer, Gerhard; **Stockhammer**, Robert. *Möglichkeitssinn. Phantasie und Phantastik in der Erzählliteratur des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000.

Beatty, Greg. "The Return of the Dead in Recent Young Adult Fantasy Series". In: The New York Review of Science Fiction 15.12, 180 (August 2003): 13-15.

Beckett, Sandra L. (Ed.) *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Beckett, Sandra L. (Ed.) *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*. New York: Garland, 1999.

Beckett, Sandra L. *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Bentley, Nick (Ed.) *British Fiction of the 1990s*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Bimberg, Christiane (Ed.) *Perspektiven der englischsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur./ Perspectives on Children's Literature in English*. Internationale Studien zu Literatur, Musik und Theater/ International Studies in Literature, Music and Theatre. Vol. 3. Kamen, Vilnius, Thessaloniki et al.: Karthause-Schmülling, 2000.

Blake, Andrew. *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter*. London; New York: Verso, 2002.

Bonacker, Maren (Ed.) *Peter Pans Kinder. Doppelte Adressiertheit in Phantastischen Texten*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004.

Bradford, Clare; **Mallan**, Kerry; **Stephens**, John; **McCallum**, Robyn (Eds.) *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Bratton, J.S. *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*. London: Croom Helm/ Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1981.

Bridger, Francis. *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001.

Briggs, Julia; **Butts**, Dennis; **Grenby**, M.O. (Eds.) *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2008.

Briggs, Katherine. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002. [1967]

Brunel, Pierre (Ed.) *The Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*. London; New York: Routledge, 1992. [1988]

Burn, Andrew. "Multi-text Magic: Harry Potter in Book, Film and Videogame". In: Fiona M. Collins; Jeremy Ridgman (Eds.) *Turning the Page: Children's Literature in Performance and the Media*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006, 227-249.

Burns, Marjorie. *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Bürvenich, Paul. *Der Zauber des Harry Potter: Analyse eines Literarischen Welterfolgs*. Frankfurt et al.: Lang, 2001.

Calin, William. *The Epic Quest. Studies in Four Old French* Chansons de Geste. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966.

Campbell, Joseph. *Der Heros in Tausend Gestalten*. Frankfurt/ Main: Fischer, 1953.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History.* London et al.: Oxford University Press, 1968. [1841]

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1977.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. London; Sydney: Unwin, 1985.

Carpenter, Humphrey; **Prichard**, Mari. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*. Oxford; New York et al.: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Caselli, Daniela. "Reading Intertextuality. The Natural and the Legitimate: Intertextuality in *Harry Potter*". In: Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Ed.) *Children's Literature: New Approaches*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 168-188.

Chambers, Nancy (Ed.) *The Signal Approach to Children's Books*. Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books, 1980.

Chapleau, Sebastien (Ed.) *Children's Literature Criticism*. Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004.

Clark, George; **Timmons**, Daniel (Eds.) *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Clewe, Susanne van. *Gewalt in der Fantasy: Die Darstellung der Gewalt in Fantasy-Romanen und Fantasy-Comics für Erwachsene*. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 1994.

Clute, John; **Grant**, John (Eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. London: Orbit, 1997.

Cogan Thacker, Deborah; **Webb**, Jean. *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism.* London; New York: Routledge, 2002.

Coghlan, Valerie; **Parkinson**, Siobhán (Eds.) *Irish Children's Writers and Illustrators 1986-2006*: A *Selection of Essays*. Dublin: Children's Books Ireland & Church of Ireland College of Education Publications, 2007.

Cole, Phillip. *The Myth of Evil*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

Collins English Dictionary. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998.[4]

Collins, Fiona M.; **Ridgman**, Jeremy (Eds.) *Turning the Page: Children's Literature in Performance and the Media.* Bern: Peter Lang, 2006.

Coren, Michael. *Der Mann, der Narnia schuf: Eine Biographie.* Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1998.

Cornwell, Neil. *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

Cott, Jonathan (Ed.) *Beyond the Looking-Glass: Extraordinary Works of Fairy Tale and Fantasy.* New York: Stonehill, 1973.

Crenshaw, James L. *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil*. Oxford; New York; Auckland, Cape Town et al.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Crews, Frederick. *The Pooh Perplex*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. [1963]

Crouch, Marcus. *Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in Britain 1900-1960.* London: The Library Association, 1962.

Crouch, Marcus. *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel 1945-1970.* London: Ernest Benn, 1972.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2000. [1997]

Cullinan, Bernice E.; **Person**, Diane G. (Eds.) *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. New York; London: Continuum, 2001.

Dahl, Erhard. *Die Entstehung der Phantastischen Kinder- und Jugenderzählung in England.* Schriften der Universität-Gesamthochschule-Paderborn. Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich, 1986.

Dainton, Barry. *Time and Space.* Chesham: Acumen, 2001.

Darton, F.J. Harvey. *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life.* Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1982.[3][1932]

Davies, Paul. *Mehrfachwelten: Entdeckungen der Quantenphysik.* Düsseldorf, Köln: Diederichs, 1981.

De Vries, Anne. "Literature for All Ages? Emancipation and the Borders of Children's Literature". In: Sandra L. Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997, 43-48.

Dickinson, Peter. "Fantasy: The Need for Realism". In: <u>Children's Literature in Education</u> 17.1 (1986): 39-51.

Doderer, Klaus. *Lexikon der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Personen-, Länder- und Sachartikel zu Geschichte und Gegenwart der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Weinheim: Beltz, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1982. 4 vols.

Doderer, Klaus (Ed.) *Neue Helden in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ergebnisse einer Tagung.* Weinheim; München: Juventa, 1986.

Doel, Fran; **Doel,** Geoff; **Lloyd**, Terry. *König Artus und seine Welt: Ein Streifzug durch Geschichte, Mythologie und Literatur.* Erfurt: Sutton, 2000.

Eccleshare, Julia. *A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels: Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature.* London; New York: Continuum, 2002.

Eckhardt, Juliane. *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987.

Egoff, Sheila; **Hagler**, Ronald. *Books that Shaped Our Minds. A Bibliographical Catalogue of Selections Chiefly from The Arkley Collection of Early & Historical Children's Literature in the Special Collections and University Archives Division The University of British Columbia Library.* Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Library, 1998.

Egoff, Sheila; **Saltman**, Judith. *The New Republic of Childhood. A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Egoff, Sheila; **Stubbs**, G.T.; **Ashley**, L.F. (Eds.) *Only Connect. Readings on Children's Literature.* Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Elgin, Don D. *The Comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantasy Novel.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Ellis, Alec. *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*. Oxford; London; Edinburgh et al.: Pergamon, 1968.

Ellwood, Robert. *Frodo's Quest: Living the Myth in* The Lord of the Rings. Wheaton, Illinois; Chennai (Madras), India: Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 2002.

Ewers, Hans-Heino. *Literatur für Kinder und Jugendliche: Eine Einführung.* München: Fink (UTB), 2000.

Ewers, Hans-Heino (Ed.) *Lesen zwischen Neuen Medien und Pop-Kultur: Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Zeitalter Multimedialen Entertainments*. Weinheim et al.: Juventa, 2002.

Ewers, Hans-Heino; **Lypp**, Maria; **Nassen**, Ulrich (Eds.) *Kinderliteratur und Moderne: Ästhetische Herausforderungen der Kinderliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert.* Weinheim; München: Juventa, 1990.

Falconer, Rachel. *Hell in Contemporary Literature: Western Descent Narratives since 1945*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

Falconer, Rachel. *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Feige, Marcel. *Das neue Lexikon der Fantasy. Xena, Conan, Artus und der kleine Hobbit – Mythen, Legenden und Sagen der Fantasy*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf und Schwarzkopf, 2003.[2]

Filmer, Katherine (Ed.) *The Victorian Fantasists: Essays on Culture, Society and Belief in the Mythopoeic Fiction of the Victorian Age*. Basingstoke et al.: Macmillan, 1991.

Forsyth, Neil. *The Satanic Epic*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Franz, Kurt; **Lange,** Günter; **Payrhuber**, Franz-Josef (Eds.) *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur zur Jahrtausendwende: Autoren, Themen, Vermittlung*. Hohengehren: Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur Volkach e.V., 2000.

Frost, Laurie. *The Elements of* His Dark Materials: *A Guide to Philip Pullman's Trilogy*. Buffalo Grove, IL: Fell Press, 2006.

Gannon, Susan R. "Children's Literature Studies in a New Century." In: <u>Signal </u>91, 25-40.

Gaschke, Susanne. *Die Welt in Büchern: Kinder, Literatur und Ästhetische Wirkung*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995.

Gelder, Ken. *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Gillespie, John T.; **Naden**, Corinne J. *Characters in Young Adult Literature*. Detroit et al.: Gale Research, 1997.

Gillis, Stacey. "The Brand, The Intertext and the Reader: Reading Desires in the 'Harry Potter' Series". In: Julia Briggs; Dennis Butts; M.O. Grenby (Eds.) *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 301-315.

Gilmore, David D. *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and all Manner of Imaginary Terrors*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

Godek, Sarah. "Fantasy – Postwar, Postmodern, Postcolonial: Houses in Postwar Fantasy". In: Reynolds, Kimberley (Ed.) Modern *Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 89- 107.

Golden, Joanne M. *The Narrative Symbol in Childhood Literature: Explorations in the Construction of Text*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990.

Green, William H. *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity*. New York et al.: Twayne, 1995.

Grenby, M.O. *Children's Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Grenz, Dagmar (Ed.) *Kinderliteratur – Literatur auch für Erwachsene? Zum Verhältnis von Kinderliteratur und Erwachsenenliteratur*. München: Fink, 1990.

Gribbin, Mary; **Gribbin**, John. *The Science of Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials"*. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2003.

Griswold, Jerry. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Griswold, Jerry. "The Disappearance of Children's Literature (Or Children's Literature as Nostalgia) in The United States in the Late Twentieth Century". In: Sandra L. Beckett (Ed.) *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997, 35-42.

Gunder, A. "Harry Ludens: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone as a Novel and Computer Game". In: <u>HUMAN IT</u> 7.2, 1-37.

Gupta, Suman. *Re-Reading Harry Potter*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Hassan, Ihab. *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters*. Madison, Wisconsin; London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.

Hazard, Paul. *Kinder, Bücher und Große Leute*. Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1952.

Heilman, Elizabeth E. (Ed.) *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003.

Helbig, Alethea K.; **Perkins**, Agnes R. *Dictionary of British Children's Fiction: Books of Recognised Merit*. New York et al.: Greenwood, 1989.

Herman, Peter C. *Destabilising Milton: "Paradise Lost" and the Poetics of Incertitude*. New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Hettinga, Donald K. (Ed.) *British Children's Writers 1914-1960*. Detroit et al.: Gale Research, 1996.

Honig, Edith Lazaros. *Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in Victorian Children's Fantasy*. New York; Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Horstkotte, Martin. *The Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary British Fiction*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004.

Hourihan, Margery. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1997.

Hume, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*. New York; London: Methuen, 1984.

Hunt, Caroline C. (Ed.) *British Children's Writers since 1960*. Detroit et al.: Gale Research, 1996.

Hunt, Peter (Ed.) *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*. London; New York: Routledge, 1990.

Hunt, Peter. *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Hunt, Peter. *An Introduction to Children's Literature*. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Hunt, Peter (Ed.) *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Hunt, Peter (Ed.) *The International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.[2]

Hunt, Peter; **Lenz**, Millicent. *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*. London; New York: Continuum, 2001.

Hunt, Peter; **Ray**, Sheila (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Harry Potter and the Novice's Confession". In: <u>The Lion and the Unicorn</u> 32.2 (April 2008), 169-179.

Imbusch, Peter. *Moderne und Gewalt: Zivilisationstheoretische Perspektiven auf das 20. Jahrhundert*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005.

Jackson, Anna; **Coats**, Karen; **McGillis**, Roderick (Eds.) *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Jackson, Mary V. *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from its Beginnings to 1839*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2003. [1981]

Johansen, K.V. *Beyond Window Dressing? Canadian Children's Fantasy at the Millennium*. Sackville, NB: Sybertooth, 2007.

Johnston, Ruth Staver. *A Companion to Beowulf*. Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood, 2005.

Jones, Raymond E. *Characters in Children's Literature*. Detroit et al.: Gale Research, 1997.

Jones, Steven Swann. *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of Imagination*. New York: Twaine, 1995.

Kaiser, Gerhard R. (Ed.) *Der Unzeitgemäße Held in der Weltliteratur*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1998.

Keenan, Celia. "Eoin Colfer". In: Valerie Coghlan; Siobhán Parkinson (Eds.) *Irish Children's Writers and Illustrators 1986-2006*. Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education Publications and Children's Books Ireland, 2007, 19-28.

Kehlenbeck, Corinna. *Auf der Suche nach der Abenteuerlichen Heldin: Weibliche Identifikationsfiguren im Jugendalter*. Frankfurt; New York: Campus, 1996.

Kekes, John. *The Roots of Evil*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Kimball, M.A. "From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature". In: Library Trends 47.3, 1999, 558-578.

Klotz, Volker. *Das Europäische Kunstmärchen: Fünfundzwanzig Kapitel seiner Geschichte von der Renaissance bis zur Moderne*. München: Fink (UTB), 2002.

Knoepflmacher, U.C.; **Myers**, Mitzi. "From the Editors: 'Cross-Writing' and the Reconceptualising of Children's Literature Studies". In: Children's Literature 25 (1997): *Special Issue on Cross-Writing Child and Adult*, vii-xvii.

Knowles, Murray; **Malmkjaer**, Kirsten. *Language and Control in Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Kress, G.; **van Leeuwen**, T. *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold, 2000.

Kreutzer, Eberhard. *Lewis Carroll: "Alice in Wonderland" und "Through the Looking-Glass"*. München: Fink (UTB), 1984.

Kullmann, Thomas. *Englische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Eine Einführung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2008.

Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina (Ed.) *Current Trends in Comparative Children's Literature Research*. Bern: Lang, 1996.

Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina. *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein internationales Lexikon*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004. [1999]

Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina. *Kinderliteratur, Kanonbildung und literarische Wertung.* Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 2003.

Kulik, Nils. *Das Gute und das Böse in der Phantastischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Untersuchung bezogen auf Werke von Joanne K. Rowling, J.R.R. Tolkien, Michael Ende, Astrid Lindgren, Wolfgang und Heike Hohlbein, Otfried Preußler und Frederik Hetmann.* Frankfurt/ Main et al.: Lang, 2004.

Kutzmutz, Olaf (Ed.) *Harry Potter oder Warum Wir Zauberer Brauchen.* Wolfenbüttel: Bundesakademie für Kulturelle Bildung Wolfenbüttel, 2001.

Kutznets, Lois Rostow. *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development.* New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994.

Lange, Günter (Ed.) *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Grundlagen, Gattungen.* Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 2000.

Lange, Günter (Ed.) *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Medien, Themen, Poetik.* Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 2000.

Lange, Günter; **Steffens**, Wilhelm (Eds.) *Literarische und Didaktische Aspekte der Phantastischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1993.

Latham, Don. *David Almond: Memory and Magic.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006.

Lathey, Gillian (Ed.) *The Translation of Children's Literature: A Reader.* Cleveland; Buffalo; Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2006.

Lathey, Gillian. "The Travels of Harry: International Marketing and the Translation of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Books". In: The Lion and the Unicorn 29.2 (April 2005), 141-151.

Lawson Lucas, Ann (Ed.) *The Presence of the Past in Children's Literature.* Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2003.

Le Blanc, Thomas; **Solms**, Wilhelm (Eds.) *Phantastische Welten. Märchen, Mythen, Fantasy.* Regensburg: Röth, 1994.

Lenz, Millicent; **Scott**, Carole (Eds.) *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005.

Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin (Ed). *Children in Culture: Approaches to Childhood*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. *Children's Literature: New Approaches*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. "Defining Children's Literature and Childhood". In: Peter Hunt; Sheila Ray (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 17-31.

Lewis, Alex; **Currie**, Elizabeth. *The Uncharted Realms of Tolkien: A Critical Study of Text, Context and Subtext in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Oswestry: Medea Publishing, 2002.

Lewis, Alex; **Currie**, Elizabeth. *The Forsaken Realm of Tolkien: J.R.R. Tolkien and the Medieval Tradition*. Oswestry: Medea Publishing, 2005.

Lewis, C.S. "On Three Ways of Writing for Children". In: Sheila Egoff; G.T. Stubbs; L.F. Ashley (Eds.) *Only Connect. Readings on Children's Literature*. Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, 207-220.

Lewis, C.S. "On Stories". In: Margaret Meek; Aidan Warlow; Griselda Barton (Eds.) *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*. London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1977, 76-90.

Lexe, Heidi (Ed.) *Alohomora! Ergebnisse des Ersten Wiener Harry Potter-Symposions*. Wien: Praesens, 2002.

Lexe, Heidi. *Pippi, Pan und Potter: Zur Motivkonstellation in den Klassikern der Kinderliteratur*. Wien: Praesens, 2003.

Lundin, Anne H. *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature: Beyond Library Walls and Ivory Towers*. New York et al.: Routledge, 2004.

Lupack, Alan. *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Lurie, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Lyon Clark, Beverly. *Reflections of Fantasy: The Mirror-Worlds of Carroll, Nabokov, and Pynchon*. New York; Bern; Frankfurt/ Main: Lang, 1986.

Lyon Clark, Beverly. *Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tomboys*. New York: Garland, 1997.

Lypp, Maria. "The Origin and Function of Laughter in Children's Literature". In: Maria Nikolajeva (Ed.) *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*. Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1995, 183-189.

Mackey, M. *Literacies Across Media*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002.

Mackey, M. "The Survival of Engaged Reading in the Internet Age: New Media, Old Media, and the Book". Children's Literature in Education, 32.2 (September 2001), 167-189.

Manlove, Colin N. *The Fantasy Literature of England*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999.

Maughan, Shannon. "Whose Dark Materials? The Culmination of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* Trilogy Raises Theological Questions". In: Publishers Weekly: 25, 18-12-2000.

May, Jill P. *Children's Literature and Critical Theory: Reading and Writing for Understanding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Mayer, Sigrid. *Golem: Die literarische Rezeption eines Stoffes*. Frankfurt/ Main; Bern: Lang, 1975.

McCarron, Kevin. "Dead Rite: Adolescent Horror Fiction and Death". In: Avery, Gillian; Reynolds, Kimberley (Eds.) *Representations of Childhood Death*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 2000, 189-203.

McGavran, James Holt (Ed.) *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth- Century England*. Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1991.

McGillis, Roderick (Ed.) *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. New York; London: Garland, 2000.

McGillis, Roderick. "Self, Other, and Other Self: Recognising the Other in Children's Literature". In: The Lion and the Unicorn 21.2 (April 1997), 215-229.

McGinn, Bernard. *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996. [1994]

Meek, Margaret; **Warlow**, Aidan; **Barton**, Griselda (Eds.) *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*. London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1977.

Meek, Margaret; **Watson**, Victor. *Coming of Age in Children's Literature. Growth and Maturity in the Work of Philippa Pearce, Cynthia Voigt and Jan Mark*. London; New York: Continuum, 2003.

Miller, Arthur G. (Ed.) *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York; London: The Guilford Press, 2004.

Miller, Dean A. *The Epic Hero*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Mortimer, Penelope. "Thoughts Concerning Children's Books". In: Sheila Egoff; G.T. Stubbs; L.F. Ashley (Eds.) *Only Connect. Readings on Children's Literature*. Toronto; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, 97-101.

Morton, Adam. *On Evil*. New York; London: Routledge, 2004.

Neal, Connie. *The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Spirituality in the Stories of the World's Most Famous Seeker*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Nel, Philip. *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Nester, Holle. *Shadows of the Past: Darstellung und Funktion der geschichtlichen Sekundärwelten in J.R.R. Tolkiens* The Lord of the Rings, *Ursula K. Le Guins* Earthsea-Tetralogy *und Patricia Mc Killips* Riddle-Master-*Trilogy*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1993.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *The Magic Code: The Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children*. Stockholm: University of Stockholm, doctoral dissertation, 1988.

Nikolajeva, Maria (Ed.) *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*. Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*. New York et al.: Garland, 1996.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*. Lanham, MD; London: Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press, 2000.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005.

Noakes, Vivien (Ed.) *Edward Lear: The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*. London et al.: Penguin, 2001.

Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Nodelman, Perry. "There's Like No Books About Anything". In: Sebastien Chapleau (Ed.) *New Voices in Children's Literature Criticism*. Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004, 3-9.

Nodelman, Perry; **Reimer,** Mavis. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. Boston et al.: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.[3] [1992]

Ohff, Heinz. *Artus: Eine Biographie*. München; Zürich: Piper, 1993.

Ong, W. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word*. London: Routledge, 2002.

O'Sullivan, Emer. *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2000.

O'Sullivan, Emer; **Reynolds**, Kimberley; **Romøren**, Rolf (Eds.) *Children's Literature Global and Local: Social and Aesthetic Perspectives*. Oslo: Novus, 2005.

Otten, Charlotte F.; **Schmidt**, Gary D. (Eds.) *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.[5]

Paul, Lissa. *Reading Otherways*. Stroud: Thimble Press, 1998.

Paul, Lissa. "Enigma Variations: What Feminist Theory Knows About Children's Literature". In: Signal 54 (September 1987), 186-201.

Paus-Haase, Ingrid (Ed.) *Neue Helden für die Kleinen: Das (Un)heimliche Kinderprogramm des Fernsehens*. Münster: LIT, 1997.[3]

Pesch, Helmut. *Fantasy: Theorie und Geschichte einer Literarischen Gattung*. Köln: Dissertation an der Kölner Universität, 1982.

Petzold, Dieter. *Formen und Funktionen der Englischen Nonsense- Dichtung im 19. Jahrhundert*. Nürnberg: Hans Carl, 1972.

Petzold, Dieter. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Fantasy Literature als Wunscherfüllung und Weltdeutung*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1980.

Petzold, Dieter. "Spaß für Jung und Alt: Cross-writing in den 'William-Büchern'". In: Christiane Bimberg (Ed.) *Perspectives on Children's Literature in English*. Kamen: Karthause-Schmülling, 2000, 90-116.

Petzold, Dieter. "Große Kunst, *juvenile trash* oder kollektives Spielzeug? Zum Erfolg der *Harry-Potter*-Bücher bei Jung und Alt". In: Maren Bonacker (Ed.) *Peter Pans Kinder: Doppelte Adressiertheit in phantastischen Texten*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004, 82-93.

Phantastische Bibliothek Wetzlar. www.bibliotheka-phantastika.de, 2009.

Poole, Richard. "Philip Pullman and the Republic of Heaven". In: The New Welsh Review 14.1, 53 (2001), 15-22.

Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1982.

Pringle, David (Ed.) *The St. James Guide to Fantasy Writers*. New York: St. James Press, 1996.

Pringle, David (Ed.) *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy: The Definitive Illustrated Guide*. London: Carlton, 1998.

Purkiss, Diane. *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000.

Rabkin, Eric S. *The Fantastic in Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Rank, Otto; **Somerset**, Fitzroy Richard,4th Baron Raglan; **Dundes**, Alan. *In Quest of the Hero. The Myth of the Birth of the Hero; The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and*

Drama, Part II; The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Reynolds, Kimberley (Ed.) *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Rolfes, Britta. *Helden(bilder) im Wandel: Die Nibelungenhelden in neueren Adaptionen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2005.

Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction.* London: Macmillan, 1984.

Rottensteiner, Franz. *The Fantasy Book: The Ghostly – The Gothic – The Magical – The Unreal.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Russell, Burton Jeffrey. *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1989. [1988]

Russell, Mary Harris. "*Ethical Plots, Ethical Endings in Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials'*". The International Review of Science Fiction, 32.88 (Summer 2003): 68-74.

Sanders, Joe (Ed.) *Functions of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Thirteenth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts.* Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Sandis, Dominique. "Proposing a Methodology for the Study of Nation(ality) in Children's Literature". In: Sebastien Chapleau (Ed.) *New Voices in Children's Literature Criticism.* Lichfield: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004, 105-118.

Saxby, Henry Maurice. *Books in the Life of a Child: Bridges to Literature and Learning.* Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia PTY LTD, 1997.

Schikorsky, Isa. *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.* Köln: Dumont, 2003.

Schrift, Alan D. (Ed.) *Modernity and the Problem of Evil.* Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Schulz, Dieter. *Suche und Abenteuer. Die „Quest" in der Englischen und Amerikanischen Erzählkunst der Romantik.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1981.

Scott, Michael. "By Imagination We Live: Some Thoughts on Irish Children's Fantasy". In: The Lion and the Unicorn 21.3 (September 1997), 322-329.

Shapiro, Marc. *J.K. Rowling. Die Zauberin Hinter Harry Potter. Eine unauthorisierte Biographie.* Nürnberg: Burgschmiet, 2000.

Shave Klein, Barbara. *Not all Twins are alike: Psychological Profiles of Twinship.* Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2003.

Shavit, Zohar. *Poetics of Children's Literature*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Shine Thompson, Mary; **Coghlan**, Valerie (Eds.) *Divided Worlds: Studies in Children's Literature*. Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2007.

Singer, Marcus G. "The Concept of Evil". In: <u>Philosophy</u> 79 (2004), 185-214.

Sklar, Elizabeth S.; **Hoffman**, Donald L. (Eds.) *King Arthur in Popular Culture*. Jefferson, NC; London: Mc Farland & Co., 2002.

Smith, Sean. *J.K. Rowling: A Biography*. London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd., 2001.

Spinner, Kaspar H. (Ed.) *Im Bann des Zauberlehrlings? Zur Faszination von Harry Potter*. Regensburg: Pustet, 2001.

Squires, Claire. *Philip Pullman's* His Dark Materials *Trilogy. A Reader's Guide*. New York; London: Continuum, 2003.

Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. London: Longman, 1992.

Sullivan, C. W. "High Fantasy". In: Peter Hunt; Sheila Ray (Eds.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996, 303-313.

Swinfen, Ann. *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945*. London; Boston; Melbourne, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Thomson, Stephen. "The Child, The Family, The Relationship. Familiar Stories: Family, Storytelling, and Ideology in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*". In: Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Ed.) *Children's Literature: New Approaches*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 144-167.

Thwaite, Ann. *The Brilliant Career of Winnie-the-Pooh: The Story of A.A. Milne and his Writing for Children*. London: Methuen, 1992.

Thwaite, M.F. *From Primer to Pleasure: An Introduction to the History of Children's Books in England, From the Invention of Printing to 1900*. London: The Library Association, 1963.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Introduction à la Littérature Fantastique.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy Stories". In: *Tree and Leaf.* New York: HarperCollins, 2001. [1938]

Torrance, Robert M. *The Comic Hero*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Townsend, John Rowe. "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature". In: Peter Hunt (Ed.) *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1990, 57-70.

Tucker, Nicholas. *What Is A Child?* London: Fontana, 1977.

Tucker, Nicholas. *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration.* Cambridge; New York; Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Tucker, Nicholas. *Darkness Visible: Inside the World of Philip Pullman*. Cambridge: Wizard Books, 2003.

Tyler, J.E.A. *The Complete Tolkien Companion*. London: Pan Books, 2002. [1976]

Uyldert, Mellie. *Die Entdeckung von Mittelerde: Symbolik von Tolkiens „Der Herr der Ringe".* München: Hugendubel, 1988. [1978]

Vincent, Sally. "Driven by Daemons". *The Guardian*, 10-11-2001. www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/nov/10/booksforchildrenandteenagers.philippullman, 18-12-2009.

Virole, Benoît. *L'Enchantement de Harry Potter: La Psychologie de l'Enfant Nouveau*. Paris: Édition des Archives Contemporaines, 2001.

Wall, Barbara. *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan, 1991.

Wartofsky, Alona. "The Last Word: Philip Pullman's Trilogy for Young Adults ends with God's death and remarkably few critics". Washington Post, 19-02-2001.

Watkins, Tony. *Dark Matter: Shedding Light on Philip Pullman's Trilogy* His Dark Materials. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004.

Watson, Victor (Ed.) *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Wertheimer, Jürgen; **Zima,** Peter V. (Eds.) *Strategien der Verdummung: Infantilisierung in der Fun- Gesellschaft.* München: Beck, 2002. [2001]

Westfahl, Gary. *Science Fiction, Children's Literature and Popular Culture: Coming of Age in Fantasyland*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Westfahl, Gary (Ed.) *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Themes, Works, and Wonders*. Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Westfahl, Gary; **Slusser**, George (Eds.) *Nursery Realms: Children in the Worlds of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror*. Athens; London: University of Georgia Press, 1999.

Whited, Lana A. (Ed.) *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.

Wilkie-Stibbs, Christine. *The Feminine Subject in Children's Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002.

Wilkie-Stibbs, Christine. *The Outside Child: In and Out of the Book*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Wooden, Warren. *Children's Literature of the English Renaissance*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986.

Wrigley, Christopher. *Return of the Hero*. Lewes: Book Guild Publishing, 2005.

Wullschläger, Jackie. *Inventing Wonderland: The Lives and Fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J.M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne*. London: Methuen, 1995.

Yampbell, Cat. "Judging a Book by Its Cover: Publishing Trends in Young Adult Literature". In: The Lion and the Unicorn 29.3 (September 2005), 348-372.

Yates, Jessica. "In Defence of the Fantastic" Amon Hen: The Bulletin of the Tolkien Society 180: March 2003, 24-26.

Yates, Paul. "Conclusion, Part I: Death, Sex and God: Sociological and Religious Accounts of the Death of the Young". In: Gillian Avery; Kimberley Reynolds (Eds.) *Representations of Childhood Death*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 2000, 217-224.

Zaidman, Laura M. (Ed.) *British Children's Writers 1880-1914*. Detroit et al.: Gale Research, 1994.

Ziolkowski, Eric. *Evil Children in Religion, Literature, and Art*. New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

Zipes, Jack. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York; London: Routledge, 2001.

Zipes, Jack (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 4 vols.