WOMEN AS HEROES IN SELECTED FANTASY NOVELS

by

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ABSTRACT

In fantasy literature of the past, women were often left out of the heroic tale, and when they were included, they served domestic functions more than they embodied laudable character. They often endured a forced, loveless marriage or death, or were saved by a male rescuer. Although there were a small number of women performing heroic deeds, they were far outnumbered by male heroes performing great actions. In modern-day society, women are now performing in heroic actions that they would have never been able to perform in the past, because of the societal expectations of gender. In response to these changes in society, the role of female characters in modern fantasy novels has altered – female heroes are now equal in terms of responsibility and actions to the male heroes.

This project seeks to provide an exploration of the inferior placement of women in fantasy novels based on feminism and Campbell's monomyth. Thus, this study will investigate the oppression and inequality of female characters in fantasy novels as well as demonstrate the new resistance to the stereotypical form of submissive female characters.

The comparison of the work of J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, and Tamora Pierce will yield insights into the work of all three writers. Of importance is the examination of the experiences of women in earlier fantasy literature contrasted to the way women characters have been portrayed in the last thirty years, and how the novels of Rowling, Pullman, and Pierce have expressed the female characters' elevated position. This study will also show how the current representation of female characters qualify as female heroes by interrogating the patterning of their quests on this theory.

A meticulous, text-based literary study will be conducted, exploring the characters and themes created by the authors in the selected texts, in order to examine the original placement of women in inferior positions in fantasy novels, as well as demonstrate how the new representation of female characters qualify as female heroes by patterning their quests using Campbell's monomyth. Thus, feminist theory is the research theory to be applied in the scrutiny of these texts. The focus of the thesis will be gender inequality in various fantasy novels, as well as the changing culture of the representation of female heroes in fantasy novels within the last few decades.

Key Words: fantasy literature feminist theory female heroes Hermione Granger Lyra Belacqua Alanna of Trebond J.K. Rowling Philip Pullman Tamora Pierce

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in any part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Signature

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Date

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Wizards, elves, dragons, and trolls" – according to Laetz and Johnston, this is "the stuff of fantasy" (161). Laetz and Johnston identify fantasy as a "transmedia genre," because there are "both fantasy novels and movies, such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* saga and its recent cinematic adaptation" (161). Because fantasy fiction novels are examined in this paper, it is important to identify exactly what a "fantasy novel" is. The question, then, is what precisely makes a narrative fantastic? Todorov locates the genre of the fantastic in the nineteenth century stating: "The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by an individual who only knows natural laws and becomes faced with an apparently supernatural event" (25). Manlove a few years later asserted that fantasy is "a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (10). Fantasy, these critics would suggest, is the communication, collaboration and co-operation of the human characters of a story with their supernatural counterparts.

According to Laetz and Johnston, there are five elements to fantastic fiction (162). Firstly, fantastic narratives are essentially fiction. Secondly, elements that identify a work as fantastic (such as wizards and dragons) cannot be minor details; they must be important in the work. Thirdly, the "content that makes the work fantastic must not be viewed only as symbols for things that are not fantastic – these elements must not only be taken as allegorical"; while fourthly, the relevant content "must not be solely mocked within the work; and finally, the relevant content "must not be merely absurd" (Laetz and Johnston 162-163).

According to Nikolajeva, fantasy is similar to the fairy tale in that: "the hero leaves home, meets helpers and opponents, goes through trials, performs a task, and returns home having gained some form of wealth" (140). Another similarity between fantasy and fairy tales is that they both typically contain a quest or the struggle between good and evil. However, fantasy "is a generic heading for a variety of different types of narratives, some taking place in a fairy-tale realm, some depicting travel between different worlds, and some bringing magic into the everyday" (Nikolajeva 140-141). Over the centuries then, fantasy has taken on a specific structural form, understandable and anticipated by the reader to thrill and inspire.

The three novels examined in this paper – the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman, and the *Alanna* series by Tamora Pierce – have the basic plot of a fairy tale: the hero will leave home (this happens in the case of Harry Potter, Lyra Belacqua and Alanna of Trebond), meet people along the way, undergo an ordeal and eventually return home. In addition, all three female characters undergo a quest and deal with the struggle between good and evil.

This study will investigate two areas. Firstly, how women in earlier fantasy novels have been placed in positions inferior to those of males; and secondly, how within the last thirty years or so the position of female characters has changed to reflect their elevated position in society. Because female characters in fantasy novels are explored in this paper, it is vital to trace the history of fantasy narratives from the earliest times in order to clearly examine the gendered performatives of the characters. In addition, this enables one to see the emphasis that has been placed on the male hero with the result

that female heroes have been minimalized to a weakened, dependent state in fantasy novels.

According to scholars Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, “most elements of modern fantasy writing can be traced to early literary examples which produced wizards, werewolves, and witches springing from ancient fears and power struggles” (14). Fantasy’s role, as a way of coping with “deprivation and repression, as well as desire,” is clear in the folk tale, and these narratives were “absorbed into or silenced by society” – most “notably through the puritan-evangelical religious hegemony of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and by the pervading utilitarian attitude of mind in the nineteenth century” (Hunt and Lenz 15). Thus, religiously inspired patriarchal views can be identified as one societal factor that helped to shape the male supremacy in the fantasy stories.

One of the earliest printed books, Caxton’s *Reynard the Fox* (1481), many of the great Tudor works, Sidney’s *Arcadia* (1590), Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1589-96), and several of Shakespeare’s plays, for example, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, and even *King Lear*, are unquestionably fantasies (Hunt and Lenz 15). These books all contain fantastic elements, and it is important to note how old the genre of fantasy is and how far its roots go back.

In the eighteenth century, which was known as “the age of reason”, the fantastic worlds of the “romance gave way to the pragmatic naturalism of the novel” (Hunt and Lenz 16). *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a “pragmatic, naturalistic fantasy, with its roots in mercantile Protestantism,” whilst “*Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) uses fantasy in the cause of

far-reaching satire – which has its roots in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fantastic satires of Cyrano de Bergerac, Rabelais, and Cervantes" (Hunt and Lenz 16). As is evident in both the titles and protagonists of these works, men were the central, significant characters, with female characters acting as a foil for male characters.

Hunt and Lenz believe that although the American works *Tarzan* and *The Wizard of Oz* were influential, fantasy was more popular in Britain than in the United States of America at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its popularity in Britain was increased by the two World Wars and then later by the Vietnam War. In the 1920s and '30s, "writers who had been negatively affected by the First World War" – particularly A.A. Milne, J.R.R Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Hugh Lofting, "created escapist worlds, and in the works of Masefield, P.L. Travers and many others" (Hunt and Lenz 18). Travers, with *Mary Poppins* (1934), and Masefield with *The Midnight Folk* (1927) and *The Box of Delights* (1935) both make use of a "more or less random selection of magical and fantastic elements intruding on the present day, largely through their eccentric intermediaries – Mary Poppins and Cole Hawlings" (Hunt and Lenz 18). At the same time, American authors were writing urban fantasies which featured brave, heroic crime fighters such as Batman and Superman (Hunt and Lenz 19). Thus, during the early part of the twentieth century, males were portrayed as heroes in fantasy narratives, with females playing the supporting role to the brave hero – even a main character such as Mary Poppins accomplished the very matronly role of nanny.

After the Second World War, British fantasy for children continued growing as a genre, but it was much more alarming. Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) and *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), Penelope Lively's *The Whispering Knights*

(1971) *and The Wild Hunt of Hagworthy* (1971), and Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* (1965-77) borrowed from "Celtic and French romance sources to provide threatening and disruptive elements" (Hunt and Lenz 19). People around the world at this time were faced with alarming uncertainties of nuclear warfare, and this was reflected in the writers' works. However, other writers produced works that were not as ominous and threatening and thus, according to Nikolajeva, the "'Golden Age' of the English-language fantasy arrived in the 1950s and '60s, with names like C.S. Lewis, Philippa Pearce, Lucy M. Boston, Mary Norton, and Alan Garner" (139).

The "Tolkien phenomenon" and the many reproductions of *The Lord of the Rings* dominated fantasy from the 1960s (Hunt and Lenz 20). Mary Norton represents a different world in her "Borrowers" series. Norton's books, the "Indian in the Cupboard" series of Lynn Reid Banks, through to Terry Pratchett's *Carpet People* (1992) and *The Bromeliad* (1989-90) "explore the idea of the miniature which has led to a more general exploration of themes of power, loss, and vulnerability" (Hunt and Lenz 20-21). These remain significant elements for both the child and adult reader as they face such an uncertain world in which their powerlessness may be overwhelming, and require a hero and other worldly forces to aid them in their time of need.

For Hunt and Lenz, the "element of rejection of the human world (also seen in Lewis's "Narnia" series) is characteristic of tensions in British fantasy of this period" (21). They continue to state that the "loss of empire, the loss of the old 'grand narratives,' and the contrast between past glories and future changes can be seen in major fantasies such as Lucy M. Boston's *The Children of Green Knowe* (1954) or Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958)" (21). Both books "demonstrate the

potential of philosophy in fantasy, but concentrate on the regressive, nostalgic element of fantasy" (Hunt and Lenz 21). As is evident in these examples, fantasy writers wrote from their own well of personal angst yet also wrote into the emotional climate of their times.

Hunt and Lenz believe that "commercial pressures consolidated the genrefication of fantasy for children towards the end of the twentieth century" (22). even so, there was some outstanding original work, such as Diana Wynne Jones's *Archer's Goon* (1984), Jan Mark's *They Do Things Differently There* (1994), or Margaret Mahy's *The Changeover* (1984), all moving children's fantasy towards the "postmodern and metafictive" (22). Although outstanding fantasy novels have been written, there have still been objections to classifying fantasy literature as serious or important literature. In 2000, there was a dispute regarding if J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, or Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* should be given the esteemed British Whitbread Literary Prize. At the centre of the dispute was the uncertainty between popular and classical literature, and *Harry Potter* was ridiculed because it is meant for children. For Hunt and Lenz, it is highly significant that nobody seemed to notice that both the competing texts were fantasies, and they argued that clearly fantasy is a part of the "fabric of literary culture" (22). Thus as a genre of academic interrogation, it has gained a solid literary reputation.

For hundreds of years the fantasy genre has been loved and enjoyed by its readers – both children and adults. It allows people to forget about their daily problems and the problems in the world around them, because they are transported to a world where good always triumphs over evil and the hero always defeats his enemy at the

end. However, although in this genre the hero always triumphs and he manages to conquer evil, Hunt and Lenz state “there is one area of formulaic writing that is increasingly difficult to justify: the treatment of gender” (3). In the hero tale, male characters have always dominated. In fantasies from Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*, A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*, J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, Ursula K. Le Guin’s first three “Earthsea” books, and countless others, “women are marginalized or dangerous” (Hunt and Lenz 3). As Le Guin said: “Authority is male. It’s a fact. My fantasy dutifully reported the fact. But is that all a fantasy does – report facts?” (qtd. in Hunt and Lenz 3). Fantasy novels in the past have generally concentrated on the exploits of male heroes and females have only been present as a sexual temptation or a damsel to be rescued. However, in the last thirty years or so, fantasy writers have created strong, heroic female characters who defy typical stereotypes. This thesis closely examines three female heroes who are not portrayed as being “marginalized or dangerous”: Hermione Granger, Lyra Belacqua, and Alanna of Trebond are strong, empowered characters who are responsible for making their own decisions and often major role players in rescuing their male counterparts.

According to scholar Tony R. Sanchez, “a place for heroes has always existed”: “from biblical exploits to mythological daring, from renowned or forgotten battlefields to the silver screen and the athletic arena” (58). There are many examples of heroic characters in history and literature, because they give people encouragement and hope, as the hero always managed to conquer evil by the end of his tale. Stories are essential in many cultures – stories about how the world was made, about the gods, about ancestors, about the past and future. Stories are intrinsic to being human; scholar Will

Wright believes they are "essentially what make us human" (146). Hence, Wright would argue that the hero is essential to the culture of a society – "to the beliefs, values, and goals of a society – because the hero is integral to storytelling, which is the essence of culture" (Wright 146). Storytelling has always been an important aspect of culture, and heroes are especially important to storytelling as they provide people with hope that the noble and virtuous will overcome the encroachments of the wicked.

Stories also then provide the essential explanations for the action of the hero. As Wright explains "the hero is the instigator of actions that bring about change, whether through dominant control (the classic hero) or through confused interference (the more modern hero)" (146). This can be witnessed in the Classics: "Prometheus came down from the heavens, stole fire from the gods, and then returned home again"; "Jason sailed through the Clashing Rocks into a sea of marvels, circumvented the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, and returned with the fleece and the power to wrestle his rightful throne from a usurper"; and "Aeneas went down into the underworld, crossed the river of the dead, threw a sop to the three-headed watchdog Cerberus and conversed with the shade of his dead father" (Campbell 28). These heroes are examples of dynamic, powerful, world-changing individuals who influence events and people significantly to bring about positive change.

In Joseph Campell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, the author deals with the history of the hero throughout the ages. He defines the hero as:

> … the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's

> visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore … is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed. (Campbell 18)

Campbell describes heroic myths and legends from around the world in order to define and explain the hero's quest. He describes the heroic monomyth – the formula that can be applied to the journeys' of all heroes – as a cycle. The hero leaves home naïve and immature and he returns home older, wiser, and stronger because of the challenges that he faced and vanquished along the way. A wise counsellor usually appears to the hero at the beginning of his journey and provides the hero with pithy yet profound guidance. On the journey the hero faces an assortment of physical and mental challenges, some of which threaten the hero's safety. Finally, the hero "arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward" (Campbell 227). Once the hero's mission is accomplished, "he re-emerges from the kingdom of dread and the boon that he brings restores the world" (Campbell 228). This familiar pattern can be found in the many fantasy novels mentioned as well as the movie adaptations. Thus, Campbell's theory is the framework that applies to every hero story.

According to Campbell: "The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation* – *initiation* – *return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (28). Schwartz reiterates that in the simplest version of the monomyth, "the hero leaves his

ordinary world, encounters a supernatural force which he vanquishes, and then returns to present his boon to his fellow man", a pattern witnessed in "Jack-in-the-Beanstalk" and similar fairy tales, and on a more complex literary level seen in the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf* (83). The hero leaves his kingdom to battle and defeat the supernatural monster Grendel, before returning to his people. Similarly, in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Sir Gawain leaves King Arthur's court in order to defeat the Green Knight. Once he has done this, he has improved the world for all of the knights. In each tale the knight illustrates exemplary bravery and fortitude in the midst of daunting dangers. For as long as there have been stories, there have been tales of powerful male heroes who perform brave tasks and rescue their people from evil. Heroic traditions, in the past, have generally endowed male protagonists with extreme qualities of bravery, strength, wisdom and wit. It is rare in the fantasy tradition for any women character to fulfil such qualities. In most cases, women have been minimized and when women are included, their role is the femme fatale, and they rarely share the status of the male protagonist.

This literary project serves to utilize Campbell's monomyth as it provides a critical framework for analysing the quest of the female hero of fantasy novels, in order to demonstrate how the role of female characters in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and Tamora Pierce's *Alanna* series has been elevated to place of significance and power. By patterning the quests of the heroes from these texts onto Campbell's monomyth, it can be illustrated that these female protagonists qualify as heroes, and their actions are equal to those of the typical male hero.

To provide a more thorough exploration of the female characters in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman and the *Song of the Lioness* series by Tamora Pierce, feminist literary theory will serve as a foundational theoretical perspective and will be applied in order to effectively analyse these texts, because it acts as an emancipator to enable women to achieve their self-autonomous positions.

Critics suggest that one of the reasons for Harry Potter's popularity is the strength of the female character. According to Eliza T. Dresang, Rowling's Hermione Granger is a "strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female who is not only assisting the males with whom she has an interdependent relationship but is also working to become her own agent as well as a catalyst for social change" (242). Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy – comprised of *Northern Lights*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass* – describes Lyra Belacqua, a young girl whose adventure begins at Jordan College in Oxford and progresses into many alternate worlds. Tamora Pierce's quartet – comprised of *Alanna: The First Adventure, In the Hand of the Goddess*, *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man*, and *Lioness Rampant* – describes Alanna of Trebond, a young woman who is unsatisfied with the future her father has planned for her and instead decides to choose her own path. The female characters in Rowling's *Harry Potter*, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and Pierce's novels, challenge traditional female stereotypes because of women's primary placement in the novels as well as their dynamic and dramatic portrayals.

According to theorist Lois Tyson, "female stereotypes typically portray women within traditional gender roles", which, as she explains, "cast men as rational, strong,

protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive" (85). According to Tyson, typical gender roles "exclude women from equal access to leadership and decision making positions" by "denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power" (84, 86). This oppression of women serves to demoralize them; Tyson argues: "patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally, and therefore, correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (86-87). Yet, contemporary female characterizations, especially by the authors in question, alter these portrayals. Hermione Granger, Lyra Belacqua and Alanna of Trebond challenge traditional gender stereotypes by refusing to accept the gender constraints placed upon them by their patriarchal societies. These characters refuse to act in a submissive manner and instead of allowing themselves to be controlled by the men in their lives; they actively make their own decisions.

In order to most effectively investigate the significance and uniqueness of these female heroes, the texts will be analysed through the lens of feminist theory. According to Brewton, feminist theory "challenges the paradigms and intellectual premises of western thought, and also takes an activist stance by proposing frequent interventions and alternative epistemological positions meant to change the social order." Brewton continues to state that "in the context of postmodernism, gender theorists, led by the work of Judith Butler, initially viewed the category of 'gender' as a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social performance." The biological distinction between man and woman eventually came under the same scrutiny by Brewton and other

theorists who reached a similar conclusion: “the sexual categories are products of culture and as such help create social reality rather than simply reflect it”. The issue of gender inequality is especially pertinent to this study as the genderized oppression of various female characters is also explored based on feminist theory.

According to Rivkin and Ryan, “contemporary feminist literary criticism begins as much in the women’s movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s as it does in the academy” (765). It goes back much further, to Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* or an even earlier text such as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* as a starting point. For the women’s movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, “the subject of feminism centred on women’s experience under patriarchy: the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women’s voices, distorted their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral” (Rivkin and Ryan 765). Along with other notable feminists of the 1960s and 1970s like Germaine Greer and Kate Millet, Adrienne Rich inspired a school of literary feminist criticism that “examined the history of women’s oppression and the silencing of their voices as twin beacons to guide its work” (Rivkin and Ryan 765).

Feminist theorists had been discussing the idea for several years that there was a difference within feminism between “biological sexual identity” and “gender identity,” and according to Rivkin and Ryan, “gender identity seemed more subject to the contingencies of culture and history, more something constructed in and variable across society and throughout history” (885). The work of Gayle Rubin, Alan Bray and Michel Foucault pointed out that gender is variable: “in history and between societies, there is

variation between different ways of practicing sex and being one gender or another" (Rivkin and Ryan 886).

Within the genus of this project, gender inequality of various literary characters is explored based on the theory of feminism espoused by Judith Butler who situates her ideas on the relationship between performance and gender identity. For Butler, gender is entirely imitative, performed and enacted: "Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 900).

Butler states that "if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that – a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment" ("Performative Acts" 900). Butler argues that:

> If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" ("Performative Acts" 901).

In light of these theoretical postulations, female liberation in selected fantasy novels may be examined according to Butler's theory. In earlier fantasy novels, female characters "perform" their genders according to constraints placed upon them by male characters, hegemonic perpetrators of their society's norms. This oppression can be contrasted to independent, multilayered female characters found in the texts under examination, such as Hermione Granger, Lyra Belacqua and Alanna of Trebond who

challenge the typical submissive and one-dimensional female stereotypes usually found in fantasy novels.

The comparison of the work of Rowling, Pullman, and Pierce will yield insights into the work of all three writers. Chapter 2 provides an overview of both feminist theory and Joseph Campbell's theory of the monomyth which is used in analysing the novels. Chapter 3 describes the development of female characters in fantasy novels. Of importance is the examination of the experiences of women in early fantasy novels contrasted to the way women characters have been portrayed in the last thirty years, and how the novels of Rowling, Pullman, and Pierce have expressed their elevated position. Chapter 4 examines the female heroes' journeys in the novels while Chapter 5 utilizes Campbell's monomyth in order to show how the current representation of female characters qualify as female heroes by patterning their quests on this theory. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes this thesis and helps the reader recognize the literary significance of these fantasies in their support of current female characterization.

Chapter 2: Literary Theory

2.1 Feminist Theories

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which was written after the social and political problems caused by the French Revolution, can be said to be the starting point of modern feminism. Wollstonecraft's work was "the first to issue an outspoken rallying cry to middle-class women, especially mothers, as major influences on society" (V.Sanders 16). Wollstonecraft emphasized the need to educate women, citing that: "till women are more rationally educated, the progress of human virtue and improvement in knowledge must receive continual checks" (Wollstonecraft 43). As V. Sanders notes, Wollstonecraft "saw women as degraded by the flirtatious and chivalrous behaviour of their male companions" (16). Instead of portraying women as superior to men, Wollstonecraft wanted to raise their intellectual standing in order to make them into more "rational citizens" – she did not influence them to abandon their work in the home, or suggest anything as "radical" as the vote (V. Sanders 16).

According to Gregory Castle, the first phase or "wave" of modern feminism "was concerned with the issue of suffrage" (94). Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were the central feminist figures in mid-nineteenth century America and their political roots were in anti-slavery activism. Stanton composed the "Declaration of Sentiments" for the Seneca Falls women's rights convention in 1848, a "watershed moment in US feminism" (Castle 94). The Declaration is based on the American Constitution, stating "that all men and women are created equal," and accuses a patriarchal society for suppressing the rights of women: "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in

direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her" (qtd. in Castle 94). This Declaration attempted to address the issues of gender based oppression as well as galvanize women to seek emancipation on both the domestic and social spheres.

According to Gregory Castle, not all feminist movements involved political activism in this early period (95). He states that "literary modernism produced foundational feminist writers", including Virginia Woolf, Hilda Doolittle, and Djuna Barnes; and that Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) was a "landmark work" in which "representations of women by male authors are criticized and a new model for female identity and agency is proffered" (95). Woolf also insisted that women be "allowed the economic and social freedom to follow their aspirations and to forego the traditional role of serving as an enlarging mirror for male identity" (Castle 95). Woolf asks: "How is he to go on giving judgment, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is?" (60). Hence, women, in this patriarchal critique, were to elevate the ego and stature of men while at the same time diminishing their own.

A second wave of feminism, which peaked in the 1960s, "focused attention on civil rights, specifically social and economic equality" (Thornham, "Second Wave Feminism" 34). Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) was a foundational text, in which she raised many of the same issues that Woolf raised twenty years earlier. According to Thornham, "it is Beauvoir's account of the cultural construction of woman as Other which laid the foundations for much of the theoretical work of the 1970's ("Second Wave Feminism" 34). Beauvoir writes:

> One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (281)

Beauvoir states that women are defined as the "other", with men being "the one": "He is the Subject, the Absolute – she is the Other" (16). Thus, Beauvoir believes that a woman learns feminine behaviour and characteristics from the patriarchal society in which she lives; she is not born with innate knowledge of feminine behaviour. According to Tyson, "Beauvoir observes that in a patriarchal society, men are considered 'essential subjects' (independent selves with free will), while women are considered 'contingent beings' (dependent beings controlled by circumstances)" (96). She elaborates:

> Men can change the world and give it meaning, while women have meaning only in relation to men. Thus, women are defined not just in terms of their difference from men, but in terms of their inadequacy in comparison to men. The word *woman* has the same implications as the word *other* – a woman is not a person in her own right. She is man's Other; she is less than a man. (Tyson 96)

For the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s the subject of feminism was "women's experience under patriarchy: the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women's voices, disempowered their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral. To be a woman under such conditions was in some respects to not exist at all" (Rivkin and Ryan 765). Noteworthy feminists of this period, such as

Germaine Greer and Kate Millett, “inspired into life a school of feminist literary criticism that took the history of women’s oppression and the silencing of their voices as twin beacons to guide its work” (Rivkin and Ryan 765).

An important feminist theorist is Gayle Rubin, whose 1975 essay “The Traffic in Women” became important to feminist arguments in the 1970s. She describes the “exchange of women,” and states that “it places the oppression of women within social systems, rather than in biology” (779). Historical examples of trafficking in women include women being “given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favours, sent as tributes, and being traded, bought and sold” (Rubin 779). According to Rubin, “instead of being confined to the primitive world, these practices become more pronounced and commercialized in more ‘civilized’ societies” (779). Rubin explains:

> The exchange of women is shorthand for expressing that the social relations of a kinship system that specifies that men have rights over their female relatives, and that women do not have the same rights either to themselves or to their male relatives. (780)

Rubin’s argument exemplifies the essence of commodification of women often portrayed in fantasy novels wherein men gain wealth or status through the purchase or sale of women. Rubin goes on to explain the reduced signification of women by stating: “gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes: instead of being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities” (782). Society requires that men repress their “feminine” characteristics, and that women repress their “masculine” characteristics. The same social system which

“oppresses women in its relations of exchange, oppresses everyone in its insistence upon a rigid division of qualities” (Rubin 782).

Thus, it could be argued that women in earlier fantasy novels are only placed in the storyline to fulfil a role – they act either as the mother or love interest as this is what society expects from them. As women had to repress characteristics deemed “masculine” and act in a “ladylike” fashion, therefore, women as heroes in a novel would not be in line with societal expectations.

According to Rivkin and Ryan, “woman” suddenly became “a matter of interpretation”: “Gender, rather than the plumb line that allowed one to trace woman’s banishment from an androcentric culture, might instead be a construct of culture, something written into the psyche by language” (766). Two perspectives began to form: one “constructionist” or “accepting of the idea that gender is created by culture in history”, the other “essentialist,” more “inclined to the idea that gender reflects a natural difference between men and women that is as much psychological, even linguistic, as it is biological” (Rivkin and Ryan 766-767).

Essentialists argued “that woman are capable of offering a different ethics from men, one more attuned to preserving the earth from destruction by weapons devised by men” (Rivkin and Ryan 767). The authors explain:

> Men must separate themselves from their mother, who represents the tie to nature, in order to enter the patriarchal system, and they consequently adopt a violent and aggressive attitude to the world. On the other hand, women are not required to separate from the mother as they acquire a gender identity; they

simply identify with their own mother as she is the closest person to them as they grow up (Rivkin and Ryan 767).

Rivkin and Ryan state that essentialist feminists argued that men "think in terms of rights when confronted with ethical issues, while women think in terms of responsibilities to others," and that "women are more caring because their psychological and physical ties to their physical being remain unbroken" (767). This can be observed in earlier fantasy novels as men typically portrayed violent and aggressive behaviour, which, according to essentialists, means that they have entered manhood as exemplified by the patriarchal system. Examples include the characters of King Arthur, Beowulf and Gilgamesh who engaged in bloody battles with their enemies as proof of and representative of their manhood. Conversely, women in earlier fantasy novels are seldom, if ever, portrayed as the hero: they are cast in the role of temptress, witch, damsel in distress or mother. This is evidenced in characters such as Queen Guinevere, Grendel's mother or Enkidu's prostitute.

On the other hand, state Rivkin and Ryan, "the constructivist position took inspiration from the Marxist theory of the social construction of individual subjectivity offered by Althusser and from the Post-Structuralist idea that language writes rather than reflects identities" (768). Gender identity and the idea that men are superior to women are both constructs of patriarchal society. According to Rivkin and Ryan, "the identity that feminist essentialists think is different from men's is only the product of conditioning under patriarchy, a conditioning to be caring, relational, and maternal that may make women seem more ethical than men, but a conditioning nonetheless" (768). They continue to state that the constructionists worried that the essentialists understood

the subordination of women to be “women’s nature” (768). They asserted that “what must change is not the way androcentric culture traps and stifles a woman’s identity that should be liberated into separation”, but rather the way both male and female gender is constructed (Rivkin and Ryan 768). Marxist feminists “especially noted that much of what the essentialists took to be signs of an acceptable female nature were in fact attributes assigned to women in capitalist culture to make them better domestic labourers, better angels in the house” (Rivkin and Ryan 768). As this study will reveal, the female protagonists in the selected texts resist societal conditioning enforced by patriarchy and establish their own path of autonomous identity.

Rivkin and Ryan believe that psychoanalysis has been crucial to the development of “contemporary feminist thinking about literature and culture”: “Millett attacked Freud’s most notable mistakes regarding women, but later feminists have argued that the engagement with psychoanalysis should not be one entirely of rejection” (768). Juliet Mitchell believes that one of the most important of Freud’s theories is that of “engendering”, which argues that “gender is socially constructed, and although Freud’s own account is patriarchal, other accounts are possible, as are other ways of constructing human subjectivity” (Rivkin and Ryan 768). These contrasting frameworks have assisted in developing a more equitable approach to female identity formation and enables the researcher to explore how the authors empower their female characters to establish such independence.

Nancy Chodorow believes that psychoanalysis is “first and foremost a theory of femininity and masculinity, a theory of gender inequality, and a theory of the development of heterosexuality” (*Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* 174). She states

that what psychoanalytic theory and feminism have in common is the fact “that women and men are ‘made,’ not ‘born’” – that is, that “biology alone does not explain sexual orientation or gender personality” (qtd. in Edles and Appelrouth 347), a concept that supports the work of other researchers, and is evident in the analysis of the female characters explored in this project who reflect heretofore masculine qualities of strength, courage, and wisdom and through the expression of these qualities rescue their male counterparts.

According to Edles and Appelrouth, “one of the problems that psychoanalytic feminist theory tackles is that of the resiliency of gender roles” (348). In the 1960s and 1970s, many feminists believed that the power of “self-governance” was enough to change gendered behaviour patterns. They thought that “stereotypical gender roles” would be put to an end if girls and boys were treated equally and were not raised with language and behavioural patterns specific to each gender (Edles and Appelrouth 348). If this was the case, there would no longer be gender roles or sexism. However, Edles and Appelrouth state that this is not the case: “despite significant changes in socialization (such as the rise in girls’ sports and more gender-neutral activities in school), there are still strongly gendered preferences among both boys and girls” (348). Thus, psychoanalytic feminists seek to “explain how gender patterns are reproduced independent of our conscious intentions” (Edles and Appelrouth 348), a notion which aids in the explication of the texts and their representation of the female characters who break with the stereotypical gender moulds.

Chodorow notes that “because of the parents’ gender roles, infants originally identify with the female parent”: “the infant first develops a sense of his or her own

selfhood in a close, one-on-one relationship with the mother, and qualities possessed by the mother are internalized by the infant to form the beginnings of the child's personality" (Edles and Appelrouth 348-349). Boys have a strong bond with their mothers when they are infants and their fathers are largely absent, which means that they have to deny themselves "emotional intimacy" with their mothers in order to separate themselves. Therefore, boys become "men" by "defining themselves in opposition to the femininity of their mother" (Edles and Appelrouth 349).

On the other hand, girls are not required to break the connection with their mothers in order to become "women." According to Edles and Appelrouth, society promotes mothers and daughters having a strong link into adulthood; and because women are not forced to separate themselves from their mothers as men are, they continue to seek close relationships because they crave emotional intimacy (349). This "unconscious desire to form attachments to others leads women to suffer greater dependency needs, as their self-identity is tied to their relationships with others" (Edles and Appelrouth 349).

In most fantasy novels, male heroes typically do not portray any "feminine characteristics"; they do not express feminine emotions because they do not want to be seen as weak or vulnerable. That is why the contemporary representation of female heroes places them more securely as adopting masculine traits. In most instances female heroes do not display weak or vulnerable behaviour – they are strong and decisive, traits which are usually assigned to male characters.

Interestingly, none of the female characters examined in this thesis have strong mother-daughter bonds. Hermione Granger does not share many details of her life with her mother and the two are not particularly close; Lyra Belacqua is raised without parents, she later learns that Mrs Coulter is her mother but she abhors her; and Alanna of Trebond's mother died giving birth to her and she is raised by her father. As a result, each of the female characters has a strong sense of their own self- constructed identity, one that has not been determined by their attachment to their mothers or the modelling of female behaviours that mothers may have represented.

Castle states that Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar were "instrumental in developing revisionist literary histories of women's writing, although they concentrated largely on white women writers in the nineteenth century" (96). Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* examines works by the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, and writers in the suffragette movement. Showalter described "the change in the late 1970s as a shift of attention from 'androtexts' (books by men) to 'gynotexts' (books by women)"; and she coined the term "gynocritics," meaning the study of gynotexts, but gynocriticism is a broad and varied field (Showalter, "Feminist Literary Criticism in the Wilderness" 185). The subjects of gynocriticism are, she states, "the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution or laws of a female literary tradition" (Showalter, "Feminist Literary Criticism in the Wilderness" 185).

Gilbert and Gubar, too, "fought against the tendencies of conventional fiction and the patriarchal culture that nurtured it" (Castle 96-97). Their landmark work *The*

Madwoman in the Attic reviews the place of women both as literary figures and as writers. They argue that women cannot become writers until they have found suitable models for themselves, and they suggest “a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of ‘angel’ and ‘monster’ which male authors have generated for her” (812). Gilbert and Gubar argue that women have played specific roles throughout the history of literature. In the Middle Ages it was often the Virgin Mary that was the “pure model of womanhood”. In the more secular nineteenth century, however, the “eternal type of female purity was represented not by a Madonna in heaven but by an angel in the house” (814). Gilbert and Gubar believe that patriarchal texts have traditionally suggested that:

> [E]very angelically selfless Snow White must be hunted, if not haunted, by a wickedly assertive Stepmother: for every submissive woman enshrined in domesticity, there exists an equally important negative image that embodies the sacrilegious fiendishness of what William Blake called the ‘Female Will.’ (“The Madwoman in the Attic” 819)

Thus, while male writers traditionally “praise the simplicity of the dove, they invariably castigate the cunning of the serpent” (Gilbert and Gubar, “The Madwoman in the Attic” 819). Similarly, assertiveness and aggressiveness – which are characteristics of a male life of “significant action” – are “monstrous” in women because they are “unfeminine” and therefore “unsuited to a gentle life of ‘contemplative purity’” (Gilbert and Gubar, “The Madwoman in the Attic” 819). Contemporary women writers counter this limiting female projection as is seen in the works of Rowling and Pierce.

According to Rivkin and Ryan, in the mid-1980s there was significant development in feminist criticism. “French feminism” – the world of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva – began impacting feminist scholars’ work (766). According to Tyson, generally the focus of French feminism has taken two different forms: *materialist feminism* and *psychoanalytic feminism* (96). Tyson states that “French materialist feminism examines the patriarchal traditions and institutions that control the material (physical) and economic conditions by which society oppresses women” such as “patriarchal beliefs about the difference between men and women and the laws and customs that govern marriage and motherhood” (96). In contrast to materialist feminism, “French feminist psychoanalytic theory is interested in patriarchy’s influence on women’s psychological experience and creativity” (Tyson 96).

What the French philosopher Luce Irigaray calls the “feminine” – “everything having to do with matter and the contact between material planes – has become subordinated to a masculine idealizing tendency that uses the feminine as a mirror for its own narcissistic speculations” (Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse” 795). In “Women on the Market,” Irigaray argues that “the economic, social, and cultural order of a patriarchal society is assured by the fact that men, or groups of women, circulate women among themselves, according to the role known as incest taboo” (799). Irigaray examines the roles that are forced on women them by males in society. She states that women are “assigned labels relating to sexual pleasure which contain certain expectations that are geared towards the fulfilment of male needs” (809). Women are classed as “objects”; and in particular they are “objects of desire used to perform sexual labour” (Irigaray 809). In the texts under examination, it is clear that the female

characters make their own determination in establishing heterosexual relationships and refuse to allow themselves to be reduced to sexual commodities.

Irigaray describes the three main categories of social roles imposed on women (807). The first category is woman as a "mother figure" where her role is to bear and raise children (Irigaray 807). Mothers, who are "reproductive instruments marked with the name of the father and enclosed in his house," must be private property and therefore excluded from the exchange (Irigaray 807). The next category discussed by Irigaray is the "virginal woman," who is sexually pure (808). She is valued by men because she is a virgin and is therefore pure and innocent. The last type of woman discussed by Irigaray is the prostitute. Although she is despised by society, she is "tolerated because she accepts and serves men's sexual advances" (Irigaray 808). According to Irigaray:

> The characteristics of feminine sexuality derive from these three categories: the valorization of reproduction and nursing, faithfulness, modesty, ignorance of, and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure, a passive acceptance of men's "activity," seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers' desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself. (808)

This is a significant point of diversion for the female protagonists under scrutiny; none evince overarching desires of marriage and motherhood but rather challenge this socially constructed trajectory.

Irigaray also suggests that, in a patriarchal culture, "much of women's subjugation occurs in the form of psychological repression enacted through the medium

of language" (Tyson 101). In other words, patriarchal language delineates all meaning in the societies in which women live. Therefore, Tyson argues that, although they may not realise it, "women do not speak as active originators of their own thoughts; rather, they passively imitate previously spoken ideas" (101). The female protagonists continually challenge this notion as throughout the texts in question, they initiate strategies that liberate others or defeat their enemies.

For Irigaray, patriarchal power is also evidenced in "the male gaze": the man looks and is therefore in a position of power; the women is looked at and is merely regarded as an object. Therefore, in patriarchy, "women are merely tokens, markers, commodities in a male economy." In other words, "women function to display men's relations to other men" (Tyson 102). Although each of the female characters holds a place of significance in their community, they are heralded for their intelligence and bravery, not simply for their femaleness.

Hélène Cixous, a proponent of "feminine writing," argues that language exposes what she calls *patriarchal binary thought*, which "is defined as seeing the world in terms of 'polar opposites'". One of these is usually better than the other (91). Examples include oppositions such as head/heart, father/mother, culture/nature, sun/moon, and activity/passivity. Oppositions like these organize the way we think, and for each opposition Cixous asks, "Where is [the woman]?" (91). According to patriarchal thinking as hypothesized by Cixous, the woman "occupies the side that patriarchy considers inferior" – heart, mother, nature, moon, and passivity while the male is "defined by the side that patriarchy sees as superior": head, father, culture, sun, and activity (91). Cixous notes: "Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it

with the opposition activity/passivity" (92). According to Tyson, "patriarchal thinking believes that it is natural for the sexes to be different" – "women are born to be passive and men are born to be active" (100).

This patriarchal thinking is displayed in earlier fantasy novels, where male heroes are portrayed as active characters who go out into the world and fight to avenge wrongs. On the other hand, female characters were generally passive and usually relational or sexual appendages for the male characters. However, in modern fantasy novels, this is no longer the case. As illustrated in the female characters under investigation, female heroes are active, decisive characters, who fight with their wits and their/or acquired physical strengths for what they believe without subsuming themselves to the larger-than-life male characters.

Julia Kristeva, a French psychoanalytic feminist, "doesn't believe in *écriture féminine* or womanspeak because she believes that any theory that essentializes women (that is, that posits inborn or biological characteristics for women) misrepresents their diversity and leaves them vulnerable to the patriarchal essentialization of women as naturally submissive and overly emotional" (qtd. in Tyson 103). In addition, the "biological differences that make women female and men male (as opposed to the differences socially imposed by patriarchy)" are seen by Kristeva as "social differences rather than biological differences because of their concrete effects on women in the real world" (qtd. in Tyson 103). She states that the "sexual, biological, physiological, and reproductive difference [between men and women] reflects a difference in … the social contract" ("Woman's Time" 21). Tyson believes that biological females have fewer rights

than biological males in society, especially with regards to her own body (103). This sublimation is what Rowling, Pullman and Pierce counter in their female protagonists.

In her significant examination of the question “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” Sherry Ortner remarks that in every society “the psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating” (85). In her explanation of this “symbolic ambiguity,” Ortner explains that the “subversive feminine symbols” such as witches, evil eye, menstrual pollution, castrating mothers and the “feminine symbols of transcendence” such as mother goddess, merciful dispensers of salvation, female symbols of justice result in the “notion that women stand on the outside of the sphere of culture’s hegemony” and not central to its effective functioning as Hermione, Lyra and Alanna evidently do (86). Attempts to cast these women in any of these roles is immediately thwarted by those who support their leadership.

According to theorist Gregory Castle, Butler is perhaps the most influential theorist to explore the idea of sexual and gender identity as a “social performance, a site of power and discourse” (104). Her pioneering 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, which was the first to use the term “gender performativity,” has consequently become a “classic text in fields as diverse as cultural studies, feminist, queer, and literary theory, and philosophy” (Rottenberg).

In exploring the work of Judith Butler, it is important to differentiate between *sex* and *gender*. According to Butler, the “sex” of a person is determined by their “chromosomal constitution”; whilst the term “gender” refers to the “cultural interpretation

or signification of the person's sex; more specifically it is the display of masculine and feminine behaviour associated with the notion of sex" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 902).

Butler describes the construction of gender identity in a society in detail. Remarking on Beauvoir's statement that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", Butler writes:

> If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 45)

Butler argues that sex as well as gender, "is a sequence of repeated acts; it is not something that one is, it is something that one does" (62). In the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*, Butler goes into more detail on this concept:

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its

> constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (45)

According to Salih, Butler has “collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always gender” (55). She propounds that all bodies are “gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social), which means that there is no ‘natural body’ that pre-exists its cultural inscription” (55).

Butler continues: “gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity that it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (34).For Butler, gender is entirely imitative, performed and enacted, arguing:

> Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (“Performative Acts” 900)

Butler contends that if the ground of gender identity is the “stylized repetition of acts” through time, and “not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style” (901). Therefore, Butler believes that the woman becomes her gender “through a

series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" ("Performative Acts" 903-904). Hence, a woman adopts femininity by mimicking other women in society. Gender is performative "insofar as it is the effect of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized under constraint" (Butler 904). Butler furthers this argument in her article "Critically Queer":

> Social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norms, and this repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and destabilization. There is no subject who precedes or enacts this repetition of norms. To the extent that this repetition creates an effect of gender uniformity, a stable effect of masculinity or femininity, it produces and destabilizes the notion of the subject as well, for the subject only comes into intelligibility through the matrix of gender. Indeed, one might construe repetition as precisely that which *undermines* the conceit of voluntarist mastery designated by the subject in language. ("Critically Queer" 21-22)

Butler continues to state that there is no subject who is "free to stand outside these norms or to negotiate them at a distance; on the contrary, the subject is retroactively produced by these norms in their repetition, precisely as their effect" ("Critically Queer" 22). According to Butler, gender performativity does not mean that one can "choose" which gender one will be today; performativity is the repetition of the norms which constitute a person; thus performativity is a "compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject, and which are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, and displacement are to be forged" ("Critically Queer" 22).

The female characters in question work at resisting and subverting the classic female roles and behaviours and make reference to it both in dialogue and in action throughout their selective texts.

Tyson furthers Butler's argument, stating that *traditional gender roles* "cast men in stereotypical patterns of behaviour", identifying them as "rational, strong, protective, and decisive," whereas women are defined stereotypically as "emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (85). Tyson believes that these gender roles are still used today to rationalize inequality between the sexes; especially where women are excluded from positions of (85). In the same way that women are convinced that they are not suitable for certain careers, they are also convinced by society that they cannot be strong, decisive heroes. However, the characters in the novels examined subvert the gender roles that are placed upon them by society. Hermione Granger, Lyra Belacqua, and Alanna of Trebond are strong, heroic female characters who defy the gender roles articulated by society. They choose to be courageous and assertive heroes and actively seek their own destinies.

Tyson continues to state that "patriarchy is thus, by definition, sexist," which means it "promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men" (85). Tyson describes *biological essentialism,* which is the idea that women are born in an inferior position to men; and that differences between the sexes "are considered part of our unchangeable essence as men and women" (85). Tyson states that feminism distinguishes between the word *sex,* which "refers to our biological constitution as male or female", and the word *gender*, which "refers to our cultural programming as either

feminine or masculine" (86). Tyson believes that rather, these gender categories are "constructed by society", which is why this is known as *social constructionism* (86).

The idea that men are "superior" to women has been used to keep men in positions of "economic, political, and social power," in other words, "to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power", constraining women by societal norms rather than their inherent biological limitations (Tyson 86). In other words, women are placed in an inferior position in patriarchal society because this is the expectation that society has. Women do not have inborn biological characteristics that cause them to be treated unfairly compared to men; they are placed in an inferior position because of cultural and societal expectations. It is clear in the novels under scrutiny, however, that Hermione, Lyra and Alanna are able to excel in the educational opportunities afforded them and thus achieve positions of authority and significance.

Tyson further contends that oppression of women serves to demoralize them arguing that: "patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermines women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally, and therefore, correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (86-87). She explains:

> Patriarchal ideology has a pervasive, deeply rooted influence on the way we think, speak, see ourselves, and view the world in which we live. Before the centuries-old struggle for women's equality finally emerged in literary studies in

the late 1960s, the literary works of white male authors describing experience from a white male point of view was considered the standard of universality. (84)

Tyson continues to state that all of Western or Anglo-European civilization is "deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, as we can see in the numerous patriarchal women and female monsters of Greek and Roman mythology, the patriarchal interpretation of the biblical Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world, and the representation of woman as a nonrational creature by traditional Western philosophy" (92). According to Tyson, "even the development of the Western canon of great literature, including traditional fairy tales" is a product of patriarchal ideology (92). The contrast in female characterisations offered by Rowling, Pullman and Pierce contrasts these traditions and provide witness to liberating views of women's potentialities.

In conclusion, Lorber suggests that "the goal of feminism as a political movement is to make women and men more equal legally, socially, and culturally" (4). Even though it is called *gender equality,* typically only women are disadvantaged. This inequality can take many different forms, "depending on the economic structure and social organization of a particular society, and on the culture of any particular group within that society" (Lorber 4). In earlier fantasy literature, it is apparent that the roles of men and women were not equal, and that women were in fact disadvantaged because they played no significant roles in these novels. However, modern fantasy literature more clearly demonstrates gender equality, as females are now acting in roles that were unthinkable outside of the male gender. Females are very often the hero of fantasy novels instead of merely being an accessory to a male character as in the case of the texts under investigation.

2.2 Joseph Campbell’s Theory of the Monomyth

A further tool in the exploration of the development of female heroes in the selected texts is Joseph Campbell’s monomyth. Joseph Campbell, a distinguished scholar and writer, realised that mythology had been important in shaping the modern world and has written several books that explore the significance of myth to modern society (“Joseph Campbell”). In 1949 Campbell published *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a study of heroes throughout world literature as they travel from an initial rite of passage to their zenith when they become a completely transformed person. In this book, he states: “The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honoured by his society, frequently unrecognised or disdained” (35).

Campbell examines the monomythic cycle of the hero in many different sources; “his material comes from Greek, Roman, Persian, Melanesian, Korean, Celtic and Egyptian myths, from the Bible, from Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu texts, from the Quran, from shamanic Siberian tales, from Shakespeare and James Joyce” (Nicholson 183). Nicholson explains: “[Campbell] deliberately loosened the boundaries between religious text, sacred recollection, mythology, literature and folklore, as he posed the hero’s journey as hermeneutic, in both psychoanalytic and spiritual terms, a journey of the self” (184). In other words, the hero’s journey is not only a journey to achieve an end – to kill an evil monster or gain a reward in the form of gold or jewels; it is also a journey of discovery where the hero gains understanding of himself and his place in the universe, enabling him to arrive home a matured and liminally transformed person. Through the novels in question, Hermione, Lyra and Alanna all have to undergo such a quest

journey in order to achieve personal growth, deliver their fellow human beings, and secure their place of significance in their universe.

Campbell states: “The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation – initiation – return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (28). The hero leaves his world of “common day” into an area of “supernatural wonder” where “fabulous forces are encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero then comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell 28). Campbell gives the examples, among others, of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods in the heavens and then returned home, and Jason, who sailed through the Clashing Rocks and managed to recover the Golden Fleece from the dragon that guarded it (28). As is evidenced in these traditional examples, in past fantasy novels all the characters defined as heroes were male.

The hero’s journey is outlined in three stages, beginning with the departure, which may demand up to five incidents: the call to adventure, in which a herald character will direct the hero to a world that he did not know about, refusal of the call, receiving supernatural aid, the crossing of the first threshold, and being swallowed in the “belly of the whale” (Campbell 83). The second stage is the initiation, which may entail up to six incidents: the road of trials, the meeting with the goddess, woman as a temptress, atonement with the father, apotheosis, and the ultimate boon. The final stage is the return, which may contain up to six incidents. Under this heading is the refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, the crossing of the return threshold, master of the two worlds, and freedom to live (Campbelli-ii).

The first stage of the hero's journey is the departure. This is the stage where he leaves his home, the only world he has ever known, because of a variety of reasons. Obviously, if the hero does not leave his home there will be no journey. This could suggest that the hero's society limits his opportunities for the expansion of his character. In the monomyth's departure stage, the hero receives a "call to adventure" in the form of a "blunder" that "reveals an unsuspected world," or through the appearance of a "herald", which is usually an animal or a mystifying person who is "dark, loathly, or terrifying, judged evil by the world" – who will cause the hero either "to live... or... to die" (Campbell 46, 48).

The next stage of the hero's journey is the refusal of the call, where the hero doubts his abilities and questions his strength to overcome evil. Campbell states that that throughout his journey, the hero usually has a magic helper who will guide him. The hero is "covertly aided by the advice, amulets and secret agents of the supernatural helper" of these "protective figures" (Campbell 89, 63).

Once the hero has begun his journey, he will continue with his adventure until he reaches the "threshold guardian" (Campbell 71). The next step in the hero's journey is into the "belly of the whale", where the hero leaves his comfortable, well-known world, and enters a world that is completely alien to him (83). The hero's departure is then over and he enters the second stage of his journey, the initiation stage.

The hero begins the initiation stage with the road of trials where his character is tested and he has to overcome various obstacles that are in the way of him achieving the goal of his journey. During this stage, the hero will make friends and enemies. This

is “a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials” (Campbell 89).

The next stage in the hero’s journey is the ordeal, and the meeting with the goddess, where the hero faces his biggest challenges. The ordeal is the peak of the story where all of the troubles reach their zenith. This is followed by woman as the temptress: “The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero’s total mastery of life” (Campbell 111). Subsequently in the hero’s journey is atonement with the father, followed by apotheosis, which “is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance” (Campbell 139).The hero then receives his due reward or ultimate boon and according to Campbell, “the adventure is here accomplished [and] signifies that the hero is a superior man, a born king” (159).

The third and final stage of the hero’s journey is the return, or the road back. Campbell suggests that “when the hero-quest has been accomplished… the adventurer must return with his life-transmuting trophy” (179). However, often the hero will refuse the return because he feels that he cannot effectively share his message with the people who live in his home. This is the point where “the two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other – different as life and death, as day and night” (Campbell 201).

The next stage of the hero’s journey is the magic flight: “If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his

adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron" (Campbell 182). However, the magic flight may be made more difficult by "marvels of magical obstruction and evasion" (Campbell 182). The next aspect of the hero's journey is the rescue from without – the hero "may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without" (Campbell 192). In other words, "the world may have to come and get him" (Campbell 192).

Once he has been rescued, the hero crosses the return threshold. He leaves the lands that his journey brought him to and he returns to his home. His return is described as a "coming back out of that yonder zone" (Campbell 201). The hero is then the master of two worlds. He has the "freedom to pass back and forth across the world division…" (Campbell 212). Once he is the master of two worlds and has achieved the goal of his adventure by overcoming his enemies, the hero has the freedom to live his life in peace, "the result of the miraculous passage and return" (Campbell 221).

Feminist theorists Pearson and Pope have analysed Campbell's theory of the monomyth and observe that although Campbell at first states that the hero can be either male or female, he "then proceeds to discuss the heroic pattern as male and to define the female characters as goddesses, temptresses, and earth mothers" (4). All the same, the quests of the female heroes examined in this dissertation can be patterned onto Campbell's monomyth, in order to enable the female to adopt the role of the empowered protagonist.

The predominant themes in various fantasy novels investigate the troubles experienced by female characters living in a patriarchal society, and the gender

inequality they face. Thus, feminist theory, which acts as an indicator of the oppression of women by patriarchal society, is applied in this investigation in order to effectively analyse these texts. A close examination of feminist theory and a comprehensive analysis of the selected literary texts by J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman and Tamora Pierce demonstrate that their contemporary female characters are designed to resist the stereotypical roles of submissive gender constructions. This feminist critical framework empowers the investigation of these female characters and their defiance of gender discrimination and limitation. Furthermore, the heroic patterning of Campbell's monomyth illustrates that these female characters in question in fact model this previously masculine archetype. In the following chapter the development of female characters in fantasy novels will be explored with particular emphasis on the inferior placement of them in earlier fantasy literature.

Chapter 3: The Development of Female Characters in Fantasy Novels

Diana Wynne Jones, a writer of heroic fantasy fiction, provides a summary of the features of a "hero" in her article "The Heroic Ideal – A Personal Odyssey." She argues that this heroic archetype can also be found in children's literature. Heroes must be:

> [B]rave, physically strong, never mean or vicious, and possessed of a code of honour that requires them to come to the aid of the weak or the incompetent and the oppressed when nobody else will... But above all, heroes go into action when the odds are against them. (Jones 130)

These characteristics are often the same as conventional masculine values: men must be strong, decisive, must not reveal their emotions, and must always be prepared to fight, even when they know that they will lose. On the other hand, Jones describes women as a "mess": they were either "goaded into taking vengeance, like Medea, or Brunhilda... or they were passive, like Hero or Andromeda or Christiana" (131).

According to Nicholson," in early modern books on the hero, heroism is assigned almost exclusively to men" (187). Thomas Carlyle, for example, begins his 1840 book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* with "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the History of the Great Men" (5). Even when theorists "deigned to extend the potential prerogative of heroism to women, their nod would more often than not subsume woman as subtext, a bracketed subspecies of the category Man" (Nicholson 187).

Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces,* defines a hero as someone whose "visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs

of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is born" (18). Campbell states that this definition applies to girls as well as boys, women as well as men: "the whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women" (111). But therein lies the problem, according to T.A. Barron. Campbell was correct about the "power and importance" of heroes, he wrote, during a time when few fantasy novels featured girls or women in heroic roles. Men were almost always the ones to go on adventures; "men normally slayed the dragon, won the prize, or saved the kingdom" (Barron 30). From the early times, fantasy novels have been male-oriented. Male characters are the ones that go on quests, while female characters act as support or barrier for achieving their goals. They are either the villain or are passive characters, awaiting rescue and/or marriage; until recently there has not been a trend of strong, female heroes.

Male characters have dominated in heroic fantasy from the earliest times. Noting the skewed gendered representation in adventure tales, critic Nadya Aidenberg comments on this glaring lack:

> We need a new heroine with new strengths, new virtues, and new energies to play new roles because classical heroes and the heroic code they embrace have failed us badly. The paradigm of virtue that heroes like Aeneas, like Roland, and the heroic code – maiden-rescuing, dragon-slaying – represent has been destructive both to the individual and to Western culture... Examining the hero, we discover his essential narrowness which neglects concerns with community,

negotiation, nature, human relations, and the enablement of individual destinies to flourish in their differences. (11-12)

The few examples of women performing heroic deeds are outnumbered by male hero stories. Female characters have generally been limited to roles defined in relation to the male hero in the past: the “sexy temptress, the damsel in distress, the virginal bride who is the object of his quest and the reward for his heroism” (Mains et al 180). In most fantasies then women are either rescued or destroyed; their full potential as independent, autonomous beings are never explored.

Deborah Kaplan furthers this argument with her comment that “nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy does not provide a thoroughly feminist space” (268). In many works of this time, such as A.A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* (1926), Kenneth Grahame’s *Wind in the Willows* (1908), and Hugh Lofting’s *Doctor Doolittle* (1920), “girls do not appear at all, and women only appear as mothers, cannibal princesses, or washerwomen” (Kaplan 268). Women were assigned specific servant roles as wives, mothers or girlfriends, and often were only included as minor characters subservient to the fulfilment of the hero’s destiny.

According to Veglahn, “modern heroic fantasy is rooted in the romances and folktales of the past” (109). Mains agrees, positing that the novels published in the “early twentieth century established narrative patterns that continue to influence the development of fantastic literature today” and she proceeds to suggest that the most important images during epic fantasy of this age include the “figures of the heroic male warrior or adventurer and the dangerously exotic woman, sometimes worshipped as a

goddess because of her beauty and sexuality" ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 34). During this time, young women were typically valued only because of their beauty and sexuality – they were seen as sexual objects instead of as strong, multi-dimensional characters in their own right. Mains notes this highlighted sexual component of the femme fatale as occurring in the works of H. Ryder Haggard, especially in *Ayesha, the Return of She* (1905), and in later works such as A. Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar* (1926), and *Dwellers in the Mirage* (1932) ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 34).

Another character that most readers recognise is the boy who "never grows up," and the women who are required to look after him. The best-known example of this type of character is J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan (Mains, "Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 35). Kaplan believes that one of the "strongest examples" of a significant female character who is "completely stereotyped" is Barrie's Wendy, who acts in the role of mother to the Lost Boys and plays wife to Peter Pan, in contrast to the self-centred and fickle Tinkerbell (268).

As did many previous fantasy writers, George MacDonald depicted the violent, evil characters in the form of the feminine through his witches, fairies and female goblins. Lewis Carroll also utilizes this female stereotype through his character, the Red Queen, a frightening, heartless character who shouts "Off with their heads" at the slightest breach of rules.

Although it is apparent that the majority of works during the early and mid-1900s do not contain strong female characters, Mains believes that "an adventuring female hero" can be seen in the character of Dorothy Gale, the protagonist of L. Frank Baum's

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900) (Mains, "Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 35). In Baum's Oz, strong female characters govern both the good and bad societies. The Emerald City is ruled by a man, the Wizard of Oz, at the beginning of the series but it soon becomes clear that he is "an incompetent phony with no magical powers" (Lurie 29). According to Lurie, "male rulers are almost always wicked or weak" in the Oz books (34). Princess Ozma is the female ruler of Oz by the end of the second novel. In addition, Lurie believes that two of Dorothy's friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, "represent unfortunate extremes of male identity": the Scarecrow is made of straw and is too emotional, he does not use his intellectual abilities; and the Tin Woodman is made of metal and is too critical – he does not use his emotional capabilities (Lurie 34). The third companion is the opposite of the classic hero typically found in fantasy, as he is a cowardly lion, a helpless version of the courageous male hero (Lurie 34). This subverts the roles typically attributed to gender, as women, and not men, are typically portrayed as being helpless. Yet a possible suggestion as to Baum's depiction of a female hero and dependent men may stem from his strong feminist leanings as his wife and mother-in-law were active in the blossoming American women's movement.

According to Mains, several of the fantasy authors of the World War years did not attempt to end the "stereotypical images of adventuring males and bewitching females", such as James Cabell who in his novels depicted women as "wives or seductive witches" ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 36). Mains continues to describe E.R. Eddison as being one of the founders of the genre of fantasy; although in his *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) there are no female heroes and women have only small supporting roles ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 36). J.R.R. Tolkien has had an extraordinary influence on the

genre of fantasy. In his 1937 work *The Hobbit,* a male hero, Bilbo Baggins, sets off on a journey to reclaim the homeland of his male companions, a group of dwarves. They are assisted by a male wizard, Gandalf. In this novel, there are no female characters of any significance. *The Lord of the Rings,* which was published in the mid-1950s, still emphasised male heroes, but several female characters were included in the novel: Goldberry, a nature spirit and Arwen, a female elf. The two female characters of the most significance are Galadriel, an elf queen, and Éowyn, "the warrior maiden who gladly gives up both battle honour and her desire for Aragorn to wed Faramir" (Mains, "Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 43). This indicates a slight, yet significant change in the treatment of females in fantasy fiction. In 1937, no females of any significance were included in Tolkien's writing; yet by the mid-1950s, two strong female characters are included.

According to Mains, in T.H. White's retelling of Malory's *Le Morte d' Arthur, The Once and Future King* (1958), women play a much larger role although some of White's female characters are still stereotyped: "Merlyn quite enjoys being seduced by Nimue, and Morgan le Fay is the evil enchantress behind the young Wart's first quest" ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 43).

Another founding father of fantasy is C.S. Lewis, who is best known for his seven book series *The Chronicles of Narnia* and whose handling of female characters, Mains would argue, is contradictory and somewhat ambiguous ("Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 43). In *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), although Susan and Lucy are heroic female characters who fight alongside their brothers, the wicked villain is the White Witch, the same "arrogant, violent" character who takes on "the familiar role of

temptress and deceiver" (Mains, "Fantasy, 1900 – 1959" 43). For Veglahn, the White Witch is "an allegorical representation of Eve, through whose sin traditional Christian doctrine says all humanity fell from grace, and she may also be read as a projection of Lewis's anxieties about the feminine" (109-110). Thus, despite his hero status of Lucy, it may be proposed that Lewis in his depiction of the White Witch continues to perpetuate the representation of women as potentially evil and life-threatening.

However, Veglahn notes that more female writers entering "and eventually dominat[ing] the field of heroic fantasy indicates important changes in male and female roles in society" (111). While in the past, male authors and indeed, male heroes, dominated the genre of heroic fantasy, in recent years female authors have created strong female heroes. This reflects a change in the dominance of patriarchal views as women's positions in society are being elevated from being subordinate to males, to being their equal.

Veglahn notices that one glaring difference is that female monsters created by male writers "seem much less isolated and more connected in relationships to others than their male counterparts in more recent books" (111). She gives the examples of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* and Queen of the Goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin* who both have emasculated, ineffectual husbands, the witch in *The Light Princess* bewitches her niece, and the Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz is one of four sisters (111). In contrast to these female monsters who have relationships with others, Veglahn finds that "male images of evil created by female writers are usually depicted as profoundly isolated. None of them is shown as part of a family during the action of the story" (111). Amongst others, she cites the examples of the

Dark Rider in Cooper's *Dark Is Rising*, who is seen first inside a black pillar, and Skiorh, the false guide in Le Guin's *Wizard of Earthsea*, is a "shadowy figure" (112). Male authors, Veglahn argues, produce female monsters who are "angry women"; and who use this anger in their "quest for power" (112). Veglahn names the Queen of Hearts who frequently shouts "Off with their heads!", as well as the Queen of Goblins who wears granite shoes, and the Wicked Witch of the West who "stamps her feet and tears her hair" when her plan to kill Dorothy is foiled (112). Conversely, Veglahn writes that female writers create male monsters who "carry reason to extremes and seem to feel little emotion" (113). She cites the most obvious examples in L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time:* the "disembodied man that operates through the Man with Red Eyes"; and the Man in the Yellow Suit in *Tuck Everlasting* who is compared to a marionette (113).

A third contrast can be seen "between the treachery of the female monsters and the fidelity to transcendent, cosmic evil typical of the males" (Veglahn 114). The treachery of the female characters is often motivated by personal anger rather than "by larger schemes of universal darkness", and Veglahn cites the examples of the witch Makemnoit in MacDonald's *Light Princess* who is hurt because her brother did not invite her to his daughter's christening, and Carroll's Queen of Hearts who cheats at croquet in order to maintain her position of supremacy (114). In comparison to the female characters, the male characters follow the rules; Veglahn believes that they are frightening because "these rules are the dictates of a universal evil which they represent and serve" (114). In addition, the male monsters "are instruments of cosmic darkness, nonpersons who have dedicated their own wills to the service of evil" (Veglahn 114).

Thus, male writers who created female monsters in modern heroic fantasy tend to create monsters that are controlled by their emotions and who are unpredictable and deceitful as a result of their chaotic emotions. In opposition to this, male monsters created by female writers in recent years typically serve "abstract evil": they are isolated, rational and intellectual (Veglahn 115).

Remarkable changes in fantasy novels began taking place soon after the middle of the twentieth century. According to Veglahn, the "world wars, technological and economic changes, and new ideologies and institutions affected this literature" (110). She believes that one of the most interesting changes was in the authorship of these stories. In the 1947 edition of Arbuthnot's *Children and Books*, there were only four books on the list that could be named heroic fantasy, and all of them were written by men. In *Thursday's Child* in 1981, twenty-five books by female authors and twenty books by male authors were listed in its heroic fantasy category (Veglahn 110). This interesting change in the number of heroic fantasy novels written by women indicates the transformative changes in society, which allowed women to enter and embrace roles previously prescribed to only men.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, science fiction had a much larger presence in the market compared to fantasy. However, many women have written both fantasy and science fiction during this period. Notable novels written by female authors of this time include Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonflight* (1968), which is about a female character named Lessa who tries to become accepted as a "dragonrider"; Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* series; and C.J. Cherryh's *Morgain Cycle*, which features a female hero (Mains, "Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 62). There was a market for fantasy stories produced

both for children and young adults before the mid-1970s. According to Mains, several authors "crossed the boundary between adult and juvenile fiction to produce thought-provoking stories that shaped many of today's readers and the next generation of authors" ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 63). Mains gives the examples of Lloyd Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain* which was published in the 1960s, and "introduced strong female characters such as Eilonwy and Achren"; Andre Norton who published *Steel Magic* (1965), *Octagon Magic* (1967), and *Fur Magic* (1968); and Alan Garner's *Moon of Gomrath* (1963) *The Owl Service* (1967) ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 63).

There was an increasing interest from readers by the mid-1970s in epic or quest fantasies which were made popular by J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. However, the majority of these epic fantasies were still oriented on male characters; and series such as Terry Brooks's *The Sword of Shannara* (1977) and Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* continued to develop the trend. According to Mains, most of these novels centred on a male hero with "a destiny to fulfil and companions (also mostly male) to help him achieve it; all too often, female characters are relegated to princess-brides (sometimes spunky) and enchantresses (often evil)" ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 64). Thus, during the 1970s, the majority of epic fantasies or quest fantasies still centred on male heroes while the minimalized female characters functioned in subordinate roles to the male hero.

When female fantasy authors saw no place for themselves in these epic or quest fantasy worlds, they "created secondary worlds in which women could be warriors, wizards, and rulers, whether they had to fight for that right or were accepted as such without remark" (Mains, "Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 64). This self-direction by the authors

reflects the kind of assertive female characters they created. Mains mentions several secondary worlds created by women since the mid-1970s which feature strong female characters: Patricia McKillip's *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* (1974), in which a young female wizard takes revenge on the "world of men" for her attempted rape; Joy Chant's *When Voiha Wakes* (1984), which describes a world where the women are the rulers and men are their domestic servants; and Anne Bishop's *Black Jewels* trilogy, which looks at the "destiny of a female Chose One in a matriarchal society of witches", amongst others ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 64). Mains elucidates:

> Women writers in particular have used the mode of fantasy to recuperate female archetypal roles that have fallen into stereotypes; to recover a lost matriarchal tradition in myth and history; to deal explicitly with women-centred issues such as rape and gender inequality; and to reenvision traditional fantasy from a feminized perspective of caring and community. ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 62)

Female fantasy writers in particular realised that female characters in older fantasy novels had stereotypical roles, thus they used their writing to portray strong female characters who had responsibilities equal to those of male characters. These independent female characters are especially evident from the 1970s onwards, as new ideologies about the role of women in society began to shape their role in literature, positioning them as not weak, powerless characters but fearless, empowered heroes.

Keeling and Sprague state that "in the late 1900s a revolutionary new type of female heroine emerged in adolescent criticism" (13). Robin McKinley, one of the

authors who created this uncommon female hero, calls her protagonists “Girls Who Do Things,” and described her desire in her Newbery Medal acceptance speech:

> I wished desperately for books like *Hero* when I was young: books that didn’t require me to be untrue to my gender if I wished to fantasize about having my sort of adventures, not about wearing long, trailing dresses ... and ... [thinking] about my lover who is off somewhere having interesting adventures. (qtd. in Keeling and Sprague 13)

McKinley came across Éowyn, her first female hero, in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, but was dissatisfied with the character’s lack of development. Because of this, she chose to create “female heroes, rather than heroines” in her novels, such as “the protagonists in her Damar novels *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and the Crown* (1984)” (Keeling and Sprague 13). Harriet – who has been nicknamed Harry – in *The Blue Sword* is kidnapped and trained as a warrior to “protect the local population from the menace of the evil’s dark forces” – and not only does she eventually become a warrior, but she is the most talented in the kingdom and is given a sword which leads her to victory – equalling her in a literary sense to the young Arthur of Arthurian tales (Keeling and Sprague 13). McKinley’s *The Hero and the Crown* has been praised “for reworking the traditional quest fantasy with a girl heroine, complete with the romantic prize of a passive (male) partner waiting at home for the dragon-slaying rightful queen to save her kingdom” (Kaplan 270).

Thus male heroes in fantasy novels have been joined by equally forceful female heroes. Modern fantasies give female protagonists the opportunity to be the hero

instead of standing by and watching the male hero save the day. According to Barron, Madeleine L'Engle, Gail Carson Levine, and Ursula Le Guin are female authors who have "deepened and strengthened the concept of the female hero in a mythic context" (31). In L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), the young female hero Meg saves the day because of the power of her love; Ella in Levine's *Ella Enchanted* (1966), is fiercely determined and pursues her dreams even though they seem unattainable (Barron 31). Le Guin's *Earthsea* trilogy (1968-74) explores "politics of gender, race, and age", as seen in the development of Tenar, the hero of *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), a strong character who is being exploited by her servants – women who are supposed to be powerful but who are actually subservient to a male king – which compels her to escape (Kaplan 270). Kaplan states:

> Girl characters have always had a richer fantastic world in which to play in children's literature than in adult literature, if only because the post-Tolkien epic fantasy, so frequently lacking in any strong female characters at all, has never been a mainstay of fantasy for young readers. (270)

Not all female heroes rely only on their physical strength. The character of Menolly in Anne McCaffrey's *Harper Hall* trilogy and Kaeldra in Susan Fletcher's *The Dragon Chronicles* are nurturing; they rely on "traditional feminine values to accomplish their quests"; they represent "an alternative feminist heroism, one not dependent on assuming the traditional masculine role of dragon-slayer, an armed warrior who conquers through violence" (Keeling and Sprague 14). Keeling and Sprague describe both of these heroes as "dragon-sayers", characters who literally tame dragons with communication and nurturance; their heroism is "based on love and female identity

rather than on absorption into male roles of violence and destruction" (14). These critics go on to state that current popular fantasy writers have "constructed the heroic mode for girls in multiple ways": one way is the "traditional masculine dragon-slaying tale of martial valour," while another "offers a protagonist who chooses to embrace traditional roles and values as a dragon-sayer" (17). The dragon-sayer girl is a type of hero who achieves her goals of deliverance using communication and protective love instead of being a passive character that stays at home and waits for a male character to rescue her (17).

Even though in modern fantasy there are more female heroes than ever before, according to Jane Tolmie, "motifs of rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage and other forms of gender-based oppression and violence are markedly interlaced within contemporary fantasy novels" (148). Many female characters experience them often rather than as an isolated incident, illustrating the sexual and physical vulnerability of the female character. Tolmie names Elian in Tarr's *Avaryan Rising* (1997) who flees an arranged marriage and becomes a squire; Romilly in Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Hawkmistress!* (1988) who escapes physical and emotional abuse from her father and prevents an attempted rape; and Paksennarion in Elizabeth Moon's *The Deed of Paksennarion* (1992) who "flees her father and an arranged marriage, cross-dresses, and survives a beating and a later rape" (148). These textual examples illustrate that women are presenting themselves not as victims but victors in the male dominated world they find themselves in.

According to Kuznets, Susan Cooper and Lloyd Alexander as authors both create female characters who have potential for development that is mostly ignored

(31). Early on in the novels, Princess Eilonwy is described as a "pert tomboy," but while Taran is away learning to be a "man," she is sent to learn to be a "lady," which Kuznets describes as "separate, but unequal opportunities for development" (31). Kuznets states that "this failure to deal with female development is, of course, not particularly surprising: patriarchal myth becomes patriarchal romance which, in turn, becomes patriarchal fantasy" (31-32). As Joseph Campbell points out about the plot of the heroic monomyth: they are all concerned with the struggles of "the hero with a thousand faces" for "the mastery of the universe," and of the heroine with a thousand faces, "to be the mastered world" – clearly not equivalent developmental roles (36).

In the young adult fantasy novel *Fire and Hemlock* (1985), Diana Wynne Jones offers an example of a "true female literary hero": "one with whom all girls could identify and through that, all persons" (Jones 134). The main character in this novel is Polly Whittacker, a young girl who is in training to become a knight. She must save the life of her friend Tom Lynn, a situation evincing "a gendered role reversal" (Fleischbein 233). In her article "The Heroic Ideal – A Personal Odyssey," Jones explores the classic hero character, and explains the development of the novel Fire and Hemlock and the character of Polly. Fleischbein describes the many functions that Polly plays in the novel: "dutiful daughter, hero at school when she defends a friend from the school bully, mother to her mother Ivy (at times their relationship is inverted), granddaughter, tomboy, hero-in-training, actor, student, friend, and ultimately Tom's real hero" (234). Jones describes the classic heroic roles that Polly takes on: she is "Gerda in The Snow Queen, Snow White, Britomart, St. George, Pierrot, Pandora, Andromeda, Janet from 'Tam Lin' and many more, in a sort of overlapping succession" (Jones 136). By

modelling Polly on heroes of both sexes, Fleischbein argues that "Jones has created a multifaceted character who is not bound to traditional female roles"; thus, "Polly provides the reader with a more fluid and open example of gender construction than is often found in previous writing for children" (234).

Jones recognized that in "the heroic tradition ... heroes are male, and females are either wimps or bad" (134). Females in literature are typically not active and do not speak for themselves; instead they allow men to make decisions for them. Females in traditional fairy tales are often found sleeping, such as Briar Rose in *Sleeping Beauty*, or do not speak, like Cinderella, or are passive, such as Snow White, the Princess of "The Princess and the Pea," Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty (Fleishbein 235), their placid behaviour making their characters innocuous and mouldable. According to Fleischbein, "there are far too few true female heroes – girls who are active, adventurous, intelligent, just, and independent – in literature" (235). Jones realised that fantasy needed a strong female hero and created this character herself in her own novels, basing her hero on the prototype male hero but with a gender twist.

In some novels, male and female characters work together to accomplish goals as a team. This partnership can be found in the novels of Andre Norton, especially in the *Witch World* series, and in Patricia McKillip's *Riddle Master* trilogy. According to Mains et al, "in order to escape patriarchal violence many female heroes turn to questing or fighting", such as Elizabeth Moon's Paksennarion and Lynette in Vera Chapman's *The King's Damosel* (Mains et al 180-181).

Occasionally, the female hero will disguise herself as a male, such as Éowyn in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. This disguise can be metaphorical, such as in Harry, the tomboy main character in McKinley's *The Blue Sword*. It can also be "magical": Lyn Flewelling's *Tamir* trilogy, beginning with *The Bone Doll's Twin*, is about "a warrior queen raised as a boy, enchanted into the form of her dead male twin" (Mains et al 181). Mains et al continues to state that "many authors have created fictional worlds" in which it is acceptable for women to become "farmers, blacksmiths, wizards, and warriors" (Mains et al 181). She cites the examples of Jenna in Jane Yolen's *White Jenna* (1989), who is the destined Chosen One of her people, and Moon in Joan Vinge's *The Snow Queen* (1980), who travels around her world to rescue her lover (181). Mains et al argues that although some critics argue that male and female heroes should be portrayed with "conventionally feminine values of community and cooperation," the readers of fantasy novels seem to enjoy the description of a woman performing "a man's job," and there are many female warriors and female soldiers in military science fiction (181).

Kaplan describes Garth Nix's heroes Sabriel and Lirael who are both intelligent and driven fighters, although they "are not unusually active or brave for female characters in their worlds" (271). What forces both young women into "terrifying and draining fights against the Dead" is birthright; and indeed the girls of Lirael's school who do not have magical powers are also heroic fighters when they are not given a choice – in fact, the most feeble characters are two boys who are her own age (Kaplan 271).

According to Balay, Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* "chillingly explores the imposition of gender roles," in an alternate world that is "characterized by a lack of gender rigidity"

(14). Her experience teaches Coraline that gender “is a system of camouflage,” used “to hide from danger, and from our own uncertaintly and self-doubt” (Balay 14). Coraline, an only child, has just moved into a new house with her busy, distracted parents. She discovers an alternate world in which her “other” parents’ attention is always focused on her. According to Balay, her independence differs from “passive femininity”; Coraline’s mother does not cook often although her father does, and “this violation of tradition is what sends Coraline looking elsewhere for models of appropriate femininity” (Balay 14).

Several authors “have turned to narrative traditions of the past in their attempt to recuperate archetypal roles played by female characters” (Mains, “Fantasy, 1960 – 2005” 65). According to Mains, fairy tales and folklore are a rich source of feminist fantasy, “a market which has grown considerably since the publication in 1979 of Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* in Britain and Tanith Lee’s *Red as Blood: Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* in North America” (“Fantasy, 1960 – 2005” 65). She continues to state that Carter and Lee, and the writers who came after them, use the “texts and conventions of well-known tales to explore female desires and to reimagine the characters of the virginal princess and the wicked witch” (“Fantasy, 1960 – 2005” 65). Mains argues that feminist adaptations of fairy tales “allow for the reclamation of the female hero, from damsel in distress to rescuer” (“Fantasy, 1960 – 2005” 65). She gives the examples of passive female characters – Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty – who take an active role in their own destinies instead of waiting for “their princes” to rescue them (65).

Some fantasy writers have written about a time before recorded history to describe “matriarchal societies shaped by goddess worship and to create fictional

worlds in which female characters are culture bearers and warriors" (Mains, "Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 66). She gives the examples of Morgan Llywelyn's *The Horse Goddess*, which is the tale of a young girl named Epona who is an early Celt; and Judith Tarr's series beginning with *White Mare's Daughter*, which features the Celtic goddess Epona (66). According to Mains, other writers "draw on classical mythology and its many tales of female goddesses and the mortal woman wronged by gods and heroes" ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 67). Examples of these can be found in Kara Dalkey's *Eurytale*, which features the heroine Medusa and is set during Roman times; and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Firebrand*, which is set during the time of the Trojan War (67).

Mains believes that" the most important source of mythic fantasy in this period has been the Matter of Britain, the legends of King Arthur falling somewhere between myth and history"; she gives the example of the best-selling *The Mists of Avalon* (1982) by Bradley ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 68). According to Balay:

> Fantasy fiction, like gender performance, relies on rules, formulae, and patterns to work. This parallel is not all that remarkable, since the same could be said for almost all post-enlightenment categories of thought. However, following the rules of fantasy requires breaking the rules of gender. Within the genre of fantasy fiction, femininity is an effort, while masculinity is natural or inevitable, whatever the gender of the subject. (17)

Mains believes that it is not surprising that "feminist writers of fantasy would choose to rewrite that history," because "history has not been kind to women, subject to oppression on the basis of gender and sexuality for centuries and largely ignored by

history books except as the wives and mothers of great men" ("Fantasy, 1960 – 2005" 69). In older fantasy novels, almost all of the characters, and especially the hero, were male, and when women were included it was to fulfil a role – they were either a wife or a mother. Because of this, modern feminist fantasy fiction writers are breaking the typical "rules of gender," and choose to have strong, heroic female characters.

In Campbell's monomyth, the hero undergoes many adventures, from fighting monsters to solving problems, while receiving help from wise helpers. Although Campbell states that the hero can be either male or female, he typically uses masculine pronouns and the majority of the examples he illustrates from folklore feature male heroes, "therefore reflecting the truth that there are more myths about the adventuring male hero than the adventuring female hero, given the customs and conventions of the societies for whom and about whom the tales were told" (Mains, "Having It All" 25).

However, in the twenty-first century, women are now performing in gender roles that were previously unimaginable because of the expectations of the society in which they lived. Thus previous literature intimates the social roles assigned, perpetuating the notion that males are the heroes. This, however, does not mean that the traditional hero's quest can only be undergone or performed by a male character. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, female-authored literature reflected societal changes in gender construction. Female heroes are demonstrating that they are as strong, brave, rational and intelligent as male heroes, and the heroic deeds they perform are reflecting those qualities. To further develop the concepts interrogated in this chapter, the following chapter utilises Judith Butler's theory of performativity to analyse the behaviour of female heroes in the novels under investigation.

Chapter 4: Female Heroes in the *Harry Potter* Series, the *His Dark Materials* Series, and *The Song of the Lioness* Quartet

According to authors Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, there is "one area of formulaic writing that is increasingly difficult to justify: the treatment of gender" and note the limited roles assigned to women in such fantasies as *The Wind in the Willows*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Peter Pan*, *The Hobbit*, and the "Earthsea" books (Hunt and Lenz 3). The books mentioned by Hunt and Lenz are typically aimed at children, inculcating at an early age the socially accepted roles of men and women and delineating the role of hero to the male and the subservient or deviant role to the female.

According to Wheeler, the term "gender" indicates a set of "cultural assumptions about women and men" (136). The terms *sex* and *gender* were previously the same and were linked to essentialist theories about the role of women in society. Wheeler states that "the essentialist position assumes a universal and natural equation of biological sex and gender behaviour" (136). When the terms "sex" and "gender" were separated, feminist critics including Judith Butler argued that gender is determined by the predominantly culture in which we live, and it can therefore be altered. Wheeler states that: "Feminist critics argue that women interpret their discrimination through designated roles ascribed to them. They contend that essentialism is a product of patriarchy and privileges men's interests over women's", which, according to Wheeler, has been "perpetuated in science fiction and fantasy novels" (137). But as the gender theorists have argued, gender is a social, and not a biological construct, and can therefore be

altered as the range of fantasy novels written of late indicate, especially those under scrutiny in this project.

The 1970s and 1980s were also an important and productive time period for gender-related fantasy fiction. Wheeler names Russ's *The Female Man*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978), Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*, and Elisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* as using "reverse gender dialectics in their portrayal of injustices against women" (137). These novels form part of a "recognized legacy that interrogates the social, political, and gendered lives of women" (Wheeler 137). This list provides evidence of women writers creating rounded, independent, and autonomous characters.

Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, and Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* quartet are all examples of empowered female characters who eschew and challenge gender stereotyping. Instead of following and conforming to the stereotypes prescribed to women by the patriarchal society in which they live, these female characters challenge the status quo with their brave and heroic approach.

4.1 Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

J.K. Rowling asserted on several occasions that Hermione Granger "was most consciously based on a real person, and that person was me. She's a caricature of me when I was younger" (qtd. in Dresang 212). Dresang believes that Rowling chose Hermione's name very carefully as she is based on Rowling, and that Rowling's degree from Exeter University in French and Classics "provided an excellent background for the

name she chose" (212). Rowling states that the source for Hermione's name is Shakespeare's *A Winter Tale* (Dresang 212), as Hermione in *A Winter's Tale* is a strong, dignified character, particularly when she stands trial for adultery and treason. The significance of Hermione's name indicates that she will have an important role to play in the novels; according to Dresang "it is clear that with the strength of her purposefully chosen name, Hermione cannot be weak or inconsequential" (213).

Dresang argues that the *Harry Potter* novels are, in fact, "feminist in nature" (218). She believes that Rowling modelled Hermione on herself, intelligent, exasperating and somewhat baffled: "Rowling has successfully developed an emerging adolescent who appears armed to withstand the most dangerous gender-related pitfall and not retreat into silence, intimidated by the masculine world" (229).

In the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Hermione cannot help but boast about her magical knowledge: although there are no magical people at all in her family, she has tried a few spells for practice and they all worked and she has learnt all of her school books off by heart. She is also well acquainted with Harry Potter's history as she has read several books on the subject. However, by sharing this knowledge with Harry and Ron, she manages to push them away as she appears bossy and arrogant to them. Hermione is also intensely dedicated to the rights of other creatures (Mikulan 260). She fights passionately for the rights of the house-elves, and after the Quidditch World Cup in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* where she sees a house-elf being mistreated, she founds an organisation called "The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare," or S.P.E.W:

> “You know, house-elves get a *very* raw deal!” said Hermione indignantly. “It’s slavery, that’s what it is! That Mr Crouch made her go up to the top of the stadium, and she was terrified, and he’s got her bewitched so she can’t even run when they start trampling tents! Why doesn’t anyone *do* something about it?”
>
> “Well, the elves are happy, aren’t they?” Ron said. “You heard old Winky back at the match... ‘House-elves is not supposed to have fun’... that’s what she likes, being bossed around...”
>
> “It’s people like *you*, Ron,” Hermione began hotly, “who prop up rotten and unjust systems, just because they’re too lazy to – ” (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 112).

Hermione’s friends do not understand why she is so passionate about rectifying the living conditions of the house-elves as they appear to be happy with their situation. However, this does not deter Hermione from fighting for the rights of the house-elves, because she believes that it is the right thing to do.

Dresang views Hermione as a “positive character” because she is the ideal example of someone who, through possessing information and knowledge, gains power (223). Because of her intelligence and because she has a wide knowledge of magic, “Hermione often rescues the other heroes, and her incredible industry, which sometimes borders on stubbornness, contributes to the readers’ view of her as invulnerable and indestructible” (Dresang 223).

Furthermore, Hermione develops as a person from novel to novel, and as the series progresses she becomes more powerful. Dresang states that Hermione’s

character extends “beyond the stereotype of the weak woman or geek”, and “she gradually attains abilities usually attributed to male heroes, a process that could be termed ‘androgynisation’” (224). She continues to state:

> While radical-libertarian feminists believe both men and women should be androgynous, that is, have access to the full range of so-called male and female characteristics, radical-cultural feminists look more to the enhancement of the so-called feminine qualities. Although the series is not finished, by book four Hermione seems to be in the process of combining both her masculine and feminine traits and thereby subverting the stereotypes imposed on her in earlier books. (224)

In the first novel in the *Harry Potter* series, Hermione, although intelligent, does not appear to be particularly brave and displays several stereotypical “female” characteristics, such as not being able to defend herself and cowering in fear from a threat while the male heroes must defend her. As the series progresses, however, Hermione’s character develops and she becomes a much more courageous character. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,* for example, Hermione participates in the Battle of Hogwarts and fights against Voldemort’s supporters : “A jet of scarlet light shot past Harry by inches: Hermione had run around the corner behind him and sent a Stunning Spell straight at Crabbe’s head. It only missed because Malfoy pulled him out of the way” (Rowling 506-507).

Hermione’s agency develops over the course of the series and Dresang concurs, saying that Hermione’s agency develops slowly (227). She sticks doggedly to her goals

and does not allow anyone to deter her; whether it is about learning, reprimanding others about the rules or looking out for the underdog. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* Hermione is unable to defeat the troll and relies on Harry and Ron to save her; but in all following adventures she plays a vital role in helping Harry. Hermione is extremely intelligent, as evident in her scholastic achievements: "Flitwick told me in secret that I got a hundred and twelve per cent on his exam" (Rowling 197), and uses her knowledge to solve Harry's problems. It is obvious that although Harry is resourceful and brave, he is now as knowledgeable and proficient at logical thinking as Hermione. Her first opportunity to save the day is when she discovers that Nicolas Flamel is the creator of the Philosopher's Stone – a magical stone that turns any metal into gold and allows the owner to mix a potion that stops them from dying. As Harry, Ron and Hermione try to stop Snape from reaching the Stone, they must pass through magical obstacles positioned by their teachers. Hermione loses her head when she is bound by Devil's Snare in the first obstacle and forgets how to light a fire without wood; but she is able to solve Snape's puzzle because it is based on logic. She says to Harry: "A lot of the greatest wizards haven't got an ounce of logic, they'd be stuck in here forever" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 207). Dresang believes that Hermione will succeed even though she has been born to Muggles – she can think logically and rationally, which has been culturally determined to be a masculine-based characteristic, in addition to learning magic, which is something that her friends Harry and Ron cannot do (227).

As defined by Dresang, "determined action" is another element of Hermione's agency in her own fate (227). Hermione can be single-minded and stubborn in

achieving her goals, but obviously, her feelings can be injured: in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* she overhears Ron telling Harry that she's a "nightmare" and that no one can stand her, after which she runs to the girls' bathroom crying. However, Hermione resolutely stands up for what she believes in.

Hermione defends her cat, Crookshanks, even though her friends loathe him. Ron, particularly, has hated Crookshanks from the first day that Hermione bought him, and he soon comes to believe that Crookshanks is trying to eat his pet rat, Scabbers. This causes great animosity between the two friends and Ron barely talks to Hermione, but still Hermione remains devoted to Crookshanks. Even if it means that she will lose a friend, Hermione always stands up for what she believes in.

Hermione does not allow the opinions of her friends to influence her, even if it means that she loses their friendship. She doggedly stands up for what she believes in, which exemplifies the fact that she is clearly a strong-minded and courageous female.

Dresang describes two instances of Hermione's "Crookshank-like" intelligence and determination in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. The first is when Harry anonymously receives a new broomstick to replace his old, damaged one – Hermione believes that it is from Sirius Black, who everyone thinks bears a grudge against Harry. The broomstick is confiscated, and both Harry and Ron are infuriated with Hermione. Soon afterwards, Scabbers, Ron's rat, disappears, and Ron blames his disappearance on Hermione's cat. Although as a result Hermione feels alone because her friends have turned on her, she sticks to her principles. In the end, she is proved correct about

Crookshanks, who sensed from the beginning that Ron's rat is evil. Dresang believes that both of these actions "are signs of a female with her own agency" (228).

Another occasion during which Hermione stands up for the browbeaten is just after Hagrid hears the news that Buckbeak, his pet hippogriff, is going to be executed. Hagrid is crying when Malfoy, one of the most unpleasant boys at Hogwarts, says sarcastically: "Have you ever seen anything quite as pathetic?" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 216). Hermione is so enraged that she reaches Malfoy before Harry and Ron can. She "slapped Malfoy around the face with all the strength she could muster," and tells him that he must never say anything like this to Hagrid again (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 216). Only after this incident does Hermione remember that she is a witch and could have used her magical powers to hurt Malfoy. Instead, Hermione's first concern is for the weeping Hagrid and her compassion for her grieving friend is expressed openly to one of the school's bullies without concern for her own safety. Hermione is not afraid of one of the most unpleasant boys at Hogwarts and stands up to him in order to protect her friend Hagrid.

Hermione's determination to provide house-elves with basic rights once again demonstrates her noble and valiant nature. Although she is ridiculed because of her beliefs, she does not allow the opinions of others to prevent her from achieving her goal of freedom for house-elves. She always stands up for what she believes in, even if it alienates her from her peers.

Hermione is particularly stubborn and determined to fight for what she believes in in book four, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* Dresang concurs and states that in

book four, Hermione's "self-determination" comes to the forefront. She becomes concerned about the lack of basic rights of the house-elves, who are the servants of wizards. Her friends and teachers mock her actions and treat her actions as unreasonable as they believe that the house-elves are happy with their treatment as it is. According to Dresang, this is "precisely what happens when any individual advocates for massive social reform. History documents those who opposed slavery were not enthusiastically welcomed or even understood by most of their contemporaries" (228). Because Hermione was chosen by the Sorting Hat to be in Gryffindor, she is brave, daring and chivalrous, "an indication that she may continue her advocacy for the house-elves despite her own misgivings or those of others" (Dresang 228), a clear indication of her compassion for the oppressed and her lack of concern for her personal status or reputation.

In addition, Hermione asserts her independence from her friends by going to the Yule Ball with Viktor Krum from Bulgaria – one of the students chosen to participate in the Triwizard Tournament. Krum is also desired by many of the female students at Hogwarts because he is in the Bulgarian national Quidditch team. Harry and Ron both ask her to attend with them at the last minute but she turns them down, saying she already has a partner. This indicates that she is becoming her "own agent", and is not only Harry Potter's friend (Dresang 228). Hermione clearly does not need to wait for her friends to rescue her from being rejected or a wallflower. She is able to seek and pursue her own course. This a point Zettel also makes: "Hermione publicly and unashamedly pursues the course she knows to be right, even when it costs her her friends or the regard of male authority figures" (95). She does not allow the general opinion of society

to deter her; and if her methods do not work at first, she tries another method. She has confidence in herself, argues her points and does not back down when people tell her otherwise. She also realises that boys frequently underestimate the skills of girls, an attitude which she does not appreciate (Zettel 95). In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* it is Hermione who suggests that the "Prince" might be a woman rather than a man, an idea which Harry and Ron are reluctant to believe. As usual, Hermione ignores their scorn and continues with her investigation, because she is positive that her idea might be correct. According to Zettel:

> Hermione never rests on previous opinions and preconceptions. She analyses her situation rigorously. She follows authority when she sees it being exerted fairly, not just forcefully, and never allows a simple order from an authority figure, male or female, to override her own good judgment. (96)

This proves that Hermione is an independent thinker, and not a shallow female character who cannot formulate her own ideas. This is also noted when Hermione challenges Dolores Umbridge, and she refuses to recoil and be silent when she is threatened by Rita Skeeter, a writer, in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

Hermione is looked down upon in many instances in the first two books because of her immense magical knowledge and because she studies often. However, when Harry and Ron realise how much her knowledge helps them when they are experiencing difficult situations the mocking stops. In book three, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Professor Lupin describes her as being the cleverest witch of her age. At the beginning of the *Harry Potter* series Hermione is unable to defend herself

and frequently allows the opinions of her classmates to offend her. However, as the story progresses she grows stronger as a character, is more confident in her opinions and stands up for what she believes in.

As a person, Hermione is intensely ambitious. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Rufus Scrimgeour asks her if she is considering a career in magical law, to which she responds: "No I'm not! I'm hoping to do some good in the world" (Rowling 105). According to Heilman and Donaldson, with this ambition Hermione "separates herself from her partnership with Ron and Harry" (144), as Hermione has always championed the rights of the oppressed and has fought for what she believes in, whereas Harry and Ron are not as proactive or as concerned with the rights of others as she is. Dresang believes that Rowling's Hermione is a "strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female who is not only assisting the males with whom she has an interdependent relationship but also working to become a catalyst for social change" (242).

Hermione is indeed a strong and incredibly intelligent female character. Harry is especially reliant on her logic and magical knowledge to help him throughout his adventures – in many instances; he would not be able to complete his tasks if it were not for the help of Hermione. *In Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, Dumbledore enlightens Harry about Horcruxes: because Voldemort did not want to die and wanted to be immortal, he created seven Horcruxes, which are vessels or objects that contain a portion of the soul. Harry's task, in Harry *Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, is to destroy each of the Horcruxes and only then can he kill Voldemort. He eventually locates and destroys all of the Horcruxes, and finally Voldemort, but he would not have been able to

complete this task if it was not for Hermione's help. She helps him locate several of the Horcruxes and destroys one herself, Helga Hufflepuff's Cup.

Hermione as a character also advances the position of women in fantasy fiction. She is not portrayed as a weak, emotional woman in the novel – she is brave, stands up for what she believes in even if it alienates her from her friends and is intensely logical – characteristics which have generally been attributed to male characters in the past.

Deborah L. Thompson believes that in creating the male Professor Gilderoy Lockhart, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* J.K. Rowling uses "particularly negative stereotypes often attributed to women or effeminate men" (45). On one occasion, when Lockheart wears a shocking pink robe to a Hogwart's function, the other staff members react unfavourably. In another instance, Harry notices that all of Lockhart's portraits hide under the picture frame to avoid being seen in hair rollers. Lockhart proclaims to have written several books dealing with defense against the Dark Arts, but they prove to be fake – he has performed a spell on the real author and has taken the credit for the books. At the end of the novel, Lockhart is asked to rescue Ginny Weasley from the Chamber of Secrets, but he attempts to sneak away as he does not know what to do and does not want to be exposed as a coward (Thompson 45). Nor is Lockhart the only spineless male character, other boys are not described as being particularly heroic. Neville Longbottom is "hopelessly hapless," and "the odious Crabbe and Goyle seem to possess every negative stereotype an author could use to describe characters – apelike, slow-witted, and mean-spirited, as Thompson describes (47). Crabbe and Goyle are the servants of Draco Malfoy, an unpleasant character and the enemy of Harry. Rowling describes

Crabbe and Goyle as “existing only to do Malfoy’s bidding”; they are both “wide and muscly; Crabbe was the taller, with a pudding-basin haircut and a very thick neck; Goyle had short, bristly hair and long gorilla arms” (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 63). In contrast to these flawed, weak-willed male characters:

> Rowling creates a world of impressively emancipated and empowered women: two of the founders of Hogwarts were witches, not wizards; Hogwarts has had many headmistresses, not only headmasters; Hermione Granger may be book smart, but she is also a member of Gryffindor House, the house of the brave; the sports coach is a woman, not a man. (Kellner 367)

Thus, Rowling deliberately creates strong-willed female characters who easily measure up to the deeds of male characters.

According to Thompson, in the novels gender equality is also demonstrated on the Quidditch pitch (48). This popular wizarding sport is played by both males and females; and in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* there are even female members in the national teams competing in the Quidditch World Cup. Chasers and Seekers – the positions that require a player to be fast and agile, are usually played by girls, who are generally smaller and lighter. In addition, Madam Hooch, who is the Quidditch instructor and usually referees the Quidditch matches, is one of many female teachers at Hogwarts (Thompson 48). Sport is typically seen as an area of male expertise and society places more emphasis on males excelling in the sporting world. Rowling, however, seeks to collapse these preconceptions and demonstrates the equality of male and female characters by portraying them as equals on the Quidditch pitch.

According to Heilman and Donaldson:

> Throughout the series, the presence of women develops quantitatively and their influence and importance to the plot and placement in the story increases. In later books, Rowling depicts women in positions of leadership in which they often control the actions or even the thoughts of male characters, as the females develop beyond the stereotypical insignificant role of the feminine in the earlier works. (143)

For example, Mrs Weasley, Ron's mother, is initially depicted as being an anxious, worrisome wife and mother, but her character appears to alter during the final battle of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. She drops her sweet, domestically inclined persona and becomes ferocious and hostile as she duels with Bellatrix Lestrange, who has attempted to harm her daughter, Ginny. Harry is astonished but extremely happy by this change in her character: "Harry watched with terror and elation as Molly Weasley's wand slashed and twirled" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 589). According to Thompson, "Rowling's most matriarchal character finally leaves 'The Burrow' and involves herself first-hand in violent conflict with the Death Eaters" (48).

Another significant and important female character in the *Harry Potter* books is Minerva McGonagall. McGonagall is not a typical female stereotype, but a strong and independent female. Christine Schoefer states: "The only female authority figure is beady-eyed, thin-lipped Minerva McGonagall, professor of transfiguration and deputy headmistress of Hogwarts. Stern instead of charismatic, she is described as eyeing her

students like a ‘wrathful eagle’” (qtd. in Dresang 234). Professor McGonagall is a powerful and highly principled woman; she believes in doing things by means of the proper channels and is very strict with her students. She is Head of House of Gryffindor, which is usually seen as being the most esteemed house and her empowerment as a woman reflects someone who seems to embody wisdom (Dresang 235).

According to Heilman and Donaldson, during the battle for Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, McGonagall takes the lead in protecting the school (144). She is not certain that the Slytherins will be loyal to Hogwarts and the wizarding world instead of to Voldemort and issues them with an ultimatum:

> I shall expect you and the Slytherins in the Great Hall in twenty minutes, also... If you wish to leave with your students, we shall not stop you. But if any of you attempt to sabotage our resistance, or take up arms against us within this castle, then, Horace, we duel to kill. (Rowling 484)

This clearly demonstrates that McGonagall is a strong, brave and determined female character. In the same way, Hermione has been identified as a strong-willed, intelligent, opinionated female hero; and while she is not the main protagonist of the *Harry Potter* series, she is crucial in allowing Harry to complete his quest and kill Lord Voldemort. She is instrumental in ensuring that Harry will successfully complete his task. These are all qualities evident in our next female character under analysis, Lyra Belacqua.

4.2 Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* Series

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy consists of *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). *Northern Lights* was published in America as *The Golden Compass* in 1996. According to Tucker, this trilogy was written over a period of seven years and is about 1300 pages long:

> Its cast ranges from scholarly Oxford dons to armoured bears, witches, angels, murderous Spectres and hideous harpies drawn straight from Greek mythology. It can be read on many different levels, and draws on a wide range of sources, from ancient Greek myths, the Bible, Dante, John Milton and William Blake to Hollywood films, a Finnish telephone directory and the Superstring theory developed from the study of quantum physics. (*Darkness Visible* 89)

Tucker notes that the publication dates indicate *His Dark Materials* was released around the same time as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Some interesting similarities in the authors is that both writers lost a parent when they were young. Tucker suggests that the authors' battles with depression may be "symbolised by the attacks from the Spectres in Pullman's stories and by the Dementors in Rowling's novels" (Tucker, *Darkness Visible* 114). Both authors have gone through hardships in their lives before achieving success: Rowling as a single mother trying to survive poverty, and Pullman who could not decide on an occupation because he wanted to write. Both authors have created decisive, intelligent female heroes who also struggle against adversity in order to achieve their goals and rid the world of evil. Tucker believes that it is not a coincidence that both writers "have created young characters

who have had to battle against odds before achieving their goals" (*Darkness Visible* 114-115).

The sales of the books in the trilogy has been immense, and at one stage sold more copes than J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. The first book of the trilogy, *Northern Lights*, won the *Guardian* Fiction prize and the prestigious Carnegie Medal. *The Amber Spyglass*, the third book in the trilogy, won the 2001 Whitbread Book of the Year, which, according to Tucker, was the first time this award had ever been won by a children's book (*Darkness Visible* 92). Despite the fact that this is deemed a series for child readers, Hunt and Lenz note that it carries some deep philosophical questions: "such as Mrs Coulter's anguished plea to know whether God is dead, or why, if he still lives, he has grown mute" (122).

According to Tucker, the trilogy's storyline describes two children, Lyra and Will, who manage to rise above the "forces of oppression to establish a new order based on truth, honesty, and love" (*Darkness Visible* 90). By defying the authorities in the novel, Lyra and Will "defeat a Church establishment which is still intent on condemning their determined search for freedom as a wicked rebellion" (Tucker, *Darkness Visible* 90).

In the first novel, the narrative follows 11-year-old Lyra Belacqua, who has been described as "the first believable little girl since Alice" (Hunt and Lenz 152). Lyra is – although she does not know it yet – the daughter of Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter, and she undertakes an adventure to rescue her friend Roger from scientists who are investigating "Dust," a new type of particle. According to Sundman, "Lyra is not the vision of an innocent little girl: instead she is vigorous, headstrong and disobedient" (1).

Yuan adds: “The worlds of Pullman’s imagination are populated by scores of strong, dynamic female characters…Richly textured, compellingly realized, Pullman’s characters transcend traditional gender roles in their various heroes’ journeys through landscapes and trials of mythic proportions” (248). Nikolajeva describes Lyra as the “sole protagonist and focalizer” in *Northern Lights* (149). In the second novel, *The Subtle Knife,* she is joined by 12-year-old Will Parry, who possesses supernatural powers. However, Will is on an adventure of his own and is not only Lyra’s “faithful servant”, and “the two characters’ consciousness is presented to the reader as enhancing and complementing each other” (Nikolajeva 149). Lyra is given a device called an “alethiometer,” which is described as being her “metaphorical sword” which arms her with magical power. In *The Subtle Knife* Lyra is required to help Will find his father. According to Hunt and Lenz: “Pullman is depicting a partnership quest, the male and female sharing equally and assuming non-traditional gender roles” (154). For example, Will cooks the food that the children will eat, and Lyra controls the alethiometer, which is a technological instrument.

Hunt and Lenz attributes Pullman with creating a female character with tempestuous and genteel qualities, stating: “Pullman presents in Lyra a highly individualized variation on the female hero: charmingly mercurial, at one moment a coarse and greedy little savage, at another an inventor of tall tales (her defensive mechanism to deal with her insecurities after she discovers Asriel is not her uncle but her father)” (155). However, at other times she is sensitive and enjoys the beautiful sights of nature. Even though she has the advantage of a privileged upbringing, “the predominant image is one of a brilliant, spirited, but emotionally deprived girl on the

verge of adolescence, who is seeking her identity and purpose" (Hunt and Lenz 155). These character profiles suggest that Lyra is a rounded, multi-faceted character who is both flawed and faithful.

Heroes in fantasy fiction are often young people or teenagers, and Hunt and Lenz place Lyra into that category, stating that she is "seeking identity and purpose" (153). Thus, Solhaug believes that it is apparent that fantasy fiction shares some characteristics with the *bildungsroman*: "finding one's own identity relates to becoming an adult, and spurs a character into action" (327). Lyra fulfils the prophecy and her destiny because of her desire to liberate others from their enslavement:

> "I want to come north," Lyra said so they could all hear it. "I want to come and help rescue the kids. That's what I set out to do when I run away from Mrs Coulter. And before that, even, I meant to rescue my friend Roger the kitchen boy from Jordan who was took. I want to come and help... And like that woman said, you might need women to play a part – well, you might need kids too." (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 140)

This example reveals Lyra's "agency as well as her determination to be allowed to actively engage in rescuing the oppressed" (Solhaug 328). Lyra is not satisfied to remain at home while children are going missing all over the country. She makes a conscious effort to become a hero and help save the children who have gone missing. She, like Hermione Granger and Alanna of Trebond, is active in determining her own future, and Solhaug suggests that the "reinvention of a character reflects a notion of change and agency" (325). This transformation symbolizes the progression of the hero

from ordinary to embracing and understanding her important destiny. When Lyra eventually learns the truth about who her parents are, she “had to adjust to her new sense of her own story, and that couldn’t be done in a day” (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 131). Lyra soon learns the truth about her birth, which she understands as “a mental tapestry even clearer and sharper than the stories she made up” (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 133).

Another distinctive feature of fantasy fiction is the hero as an orphan, or having a background that he did not know about. Often in myth stories, a high born or aristocratic hero is brought up by poor or surrogate parents. According to Solhaug, in contemporary fantasy, “it is common to reveal that the hero of a simple background to be of high birth after all, offering some kind of redemption for what the hero had to suffer as a child” (324). Sometimes, the fact that the hero is an orphan prepares the hero for the hazards that she will find along her journey (Solhaug 325). At the beginning of the trilogy, Lyra believed that she was an orphan because she had been told that her parents died in an airship accident. According to Hunt and Lenz:

> Pullman draws upon an honoured tradition in children’s literature and folklore. Orphans are appealing as lead characters because they express a paradox: they are a manifestation of loneliness, but they also represent the possibility for humans to reinvent themselves. (152)

Another pattern in folklore often found in the “orphan story” is the “helper” or “animal guide” (Hunt and Lenz 152). Lyra’s daemon, Pantalaimon, is extremely significant here. There is a close relationship between a person and a daemon – a

daemon is described as being an extension of a person's soul: "For a second or so more, he was still her own dear soul" (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 277), and it is also clear that daemons are "what makes us different from animals" (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 314). Thus, according to Solhaug, "they can be seen as an extension of the person" (326).

Hunt and Lenz attribute to Lyra "certain characteristics often found in relation to the traditional masculine fantasy hero":

> ... a humble birth; orphan status; being the subject of a mysterious prophecy; exceptionality – a special gift; being apprenticed to a teacher or mentor with magical powers; being endowed with a weapon of supernatural prowess; committing an act of disobedience or hubris which bring on disasters, for which the hero must seek a cure or remedy; suffering a dramatic temptation; waging a battle against a dragon, or some similar supernatural opponent; winning a victory over the evil adversary; and finally returning to his community with a boon or gift, ultimately restoring the society to wholeness. (153)

Lyra's story at the outset incorporates several of these motifs, most obviously her oracular "destiny" and the "animal guide" or companion in the form of her daemon, Pantalaimon. These points will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Lyra's character development is furthered in *The Amber Spyglass*, as "she and Will learn of the sorrows of mortality, the wonder of first love, and ultimately, of the heart-rending sacrifice they must make for their daemons' survival" (Hunt and Lenz 155). Lyra has many heroic tasks and adventures to undergo; including the distressing

descent into the underworld and "betraying" Pantalaimon. In addition, she must grow into a truthful person; she must acknowledge her feelings for Will; and lastly she must give herself over to an "ultimate concern" (Hunt and Lenz 155). Lyra does not only undergo trials and ordeals on her journey in order to achieve an objective, she also grows and progresses as a person, and ultimately learns many valuable lessons about herself.

Hunt and Lenz believe that Lyra's development into an adult and gaining wisdom can be clearly seen in her home-coming scene. Previously she had disliked the Master's manservant, Cousins, but when she returns to Jordan College she is surprised to find him friendly and loving (156). This indicates how much she has actually learned during the course of her journey – not only in terms of battling evil, but how she has grown and matured as a person, and gained insight along the way to better become a better judge of human character.

Tucker believes that "as the most important chosen instrument of good, Lyra comes over as an ideal character with whom readers can identify" (*Darkness Visible* 112). She is a remarkably brave individual; and although she does understand what she is required to do in terms of her destiny, "she never flinches away from this duty" (Tucker, *DarknessVisible* 112). Lyra is determined to correct the wrongs in her world and is determined to fulfil her destiny, despite the difficulty of any situation in which she finds herself.

According to Hunt and Lenz, Pullman's "innovations on the traditional heroic role centre on the sharing of quests between Lyra and Will"; Lyra and Will are reliant on

each other for physical survival and for “wholeness of soul” (157). Pantalaimon comforts Will when he is upset, which is usually not allowed as people typically do not touch daemons that do not belong to them. Even though Will does take the lead on several occasions, his deeds are matched by Lyra’s own feats of astounding courage, notably:

> [F]inding the self-control to part from Pan for the sake of Roger; reaching out compassionately to the ghosts and committing to the quest to free them; finding a way to connect with the No-Name and transforming their relationship; finally, insisting that she and Will must make the painful choice of cultivating their respective gardens in their own worlds. (Hunt and Lenz 157)

According to Solhaug:

> Pullman has carefully constructed Lyra as the perfect female hero. She fits most of the paradigms designated to the traditional male hero, and also rejects the notion that females should be confined to limited, subjugated, or subservient roles. (334)

Another important feature found in Lyra’s character is agency, which is also a central feature found in heroes in general. Even though Will is Lyra’s counterpart in *The Subtle Knife*, Lyra takes the principal role. According to Solhaug: “Pullman’s choice of closing the circle by using a female hero to redeem all of mankind can perhaps be read ironically, since women mythically have been seen as the cause of the fall itself” (334). Thus, it is clear that Lyra is a brave, determined hero who actively seeks to fulfil her destiny at all costs, a characteristic that she shares with the next female hero to be examined, Alanna of Trebond.

4.3 Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* Quartet

In her essay "Fantasy: Why Kids Read It, Why Kids Need It," Pierce declares that "Fantasy is a literature of possibilities. It opens the door to the realm of 'What if,' challenging readers to see beyond the concrete universe and to envision other ways of living and alternative mindsets" (50). In the majority of the works of heroic fantasy literature, the heroes are male; but in Pierce's novels, females are portrayed in the principal heroic roles; by providing stories of "girls having adventures" (Pierce, qtd. in "Heroines' Journeys"). According to the article "Heroines' Journeys":

> While Pierce's heroes are strong and independent, they are also females with normal human flaws, fears, and desires. They muddle through the pitfalls and complexities of human relationships and discover the joy and fulfillment of loyalty and commitment. They struggle to learn what they can do and what they are called to do. (3)

Alanna's story covers four separate novels – *Alanna: The First Adventure*, *In the Hand of the Goddess*, *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man*, and *Lioness Rampant* – and describes the heroic journey that she embarks on from the age of ten to twenty. Campbell's monomyth can be applied to the entire quartet as one journey or to each book separately.

From the beginning of the series, Alanna and her twin brother Thom are aware of the gender conventions that are placed on them because of the patriarchal society in which they live:

> All girls from noble families studied in convents until they were fifteen or sixteen, at which time they went to Court to find husbands. Usually the oldest son of a noble family learned the skills and duties of a knight at the King's palace. Younger sons could follow their brothers to the palace, or they could go first into the convent, then to the priests' cloisters, where they studied religion or sorcery. (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 4).

In the first novel in the series, *Alanna: The First Adventure,* Alanna and Thom are unhappy with the places that their father has decided to send them. Alanna is being sent to the convent to learn to sew and dance while Thom is to be sent to the palace to be trained as a knight:

> "Why do you get all the fun?" she complained. "I'll have to learn sewing and dancing. You'll study tilting, fencing –"
>
> "D'you think I *like* that stuff?" he yelled. "I *hate* falling down and whacking at things! *You're* the one who likes it, not me!" (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 1)

Alanna devises a plan and instructs Thom to write letters to the trainer of pages and the people at the convent. Thom is to go to the convent and Alanna will pretend to be a boy named Alan and will go the palace and learn to be a knight.

Coram, the servant of Alanna's family, thinks the following to himself before he learns that Thom and Alanna have switched places:

> Why couldn't Alann have been the boy? She was a fighter... She learned quickly and well – better than her brother. With all his heart Coram Smythesson wished now, as he had in the past, that Alanna were the boy. (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 6).

Later on in the quartet, Coram becomes Alanna's staunchest supporter and practises sword-fighting with her. He constantly encourages Alanna: "Lass, ye've got to accept who ye are... Ye can be a woman and still be a warrior" (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 49).

To Alanna, it is extremely unfair that she has the desire and talent to become a knight but cannot because of the expectations of the patriarchal society in which she lives – she is supposed to go to the convent to learn how to dance and sew. On the other hand, although her brother is clearly not interested in becoming a knight, he is being forced down this path by his father. Alanna realises that the society in which she lives is patriarchal and that males dominate, so in order to achieve her desire of becoming a knight she disguises her gender and pretends to be a boy. At first, she decides to remain disguised as a boy for eight years, the length of time it will take her to train as a knight. She eventually spends the first two novels in the quartet disguised as a boy.

According to Baker, "while the hugely popular novels of Tamora Pierce feature female protagonists, they are set in 'old territory,' the territory of a power identifiably male" (247). Alanna, who is one of Pierce's "sheroes", or female heroes, is disguised as

a boy for much of the story, which allows her to show that as a female she can compete with males:

> Here she must learn jousting, fighting with weapons such as maces, axes and staffs, archery while standing and while riding, normal riding and trick riding. She must learn to fall, roll, tumble. She would get dirty, tear muscles, bruise herself, break bones. If she withstood it all, if she was stubborn enough and strong enough, she would someday carry a knight's shield with pride. (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 38)

During the time she undergoes training and is educated as a page, Alanna undergoes several tests and gains many friends, including Prince Jonathan; George, the King of Thieves; and Myles, a knight. Although Alanna does eventually achieve her goal of becoming a female knight, she still feels that she will not be accepted because of her patriarchal society's expectations of gender – there has never been a female knight before. In her society, women were expected to learn how to sew and dance and then find a decent husband. She is captured by a Bazhir tribe in *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man,* and she has to persuade this tribe to change its traditions, especially regarding females. In *Lioness Rampant*, Alanna agrees to marry George, who understands Alanna for who she is – a strong and courageous woman. According to "Heroines' Journeys," by marrying George, "Alanna chooses a life where she can be both knight and wife, masculine warrior and feminine mother. In herself, she has unified male and female and become master of these two worlds. Her whole Self has emerged."

In other words, one of the most important tasks that Alanna must achieve during the course of the quartet is to accept and embrace the fact that she is female, and that she as a female knight is just as worthy and as powerful as a male knight. When she eventually tells George that she is a girl, she says to him: "But I'm a girl... I'm lying to them. I'm doing men's things" (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 64). To this, George replies: "And you do them better than most young men" (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 64). Clearly, Alanna is equal to, and even surpasses, the courage and ability of her male counterparts.

Tolmie believes that "female fantasy writers are aware of and irritated by the difficulty of creating compelling and flexible language for portraying female heroism" (153).One of the problems that female fantasy writers face is to "develop strong female characters who reject the status quo and forge new realities for themselves – magical, sexual, martial, religious, and political" (Tolmie 153). Tolmie examines a scene from Pierce's *Song of the Lioness* quartet, when Alanna's male disguise is unmasked and the fact that Alanna is female is exposed to everyone in the court. The king is furious when Alanna's shirt is cut open and she is revealed as a woman. He asks the court, in a "low and dangerous" voice, "Who knew?" Several of her friends tell the truth, and inform the king that they knew that Alanna is female:

> "I knew." Jonathan's voice was strong and clear. "I've known since the Black City."
>
> "I knew," Coram admitted in a shamefaced rumble.
>
> "And I knew," Myles added. "I guessed when Alan – Alanna – cured Jonathan of the Sweating Sickness, Majesty."

The King looked at Alanna. "What have you to say for yourself?"

Alanna met his eyes squarely. "I hated lying to you," she admitted. "I wanted to tell; but I couldn't. Would you have let me win my shield if I had told the truth?"

The King's silence was answer enough. "I've tried to be honest about everything else. And I can't regret what I did."

Roger's snarl of fury surprised them all. "You *demon*!" he screamed. "You lying, cheating –"

Without warning he lunged at her, his sword raised. (Pierce, *In the Hand of the Goddess* 226)

Tolmie believes that throughout the quartet, Alanna's circumstances makes it apparent that "contemporary fantasy preserves almost all of the major elements critically associated with the medieval maiden warrior: exclusion of women from the public realm, being raised as a son, cross-dressing, resistance to heterosexual complementarity, even demonization" (153). Alanna highlights: *I can't regret what I did*. She realises that if the king had known that she was female, she would have never had the opportunity to become a knight, her true desire. In addition, she criticizes the king for his shortcomings and attacks the patriarchal system. According to Tolmie, "in Alanna's words we hear a feminist voice inserted" (154). When Alanna reveals herself to be female, Roger's response is representative of the male jealousy and rage at being outwitted by a female. Alanna chooses to be a strong, courageous female and she is clearly not ashamed of lying and pretending to be a male in order to achieve her goal of

becoming a knight. By winning her shield fairly, she proves herself to be equal, not subordinate, to the males around her and is clearly a gifted knight.

In the following chapter, Campbell's monomyth will be used as a critical framework for analysing the quests of the female heroes in order to prove that they are strong characters who are equal in character and actions to the typical male hero in fantasy novels.

Chapter 5: The Female Heroes' Journeys

This chapter analyses the journeys of Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, and Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* quartet, in order to prove that they are strong female heroes who are equal in character and ability to typical male heroes.

Areas that will be discussed in this chapter include separation, initiation and return. According to Campbell, separation is the beginning of the hero's journey: "A blunder – apparently the merest chance, reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (46). Once he or she has passed through the threshold, the hero enters an "initiation" stage, "where he must survive a succession of trials" (89). According to Campbell: "This is a favourite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals" (89). The final area that will be analysed is the return, which, according to Campbell, is when "the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life transmuting trophy" (179). In other words, the adventurer has completed his or her journey and can now return home with the knowledge that he or she has gained along the way. The first female character to be explored using Campbell's monomyth template is Rowling's Hermione Granger.

5.1 Hermione Granger

Separation

Hermione's "call to adventure" is when she decides to leave her Muggle parents and attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* Hermione appears in Harry and Ron's compartment on the Hogwarts Express searching for her friend Neville's pet toad. She is described as having "a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth" (Rowling 79). Her actions show her to be a positive, strong character. She demands that Ron performs a spell to turn his rat yellow and when he fails she is not afraid to criticize this failure. Hermione then reveals to the boys that she has read numerous books and in addition knows about Harry's background. Harry relies on her prodigious knowledge throughout the series, and in many cases would not have been successful in his task if not for Hermione's help. An example of this is in *Philosopher's Stone,* when Hermione solves the riddle which Harry was unable to, which allows him to pass through a magical doorway and reach the Philosopher's Stone.

At the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* Hermione is described as "bossy" and a "know-it-all," and is reluctant to break any school rules. Hermione overhears Ron taunting her: "It's no wonder no one can stand her," he said to Harry as they pushed their way into the crowded corridor. "She's a nightmare, honestly." (Rowling 127). Ron's hurtful statement upsets Hermione, who is extremely upset by these comments and hides in the girls' bathroom. However, she does not realise that a troll has somehow entered the school. Harry and Ron realise that she is

unaware of the troll's existence and set off to find her and warn her of the danger. When they find her she is "shrinking against the wall opposite, looking as if she was about to faint" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 129). Harry and Ron eventually manage to knock the troll unconscious. When Professor McGonagall attempts to punish them for taking on a fully grown troll, Hermione declares that it is her fault: "I went looking for the troll because I – I thought I could deal with it on my own – you know, because I've read all about them" (Rowling 131). By lying and accepting the blame, Hermione can no longer be seen as a helpless and cowering damsel in distress.

According to Zettel, Hermione is in trouble "not because she was reduced to tears, but because the males around her made a series of mistakes" (93). Lord Voldemort possessed Professor Lupin. Ron's taunts caused Hermione to become insecure which led to her hiding in the girls' bathroom. Harry and Ron placed Hermione in even more danger when they locked the bathroom door. It was because of this group of males, including Harry, that Hermione was suddenly faced with the threat of a dangerous troll, and had no way to escape.

Yet it is this harrowing incident and her bravery to accept the blame that establishes Hermione's friendship with Harry and Ron. This is when her hero's journey and her integral role in helping Harry defeat Lord Voldemort begins. Rowling writes: "But from that moment on, Hermione Granger became their friend. There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them" (132).

Initiation

The initiation stage of Campbell's monomyth is when the hero journeys forward and undergoes a series of tests in order to return to his or her home with a boon that will benefit the people. According to Morris, as one of the three central characters in the novels – Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger – "Hermione stands out as one of the most competent, proficient and capable characters in the series." Hermione is an example of a strong, intelligent, empowered female. According to Fry, "Rowling challenges the stereotypical twentieth century hero myth through the characterization of Hermione Granger" (157). Once Hermione leaves her home and attends Hogwarts, she undergoes a series of tests which she must overcome in order to help Harry defeat Lord Voldemort.

Hermione is given an important role by Rowling in all of the novels in order to challenge gender roles and stereotypes. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* Harry, Ron and Hermione attempt to locate the Philosopher's Stone, which is protected by several spells and enchantments which have been provided by the teachers of Hogwarts. The final spell that Harry and Hermione must overcome – Ron was injured in a game of magical chess in the previous chamber and did not join them – is a riddle offered by Professor Snape. They must solve the riddle in order to enter the next chamber, which houses the Philosopher's Stone:

> "*Brilliant*," said Hermione. "This isn't magic – it's logic – a puzzle. A lot of the greatest wizards haven't got an ounce of logic, they'd be stuck in here forever."

"But so will we, won't we?" [asked Harry].

"Of course not," said Hermione. "Everything we need is here on this paper. Seven bottles: three are poison; two are wine; one will get us safely through the black fire and one will get us back through the purple."

"But how do we know which to drink?"

"Give me a minute." (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 207)

Because Hermione is an extremely intelligent and logical witch, she is able to solve the riddle and decide which of the bottles contain the liquid that will enable one of them to leave this chamber and enter the next. Hermione plays a vital role in Harry reaching the next chamber and the Philsopher's Stone; if Hermione had not solved the riddle, he would have been unable to do this and would be unable to leave the chamber as he does not have the critical skills to solve the riddle. Although Hermione does not herself face Lord Voldemort, she is nevertheless a hero in her own right. In fantasy novels, and in literature in general, women are generally created as emotional and men as logical. Yet Hermione evidences logical, rational thinking. Only after Hermione deciphers the riddle, can Harry enter the next chamber and face Voldemort and his partner, Professor Quirrell, and attempt to stop them from stealing the Philsopher's Stone. Although traditional female stereotypes, typically, portray women within traditional gender roles, men are cast as "rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson 85). Rowling then, has clearly not portrayed Hermione as a weak, submissive character. Hermione is a

strong-willed, intelligent, logical character, and is of vital importance to Harry's successes within the series.

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry begins hearing a strange voice which appears to come from within the walls of the school itself. Hermione eventually realises that the baffling voice belongs to a Basilisk – an ancient, tremendously large snake that kills at once whoever looks directly into its eyes – inside the plumbing pipes of Hogwarts. Harry alone can hear the voice because he is a Parseltongue – he can understand and communicate with snakes. Hermione reaches the conclusion that the Basilisk has not killed anyone because no one has looked into its eyes directly; instead the Basilisk was seen, for example, in a puddle of water on the floor. Hermione is on her way to tell Harry and Ron about the information that she has ascertained when she comes across the Basilisk herself. However, she is merely "petrified" and not killed because she had the foresight to check around the corners of the passages with a mirror. Although petrified, she still manages to give Harry the information she has learned about the Basilisk. Harry and Ron pay Hermione a visit in the hospital wing and they discover a piece of paper clutched in her petrified hand:

> It was no easy task. Hermione's hand was clamped so tightly around the paper that Harry was sure he was going to tear it. While Ron kept watch he tugged and twisted, and at last, after several tense minutes, the paper came free.
>
> It was a page torn from a very old library book. Harry smoothed it out eagerly and Ron leaned close to read it too.
>
> [...] And beneath this, a single word had been written, in a hand Harry recognised as Hermione's. *Pipes*.

> It was as though somebody had just flicked a light on in his brain.
>
> (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* 214-215)

Hermione's intellect and bravery once again enables Harry to ensure the safety of others. The information with which Hermione provides him, allows Harry to kill the Basilisk, rescue Ginny Weasley from the concealed Chamber of Secrets, and once again face and defeat Lord Voldemort by destroying the enchanted diary he was using to endanger Ginny. In these instances, Hermione again plays a fundamental role in Harry's defeat of the Basilisk and of Lord Voldemort.

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione has a larger and even more important role than she has ever had before. She has been present at several lessons at the same time during the course of the school year – Harry and Ron cannot understand how she can be doing this as there is simply not enough time in the school day to allow this. They eventually discover that she has been using a magical gadget called a "Time-Turner" which was given to her by Professor McGonagall at the beginning of the year because she is such an exceptional student. Harry and Hermione use the Time-Turner to save the lives of Sirius Black, who is Harry's godfather, and Buckbeak the Hippogriff:

> "What we need," said Dumbledore slowly, and his light-blue eyes moved from Harry to Hermione, "is more *time*."
>
> "But – " Hermione began. And then her eyes became very round. "OH!"
>
> "Now pay attention," said Dumbledore, speaking very low, and very clearly. "Sirius is locked in Professor Flitwick's office on the seventh floor.

> Thirteenth window from the right of the West Tower. If all goes well, you will be able to save more than one innocent life tonight. But remember this, both of you. *You must not be seen*. Miss Granger, you know the law – you know what is at stake ... *you – must – not – be – seen*."
>
> Harry didn't have a clue what was going on. Dumbledore had turned on his heel and looked back as he reached the door. (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 288)

Harry and Hermione travel back in time to the moment just before Buckbeak's execution. They are able to save his life, but Hermione has to repeatedly remind Harry that it is imperative that they do not interfere with the events of the past. Harry wants to run into Hagrid's cabin and grab Peter Pettigrew before he manages to escape, but Hermione stops him and asks him what he would if he saw himself suddenly stepping into Hagrid's house. Harry replies and says that that he would think he had gone mad or that "there was some Dark Magic going on." Hermione replies: "Exactly! You wouldn't understand, you might even attack yourself!" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 292).

This account illustrates Hermione's ability to calmly and logically look at a situation and determine the best course of action. Fry agrees, suggesting that Hermione remains calm in spite of her own emotions. She is as concerned about Sirius's fate as Harry, but she is "able to separate her emotions from her logic and stay in control of the situation" (160). Harry wants to get involved and change the course of proceedings, but Hermione restrains him as she knows this could have catastrophic consequences. At one point, she has to restrain Harry physically by holding onto his clothing in order to

stop him going forward and fetching his Invisibility Cloak. According to Fry, “in this situation the reader sees Harry reacting in a stereotypically feminine way, whilst Hermione reacts in a stereotypically masculine way; once again Rowling has subverted gender roles in her characterization of the two” (Fry 161). Hermione does not conform to the notion of the stereotypical female. She is not ruled by her emotions but instead by her logic, and because of this she is able to successfully rescue Buckbeak and Sirius Black without altering the course of time, something which Harry is clearly not able to do by himself.

Fry states that “Rowling also portrays Harry as frequently feeling fear, uncertainty and self-doubt throughout the novels” (161). This begins with his first meeting with Hagrid, when he expresses his uncertainty and self-doubt: “I think you have made a mistake. I don’t think I can be a wizard” (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* 47). In opposition to Harry’s feelings of self-doubt, Fry states that Hermione often displays “great courage, certainty and self-assurance, most of which stems from her vast knowledge of magic, and of Hogwarts, acquired as a result of the endless hours she spends reading” (161). Hermione shows her bravery and confidence by attempting to stop Harry and Ron from duelling with Draco Malfoy in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone,* and she also volunteers to break into Professor Snape’s private store and steal the ingredients for the Polyjuice Potion they are attempting to make. According to Fry:

> Rowling’s characterisation of Harry and Hermione is in opposition to the usual characterisation of heroes, which typically inscribe the dualism of male/female

> asserting what it means to be human, to be the norm, is to be male, and defining the female as "other" – different, deviant, and dangerous. (161)

Although she is not the central character of the series, Hermione is certainly not an unimportant and insignificant character. Without her support, Harry would not be successful in overcoming his challenges and defeating Lord Voldemort. Fry believes that Hermione plays a "progressively more important role in Harry's quests, to the extent that she appears almost as often as Harry" in *The Goblet of Fire*, and far more than Ron; and that she in fact "drives most of the plot of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*" (161). When Harry and Ron have an argument about Harry's involvement in the Triwizard Tournament and no longer speak to each other, Hermione continues to support Harry, and she spends many hours teaching him spells that will help him complete the tasks in the Tournament. She even abandons studying for her examinations because she is so committed to helping Harry: "Ron and Hermione were supposed to be revising for their exams, which would finish on the day of the third task, but they were putting most of their efforts into helping Harry prepare" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 528). This makes it apparent that Hermione is prepared to surrender her grades in order to ensure Harry is prepared for the tasks in the Triwizard Tournament. Fry believes that Harry admires Hermione's academic talents, and recognizes her as the cleverest person in their year; which makes it likely that Hermione "knows herself to be Harry's equal, and it does not seem likely that if she did not feel that Harry regarded her as such, she would ever risk her academic success in order to be a mere 'accessory' to Harry's exploits" (162).

Hermione realises that Harry needs her expertise in order to be prepared for the tasks he will face in the Triwizard Tournament, and because she knows herself to be his equal, and not inferior to Harry, she feels confident enough to sacrifice her studies in order to help him.

Harry is undoubtedly the hero in the *Harry Potter* series, yet he is not extremely gifted in everything that he does. He is a talented flier and a gifted Quidditch player, but he is a mediocre student and, according to Fry, "is rarely insightful in the way he understands or relates to other people" (163). Fry offers a different evaluation of Hermione, stating:

> Hermione is both more sensitive and much brighter than Harry – in this way she demonstrates Rowling's use of role-reversal. Although Rowling's hero is a boy, Hermione is quite clearly a hero as well. Whilst it is true that Rowling's hero is male, it is clear that his heroism is dependent on female support; yet this does not mean that Hermione's role is less valuable than Harry's (63).

Although Hermione is not the hero of Rowling's series and does not herself defeat Lord Voldemort, her assistance to Harry is essential to help him defeat Voldemort. Without Hermione's help in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,* Harry and Ron would not have been able to survive living in the wild. She carries a bag that has been magically enlarged and that contains the items they need to survive (from potion ingredients to books), provides their food, heals Harry and Ron when they are injured, and casts the protective spells around their campsite that help them avoid detection. Tigner states: "Hermione is academically more gifted and informed than Harry, intellectually more curious and hard working, morally more mature, tactically more

incisive and bold, and actually more effective as an emulable model than any other character in the series, including Harry himself." This clearly illustrates the numerous ways that the female Hermione outshines the male Harry.

Fry believes that Rowling has portrayed Harry as the "essentially masculine side" of the conventional hero – he is typically at the centre of the action and performs "heroic" tasks such as fighting Voldemort. On the other hand, Hermione is portrayed as the "feminine" side of the hero. She provides Harry with guidance and for much of the series, is not involved with physically fighting Voldemort. She is also more aware of the feelings of the people around her than Harry (165). Fry states:

> However, their dualism – which sees Harry displaying self-doubt and fear, as well as strength and courage, and Hermione displaying coolness and logic, as well as strength and courage, together they combine to make one unific hero figure who overcomes the evil embodied by Voldemort. (165)

Hermione is clearly the strongest female character in the *Harry Potter* series, and her importance throughout the series matches that of Harry's. She is intelligent, hardworking, mature and courageous; and because of all of the help with which she provides Harry along the way, he is able to complete his quest and defeat Lord Voldemort. It is unlikely that he would have had the ability to complete this task if it were not for Hermione.

Return

The return phase involves the hero needing to leave the world of adventure and return to his people having acquired a boon for their benefit. Campbell explains:

> When the hero-quest has been accomplished ... the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may rebound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds. (179)

As the novels and this analysis has illustrated,Harry would have been unable to defeat Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* without Hermione's help. However, once Voldemort is defeated, the heroes have "the freedom to live." This is "the result of the miraculous passage and return" (Campbell 221).

There was always the possibility that Voldemort and his supporters, the Death Eaters, would try and kill Hermione: she is best friends with Harry Potter, who opposes Lord Voldemort, she is a member of the Order of the Phoenix, a group that tries to overthrow Voldemort, and she is a "Mud Blood," or a witch with non-magical parents. However, once Voldemort is defeated she no longer has to be concerned about her safety. She has "the freedom to live" and can continue with her schooling at Hogwarts. This is the stage at which the hero can live "happily ever after." In the epilogue of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,* Hermione has married Ron Weasley and they have a son and a daughter, Hugo and Lily. Hermione has indeed enjoyed the boon and shared it with others – her new husband Ron and their subsequent children, as well as Hogwarts itself. However, this does not suggest that she has acquiesced to the typical woman role of wife. It is revealed that Hermione returns to Hogwarts to complete her education, and then begins a highly successful career, first as a promoter of house-elf

rights in the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, and later in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

5.2 Lyra Belacqua

Separation

According to Campbell, the hero's adventure begins with the "call to adventure" (45). In Lyra's case, her "call to adventure" occurs at the beginning of *Northern Lights,* when the Master of Jordan College tries to murder her uncle by poisoning him. Lyra prevents her uncle from drinking the poison and is allowed to remain hidden in the room, where she hears a meeting about the North, and her curiosity is awakened.

The second "call to adventure" is when her friend Roger, the kitchen boy, is abducted by the "Gobblers". Children all over the country are being abducted by Gobblers, and Lyra overhears that they are being taken to the North. Her uncle will not allow her to accompany him on his next voyage to the North, but Lyra is definite in her decision to rescue him, which will force her to leave the only home that she has ever known.

Lyra acquires the opportunity to travel to the North with Mrs Coulter, who requires a personal assistant. Lyra is overjoyed to have the opportunity; and before she leaves on her journey, the Master of Jordan College presents her with an alethiometer, a strange instrument that looks somewhat like a compass and allows the owner to identify the truth from a lie – and warns her not to tell anyone about it, least of all Mrs Coulter. This is Lyra's "call to adventure" – her adventure begins when she leaves her

home and everything that is familiar to her – to journey to the North and attempt to save her friend Roger.

Initiation

Once the hero has answered the "call to adventure," the next stage in the hero's journey is initiation. This is where the hero must overcome a succession of ordeals, or adventures, in order to return home with the knowledge that he or she has gained along the way.

Lyra now crosses what Campbell refers to as "the first threshold," in which "the hero goes forward in his adventure" (71). Lyra crosses the first threshold when she goes forward on her adventure – she leaves only home she has ever known, in Oxford, to live with Mrs Coulter in London. She lives a vastly different lifestyle to her own in London; she attends parties with Mrs Coulter and is taught to properly care for her appearance. However, she soon grows bored of this lifestyle and eventually realises that Mrs Coulter is not the person she assumed her to be – she is in fact the organizer of the Gobblers. Lyra and Pantalaimon decide they can no longer stay with Mrs Coulter, knowing this information – so they decide to run away. This is the beginning of the "road of trials" that Campbell outlines, or the tests and ordeals that she must undergo in order to achieve her objective of rescuing Roger (89).

Once she has run away, Mrs Coulter sends people to look for Lyra so she is concealed by the Gyptian people. Whilst travelling with the Gyptians, Lyra finally learns about her true background from Farder Coram and John Faa. Lyra was led to believe that she was an orphan and that Lord Asriel was her uncle, when in fact this was not

true: “Your father never perished in no airship accident, because your father is Lord Asriel” (Pullman 122). To Lyra’s astonishment and disbelief, she learns that Mrs Coulter is her mother: “To see Lord Asriel as her father was one thing, but to accept Mrs Coulter as her mother was nowhere near so easy” (Pullman 131).

Farder Coram becomes Lyra’s adviser and he helps her discover how the alethiometer works. According to Nordlen, an alethiometer is a very rare device and it can take an intelligent person a lifetime to discover exactly how it works (12). Lyra is determined to discover how to use it and pours over it “like a lover with a picture of the beloved. So each image had several meanings, did it? Why shouldn’t she work them out? Wasn’t she Lord Asriel’s daughter?” (Pullman 133).

The Gyptians and Lyra arrive in Trollesund, where the witches have a consulate. Dr Lanselius, the Witch-Consul, decides to test Lyra – she must identify which spray of cloudpine belonged to the witch Serafina Pekkala. She easily manages this task, and after this “another secret about Lyra is revealed”, although not to herself (Nordlen 13). According to Solhaug, “the idea of the prophecy is one of the most important traits in fantasy fiction, and *The Golden Compass* is no exception of this” (329). In many instances, the hero’s journey has been “prophesied at birth” (Campbell 51). Serafina Pekkala, admits to the aëronaut Lee Scoresby:

> There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny. But she must do so without knowing what she is doing, as if it were her nature and not her destiny to do it. If she’s told what she must do, it will

all fail; death will sweep through all the worlds; it will be the triumph of despair, forever. (Pullman 308)

Dr Lanselius's test is not the only trial that Lyra must undergo; there are many ordeals that she must experience over the course of her journey. Nordlen states that Lyra's "entire journey from her departure from Oxford until her return is filled with trials", such as the Tartar attack (20). Not far from Bolvangar, the group, consisting of the Gyptians, Lyra, Iorek Byrnison, and Lee Scoresby, is attacked by the Tartars, who capture Lyra. She is taken to Bolvangar where she locates Roger. Lyra is trapped in the silver guillotine that separates a child from his or her daemon, but at the last second is saved by Mrs Coulter. Lyra manages to escape Bolvangar with Roger and the other children, and manages to escape in Lee Scoresby's balloon.

Once Lyra has rescued Roger, she visits her father's house in Svalbard. Another trial occurs the next morning when Lyra cannot find her father or Roger. She realises that her father wanted to create a bridge between the two worlds; so he "cut the link between Roger and his daemon in order to exploit the great energy which is then released" (Solhaug 331): "the energy that links body and daemon is immensely powerful: and to bridge the gap between the worlds needed a phenomenal burst of energy" (Pullman 378). She realised that she was the one who had brought Roger to him: "Oh, the bitter anguish! She had thought that she was saving Roger, and all the time she'd been diligently working to betray him..." Lyra does not manage to save Roger, who is killed by her father in order to bridge the gap between the two dimensions. According to Solhaug, "Lyra's heroic aspirations represent an embrace of

the future and her destiny. Realizing that ‘dust’ must not be destroyed, Lyra wants to beat her father to it” (331).

In *The Subtle Knife,* the second novel of the series, the character of Will Parry is introduced for the first time. Will does not live in Lyra’s world; but by chance he finds a way to transport himself through his universe and into Lyra’s world. Will meets Lyra and eventually comes to own the Subtle Knife, a knife that can “cut through the fabric between worlds, which makes it easier to travel between universes” (Nordlen 15).

After the passing of the first threshold, the hero has to survive what Campbell calls “the belly of the whale:”

> The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died. (83)

Nordlen believes that the end of novel three, *The Amber Spyglass,* Lyra and Will face their biggest tests to that point. They must enter the land of the dead – or “the belly of the whale.” Lyra cannot enter the land of the dead with Pantalaimon, as their souls must be left behind. One final challenge for Lyra and Will, who by this stage have fallen in love with each other, is to leave each other. They are from different worlds and cannot live in a world which is not their own for an extended period of time. Will and Lyra have to sacrifice their own happiness.

Return

When the hero crosses the return threshold, he comes “out of the land we know into darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure” (Campbell 201). According to Nordlen, “Lyra has returned from a long journey where she has survived several trials; she has used her wit and imagination and escaped from captivity both in the care of Mrs Coulter and from Bolvangar and the bears of Svalbard. She managed to save the children at Bolvangar and her friend Roger” (22). Once Lyra has returned from her adventures, she returns to the only home that she has ever known, Jordan College. She has grown as a person over the course of her journey and has learnt many lessons, especially regarding the importance of telling the truth. She is a changed person because of the ordeals that she has overcome.

According to Campbell, the hero can attain either a “microcosmic” or a “macrocosmic” triumph (35). According to Nordlen, Lyra manages to achieve both: “When she, as a child, saves the children at Bolvangar, in her own universe, she accomplishes a microcosmic triumph. While she, as an adult – with a settled daemon – saves all the universes ... she achieves a macrocosmic triumph” (23). By bringing Dust back, Lyra releases “again... the flow of life into the body of the world” (Campbell 37).

According to Solhaug, there are few fantasy texts where a female hero “fills the space of a male hero” (332). Lyra’s daemon may be male, but Solhaug believes that Pullman has “constructed Lyra as the perfect female hero. She fits most of the paradigms designated the traditional male hero, and also rejects the notion that females should be confined to certain roles” (334).

Lyra is not satisfied to sit on the sidelines and wait for a male hero to rescue her; instead she herself is the rescuer of her friends. The *His Dark Materials* trilogy manages to represent a strong, decisive female hero in place of the more common male hero. In other words, Lyra's quest is equal to that of a male counterpart because her journey can be patterned on Campbell's theory of the monomyth.

5.3 Alanna of Trebond

Separation

Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* quartet began as a single book, but was eventually published as four separate novels. Each volume "depicts one round of the hero's journey, with the last book in the quartet depicting Alanna's ultimate ordeals and supreme rewards" ("Heroines' Journeys"). The story begins in *Alanna: The First Adventure*. Thom and Alanna of Trebond are twins, children of a wealthy man in the kingdom of Tortall. Alanna's greatest desire is to become a knight, while Thom's is to become a powerful sorcerer. However, their father has already made the decision and will not have his mind changed: "all girls from noble families studied in convents until they were fifteen or sixteen, at which time they went to Court to find husbands" and "the oldest son of a noble family learned the skills and duties of a knight at the king's palace" (Pierce 9). Suddenly Alanna realises that they should switch places, because she wants to train as a knight and Thom can learn magic at the convent. Alanna is afraid of the life that has been planned for her by her father and by the society in which she lives. She does not want to spend her days learning magic, sewing, and dancing, so she actively shapes her situation and plans for her future. Alanna's refusal to accept the life that has

already been chosen for her by her father, and her decision to take control of her own life, is Alanna's "call to adventure".

Alanna changes her name to Alan and assumes the role of a boy, donning "shirt, breeches and boots" and cutting her hair (Pierce 10). Alanna, now Alan, is free to become a knight since she appears to be a man, and can thus take on a masculine role.

In order to change places, Alanna and Thom require the help of Maude, the village healer. Maude had already taught them all of the magic that she herself knew and realised that they needed further instruction by more knowledgeable teachers. She casts a spell in order to help her make a decision and Alanna has a vision of "a city made of black, shiny stone… The sun beat down on gleaming walls and towers. Alanna was afraid – more afraid than had ever been…" (Pierce 3). This is another call to adventure for Alanna. According to "Heroines' Journeys," Maude also acts as Alanna's "first helper" (4). She gives her some advice that will help her along her journey:

> Think before you fight. Think on who you're fighting, if only because one day you must meet your match. And if you want to pay for those lives you do take, use your healing magic. Use it all you can, or you won't cleanse your soul of death for centuries. It's harder to heal than it is to kill. The Mother knows why, but you've a gift for both. (Pierce, *Alanna: The First Adventure* 11-12)

The "first threshold" that Alanna has to cross is Coram, the sergeant-at-arms of her father's castle, who is supposed to be taking Thom to the palace and will act as his manservant. Alanna removes her cloak and reveals her true identity to Coram, who insists on taking her home once again. However, Alanna saves his life when a wood-

snake crosses his path and almost causes his horse to throw him from his seat. According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” the snake is a typical threshold guardian (4). Coram recognises that Alanna is a better candidate for a knight’s training as she is skilled in the fighting arts and archery, and is quicker and more stubborn than Thom. This allows her to undergo the separation from her home and seek her intended destiny in order to achieve her desires to gain knighthood.

Initiation

According to Campbell, once the hero has traversed the threshold, she “moves to a dream landscape... where [s]he must survive a succession of trials” (89). The hero is “covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region” (Campbell 89).

According to the article “Heroines’ Journeys,” during her training and education as a page, Alanna undergoes a number of various tests and ordeals (4). She is also aided by several friends that she meets along the way, “including Prince Jonathan, George, the King of Thieves, and Myles, a wise knight” (“Heroines’ Journeys” 4). At one stage Prince Jonathan’s life is in danger, and Alanna uses her magical powers to save his life. When Alanna opens a stone door that no one else is able to dislodge, another trial begins. In an old armoury she finds a sword with ancient magical powers. However, before she can leave the room, darkness engulfs her and she is certain that she is going to die – until the sword, named Lightning, saves her. According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” this is “only the first time that Lightning serves as a magical aid to save Alanna from death or destruction” (4). The next time Lightning acts as a magical aid is in

the Black City, where Alanna fights the “Nameless Ones” who have been stealing the souls of the Bazhir tribes. The Nameless Ones strip Alanna of her clothing and she is revealed to Jonathan as a girl. According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” the “boon” or the ultimate reward that Alanna receives is “Jonathan’s request for her to be his squire”, although he now knows her true identity (4).

According to the article “Heroines’ Journeys”, *In the Hand of the Goddess* begins with a “call-to-adventure scene”: while travelling one night, Alanna is caught in a thunderstorm and she and Midnight, her horse, protect themselves from the rain by “taking shelter under a large tree on a hill”, which “is a symbol of the World Navel” (5):

> The effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world. The miracle of this flow may be represented in physical terms as a circulation of food substance, dynamically as a streaming of energy, or spiritually as a manifestation of grace. (Campbell 37)

A “dark, loathly, [and] terrifying” wood-spider is the first herald character to appear to Alanna (Pierce 53). Next, “a scrawny, wet, black male kitten with purple eyes like her own comes to her, another representative of the unknown and undeveloped elements of the unconscious” (“Heroines Journeys” 5). Lastly, a tall, baffling stranger appears – the Great Mother Goddess. Alanna is informed of three fears which she must overcome: “the Ordeal of Knighthood, love, and Duke Roger, a great sorcerer” (“Heroines’ Journeys” 5).

According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” the initiatory trials that Alanna must face in the novel *In the Hand of the Goddess* concern these three fears (5). She must

demonstrate that she is a great warrior and also survive the tests that Duke Roger's magic throw at her. These three terrors of Alanna's are tested when she goes into the Chamber of the Ordeal: cold, her own death, spiders, drowning, and Roger winning. The ember-stones, however, come to her aid, and Alanna is able to kill Roger. The ember-stones are Alanna's "supernatural aid," what Campbell describes as "the unsuspected assistance that comes to one who has undertaken his proper adventure" (34).

In *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man,* Alanna continues to undergo trials. She takes on the responsibility of becoming the tribe's shaman, she trains young apprentice knights and she controls the evil that is contained in a sword that is filled with Roger's magic. She also struggles with a difficult decision – she wants to turn down Jonathan's proposal of marriage. During an argument with Jonathan, he accuses her of not being "womanly," and when she pays George a visit and they become lovers ("Heroines' Journeys").

When George leaves to take care some of some business, Alanna goes back to Bazhir. However, she is soon on an adventure to rescue a sorceress, who informs her how to fix her damaged sword. In order for her sword, Lightning, to be fixed, it must be united with Roger's sword. Alanna has to use her Gift – her magical powers, which she avoids using – to fix her sword. Alanna must accept who she really is, and what talents she possesses, to be able to finally become a great and powerful female knight. Alanna is also given a leather envelope by the sorceress. In *Lioness Rampant,* Alanna learns that this envelope contains a map of the Eastern Lands and the Inland Sea. A star

marked a spot in the Roof of the World, which is where the Dominion Jewel was hidden ("Heroines' Journeys" 5).

Alanna is concerned that the people of Tortall believe that she received her shield because of "magic and trickery" (Pierce, *Lioness Rampant* 14). She believes that by bringing home the Dominion Jewel, people will no longer doubt her strength and courage, and she will also honour his Majesty. In order for Alanna to reach the Dominion Jewel, she travels to a cave on a high mountain, where she meets an "elemental" in the form of an ape, a creature that came before the gods: "I am this place, and these mountains. I suppose you might call me an elemental." (Pierce, *Lioness Rampant* 60). Alanna and the elemental battle, and although he comes close to killing her, he does not. According to "Heroines' Journeys," this "bears a resemblance to Campbell's atonement with the father" (6). The ape offered her the "multi-faceted purple gem" (Pierce 60) because he believed that she deserved it.

Return

When Alanna returns to the capital city, she learns that Prince Jonathan's father is dead and he is the new King. One of her closest friends, Raoul, informs her that her brother Thom has brought Roger back from the dead. Roger threatens to cast an earthquake spell on the day of Jonathan's coronation, but is not able to succeed because Jonathan stops him with the Dominion Jewel, the crown, and Alanna's Gift. Because Jonathan has Alanna's magical Gift, she must battle against Roger using only her strength and wits, as she does not have her powers. He calls Lightning, his former sword, towards him, but Alanna refuses to let it go and continues to hold onto it. She realises that Roger

expects her to fight: “He expects you to fight. So – stop fighting.” (Pierce, *Lioness Rampant* 131). The sword soars toward Roger and kills him for a final time. According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” having “conquered the embodiment of death” by letting go, “Alanna is now free to live, which is another aspect of Campbell’s return” (“Heroines’ Journeys” 6).

When she leaves her home at the beginning of the first novel, Alanna is making a conscious decision to change her future. She is afraid of her own magic and does not want to learn more about her magic; she does not want to learn to become a proper lady and study the feminine skills of dancing and sewing at the convent. She is proactive and decides to become a knight, something that she has always dreamed of. In order to do this, she had to disguise herself as a boy. However, she is a woman and does not want to remain disguised as a man forever. She admits to Mistress Cooper: “I see all the Queen’s ladies wearing pretty things, and I’ve been thinking lately I like pretty things. I’m going to have to be a girl someday” (Pierce, *In the Hand of the Goddess* 123).

According to Tolmie, “there is a constant and deliberate effort, in the life trajectory of Alanna, to get away from the limitations imposed by a general condition of female disenfranchisement” (154). Alanna refuses to accept the life that has been planned out for her because she was born a female. Instead, she chooses her own path and refuses to allow her gender to define her identity. According to “Heroines’ Journeys,” when Alanna marries Georges and accepts her femininity, she “chooses a life where she can be both knight and wife, masculine warrior and feminine mother” (6). Alanna finally realises who she is as a person – she has a feminine, nurturing side, and

a masculine side, which is the side of her character that wants to be a knight. By accepting both of these aspects of her personality, she has become the “master” of the two worlds. She no longer needs to struggle with her identity and feel inferior because she was born a female – this is her “freedom to live,” “the result of the miraculous passage and return” (Campbell 221).

In conclusion, female stereotypes typically portray women in fantasy novels within traditional gender roles – they cast women as “emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive” (Tyson 85). As can be seen from the examples given, the quests of Hermione Granger in the *Harry Potter* series, Lyra Belacqua in the *His Dark Materials* series and Alanna of Trebond in the *Song of the Lioness* quartet can all be patterned on Campbell’s theory of the monomyth. All of the heroes depart with the call to adventure. Often they have a supernatural aid who guides them on their journeys. They cross the first threshold and are swallowed into the belly of the whale. The next stage is the initiation, where they experience hardship in the road of trials. The final stage they experience is the return, where they cross the return threshold, become the master of the two worlds, and finally, have the freedom to live.

The female heroes examined through Campbell’s monomyth are strong and powerful women who are equal in strength of character to typical male heroes, and are able to complete typically masculine heroic tasks. In other words, they are not merely “heroines,” they are “female heroes.” These characters are not “emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive” – they are rational, brave, protective, and decisive, traits which have typically been assigned to male characters or heroes in fantasy novels.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Current fantasy literature provides a space and place for dynamic female characters. This study sought to investigate two areas through an interrogation of selected female characters: firstly, how women in earlier fantasy novels have been placed in positions inferior to those of males; and secondly, how within the last thirty years or so the position of women characters has changed to reflect their elevated position in society. The new representation of female characters shows them to be strong, brave, and decisive heroes who are as competent as their male counterparts. In order for this to be explored, the female characters Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy and Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* series were analysed using the literary theory of feminism and Joseph's Campbell's monomyth.

In the past, the heroes in fantasy novels were predominantly male. In more recent fantasy fiction of the twenty-first century, women are portrayed as decisive, independent heroes. They are cast in roles that were unimaginable less than a century ago, because they were previously limited by the societal expectations of gender responsibilities. As this project illustrates, not only male characters undertake the traditional hero's quest. In the last three decades or so, the role of women in society has changed and as a result, this change is reflected in the fantastic literature published. Women heroes are proving themselves equal to men in both physical and intellectual ability and the heroic deeds they perform are reflecting these elevated qualities.

In Chapter 1, "Introduction", the elements of the genre of fantasy fiction were identified and discussed. In fantasy novels of the past, the protagonists were strong and

powerful male heroes. Female characters were typically included to fulfil a role: to be a sexual temptation to the male character, or to be rescued by him. However, female characters in contemporary fantasy fiction are heroic, authoritative heroes who actively shape their own futures.

Chapter 2, “Literary Theory”, provides the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The literary theory of feminism was discussed and applied to the texts in order to examine how the female characters represent strong, independent heroes. As indicated in Chapter 2, feminism focuses on the oppression of women by a patriarchal society and the endeavours to free them from these oppressive stereotypes so that they are not held back by societal expectations of gender and can become or do whatever they desire. As Tyson argues: “in every domain where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she is objectified and marginalised, defined only by her difference from male norms and values, and by what she lacks and what men have” (92). Although the characters under examination in this dissertation live in patriarchal societies, they refuse to be marginalised because they were born female. They determine to become strong and autonomous, fighting against male norms and values in order to achieve their heroic goals.

Feminist theorists differentiate between “sex” and “gender”. “Sex” refers to the biological constitution of a person as either male or female, while the word “gender” indicates how we are trained to act by the patriarchal society in which we live. For example, a woman is expected to be subservient, driven by her emotions, physically weak and of inferior intelligence to men. However, women are not born with these characteristics. They are instilled as female children from a young age to function, act

and believe themselves to be less capable. Thus, this paper investigates earlier fantasy novels where the strong, capable heroes are generally male, and contrasts this to the new generation of fantasy novels which portray women in heroic roles equal to that of male heroes.

According to Judith Butler's theory of performativity: "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts" (*Gender Trouble* 45). In other words, gender is not something that one is born with, instead it is something that one does, or how one chooses to behave. Butler suggests that gender is the result of cultural and societal expectations, and because of this behaviours can be changed with a conscious decision to act differently. The female characters in the novels examined choose to be autonomous females; they challenge the stereotypes typically ascribed to women and choose instead to be heroes. Often, these female characters are unhappy with the futures that have been planned for them – futures that have usually been planned by the males around them – therefore they decide to actively shape their own futures and accomplish their own goals in order to fulfil their own desires.

An additional theorist used in the investigation of Rowling, Pullman, and Pierce's female characters is Joseph Campbell who proposed the theory of the monomyth in which he describes the hero's journey as a cycle. The hero leaves home naïve and immature and he returns home older, wiser, and stronger because of the challenges that he faced and the evil that he defeated along the way. A wise counsellor usually appears to the hero at the beginning of his journey and provides the hero with sound advice. On the journey the hero faces various physical and mental challenges, some of which threaten the hero's safety, yet through his acumen he survives. Finally, the hero

“arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward” (Campbell 227). Once the hero has returned to his home from completing his task, “the boon that he brings restores the world” (Campbell 229).

Campbell’s theory provides a template of analysis for the hero story: “The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation* – *initiation* – *return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (28). In the simplest version of the monomyth, the hero leaves his home, overcomes various trials and challenges whilst on his journey, and returns to his home with a boon. Campbell’s monomyth was a significant pattern in which to explore the quest of the selected female characters to see if it represents the heroic model.

In Chapter 3, “The Development of Female Characters in Fantasy Novels”, the development of the importance of female characters in fantasy novels was explored, beginning with early fantasy novels. In earlier fantasy novels, women were placed in inferior positions because of the patriarchal ideologies in the societies in which they lived: men were expected to be strong, heroic and decisive, whereas women were thought to be emotional, weak and submissive. However, as the societal expectations of gender are changing, the authors of fantasy novels reflect those changes in their novels. Female heroes are now being included in fantasy literature and demonstrate that they are as strong, brave, rational and intelligent as male heroes.

There are few examples of women performing heroic deeds in older fantasy novels, and female heroes are outnumbered by male heroes. Fantasy literature published in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century would generally always contain

a heroic male character, but frequently did not include strong female characters. In the majority of those novels, most women were excluded from the heroic tradition. When female characters made an appearance, they would hold stereotypical roles such as the temptress or mother-figure. This was in line with the patriarchal ideals of society, as well as the stereotypical gender roles of the time.

During the middle of the twentieth century, significant changes began taking place in heroic fantasy literature. These changes were brought about by ideological and social changes in the world: the two world wars, changes in technology, and the feminist movement which changed the role of women in a patriarchal society. In recent fantasy fiction, there are now equally forceful and convincing female heroes in heroic fiction. Besides J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman and Tamora Pierce, Madeleine L'Engle, Gail Carson Levine, and Ursula Le Guin are female authors who have included independent, brave female heroes in their writing. This chapter thus illustrated the historical developments of female characters from subservient underlings to dynamic champions.

Chapter 4, "Female Heroes in the *Harry Potter* Series, the *His Dark Materials* Series, and *The Song of the Lioness* Quartet" analysed the behaviour of the female characters in the novels under investigation. Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, and Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* quartet are all examples of empowered female characters who eschew and challenge gender stereotyping. Instead of following and conforming to the stereotypes prescribed to women by the patriarchal society in which they live, these female characters challenge the status quo with their valiant, plucky and bold approach.

In Chapter 5, “The Female Heroes’ Journeys” Campbell’s monomyth was used as a critical framework for analysing the quests of the female heroes in order to prove that they are strong characters who are equal in nature and behaviour to the typical male hero in fantasy novels. Although Campbell writes that the hero can be either male or female, typically the hero in fantasy novels was male. This investigation illustrates that the quests of Hermione Granger, Lyra Belacqua, and Alanna of Trebond follow the pattern of Campbell’s theory of the monomyth. Each of the female heroes begins her journey in the “Separation” phase by leaving home and beginning her journey. The heroes then undergo the “Initiation” phase where they undergo trials which they must overcome in order to return home with new knowledge. Eventually, all three of the female heroes “Return” to their homes with a boon which typically helps their people.

The female characters in the novels examined are not inactive, passive characters who await the males around them to make decisions for them – they examine the world they inhabit for injustices and attempt to change these injustices themselves. They certainly do not adhere to the typical societal expectations of women and instead make conscious decisions to fulfil their own destinies. These female characters reject traditional gender stereotypes and do not believe that they have to act a certain way in order to be accepted into their societies. Instead they choose how they want to act pursue adventures in order to achieve their goals.

According to Dresang, Rowling’s Hermione is a “strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female who not only assists the males with whom she has an interdependent relationship but also works to become her own agent as well as a catalyst for social change” (242). Hermione leaves her parents and the Muggle world in

order to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. She has a progressively more important role in Harry's fight against Lord Voldemort; in fact, Harry would not have been able to defeat Lord Voldemort if not for Hermione. Once the antagonist, Lord Voldemort, is vanquished, Hermione has earned, as Campbell states, the "freedom to live", suggesting that her liberated behaviour enables her to pursue her own course (221).

The protagonist of *Northern Lights*, Lyra Belacqua, leaves her home in Oxford to live as the personal assistant of Mrs Coulter in London. This is the beginning of her heroic journey. She eventually runs away from Mrs Coulter's home and travels to the North with the Gyptians, where she experiences many adventures, and through her bravery, sacrifice, and wisdom is able to save multiple universes. Finally, once Lyra has survived her trials, she returns to Jordan College, the only home she has ever known. She escapes from captivity and manages to free her friend Roger's soul from the land of the dead.

Alanna of Trebond discovers that her father is sending her to the convent where she will learn sorcery and how to be a proper lady, while her twin brother Thom is being sent to the palace where he will be trained as a knight. In resisting her pre-ordained course, she actively shapes her destiny. Alanna suggests to her brother that they switch places, as it is her aspiration to become a knight and her brother Thom's to become a powerful sorcerer. This is the beginning of her hero's journey. During the course of the four novels Alanna experiences various trials, which she manages to overcome with the help of her allies and a magical sword called Lightning. At the end of the last book, Alanna, who has achieved her goal of knighthood, marries George. She eventually

decides to be both a female knight and a wife; therefore she becomes the “master of the two worlds” (Campbell 212).

This project sought to address the misrepresentation of women in earlier fantasy novels and acknowledge the elevated position offered to women in selected fantasy novels of the last few decades. Textual evidence and character analysis illustrated that the authors under investigation patterned their female characters’ quests according to Campbell’s monomyth.

Yet there exists further possible areas of investigative study. Feminist theory is advancing continuously, and the previously inferior position of women is giving way to a more elevated independent, liberated role for women. Therefore, there is the possibility of further application of advanced feminist theory in exploration of fantasy literature for children and young adults. In addition, an interesting angle could be to differentiate between female heroes in works authored by female authors as opposed to male authors. Two of the female characters in this dissertation, Hermione Granger and Alanna of Trebond, were created by female authors whilst Lyra Belacqua was created by a male author. Investigation of issues surrounding authorial gender differences could be explored. Furthermore, there are a host of additional female heroines that could be explored, such as Liesel in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief.* It is hoped that this study opens additional exciting vistas into literary investigation of female heroines.

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