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*“Writing is a process,
a journey into memory and the soul.”*

—Isabel Allende

With this in mind, I would like to thank everyone who has accompanied and supported me on this journey.

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1. Introduction

Gender is one of the most debated topics in culture nowadays, which comprises several aspects, such as male and female attributes and characteristics, gender specific occupations and labor conditions, and specific gender roles. These aspects clearly depict our perceptions and expectations of men and women in our society.

As two centuries ago, women were treated as the weaker, inferior and less valuable gender, they received fewer rights and faced more disadvantages than men. Resistance movements against these discriminations were often futile at that time. Since the 1920s, however, these fights for gender equality by women, critics and feminists have begun to take effect and eventually lead to more rights and a more equal perspective of both genders. Nevertheless, even nowadays gender equality is not given everywhere – as is evinced also in literature and the media. Some portrayals of men and women are still biased, which can influence the perceptions of the genders in its consumers, especially the younger ones. To be more precise: the portrayals in stories can either change the (young) reader's concept of men and women, or even confirm their clichéd perceptions they might already have.

When we think of a prototype of men and women, we usually have a specific idea of how a typical man or woman has to be, behave and look like – in order to be perceived as a typical man or women. Such stereotypes are influenced by our society and its values. Once these ideas have been internalized in our population, they are extremely difficult to change. For example, women of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries were a rarity in the workforce and financially dependent on their husbands, which lead to the traditional gender roles of the stay-at-home mother and the father as the “breadwinner”. Although working women are definitely not a rarity anymore, the gender roles of the providing husband and the nurturing (not working outside the house) wife are still accepted and spread by some people. The main problem is, however, that these perceptions become internalized and can lead to a guilty conscience of working mothers, who might consider themselves as worse mothers because they spend less time at home, caring for the children. Also the traditional concept of men, who are not supposed to cry and show emotions or weakness, does not correspond to nowadays' reality, but is still propagated occasionally.

This thesis directly addresses the issue of gender portrayals in selected children's and young adult literature, by having a look at the characters of the three books *The Secret Garden* (1912), *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) and *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012). In the course of my analysis of these stories, several gender aspects – including physical attributes and looks, psychological/character traits, emotions, roles and occupations, and hobbies/interests – of the protagonists and selected secondary characters will be regarded and then compared to each other at the end of this thesis, in order to notice any differences between and within the books.

The first two chapters will serve as a theoretical input in which I will address the subject matter of “gender versus sex”, the development and manifestation of gender roles and their effects on us, will give some historical background information on men and women and their roles in the 19th and 20th centuries, and will summarize findings of previous studies on that topic, in order to compare this information with my findings of the books investigated.

The aim of this analysis is to answer my research question(s): Which gender roles are represented in the selected children’s and young adult literature and have they changed over the last century? What kind of ideology are they based on are they related to the context and time? Thus, I want to find out, whether traditional gender roles (e.g. stay-at-home mother) are still portrayed in books, although most of them do not correspond to reality anymore. In order to compare these portrayals and find any possible changes over time, I chose three books from three different eras, which together cover a whole century: from the beginning of the 20th century (World War I), to the 1940s (World War II) and on to the beginning of the 21st century.

These three books were chosen since *The Secret Garden* (1912) by Frances Hodgson Burnett is one of the most famous children’s stories of that time and often used as readings in schools, *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) is the first book of the popular series *The Famous Five* by Enid Blyton, which was typically read by young readers in the 1940s, and *The Fault in Our Stars* was recommended by several critics (e.g. IMDb) amongst the Top 100 readings for young adults.

Due to these different eras, I expect a slight change over time in the gender roles presented. Therefore, I assume that the books written in times of war (beginning and middle of the 20th century) will convey more traditional gender aspects than the more recent book. However, since the media still present many conservative portrayals of men and women, I expect that at least a few traditional roles will also occur in contemporary literature.

2. Theoretical background

Gender roles have been studied and debated over centuries and are still a popular and common issue addressed by contemporary theorists and feminists. Additionally to media, advertisements, politics and our working conditions, also literature (such as magazines, news papers, books etc.) presents the different views of our genders in society, which are part of our everyday life.

To ensure a smooth introduction to the topic of this thesis, this chapter provides necessary background information on gender vs. sex, gender roles and traditional views of men and women. First of all, a short definition of the term “gender” and its distinction from the term “sex” will be given, which is then followed by an explanation of why and how gender roles emerge, and how traditional roles and views of the genders varied over time. Concerning this last point, the focus will lie on women’s and men’s roles and occupations during the 19th and 20th centuries, compared to nowadays.

2.1. Gender roles

In order to describe gender roles and their components, the definition of *gender*, compared to *sex*, has to be clarified beforehand.

2.1.1. “Gender” versus “Sex”

According to Priess & Hyde *gender* is prescribed as a “quality of maleness or femaleness”. These “qualities” are determined by our society and make up “a culturally defined set of meanings attached to sex and sex difference” (Unger quoted in Shields & Diccico 493). This means that gender is a cultural construct, or “social construction” (Turner-Bowker 461) that includes expectations and restrictions regarding certain behaviors (Risman & Davis 743) as well as appearance, mannerisms, personality traits and work (Miville 3). In contrast, *sex* describes a “categorization on the basis of anatomy and physiology” and has been distinguished from gender since the 1970s (Unger qtd. in Shields & Diccico 493). In short, sex is biologically determined and categorizes us on the basis of our anatomy, while gender is prescribed through cultural values and categorizes us on the basis of our behavior, appearance or work etc. It thus determines how women and men are expected to be and behave.

Since the two genders (male and female) are regarded as different and contrary, expectations of men and women are distinct as well and are known as the so called

gender roles. As gender roles are present on every occasion during one's whole life span, the term can be defined as "a stability of behavior expected of women (or men) across their social contexts, their life-cycles, and whatever culture or sub-culture they might enter" (Risman & Davis 738; see also e.g. Connell; Ferree; Risman, *Gender Vertigo* and *Gender as a social structure*).

Additionally, gender roles always include aspects of behavior patterns, which means that gender can be seen as something we "do" or "perform", not only something we simply "are". In order to be part of a sex category, individuals have to "do" gender (West & Zimmerman qtd. in Risman & Davis 741).

One main theorist and philosopher who deals with this issue of "doing gender" is Judith Butler. She explains the term in her work *Undoing Gender* as follows:

If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice or improvisation within a scene of constraint. [...] But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author [...]. (Butler 1)

2.1.2. How do gender roles emerge?

The fact that men and women are expected to be and act differently, leads us to the next question, namely why different gender roles actually exist. In this respect, several different theories exist, which regard various factors as responsible for the existence of gender roles and therefore are partly contradictory to each other.

According to evolutionary theory, psychological differences between the genders are caused by different "reproductive roles" of males and females and emerged early in our evolution (Priess & Hyde 100). For instance, contact to other women who can help in childcare increases a successful upbringing (and survival) of these children. This influences the way women (and men) and their respective gender roles are, as the following quote suggests.

Therefore, women are more likely to exhibit nurturance, affiliative behaviors, and strong communication skills that help them care for children and acquire help in childbearing tasks. Men are more likely to benefit reproductively from enjoying high status and control of resources in a community, and therefore may exhibit competitiveness or aggressiveness, larger physical size, strong spatial skills, and greater range of travel, which help them to locate and compete for potential mates and valuable resources. (Priess & Hyde 100)

Additionally, at the very beginning of biological theories, the distinctive sex hormones were believed to be responsible for any differences between the genders (Lillie quoted in Risman & Davis 735). Further research showed that the hormones estrogen and testosterone have an impact on the reproduction of the sexes, but also

their body parts and organs, such as the liver, bones and the heart (David et al. qtd. in Risman & Davis 735). Also the brain was held responsible to cause differences in the behavior of males and females (Phoenix et al. qtd. in Risman & Davis 735). Nowadays' theories still claim that "brains are the intervening link between sex hormones and gendered behavior" (Risman & Davis 735).

A century ago, Sigmund Freud's theory was that psychological differences between men and women were "natural, deep-seated, and of profound personal and social consequence" (Shields & Diccico 491). The 1930s mark the beginnings of research on gender differences with regard to stable features that differentiated consistently between the sexes. Men and women were seen as "opposite anchors on a unidimensional, bipolar continuum", which meant that a person could either be feminine or masculine, but not both (Shields & Diccico 492). However, this assumption was questioned by feminist psychologists in the 1970s, who believed that individuals could have both features to some extent (see Bem; Constantinople qtd. in Shields & Diccico 491).

Basically, the question here is why one gender would want to dominate the other one. Interestingly, dominance of the males over females can be noticed in several other primate species (Sadalla et al. quoted in Ickes 82) and has again been linked to the masculine hormone testosterone (Kenrick & Keefe 76ff.).

[...] The essential difference between the masculine and the feminine gender roles – the masculine tendency to attend to the status and power implications of a social exchange before considering its implications for solidarity and closeness, and the feminine tendency to do the reverse – is assumed to reflect a sex-linked, biologically determined difference between men and women. (Ickes 82)

However, not only biological features produce gender differences, but also several other factors are described to have an impact on human behavior. These factors include, "socialization" and "societal expectations" of men and women (Shields & Diccico 493). Thus, Eccles et al. (qtd. in Shields & Diccico 493) claimed that our "social environment affects individuals' expectations of success, ideas about the importance of a task, and the perception of available options." Therefore, "social learning" and expectations of our society have great influence on the different behavior of the genders (Shields & Diccico 494). This also includes "societal norms" which expect men and women to "occupy different roles in society" (Priess & Hyde 102), which contradicts the theory of biological factors (e.g. the body and hormones) being responsible for gender distinctions.

Since socialization is necessarily connected to social interactions with others, these contacts affect our gendered behavior as well, as explained by Shields & Diccico:

Gender emerges through social interactions as a negotiated statement of identity; that is, gender is not something that one achieves over the course of development, but rather it is continually practiced in social interactions large and small. (Shields & Diccico 495)

As the quote above suggests, gender is always related to doing something. This means that as long as we are doing gender – even the “taken-for-granted” actions – we are maintaining and re-creating an inequality between the genders (Vannoy 511).

Moreover, Priess & Hyde are convinced that not only society, but also closer relationships of individuals shape one’s “gender-role development”. These include family members, peers or even educational settings (i.e. teachers), whose gendered behaviors and attitudes have an impact on the child’s gendered behaviors and attitudes (Priess & Hyde 103).

Already around the age of two, young children begin to recognize their own sex and know to which sex group they and other people belong, i.e. they develop their so-called “gender identity” (Priess & Hyde 101). By the age of five, they are already able to differentiate between male and female behavior and realize the expectations people have of the genders. This procedure is called the development of “gender schemas” (Priess & Hyde 101). These schemas are ideas of what (behavior) is seen as male and what as female, and also help individuals to notice relevant and “appropriate” behavior of men and women in their environment. Furthermore, “people do organize and remember information according to gender categories and are more likely to attend to and exhibit preferences for activities associated with their own gender” (Priess & Hyde 101).

In order to “learn” gender with its rules and structures, children acquire knowledge through modeling and imitating other people, through making experiences and through tuition in their environment (Priess & Hyde 102). The process of socialization already starts right at the beginning when we are born and ensures that “children are accordingly rewarded for displaying the gender-appropriate behaviors that they are encouraged to perform” (Lever qtd. in Risman & Davis 737).

A further highly influential factor on the perception of gender (roles) is the mass media. Since television, literature, radio and other forms of media permanently present gender stereotypes - in which men are depicted as competitive, aggressive and dominant in their jobs, and women as the dependent and emotional gender – we believe them to be true and let our perceptions and expectations be shaped according to these stereotypes (Priess & Hyde 104). The problem, however, is that we often do not realize that these portrayals do not always correspond with reality.

In short, Epstein (quoted in Risman & Davis 740) argues - again contradictory to the evolutionary and biological theories - that present gender differences are caused by “social roles” and “societal expectations” of men and women. Accordingly, the differences would disappear if women and men received completely the same opportunities. Unfortunately, this is not (always) the case and therefore, “gender is still present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life” (Acker 567).

To conclude, inequality of the genders is caused on an “individual”, “interactional”, and “institutional” level: While the individual adds to the identification as man or women, the “interactional” level includes sex categorization, “cultural logics” and stereotypes about males and females, and, lastly, institutions cause gender differences “through a variety of organizational processes (...) with cultural logics still embedded within them” (Risman & Davis 748).

As will be shown in Chapter 3 of this thesis, also literature (including books for children and adolescents) contributes greatly to our perception of gender. Above all, children believe the representations of men and women in the stories to be true, since they do not have enough experience to judge these portrayals themselves, which then leads to a “passive acceptance” of outdated or biased gender roles by our youngest readers.

2.2. The history of traditional female and male gender roles

Even though feminists strive to establish an equality of both sexes, our perceptions of men and women are still highly influenced by the media, society and culture. Therefore, traditional gender roles and ideas of the “typical” man or women are still accepted by a number of people. This section of the thesis will present traditional gender roles of women and men, beginning from the late 19th century over the 20th century, compared to the roles nowadays. Although the literature used for this section mainly focuses on roles in the United States, the following descriptions can also be expanded to England and other parts of Europe, as further research confirmed.

As claimed in Mihăilă’s paper on the beginnings of gender roles, women were predominantly regarded as “objects” in all kinds of categories during the 19th century. Thus, they were “condemned to resign themselves and to become what social institutions based on moral and religion expect them to be” (Mihăilă 657). Here, the author emphasizes that women did not receive the same education as males did, which created a certain female “intellectual inferiority” that was used to “dominate them better”. Middle and upper class women’s education was therefore limited to knowing how to be beautiful and attractive, how to dance, sing and speak other languages (above all French) (Mihăilă 657).

At the end of the 19th century, the education during early school years was identical for both boys and girls, but in secondary schools, the fields of education for girls included “literature, art and domestic economy in order to prepare them for family life” (Mihăilă 658). Especially in rural areas, teaching focused even more on domestic work, such as cooking, spinning, sewing, taking care of the house and obeying “family’s rules” (Mihăilă 658).

According to Cott, it was especially the men who wanted women to work at home. Otherwise, they feared that women would take men’s jobs and reduce their earnings.

Instead, men wanted their wages to be raised “to a level sufficient to enable their wives to devote themselves to hearth and home” (see Hartmann 16-17; Barrett & McIntosh 51-72; May 400-408 qtd. in Cott, *The Intersection of Work and Family Life (TIOWAFL) Part 1*. 175).

In the late 19th century, the ideal of the American men and woman – the so called “Cult of True Womanhood” – was developed and consisted of “culturally prescribed rules for behavior” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 212), which also applied to men and women in England. Accordingly, women had to learn the “moral and practical issues” concerning nurturance and the household, and had to maintain certain characteristics, such as purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness in order “to better meet the needs of husbands, fathers, and children” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 212). In contrast, men’s work was supposed to be mainly limited to “wage work” and “public affairs”, as declared by Cott. Furthermore, they were expected to be “aggressive and competitive, yet not too concerned with moral issues”, and were generally thought to possess “spiritual natures intrinsically inferior to women’s” (Welter qtd. in Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 212). Especially this century was marked by husbands as the superior and determining part of the family, as demonstrated in the following quote.

Nineteenth-century [...] women were trapped into subservience to men within the family not only because they were largely excluded from the economy and, once they married, absorbed by childbirth and child care, but also because the power that men held over women in this situation was reinforced by the law. [...] Married woman possessed few legal rights, and virtually none in relation to their husbands. (Vander Mey, Neff & Demo 102)

However, also cheap workers were needed at that time, especially in the domains of nursery, education (i.e. teachers) and low skill industrial work. Since numerous women (who were unmarried or finished with child care) were available and willing to do these cheap jobs, this kind of work began to be considered as “women’s work” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 34). As hardly any woman had working experience, higher education or other trained skills, these jobs “bore the stigma of low skill, low status and low pay” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 37):

Generally, women regarded their work as temporary and hesitated to invest in apprenticeship training, because they expected to marry and raise families. Thus they remained untrained, casual labor and were soon, by custom, relegated to the lowest paid, least skilled jobs. Long hours, overwork and poor working conditions would characterize women’s work in industry for almost a century. (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 38)

In the 1890s, the women’s suffrage movements in America (the actual suffrage was established in 1920, followed by England in 1928) might have been the reason for a greater equality of the sexes. This “muting of gender-role distinction” also affected men’s and women’s occupations, which required them to “assume each other’s tasks” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 214). However, this equality did not apply to all kinds of roles, as “women’s other work”, such as housekeeping, cooking, canning, sewing and washing, still remained “assigned for their sex” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 215). Thus,

women's duties were never appreciated as much as was men's work, as men refused to do (or to confess doing) women's work (Cott, *TIOWAFL/1* 216).

Since, at that time, women only worked temporarily outside the home – if at all – either because of “financial necessity”, “personal selfishness” or because they were not married, they were seen as an “anomaly” in the work force (Cott, *Feminist Struggles for Sex Equality (FSFSE)* 303). Therefore, women's work outside the home was regarded as a “stage, not a right”, and it was considered common sense that the “mature woman belonged at home” (Cott, *FSFSE* 303). Over the course of the 20th century, this view of working women changed considerably. Whereas in the 19th century, a married woman in the labor force was something unusual, the 20th century provided more chances to work outside the home. According to Matthaey (qtd. in Cott, *The Intersection of Work and Family Life (TIOWAFL) Part 2* 581), less than 5 percent of all married American women were working outside the home in 1890. 87 years later, the percentage rose to 47,1 percent and by 1980, more than half of all married women worked in the labor force. Interestingly, this increase in working women did not happen evenly across all age groups. The greatest increase was found amongst women over 45 (Oppenheimer qtd. in Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 582). According to Oppenheimer, this was a “response to changes in demand for workers in traditionally female occupations, especially teaching and clerical work, after the war” and because of a completed child care (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 583). As far as England and other parts of Europe are concerned, similar numbers can be expected.

During the 1910s and 1920s, there was a greater demand of working women (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 598). While several million men served the army during World War I, every helping woman was needed to replace the men in order to keep industrial production and everyday life going. Therefore, the number of working women (also wives) doubled between 1900 and 1920 (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 598). Ten years later, in the 1930s, the number of married women at work increased again, families had to earn money in every possible way in order to survive (Cott, *FSFSE* 302). Therefore, also women were forced to earn some money, mainly in lower-paid jobs like domestic service, part-time work, canning, and farm labor (Cott, *FSFSE* 302), because of their mostly low educational standards. Due to this boom of working women at these times, World War I and II can be regarded as the main reasons for dramatic changes in women in the working force. But also “social and legislative changes” during the 1910s, such as the suffrage or birth control movements lead society to “challenge the traditional view that middle-class married women should not participate in the working force” (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 599).

Nevertheless, these events were not the only significant contributions to women's labor force. The husband's income also had a negative influence on the wife's participation in the work force, since wives of affluent men were not required to earn any additional money to ensure their survival (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 583). Additionally, the more children a wife had, the greater were the benefits of staying at home. In general, a couple with three children or more was considered a large family, which

results in “higher productivity in the home”, especially for the mothers (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 587). Furthermore, it was suggested that the prior “employment behavior” of women had an effect on their later work during and after World War II: Women who already worked as young wives were more likely to continue working outside the home after their childbearing (Cott, *TIOWAFL/2* 583).

In the 1960s, another movement took place which challenged “the discrepancy between the formal accordance of equality and the informal and private treatment of women as men’s inferiors” (Cott, *FSFSE* 452). Nevertheless, the typical family of the mid-20th century at first still featured a dominant father and husband, as described by Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex*:

In the prototypical patriarchal nuclear family ... the father is the breadwinner; all other members of his family are his dependents. He agrees to support a wife in return for her services: housekeeping, sex, and reproduction. The children whom she bears for him are even more dependent. (Firestone 48)

Since the 1970s, as Cott states, young women have begun to achieve higher education and have started to earn their own money in order to be independent. A marriage was therefore more out of choice than necessity. With this development, the traditional patriarchal roles were challenged and “were beginning to falter” (Cott, *FSFSE* 456).

Nowadays, women’s work is barely temporary anymore, since the years of work outside the home increased constantly over the last century. In times when wives would have stayed at home to do the household chores and child care, contemporary mothers are much more likely to work outside of their home. This increasing trend of the working woman offers them many more options than they had a century ago, for example divorcing an unsatisfactory marriage and the ability to support herself independently (Cott, *FSFSE* 457).

Interestingly, Gerson’s study in *Hard Choices* revealed that it is not femininity that determines women’s choice of work or family, but the “structural conditions”. Thus, women rather “choose” work or family and household commitments according to their “marital stability” and “success in the labor force” (Gerson qtd. in Risman & Davis 740). However, Bianchi et al. (quoted in Risman & Davis 740) claim that even women with well paid work outside of their domestic field are more involved in household and family care than their male partners or husbands.

In the past, it was predominantly the man’s duty to provide the family with “physical resources”, such as food, money and protection, in order to facilitate the children’s survival and upbringing (Ickes 82). In the present days, however, both men and women can work outside the home to assure physical resources, which are not restricted to men anymore. Also “sensitivity to family members’ social-emotional needs” has become more important for both mothers and fathers, as Ickes

emphasizes. Therefore, the traditional view of gender roles and the contrary sexes are less optimal to describe the contemporary family and culture (Ickes 82).

According to Sullivan and Kan et al. (qtd. in Risman & Davis 740), husbands have become cross-nationally more and more involved in the household and family work over time, however, “gender still trumps the structural material variable of time and economic dependency when it comes to housework and care work” (see Risman, *Gender as structure or trump card?* qtd. in Risman & Davis 740). Nevertheless, “privileged women” might indeed take up masculine roles and leave household chores and family care to “less privileged” women (MacDonald; Nakano Glenn qtd. in Priess & Hyde 105). Due to the acceptance of girls and women taking up male roles, the strong masculinity of usually male roles has decreased or even vanished over time, as Priess & Hyde explain. However, this was not the case with female roles. Since male roles were generally considered as more valuable than female roles, men refused to take up women’s roles. Thus, “girls are more likely than boys to have a gender-role identity that does not match their gender, instead perceiving themselves as masculine or androgynous” (i.e., as possessing both feminine and masculine qualities) (Priess & Hyde 105).

Nevertheless, teenage girls and boys are still more likely to choose their activities according to their gender and the respective expectations. Accordingly, girls engage more in activities such as reading, writing, walking and dancing, while typical boys’ activities are sports, building, science and hunting (Priess & Hyde 106), which suggests that some prototypical male and female gender roles are still present in the 21st century. Hence, it is interesting to see what gender roles are portrayed in children’s literature und whether they also correspond to reality.

3. Gender in children's and young adult literature

As implied in the previous chapter, gender roles as well as our perceptions of gender still have a great impact on us and our behavior. Since we perceive feminine and masculine roles and expectations through our environment but also the media, such as television and books, I assume that the various aspects of gender are deeply manifested in children's and young adult literature as well.

The following chapter will therefore focus on previous studies addressing that issue in order to examine sexist versus non-sexist gender roles and portrayals of female and male characters in books of the 20th and 21st centuries, aimed at children and adolescents. Amongst others, questions such as "how are men and women presented?", "to what extent are traditional gender roles (for example a stay-at-home mother) still conveyed in the stories?" and "have these portrayals in the books changed over time?" will be answered in this section. Moreover, possible effect(s) on the young readers will be discussed in the second part of the chapter.

3.1. Previous research on gender representation in children's and young adult books of the last century

An interesting contribution to this issue, amongst others, was made by Grauerholz and Pescosolido, who had a look at 2216 children's books published in the United States between 1900 and 1984, in order to investigate their representation of women and girls. Thereby, human characters as well as animal (main) characters were part of the investigation and their focus was on the visibility (being mentioned in titles) and centrality (as main characters) of girls and women in these books. Since the number of working women during World War I and II and the "demand for equality during the women's movement" increased, women were expected to be as present in the stories as men are during these periods (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 119).

The results of their study revealed that the ratios of males and females in both central roles and titles fluctuated in a "U-shaped curve" (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 122) over time: the greatest balance of gender in titles and central roles was much more present in the earliest and most recent periods of the 20th century, while books published in middle of the century showed the highest inequality of ratio. In detail, after the 1950s, the trend of imbalance began to become more balanced again, especially after the 1970s (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 117). Therefore, "gender representations were found to vary in a curvilinear fashion" over the last century (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 114).

This inequality of the genders in children's books of the 1940s and 1950s may reflect "an era when traditional gender roles were valued, and a strong emphasis was

placed upon conventional representation of the family” (Grauerholz and Pescosolido, 123) in the aftermath of World War II – despite the fact that women had taken over men’s work during the war years. The increase of female representations in titles and central roles during the 1970s and 80s, however, might depict the “growing concern among authors and publishers for equal gender representations” (see Lystad; Macmillan, qtd. in Grauerholz & Pescosolido 123). Despite a more egalitarian representation of males and females in more recent decades, the general imbalance of gender in children’s books is still present, especially concerning female adult characters and female animals (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 123).

However, the respective gender of the authors was found not to affect the gender representation in their books (Grauerholz & Pescosolido 122). Therefore, also female authors used unequally distributed roles and illustrations of gender in their stories.

An investigation that confirms these findings is Gooden & Gooden’s study in which 83 notable picture books (according to the American Library Association’s website), published between 1995 and 1999, were examined for gender representations in central characters, their illustrations and in titles. The authors of the study hypothesized that the proportion of female main characters will be equal to or higher than the corresponding proportion of males, and that the amount of females depicted alone in illustrations will be equal to or higher than the number of males in pictures (Gooden & Gooden 93). Similar to Grauerholz & Pescosolido’s findings, Gooden & Gooden agree that female representations since the 1970s have increased, but that traditional gender roles have not disappeared in children’s literature since then. Thus, hardly any male character was found doing the household, grocery shopping or caring for children. However, some nontraditional activities of female characters were detected, such as “dressing up as a pilot, ambulance driver, and scuba diver” (Gooden & Gooden 96).

As a plausible explanation for the underrepresentation of women before the 1970s Gooden & Gooden adduce the fact that the majority of authors seemed to accept the traditional view of gender roles and that therefore “the lack of female representation was never challenged” (Gooden & Gooden 89). As a result of the women’s era, people were prompted to notice the gender stereotypes in children’s books and a world that equally respected all people was demanded (Gooden & Gooden 90).

The master question is, however, whether the presentation of gender is different in distinct categories of children’s literature. Since some books were rated (and listed) as non-sexist books, it is plausible that traditional gender roles and differences between boys and girls are not as present in these stories as in sexist books. But is this really the case?

In 1993, also Kortenhaus & Demarest analyzed the “sex bias” presented in 150 award vs. non-award winning children’s picture books. One type of children’s books from the 1970s are known to portray a “greater balance and sex equity” (Collins et al. qtd. in Kortenhaus & Demarest 219) – the so called *Caldecott* books. Therefore,

Kortenhaus & Demarest re-examined these books (compared to non-award books) in order to prove their hypothesis that more sexism would be found in “a random cross section of recent children’s books” than in Caldecott books, and that they were expected to show “a dramatic change in sexism” over the last 50 years (Kortenhaus & Demarest 222). In order to achieve these results, the portrayed gender roles and all types of activities done by male and female characters were analyzed with a “content analysis”. Additionally, titles, pictures, animals and central roles of/in the books were part of this analysis.

The outcome of their study was similar to the previous studies mentioned above: the number of male and female characters in books has become “more evenly distributed over the past 50 years”, however, the roles only changed “in a more subtle way”. Nowadays, girls are seen in more instrumental activities, but are still depicted as the more passive gender, while the portrayal of boys as the instrumental gender has not changed (Kortenhaus & Demarest 219).

Nevertheless, most of the statistical results found by the comparison of both kinds of books were not significant, which means that the non- award winning books compared to Caldecott books were fairly similar. In both types of books, male characters outnumbered females in all categories and significant sex differences were present in the aspects of sex roles, pictures and animals (Kortenhaus & Demarest 224).

As Gooden & Gooden found in their investigation, Kortenhaus and Demarest’s findings show that children’s books before 1970 (both Caldecott and non-award books) depicted more male characters compared to female characters in titles, pictures, animals and central roles. After that period, children’s literature became more egalitarian concerning the “distribution of male and female characters” in all four categories (Kortenhaus & Demarest 225).

As far as Kortenhaus & Demarest’s content analysis is concerned, especially older books were found to portray strongly stereotyped gender roles. According to Deaux (qtd. in Kortenhaus & Demarest 220), typical male characteristics are “competence, instrumentation, and achievement motivation”, while the traits “nurturant, dependent, and submissive” are perceived as typically female traits, which are regarded as “less desirable” than male traits. Therefore, male characters are typically “competent and achievement oriented”, whereas girls and women are depicted as “less competent in their ability to accomplish things” (Kortenhaus & Demarest 220ff.). Moreover, males were connected with “active mastery themes”, such as cleverness, adventure or earning money, whereas, on the contrary, female characters were attributed to “second-sex themes”, like passivity or victimization. In short, gender was depicted according to the motto “boys do, girls are” (Key qtd. in Kortenhaus & Demarest 221).

Before 1960, girls were seldomly seen in independent or instrumental activities and boys were hardly ever described as “dependent or nurturing” (Kortenhaus & Demarest 226f.). Even when there was an active girl in the story, there was normally

an even more active and independent boy present, and girls in central roles were described as “needing help to solve a problem” which they then usually received from an older male character (Kortenhaus & Demarest 227-230). These findings suggest that girls were not accepted to be capable, or more active and independent than boys.

When it comes to parents, Kortenaus & Demarest found that mothers are typically presented as “ineffectual” and “overwhelmed by problems, always needing to rely on fathers or sons to solve their dilemmas” (p. 230). Fathers, on the other hand, are described as being capable, taking charge and seldomly “consulting the mother about any decision” (Kortenhaus & Demarest 230). Additionally, mothers were usually shown in a domestic setting and not working, which teaches young female readers that women are not supposed to carry out a profession outside of their home (Kortenhaus & Demarest 231). Of course, this is not an adequate reflection of the “changing role” of females in the workforce of our society (Kortenhaus & Demarest 231).

Similar results were found in Turner-Bowker’s study, who also examined Caldecott books in comparison to non-award winning literature. One of her “major findings” was that, again, girls and women were still underrepresented in the investigated books, even in the award-winning Caldecott books (Turner-Bowker 464). Additionally, they were often presented as “inconspicuous and nameless”, or as “helpers, caretakers, followers, and servers of others”, which indicates that traditional stereotypes are still portrayed in these books. Also traits such as “pleasers”, “passive” and “dependent” were used for female characters which brand them as “pretty dolls – to be admired and to bring pleasure” (Turner-Bowker 464).

With regard to occupations, women were often restricted to the domestic setting, pursuing “female” professions such as baker, garden tender, nurse, child-tender, and launderer (Turner-Bowker 464). In many cases, they also took on the roles of the mother, wife, fairy godmother or the underwater maiden, whereas men were mainly seen in jobs like storekeeper, housebuilder, king, prince, fighter, fisherman, policeman or soldier. This implies, as Turner-Bowker (p. 464) puts it, that the gender roles and occupations of females “are those that are not valued in our society.”

Moreover, according to Jackling & Miche (qtd. in Kortenhaus & Demarest 227) and Turner-Bowker, many other aspects than traits and occupations are used to facilitate sexism, such as “disparaging statements”, physical attributes, character prevalence, emotions and moral orientation. Here, we already saw that males have almost always been more present in titles, central roles and illustrations of children’s books. With regard to physical attributes, “strong” adjectives such as potent, powerful and active are used to describe boys, whereas girls are more seen as beautiful, sweet and passive (Turner-Bowker 471ff.). Concerning the emotional aspect, Moore & Mae (qtd. in Turner-Bowker 466) found that female characters are described as “more tearful” and “dependent” than boys or men. On the other hand, males are depicted as tough,

but “less able to deal with their feelings”, whereas girls weather their grief through communication with others. These findings confirm the stereotype that females are the more emotional gender in our society. Furthermore, Tetenbaum and Pearson investigated “moral orientations” of female and male characters in children’s books, which resulted in the conclusion that girls were mainly oriented toward “caring as a moral goal”, whereas boys were oriented toward “justice as a final goal”. These results imply that (moral) dilemmas of females are “concentrated in the inner arena of emotions and relationships” (Tetenbaum & Pearson 390). Additionally, while the male tend to “wrest good from the land”, females are more likely to “wrest good from other people”. In more detail, boys rather concentrate on fairness/correctness and try to find a logical solution, whereas girls focus on the needs of others, how to help them and therefore invent “unique contextually based answers” (Tetenbaum & Pearson 391).

Interestingly, these moral decisions of the characters were found to have an impact on the reader’s moral orientations, as suggested in the following quote:

Stories for children provide a concrete format through which the essence of moral conflict and the appropriateness of moral behaviour can be conveyed in an emotionally compelling and cognitively assimilable fashion. The child, struggling to attain meaning and to acquire the moral percepts of his/her culture, identifies with fictional characters, thereby vicariously working through his/her own conflicts. (Tetenbaum & Pearson 382)

Also noteworthy for this chapter is Diekman & Murnen’s analysis of sexist vs. non-sexist books. The goal of their study was also to find out to what extent non-sexist stories present equality and egalitarian gender roles compared to books categorized as sexist. However, compared to the other studies, they expected at least some sexism in non-sexist books as well, since “it continues to be manifest in society” (Diekman & Murnen 374).

As already mentioned in chapter 1 of this thesis, gender roles have become more equal over time. Nevertheless, actual changes have mostly taken place in male-dominant roles, but not in female-dominated roles. Thus, women are nowadays more represented in traditional “male” roles (e.g. financial support of the family) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2002), whereas men’s responsibilities did not considerably increase in traditional “female” roles such as household chores or child care (e.g. Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; qtd. in Diekman & Murnen 375). This imbalance in “social change” was therefore also the focus of Diekman and Murnen’s investigation. They expected girls to adopt male character traits, but not vice versa, since this is the case in reality. Sexist books, however, were expected to include more inequality concerning personality features than non-sexist books. The same applies to gender roles. Evidence of asymmetrical change in roles was already found by Kortenhaus & Demarest, whereby females have become more involved in “male” activities (i.e. instrumental activities), while males are presented only slightly more in “female” activities (i.e. passive activities). Therefore, non-sexists books were

expected to show more equality in “male-stereotypic roles” than sexist books would portray, however, both kinds of books were expected to show inequality in “female-stereotypical roles” (Diekman & Murnen 375).

Basically, the aspects of “status” and “power” are linked to masculinity, since “men maintain higher levels of power and status than women” (Diekman et al., 2004; qtd. in Diekman & Murnen 375). This conception influences children’s beliefs that jobs done by men would have greater status than women’s occupation (Liben, Bigler & Krogh, 2001; qtd. in Diekman & Murnen 375) and that women are “inferior” or “incompetent” (Diekman & Murnen 375). Additionally, the “feminine ideal” depicts women in “overly romantic terms” or as “delicate creatures who require protection” (Glick & Fiske qtd. in Diekman & Murnen 375) and who prefer older men with high status and well paid occupations (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly qtd. in Diekman & Murnen 375), which, again, creates gender inequity. Thus, this inequity might also be present in both non-sexist and sexist books which depict the “traditional feminine ideal”, as Diekman & Murnen suspected.

All these facts led Diekman & Murnen to focus on the following features in their investigation: Personality characteristics, social roles, status, gender segregation and the traditional feminine ideal. Their exact definitions, further explanations and specific examples of each of these aspects can be found in Diekman & Murnen’s appendix from page 383 onwards.

In their analysis, 10 elementary school books categorized sexist and non-sexist respectively were chosen randomly and assessed by several individuals. Their prediction was that sexist books would depict male characters more often, present men with higher status than women, and portray a high level of gender segregation. Additionally, a certain extent of sexism with regard to female-stereotypic domains and the “female ideal” were expected to be equally present in both kinds of books, given the situation in reality (Diekman & Murnen 376).

Regarding personality characteristics, they found that sexist children’s books presented indeed more traditional personality traits than the non-sexist books (Diekman & Murnen 378). As expected, the nonsexist books were only found to be more egalitarian concerning descriptions of male characteristics. With regard to female traits, sexist and non-sexist books did not differ. This means that some girls were found to also have “male” traits, whereas boys with “female” traits did not occur (Diekman & Murnen, 2004 380).

Moreover, sexist books presented more traditional gender roles than the non-sexist stories did. Thereby, female-stereotypic roles were even more affected than male-stereotypic domains (Diekman & Murnen 380) which again confirms the author’s expectations. Accordingly, sexist stories indeed included more representations of men with higher status than those found in non-sexist books. Sexist books also tended to “favor” male characters as narrator and in illustrations than females. However, no significant differences in gender segregation was found between both

kinds of books, which implies that “categorization” of males and females occurred in sexist as well as in non-sexist stories. Furthermore, despite their hypothesis that the traditional feminine ideal would also be portrayed in non-sexist literature, it was indeed more emphasized in sexist books (Diekman & Murnen 381).

Although some differences were found between sexist and nonsexist children’s literature, the latter also presents a “narrow vision of gender equality”. Although the findings were similar as in other studies, one might doubt the significance of this study due to its fairly small amount (i.e. 10) of investigated books. Nevertheless, the results confirm Diekman & Murnen’s argument that sexism is a “multidimensional construct”, which leads them to their conclusion that “even in the domain of children’s literature, sexism manifested itself in divergent ways” (Diekman & Murnen 381).

In terms of gender portrayals in literature for adolescent readers, Roberta Trites (qtd. in Robinson 205) is convinced that, like children’s literature, young adult fiction often deals with the “individual’s troubling relationship to the norms of the greater society”. She claims that the message of such books usually “highlights the power of the individual to transform his or her world.” Thus, the actual problem that characters in young adult fiction have to face is their struggle to have a “liveable life” and to overcome the existing “cultural matrix” (Robinson 205).

The two workbooks for young adults, *Girlness: Deal with it Body and Soul* (2006 by Diane Peters) and *Guyness: Deal with it Body and Soul* (2006 by Steve Pitt), are examples of young adult literature that prompts its readers to recognize and resist conveyed gender constructions and societal expectations (Robinson 206). Nevertheless, a closer look suggests that they also include certain features which again create a distinction between the two sexes. One example is the fact that the books are “targeted for distinct ‘opposite sexes’”, as the titles suggest, although their aim is to dismiss the differences between girls and boys, which somehow reconstructs the line between the two again. Furthermore, the books do not imply that boys can also read the girls’ edition and vice versa, which implies that boys and girls are (and need something) different (Robinson 209).

In Robinson’s study she examined ten young adult novels for “assumptions about girlness and guyness” (p. 209ff.). Seven books (all written by female authors) contained a female protagonist and three novels told the story from a boy’s point of view. In her investigation she found that each book includes a struggle of a teenage character with the normative culture. Additionally, they are all confronted with a certain pressure to meet expectations held by the society. Three of the ten analyzed books include a character who tries to “fit in with his or her peers”. Two of the novels present main characters who try to “conform to a non-normative culture”. In these stories, the characters need to “embrace a more mainstream ethic by rejecting their non-normative peers”. Other examined books show protagonists who have to resist an “internalized ideology”, for example accepting to be lesbian (as in *Hello, Groin*) (Robinson 212).

Another feature that each of these books shared was a protagonist who was able to solve his/her problems and, additionally, “deeply moral messages”. 9 out of the 10 investigated stories for young adults were told from the main character’s view, which “highlights the voice and the power of the often-disenfranchised adolescent” and indicates that these protagonists are “actively engaged in self-construction” (Robinson 213).

Besides learning to understand oneself, the adolescent character generally also has an astonishing and surprising effect on his or her surroundings. Thus, they are often seen in “power-repression dynamics” which indicates that they are, indeed, fairly “potent”, as Trites (qtd. in Robinson 214) calls it. This clearly suggests that teenagers can have an impact on their environment, and can act as role models for other characters and even the reader (Robinson 214).

In only three of the ten adolescent novels, male heroes were part of the story. However, these stories did not deal with “acceptance” or support in finding an identity, as it was the case with female protagonists. Instead, these stories were about “woundedness”, “failures” and “serendipitous success” and conveyed the feeling that boys are not trustworthy, even when the story was told from their perspective (Robinson 216). Moreover, Robinson (p. 221) found that male characters in the books are “encouraged not to pursue a formal education” and that the standards they are encouraged to achieve “leave them wounded and damaged.” In short, the message conveyed in boy’s books is mostly the same: “A boy should take a chance and pursue his dreams” (Robinson 219) which was not found for girls.

3.2. The effects of gender representation on children’s beliefs and perceptions of gender

Stereotypes are learned, widely shared, socially validated general beliefs about categories of individuals. These beliefs are widespread and are thought to “hold a kernel of truth” (Eagly & Wood qtd. in Turner-Bowker 461), but are typically inaccurate. Stereotypes oversimplify and exaggerate attributions made to groups, creating distinctions between categories which are greater than actual observed differences. Stereotypes are powerful and enduring and are often maintained through self-fulfilling prophecies. They are pervasive in family life, educational institutions, and industry (Turner-Bowker 461). Of course, children are influenced by these beliefs as well, since they learn to behave in a specific way and also to “assign certain personality characteristics to girls and boys” (Turner-Bowker 462). According to Turner-Bowker (p. 462), one effective form of maintaining these categories is through language, as it “serves as a vehicle to perpetuate or abandon stereotypes.”

Children, as they develop their gender identity, actively observe the world for rules and structures in order to “fit into” this world. This development is therefore “shaped

by shared beliefs of society” (see Turner-Bowker qtd. in Gooden & Gooden 92). One important tool that helps children to acquire knowledge about their gender is reading children’s (picture) books (LaDow qtd. in Gooden & Gooden 91), since they often present “societal values” (Arbuthnot qtd. in Gooden & Gooden 91). Furthermore, books enable young children to “learn about the lives of those who may be quite different from themselves” (Gooden & Gooden 91).

They [texts] are highly interactive; they mold and construct us by presenting images of ourselves. They define what it means to be female or male in our society. Books provide role models; from this, children learn what behavior is acceptable for them, for their peers, and for adults around them. They learn what to say and do, they learn what’s expected of them, and they learn right from wrong. (Turner-Bowker 463)

By learning these rules, children also learn “to stereotype by sex role” (Gooden & Gooden 91) at a young age. All kinds of media (such as television, movies, books), toys and games present “sex-typed models” and their attitudes, which children are confronted with even before entering school (see Fried qtd. in Gooden & Gooden 91). As the following quote implies, children are not asked about what they actually want. Instead, they are told what to want and how to be:

Children’s choices of what they want to become or accomplish is limited by stereotypes. Gender bias prevents individuals from exploring the activities and interests that are best suited to their personality and abilities. (Gooden & Gooden 97)

Through the use of language (as in literature), such stereotypes quickly become prevalent in our society. Traits like “independent, aggressive, bold, and adventurous” are seen as “typically” male characteristics. Moreover, males are usually depicted as “leaders, decision-makers, and heros [sic].” and, contrary to women and girls, rarely seen in roles in a domestic setting. On the other hand, characteristics such as “quiet, caring, expressive, emotional” are connected with femininity (Turner-Bowker 463). These biased portrayals of boys and girls in stories become “normal” for young readers, who are then irritated by stories where this is not the case, as Fox claims in the quote below:

It’s alarming to consider that by 5 years of age, children mentally enforce a sex change in a literary female protagonist because they find the idea of an active, interesting, self-respecting, female main character simply unthinkable. (Fox 84)

Psychologists and leaders of liberation groups agree on the fact that gender stereotyping in children’s literature has especially harmful effects on the young reader’s perception of women’s roles (Gooden & Gooden 89).

Gender stereotypes in literature prevent the fullness of female human potential from being realized by depriving girls of a range of strong, alternative role models. [...] Everything we read [...] constructs us, makes us who we are, by presenting our image of ourselves as girls and women, as boys and men. (Fox 84)

This quote suggests that children's books and their stereotypical views of gender and roles have an effect on "how children perceive themselves", which Narahara (qtd. in Gooden & Gooden 90) acknowledges as well. The (negative) depiction of males and females could influence the identity and self-esteem of children of the same gender, especially girls, in a negative way. These biased portrayals can also impair a child's self-concept and his or her expectations of others (Kortenhaus & Demarest 220).

The authors Kortenhaus and Demarest as well agree that books have a great influence on "transmitting values and attitudes" of our culture and society, and therefore on our socialization (p. 220). There is no doubt that the characters depicted in children's books "mold a child's conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicate how males and females are supposed to act". Media (including children's and young adult literature) determine our perception of what is "normal" and "attractive" for boys and girls. In particular, they convey stereotypical messages, such as "violence is natural for guys" (*Guyness*, p. 25) or "girls must be very thin to be attractive" (*Girlness*, p. 19) (Robinson 207).

Moreover, Diekman & Murnen are convinced that stories for young readers and the adventures they contain, even if they are set in imaginary worlds, teach them about existing expectations and values (i.e. what is wrong and what is right) in our world. More importantly, these stories inform their readers about gender roles and can "change children's ideas about the world". Therefore, Diekman & Murnen (p. 373) argue that stereotypes in these stories increase children's beliefs in traditional gender roles, while non-sexist stories decrease their biased conception of gender. Their plausible reason why texts for young readers are highly influential is that they are (mostly) not able to judge what is real and what fiction, and what is right or wrong, themselves:

Children have relatively less knowledge of real-world-limitations, less ability to counterargue information effectively, and less differentiation between fiction and reality. (Diekman & Murnen 373)

Since media, books and therefore language are a popular tool "to maintain the gender status of individuals in our society" (Turner-Bowker 462), books can also serve to eliminate unequal views of gender (Gooden & Gooden 90). In their study, Trepanier-Street & Romatowski were able to show that children's attitudes, "while still generally stereotypic", were "more flexible regarding occupational roles" and that their attitudes can be positively influenced by well chosen books (p. 155). Previous research proved that children who read books that depicted females in non-stereotypic roles were highly convinced of the ability of girls to do the same non-stereotypic activities as in the story. Also the amount of children who rated an occupation stereotypically (e.g. pilot and mechanic for men, dancer and nurse for women) was significantly lower after reading a non-stereotypical story. Thus, more children began so see several occupations as "neutral", i.e. for both men and women (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski 157).

Since society of the 21st century respects that “women are just as capable as men” (Gooden & Gooden 97), it is indispensable to show that in literature as well. We are told and taught that we can do, be and feel anything we want. But the question here, that Fox (p. 84ff.) addresses directly, is *why* this is not the case in children’s literature? Children’s stories still convey the idea that girls are rather “nurturer” than “adventurer” or “tentative” and “careful” instead of “wild” and “risk takers”. The same applies for boys. Why are they not allowed to cry and to show pain or weakness? Why are they still depicted as baseball players or machine gunners instead of dancers or painters? So far, all these questions remain without a plausible answer. This “remaining aloof from the world”, as Fox (p. 86) puts it, unconsciously causes racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and size-ism in our society, which we often do not even realize. Therefore, being unaware of this issue can easily lead us into a “passive acceptance” of the biased portrayals of gender in literature.

In order to help raising the readers’ awareness concerning this issue, the following part of my thesis will demonstrate and analyze the portrayals of gender and (traditional) sex roles in three selected books for young readers, which might go unperceived at first sight.

4. An analysis of portrayed gender roles in 3 selected books

This chapter constitutes the main part of my thesis on gender aspects in children's and adolescents' literature, as three books (i.e. fictional stories) will be described and analyzed with reference to the historical background and the variables investigated in previous studies mentioned before. First, in order to introduce the books and to give some background information, the plots of each story are summarized at the beginning of each sub-chapter. Afterwards, an analysis of the traditional vs. non-traditional gender roles of the main characters in the stories follows as well as a description of certain roles and portrayals given to secondary characters (for instance other family members). At the very end of this chapter, my findings will be summarized and compared to each other.

With regard to the analysis of gender roles in the stories, I will concentrate on the aspects of physical and psychological attributes (e.g. strong and dominant versus sweet, nice and beautiful), activities/hobbies (e.g. adventurous and active versus nurturing and passive), the gender of main characters, emotions and occupations (e.g. of parents etc., if present), since these were the most prominent features investigated in the previous studies mentioned in chapter 3.

The chapter will begin with two children's books and end with one book aimed at young adults. Since the books will be analyzed in a chronological order, the oldest story, *The Secret Garden* (1912), will be investigated first, followed by *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) and the adolescent's book, *The Fault in our Stars* (2012), at the end. This order will help me to eventually compare all of the investigated gender roles to each other, including the aspects of time and context of the stories' publication.

4.1. "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1912)

The Secret Garden is a children's fantasy story, written by the English author Frances H. Burnett, and was first published in 1911 in the United Kingdom.

4.1.1. Plot

The beginning of the story of *The Secret Garden* is set in India, where Mary Lennox, a 10 year old spoiled girl, is living. As her English parents do not have the time and interest to raise their daughter the common way, they hire servants to take care of her upbringing. Since her parents can afford good servants, Mary is used to being treated in the best way, to getting dressed and fed every day and to being allowed to

do anything she wants to do. Suddenly, the cholera epidemic spreads through India and everyone in Mary's surroundings, including her parents, dies. Mary survives, but is left alone in a lonely room, until she is found a few days later. After some time, she is then brought to Yorkshire, England, to live with her wealthy uncle and guardian, Mr. Craven, and his servants in his home called the "Misselthwaite Manor".

She is picked up by Mr. Craven's servant, Mrs. Medlock, who brings her to her new home. On their way, Mary hears that it is a huge estate with over one hundred rooms and several gardens which make up an enormous green area. However, she is not allowed to use all of it and is told not to wander about, but to stay in her room and keep quiet. Another servant called Martha keeps looking after her and takes care of her meals and clothes. Martha is a younger servant, with a strong Yorkshire dialect, who does not mince matters and says what she thinks. As she expected Mary to be a black native, Mary takes offence and feels disrespectfully treated, since her servants in India always treated her like majesty and never dared to say anything against her. Despite this misunderstanding, Mary soon befriends Martha, who tells her the story of Mr. Craven's dead wife and the secret garden. It is said that Mr. Craven and his wife used to spend a lot of time together in this garden, but as one day his wife fell down a tree and died, the garden was locked up and the key hidden.

Mary, curious as she is, soon decides to visit the gardens and find the secret garden. In the gardens, she sees a robin sitting in one garden behind walls without a door. Also the gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, tells her that there is no door to that part of the gardens. Nevertheless, she is determined to look for the door and as the robin leads her to the place where the key is buried in the ground, she is also able to find an old wooden door completely covered with ivy. It is the entrance to the secret garden, which has been locked up for over ten years. In it, everything is overgrown and most of the plants are already dead. Mary decides to re-landscape parts of it and removes some dead plants and grass.

During her time with Mary, Martha tells the girl about her family, including her brother Dickon, who knows a lot about plants, flowers and gardening. Since Mary would like to plant new things in the garden, she is delighted when Dickon brings her garden tools and seeds. She tells Dickon her secret about the locked up garden and together they re-landscape it with new flowers and seeds.

Back in the house, Mary is brought to Mr. Craven, who she has never met before and who wants to see her. Although he is known as a "miserable hunchback" who does not care about anyone but himself, he suddenly seems to be a polite and caring man who wants to know if she has everything she needs. She only asks for a little bit of earth to plant things into, which he permits without even asking further questions. Throughout the rest of the story he is mostly spending time abroad and therefore not mentioned very often until the end of the book.

In her room, Mary suddenly hears somebody crying somewhere in the hallway. None of the servants is allowed to speak about the source of the cries, so she is told that it

is the wind. Since Mary hears these cries over and over again, she does not believe them and goes wandering about the house, although she was forbidden to do so. Soon, she finds a little boy lying in his bed, crying. He is Mr. Craven's ten year old son, Colin, who is thought to be deathly ill and kept lonely in his bedroom. Since he is a very thin and weak child, he needs to take a wheelchair to go somewhere, but spends most of his time in bed, while his servants were told to fulfil all his needs. His father, however, does not want to see his son because he would remind him of his dead wife, which is why Colin is crying desperately.

As Mary and Colin get to meet each other – secretly at first – they soon become friends. Since Colin himself believes that he will die soon, he is convinced that his back is beginning to form a hunch. Mary, however, soon realizes that Colin is not deathly ill, but he, all the servants and Dr. Craven, his doctor, who is interested in inheriting the Manor, talk him into believing it. She examines his body, without finding anything unusual, and tries to convince him that he is healthy, if he only believes it. Although Colin and Mary have some arguments because she is not willing to follow all his stubborn demands and Colin is somehow jealous of Dickon, Mary always comes back to talk to him and tell him about Dickon and the garden.

After some time, Mrs. Medlock finds out that the children are meeting each other secretly and tries to keep them apart – without success. Colin orders his servants to let her come to his room whenever he says so. As Colin enjoys Mary's visits, he soon gets better and a more cheerful and winsome boy, which also pleases the servants, who are already tired of his cries and tantrums.

To cheer him up, Dickon and Mary start taking Colin to the secret garden in his wheelchair. Together they play around and spend a lot of time together in the gardens. Suddenly, the gardener sees them and gets furious about their breaking into the secret garden. When he sees Colin, he recognizes him as the "cripple". Colin will not accept being called a cripple and carefully stands up from his wheelchair with the help of Dickon. Very slowly and unsteadily at first, since his legs are weak from lying in bed, but every day, his legs become stronger and he can soon manage to walk and run around with his two new friends. First, they want to keep Colin's recovery a secret in order to surprise his father, Mr. Craven, when he comes back home from a trip abroad.

However, Dickon's mother, Mrs. Sowerby, knows about Colin's recovery and sends a letter to Mr. Craven, telling him to come home and see his son. On his trip, Mr. Craven also has a dream in which his beloved wife tells him to get back soon and see his son in the secret garden. Although he does not know what this is all about, Mr. Craven immediately returns to the Misselthwaite Manor to find his son. As he quickly starts out for the gardens, he finds the three children together in the supposedly locked up secret garden. He is overwhelmed as he sees his healthy looking and walking son who does not look deathly ill anymore. Colin is delighted to see his father, and leads him around to tell him all the stories that have happened so

far. As they get back to the house, all the servants become privy to the surprisingly reconciled father and son and Colin's recovery.

4.1.2. Main characters and their gender roles

As *The Secret Garden* revolves around the stories of Mary and her new life in Yorkshire, Dickon and Colin, I will regard these three characters as the central roles in my analysis of portrayed gender roles.

The most frequently present character in the book is Mary, the 10 year old spoiled daughter of two wealthy English parents living in India. Since she has never received love or caring from her own parents, she has been growing up with servants who "always obey[ed] her and g[a]ve her her own way in everything" (*The Secret Garden* 8). Thus, she is used to playing the dominant part and giving others commands without showing much respect. One day, when another woman than her Ayah appears, Mary will not let her stay and even becomes aggressive and abusive, as the quotes below demonstrate. Basically, these traits, such as commanding other people, rudeness, aggressiveness and dominance, are very unusual for a female character and are typically more represented amongst males in children's stories, as shown in Chapter 3. Therefore, her person is somehow described with a masculine touch.

"Why did you come?" she said to the strange woman.

"I will not let you stay. Send my Ayah to me."

The woman looked frightened, but she only stammered that the Ayah could not come and when Mary threw herself into a passion and beat and kicked her, she looked only more frightened and repeated that it was not possible for the Ayah to come [...]. (8)

"Pig! Pig! Daughter of Pigs" she said, because to call a native a pig is the worst insult of all. (9)

When her parents and all the servants die, she is left alone in her house and forgotten by everyone. Nevertheless, she does not cry, nor show any signs of sadness or sorrow, which lets her character appear strong, emotionless and without weakness, which is, again, typically connected to male characters, while girls are mostly described as the emotional and weaker gender (see Chapter 3). The only thing she thinks about, is herself:

She did not cry because her nurse had died. She was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for anyone. (11)

She did not miss her [mother] at all, in fact, and she was a self-absorbed child she gave her entire thought to herself, as she had always done. (14)

Also Mrs. Crawford, the woman Mary stays with for a short time before she is taken to Mr. Craven, describes her as being contrary to her mother, who was a pretty

woman with good manners, which females were expected to be and have at this time (see Chapter 2).

“She is such a plain child,” Mrs. Crawford said pityingly, afterward. “And her mother was such a pretty creature. She had a very pretty manner, too, and Mary has the most unattractive ways I ever saw in a child. [...]” (16)

As Mary arrives at Misselthwaite Manor, other female servants are ordered to care for her and her rudeness and commanding goes on. Especially Martha, the young Yorkshire servant, gets to notice Mary’s daintiness and disrespect. The following passages demonstrate how Mary is, on the one hand, not able to keep her temper under control and, on the other hand, needs her servants to get dressed. These character traits – as opposed to the ones mentioned before – make her seem weak and dependent on other people, which are typical traits used for female characters (see e.g. Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; and Priess & Hyde, 2001; Chapter 3 of this thesis).

“Who is going to dress me?” demanded Mary.
[...] “Canna’ tha’ dress thysen!” she said
“No,” answered Mary, quite indignantly. “I never did in my life. My Ayah dressed me, of course.” (31)

“Why doesn’t tha’ put on tha’ own shoes?” she said when Mary quietly held out her foot.
“My Ayah did it,” answered Mary, staring. “It was the custom.” (33)

[...] When I heard you was comin’ from India I thought you was black too.”
“What!” she said. “What! You thought I was a native. You – you daughter of a pig!” (31)

She was such in rage and felt so helpless [...] that she threw herself face downward on the pillows and burst into passionate sobbing. (32)

Other male traits of Mary’s character become visible as she becomes active – for example by disobeying the rules of wandering about the house and gardens, by digging and re-landscaping parts of the secret garden and by using her new skipping rope – instead of being passive and staying inside her room, playing with dolls or reading books, as it is more common for female characters (see e.g. Turner-Bowker, 1996; and Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; in Chapter 3).

Why shouldn’t she go and see how many doors she could count? It would be something to do on this morning when she could not go out. She had never been taught to ask permissions to do things, and she knew nothing at all about authority, so she would not have thought it necessary to ask Mrs. Medlock if she might walk around the house, even if she had seen her. (57)

The skipping rope was a wonderful thing. She counted and skipped, and skipped and counted, until her cheeks were quite red, and she was more interested than she had ever been since she was born. (75)

As far as female education at the beginnings of the 20th century is concerned, it was mentioned in Chapter 2 that its focus was laid on literature, languages and the domestic work, such as cooking, spinning, sewing, taking care of the house and obeying “family’s rules” (see Mihăilă 657-658). In this story, however, Mary did not receive a typical education for girls and, except from reading, she does not command any of these skills, as the quote below shows.

“Can tha’ knit?” she asked.
“No,” answered Mary.
“Can tha’ sew?”
“No.”
“Can tha’ read?”
“Yes.” (55)

On the other hand, however, her physical appearance resembles the body and strength of a typical girl described in children’s stories. Mary has long hair, a thin and petite body and does not have a lot of strength in her arms and legs. Especially the gardener speaks of her as a weak child with “buttermilk” in her veins (75).

Although girls are typically depicted as “sweet”, “pretty”, “beautiful” and “nice” (see Chapter 3), this does not apply to Mary’s looks – at least not at the beginning. Instead, nasty and ugly adjectives are used for her appearance, such as “plain” and “unattractive” (16), “not good-looking” (44), or “with a sour expression” (1). Ben Weatherstaff, who has never seen an “uglier, sourer faced young ‘un” (91), even calls her “th’ little wench from India” (43) or “a young plucked crow” (91), which are highly unpleasant descriptions for a typical young girl.

As the story continues, however, she turns into a pretty little girl, who gains weight every day and whose hair grows thicker and stronger, which makes her more feminine than she was before. Moreover, she does not only gain strength in her arms and legs, but also in the way she treats Colin, who believes he is going to die. Accordingly, her strength can, on the one hand, be noticed in her convincing Colin of his health, if he would only believe in it, and, on the other hand, in her resistance against his moods and selfish orders. Thus, instead of nursing and caring for the poor little boy, which would be typical for a girl (see e.g. Turner-Bowker, 1996), she rather pushes him out of his bed in a more energetic (instead of a tender) way, and urges him to do something about his bad situation:

“And I am going to die besides.”
“You’re not!” contradicted Mary unsympathetically. He opened his eyes quite wild with indignation. He had never heard such a thing said before. [...]
“I am not?” he cried. “I am! You know I am! Everybody says so.”
“I don’t believe it!” said Mary sourly. “You just say that to make people sorry. I believe you’re proud of it. [...]” (165)

Since nobody else dares to contradict Master Colin’s will, Mary can also be seen as a clever and brave little girl, which is, again, predominately connected to males. One

example of her resistance is, when Colin has another tantrum and she cannot stand his cries anymore:

“You stop!” she almost shouted. “You stop! I hate you! Everybody hates you! I wish everybody would run out of the house and let you scream yourself to death! You will scream yourself to death in a minute, and I wish you would!” (171)

“If you scream another scream,” she said, “I’ll scream too – and I can scream louder than you can, and I’ll frighten you!” (171)

As she finds the secret garden, which is completely untended and overgrown, she decides to re-landscape parts of it, but has no notion of gardening and planting things. Thus, she is depicted as being unknowing, incompetent and dependent on Dickon (i.e. an older male), who teaches her how to use gardening tools and how to let new plants grow. This part of the story is the only one that confirms the argument by Kortenhuis & Demarest (1992; see Chapter 3) that female characters tend to need the help of older males in order to solve a problem, which, in this case, is re-landscaping the overgrown garden. Another typical female trait that can be found with regard to her gardening, which is her nurturance, since she tends the garden and all the plants in a very careful and loving way. On the other hand, however, Mary can also be seen as the one helping others to solve their problems, as already mentioned above. Accordingly, Mary helps Colin to win back his optimism and vitality, which, in turn, contradicts Kortenhuis & Demarests description of the dependent female.

At this point, Parsons compares Mary’s character to the Prince in the fairytale of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Just as the Prince cuts his way through the rose bushes to the castle, Mary pushes away the ivy to enter the secret garden. And just as the Prince enters the castle and searches for his sleeping beauty, Mary wanders about the many hallways of the manor, to find crying Colin (Parsons 255-256). This again gives Mary the male attributes of being active, brave and determined to find what she is looking for.

Towards the end of the story, Mary has indeed undergone a great deal of changes with regard to both female and male features: from the unattractive, passive, rude and spoiled child to a more respectful, pretty and helpful (i.e. female), as well as a strong and active (which is rather seen as male) young girl.

Compared to Mary, Master Colin can be seen as her male equivalence. He as well is a spoiled and bad-tempered child who has never received love from his father, and has spent all his lifetime in his bedroom, raised by servants. Thus, similar to Mary, he is portrayed as a self-centered, physically not attractive (i.e. thin, sharp faced, pale, with too big eyes), weak, passive, unable to control his emotions, dogmatic and disrespectful child with no other social contacts than his servants. In general, he shares both male and female characteristics as will be demonstrated in the following quotes and examples. On the one hand, he is a lonely and passive child who is dependent on others and shows weakness (physically as well as mentally and

emotionally) on several occasions, which is typically attributed to female characters. On the other hand, his dominance and authority, aggressiveness and rudeness towards Mary and his servants, give his character also typical masculine character traits (see e.g. Priess & Hyde 104).

To go into more detail, he is believed to be ill and to die soon, which is why he does not receive any love and is left alone and passive in his room without a chance to have friends over or talk to someone else than his servants. His father, Mr. Craven, does not want to see Colin because he would remind him of his beloved dead wife, and cannot stand the thought that his son will become the same hunchback as he is.

“Because I am like this always, ill and having to lie down. My father won’t let people talk me over either. The servants are not allowed to speak about me. If I live I may be a hunchback, but I shan’t live. My father hates to think I may be like him.” (124-125)

Without any contact to the outer world, Colin has never learned to show respect, patience or good manners, and, as the deathly ill Master’s son, he takes the services of others for granted, without showing any signs of gratitude. Thus, all these circumstances certainly contributed to Colin’s selfish, rude and disrespectful attributes that he displays:

He could have anything he asked for and was never made to do anything he did not like to do.

“Everyone is obliged to do what pleases me,” he said indifferently. “It makes me ill to be angry. No one believes I shall live to grow up.” (127)

Mary had known that she herself had been spoiled, but she could see quite plainly that this mysterious boy had been. He thought that the whole world belonged to him. How peculiar he was and how coolly he spoke of not living. (128)

His weakness and dependence on others becomes clear when he does not get up from bed because Mary does not show up in his room, as demonstrated in the following quote. As she was working in the garden with Dickon, Colin immediately becomes petulant and jealous of Dickon, which implies that, here, not the girl is the dependent one, as usual, but the boy, who is dependent on Mary and her visits to feel better and who is afraid that he might have to share her with the other boy.

“Why didn’t you get up?” she said.

“I did get up this morning when I thought you were coming,” he answered, without looking at her. “I made them put me back in bed this afternoon. My back ached and my head ached and I was tired. Why didn’t you come?”

“I was working in the garden with Dickon,” said Mary.

Colin frowned and condescended to look at her.

“I won’t let that boy come here if you go and stay with him instead of coming and talk to me,” he said. (163-164)

Other signs of Colin’s weakness are his uncontrolled emotions and tantrums. The classification of boys/men as the emotionless and tough characters (see e.g. Priess & Hyde 104; Turner-Bowker 466; mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis), is

therefore definitely not confirmed in this story. However, Moore & Mae's argument (qtd. in Turner-Bowker 466) that males are "less able to deal with their feelings", is demonstrated here by Colin's tantrums. Additionally, as Colin repeatedly shows such conniptions (i.e. hysteria), he "subverts the stereotypical role of women during the nineteenth century" (Parsons 262). Thus, his tantrums can be perceived as a weak female characteristic, since hysteria was said to be common amongst women two centuries ago.

Also in the passage below, when Colin mentions the broken branch of the tree in the secret garden, Mary and Dickon do not dare to tell him that this was the way his mother died because they fear another emotional breakdown.

"It looks as if a big branch had been broken off," said Colin. "I wonder how it was done."

[...]

For both she and Dickon had been afraid Colin might ask something about the tree whose branch had broken off ten years ago, and they had talked it over together and Dickon had stood and rubbed his head in a troubled way.

"We mun look as if it wasn't no different from the other trees," he had said. "We couldn't never tell him how it broke, poor lad. [...]" (209-210)

However, as the days pass with Mary and Dickon on his side, Colin gets stronger, more active and full of the joys of life. Here, just as Mary needs Dickon's help to work in the garden, Colin needs the help of Mary and Dickon to get out of his room, to have fun, and to start walking on his own. Especially when he is called a cripple by Ben Weatherstaff, he turns his anger into strength and, again, with the help of Dickon (i.e. an older male) is able to stand up from his wheelchair (see quoted passage below). Once more, this suggests that not only girls make up the dependent gender who needs help of an older male to solve a problem, as it was suggested by Kortenhaus & Demarest (1993; see Chapter 3). In this case, Colin is dependent on the help of Mary and especially Dickon, in order to gain back his strength.

There was a brief fierce scramble, the rugs were tossed onto the ground, Dickon held Colin's arm, the thin legs were out, the thin feet were on the grass. Colin was standing upright – upright – as straight as an arrow and looking strangely tall – his head thrown back and his strange eyes flashing lightning. (216)

Without Mary's and Dickon's help, Colin would have never thought of walking on his own and becoming active again, as described in the quote below. Until then, he perceived himself as weak and passive, as being unaware of the outer world and as not believing in himself and his abilities, which is clearly not the traditional portrayal of a boy. To be more precise, it is the exact opposite of how typical males are presented in society (such as the media) and literature.

So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness and his destination of people who looked at him and reflected hourly on humps and early death, he was a hysterical, half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew

nothing of the sunshine and the spring, and also did not know that he could get well and could stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. (270)

Now, since Colin is able to walk on his own, without being dependent on others anymore, he sees himself as a “real boy” (p. 254), which implies that his view of a typical boy includes strength, independency, power, activity and volition. These characteristics are usually also used for male characters in other children’s stories, as Turner-Bowker (1996) claims in her paper (see Chapter 3).

Towards the end of the story, Colin’s love and dependency towards his father becomes also visible. Since his father has never shown interest in his son, Colin felt unloved and not worthy of living. As soon as he is able to walk, however, his pessimism changes. Colin is now desperately longing for his father and his attention, and imagines him seeing his strong, walking and healthy son who is now worth being loved. When this scenario becomes true, Colin and his father are overwhelmed.

Across the lawn came the Master of Misselthwaite, and he looked as many of them had never seen him. And by his side, with his head up in the air and his eyes full of laughter, walked as strongly and steadily as any boy in Yorkshire – Master Colin! (286)

Because Colin does not hide his feelings towards his father, he might be perceived as feminine, since females are the emotional gender, not hiding their feelings. Nevertheless, since all children – regardless of their gender – need their parent’s love to feel secure, I do not regard Colin’s need for love and warmth as a feminine characteristic. On the contrary – in my point of view it only makes him seem human and natural.

To summarize Colin’s development in the story, it can be said that it begins with a spoiled, weak, hysterical and passive (i.e. feminine) child, who over the course of the story, changes into a strong, active and confident “real boy” and ascends to manhood.

Last but not least, Dickon makes up the third one of the children and is therefore the last central character I will analyze in this chapter. Basically, Dickon is depicted as the competent, strong, clever capable, active – and therefore clearly masculine - one of the three children from the beginning of the story. Accordingly, he represents any other characteristics than passivity, shyness, or dependency, which are typically connected to female characters (see e.g. Turner-Bowker, 1996 and Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). It seems that there is almost nothing that Dickon does not know about, no matter if it is gardening, animals, making music, “speak[ing] robin to a robin” (p. 251) or helping others. Some of his many competences and abilities can be realized easily in the following quotes:

He was very strong and clever with his knife and knew how to cut the dry and dead wood away, and could tell when an unpromising bought or twig had still green life in it. (104)

Dickon took his spade and dug the hole deeper and wider than a new digger with thin white hands could make it. (222)

“He is not like anyone else in the world. He can charm foxes and squirrels and birds just as the natives in India charm snakes. He plays a very soft tune on a pipe and they come and listen.” (141)

Additionally, as Mary’s interest in planting and re-landscaping the garden increases, she needs Dickon’s help, who seems to be an expert in this area, as suggested in the quote above. Therefore, the idea of the male character who is typically “competent and achievement oriented”, compared to girls as “less competent in their ability to accomplish things” (Kortenhaus & Demarest 220f.) is definitely conveyed at this point here. Accordingly, Dickon is the competent boy who has to help Mary in order to “accomplish things”, as demonstrated below:

“There’s a lot of work to do here!” he said once, looking about quite exultantly.
“Will you come again and help me to do it?” Mary *begged* [emphasis added]. “I’m sure I can help, too. [...] Oh! Do come, Dickon!” (106)

Although gardening (i.e. a “garden tender”) is classified as a typical female activity according to Turner-Bowker (p. 464; see Chapter 3), it is only carried out by male characters in the story of *The Secret Garden*, at least for the most part of the time. However, their type of gardening, which includes for example digging holes, requires physical strength, which explains why it is carried out by men. Thus, Ben Weatherstaff is in charge of the gardens and also Dickon knows how to work with garden tools and has a great knowledge about planting things, and is mostly involved in the re-landscaping of the secret garden.

As far as his physical appearance and looks are concerned, Dickon is not described as being handsome, with his “nose turned up” and cheeks “red as poppies” and “round eyes” (96), but indeed as being physically strong and exercising, as in the following quote, which constitutes a traditional character trait of males:

Dickon stood up on the grass and slowly went through a carefully practical but simple series of muscle exercises. Colin watched them with widening eyes. (247)

Apart from his physical strength, he is equipped with perfect health and toughness. For instance, he is able to spend time outside in the rain without catching a cold, as demonstrated here:

[...] I get out on th’ moor many a day when it’s rainy [...]
“Do you never catch a cold?” enquired Mary, gazing at him wonderingly. [...]
“Not me,” he said, grinning. “I never ketched cold since I was born. I wasn’t brought up nesh enough. [...] I’m as tough as a white-thorn knobstick.” (106)

With respect to the motto “boys do, girls are” (Key qtd. in Kortenhaus & Demarest 221; see Chapter 3), it can be argued that in this story, Dickon corresponds to the

boy and Colin to the girl. Accordingly, Dickon is the active one who *does* things, while Colin *is* the passive one who lets others do his things for him. Mary, however, can be seen somewhere in the middle, since at first, she also lets things be done for her (e.g. dressing), but then becomes more instrumental and active, such as Dickon, over time.

Besides all his masculine character traits, Dickon also represents a little bit of femininity throughout the story. Firstly, Mary describes him with adjectives such as “beautiful” (111), “nice” (106), “very clean” (96), and “walking about very softly” (102), which are typically connected to femininity. Moreover, he is supportive, helping others (even the animals) and is rather need oriented than justice oriented, which is again a female characteristic, according to Tetenbaum & Pearson (1989; see Chapter 3). Thus, he is sharing food and drink with others, although he and his family do not have much themselves:

“[...] If they’re thirsty give ‘em a drink, and if they’re hungry give ‘em a bit o’ food. They want to live same as we do. If they died I should feel as if I’d been a bad lad and somehow treated them heartless.” (238)

Last but not least, Mary once calls him an “angel” and imagines him as “a sort of *wood fairy* who might be gone when she came into the garden again [emphasis added]” (110). Since it is women who are normally represented as different kinds of fairies in children’s stories (Turner-Bowker 464), the author might have used this description to let Dickon’s usually masculine character appear more feminine by watching over others. Additionally, he represents a “mother figure” throughout the story (Foster & Simons 186), since he rescues and takes care of several animals (e.g. a fox, a crow and a lamb), is protective and tender, and makes things grow in magical ways (Parsons 263). The plants and animals could be seen as his “children” that he “raises” and cares about.

To sum up, Foster and Simons get to the point that in *The Secret Garden* both boys “tend to subvert gendered norms; [...] are non-aggressive, non-confrontational and non-competitive; they are gentle in manner and prepared to absorb themselves in home-loving activities, such as gardening and story-telling” (Foster & Simons 174). Mary on the other side, develops both female (e.g. beauty) and male (e.g. strength and activity) traits over the course of the story.

4.1.3. Other female/male gender roles

Not all secondary characters of the story will be analyzed regarding their representation, and only selected characteristics of gender roles which I regard as noteworthy in the story will be discussed in this sub-chapter. These will include the

characters of Mary's mother, Mr. Craven, the servants Mrs. Medlock and Martha, and Mrs. Sowerby.

To start with Mrs. Lennox, Mary's mother, the reader can clearly notice a non-traditional behavior of a mother from the beginning on. Accordingly, instead of staying at home and caring, loving and tending (for) her daughter, Mrs. Lennox is described as a "great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people" (7). Although the traditional mother role of the 19th and 20th centuries was a stay-at-home mother who was predominately in charge of raising and nurturing the children of the family, this is not the case in this story. Some "privileged women", however, who were married to wealthy and/or well-paid husbands, were able to hire maids and leave household chores and family care to "less privileged women" (see Priess & Hyde 105; Chapter 2). This habit can be recognized with regard to Mary's mother, who never wanted to have and raise a child, and therefore hires a servant to take over her "job":

She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. (7)

Although women have generally always been regarded as the caring, sensitive, emotional, dependent, passive and "soft" gender, these character traits do definitely not apply to Mrs. Lennox. Instead, she is portrayed as an independent and beautiful young woman who does not care about anyone but herself and spends most of the time outside the home. Besides this traditional idea of the caring female, however, another stereotype exists in some children's stories - namely the one of the "bad" or selfish woman, mostly portrayed as the wicked stepmother or the witch. Thus, Mrs. Lennox does not share a single characteristic of the traditional (loving) mother, but indeed displays the ones associated with the counter stereotype (although she is actually no stepmother or witch).

However, as far as passivity is concerned, she can be seen as passive and idle with respect to "not taking part" in Mary's upbringing:

So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also. (7-8)

The only typical female trait that can be noticed with regard to Mrs. Lennox' description, is her beauty. Since she is presented as "a tall, slim, pretty person" with "a delicate little nose", hair "like curly silk" and "large laughing eyes", who "wore such lovely clothes" (9), she fulfils the aim of women's education during the 19th century, which was to know how to show beauty and attractivity, according to Mihăilă (p. 657; see Chapter 2).

In contrast to Mrs. Lennox, traditional female gender roles, regarding for example household chores and child care, can be found in Mrs. Medlock's and Martha's

characters. Both of them are servants in the Manor; they are hired to take care of Mary and Colin (e.g. feed and dress them) and to keep order and tidiness in the house. Thus, both are restricted to traditional female duties in the house. Moreover, they are dependent on a man, Mr. Craven, and his payment, which again was common in the 19th (and beginnings of the 20th) century, and in other children's books, such as *Five on a Treasure Island*, as will be shown in the following sub-chapter.

After reading Chapter 2 – which says that married women were seen as an “anomaly” in the work force during the 19th and beginnings of the 20th centuries, since they were restricted to childcare and work inside their own home (see Cott, 1994) – one might wonder at the fact that most of the workers in the Manor are female. Nevertheless, this only applied to middle class women, whereas lower class women always had to work in order to provide the family with some additional money. In this book, all of the working women belong to the lower class, which explains their occupations. Additionally, the story takes place during times of war, in which (see Chapter 2) women in general were needed in the work force to keep industrial production and everyday life going. Moreover, being a maid was regarded as a typical female occupation, which also explains why most of the workers in the Manor (which are maids) are female.

Although Mrs. Medlock and Martha are the ones to take over Mrs. Lennox's duties of childcare and are told to provide sustenance for Mary and Colin, there is no trace of a loving atmosphere or any warmth in the handling/contact of these characters. Instead, Mrs. Medlock's contact to Mary simply consists of commands and reprimands in a strict and serious tone. Comparable to Mrs. Lennox, Mrs. Medlock also does not show any interest in caring for that child, as suggested in the following quote. This attitude lets her character seem emotionless and careless – features which are not supposed to be displayed by a traditional female.

Mrs. Medlock looked pleased. She was relieved to hear that she need not “look after” Mary too much. She had felt her a tiresome charge, and had, indeed, seen as little of her as she dared. (118)

“And you mustn't expect that there will be people to talk to you. You'll have to play about and look after yourself. (22)

Martha, however, builds up rapport over the time, and at least chats with Mary about private matters, such as family affairs, and the secret about the locked up garden, and also teaches her how to use a skipping rope. Although she is seen as a “strange servant” (30) who “talk[s] to [her] masters as if they were [her] equals” (29), and sometimes makes inappropriate remarks (for example expecting Mary to be black), she knows and represents traditional expectations of a young woman. Accordingly, she is astonished at Mary's rude and aggressive behaviour, as shown below, and her inability to knit and sew, since these habits are not regarded as usual for girls.

“Who are you callin’ names?” she said. “You needn’t be so vexed. That’s not th’ way for a young lady to talk. [...]” (31)

Even on her days off, Martha helps her mother in the house and confirms the traditional view of women once more:

She was going to walk 5 miles across the moor to the cottage, and she was going to help her mother with the washing and do the week’s baking and enjoy herself thoroughly. (65)

In the evening they had all sat round the fire, and Martha and her mother had sewed patches on torn clothes and mended stockings and Martha had told them about the little girl who had come from India [...]. (71)

With regard to traditional male roles, on the other hand, Mr. Craven has to be mentioned here, since he is a character who displays most of the typical traits associated with men: a dominant man who has the say in the house and is in charge of everyone (who can be compared to a traditional family father of the 19th century, see Chapter 2). Therefore, all his servants follow his will and “never even dar[e] to ask a question” (19) due to their dependency on him and his payment. Furthermore, he is described as a grumpy “hunchback” who does not show any other emotions and who is not able to deal with his grief about the death of his beloved wife. This aspect is also typically found in male characters (see Moore & Mae, qtd. in Turner-Bowker 466), and is demonstrated below:

[...] [H]e was a man who for ten years had kept his mind filled with dark and heart-broken thinking. He had not been courageous; he had never tried to put any other thoughts in the place of the dark ones. [...] A terrible sorrow had fallen upon him when he had been happy and he had let his soul fill itself with blackness and had refused obstinately to allow any rift of light to pierce through. (271)

This inability to deal with his feelings makes him the way he is: “horrid” (16), “cross” (16) and “unpleasant” (23). Even his own son has to go without his father’s love, since Mr. Craven is not able to look at Colin and his resemblance to his beautiful but dead mother:

During those years he had only wished to forget him [Colin]. [...] He remembered the black days when he had raved like a madman because the child was alive and the mother was dead. He had refused to see it, and when he had gone to look at it at last it had been such a weak wretched thing that everyone had been sure it would die in a few days. [...] He had not meant to be a bad father, but he had not felt like a father at all. He had supplied doctors and nurses and luxuries, but he had shrunk from the mere thought of the boy and had buried himself in his own misery. The first time [...] the small miserable looking thing languidly and indifferently lifted to his face the great grey eyes with black lashes round them, *so like and yet so horribly unlike the happy eyes he had adored, he could not bear the sight of them* and turned away pale as death [emphasis added]. (276-277)

Not only due to his despair, but also because of his work and traveling, Mr. Craven is hardly ever seen in the house. When he is at home, he mostly shuts himself up and is known not to be very communicative or interested in others. Being all on his own, working, which is what men were usually supposed to do at that time, he even forgets his new house resident, Mary, although he is her guardian and supposed to care for her:

“I forgot you,” he said. “How could I remember you? I indented to send you a governess or a nurse or someone of that sort, but I forgot.” (115)

Moreover, he does not know anything about childcare, which again was not unusual amongst men, since raising children was not their duty. On the other hand, however, this lack of knowledge also makes him the dependent and incompetent one who needs other women’s (especially Mrs. Sowerby’s) advice and help:

He looked as if the sight of her worried and fretted him and as if he did not know what in the world to do with her. (115)

“I don’t know anything about children, but Mrs. Medlock is to see that you have all you need. I sent for you today because Mrs. Sowerby said I ought to see you. [...] She thought you needed fresh air and freedom and running about.” (116-117)

Nevertheless, he at least wants to make sure that Mary is well and in good hands, and has everything she needs. This aspect makes him seem at least a little bit more caring.

“Are you well?” he asked.
“Yes,” answered Mary.
“Do they take good care of you?”
“Yes.”

“[...] I am your guardian, though I am a poor one for any child. I cannot give you time or attention. I am too ill, and wretched and distracted; but I wish you to be happy and comfortable. [...]” (116)

The last traditional gender role amongst the secondary characters I want to mention at this point, is Mrs. Sowerby’s role in the story. Throughout the book, the reader receives the information that she is mother of twelve children, wise, loving, caring and supporting her children in every possible way, which gives the impression of typical female and motherly traits. Since she is additionally a stay-at-home mother, doing the household chores, nurturing and educating her children into respectful and capable human beings, she definitely meets the characteristics of the traditional female gender role of the 19th and beginnings of the 20th centuries (see e.g. Cott, 1992, 1994; Mihăilă, 2012; Chapter 2).

In addition to raising her own bunch of children, Mrs. Sowerby knows what Mary needs, sends her a skipping rope and gives Mr. Craven advice on how to deal with

Mary and Colin (e.g. her letter to him), as shown in the quote below - even though she is not their mother, nor has she ever seen the two.

"[...] She [Mrs. Sowerby] says, 'Nothin' will do her [Mary] more good than skippin' rope. It's th' sensiblest toy a child can have. Let her play out in th' fresh air skippin' and' it'll stretch her legs an' arms an' give her some strength in 'em.'" (74)

"[...] I sent for you today because Mrs. Sowerby said I ought to see you. [...] She thought you needed fresh air and freedom and running about." (117)

Also regarding Colin, Mrs. Sowerby knows how he feels and that he needs his father. As soon as she hears of Colin's recovery, she writes a letter to Mr. Craven, telling him to come back from his trip to see his son:

"[...] Please, sir, I would come home if I was you. I think you would be glad to come and – if you will excuse me, sir – I think your lady would ask you to come if she was here. [...]" (276)

Moreover, we know that at least two of her children, Martha and Dickon, were taught good manners, respect and several (gendered) working skills, such as knitting, sewing, baking, or how to use garden tools and planting things. All these aspects suggest that Mrs. Sowerby is a perfect example for an experienced and empathetic (i.e. traditional) mother figure who is highly successful in her upbringing, as summarized in the following quote by Mary:

"She knows all about children," Mary said again in spite of herself. (117)

To conclude my findings of this sub-chapter, it can be noticed that both traditional and non-traditional gender aspects can be found with regard to the secondary characters. On the one hand, women in the Manor have traditional occupations (i.e. being maids who take over the childcare) and skills (such as sewing and cooking), Mr. Craven is depicted as the wealthy and dominant man, who has the say in the Manor, and Mrs. Sowerby also confirms traditional female roles by being a warm, caring and nurturing stay-at-home mother. On the other hand, however, Mrs. Lennox' features do not match the traditional traits of a loving and caring mother, since she is described as being selfish and idle with regard to the upbringing of her own daughter. Although Mrs. Medlock pursues a typically female occupation, it was shown that she does not fit the traditional concept of a motherly figure either – despite her duty to care for Mary and Colin – because her way of handling the children simply consists of commands and reprimands in a strict and serious tone.

4.2. “Five on a Treasure Island” by Enid Blyton (1942)

Five on a Treasure Island is a children’s book published in the time of war and is part of a book series called “*The Famous Five*” by Enid Blyton.

4.2.1. Plot

The book revolves around four children - Georgina, Dick, Anne and Julian – and a dog, named Tim, who spend their holiday together and experience an adventure on a desert island.

The story starts as the siblings Dick, Anne and Julian are planning to visit their cousin Georgina and her parents for a few days during their holidays. The three children are excited to get to know Georgina – who wants to be called “George” – since they have not met her before. As they arrive at her family’s house, “Kirrin Cottage”, Georgina is not there. Although the children are curious about their unknown cousin, Georgina does not seem to be interested in her guests, since she stays away until late at night. The next morning the siblings meet George for the first time and soon realize that she is “different” from other girls, starting with her nick name.

“Do you call her ‘George?’” asked Anne, in surprise. “I thought her name was Georgina.”

“So it is,” said her aunt. “But George hates being a girl, and we have to call her George, as if she were a boy. The naughty girl won’t answer if we call her Georgina.”
(*Five on a Treasure Island* 9-10)

Even George’s parents, Aunt Fanny and Uncle Quentin, warn the three siblings, since she can be difficult sometimes and might seem strange to them at first sight:

“[...] I must tell you, children, you may find George a bit difficult at first – she’s always been one on her own, you know, and at first may not like you being here. But you mustn’t take any notice of that – she’ll be all right in a short time. I was very glad for George’s sake that you were able to come. She badly needs other children to play with.” (9)

“Well, children, I hope you have a good time here, and maybe you will knock a little common-sense into George!” (10)

As Aunt Fanny predicted, George wants to be alone at first, doing her own thing with no one “interfering with [her] life” (14). When Julian tells her that they would like her to spend time with them, George clarifies that she is not interested in becoming friends:

“I didn’t want any of you to come, anyway. I’m quite happy on my own. Now I’ve got to put up with a silly girl who likes frocks and dolls, and two stupid boy-cousins!” (14)

“I don’t make friends with people just because they’re my cousins, or something silly like that. I only make friends with people if I like them.” (17)

Nevertheless, they go to the bay together and start chatting with each other. Soon the three siblings detect a small island with a castle on it in the distance. George introduces it as “Kirrin Island”, which belongs to her, and offers to take them there someday – provided that she likes them. At first, the siblings do not believe George to own an island, but then Julian remembers Aunt Fanny telling them that she is an absolutely truthful girl, and as soon as George explains that her family owned nearly all the land around there, including the island because nobody would buy it, they suddenly believe every word.

One afternoon, George decides to take the three to Kirrin Island. Before they go, she gets Timothy, a dog and secret friend, and together they paddle over to the island in a boat. George’s parents did not want her to keep the dog, which is why she always meets him secretly. As they come close to the island, George stops the boat and tells the others about an old wreck underneath them in the water. Years ago, her great-great-great grandfather wanted to deliver loads of bars of gold to the land, but then the ship sank and nobody knows where the gold is. Together they look into the sea to see the mysterious wreck lying on the bottom of the ocean. Julian and George even dive into the water to come as close as possible.

The island reached, the four children and Tim look around the castle and enjoy the warm afternoon there. Suddenly a strong thunder storm comes up and they hide in a little room until it is over. As they come out again, they see something in the water in front of the island. It is the wreck which was lifted up from the bottom of the sea by the storm. Soon the children decide to secretly explore the wreck in hopes of finding the gold.

On the wreck, the children do not find anything precious, like gold, but suddenly detect a small locked cupboard in the cabin which contains a tiny wooden box, old books and other old “funny objects” which were spoilt by the water. Since the wooden box is locked as well, the children take it with them to open it at home. Back at Kirrin Cottage, Julian throws the box onto the ground and so they manage to open it. At this moment, angry Uncle Quentin, who is trying to work, comes outside and takes away the box. The children are upset and decide to steal it from Quentin’s study. As they open it, they find a map of Kirrin Island with the word “ingots” (which stands for gold) written in the corner. They copy the map, persuade Aunt Fanny to let them stay a day or two on the island, and plan to go on a treasure hunt.

Back on the island, they try to find the way to the dungeons which are to lead them to the bars of gold. Since many years have passed since the map was drawn and the castle is already a ruin, it is difficult to find the entrance of the dungeons. Nevertheless, with Tim’s help they are able to find the dungeons and the chamber containing the hidden gold.

In the meanwhile, a man takes notice of the deserted island and the missing gold and wants to buy the island. Since George's parents desperately need the money, they decide to sell the island to this man, without knowing that the gold is hidden there. As the children find the gold on the island, the man and his accomplice arrive there as well to take the gold. As soon as they notice the children, they lock up George and Julian in the chamber and take away their boat's oars, so that they cannot leave the island and reveal the men's plan to steal the bars. While the men are gone to get a bigger boat, the children work out a plan on how to convict the two thieves. When they come back the children are able to get George and Julian out of the chamber and lock the men into it, while they are getting help. Back at Kirrin Cottage, they divulge their secret to George's parents and ask them for help. Together they can catch the villains and receive all the bars of gold, since the island does not belong to this man yet. From now on, the family has enough money to better make ends meet and Uncle Quentin does not have to worry about providing for his family anymore.

4.2.2. Main characters and their gender roles

The central roles are distributed amongst the four children Anne, George, Dick and Julian, and the dog Timothy, who together make up the "Famous Five". As far as these characters are concerned, a fairly equally distribution of the two genders can be noticed: two female and three (including the dog) male characters. In my analysis, however, I will concentrate on the gender roles regarding the 4 human characters.

To begin with the most striking character of the story, Georgina, is a young girl who does not feel comfortable in her skin as a female. Actually, she hates being a girl and does everything to be perceived as a boy, as it will be shown later on. The fact that George rather wants to be perceived as a boy can have several reasons. On the one hand, George knows that males are the more privileged gender in society, which is accepted to be more active, independent and adventurous than girls. Since she also wants to *do* things, to frolic around and to be active and uncommitted, she decides not to take on female roles, which are normally restricted to obedience, passivity and dependence. Therefore, she finds girly things, such as dolls and frocks, boring and "babyish", as they do not meet her interests of being active, and rebels against everyone who treats her like a typical girl. On the other hand, these countless attempts by George's parents to urge her into roles and behavior that are normally expected of girls, might have caused an even more stubborn and defensive attitude against the female gender by George.

In order to be more like a boy, she wants to be called "George", which is a male name, has short hair (which is typically considered as a masculine feature) and does not show traditional character traits of girls which are held by society. Accordingly, she prefers going outside (alone) to play with her dog Tim instead of playing with

other girls, dolls or helping her mother in the house, as one might expect. This rebellion against her biological gender is demonstrated in the following quotes:

"[...] George hates being a girl and we have to call her George, as if she were a boy. The naughty girl won't answer if we call her Georgina" (10)

[Anne to George:] "I say! Are your Georgina?"

The child in the opposite bed sat up and looked across at Anne. She had very short curly hair, almost as short as a boy's. Her face was burnt a dark-brown with the sun, and her very blue eyes looked as bright as forget-me-nots in her face. But her mouth was rather sulky, and she had a frown like her father's.

"No," she said. "I'm not Georgina."

"Oh!" said Anne, in surprise. "Then who are you?"

"I'm George," said the girl. "I shall only answer if you call me George. I hate being a girl. I won't be. I don't like doing the things girls do. I like doing the things that boys do. [...] You're to call me George. Then I'll speak to you. But I shan't if you don't." (13)

As long as George is treated like a boy, she seems satisfied:

"[...] Anyway, you look like a boy."

"Do I really?" said George, the frown leaving her face for a moment. (13)

"It sounds fine," said Dick. "How does it belong to you Georgina?"

George glared at him and didn't answer.

"Sorry," said Dick, hastily. "I didn't mean to call you Georgina. I meant to call you George." (20)

"Morning, Master George," he said. (46)

Obviously, her mother does not like George's male behavior, since she often calls her a "naughty girl" whenever she acts differently from her mother's expectations. Also her looks do not please her mother's conception of a daughter, as the following passage describes.

"Mother was awfully cross with me when I cut my hair short. I had hair all around my neck; it was awful." (14)

Here, George does everything not to be like a traditional girl (including her looks), whereas her mother would like her to be a "normal" girl (who is typically not wearing short hair), which occasionally causes quarrels between George and her parents.

As already mentioned in the plot summary above, her parents are a little worried that she will never make friends with other children with her behavior, and warn the siblings that she can "difficult" or "rude" sometimes:

"Well, she's a funny little girl," said her aunt. "She can be very rude and haughty – but she's kind a heart, very loyal and absolutely truthful. Once she makes friends with you, she will always be your friend - but she finds it very difficult to indeed to make friends, which is a great pity." (11)

Generally, they want her to behave like a girl and try to lead her in that direction, as implied in the quotes below. Nevertheless, she does not want to be restricted to girly roles, since, as mentioned above, they do not meet her interests.

“Do be sensible, George. [...]” (97)

“Mother and Father are always saying that things are good for me – and *they are always the things I don't like*. [emphasis added]” (42)

In chapter 3 it has been mentioned that typical characteristics used for girls in children's stories are for example “sweet”, “beautiful” and “passive”, which are clearly not used with regard to George. In contrast, she is portrayed as an active, strong, adventurous, fearless and sometimes rude, “naughty”, “haughty” and dominant child, since she predominantly does what she wants to do, no matter what her parents would like her to be – which is usually attributed to male characters. Thus, these character traits clearly contradict the traditional descriptors used for female characters. The following quotes are examples of how George does not do what she is told (shows disrespect), how she is active and strong instead of passive, and how she acts as a brave rescuer – which are usually all associated to boys – in order to decline the restricted roles of the gender she actually belongs to.

“Oh, the naughty girl! I told her to wait in the garden for you,” said her aunt. “Now she's gone off somewhere. [...]” (9)

“I wonder where Georgina is,” said Anne when she said good-night to the boys, and went to her own room. “Isn't she odd – not waiting to welcome us – and not coming in to supper – and not even in yet! After all, she's sleeping in my room – goodness knows what time she'll be in!” (12)

“[...] I can climb better than any boy, and swim faster too. I can sail a boat as well as any fisher-boy on this coast. [...]” (13)

“[...] She can handle a boat like a man.” (45)

Then George clambered up the side of the wreck like a monkey. She was a marvel at climbing. (76)

There was an old iron ladder fastened to the side of the well. George was on it before anyone else could get there! Down she went, not caring if the ladder held or not, and reached Tim. (121-122)

Also the fact that George and Julian are the only ones who dare to go into the dark dungeons to look for the gold, and then try to defend their gold from the men with guns, confirms George's character to be adventurous, active and brave/fearless – i.e. gives her character masculine traits.

Sometimes, however, also “female” traits appear which George obviously feels “ashamed of”, like in the passages below:

Then George did a surprising thing for her. She gave Anne a hug! Then she immediately looked most ashamed of herself, for she felt sure that no boy would have done that! And she always tried to act like a boy. (33)

[Dick to George:] “Bad luck, old girl – I mean, old boy!”
George managed to smile. “I’ve been behaving like a girl,” she said, half ashamed. (105)

Moreover, we have already seen in previous parts of this thesis that boys – especially in children’s fiction – are not supposed to cry, since they are regarded as the stronger gender, in contrast to girls as the emotional gender. This (wrong) belief is also shared by George and confirmed by the following quote, in which Dick is embarrassed of having been a “cry-baby”.

“[...] I cried for days – and I never do cry, you know, because boys don’t and I like to be like a boy.”
“Boys do cry sometimes,” began Anne, looking at Dick, who had been a bit of a cry-baby three or four years back. Dick gave her a sharp nudge, and she said no more. George looked at Anne.
“Boys don’t cry,” she said, obstinately. “Anyway, I’ve never seen one, and I always try not to cry myself. It’s so babyish. [...]” (26)

Although she is pictured as a strong and fearless child, there are two situations in which she has to fight with tears. One time because she was not allowed to keep Tim, and another time due to an argument with her parents. In the latter one, she even enjoys being comforted by Julian. Additionally, she admits at least once that there are indeed things that frighten her, such as the lifted wreck. These instances are described in the following passages:

“[...] I cried for days [...] I just couldn’t help it when Timothy had to go. He cried too.” (26)

He slipped his arm around her. For once George didn’t push it away. She felt comforted. Tears came into her eyes, and she angrily tried to blink them away. (104)

“Let’s go,” she said with a shiver. “I don’t like it much. It *is* exciting, I know – but it’s a bit frightening too.” (79)

Her aversion for being a girl becomes also clearly visible as soon as she mocks at Anne for playing with dolls and frocks and for going to a boarding school for girls. She considers girly things as babyish and, again, the characteristics “rude” and “haughty” are conveyed through her behavior. In the first quote below, Anne does not understand her stand against girls and wants to clarify that she actually has the same gender.

“Pooh! Fancy bothering about pretty frocks,” said George, in a scornful voice. “And dolls! Well, you *are* a baby, that’s all I can say.”
Anne felt offended. “You’re not very polite,” she said. “You won’t find that my brothers take much notice of you if you act as if you know everything. They’re real boys, not pretend boys, like you.” (14)

“You’d like boarding school,” said Anne. “We all go. It’s fun.”

“No, it isn’t,” said George obstinately. “It must be awful to be one of a crowd, and to have other girls all laughing and yelling around you. I should hate it.” (42)

Since George is living alone with her parents and is not going to a boarding school like other girls, she does not have a lot of contact to other children or peers. Therefore, at the beginning, her only friend is “a big brown mongrel dog with an absurdly long tail and a big wide mouth that really seemed to grin” (23), called Tim. It seems as if he is the only one who can make her happy and smile, which is why she does not want to give up on him, as her parents would like it. Moreover, George is for the first time described with female features (“sunny”, “pretty”) when she is with Tim.

“Timothy is my very greatest friend,” said George. “I couldn’t do without him. But Mother and Father don’t like him, so I have to keep him in secret. [...]” (23)

The little girl [George] smiled, and her face altered at once, and became sunny and pretty. (...)

“I love him awfully,” she said. (25)

As both parents are not pleased with her only friend and would like her to meet other children, they see the siblings’ visit as a great chance for George to socialize and to get in contact with other children. As the following quote suggests, her father hopes that the siblings could take her obstinacy, which is usually not approved for girls, from her:

[Uncle Quentin to the siblings:] “Well, children, I hope you have a good time here, and maybe you will knock a little common sense into George!” (10)

Additionally, we learnt in chapter 3 that, regarding moral orientations, boys rather concentrate on fairness/correctness and try to find a logical solution of moral dilemmas, whereas girls focus more on the needs of others and how to help them (see Tetenbaum & Pearson 391). As far as George is concerned, an orientation towards “justice as a final goal” (Tetenbaum & Pearson 390) can be noticed, since she places great value on fairness, as the following passage implies. This again is typically regarded as a male characteristic (see page 15 of this thesis).

In a few moments he [Julian] was back again, carrying four fat chocolate ice-cream bars. He gave one to Dick, and one to Anne, and then held out one to George. She looked at it longingly, but shook her head.

“No, thanks,” she said. “You know what I just said. I haven’t any money to buy them, so I can’t share mine with you, and I can’t take any from you. It’s mean to take from people if you can’t give even a little back.” (27)

With the days passing by, George’s character takes up more softer and girlish character traits. She begins to enjoy the visit of her cousins and soon she does not want to be alone anymore. She realizes that sharing adventures is much more fun

than experiencing all this on her own, which makes her brighten up and the “boyish rudeness” disappear:

George looked at him and her eyes shone too, as bright as the sea itself. It was the first time she had ever taken anyone to her precious island, and she was enjoying it. (48)

George felt very happy. She had often been to her island before, but always alone except for Tim. She had always vowed that she never, never would take anyone there, because it would spoil her island for her. But it hadn't been spoilt. I had made it much nicer. For the first time George began to understand that sharing pleasures doubles their joy. (67)

Furthermore, she starts to show empathy when she becomes aware of her bad-tempered behaviour and realizes why her parents are mostly so upset with her. In the following quote, she notices that the others make her become what she actually should be like: a “normal”, nice, respectful and cheerful young girl, instead of a stubborn child, who works against her parents that are desperately trying to help her:

“I think I'd have been much nicer if I hadn't been on my own so much,” thought George to herself, as she looked at Julian's bent head. “Talking about things to other people does help a lot. They don't seem so dreadful then; they seem more bearable and ordinary. [...] Mother's a dear, but I understand now why she says I am difficult. I'm different from my cousins – they're easy to understand and everyone likes them. I'm glad they came. They are making me more like I ought to be.” (107)

In contrast to George, Anne is a female character who generally meets the traditional expectations of a young girl. While George refuses to play, behave and be like other girls, Anne accepts her gender and displays typical character traits, such as being fearful, shy, nice, sweet and polite and is not as strong and active as her brothers, as demonstrated in the following passages:

Everyone climbed up to gaze out to sea. They saw a great tumbled, heaving mass of grey-green water, with waves rearing up everywhere. Their tops broke over the rocks and they rushed up to the island as if they would gobble it whole. Anne slipped her arm through Julian's. She felt rather small and scared. (60)

Then George clambered up the side of the wreck like a monkey. She was a marvel at climbing. Julian and Dick followed her, but Anne had to be helped up. (76)

Everyone took turns at rowing except Anne, who was not strong enough with the oars to row against the tide. (67)

As already mentioned in chapter 3, most stories written for young readers include “passive” female characters. In this case, Anne can also be described as more passive and reserved, regarding the adventurous activities in the story, than the other children:

Anne didn't want to climb down the well even a little way. But Dick pulled her to her feet and hurried her off to the middle of the old courtyard. (148)

“Well,” said Dick, “I’ll try it – but not you, Anne. I’m not going to have you falling down that well. The ladder might be broken half-way down – anything might happen. You must stay up here and I’ll see what I can do.” (153)

As mentioned in chapter 2, schools in the late 19th century predominately taught girls languages, how to behave correctly and how to fulfill women’s duties in the home. Since Anne goes to a boarding school for girls, it is implied that her surroundings expect her to take up good-mannered female traits, such as politeness, and gender roles (e.g. playing with dolls and frocks) that are established by and anchored in the society. Additionally, she obviously learnt to differentiate between being a boy or a girl, as the second quote suggests.

“Did you get told off?” said Anne. “I wouldn’t like to be rude to your father. He looks fierce.” (25)

“Don’t you simply hate being a girl?” asked George.

“No, of course not,” said Anne. “You see – I do like pretty frocks – and I love my dolls – and you can’t do that if you’re a boy.” (14)

Furthermore, during their adventure on the desert island, it is Anne who cares for her brother Dick, as he wounded his cheek in the dungeons. This implies that Anne also takes up the female roles of a “caregiver” and “nurse” (see e.g. Turner-Bowker 464), while the “male” characters Julian and George continue exploring the dark dungeons.

Anne dipped her hanky into the kettle of water and dabbed Dick’s cheek gently. [...] Anne took his hand. She was very upset at the little accident, and although she didn’t want to miss the fun either, she meant to stay with Dick till he felt better. (135)

Since she is the youngest and most naive one of all four children, she sometimes has troubles keeping secrets which easily slip from her tongue, as for example in the passage below. Additionally, this could also be the case because of her honesty and fear of being caught lying, which would contradict her good manners she has been taught. The others, however, cannot believe that it happens several times, and call her an “idiot” or “stupid baby” (32).

“I wasn’t really afraid of the storm,” said Anne. “In fact, I wasn’t really as afraid of it as Ti...”

Everyone knew perfectly well that Anne was going to mention Timothy, and they all interrupted her at one, speaking very loudly. [...]

“Idiot!” said Julian to Anne. “Nearly gave us away twice!”

[...]

“I do think you’ve got a careless tongue.”

“Yes, I have,” said Anne, sorrowfully. (69)

“Where did you get it?” he barked, glaring at poor Anne, who was nearest.

“Out of the wreck,” stammered the little girl, scared.

[...]

Anne burst into tears. “Don’t blame me for telling him we got it from the wreck,” she sobbed. “Please don’t. He glared at me so. I just had to tell him.”

“All right, Baby,” said Julian, putting his arm round Anne. (87)

Moreover, her naivety is also expressed in several passages in which Anne says or asks things that are obviously impossible, such as in the following ones:

“[...] But I just couldn’t help it when Timothy had to go. He cried too.” [...] “Do you mean – he cried real tears?” asked Anne. (26)

He [Tim] leapt into the boat as soon as he saw it, and stood at the stern, his red tongue out, his tail wagging violently.

“I wonder his tail keeps on,” said Anne, looking at it. “One day, Timothy, you’ll wag it right off.” (75)

Furthermore, the idea of girls being the emotional gender (e.g. Priess & Hyde 104) is clearly portrayed with Anne’s character in this story. Thus, she cannot or does not want to hide her emotions, as she shows her joy, fear, sorrow (e.g. see above: “Anne burst into tears” (87)) and excitement on every occasion.

It really wasn’t very long before they were all up in the open air once more, giving Anne hugs, and hearing her exclaim gladly, with tears in her eyes, how pleased she was to see them all again. (159)

Julian put his arm around Anne, who looked a bit doleful. (15-16)

George looked as if she didn’t want to be put with Anne, and classed as a girl. But Anne didn’t wish to sleep alone in her corner, and she looked so beseechingly at George that the bigger girl smiled at her and made no objection. (111)

And then Anne suddenly burst into loud sobs! The excitement had been too much for her and she couldn’t bear to think that her uncle wouldn’t believe that everything was true. (174)

Also her empathy towards other people is visible in the situations below, which supports the belief of sensitive female traits mentioned in the previous chapters.

Anne took George’s hands. “I’m awfully sorry about your island, George,” she said. (105)

“I’m so glad Kirrin Island wasn’t sold, George,” said Anne sleepily. “I’m so glad it still belongs to you.” (183)

Although we do not know many details about her physical appearance – except the fact that she is not as strong as the others – we do know that she is going to a boarding school for girls where each girl has to wear “school tunics”. However, she is not the kind of girl who always likes to put on skirts and dresses - which might be regarded as typical garments for (young) girls, especially more than 50 years ago – and enjoys wearing casual jeans and shorts like her brothers.

[Mother:] “Yes,” she said, “there’s nothing much to get ready for them – just bathing suits and jerseys and jeans. *They all wear the same.*” [emphasis added]

“How lovely it will be to wear jeans again,” said Anne, dancing round. “I’m tired of wearing school tunics. I want to wear shorts, or a bathing suit, and go bathing and climbing with the boys.” (4)

While Anne and George stand in contrast to each other regarding female gender roles, Dick’s character is more comparable to George’s, since both children are not consistent with the traditional views and expectations of girls and boys. As already mentioned above, George challenges the traditional female roles by acting and looking like a boy, whereas Dick, on the other hand, shares certain female features and preferences, such as plush toys instead of cars or bricks.

“You know, I remember a little boy called Dick who put aside one teddy bear, three toy dogs, two toy cats and his old monkey to take down to Polseath one year,” she said. (5)

Another example is the fact that he sometimes cried in front of other people, which is, according to Fox (1993; see page 21 of this thesis), still not accepted in contemporary children’s literature. Therefore, Blyton describes the character as being ashamed of his “weakness”, which confirms the prior statement that boys do not cry or show pain/weakness.

“Boys do cry sometimes,” began Anne, looking at Dick, who had been a bit of a cry-baby three or four years back. Dick gave her a sharp nudge, and she said no more. (26)

This “shame” is also raised at the mentioning of other “female” traits, such as loving plush toys in the quote above:

Then it was Dick’s turn to go red. He changed the subject at once. (5)

As far as his character traits are concerned, Dick sometimes seems to be intimidated by George and her toughness. Especially, when he mistakenly calls her Georgina, which happens more than once, he corrects himself hastily.

“How does it belong to you, Georgina?”
George glared at him and didn’t answer.
“Sorry,” said Dick, hastily. “I didn’t mean to call you Georgina. I meant to call you George.” (20)

“Oh, Georgina – I mean George!” said Dick. (21)

Moreover, there are situations in which Dick feels uncomfortable and frightened, which contradicts the belief that all boys are fearless (see Chapter 3). In the following passage, the children are about to have a meal when Dick is “half-scared” of other people on the island sharing their meal, which additionally makes him seem to be a greedy person.

“Let’s have our dinner!” yelled Dick, who was feeling terribly hungry as usual. [...]

"[...] I wonder how long ago other people had a meal here? I wish I could see them."
"Well, I don't," said Dick, looking round half-scared as if he expected to see the old-time people walk in to share their picnic. (56-57)

Even though he likes to eat a lot, he is "not very big" (p. 155), which is just about the only thing we know about his physical appearance. Although Dick might not be seen as a prototypical masculine character because of his "weak" moments and "female" traits, he also takes up active parts and shows braveness towards the end of the story. For instance, when a big wooden splinter gets stuck in his cheek, he stays calm and pulls it out himself.

"Golly!" said Julian, and he shone his torch on to Dick.
"Can you bear it a moment if I pull the splinter out? It's a big one, and it's still sticking into your poor cheek."
But Dick pulled it out himself. (133)

Especially when he and Anne find out that George and Julian are locked up in the dungeons, he is taking over responsibility and climbing down the narrow and dangerous well to rescue them, while Anne is waiting outside. This definitely attributes activeness, braveness and dexterity to his character, which again supports the argument that boys are the superior, active and brave gender.

"Well," said Dick, "I'll try it – but not you, Anne. I'm not going to have you falling down that well. The ladder might be broken half-way down – anything might happen. You must stay up here and I'll see what I can do." (153)

[Aunt Fanny:] "You might have been killed," she said. "Oh, Dick! What a brave thing to do!" (175)

Although both Anne and Dick participate in the problem solving (i.e. both think about how to rescue George and Julian), it is Dick who actually carries out the rescue. Without his active help, they could not release the two children, since Anne is too weak and scared to climb down the dark well. Therefore, the argument that girls are seen as the dependent part, "needing help to solve a problem" which they usually receive from an older male character (Kortenhaus & Demarest 230, see chapter 3), is definitely reflected in this case.

Moreover, Dick does not only show braveness, but also cleverness at the end of the story, since he is the one who realizes that the letter written by George is meant to be a warning.

"Oooh!" said Anne, her eyes shining. "They've found it. Oh, Dick – are you well enough to come now? Let's hurry."
But Dick did not get up from the rocks. He sat and stared at the note, puzzled.
"What's the matter?" said Anne, impatiently.
"Well, don't you think it's funny that George should suddenly sign herself 'Georgina'?" said Dick, slowly. "You know how she hates being a girl, and having a girl's name. You know how she will never answer if anyone calls her Georgina. And yet in this

note she signs herself by the name she hates. It does seem a bit funny to me. Almost as if it's a kind of a warning that there's something wrong." (145)

Last but not least, the fourth and oldest protagonist in the book is Julian. Throughout the book, he is portrayed with a little bit of everything. On the one hand he is described as an active, adventurous, somehow dominant, clever and strong character (like George) and on the other hand he is also seen as a caring, understanding and supportive child, who does not back off from pleasing his friends, as shown in the following examples. Therefore, he has all the prototypical male characteristics that a male character needs, but also shares a few female traits (see e.g. Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Turner-Bowker, 1996).

Julian put his arm round Anne, who looked a bit doleful. "Cheer up!" he said. "You've got us to stick up for you. Come on down to breakfast." (16)

"Here, let me take the oars for a bit, George, You can't do all the rowing." (36)

Anne slipped her arm through Julian's. She felt rather small and scared. "You're all right, Anne," said Julian, loudly. (60)

"It's only because you are so upset," said Julian. He slipped his arm around her. For once George didn't push it away. She felt comforted. (103-104)

"You're an awfully nice person," said Julian, surprisingly. "You can't help being an only child. They're always a bit odd, you know, unless they're mighty careful. You're a most interesting person, I think." George flushed red again, and felt pleased. (107)

Furthermore, instead of a moral orientation towards justice and fairness, rather an orientation towards the needs of others can be noticed, which is regarded as a female characteristic, according to Tetenbaum & Pearson (1989). Thus, Julian wants to share the siblings' sweets with their cousin, although he knows that she cannot give them anything back.

He gave one [chocolate ice-cream bar] to Dick, and one to Anne, and then held out one to George. She looked at it longingly, but shook her head.

"No, thanks," she said. "[...] I haven't any money to buy them, so I can't share mine with you, and I can't take any from you. It's mean to take from other people if you can't give even a little back."

"You can take from us," said Julian, trying to put the ice into George's brown hand. "We're your cousins." (27)

In my point of view, however, these "female" traits, such as caring and comforting, do not make him any less masculine. On the contrary, they make his character even more sympathetic.

On the other hand, his male traits are expressed through his fearlessness, activities and interests, such as sports (e.g. climbing and swimming) and new adventures (e.g. the old wreck). As far as his physical strength is concerned, he is described as a strong swimmer, diver, climber, oarsman and a thoroughly active child.

The spray flew so high into the air that it wetted Julian as he stood in the centre of the ruined castle. "I really must see what the waves are like," thought the boy. "If the spray flies right over me here, they must be simply enormous!" He made his way out of the castle and climbed up on to part of the ruined wall that had once run all round the castle. He stood there, looking out to the open sea. And what a sight met his eyes! (58)

They all went to play in the other room. Julian turned a table upside down with a crash. "We'll play at wrecks," he said. "This is the wreck. Now we're going to explore it." (70)

Although Julian likes to engage in activities which are typically regarded as "male" activities/hobbies – i.e. where he can be active (e.g. doing sports) – he is once put into a passive role for a short time. Accordingly, instead of playing actively with toys or cars, as one might expect of a boy, he decides to read a book, which is more associated with a "female" activity, due to its passivity (see Priess & Hyde 106). The same applies to Dick in this passage.

Anne went to get one of her dolls to play with. She had managed to bring quite a number after all. *Julian fetched a book.* George took up a beautiful little boat she was carving out of a piece of wood. Dick lay back on a chair and thought of the exciting wreck [emphasis added]. (71)

Moreover, Julian likes to take over the dominant and determinant role of the four children, probably also because he is the oldest one. Therefore, he is often the one, besides George, to make the decisions and to issue commands:

"Now, not a creak on the stairs – not a cough or a giggle!" warned Julian, as they stood together on the landing. (73-74)

Julian told the others what they had planned. "We'll go tomorrow morning," he said. "We'll make out a list of all the things we shall need. Let's begin now." (105)

"Come on! You take the spades, Dick. I'll take the food and drink with George. And Anne can take the little things." (110-111)

"We'd better set to work," said Julian, and he picked up a spade. "Let's clear away these weeds with our spades – scrape them off, look, like this – and then examine every single stone!" (114)

Besides being determinant, dominant and active, Julian definitely shows courage as he offers to sneak into the study and bring back the wooden box containing the map of the hidden gold that Uncle Quentin took away. Thus, he bravely saves their adventure, "even it means a telling off" (p. 87).

He stole to the windows and looked in a little more. One was a little way open and Julian opened it a little more. He saw his uncle lying back in a comfortable armchair, his mouth a little open, his eyes closed, fast asleep! Every time he took a breath, he snored.

“Well, he really does look sound asleep,” thought the boy. “And there’s the box, just behind him, on that table. I’ll risk it. I bet I’ll get an awful telling off if I’m caught, but I can’t help that!” (88-89)

4.2.3. Other female/male gender roles

This sub-chapter focuses on the portrayed roles and traits of the four parents in the story, since they are the most prominent secondary characters in this book.

Concerning the women and men described in the book, several traditional gender roles can be detected. On the one hand, the mothers are responsible for packing the children’s luggage, cooking, baking, preparing snacks, caring for the children and husband, and gardening, whereas, on the other hand, the fathers are in charge of family decisions, driving the car, working and earning money. These traditional gender roles were also found in Turner-Bowker’s study (1996, see Chapter 3 of this thesis) and can be noticed easily in the following passages:

“Oh Daddy, do telephone to Aunt Fanny and ask her if we can go there!” cried Dick. (3)

[...] Oh, goody, goody – when are we going, Daddy?”
“Next week, if Mother can manage it,” said Daddy.
Mother nodded her head. “Yes,” she said, “there’s nothing much to get ready for them – just bathing suits and jerseys and jeans [...]” (4)

“Quentin is working on a very difficult book,” said Aunt Fanny. “But I’ve given him a room all to himself on the other side of the house. So I don’t expect he will be disturbed.” (10)

The smell of bacon and eggs was very good. They ran down the stairs and said good morning to their aunt. She was just bringing the breakfast to the table. Their uncle was sitting at the head, reading his paper. He nodded at the children. (16)

Their aunt went to see if Uncle Quentin wanted any more pie. (32)

“Anyway, I couldn’t come,” went on Aunt Fanny. “I’ve got some gardening to do. [...]” (45)

They went down to breakfast, and George asked her mother if they could take their dinner as they had planned. “Yes,” said her mother. “You and Anne can help to make the sandwiches. [...]” (46)

Aunt Fanny had baked new scones for them, and had made a ginger cake with black treacle. (68)

Moreover, the mothers are presented as being the caring and empathetic gender, who are supplying their children with love and warmth, which also supports the traditional view of women, as described in the Chapters 2 and 3.

She [George] scowled at the three children. "Don't look like that, George," said her mother. "I hope you've made friends already. It will be fun for your to play together. (16)

Their aunt heard them and smiled. "Well, I really must say I'm pleased that George is going to share something with you," she said. (44)

"I know, George dear," said her mother. "But you really must be sensible. It can't hurt the castle to be photographed." (97)

George's father looked amazed and annoyed. He simply didn't believe a word! But his wife saw by the solemn and serious faces of the four children that something important really had happened. (174)

While the siblings' father is rather neutral concerning his character traits, and he and his wife make arrangements with each other, George's father is presented as the determining, dominant part of the family, who has the greatest say. At this point, the fact that the typical family of the mid-20th century was still seen with a dominant father and husband (see e.g. Firestone, 1970 and Cott, 1994; mentioned in Chapter 2), and other family members who all are "his dependents" (Firestone 48), is clearly confirmed. Examples of the father's dominance in the story are given below:

"I'm going fishing," said George.

Her father looked up at once.

"You are not," he said. "You are going to show a few good manners for a change, and take your cousins to the bay. Do you hear me?" (16)

"Any more noise like that and I shall keep you all in tomorrow!" said his uncle Quentin. "Georgina, keep your cousins quiet." (71)

"That's enough, Georgina," said her father, angrily. "Your mother is guided by me. [...]" (102)

Even though Aunt Fanny's family owns Kirrin cottage and the island, Uncle Quentin is the one to make the decisions and to sell the island. Also with regard to their daughter George, Fanny does not make any decisions without asking Quentin beforehand.

"Aunt Fanny, as the weather is so fine, do you think you would let us go for the weekend to Kirrin Castle, please, and spend a day or two there on the island? You can't think how we would love to!"

"Well – what do you think, Quentin?" asked their aunt, turning to her husband. (100)

Moreover, Uncle Quentin is the only one who is working and earning money, since his wife Fanny has no occupation outside of their home. Therefore, Quentin sees himself as responsible for supplying his family with money, but as his job does not bring in a lot of money, he turns into a "bad-tempered" (p. 41) and "fierce" (p. 25) man.

"[...] You see, Daddy doesn't make much money with the learned books he writes, and he's always wanting to give mother and me things he can't afford. So that makes him bad-tempered. He wants to send me away to a good school but he hasn't got the money. [...]" (41-42)

As soon as George's family receives all the bars of gold, Quentin does not have to worry about supporting his family anymore, and his mood lightens up.

"[...] Oh, Father – shall we be rich now?"

"Yes," said her father. "We shall. Rich enough to give you and mother all the things I've longed to give you for so many years and couldn't. I've worked hard enough for you – but it's not the kind of work that brings in a lot of money, and so I've become irritable and bad-tempered. But now you shall have everything you want!" (178)

But Uncle Quentin was quite different now. It seemed as if a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. They were rich now – George could go to a good school – and his wife could have the things he had so much wanted her to have – and he would be able to go on with the work he loved without feeling that he was not earning enough to keep his family in comfort. He beamed round at everyone, looking as jolly a person as anyone could wish! (179-180)

As demonstrated in Chapter 2 of this thesis, this portrayal of a working father and a stay-at-home mother, caring for the house and child(ren), again represents the traditional gender roles of men and women in the late 19th century and beginnings of the 20th century (e.g. Cott, 1992, 1994; Mihăilă, 2012).

Nevertheless, this book was published in 1942 - i.e. during war time - when women were desperately needed in the work force in order to replace their men and to earn money to survive (see Cott, 1994; mentioned in Chapter 2). Thus, the gender roles of the mothers in this story are not consistent with the actual situation at that time, which was also found by Grauerholz and Pescosolido (see Chapter 3), whose study showed that books published in the middle of the 20th century had the highest inequality of working men and women – probably due to "an era when traditional gender roles were valued, and a strong emphasis was placed upon conventional representation of the family" in the aftermath of World War II (Grauerholz and Pescosolido, 123).

To conclude, it can be said that this children's book represents both traditional, as well as non-traditional gender roles of the characters. On the one hand, the parents and Anne clearly approve certain traditional gender roles as they mostly conform to society's expectations of males and females. Accordingly, it is the father who has the say in the family and who is responsible for supplying the family with money, while the mother is in charge of the children and the kitchen. Anne's character displays typical female features, such as shyness, politeness, and physical weakness.

On the other hand, regarding non-traditional gender roles, we saw that George is a good example of how typical and biased attitudes towards girls can be rejected and worked against, since she is not willing to be restricted to certain character traits and

behaviours. Towards the end, however, she realizes that being female is not as bad as she always imagined, becomes a little more feminine (e.g. more polite and respectful towards others) and even agrees to attend a boarding school for girls, which was typical for girls at that time (1940s) – although she detested girl's schools at the beginning. Nevertheless, she does not give up her “male” interests of being active and adventurous.

Julian and Dick can be seen somewhere in the middle, as both show traditional (e.g. being dominant and determining) and non-traditional (e.g. being sympathetic and comforting others) features. Thus, Dick is the brave rescuer who frees George and Julian from the dungeons, but who once was a cry-baby and liked plush toys when he was little. Julian is depicted as some kind of a leading figure, making the decisions and as protecting his sister, but, on the other hand, is also sympathetic and understanding towards the others. However, his female tendencies are not mocked by others – as opposed to Dick's feminine characteristics.

4.3. “*The Fault in Our Stars*” by John Green (2012)

The novel *The Fault in Our Stars* is a contemporary fictional drama and romantic story, written for young adult readers in 2012. This book was chosen for my thesis because, firstly, it is mentioned amongst the Top 100 books for young adults¹, and secondly, it includes several non-traditional gender aspects, which are definitely interesting to have a look at. In 2014, the movie with the same title, based on Green’s novel, was released and received as positive criticism as the novel itself².

4.3.1. *Plot*

The plot of the teenage story revolves around the protagonist Hazel, a 16 year old girl from Indianapolis, and her teenage life with friends and family as a lung cancer sufferer. As she attends Support Group, where several cancer patients meet up to talk, she gets to know Augustus, a former patient and amputee, and Isaac, who is about to lose his eyesight. Both soon become her closest friends throughout the book.

Especially Augustus lays eyes on her and invites her to his place right after their first meeting. As they talk about their lives, experiences with cancer, movies and books, they agree on reading each other’s favorite novel. After reading Hazel’s *An Imperial Affliction* by Peter Van Houten, Augustus is as frustrated as she is, since the story about a girl with cancer ends abruptly, without providing a satisfying ending. Soon Augustus decides to help Hazel to contact the author in order to ask him about the ending. Because Van Houten has never replied to any of Hazel’s letters, her expectations of an answer are not very high. However, as Augustus finds the author’s assistant’s e-mail address, he does not hesitate to write her – and receives an answer that none of them would have expected: Van Houten’s assistant, Lidewij, invites them to his house to talk about the book if they ever happen to be in Amsterdam. Of course, both Gus and Hazel want to accept the invitation and fly to Amsterdam. Augustus still has his “death wish” which he is willing to redeem, and together with his parents he starts to plan their trip. Unfortunately, Hazel’s condition gets worse in the meantime, which leads her doctors and parents to doubt that she can go on this long journey overseas without any problems.

By then, their friend Isaac has already undergone his surgery and lost both his eyes and his girlfriend. He has to adjust to these new circumstances and falls into a depression and self-pity. In order to comfort him, Hazel and Gus come to see him

¹ See e.g. “100 Best-Ever Teen Novels”: <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/07/157795366/your-favorites-100-best-ever-teen-novels>

² See e.g. IMBD: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2582846/>

regularly, play video games for blind people together and help him to take revenge on his girlfriend, who left him behind.

After several discussions with her parents and Dr. Maria, who knows about Hazel's situation in detail, Hazel is eventually allowed to take her chance and go to Amsterdam with Augustus and her mother. In Amsterdam, after checking into their hotel, the teenagers are invited to dinner and champagne at a fancy restaurant. They enjoy the evening, talking and watching people and boats pass by - and fall in love.

The next morning, excited to finally get some answers on the end of *An Imperial Affliction*, Gus and Hazel visit Van Houten at his place, as agreed with Ms. Lidewij. But instead of a nice and genial writer, a grumpy, "potbellied" alcoholic "with thin hair, sagging jowls, and a week-old beard" (*The Fault in Our Stars* 180) opens the door and is surprised to see "two adolescent apparitions" (p. 180) on his doorstep. Unwillingly, he lets them enter and starts with a drink. Contrary to Hazel's and Gus's hopes and expectations, there are no answers to their questions about the book, but a lot of insults and strange comments from Van Houten's side. Disappointed and upset by his rude behavior and rejection of their questions, they decide to leave. Since Lidewij is also clearly ashamed of Van Houten's behavior, she decides to take the two teenagers with her to visit the Anne Frank house.

In the Anne Frank house, Hazel learns her limit while she is climbing countless steep stairs with her oxygen cart. Completely exhausted and out of breath, she has to sit down and rest for a while. As Gus is always by her side, he helps her up and together they watch a short video clip of Anne Frank's father for a little bit, before they start to kiss. Leaving the museum, Gus and Hazel decide to go to Gus's hotel room to get some rest. Hazel sees his amputated leg for the first time and they soon come very close to each other. Hazel is worried about her love for Gus because he has already lost his former girlfriend to cancer, and she does not want him to experience such a loss again. However, at the end of their trip, it turns out that it is Gus who gets worse, since his cancer has relapsed.

Back in America, Gus's health worsens dramatically and he has to spend a few days in hospital. His family, Hazel and Gus himself soon realize that he is getting weaker and weaker and that sooner or later he will die. Therefore, he invites Hazel and Isaac to his pre-funeral at the church in which their Support Group meets, and wants them to read their eulogies on him. Eight days later, Augustus dies in his bed at home. Hazel is devastated, but stays strong and, for the first time, introduces herself as Gus's girlfriend at his funeral, where she reads her eulogy to him again.

At the funeral, she is surprised to see Peter Van Houten, since she expected to never hear from him again. He tries to apologize for his behavior and is willing to talk about his book and what happens afterwards, however, Hazel is still so upset with him that the only thing she wants him to do is to leave.

Nevertheless, she soon learns from Isaac that Gus wrote something before he died that might be for her. As she finds out that his plan was to write a sequel to *An Imperial Affliction* for her, and sent it to Van Houten in order to write a nicely composed eulogy for Hazel, she is astonished. In it, he writes that “you don’t get to choose if you get hurt [...], but you do have some say in who hurts you” (313) and that he is contented with his choice. Hazel agrees.

4.3.2. Main characters and their gender roles

As the dramatic story, which is told from Hazel’s perspective, revolves mainly around her and her life, Hazel can be seen as the protagonist and main character in this novel. Additionally, I will include Augustus as another main character, since his presence makes up a great part in Hazel’s story as well.

To start with Hazel, a 16 year old teenager and cancer sufferer, it can be realized fairly soon that she does not fit into the traditional view of a sick teenage girl that one might have. Thus, she is not described as a depressed, lonely, weak and passive girl, but - contrary to this stereotype, which is often conveyed in stories for young readers – as a strong girl who does not want to give up hope and give in to her weakness caused by her illness.

Instead of falling into a depression and self-pity, her way of dealing with her hard fate is often accompanied by satire, which obviously makes it easier for her to accept her fate. Accordingly, ironical statements and making fun of the illness are not a rarity in her storytelling, as for example in the following three quotes:

Six or seven or ten of us walked/wheeled in, gazed at a decrepit selection of cookies and lemonade, sat down in the Circle of Trust, and listened to Patrick recount for the thousandth time his depressingly miserably life story – how he had cancer in his balls and they thought he was going to die but he didn’t die and now here he is, a full-grown adult in a church basement in the 137th nicest city in America, divorced, addicted to video games, mostly friendless, eking out a meager living by exploiting his concertastic past, slowly working his way toward a master’s degree that will not improve his career prospects, waiting, as we all do, for the sword of Damocles to give him the relief that he escaped [...] those many years ago when cancer took both of his nuts but spared what only the most generous soul would call his life. (5)

[L]ike, I realize that this is irrational, but when they tell you that you have, say, a 20 percent chance of living five years, the math kicks in and you figure that’s one in five ... so you look around and think, as any healthy person would: I gotta outlast four of these bastards. (5)

I didn’t tell him that the diagnosis came three months after I got my first period. Like: Congratulations! You’re a woman. Now die. (24)

Since she does not show her weakness directly, she also uses such ironical comments and thoughts in order to cover her anxiety and anger that comes along with her illness. Another example is the following passage in which she holds back her disappointment from becoming visible, but thinks about the situation in a negative and satirical way.

“Can’t I just get a lung transplant or something?” I asked.

Dr. Maria’s lips shrank into her mouth. “You would not be considered a strong candidate for a transplant, unfortunately,” she said. I understood: No use wasting good lungs on a hopeless case. I nodded, trying not to look like that comment hurt me. (116)

Furthermore, she clearly is a fighter. Despite the fact that her lungs are weakened and Hazel therefore is out of breath quickly whenever she has to exert herself, she still continues being active, for instance taking the stairs instead of the elevator, going for a walk with Augustus and his family or driving the car herself. This fighting becomes visible in the following passages, amongst others:

The walk felt long, but I kept telling my lungs to shut up, that they were strong, that they could do this. (269)

I didn’t want to take the elevator because taking the elevator is a Last Days kind of activity at Support Group, so I took the stairs. (8)

Although her mother gave up work in order to care for her daughter, Hazel is still able to care for herself and fights for at least *some* independence, such as deciding herself what to do, where to go, and when to eat. All these characteristics of not giving up and staying active clearly contradict the traditional view of the weak girl who is passive and dependent on others (primarily males).

These features also make Hazel some kind of role model for some people in her surroundings, as, for example, the girl in Hazel’s Support Group says. Therefore, Trites’ statement that the adolescent protagonist can indeed be fairly “potent”, and can have an impact on the environment and be received as a role model (quoted in Robinson 214; see Chapter 3) can be confirmed in this story.

Although it has already been mentioned that Hazel is not the kind of girl who gives up and lets her disease take over her life, there are, however, a few moments in the book in which she has to rest (due to her weak lungs gasping for breath) or just wants to lie around and watch TV or read a book, which again makes her passive. Although nobody blames her for being tired and lazy sometimes, her mother tries to encourage her to enjoy her life, to go out and meet other people instead of becoming passive, as the following quote suggests. After some arguments, Hazel agrees with her mother and joins the Support Group.

Me: “I refuse to attend Support Group.”

Mom: “One of the symptoms of depression is disinterest in activities.”

Me: “Please just let me watch *America’s Next Top Model*. It’s an activity.”

Mom: "Television is passivity."

Me: "Ugh, Mom, please."

Mom: "Hazel, you're a teenager. You're not a little kid anymore. You need to make friends, get out of the house, and live your life."

[...]

Mom: "Your're going to Support Group."

Me: "UGGGGGGGGGGGGGG."

Mom: "Hazel, you deserve a life." (7)

This implies that her mother still sees her daughter as a "normal" girl who should enjoy her teenage life, despite the fact that she is ill. Nevertheless, the real reason why Hazel wants to stay reclusive is not because of a depression, but because of her fear to hurt other people by dying. Since she describes herself as a "grenade" that someday "is going to blow up" (p. 99) and will not be there anymore, she wants to "minimize the casualties" (99), as stated in the quote below in more detail:

"I'm a grenade," I said again. "I just want to stay away from people and read books and think and be with you guys because there's nothing I can do about hurting you; you're too invested, so just please let me do that, okay? I'm not depressed. I don't need to get out more. And I can't be a regular teenager, because I'm a grenade." (99)

The quote suggests that she is concerned about other people, especially her loved ones, which makes her an empathetic and emotional character, as it is typical for females in children's and young adults' books. Therefore, she attends Support Group and does everything her parents ask her in order to please them, and additionally does not want to fall in love with Augustus, since she would then hurt him by dying sometime soon.

Interestingly enough, it seems that the only thing that upsets Hazel is the pity of other people. Since she sees herself as a "normal" girl, she also expects others to treat her that way instead of seeing her as some kind of a different species. As she states in the quote below, this pity is "the worst part" of her illness:

I could feel everybody watching us, wondering what was wrong with us, and whether it would kill us, and how heroic my mom must be, and everything else. That was the worst part about having cancer, sometimes: The physical evidence of disease separates you from other people. We were irreconcilably other [...]. (144)

Moreover, Hazel is intelligent, well-read and inquisitive, which often leads her to question banal things around her that do not make sense to her. As one example in the novel, the fact that scrambled eggs are restricted to breakfast makes her want to argue about it:

"Like, why don't we have curry for breakfast?" [...]

"I mean, seriously: How did scrambled eggs get stuck with breakfast exclusivity? You can put bacon on a sandwich without anyone freaking out. But the moment your sandwich has an egg, boom, it's a *breakfast* sandwich." (137)

This curiosity and scrutinizing trivial things show that she is a clever girl who has sophisticated thoughts, which could be regarded as rather untypical for (most) teenage girls. Accordingly, “typical” girls of her age would probably rather think about shopping, friends, boys or looks, instead of why the world is as it is and what it is going to be like in the future, as in the following example:

“Our fearlessness shall be our secret weapon,” I said.

“The tales of our exploits will survive as long as the human voice itself,” he said.

“And even after that, when the robots recall human absurdities of sacrifice and compassion, they will remember us.” (202)

However, since both Augustus and Hazel share such sophisticated thoughts and cleverness, which should not be held as a male-only trait, I would describe this characteristic as neutral, regarding gender aspects.

As far as her further interests are concerned, some masculine tendencies can be noticed. First, as Hazel spends most of her time with Gus and Isaac, she does not mind playing brutal video games together or reading Gus’s favourite book *The Price of Dawn*, which is based on such a game. Moreover, she helps them to take revenge on Monica, Isaac’s ex-girlfriend, which some of us might see as a crime. Additionally, she does not always meet the traditional expectations of girls who are supposed to be polite, to use “nice” language, and act like a “lady”, as it is implied by Peter Van Houten, when Hazel and Gus visit him in Amsterdam:

“BULLSHIT! That’s bullshit. Just tell me! Make something up!”

“No, and I’ll thank you not to curse in my house. It isn’t becoming of a lady.” (193)

Lastly, regarding her looks, Hazel obviously does not care a lot about femininity: She has short hair (typically associated to males), does not see her as being beautiful (as traditional girls in books for young readers normally are) due to her thin body and “chipmunked cheeks” (see example below), and she does not wear make-up nor is she concerned about the newest clothes and styles (as it is mostly important for teenage girls). These features can be noticed in the following passage, in which she briefly describes herself:

I was wearing old jeans, which had once been tight but now sagged in weird places, and a yellow T-shirt advertising a band I didn’t even like anymore. Also my hair: I had this pageboy haircut, and I hadn’t even bothered to, like, brush it. Furthermore, I had ridiculously fat chipmunked cheeks, a side effect of treatment. (9)

On the other hand, however, Hazel indeed has some typical female traits and preferences as well, such as watching her favorite show, *America’s Next Top Model*, meeting her best friend for shopping, or wearing a dress when meeting Augustus for the second time and their dinner in Amsterdam. Additionally, she obviously agrees with the idea that males and females are supposed to have different interests, for example watching boy’s movies vs. girl’s movies, as she declares in the following quote. Nevertheless, she is not honest with Gus about her lack of interest in this boy

movie, perhaps in order not to disappoint him at their first meeting outside Support Group.

The movie was about this heroic guy in a mask who died heroically for Natalie Portman, who's pretty badass and very hot and does not have anything approaching my puffy steroid face.

As the credits rolled, he said, "Pretty great, huh?"

"Pretty great," I agreed, although it wasn't really. It was kind of a boy movie. I don't know why boys expect us to like boy movies. We don't expect them to like girl movies. (35)

Besides Hazel, who combines traditional and non-traditional gender aspects in her character, Augustus Waters, her friend and first love, is the second main character in this story. When he is described in the book for the first time, the reader gets the impression of a young, handsome, cool and masculine teenager:

Long and leanly muscular, he dwarfed the molded plastic elementary school chair he was sitting in. Mahogany hair, straight and short. He looked my age, maybe a year older, and he sat with his tailbone against the edge of the chair, his posture aggressively poor, one hand half in a pocket of dark jeans. [...] Look, let me just say it: He was hot. (9)

His voice was low, smoky, and dead sexy. (11)

Although he suffered from osteosarcoma and is a leg-amputee with only one "real" leg, he does not see himself as not normal or incomplete, but still as a very attractive and masculine teenager, who is fully confident of himself:

"Hazel Graze, when you're as charming and physically attractive as myself, it's easy enough to win over people you meet. [...]" (235)

Moreover, he seems to be a strong character, physically and mentally, helps others with their diseases and deal with their weaknesses. Especially when it comes to Isaac, he assists him at Support Group ("[...] I'm just here today at Isaac's request", p. 11) and with overcoming his sadness due to the loss of eye sight and his former girlfriend. But also Hazel enjoys his company and high spirits, which have a positive effect on her as well. As far as she is concerned, he does a lot for her and is always willing to please her. Accordingly, he emails the author (and his assistant) of her favorite book in order to get her the answers she is desperately longing for. Moreover, when he receives Lidewij's invitation, Augustus convinces her of going to Amsterdam and even spends his "wish" on her to provide their trip. This (often selfless) caring and providing help for others might not match the typical characteristics of a traditional male protagonist in children's and young adult literature, however, it makes him a sympathetic character.

As he is always helping others, he does not seem to have any weaknesses or fears (that concern his former illness) himself. Nevertheless, he does have one fear, which is oblivion, as he states in Support Group. He wants people to recognize and know

him and not to forget him once he is dead, but not simply as a boy; he wants to be seen as some kind of hero. This could be the reason why he puts his shoulder to the wheel for other people: He wants them to remember him as a special person, as it is implied in the following quote in which he and Hazel have their dream of “righting wrongs” in the world:

“The tales of our exploits will survive as long as the human voice itself,” he said.
“And even after that, when the robots recall the human absurdities of sacrifice and compassion, they will remember us.” (202)

As soon as a problem or an unpleasant situation comes up, he has his special way of dealing with it. He puts a cigarette between his lips without lighting it, which acts as a metaphor for his power of controlling the situation – as described in the following quote – but can also be seen as a “masculine” pose.

Then Augustus Waters reached into a pocket and pulled out, of all things, a pack of cigarettes. He flipped it open and put a cigarette between his lips.
“Are you serious?” I asked. “You think that’s cool? Oh my God, you ruined *the whole thing*.”
[...]
“They don’t kill you unless you light them,” he said as Mom arrived at the curb. “And I’ve never lit one. It’s a metaphor, see: You put the killing thing right between your teeth, but you don’t give it the power to do its killing.” (19-20)

Although Hazel is the one who actually worries about hurting Gus by being a “grenade”, it is his health condition which worsens dramatically as his cancer suddenly relapses in the last third of the book. Despite his leg prosthesis, he is always portrayed as an attractive, masculine and strong teenage boy – who was a good basketball player in high school (which is regarded a typically male sport) - throughout the story. Even when his body is clearly suffering from the relapsed disease, he keeps his humor and self-confidence concerning his attractive looks:

“Right, it’s primarily his hotness,” I said.
“It can be sort of blinding,” he said.
“It actually did blind your friend Isaac,” I said.
“Terribly tragedy, that. But can I help my own deadly beauty?”
“You cannot.”
“It is my burden, this beautiful face.”
“Not to mention your body.”
“Seriously, don’t even get me started on my hot bod. You don’t want to see me naked, Dave. Seeing me naked actually took Grace’s breath away,” he said, nodding toward the oxygen tank. (251)

Furthermore, he downplays the seriousness of his bad condition and is determined to fight against the disease and to stay strong, as the quotes below show. This determined and obstinate fight can, again, be regarded as a very typical male trait, as was mentioned in Chapter 3.

“I’ll fight it. I’ll fight for you. Don’t you worry about me Hazel Grace. I’m okay. I’ll find a way to hang around and annoy you for a long time.”

I was crying. But even then he was strong, holding me tight so I could see the sinewy muscles of his arms wrapped around me as he said, “I’m sorry. You’ll be okay. It’ll be okay. I promise,” and smiled his crooked smile. (215)

He was still well enough to push his own wheelchair, pulling miniature wheelies to get the front wheels over the bump in the doorway. Still athletic, in spite of it all, blessed with balance and quick reflexes that even the abundant narcotics could not fully mask. (235)

Even as his health is at the worst point, he does not accept passivity or his weakness and still wants to do things himself, as he says in the passage below, in which he wants to get a pack of cigarettes:

“I wanted to buy a pack of cigarettes,” he mumbled. “I lost my pack. Or they took it away from me. I don’t know. They said they’d get me another one, but I wanted... to do it myself. Do one little thing myself.”

Unfortunately, he cannot make it back home without Hazel’s help, who is then coming to pick him up in the middle of the night. When she wants to take him to the hospital, he refuses. Despite his refusal, Hazel calls an ambulance which makes him a “desperate humiliated creature” (p. 245), as she describes it, who is about to lose the fight and give up:

“This is it. I can’t even not smoke anymore.” (245)

“I hate myself I hate myself I hate this I hate this I disgust myself I hate it I hate it I hate it just let me fucking die.” (245)

At the end of the book, Augustus wants to realize his only wish, namely staying in other people’s minds after his death, by writing a sequel for Hazel:

“Sometimes I dream that I’m writing a memoir. A memoir would be just the thing to keep me in the hearts and memories of my adoring public.” (235)

When he dies, he leaves behind mourning parents, a devastated Isaac, a heartbroken Hazel and an apologizing Van Houten, who wants to make it up to him (and Hazel) by attending the funeral. These circumstances and his moving sequel for Hazel suggest that he indeed managed to impress other people and to stay in their minds and hearts – even after his death.

To sum up, both main characters can be regarded as heroes in this book, since they stay strong despite their hard fate and try to help and please others as well as they can. In short, they plan to defend and protect “the weak” ones, although they are in frail health themselves:

“That’s what we should do, Hazel Grace: We should team up and be this disabled vigilante duo roaring though the world, righting wrongs, defending the weak, protecting the endangered. (202)

Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Trites claims that the message of such books usually “highlights the power of the individual to transform his or her world.” (qtd. in Robinson 205). Thus, the actual problem that the characters have to overcome is their struggle for a “liveable life” (Robinson 205). This idea can also be found in *The Fault in Our Stars*, as Hazel and Augustus have the power not to be seen as weak and sick teenagers, but as strong fighters who even become role models for others and perhaps even the reader. Moreover, they indeed have to struggle for a liveable life, but somehow win this struggle by enjoying their lives and not letting their disease take over, as far as it is possible.

As Robinson (see Chapter 3) points out, she found that adolescent male protagonists usually deal with “woundedness”, “failures” and “serendipitous success” and often convey the feeling that boys are not trustworthy (Robinson 216). As far as woundedness and failures are concerned, parallels can be found again in the book. Accordingly, Augustus (and also Isaac) happens to experience woundedness through his disease, which makes him suffer especially at the end of the story, and also failure, since he eventually loses the fight against his illness (while Isaac experiences failure by losing his eyes and Monica). With regard to a serendipitous success and untrustworthiness, no clear conformity with Augustus’ character can be noticed. A success might be found in his meeting Hazel and their believing in each other. Receiving Augustus as not being trustworthy, however, does not apply in my point of view, since everything he does is to please, help or protect others. Furthermore, Robinson (p. 221) states that most male characters in the books are “encouraged not to pursue a formal education”, which again cannot be confirmed with regard to Augustus, since he – as well as Hazel - does attend school, despite his not always good health condition.

Concerning female protagonists in books for adolescent readers, Robinson found that most of them deal with “acceptance” or support in finding their identity (Robinson 219). This aspect does not clearly apply to Hazel’s character. Thus, Hazel does not have to struggle for acceptance, nor does she need support in finding an identity, since she has already found her identity, knows what she is and what she wants/needs, and is accepted by others the way she is. Most importantly, as already mentioned, she is even seen as a role model for others – especially other cancer sufferers.

Lastly, the message conveyed by most male protagonists is, according to Robinson (p. 219), that “a boy should take a chance and pursue his dreams”, which was, interestingly enough, not found for female protagonists in her study. With regard to *The Fault in Our Stars*, it can be argued that it is rather Hazel who takes her chance and fulfils her biggest dream by meeting the author of her favorite book to get the

answers about the book she is so desperately looking for, despite her bad health condition. Nevertheless, her dream makes her dependent on Augustus, since without him, who is willing to use up his “wish” for their trip, she would not be able to pursue this one dream.

4.3.3. Other female/male gender roles

This sub-chapter presents noticeable gender aspects with regard to the secondary characters of Hazel’s parents, Augustus’ parents, Peter Van Houten and Isaac, since these characters display the most prominent features worth discussing in the story besides Hazel and Augustus. Also “Philip”, Hazel’s oxygen tank, will be mentioned briefly at the very end of this chapter.

To begin with Hazel’s parents, it can be said that especially her mother shows several traditional gender roles, such as staying at home and caring for her daughter, whereas her father contradicts the traditional view of a man in some aspects, for example by showing his emotions. In more detail, it was already mentioned in Chapter 3 that women in children’s and young adult literature are usually the caring, warm and emotional gender, and who are often staying at home to care for the children and the house. In this case, Hazel’s mother is indeed the one who takes over the caring part and the household chores (e.g. doing the laundry on page 91), however, as is revealed at the end of the book, she also wants to finish her degree at university, which implies that her child and the household are not the only things she cares about. As shown in the following quote, it is not only Hazel her mother worries about, but also her husband, who would have to stay alone at home if they were going to Amsterdam for a few days:

“So you’ll come,” I said. “The Genies will pay for it. The Genies are loaded.”
“But your father,” she said. “He would miss us. It wouldn’t be fair to him, and he can’t get time off work.” (92)

Although it is the father who earns the money for the family, her mother does not seem to be inferior or dominated by her husband, since both have a say in family decisions. Thus, Hazel’s father does not quite represent the traditional view of a man that is usually presented in books, since he seems to be more cooperative instead of dominant and also takes part in the household, such as helping with dinner or doing the dishes as in the following passages:

After a while, Mom and Dad announced that it was time for dinner. (97)

After they finished eating, Dad did the dishes and walked us to the car. (138)

Furthermore, it becomes clear throughout the story that Hazel's father is very emotional and not hiding his feelings (for his family) in front of others, which is not typical for the traditionally strong head of the family. Therefore, he tells them how he loves them on any occasion and cries a lot, as described in the following examples:

"Hazel," Dad said, and then choked up. He cried a lot, my Dad. (99)

My dad started crying a little. I didn't look over at him, but no one said anything for a long time, so his hiccupping cry was the only sound in the room. (116)

Of course, he started crying, and he kissed my cheek with his stubbly face. He pressed his nose against my cheekbone and whispered, "I love you. I'm so proud of you." (138)

Despite the fact that it is mostly female characters who are described as less competent than males, this trait can be rather found with regard to Hazel's father, while her mom is in charge of the business of caring for their sick daughter and keeping the family afloat, as Hazel comments on in the book:

"You're plenty busy," I told her, although it occurred to me that Mom's business was mostly me. There was also the business of being married to my dad – he was kind of clueless about, like, banking and hiring plumbers and cooking and doing things other than working for Morris Property, Inc. – but it was mostly me. (142-143)

Dad asked me if I was working on anything for school.

"I've got some very advanced Algebra homework," I told him. "So advanced that I couldn't possibly explain it to a layperson." (98)

Although Hazel's mom is the one to take care of her daughter most of the time, she does not expect Hazel to follow traditional female gender aspects, such as wearing her hair longer or helping in the household, as it was the case with George in *Five on a Treasure Island*. Thus, as already mentioned above, Hazel's mother can be seen as a modern woman, who wants her daughter to enjoy her life, even if this means dating boys or going out at her age, instead of being passive (which is usually seen as a female trait):

Me: "Please let me watch *America's Next Top Model*. It's an activity.

Mom: "Television is passivity."

Me: "Ugh, Mom, please."

Mom: "Hazel, you're a teenager. You're not a little kid anymore. You need to make friends, get out of the house, and live your life." (7)

In comparison to Hazel's parents, Augustus' parents are not very different with regard to their love and concern towards their sick child. Since the reader is not explicitly informed about their occupations or relationship to each other, there is not much to analyze regarding their gender roles. What we do know, however, is that they have a lot of money (they "are loaded" as Hazel calls it; p. 92), which implies that at least one of them has to have a well-paid job, and that they are loving parents, who care for their son. Furthermore, like Hazel's parents, both of them help together in the

household, as the following passage shows – which is rather unusual in traditional stories for young readers, in which it is mostly the mother who is in charge of preparing meals.

They were making enchiladas in the kitchen (a piece of stained glass by the sink read in bubbly letters *Family Is Forever*). His mom was putting chicken into tortillas, which his dad then rolled up and placed in a glass pan. (27)

Besides the fact that Augustus' father helps in the kitchen, he is described as being tall, "almost as tall as Gus", and "skinny in a way that parentally aged people usually aren't" (27). This indicates that he probably keeps himself fit and healthy, but also that he is not very muscular, which "real" men might be expected to be. Moreover, he can be seen as some kind of gentleman, since he is always polite and even offers Hazel to carry her oxygen tank down the stairs. His mother, on the other hand, is portrayed as a "small and brunette and vaguely mousy" (28) woman, which is definitely more associated to females, who are typically expected to be smaller than men, shy, and more reserved and unobtrusive than men.

Additionally to Hazel's and Augustus' fathers, their friend Isaac does not fit into the traditional concept of a man or boy either. Accordingly, Isaac is described as an unathletic, weak and depressed "skinny guy" (6), who is dependent on others (especially his mother) due to his blindness. When he loses his eye sight and former girlfriend he wallows in self-pity instead of fighting for a liveable life and coping with his hard fate, as Augustus and Hazel do. All these features are rather associated with female characters, who are more likely to be weak, dependent on others, unathletic and depressed, than males are (see Chapter 3) – despite the fact that this does not exactly correspond to reality. One example of Isaac's depressed mood (and heartbrokenness) can be found in the quote below:

"Isaac and Monica are no longer a going concern, but he doesn't want to talk about it. He just wants to cry and play Counterinsurgency 2: The Price of Dawn." (57)

Nevertheless, after some time, Isaac gets tired of crying and keeping his anger to himself, and gives free reign to his rage by showing "manly" aggression:

Suddenly Isaac started kicking the crap out of his gaming chair, which somersaulted back toward Gus's bed. "Here we go," said Augustus. Isaac chased after the chair and kicked it again. (61)

Isaac reached for a basketball trophy from the shelf above the bed and then held it over the head as if waiting for permission. [...] the trophies came down one after the other, and Isaac stomped on them and screamed while Augustus and I stood a few feet away, bearing witness to the madness. (62-63)

Isaac reached over and found an egg himself from the carton Gus cradled. He tossed it, hitting a taillight [of Monica's car]. (228)

Despite the fact that his friends Hazel and Augustus become a couple, Isaac is not regarded as the third wheel of their relationship, since he stays Augustus' best friend and is still included in several activities. The three of them keep helping and supporting each other, which is a sign of true friendship. As Isaac is an emotional boy, who does not mind to show his feelings in front of other people, he always tells (and shows) his friends what he is thinking, even if this might sound "cheesy" for a teenage boy. One example that can be mentioned here is the scene at Augustus' prefuneral, where Isaac states how hard it will be to lose his best friend:

"But I will say this: When the scientists of the future show up at my house with robot eyes and they tell me to try them on, I will tell the scientists to screw off, because I do not want to see a world without him." (258)

Isaac was still clinging to the lectern. He started to cry. He pressed his forehead down to the podium and I watched his shoulders shake [...]. (259)

Towards the end of the story, Isaac learns to live his life as it is and to accept these bad circumstances. He even wins back his humor (see examples below) and the joy of life with the help of Hazel and Augustus (and a new video game for blind people), who are there for him the whole time.

"[...] Hi, Support Group Hazel. Come over here so I can examine your face with my hands and see deeper into your soul than a sighted person ever could." (74)

"How are your eyes?"

"Oh, excellent," he said. "I mean, they're not in my head is the only problem." (225)

After learning to adjust to his new circumstances he also has typical fields of interest again that a "normal" teenage boy would have as well:

"[...] I got this machine that reads me my emails. It's awesome. I can change the voice's gender or accent or whatever."

"So I can like send you a porn story and you can have an old German man read it to you?"

"Exactly," Isaac said. "Although Mom still has to help me with it, so maybe hold off on the German porno for a week or two." (225-226)

Isaac asked what I was doing, and I said I was good and he told me there was a new girl in Support Group with a really hot voice and he needed me to go to tell him if she was actually hot. (226)

Last but not least, Peter Van Houten is one of the secondary characters, who, in contrast to Hazel's father and Isaac, shows a few more male character traits – but in a rather negative way. At first, he makes promises via email, in the belief that Augustus and Hazel will not be able to accept the invitation to come to Amsterdam anyways, and then (despite all the way they have come to visit him) insults them and sends them away, instead of keeping his words, which lets him appear selfish and

heartless. Additionally, he has a very rude, impolite and offensive way of talking to Hazel and Augustus, instead of being pleased to see what his novel does to his fans:

“This boy appears to have some kind of developmental delay,” Peter Van Houten said to Lidewij. (182)

“It is at any rate a pleasure to meet such ontologically improbable creatures.” (182)

Not even the fact that both teenagers suffer from cancer stops him from mocking their illness, as for example in the quote below:

“I regret that I cannot indulge you childish shims, but I refuse to pity you in the manner to which you are well accustomed.”

“I don’t want your pity,” I said.

“Like all sick children,” he answered dispassionately, “you say you don’t want pity, but your very existence depends upon it.” (192)

Whether this can be seen as typically male depends on the reader’s idea of maleness. However, fact is that not being empathetic or sensitive (especially to sick children) clearly contradicts the traditional idea of the sensitive female, which leads me to my argument that I would regard these characteristics as masculine. Nevertheless, the idea of all women being empathetic (and not selfish or impolite) does not always correspond to reality either.

What indeed can be regarded as typically male could be his way of bossing others around. Although his assistant, Lidewij, does everything he asks her to do for him, he does not show any signs of gratitude or respect towards the woman either. Instead, he uses short and direct commands in a rather rude and dominant tone, such as the following ones:

“Lidewij, play ‘Bomfalleralla’ immediately.” (188)

“Oh, shut up, Lidewij. [...]” (189)

Moreover, his inappropriate behavior also includes his drinking problem, i.e. drinking scotch in the morning and even offering his underage fans to have a drink, which gives his character an untrustworthy touch.

As far as his looks are concerned, he is described as being “[a] potbellied man with thin hair, sagging jowls, and a week-old beard”, “[h]is face and belly [...] so round, and his arms so skinny, that he looked like a dough ball with four sticks stuck into it” (p. 180). Although not every man necessarily has to be handsome and muscular, Van Houten’s looks influence the reader’s idea of his person negatively. Due to this portrayal, he seems to let himself go – perhaps even neglect himself – and therefore appears vulgar, careless, weak and not very intellectual, which are traits that we usually do not connotate to masculinity.

At the end of the story, however, Van Houten feels bad about his behavior and wants to make it up to them by obeying Augustus' last order and giving Hazel the answers to her questions about the book (see quote below).

"[...] He despised me. But at any rate he was quite instistant that I'd be absolved for my misbehavior if I attend his funeral and told you what became of Anna's mother. [...]" (276)

This act makes him appear at least a little more human, i.e. having a conscience, than before. Nevertheless, his rude behavior and drinking problem has upset and disappointed Hazel so much that she is not interested in talking to him and receiving answers anymore. Thus, instead of making it up to her and telling her the ending, he only gets to hear how bad she feels for him, as quoted below:

"You don't want an explanation?" he asked.
"No," I said. "I'm good. I think you're a pathetic alcoholic who says fancy things to get attention like a really precious eleven-year-old and I feel super bad for you. [...]" (276)

This again leads the reader to picture him as a weak and pathetic man, which are not the kind of traits that are typically associated with a traditional man.

Lastly, it can be argued why Hazel calls her oxygen tank "Philip" – which is clearly a male name. One reasonable answer to the question why it "kind of looked like a Philip" could be the fact that it is described as being "large" and "rectangular" (39), which would fit more into the concept of traditional male features as opposed to typical female features (such as soft, small and pretty). Moreover, the tank is essential for her breathing, which supports her weak lungs and gives them strength to breathe. Since it is usually the males who possess strength and who support others (i.e. women), this can also be a possible explanation of her choice.

To summarize my findings concerning the secondary characters mentioned, it can be noticed that the portrayed gender roles include a mixture of both traditional and non-traditional aspects. Thus, none of the fathers in the story clearly fits into the traditional concept of men (i.e. being strong, dominant, emotionless etc.), whereas the mothers mostly correspond to typically female characteristics (such as being caring, emotional, small, shy and unobtrusive, or staying at home to look after the child etc.), in Western society. Peter Van Houten can, on the one hand, be seen as manly, since he shows certain male traits, like being dominant and determining, but also very rude and not empathetic, however, on the other hand, Hazel sees him as a pathetic and weak alcoholic, which, again, is contrary to typically masculine features. Also Isaac somehow displays traditional gender aspects of both genders, such as being emotional and weak at the beginning of the story (i.e. depressed and crying after his breakup with Monica), which is typically associated with female characters, but then he also shows aggressions, copes with his new life and has typically male interests (e.g. girls or playing video games) which can be seen as a transformation to a more masculine character. The last "character" mentioned in this sub-chapter is Philip, the

(male) oxygen tank, which probably received a male name due to his looks (i.e. large and rectangular), his support and his power of giving Hazel's lungs the strength to breathe.

5. Conclusion: A comparison of the gender roles in the three books

This concluding chapter of my thesis will summarize all gender aspects that were found with regard to the protagonists and selected secondary characters of the three books presented before. Additionally, these aspects will then be compared to each other, in order to find any similarities or difference, especially in view of the time of the novels' publication and their contexts, since they were written in three different eras. Thus, my research questions (see Introduction) - which (traditional vs. non-traditional) gender roles are represented in the selected texts and whether they have changed over the last century – will be answered.

To start with my findings, it can be noticed very clearly that all of the three books contain both traditional and non-traditional gender aspects. Therefore, there was no book which portrayed only the one or the other type of gender roles. However, what was indeed found to be different, was the number of traditional roles in relation to non-traditional roles. In the first two books, *Five on a Treasure Island* and *The Secret Garden*, for example, traditional views of men and women were portrayed more often compared to modern roles, whereas the story of *The Fault in Our Stars* contained more non-traditional gender aspects than old fashioned ones. After all, the first two books were both written in the first half of the 20th century and in times of war, while the last novel is a more contemporary one (written in 2012). Thus, approximately 70 years lie between the first two and the last book, which seems to be a reasonably long time to undergo changes in society's expectations and views concerning men and women, which will be discussed in more detail later on.

The oldest book analyzed in this thesis, *The Secret Garden*, was found to portray a great number of traditional gender roles of both the main characters and secondary characters. To go into more detail, occupations, looks (including clothes), psychological and physical attributes are often chosen according to society's expectations and prescriptions of men and women at the beginning of the 20th century (World War I). Thus, Mary shows certain attributes, such as passivity, (physical) weakness and dependency, which are clearly attributed to female characters in children's and adolescent books, as it was shown in Chapter 3. When her servant Martha learns that she is neither able to dress herself, nor to sew or knit, she is surprised because girls were supposed to be taught the typical household chores (amongst other subjects) in girls' schools at that time. Nevertheless, since Mary has always had her private servants to care for her, she has never had to fulfil such "female" tasks. As the story proceeds, Mary gains other female attributes (for example politeness, caring for and nurturing other things and people, respect and helpfulness), which are endorsed by others, and which even more put her into this traditional view of a young lady. On the other hand, however, she also develops traits that are not typical of a female character, such as physical strength, activity, helping and supporting others (instead of *being supported*) and assertiveness.

In contrast, George in *Five on a Treasure Island* can be regarded as the counterpart of Mary's character. Accordingly, George is a young girl who does not accept being restricted to this traditional idea of a "normal" girl with long hair, female interests (such as reading, playing with dolls, helping in the household etc.), and female traits (e.g. being passive, dependent and nurturing). Instead, she plays outside, has physical strength, is interested in adventures and sportive activities, wears her hair short, and does not help in the household – which is typically associated with male characters. Nevertheless, her parents do not want to accept her untraditional behavior and try to urge her into the other direction, which often ends in a fight. Towards the end of the story, when George has already met her cousins – including the "traditional" girl Anne – she realizes that girl's stuff is not as bad as she thought, and begins to admit also her female nature.

Although Mary and George are fairly contrary to each other (regarding their traits and development), they have one thing in common: both characters are somehow pushed into the direction of traditional female gender roles, which suggests that discrepancies to the traditional expectations were not welcome at the beginning of the 20th century – as opposed to *The Fault in Our Stars*, which was written almost a century later.

The characters in *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) often show non-traditional roles and behaviors, which are barely questioned by others. Above all, Hazel, the protagonist, does not confirm the ideologized view of the typical girl who is pretty, passive, weak, nurturing and usually interested in shopping/clothes and looks/make-up. Instead, she is depicted as a strong cancer sufferer, who fights against her disease, and who is intelligent and inquisitive, which basically does not count as typically female. Due to Hazel's illness, she is sometimes involuntarily tired and out of breath, which often forces her to take a rest – however, she does not want to accept these times of weakness and always tries to pull herself together (e.g. taking the steep steps in the Anne Frank House). Although these character traits are usually associated with males, Hazel is not urged to conform to the traditional concept of a girl/woman, but is accepted the way she is.

While Mary and Hazel do not really worry about what gender-related behaviors and roles they are expected/supposed to show, George clearly does not want to be restricted to the traditional female roles that her parents idealize, and actively fights against these attempts.

In contrast to all the other girls mentioned in the three books, Anne is the only one who completely confirms the traditional view of girls that occurs in most children's stories, as described in Chapter 3. Thus, she likes "girly" things, such as pretty dolls and frocks, she is shy, polite and respectful to others (especially to adults), goes to a boarding school for girls (which was typical at that time), shows nurturing tendencies and is not as strong and fearless as the male children (her brothers and George) in the story of *Five on a Treasure Island*. Since she is also the youngest one of the

characters, she always needs to be protected and comforted by others (especially by Julian), which seems to be normal for young girls because nobody blames her for it.

Whereas the female main characters in these books do not want to give in to society's gender specific expectations and try to do their own thing, some of the female secondary characters, however, very often conform to traditional gender roles, as described in Chapter 3. Several traditional concepts of women can be clearly noticed with Mrs. Sowerby, Mary's maid Martha, the mothers in *Five on a Treasure Island*, Anne, and Hazel's mother to some extent – since they all show female features, such as being caring, nurturing, emotional/empathetic or dependent on a man (and his money), and have typically female occupations, as for example caring for the children, cooking, doing household chores and knitting. Thus, with regard to the selected three books, secondary female characters are more affected by traditional gender roles than the main characters. One exception here is Mary's mother, who does not fit into the traditional concept of a loving, nurturing and caring mother, as she is described as being independent (of her husband), selfish, only interested in parties and herself and is not taking part in Mary's childcare or any household chores.

Concerning male characters in children's and young adult literature, previous studies (mentioned in Chapter 3) showed that boys and men are predominately portrayed as the strong gender, and as being adventurous, dominant, providing for the family, protecting/helping others and as being superior to female characters. As far as the three stories are concerned, these features are mostly present, however, in some cases they are accompanied by female traits, which leads to the result that almost none of the male characters in these books can be regarded as completely typically male. Two exceptions here are Uncle Quentin, George's father - who predominately takes up traditional male features, such as dominance, working and providing money for the family, having the say in the family etc. and, additionally, does not show any emotions or empathy (until the end) and does not take part in the household chores or childcare – and Mr. Craven, who is the dominant and providing man in the house, always working and barely present, and who hires servants to take over the childcare of his own son.

A closer look at the male main characters of the books (Colin, Dickon, Julian, Dick, Augustus) reveals that, additionally to their male character traits, each one of them also exhibits female tendencies:

Colin is a weak young boy, who is believed to be sick and dependent on the help and care of others in order to survive, just because he does not believe in himself and his strength to do things on his own. Additionally, due to his tantrums he is seen as a hysterical boy who does not have his emotions under control. As already pointed out in Chapter 3, weakness (physically and emotionally) is one characteristic that is clearly associated with female characters in children's stories. However, towards the end of the story, Colin becomes a strong and active young boy due to Mary's and

Dickon's help, who learned to believe in himself and who is not dependent on others anymore.

Although Dickon has physical strength, competence (e.g. with regard to gardening and animals), cleverness and is hard-working throughout the story – qualities which are usually connected to male characters – he, just like Colin, shows some female traits as well. Firstly, Mary describes him as some kind of fairy, which is typically a female role in children's books and, secondly, he can be regarded as a mother figure for the garden, the plants and the animals, since he protects, nurtures and treats them tenderly, as if they were his own children.

Therefore, it can be concluded that both boys somehow subvert the traditional gender norms by being “non-aggressive, non-confrontational and non-competitive” and by being “gentle in manner and prepared to absorb themselves in home-loving activities, such as gardening and story-telling” (Foster & Simons 174).

In comparison to Dickon, Julian's character in *Five on a Treasure Island* shows several similarities with regard to their traits: On the one hand, Julian is the oldest one of their clique and can be regarded as some kind of a leader (besides George), who mostly decides what to do and where to go, who is brave enough to go into the dark dungeons to find the gold, protects his sister, and is a strong swimmer and climber – which makes him seem to be a traditional male character. On the other hand, however, he is comforting and sympathetic towards the others, and need (instead of justice) oriented, which points to a certain feminine behavior, as it was the case with Dickon's character.

Although both Dickon and Julian share female tendencies, they are not satirized or ridiculed by the author or the other characters (e.g. their parents) in any way for their “untypical” characteristics. In contrast to them stands Dick, Julian's brother, whose feminine traits are clearly mocked by others. Thus, his own mother twits him because of his “girly” preferences (e.g. plush toys instead of cars or bricks), and George insists on the idea that boys are not allowed to cry, which makes Dick ashamed of himself because he once was a “crybaby”. This satirizing of Dick's female traits suggests that it was not accepted that males show female preferences or weak behavior at that time (the 1940s).

Augustus, the last male protagonist, can be regarded as one of the “manliest” characters amongst all protagonists because, contrary to Colin, he fights his illness until the end, stays (mentally and physically) strong as long as his cancer allows it, and supports/helps many other people, despite his own bad condition – without showing traits that are typical of females. Even at the very end of *The Fault in Our Stars*, when Augustus becomes weaker due to his relapsed cancer, he does not want to accept passivity and still wants to do things on his own (for example drive a car and get a pack of cigarettes or wheel his own wheelchair), while rejecting the help of others. As these characteristics of being strong, muscular and active, and not accepting weakness and passivity, and his interests in video games, girls and

basketball are generally associated to males, his character is predominately portrayed as masculine.

In comparison to Dickon, who is described as a competent young boy, Augustus can also be regarded as competent, but in a more intellectual instead of a practical manner. Thus, Augustus is not only intelligent and has sophisticated thoughts (e.g. thinking in metaphors), but also knows how to help and please others, especially Hazel and Isaac. Since he (and Hazel) additionally wants to protect the weak and be remembered as a special person after his death, he can be also regarded as some kind of a hero – another typically male role.

Opposed to Augustus' strong and powerful character, his friend Isaac is portrayed in a more weak and feminine way. Thus, Isaac does not hide his hurt feelings when his girlfriend breaks up with him, becomes desperate and cries in front of other people, which is usually untypical of male characters. Moreover, he is not a fighter as much as Augustus is, but is rather presented as weak and dependent on other people, since he wallows in self-pity after his operation and the break up with Monica, is dependent on Augustus' (and Hazel's) and his mother's support (e.g. comforting and encouraging him) and needs a long time to accept and adjust to his blindness. When Isaac – due to the mental support of Hazel and Augustus – eventually learns to accept his fate, he gives up more and more of his feminine traits and becomes an almost typical young man with “normal” interests (e.g. video games and girls) and behaviors. Therefore, Isaac's character shows many similarities to Colin's character, who is also described as being hysterical, weak and not able to cope with his feelings at first, but then, with the help of his friends, develops into a stronger and more active (i.e. “typical”) young boy.

As far as other male secondary characters are concerned, it was already said that most of these characters in the stories – except Uncle Quentin and Mr. Craven (see above) – somehow subvert the traditional gender roles by showing feminine traits. In more detail, both fathers in *The Fault in Our Stars* take part in the household and are not the only ones, who have a say in the family. Moreover, Hazel's father is described as a very warm and emotional man - who cries a lot and shows his feelings towards his wife and daughter in public - which is not usual for male characters, who are generally not supposed to show feelings, let alone cry in public, according to the previous studies mentioned in Chapter 3. Isaac, who was mentioned above, also violates the idea of a strong and emotionless male.

Peter Van Houten, the author of Hazel's favorite book, can neither be seen as typically male, nor as typically female. In general, he shows negative behavior, which is not clearly restricted to a certain gender, such as rudeness, impoliteness or carelessness. Nevertheless, one might argue that his dominance and bossing others around, as well as his insensitivity towards children, can be counted as male character traits.

As already mentioned above, Uncle Quentin and Mr. Craven are the only male secondary characters who mostly conform to traditional male gender roles, while not showing any feminine tendencies (such as weakness or emotionality), as the other characters do. Since these two characters occur in stories written in times of war, it might be suggested that men were not accepted to have or show female characteristics in the first half of the 20th century, while male characters in contemporary books are more allowed to have feminine traits. Nevertheless, it seems that these changes predominately apply to secondary characters (especially fathers), since the male protagonists, who are supposed to serve as role models for the readers, exhibit both female traits (e.g. emotionality) as well as many typically male features in all three texts (i.e. during the whole last century). Especially Augustus' masculine behavior until the end of the story implies that, even in the 21st century, male protagonists are still expected to show maleness to some extent in order to be regarded a "hero" – in contrast to secondary characters. However, these portrayals of boys with both male and female characteristics rather correspond to reality (as opposed to an exclusively male portrayal of characters), since I doubt that boys/men do not also experience times of weakness and emotionality. Therefore, young readers ought to notice that boys do not always have to be the strong, fearless, emotionless and dominant gender, but that they can also be caring and open to feelings without being ashamed. The same applies to young girls, who should realize that they do not have to be restricted to traditional female roles (anymore) and are equally allowed to show male tendencies, as the female protagonists in the stories do.

It can be noticed in all three books that the female protagonists do not want to be restricted to female roles and therefore show male behavior to some extent – while the female secondary characters generally still conform to traditional roles. Thus, the acceptance of non-traditional gender roles amongst female protagonists has definitely increased since the last 80 years, whereas the traditional portrayal of female secondary characters has not significantly changed over the last century.

In *The Secret Garden*, traditional gender roles seem to be well accepted and any abnormalities (e.g. Mary's inability to knit and sew) are questioned, however, neither Mary's mother's behavior, nor Mary's male tendencies are ridiculed in any obvious way by other characters. In contrast, characters of the story *Five on a Treasure Island* who do not conform to the gender norms (e.g. George and Dick) are mocked or satirized by others. The last book, *The Fault in Our Stars*, again shows more tolerance and openness to non-traditional features. Therefore, the "U-shaped curve", which was found in previous studies by Grauerholz and Pescosolido, can also be noticed in my analysis: While the oldest (1912) and the most recent book (2012) seem to basically accept violations of the traditional gender norms, *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942), clearly satirizes any gender abnormalities.

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7. German Summary

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Thema der Geschlechterrollen in ausgewählter englischer Kinder- und Jugendliteratur des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts. Da unsere Vorstellungen von Frauen und Männern bekanntlich stark von Stereotypen und Vorurteilen begleitet werden, und in vielen Bereichen unserer Gesellschaft – wie in der Politik, der Wirtschaft, den Medien oder der Literatur – stets ungleich und teilweise auch traditionell dargestellt werden, ist es das Ziel dieser Arbeit, die vorkommenden (traditionellen und nicht traditionellen) Geschlechterrollen in den Büchern zu untersuchen, zu beschreiben und zu vergleichen.

Hierfür wurden die zwei Kindergeschichten "*The Secret Garden*" (1912) von Frances Hodgson Burnett und "*Five on a Treasure Island*" (1942) von Enid Blyton, und das Jugendbuch "*The Fault in Our Stars*" (2012) von John Green ausgewählt – welche zusammen eine Zeitspanne von einem ganzen Jahrhundert abdecken. Dies ermöglichte mir, die Ergebnisse auch unter Berücksichtigung der Zeit miteinander zu vergleichen. Da im 19. und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts noch strenge Rollenbilder und Erwartungen an die Geschlechter herrschten, wie zum Beispiel die nicht arbeitende Mutter, die zuhause die Kinder versorgt und den Haushalt erledigt, und der Vater der für die Familie aufkommt und das Sagen im Haus hat, ging ich davon aus, dass besonders die ersten zwei Bücher solch traditionelle Bilder wiedergeben werden und das aktuellste Buch (2012) toleranter gegenüber Verletzungen des geschlechtsspezifischen Verhaltens sein wird.

Meine Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die (männlichen und weiblichen) Protagonisten aller Bücher sowohl genderkonforme als auch nicht traditionelle Verhaltensweisen und Tendenzen zeigen. Besonders die Mädchen der ersten beiden Bücher kämpfen aktiv gegen eine Einschränkung auf traditionelle weibliche Geschlechterrollen und zeigen demnach des Öfteren typisch „männliches“ Verhalten, wie Sportlichkeit und Aktivität, Dominanz und Stärke. Die Protagonistin des letzten Buches könnte auch als alles andere als traditionell weiblich bezeichnet werden, da sie sich nicht darum kümmert, wie andere sie sehen bzw. wie sie sein soll, und das tut, was sie möchte (egal ob es als männlich oder weiblich gesehen wird). Wie erwartet, wird sie auch so akzeptiert wie sie ist, ohne ihr nicht weibliches Verhalten in irgendeiner Weise zu thematisieren oder zu verurteilen.

Auch die männlichen Hauptrollen zeigen neben ihrer Männlichkeit auch nicht konformes Verhalten, wie zum Beispiel (körperliche und mentale) Schwäche, Passivität und Emotionalität, was besonders in „*Five on a Treasure Island*“, und zum Teil auch in „*The Secret Garden*“ von anderen Charakteren kritisiert und verspottet wird. Im aktuellsten Buch jedoch, zeigt der Hauptcharakter eher wenig Schwäche und bekämpft sein Leid bis zum Ende der Geschichte. Dies suggeriert, dass sowohl früher, als auch noch heutzutage männliche Charaktere Stärke und Männlichkeit

zeigen müssen, um als Vorbilder und Helden zu gelten, sie aber keineswegs *nur* männliche Verhaltensweisen zeigen dürfen.

Was die Nebenrollen in den Büchern betrifft, kann zusammenfassend gesagt werden, dass sich das Frauenbild über die Jahre hinweg nicht sehr viel verändert hat, da die Mütter in den Geschichten immer noch diejenigen sind, die für den Haushalt und die Kinder zuständig sind, während die Väter/Männer wie gewöhnlich arbeiten gehen und Geld nachhause bringen. Im Gegensatz dazu habe ich festgestellt, dass die männlichen Nebenrollen, welche 1912 und 1942 ihre traditionellen Rollen noch streng einhielten, im letzten Buch (2012) mehr „Weiblichkeit“ zeigen und dies auch toleriert wird. Demnach sind die männlichen Sekundärcharaktere in „*The Fault in Our Stars*“ emotionaler, schwächer und teilweise auch abhängiger von anderen Personen, als in den Büchern davor. Dies zeigt eine klare Veränderung der Geschlechterrollen von männlichen Nebencharakteren (besonders den Vätern) über das letzte Jahrhundert und eine steigende Toleranz bezüglich Emotionalität der Männer.

8. Curriculum Vitae

Persönliche Daten

Name	Melanie Dietrich
Familienstand:	ledig
Staatsangehörigkeit:	Österreich

Schulische Ausbildung/Studium

1997 – 2001	Volksschule Steinbrunn
2001 – 2005	Gymnasium Wolfgarten, Eisenstadt
2005 – 2009	Oberstufenrealgymnasium Theresianum, Eisenstadt mit Maturaabschluss
2009 -	Lehramtsstudium Englisch und Psychologie/ Philosophie, Universität Wien
2010 -	Bachelorstudium Psychologie, Universität Wien
Wintersemester 2013	Auslandssemester an der University of Urbana & Champaign, Illinois, USA
Sommersemester 2015	Abschluss der Diplomarbeit und Diplomprüfung des Lehramts

Beruflicher Werdegang

2012	Kursleiterin in Englisch, LernQuadrat Eisenstadt und Kids-Bül Neufeld
Februar 2015 -	Kursleiterin der Förderung 2.0 in Englisch, VHS Wien