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narrative

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1. Introduction

Emotions and their depiction in literature have increasingly become the focus of research interest over the last fifty years (Stephens, “Editorial” v). This also applies to grief and the mourning process, evident in the increasing number of publications on the topic throughout the last two decades (cf. Henderson 2011; Boker 1996; Gana 2011). However, the focus of this research generally seems to lie on grief centered works, such as eulogies (cf. Henderson) or novels about bereavement (cf. Day 2012; Apseloff 1991; Berns 2004). Other literary genres, less often used to aid individual or communal mourning processes, are mostly ignored. Research is especially lacking in young adult literature, hereafter YA, although death and dying are common themes within it: In many genres belonging to YA literature, parental death has been used as a functioning trope, a necessary plot device to free young heroes for their adventure. The limited previous work on the subject (c.f. James 2009; Gibson and Zaidman 1991) has been mainly focused on the psychological aspects of grief, i.e. if the bereaved characters portray healthy coping mechanisms. Different representations are mostly explained through contemporary, cultural, and historical attitudes towards death and grief in children’s and YA literature. However, the representation of death and its aftermath is not purely depending on society’s current *Zeitgeist*: Literary genres also have certain conventions and underlying frameworks that influence the depiction of emotions (Henderson 3), and, thus, the representation of grief. Still, when analyzing emotions, structuralist approaches have mostly been neglected. For literature closely connected to genre conventions, that tends to consciously adapt and play with proven formulas, as specific genres within YA literature are prone to do (Coats 324), ignoring this influential aspect is especially problematic.

The aim of this thesis is to further the current knowledge on the depiction of grief in YA literature, as well as to contribute to the conversation on how the portrayal of emotions in literature is influenced by generic restrictions. The quest narrative, which is considered one of the most stable genres (Auden 42), is ideal for this research. Furthermore, as death is often the facilitator of the adventure the hero embarks on, grief should be a motif prevalent in numerous quest narratives. Thus, my thesis is dedicated to answer the following research question: “How is the hero’s grief and grieving process for a loved one addressed and represented in YA quest narratives?”. My corpus consists of three YA novels that can be grouped within the fantastic quest narrative genre: *Eragon* (2002) written by Christopher Paolini, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2005), hereafter *Percy*, by Rick Riordan, and *Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008),

henceforth *Knife*, by Patrick Ness. To further specify my research, I formulated three smaller research questions:

- How can the spatial and temporal circumstances of the quest narrative contribute to the duration of the grieving process?
- Which roles and functions do the side characters occupy in accordance to the quest narrative and how do their reactions to the death of the heroes' parents relate to the duration of the grieving processes?
- How do the specific roles and functions of the dying parental figures, in accordance to the quest narrative, affect the heroes' grieving processes?

In order to answer my research questions, various aspects have to be considered: First of all, grief, the subject matter itself, has to be examined and defined in greater detail. Thus, I will start with an overview on current theories on grieving processes and grief reactions (see 2.1). To relate my thesis to previous academic research, a literature review of the studies focused on the depiction of grief in children's literature will be conducted in section 2.2. Hereby, a necessary differentiation between research analyzing "bereavement literature" and approaches that analyze various sub-genres of children's and YA literature, as well as the portrayal of death within said sub-genres, will be made. Since all the novels under analysis have male protagonists, the last section of chapter 2 will examine the gendered aspects of grief. As I follow a structuralist approach in my research, the genres under analysis will be examined in detail in chapter 3. The first section provides a detailed analysis of the quest genre, focusing on the four aspects most important for my sub-research questions: The conventional plot structure, stock characters, temporal and spatial conditions, as well as the hero as a developing teenage boy. Thus, section 3.1. is divided into four sub-sections: First of all, different quest frameworks by structuralist literary critics will be examined. Due to its relevance to the novels under analysis, Joseph Campbell's "monomyth" framework, as well as important quest characters and their functions, are discussed in greater detail in the second sub-section (cf. Campbell 1949). As my first sub-question is also concerned with the dimensions of time and space, sub-section 3.1.3. focuses on the spatial and temporal restraints that occur as a direct response to the quest structure's identified generic conventions. Due to the protagonists' age, the specific aspects of the YA hero, as a distinct type of the heroic quest hero, will be investigated in the last sub-section (3.1.4). As YA literature also tends to deal with specific themes and motifs, a closer consideration of YA literature in general is useful for any further structuralist analysis. Hence, the second section of chapter 3 provides a concise overview on YA literature in general. The

connection between YA literature and the Bildungsroman, as a novel of development and formation, will be examined as well.

After this theoretical input, chapters 4 and 5 comprise the practical part of the thesis. In the former, the methodology used to analyze grief in YA quest literature via a structuralist framework will be presented. In the latter, I will present my findings, analyzing *Percy*, *Eragon*, and *Knife* in accordance to the three sub-research questions formulated above. My conclusions, concerning the developmental aspects of death and how the quest hero's growth also shortens the grieving process, are drawn in the final chapter. As to the best of my knowledge, no similar research on grief and the quest narrative has been conducted hitherto. Hence, the current thesis will provide valuable input to the growing research field of emotions in literature.

2. Grieving in YA Literature

2.1. Grief – Theorized

The death of a character is often a highly emotional scene; partly due to the survivors' emotional reaction. Since bereaved people grieve and mourn the death of loved one, most authors dedicated to creating three-dimensional characters are prone to simulate such grieving behavior in their narratives (DeMinco 181). In the immediate aftermath of the loss, surviving characters thus often display actions commonly associated with the mourning process, such as crying, screaming, and lamenting, or are described as experiencing intense feelings, i.e. pain, anger, and horror. However, can grief be always understood as a state of experiencing negative emotions? Or as a feeling mainly expressed by tears or loud lament? In order to successfully analyze the depiction of grieving in literature, the terminology, i.e. what is actually understood by “grief” and “grieving”, has to be defined first.

In general terms, “grief” can be defined as an “intense sorrow, especially caused by someone’s death” (Oxford Dictionaries) or as “deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement” (Merriam-Webster). Although grief often causes various, sometimes conflicting, emotions, it predominantly expresses itself through negative feelings, such as shock, guilt, intense sadness, and anger (Glass 157). Grieving is, however, often not just a solitary act or the experience of one single emotion. In her seminal research *On Death and Dying* (1973), the psychiatrist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross convincingly shows that grieving has to be understood as a long-term process. Although every individual grieves differently, Kübler-Ross identified five stages that a grieving person can undergo: Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, Kübler-Ross (29) mentions that not every bereaved person passes through all five stages. Instead, it is possible to skip stages or to favor one over another. Still, even if some stages may be left out, acceptance should be reached for a positive conclusion of the grieving process (126). Although Kübler-Ross’s model is still widely used to explain grieving behavior, some studies (c.f. Bonanno 2004, Bonanno & Kaltman 2001), analyzing high resilience after a dramatic experience such as bereavement, show that some people exhibit only a few signs indicating depression or a dysfunction after experiencing the death of a loved one. However, high resilient people still experience “yearning and emotional pangs” and have sudden onsets of “intrusive thought[s]” and reflections (Bonanno 23–24). Thus, although grief is sometimes resolved faster and is, at times, less visible in high resilience individuals, the bereaved person still processes the loss of a loved one. Grief may therefore be expressed in numerous ways, depending on the person, their adjustment in life, and psychological health.

If grieving stays unresolved, or if it is not allowed to begin with, either by the bereaved person themselves or through their environment, it can have far-reaching consequences: Colin Murray Parkes' research indicates that both extensive grieving and the suppression of grief may affect the health of a bereaved person and might even lead to the development of physical or mental illnesses. Thus, mourning one's loss within an appropriate time frame is of great importance for the overall health of the people left behind (Parkes 857-858). If grieving is resolved properly, the bereaved person can start to remember the deceased. People who have accepted their loss are capable of fondly thinking back to a passed loved one and to "remember what [they] had with the deceased rather than mourn what [they] will not have" (Caldwell & Cowan); thus, changing their outlook: from missing a shared future to appreciating the past.

Although the academic interest in the portrayal of emotions in literature is generally a relatively new, twenty-first century phenomenon (Kümmerling-Meibauer 93), research in the portrayal of death, and, as a by-product, grief, has been conducted since the late twentieth century. However, previous research (c.f. Hughes, Bailey) suggests that the manner in which death and the subsequent emotional reaction is depicted, highly depends on the pedagogic principles prevalent in the time period the literature was published in. This chapter focuses on the larger, apparent trends shaping the portrayal of grief and death in children's and young adult literature. After providing a short overview on how the depiction of death and grief in children's and YA literature changed throughout the last 120 years, the most important research trends will be reviewed in-depth. The chapter will conclude with a short excursion on the gendered aspect of grief, especially the norms set for bereaved males.

2.2. Death and Grief in YA Literature

Death has been a frequent topic in children's and YA literature. However, previous literary research (cf. Bailey 2016, Hughes 1978) suggests that the manner in which the end of life, and its emotional consequences for the survivors, is represented in youth literature published in the Anglophone sphere, depends on the *Zeitgeist* of its contemporary society. The depiction of death and grief thus seems to be determined by historical and didactic factors. Historically speaking, the attitude of Anglophone youth literature towards death changed twice in a significant manner: Authors went from including death and mourning in children's books, to a near complete disavowal of death in the 1920s. Death was perceived as a topic too sensitive and disturbing for children, a view that only changed in the late 1960s and 70s. Victorian society, while quite prudent about sexual matters – especially in connection with young,

unmarried adults – was quite open about death. As dying, loss and grief were inevitable aspects of children’s lives, due to significant higher child and infant mortality rates, so was their depiction within books read to children (Gibson and Zaidman 232). Authors of classic family novels (see section 3.1), such as Louisa May Alcott, Charles Dickens, and Inga Moore, covered the experience of significant loss quite explicit in their novels (Moss 530). Although descriptions were at times “over-sentimental” (Moss 530), death scenes and characters’ emotional responses and reactions to the bereavement of a loved one, including longer periods of mourning, were presented as a normal aspect of family life in Victorian literature.

This clear depiction of death and grief radically changed with the emergence of 20th century children’s literature. While literature suitable for children has already been available in the Romantic and Victorian era, the shift of the century marks a clear distinction between adult and children’s literature. Previously, children’s literature was often marketed as to be read by the whole family and frequently included patronizing and didactic lessons for the young listeners. Around the 1900s, however, a new genre specifically tailored to a young readership emerged (Bailey 3). Felicity Hughes (543-544) proposes that although still didactical patronizing, the focus of the new children’s books was the depiction of childhood experiences from a child-like point of view, featuring child narrators and contemporary colloquial language. As infant and child-mortality had decreased significantly in the early decades of the 20th century, so did its depiction in children’s literature (Gibson and Zaidman 232). Moreover, early 20th century children’s literature, contrary to its predecessors, seemed to shy away from realistic depictions of death altogether, and, instead, attempted to forgo talking about the end of life as much as possible (Moss 530). Authors and pedagogues seemingly tried to shield children from the harshness of the, now separate, adult world, leading to the sudden banishment of death and mourning from children’s literature (Moss 530).

Only after the 1960s, death found its way back into children’s bedrooms, via stories and books, albeit subtler and less realistic than in the late 19th century. Critics and pedagogues alike agreed that dying and the end of life should not be hidden from children any longer and that encountering grieving characters in books was another way of gaining information on coping mechanisms (Gibson and Zaidman 232-233). This forefront approach was also reflected in the resurgence of academic interest in the problem novel – the teenage variant of the social novel, that generally focused on different ‘problematic’ topics, such as sexual encounters, suicide, death, and drugs (Moore and Mae 52–53). However, the problem novel’s approach to these topics was sometimes still rated as too superficial (Apseloff 327-328), an opinion literary critics

held for some time towards YA literature addressing death (Day 115). Still, the ban on death in children's and YA literature had been lifted, allowing for an engagement and an open discussion about death and mourning in children's literature.

The portrayal of death seems to have become even more diverse in recent years. Compared to the 20th century, when approaches on how to depict death were largely uniform in the Anglophone cultural sphere, 21st century approaches to death in children's and YA literature appear to be less straightforward. Although the frequent occurrences of death suggest a general consensus on the fact that loss and bereavement should not be banned from children's literature, the manner and the extent of the discussion differs depending on the book in question. For this analysis, I am differentiating between two trends and approaches towards death within current children's and YA literature: the bibliotherapy movement, which includes literature focused mainly on death and the subsequent grieving process, and novels where death is, if included, simply a narrative device and part of a larger, on-going storyline.

2.2.1. Bereavement literature and the bibliotherapy movement

The term "bereavement literature" can be used in a broad or narrow sense. According to Jean Holloway (1990) and JM Simpson (2014), "bereavement literature" describes literature that was mainly written by authors who experience loss themselves. As such, bereavement literature can include memoirs, diaries, and novels "which approach bereavement through a fictional account" (Holloway 17). However, the term bereavement literature can also be understood, and used, in a broader sense. Giskin Day, for example, uses the term to discuss books "about death and grieving" in general (Day 115-116). If understood this broadly, works that can be categorized under the genre of bereavement literature primarily deal with the feeling and state of bereavement, and thus feature main characters that, often for the first time, experience significant loss (Day 115-116). This type of literature is not restricted to adult literature: The beginning of YA bereavement literature lies within the problem novel, where death and loss were frequent themes, e.g. *Blindfold* (1990) by Sandra McCuaig. Nowadays, literature centered on experiencing and overcoming grief occupies its own niche in children's and YA literature. As Day argues (115), the recent increase in popularity becomes apparent in the number of publications and prize-winning books focusing on the subjects of grief and loss, e.g. *Everybody Jam* (2011) by Ali Lewis and *A Monster Calls* (2011) by Patrick Ness. Usually, the plot of bereavement literature focuses on one character's death and the protagonist's emotional reaction to said event. As bereavement literature for younger readers has become more popular

during the late 20th century (Day 115), a time where realism returned to children's and YA literature (Gibson and Zaidman 232-233), depictions of death and grief tend to be quite explicit, often mirroring contemporary psychological theories. The solution presented to resolve a character's grief is therefore often central to literary critics' assessment of bereavement literature. One such critic is Gail Radley, who examined three novels according to their realism in the portrayal of grief in his article "Copying with Death in Young Adult Literature". For his analysis Radley focused on two novels featuring anticipatory grief and on one that addresses grief after bereavement. Although none of the books' protagonists progressed through all of Kübler-Ross's five stages, Radley maintains that the novels could still be helpful for an adolescent reader that tries to comprehend death as a fixed entity in life (28). Other critics analyzed even more specific bereavement literature: In "Death in Adolescent Literature" (1991) Marilyn Apseloff examined two books in accordance to their realistic depiction of grief after suicide and the effects of bereavement. As the bereavement occurred through suicide, her qualitative analysis also includes the additional component of guilt the young protagonists face throughout the novel. Although Apseloff (237-238) expresses that both novels adhere to current psychological models in dealing with death, her analysis is scathing when assessing the general literary prowess of the authors, especially condemning the portrayal of adult characters' interaction with the YA protagonist. A more positive analysis was conducted by Giskin Day in his article "Good Grief" (2014). Day analyzed the anticipatory grief novel *A Monster Calls* in accordance to the Kübler-Ross' five stages model¹, showing a clear correlation between Conner's, the main character, development throughout the story and his progress through the five stages of grief (117-119). Bereavement literature thus often seems to successfully adapt cultural expectations of grieving behavior and to portray a variety of well-known coping mechanisms.

Due to bereavement literatures' focus on portraying grief in a psychologically and culturally recognizable way, it is often used during bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy can be broadly defined as an attempt to change a child's behavior or actions through literature (Berns 324). Although many adolescents do not know how to talk about their first experience with death, medical professionals have agreed for some time now that teenagers who encounter grief need the chance to talk about their experiences in order to communicate any existing fears, anxieties, or conflicting emotions they may feel (Glass 154). For bibliotherapy advocates, bereavement literature serves as a catalyst, facilitating the much needed communication, but it can also be a

¹ Although aware of the limitation the stage-theory presents, Day (117) argues that Kübler-Ross' model has highly influenced Western cultural expectations towards grief and behavior of the deprived.

tool or a model to “normalize a child’s grief reactions to loss, support constructive coping, [and] reduce feelings of isolation” (Berns 324). By reading how characters experience a series of emotions and different stages of the grieving process, readers are not only presented with healthy coping strategies, but might also feel less alone, as well as learn how to abstract their own experiences (Berns 325-326). However, although the use of bereavement literature in bibliotherapy has gained more ground and supporters in recent years, some people remain skeptical of young readers’ abilities to easily copy and adapt grieving strategies from books. Giskin Day (119) warns that teenagers who are themselves in midst of a crisis might not be able to relate to a fictional character or the behavior depicted. Still, although the actual effect of learning coping mechanism through reading is sometimes questioned, the use of bereavement literature in bibliotherapy is increasing, both within educational and medical institutions (cf. Berns 2004, Briggs and Pehrsson 2012, Heath and Cole 2012).

2.2.2. Death and YA literature

A stark contrast to the psychological approach and application of bereavement literature is the inclusion of death in narratives written for other children’s and YA genres. Although death and loss are often important plot devices, as they facilitate further development and maturing of the young protagonists’ experiencing loss (Trites 117-118), the emotional processing of grief and bereavement is seldom the focus in narrations outside of the bereavement genre. Instead, death, and therefore grief, is often simply encountered through the course of the larger plot. Due to a surge of academic interest in the depiction of death in children’s and YA literature, research concerning bereavement has become slightly more common again: Some attempts have been made (c.f. Gibson and Zaidman 1991, Trites 2005) to explain and analyze death in children’s and YA literature in general without limiting the discussion to any particular genre or author. Roberta Trites, for example, proposes in *Disturbing the Universe* (2000), hereafter *Disturbing*, a series of maxims and motifs, i.e. photography as metaphor for accepting death (Trites 125), supposedly valid for most YA narratives. Some of the assertions made in *Disturbing* have proven to be accurate and were adopted by other literary critics: For example, Trites (123) points out that experiencing loss is often connected to establishing independence from adult caregivers, as well as the adolescents’ exploration of their sexuality. Other maxims, however, are inconsistent with the majority of the novels analyzed in this work, i.e. that death “always” occurs “onstage” and is generally “seemingly gratuitous” (Trites 120) – a general statement that is not sufficiently explained within *Disturbing* after being asserted. As such, while Trites’

seminal work will be used as a reference point in later chapters once more, broad statements about experiences of loss by adolescents should be taken lightly, as they might not prove to be valid for all YA literature genres.

In contrast, structuralist research focusing on specific genres provides more detailed insights towards death in children's and YA literature; although, significantly more analysis has been conducted for the former (c.f. Rustin and Rustin 2001). One of the most remarkable in-depth structuralist analyses covering grief in both children's and YA literature has been conducted by Hamida Bosmajian, who analyzed death and grief within a collection of autobiographical children's and YA holocaust books. According to her research, grieving and mourning are frequently mentioned within children's and YA holocaust literature, as the themes structuring the genre, i.e. separation, the Shoah, and death, are deeply intertwined with bereavement and loss. However, Bosmajian's study also shows (xv) that the grieving processes of the young protagonists are not depicted in an idealized, psychologically approved way, which would include protagonists who undergo different stages of the grieving process, before finally resolving it. Instead, grief is predominantly presented as being inconclusive and "unresolved", and to overcome mourning is seen as "the beginning of the end of forgetting the dead" (Bosmajian xv). Furthermore, Bosmajian noted that many authors still want to shield children from the atrocities committed under the Shoah, elements that are considered too personal or traumatic have been left out. Even unresolved grief and mourning for the dead is therefore often consciously limited by authors of autobiographical holocaust literature for children, as adults try to redirect the readers' attention to acts of kindness instead (Bosmajian xiv-xvi). As such, if grief is portrayed in Holocaust literature at all, it is presented as an emotional state that affects survivors throughout the whole novel and, in some cases, nearly a lifetime.

Another seminal structuralist analysis of death in YA literature has been conducted by Kathryn James (2009). By conducting a qualitative corpus analysis featuring YA books from four different genres – realism, fantasy, historical fiction, and dystopian literature – James (2-3) examines the connection between death and adolescents' development. Like Trites (122), James (3-4) argues that death is often used as a plot device initiating the protagonist's sexual development and maturing. Although the interconnections between facing death and characters' sexual developments are meticulously analyzed, one limitation of James' study is that she mostly ignores any emotional repercussions that experiencing the loss of a loved one should have on the young protagonists. Grief is just mentioned in connection with one novel as an emotion that has to be overcome quickly by the protagonists in order to grow further in their

role as independent teenagers (James 127-128). James (7-8) also noted a connection between grief and stereotypical gender traits, which have been found to be constantly repeated and reinforced in all three genres under analysis. While additional in-depth analyses of grief in YA fantasy, realism, dystopian, and historical literature still need to be conducted, James' insight that death might lead to the protagonists' sexual awakening and forced development, which in adolescence is often connected to gender identity, is still an important contribution to the research of grieving and mourning in YA literature. Not only does James' work support Trites' observation that death in YA novels especially facilitates character development in a variety of YA literary genres (118-119), it additionally begs the question if there is a gendered way of reacting to grief, connected to the assumed and developed gender identity of the teenage literary characters. As conservative gender roles are predominant in the quest genre (Stephens "Gender" 19), and, as such, are of importance for this study (see chapter 3.1.4.), this specific aspect of mourning will be briefly discussed in the following section.

2.3. Gendered Grief

Research in psychology and social studies (c.f. S. Z. Moss et al. 1996; Doka and Martin 2010) largely agrees that there is a clear correlation between gender and the behavior of the bereaved. One of the most recent models, that demonstrates the influence of gender on the behavior of the deprived, was established by psychologists Kenneth Doka and Terry Martin (2010). Doka and Martin (4) differentiate between "intuitive grieving patterns", which describes emotional expressions due to bereavement, and "instrumental grief". Instrumental grief is characterized by a lack of affective expressions;² instead, grief is often expressed physically, i.e. through restlessness, or as cognitive, non-affective realizations. Although instrumental grief can be expressed by women as well as men, Doka and Martin (4) suggest that men, due to socialization, are more likely to resort to instrumental grieving patterns. In contrast, women tend to express grief in an intuitive way. As this behavior is seen as normal and culturally appropriate, it is frequently replicated and represented in the media, thus aiding and again reaffirming society's perception of what constitutes a manly way to grieve (Moran 98). Research on how grief is represented in adult literature also indicates a connection between gender, socially prescriptive

² In their earlier work, Doka and Martin (1998) initially used the terms masculine and feminine grieving patterns for intuitive and instrumental grieving patterns. However, while there is a tendency for the respective gender to resort to the previously identically named grieving patterns, this divide should not be seen as prescriptive. To not evoke any misconceptions, the terminology was changed in the revised edition of *Grieving Beyond Gender* (2010) to not evoke any misconceptions (Doka and Martin 7-8).

gender behavior, and literary characters' reactions to bereavement (c.f. Shamir and Travis 2002, Mills 2014, Dreher 2016): Male literary characters react to the loss of a loved one according to stereotypical, culturally prescribed male grieving patterns, lacking affective expressions and appearing stoic. If men, however, do express sorrow, intensity seems to be the deciding key factor that determines if the exhibited grieving behavior is acceptable or not. If it is too long or too tearful, male characters are frequently told to "man-up", and as such, are restricted in their feelings by an unsympathetic environment. This pushes males into a gender-stereotypical manly role, disavowing them of any character traits considered feminine – even emotional reactions after bereavement (Dreher 7).

While research on gendered grief in literature has been conducted previously, masculinity and literary studies have focused nearly exclusively on the mourning adult man. In contrast, research on gendered grief is devastatingly lacking in YA and children's literature. Although some scholars (c.f. Haralson 2002) occasionally use characters from children's literature to strengthen their argumentation, the majority of the primary works analyzed are not children's or young adult books – and the characters that are grieving in a gendered way are not children or adolescents. As gendered behavior is reinforced throughout a lifetime of socialization, and YA novels are at least partially about the protagonist's quest for identity and the self (Coats 321), adolescent characters forced to grow up might show similar gendered reactions to bereavement as adult characters. A study by Moore and Rae (1987), which partially focused on the gendered aspect of grief in children's and YA books, seems to affirm this assumption. Although only examining children's literature of the 60s and early 70s, the results of "Who Dies and Who Cries" (1987) clearly demonstrates that young male and female characters express their grief differently, with males exhibiting more muted reactions towards the bereavement of a loved person. Boys tended to express their grief significantly less often than their female counterparts (Moore and Rae 56-57), often having no visible reaction to the loss of a loved one at all. Female protagonists, on the other hand, were not only more likely to express their grief, they were also more likely to do so through tears or other affective behavior (Moore and Rae 56-57). Although the study is already over 30 years old and is therefore not representative for current children's and YA literature, the discovered correlation between young protagonists' grieving behavior and gender-normative grieving patterns should be kept in mind when conducting research on contemporary YA literature.

Thus, although recent research indicates that stereotypical gendered grieving behavior is reinforced in literature, if, and how, this is also applicable for contemporary YA fiction has not

been sufficiently analyzed hitherto. Future research concerning grief in YA literature should thus investigate if the depicted mourning patterns follow distinctively gendered approaches or allow for more gender-flexible, or “blended” (Doka and Martin 4), portrayals of loss. This brief discussion of gendered grief concludes the introduction and literature review on death and grief in YA literature. As this chapter has demonstrated, research concerning grief in non-bereavement genres is still developing, especially in YA literature. As my thesis is primarily focused on the portrayal of grief in the YA quest genre, the next chapter will examine the genres under analysis, the quest and YA literature in general, in more detail.

3. YA Quest Literature – A Genre Overview

While narratives are aiming for uniqueness through their specific plot twists, characters, etc., each genre has certain conventions that aid the reader during the process of creating meaning while engaging with a literary piece. John Frow defines these conventions as “constrains” (Frow 10) that simultaneously enable and restrict meaning, by providing an underlying structure for each genre. As these underlying structures are repeated in numerous books, readers engage even new stories with certain expectations concerning, for example, the storyline or encountered stock characters. Thus, while the inclusion of fantastic elements is a necessity for novels located in the fantasy genre (Attebery, *Tradition* 2), in a detective novel the sudden appearance of a witch would not be accepted as a functioning trope. Although “generic structures” (Frow 10) are amendable to change, some genres are more rigid than others, and resist transformation to a much higher degree, such as the quest story (Auden 42). Since my hypothesis concerning grieving is largely focused on how the genre of the YA quest narrative interrelates to the hero’s grief, a clear definition of said genre is necessary and has to be conducted. The typical topoi and themes of the quest narrative, as well as the genre’s restrictions and constraints concerning structure, will therefore be analyzed in the following section. Afterwards, the focus will shift to the peculiarities of the YA quest narrative, which should be treated as a separate sub-genre of the quest narrative. Not only differ the developmental processes of YA heroes from the ones their adult counterparts go through, due to the literatures’ focus on coming-of-age processes the YA quest genre should be re-interpreted as a contemporary adaptation of the classic German Bildungsroman.

3.1. Looking for the Quest Narrative

3.1.1. Structuring the Quest

Quest narratives are often defined as following a clear “plot structure”, here understood as a “narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality” (Forster 60) and as skeletal “frameworks” beneath narratives (Abbott 43). What this quest structure actually consists of, however, is not agreed upon. Although the quest genre is often considered one of the oldest and most stable pattern in literary theory (Auden 42), no uniform structure has been established hitherto. Since the 19th century and the work of Edward Tylor, who stated that numerous hero myths follow the same universal plot structure, multiple comparative quest analyses have been conducted (Segal, “Introduction” vii). The analyzed patterns differ greatly from one another – in length, depth of detail, and results – depending on the scholar in question: W. H. Auden, for

example, only briefly delineates a possible quest structure in his essay “The Quest Hero” (1969), by suggesting there are only two fixed points in otherwise completely flexible quest narratives: The “starting out”, which simultaneously marks the end of the hero’s normal life and the beginning of the quest, and secondly, the “final achievement”, in which the hero reaches his³ quest goal (Auden 48). While a middle part does exist, it can consist of numerous adventures, whose quantity “cannot be but arbitrary” (Auden 48). Otto Rank on the other hand proposes that the plot structure underlying quest narratives consists of twelve sequencing steps, which detail the hero’s life from his birth to his ascent to power (Rank 57). Depending on the rigidity or level of flexibility of each analysis, the different quest patterns are more or less applicable to a variety of literary texts. Before focusing on Eragon’s, Todd’s and Percy’s quests in particular, this section will provide a short overview on the different theories concerning quest patterns, in order to identify the most useful structure to analyze the books of my corpus.

One of the more flexible quest patterns, applicable to a wide canon of literature, is the structure identified in Northrop Frye’s essay “Archetypal Criticism: The Theory of Myth” (1957). According to Frye (33-34), the romantic quest, underlying all genres located in the mode of romance, i.e. fairy tales, folklore, as well as legends, always follows a three-part structure, predominantly focused on the struggle the hero has to face: Quest narratives move from “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures” to “the crucial struggle”, and finally end with “the exaltation of the hero”, which Frye describes as the “recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict” (Frye 187). By identifying the “dragon-killing theme” as the quest’s prototypical motif (Frye 189-193), Frye’s theory seems to largely overlap with the layperson’s view of quests as “chivalric activities” (Lacy 114–16), i.e. adventures undertaken by knights in search of, for example, the holy grail. The hero’s life prior- and post of the adventure is of no importance, which could be due to the fact that the romantic hero has intrinsic heroic qualities (Frye 33–34). Therefore, the narrative does not have to justify why this particular character has been chosen, the hero simply has to deliver proof of his heroic character to the world.

A more detailed quest structure analysis is based on the adventures fairy tale heroes have to undertake. In *Morphology of the Folktale* (1958) Vladimir Propp developed a skeleton structure for the Russian fairy tale, based on the genre’s “dramatis personae” (Propp 20), i.e. the characters and their specific functions. After a close reading of one hundred Russian fairy tales,

³ As all quest theories mentioned in this chapter focus predominantly on male heroes, I will only use the male pronoun when discussing heroes in this paper.

Propp suggested a structure consisting of thirty-one steps (Propp 25–65), which can be summarized as follows: a hero wants or has to leave home, on the road he gains friends, enemies and passes trials, until he finally achieves his initial goal (Williams 186). While Propp’s thirty-one step structure is too tailored to fairy tales to be generally applicable to modern quest narratives, two steps are of specific interest for the analysis of YA quest novels: Steps VIII and IX, which are part of the phase Propp termed “complication” (Propp 31). In these steps, “[t]he villain causes harm or injury to a member of the family” and “[m]isfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or dispatched” (Propp 30–36). Although the act of departure is an essential part of all quest theories, Propp’s structure is stressing the villain’s role as the facilitator and instigator of the movement. Thus, instead of setting out on a whim, the hero often reacts to the villain’s action, such as the slaying of parental figures, which creates a lack for the hero and makes a continued stay at home unattractive.

In contrast to Propp’s framework, Otto Rank’s quest structure focuses on the hero’s early life, starting with his birth, leading to his childhood, and eventually ending with him achieving independence, both as a person and heroic figure (Segal, “Theories” 21). In Rank’s structure, the hero is always the child of royal or esteemed parents. As a perceived threat to his father’s power, he is abandoned and left to die, but saved by ordinary people who raise him. When he grows older he is either acknowledged by his birth parents or takes revenge on the father figure, either way attaining “rank and honor” (Rank 57). While focusing on the hero’s early life might seem suitable for the analysis of YA fiction, the ground premise of Rank’s theme is the traumatic birth, the subsequent exposure by the hero’s parents and the boy’s exile. Although not compatible with all of the myths Rank used as illustrations (Segal, “Introduction” xv), the identified structure is perceived as rigid and does not allow for any variation. As it is furthermore not applicable to Percy’s, Eragon’s and Todd’s lives; Rank’s theory is not useful for my structuralist analysis.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), henceforth called *Hero*, Joseph Campbell provided one of the most well-known analyses of the quest narrative hitherto. The first part of his groundbreaking book details the structure of “the hero’s journey”, which describes a three part framework underlying most myths, fairy tales and folklores of various cultures (Howard 6). This identified universal structure, the “monomyth” (Campbell 23), was developed based on the writings of the psychologist Carl Jung, and supposedly signifies not only the hero’s growth, but human development in general (Segal, “Hero’s Quest” 1–2). As described in *Hero*

(Campbell 23), the complete monomyth has three stages: departure – initiation – return. In short, “[a] hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell 23). Each stage consists of at least five sub-categories and is separated from the next great stage by a “threshold” – marking a point of transition – that the hero has to cross in order to advance any further in both the adventure and his development (Campbell 67–68). Although Campbell’s analysis focuses mainly on the second half of the hero’s life, and not on the childhood itself like Rank’s structure (Segal, “Theories” 26), the monomyth emphasizes the importance of the hero leaving his regular life behind before starting his quest. Furthermore, the hero of the monomyth can be raised by his parent(s), whose heritage is unspecified. As Campbell’s quest structure seems to be the most useful theory for the analysis of the death of a loved, parental figure, the next section will examine the monomyth structuring the hero’s journey in more detail.

3.1.2. The Hero’s Journey

As mentioned above, in the universal structure of the monomyth the hero’s journey is divided into three stages. The first stage of the hero’s journey, “departure” or “separation”, not only marks the start of the adventure, but also the hero’s withdrawal from the normal world. “Call to Adventure”, the first category of separation, indicates that the hero’s previous life is drawing to a close (Campbell 42–43). By chance or fate the hero encounters forces beyond his control, connected to the looming adventure ahead. As adventures seldom start ‘in medias res’, one or possible more announcements signal the dangers and trials about to come. Campbell (44) prescribes this function to one certain character, the “herald” or “announcer of the adventure”, who often takes on a frightening or repulsive appearance. Through his or her arrival, the individual’s normal life is interrupted to such a degree that it is irrevocably changed. Although some characters ignore the quest, this usually appears to be impossible, as the mundane life often loses any appeal previously held (Campbell 46-48). Thus, in the monomyth’s next stage, “Answering the Call” (Campbell 48), the call to adventure is usually accepted, and the hero leaves for the quest or is sent away by sympathetic forces. However, since not every herald is on the hero’s side, and “malignant agents” might also deliver the call, the adventure might be jumpstarted by destructive forces sending an unwilling or unsuspecting hero away (Campbell 48), a scenario reminiscent of Propp’s structure. Although, in this scenario, the hero has not responded to the call of his own volition, it has been answered anyway. Should the call be

rejected by the hero, the journey enters the stage “Refusal of the Call” (Campbell 49), which includes the complete negation of the quest and everything it entails. As the quest signifies human development, an unanswered call has negative repercussions: The hero becomes a victim, who, without help from outside forces, has nearly no other possibility than to fail in any endeavor undertaken thenceforward. The quest and his development have failed – before they have even begun – and end unsuccessfully (Campbell 49). If the hero does not submit to a dedicated self-finding process, which might change his mind enough to accept the call, he must hope that some form of “supernatural aid” saves him from his predicament (Campbell 53).

Supernatural aid can take on a number of forms, the most frequent one being a wizened figure, i.e. a wizard or a fairy, that provides the hero with an – often magical – object needed or useful for the journey to come (Campbell 57). Albeit both male and female figures can act in the role of the aiding character, or, in case of godlike beings, do not have to be bound by gender at all, Campbell mentions (59) that most guides are male. Campbell’s description of supernatural aid closely resembles both Propp’s character description of the “donor” personae (Propp 39) and Auden’s description of the “helper” (Auden 44) – which seems to make this stage an essential part of most analyses of quest structures. However, while the guide is identified as an important persona, the theories are inconsistent concerning the length of their presence: Although most theories note that the guide leaves, or is left behind, sooner or later, there is no consensus on the point of departure. In Campbell’s hero’s journey, for example, the guide is left behind before completely entering the magical world; various stories such as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), however, show a prolonged stay of the wise figure past a number of trials or even a reappearance at a later date.

As soon as the hero is ready to set out, he enters the stage “Crossing of the First Threshold” (Campbell 64), which marks the actual act of departing from home. While the hero might have been able to turn back up until now, he leaves his old surroundings behind when he crosses the threshold’s boundary to partake in the quest. At times this boundary is protected by a “threshold guardian”, who not only prohibits anyone from leaving, but also indicates that the safety of the known world is, past this point, irredeemably over (Campbell 64). By beating or tricking the guardian, or if one is absent, simply stepping over the boundary, the hero enters a new, unfamiliar part of the world (Campbell 67–68). For Campbell (74), the feelings caused by the act of crossing the boundary indicate a new stage, both in the quest structure - called “Belly of the Whale” – as well as in the hero’s development. Just like Jonas, who is swallowed by a giant

fish⁴ and trapped in darkness over three days and nights (*Die Bibel* Jona 2.1-11), the unknown completely envelops the quest hero. It is a period of growth, in which he has to come to terms with himself and his unconscious fears, in order to re-emerge at a later date, bearing new talents (Campbell and Moyers 146–47). Thus, in Jungian fashion, the overstepping of the threshold symbolizes the death of the hero's previous self to allow for his rebirth. Although he might win a fight against the guardian, true victory is not gained – instead the unknown world beyond the threshold swallows the hero whole, pulling him under (Campbell 74).

The second stage – “Trials and Victories of Initiation” – covers the main part of the quest; starting with the training and trials the hero has to master, leading up to a final showdown between hero and villain. In *Hero* (28-29) Campbell defines six subsections for this stage. The first category, “Road of Trials” (Campbell 81), is significantly longer than the other sections in many narratives, since it includes most adventures the hero has to endure in order to reach his goal: Slaying dragons, tricking trolls, and helping people in need are only few examples of the various adventures awaiting the hero. These trials facilitate further character development, so that all the abilities needed to gain the object may be acquired a priori. Between the trials and obtaining the quest objective, the “Ultimate Boon”, Campbell identifies three subcategories in which the hero, in conformity with psychoanalysis, may experience and resolve an unconscious oedipal crisis: “Meeting with the Goddess”, “Woman as Temptress”, and “Atonement with the Father” (Campbell 92-125). After the initiatory adventures have been overcome, the male hero may meet a “goddess”, a female character the hero is either enamored with, that represents life itself and personifies the good mother, or a horrid figure representing the bad mother in an anti-goddess fashion (Campbell 92). Since Campbell relates the monomyth to the psychoanalytical teachings of Carl Jung, he ascribes having a relationship and eventually marrying the female character to, firstly, the ability to gain mastery of the life she symbolizes, and, secondly, the hero's desire to be in a sexual relationship with his mother (Campbell 92). Typical for oedipal situations, however, the realization of the mother's identity leads to a crisis, as the hero sees that “he has become himself the father” (Campbell 115). Furthermore, the realization of the bride being the mother does not diminish the hero's desire for her. In order to advance, Campbell's hero has to overcome his desire and leave the mother figure behind (Campbell 101-102). By seeking “Atonement with the Father”-figure, who has godlike qualities as well, the hero can find additional salvation for the committed sin and overcome the unconscious rivalry with the father, as well as gain temporary godlike comprehension (Campbell 124–25). Albeit

⁴ Although the story is commonly known as Jonah and the whale, the species of the monster that swallowed the prophet was not specified in the Greek and Hebrew versions of the bible.

possibly still relevant for some quest narratives, applying these categories to contemporary literature may be problematic. Apart from the fact that Campbell's quest structure suddenly seems to exclusively focus on male characters, foregoing female heroines (Pearson and Pope 4, in Nicholson 188), the "Mastery of the Female" implies not only the sexual objectification of the female love interest, but also her inability to participate as an active agent in such a relationship (Nicholson 189–90). Campbell's examples of stories starring heroines are not redeeming this stage, as the female is not in the agency role when meeting the, here male, godly figure; instead, she is supposed to bow down to the god's wishes. Heroines undergoing the hero's journey, so Nicholson (190), are thus only presented as passive, sexualized beings, either through their motherhood or by being victims of their own or others' desire. As such, "woman as a hero is lost to the greater, symbolic Woman" (Nicholson 191), which, while not of consequences for the following analysis, reveals some of the problematic aspects the hero's journey presents for feminist readings of quest narratives.

After becoming one with the father, the hero may experience a state of "Apotheosis". Campbell describes this process, which characterizes the fifth section of initiation, as the hero becoming "more than man" (133): The hero gains attributes of the male god and female goddess, and thus achieves a unisex, divine state, transcending dualism as well as the limits of consciousness. Now knowledgeable of everything, the hero is equipped with god-like comprehension (Campbell 127-131), and, in some modern quest myths, even god-like power. Once all heroic traits are gained, the "Ultimate Boon" (Campbell 155) is finally found. Although the quest objective can take the form of any object or may indeed be a person, for Campbell (158) "the boon is simply a symbol of life energy stepped down to the requirements of a certain specific case". Whereas in some myths the hero's heroic qualities are further demonstrated by the supreme ease shown in gaining the quest objective, others require a final show of wit, trickery, or strength – sometimes even leading to a final battle between hero and villain or last guardian respectively. Regardless of how the hero achieves his goal, gaining the boon marks the end of the second stage of Campbell's monomyth, leading to the final stage of the hero's journey – "The Return" (Campbell 167).

Simply receiving the boon is in most cases not the end of the quest. Just as Frye identified the renewal of the land as the essential quest's goal (Frye 189–92), Campbell named the delivery of the acquired boon to the community left behind as the ultimate end of the complete hero journey (Campbell 167). The third stage of the monomyth describes the various possibilities the return may be realized in narratives. If the hero returns home of his own volition, the "Magic

Flight” (Campbell 170) begins: Should the hero have gained the favor of benign forces at one point in his adventures, the return home may be accelerated with their assistance. If, however, villains or other opponents still prevail, the hero might be pursued or has to overcome various obstacles in order to escape (Campbell 170). Furthermore, the return requires the crossing of another threshold, beyond which the previously known and, in comparison to the wondrous, mundane world awaits. Although he has changed and become a more complete, divine being, the world left behind has frequently stayed the same and has difficulties comprehending the hero’s otherness. Similar, accepting the old status quo as his new reality can become a hardship for the hero, who now has to learn how to combine both worlds that shape him (Campbell 194, 196). As crossing the return threshold is frequently a one way-street, the hero’s return does not always occur voluntarily. In the “Refusal of Return”, the hero rejects crossing the threshold, instead staying forever in the magical land he became part of during his quest (Campbell 167). While the refusal might be successful at times, often the world left behind calls the hero home or actually forces him to return, thus leading to what Campbell termed a “Rescue from Without” (Campbell 178). Only seldom is the hero allowed to have it all – few mythological figures are so-called “Master[s] of Two Worlds” (Campbell 197), who are not constrained by the threshold and can pass its boundaries without consequences. The goal of Campbell’s monomyth is reached when heroes have attained a state of complete acceptance and are at peace with themselves. As such, the hero may act as an agent of universal will, while still retaining the “Freedom to Live” his life in any way he wishes (Campbell 206, 209). This last stage completes the final act of the hero’s journey.

Against common misconception, myths do not have to follow the outlined structure precisely – the theory of the monomyth can be applied creatively to each narrative (Howard 7). The sequence and number of the steps are adaptable – while some steps of the monomyth may be omitted in a story, others may be repeated numerous times. Some myths therefore consist of one (more or less) complete circle, starting with the call to adventure and ending with freedom to live, whereas others might feature multiple circles or only specific sub-categories (Campbell 228). While numerous writers adapt the monomyth and restructure the model according to their own purposes, LeGuin for example reimagines the monomyth in many of her books (Rochelle 33–34), Campbell’s original structure has largely remained unchanged, and is still used for literary analyses of quest narratives (c.f. Stroda). One exception is Christopher Vogler’s revision of the hero’s journey, *The Writer’s Journey* (2007), which had a considerable impact on the movie industry and popular culture as such (Vogler xxx). While the newly identified

structure mostly mirrors Campbell's, Vogler left out most stages exclusively focused on psychoanalysis and established new sub-stages dedicated to character agency. As *The Writer's Journey* was initially designed as a screenwriting aid (Vogler xxix), not all adaptations have to be taken into account for the analysis of YA books. However, two alterations are especially useful for the present study: First of all, Vogler omits the stage "Belly of the Whale" entirely, in favor of expanding the sub-category "Crossing the Threshold" (Vogler 6). In the monomyth, the hero is passively swallowed by the new world, and is overwhelmed by the new forces found. Vogler subsumes this category into the "Threshold stage" and characterizes the hero as an active agent by letting him take a "leap of fate" (Vogler 130): By actively choosing to 'leap', or simply cross, into the new world, the hero acknowledges the unknown. Although he might be scared, the new world can be entered willingly and under the belief that his goal can somehow be achieved. Thus, instead of having no control while being drawn in by the elements of the threshold, the hero might choose to surround himself with a new, unfamiliar world. The second adaptation is the exclusion of the three categories connected to the oedipal desire, in lieu of the development of the focal character and his preparation for the crucial struggle. Thus, instead of narrowing the hero's struggle to the marriage with the mother, or to the battle for acknowledgement with the both terrifying and forgiving father, Vogler establishes a larger category termed "Ordeal", which describes the central crisis necessary to obtain ultimate boon (Vogler 6). Although this crucial struggle may be represented in various ways depending on the quest goal, it is usually a final confrontation between the hero and his greatest fear (Vogler 15). This focus on the hero's agency and the final struggle, as well as the flexibility on what the struggle entails, makes Vogler's reinvention of the hero's journey quite useful for the further analysis of YA quest fiction.

After analyzing Campbell's model in detail, the monomyth seems to be the most suitable method for the analysis of my chosen YA books. For precise examinations of specific points of departure as well as transition, however, aspects of Vogler's adaptation and Propp's theory of the fairy tale quest should be taken into consideration as well. Before focusing on the development and character of the young adult hero himself, the next section will briefly detail two elements that additionally frame the quest narrative: The parameters that structure the quest narrative's movement through time and space.

3.1.3. Spatial and temporal constrains

3.1.3.1. *The passage of time*

Motifs related to time, i.e. “urgency”, “speed” or “haste”, seem to be recurring in numerous quest narratives. Frequently either the hero’s own life or a third parties’ is at immediate risk of being harmed, sometimes the whole world is even threatened by impending doom. As a result, quest goals are often time sensitive: Instead of leisurely treading along, heroes rush to achieve their goal once their quest has started (see the analysis of Percy’s quest in chapter 5.1.1.) However, not all heroes acknowledge the urgency of their quest; some choose to ignore the impending danger, leading to the threat catching up with the protagonists sooner rather than later: In *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954) by J.R.R Tolkien Frodo postpones leaving Hobbiton, and leisurely prepares his journey for months. Finally ready, Frodo has to realize that Dark Riders have invaded the previously safe Shire in search for the one ring, leading to a hasty “flight” from danger. As these two examples have shown, the motifs of urgency and haste seem to have profound effects on the quest narrative, influencing both characters’ interactions and decisions as well as the quests’ internal structures in various ways. The effects of speed and haste thus seem to provide new constrains for the quest narrative, affecting the presentation of events and emotions. The nature and scope of this influence can be understood by examining any reciprocal interaction between the identified time motifs in quest narratives and Gerard Genette’s model of narrative time. Although haste and speed do not seem to overly impact the concept of order, duration and frequency are affected by the motifs under analysis.

In his groundbreaking essay *Narrative Discourse* (1990), Genette categorized literary time according to three criteria: order, duration, and frequency. The first criteria, order, “compare[s] the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story” (Genette 35). Although order is not overly influenced by “speed” and “urgency”, it has to be mentioned that YA quest narratives repeatedly mainly favor a linear succession of events. Furthermore, YA quest narratives often start ‘in medias res’, at a point in the hero’s life just before the actual adventure. In *Knife*, the reader immediately accompanies Todd on a trip to the swamp where the teenager is confronted with Viola’s Silence, which acts as the quest announcer (Ness 1–5). In novels starting with a flash-forward or a voice-over of a retrospective first-person narrator such as Percy Jackson (Riordan 1), the narration again swiftly proceeds to an event in close proximity to the call to adventure. After providing a short overview of the hero’s current situation in the mundane world, the plot swiftly moves forward to the actual departure and

quest, ending with the hero reaching their quest goals. However, this mostly linear movement still allows for anachronic diversion, i.e. the inclusion of events set in the chronological past or future (Genette 48). Events that transpired prior to the novel's starting point and are of importance to the overall storyline can be included as a recollection or retelling of events by specific characters. In contrast to anachronic scenes introduced by narrators, i.e. "analepsis" and "prolepsis" (Genette 48), these "character motivated anachronies" do not have to disturb the chronology of events and are still included in the primary linear narration (Rimmôn-Qênân 51). Hence, the inclusion of past events does not have to inhibit the overall forward focus that shapes sequencing in YA quest novels (Rimmôn-Qênân 51). A possible reason for this forward focus is the rapid pace many YA quest narratives seem to have, an aspect of narrative time that is influenced by speed and urgency to a much higher degree.

In contrast to order, the motifs urgency and speed can greatly influence duration – the second category of time. Genette (33), following German literary theories such as Gunther Müller, differentiates between "narrative time", i.e. the external time needed to read a story, and the "story time", i.e. the time passing in the story. Apart from dialogues, where narrative time and story time might be almost equal, the two temporal concepts seldom overlap and are thus, on their own, no adequate indicator of duration (Genette 87). Instead Genette claims that duration can be measured according to the narrative "speed" of a text. Speed, nowadays generally referred to as pace, is measured by setting the narrative and story time in relation to one another, i.e. by comparing the duration of the story and the text length designated to it (Rimmon-Kenan 52). While admitting that a continuum of narrative speeds, peaking at two extremes with numerous intermediate stages, should theoretically exist, Genette (93-94) postulates that only four forms of narrative speeds, or narrative movements, are conventionally used. Two forms are the extreme speeds at both ends of the theoretical speed continuum: During ellipsis "a nonexistent section of narrative corresponds to some duration of story" (Genette 93). Descriptive pause, on the other hand, describes a text passage where "some section of narrative discourse corresponds to a nonexistent diegetic duration" (Genette 93). The other frequently used forms of pace are scene, which is conventionally realized in the aforementioned dialogue in which story time and narration time might be nearly identical, and the summary, which summarizes larger amounts of story time in condensed and shortened narrative discourse (Genette 94). According to literary critics such as Bridgeman (58), the narrative movement may serve the reader as an indicator of the importance ascribed to each event: Plot-wise unimportant events covering various lengths of story time are usually summarized or left out, while the

narrative speed of other events may be stretched and presented in great detail in order to foreground their significance (Bridgeman 58). Instead of keeping a “constant pace” with a consistent relation between story and textual time (Rimmôn-Qênân 53), the speed of most narratives is thus frequently accelerated or decelerated for stylistic effect. In narratives structured by urgency and speed, plot-heavy scenes regularly follow one another. YA quest narratives, which especially in the second and third act of the quest often accumulate numerous high-activity scenes, frequently seem to follow a rapid narrative pace. Fast paced narratives are often described by critics as “flow[ing] from place to place [...] from one activity to the next without establishing a series of complete breaks separating one scene clearly from one another” (Dewald 148). In addition, longer descriptions and side stories are often exchanged for shorter summaries (Keller 119), and ellipses are frequently used to pass over segments of narrative time (Lapidge 74). The effect of this fast-paced narration might not always be immediately obvious, as rapid narrative pace does not automatically restrict quest narratives to overall short story time-frames. The overall story time of fast paced narrative fiction can still cover months or years: In *Eragon* one year of internal story time passes for Eragon between finding Saphira’s egg and battling the Shadow at the Warden stronghold at the end of the novel. As long as decelerated sequences are introduced or followed by accelerated scenes, such as ellipsis or summaries, which leads to rapid leaps in the narration, the fast pace of the narration can still be maintained over a long period of story time – with the hero hurrying from one problem to another for months on end. However, this urgent rushing might restrict the time available for the hero’s ongoing development; especially the depiction of emotions, and the time available to heroes to actually process their feelings, might be cut short if plot-heavy scenes constantly follow one another. The correlation between duration, rapid narrative pace, and Eragon’s, Todd’s and Percy’s reaction to their parents’ deaths as well as the subsequent grieving processes, will be a major focus of the analysis in chapter 5. As the analysis will demonstrate, narrative pace is not solely restricted to duration - speed also effects the number of times the hero’s emotions are represented in the novel. Fast pace is also connected to frequency, the third aspect of narrative time identified by Gerard Genette.

Frequency, Genette’s third criteria, describes how often an event is narrated compared to the number of times the event occurs in the story. The same event can either be narrated “singulative”, the most common frequency mode in which one event is narrated once, via “repetition”, i.e. the multiple telling of a singular event, or via “iteration”, the “single telling of multiple events” (Genette 113-116). Literary critic Mieke Bal (111) expanded on Genette’s

concept by including two additional levels of frequency: “plurisingular”, where multiple events are narrated multiple times – a category subsumed under “singulative” in *Narrative Discourse* (1990) – and ‘varisingular’, a narrative technique where multiple events are narrated an unequal number of times. Although the choice of frequency mode is sometimes a purely stylistic one (Bridgeman 59), certain modes of frequency correlate commonly with specific aspects of order and duration: So is iteration frequently employed in summaries, whereas repetition is often used in anachronic excursions (Genette 156-159). Considering that anachronic sequences are often associated with characters’ memories of previously narrated events, i.e. the memory of the departed parental figure or their death scene, I am following Bal’s interpretation of anachronies, who argues that “every internal retroversion or anticipation that does not fill in an ellipsis” is in fact a matter of repetition (110). As the chosen mode of frequency influences how the narrative and said event are perceived by the reader (Bridgeman 59), frequency can determine if the event is understood as being more or less important for the overall narrative and plot structure. Repeatedly referred to events accumulate more text space and thus narrated time, which can increase the events’ perceived importance (Bal 102). Consequently, although events summarized via iteration often provide necessary background information for the overall story line, readers might interpret the glossed over passages as plot-wise unimportant. An analysis of the author’s choice of frequency mode when describing specific events, such as grief after a parent’s demise, might therefore yield new insights concerning the event’s significance in relation to story, character, and reader.

Apart from common correlations between order, duration and frequency, the choice of frequency mode used is additionally influenced by the genre of the text. According to numerous theories on quest narratology (c.f. Auden, Campbell, Propp), repeated actions and events are a reoccurring concept in the quest genre: Especially in fairy tales, which are often included in the canon of classical quest literature, repeated actions, multiple trials, and recurring characters are frequently used as a stylistic device (Auden 42-44). However, none of the quest structure theories previously mentioned analyze which frequency mode is used to describe said repeated actions, i.e. if they are introduced as repetitions or iterations. As the theories’ insights concerning frequency are further mostly based on fairy tales, their validity concerning other quest narratives has to be questioned. I propose that quest literature focused on speed and urgency seldom applies repetitions, since frequent description of the same event might lead to the decrease of the overall narrative pace. Thus, important events might only be mentioned in a singulative fashion or may be even summarized via iteration in order to preserve the rapid

speed of the narrative. While an in-depth analysis of all instances of repetition or iteration in *Eragon*, *Percy* and *Knife* would go far beyond the scope of this research, I will examine my hypotheses concerning the lack of repetition in connection to the depiction of grief in chapter 5. In addition to the temporal aspect, the forward focus of the character and the plot also affects hero's actual movement through space. The next section will therefore examine how haste influences spatiality in quest narratives.

3.1.3.2. Spatiality and the quest

The first stage of the hero's journey provides a clear spatial description valid for many quest narratives: Next to the ordinary world, a "dream landscape" exists (Campbell 81). Although Campbell describes the world behind the threshold only vaguely, allowing for various adaptations, the key difference between the two worlds is the sudden danger and the constant trials the hero has to overcome (Campbell 81-82). In many fantasy novels, the existence or non-existence of magic is the differentiating factor between the ordinary world, or the mundane, and the dream landscape, which I will for fantasy novels also call the fantastic. The dream landscape and the ordinary world are separated from each other and can only be reached via a "threshold" that most inhabitants of the ordinary world either fear or lack the ability to cross (Campbell 64). The threshold thus acts as a "portal" or "window" (Dannenbergh 76), connecting the two worlds and allowing for an escape. As Campbell has not closely defined what constitutes a threshold, I suggest that these portals can take on various forms: Ranging from material objects – just as the cupboard in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C.S. Lewis – to tears in the fabric of reality – i.e. the metaphorically called "windows" (Pullman 23) used by Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry in *The Subtle Knife* (2002) by Philip Pullman – or a simple road seldom taken, leading out of a familiar village towards the unknown. Per Farah Mendelsohn's classification of fantastic stories, many fantasy quest narratives can therefore be defined as "portal fantasies", in which "a fantastic world" is "entered through a portal" (Mendelsohn xix). Although portal fantasies can be solely set in secondary worlds, a transition from a relatively mundane to a fantastical way of life still takes place and is necessary for the plot of the narration. As the fantastic and the mundane generally do not interact in stereotypical quest fantasies, danger does not cross the threshold and is purely part of the unknown world outside the portal. However, should the fantastic enter the ordinary world of the quest hero, the narrative shows signs of being an "intrusion fantasy" (Mendelsohn xiv). Thus, at times, two categories of the fantastic coincide within the same narrative. Although Mendelsohn states that such categorical

crossovers seldom occur in relation to portal quest narratives (Mendelsohn 2), the following thesis questions that statement: Both *Eragon* and *Percy* are representatives of the intrusion-portal-fantasy. The two books start out as intrusion fantasies but begin to follow the typical portal fantasy structure at the passing of the threshold. *Knife* is the only outlier, seeing as the novel is a crossover between an immersive fantasy and a sci-fi novel, due to its extraterrestrial setting and other science fiction elements, i.e. aliens and spaceships (c.f. section 5.3.1.).

Another important difference between the mundane and fantastic world is the existence and the experience of distance. The ordinary world is usually spatially confined and thus acts as a “container” (Bridgeman 55): Even though the containment does not have to be physical, i.e. through walls or geographic boundaries, such as being enclosed by the sea or dangerous mountain ranges, leaving the ordinary world is often difficult or prohibited in the hero’s childhood and prior to the quest. Contrarily, the fantastic world is often represented as wide, open space. While full of danger and forces not previously encountered, going on a quest enables the hero to experience parts of this vast world for the first time, although his freedom to actually explore the otherness on his own might be restricted. One example for both the expanse lying beyond the threshold and the hero’s restricted movement within is Harry Potter’s limited experience of the Wizarding World. In Joanne K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (1999), Harry is introduced to the Wizarding World, a magical place accessible through portals by individuals with magical abilities or their guidance. Harry receives a small peak of the new world’s otherness and magnitude when visiting Diagon Alley. Although interested in nearly everything he sees, the only shops the young boy turned wizard can visit are the ones required to buy his school supplies, since his temporary guide, the half-giant Hagrid, sets the path, before sending Harry back to his mundane home (Rowling 67–87). Instead of exploring the new area, the foci of quest narratives repeatedly lie on a linear, forward movement: In this aspect, the movement of quest protagonists resembles fairy-tale heroes, who commonly follow a straightforward path before reaching their end-goal (Bridgeman 60). However, as linear movement is not always a possibility due to obstacles, characters are occasionally forced to follow an indirect route. Although this diversion might force the journey temporarily to an involuntary halt, the movement is generally not obstructed for a long time.

In conclusion, the physical journey might be considered a necessary plot device for the separation of the hero and their usual environment, engulfing them in a new world with different rules. However, as Mendelsohn has already stated, the journey is often simply a metaphor for a coming of age, as well as a recognized “functioning trope” (Mendelsohn 7–8). While

Campbell's quest always revolves around a 'journey', it is irrelevant if said journey is physical or mental (Vogler 7), as long as its ultimate goal is the protagonist's development. The next section will elucidate the hero's development further.

3.1.4. How Boys become Young Heroes

Although YA heroes often participate in the hero's journey, they are no prime examples of Campbell's typical Jungian understanding of heroism. In general, Campbell's theory requires heroes who "must be fully developed egos ready to encounter the unconscious from which they have long been separated" (Segal, "Theories of Myth" 26), which is not the case in young adult books that share similarities with the Bildungsroman. However, the young adult hero does not completely oppose Campbell's hero structure; instead he shows specific peculiarities due to his age and required development that have to be illuminated in order to understand the difference between the adult and the adolescent hero.

As YA quest narratives commonly feature young protagonists, unfamiliar with the danger that is going to disrupt their lives, development and growing up are key motives of the genre. Most male main characters of YA quest narratives start off as boys, either according to their biological age or due to their behavior; their adventure being the facilitator of their development to young adults. In the beginning of the narrative, the adolescent hero therefore often shows particular childlike tendencies, without being one of Campbell's typical childhood heroes, who are solely preoccupied with the return to the magical land they were exiled from as babies (Campbell 278). Rather, the YA heroes frequently share similarities with Propp's and Lüthi's classic fairy tale heroes: The future hero is often a biologically disadvantaged one, being the weakest and youngest member in the household. Frequently they occupy a weak or extreme position in the community, by being orphans, especially poor or rich children, i.e. members of the aristocracy that are not fully integrated into the group due to their social standing (Lüthi 152–53). Thus, even more so than with adult heroes, the child and YA hero share the attribute to be "easily detachable" (Potts 222–223). Orphans or boys with insufficient parental figures appear to be especially isolated from the other members of society. Famous examples include Harry Potter, as well as Will Parry, who is the de facto caretaker of his sick mother prior to his quest (). If parental figures are present as well as positively invested in the hero's life, their presence might actually be a hindrance to the start of the adventure: not only can their guidance "come to be felt as unduly constrictive" (Brewer; in Potts 224), their protection might inhibit the individual development of the hero. Thus, caring or engaged parents are frequently

dismissed from the narrative, which not only isolates the child hero, and as such eases their departure from the familiar world, but also forces them to become active agents and to make their own decision.

As soon as the child has left the parental guidance and protection, young heroes can enter the next stage of their development. The act of growing up is often exemplified by the mastery of specific skill sets, such as fighting or magic. In a study investigating the different forms of education in Terry Pratchett's Discworld universe, Haberkorn and Reinhardt (53) suggest that a hero's or heroine's reaction to the magical powers and supernatural things encountered can be an indicator of the character's maturity. While "true" children wonder but subsequently simply accept the fantastic, adults need logic and rules in order to accept magic – in other words, grown-ups want to know and control the supernatural force of the magical world (Haberkorn and Reinhardt 53). Thus, so Haberkorn and Reinhardt (53), one can measure the development and inner age of a character according to their usage and reaction to magical abilities. James Kincaid (qtd. in Billone 182) dramatically calls Alice a "false child", as Alice cannot accept the miracles of Wonderland and reacts to the illogical games of its inhabitants with scorn – and therefore as an adult would. Structuring and commanding magic and special abilities is thus interpreted as a sign of maturity. By implication, the process of growing up, of going through adolescence and "becoming" a hero, is signified by the youths' control of their supernatural abilities. How this control is gained, if the heroes learn in a formalized school setting like Hogwarts, or via exclusive mentor training as Eragon receives, is not important. However, even while mastering their extraordinary abilities, young heroes tend to stay relatable and do not immediately gain superiority over the other inhabitants of the fantasy world (Potts 222). Instead they can be lost, confused and in need of aid, portrayed as being unable to completely figure out what is happening without an outside source (Lüthi 154). Due to their inexperience and young age, children and adolescents are thus allowed to be in bigger need of mentor guidance than adults, who sometimes are gifted with inherent magical prowess and faster control. Thus, the magical aid or guide might even fill the dual role of being both teacher as well as surrogate or symbolic parental figure during the first trials in the magical world (Potts 223).

While boy heroes seldom mature enough to be considered grown men over the course of one single book, they develop from children to adolescent males, or from teenagers to young men. This physical and/or mental growth is frequently accompanied by a further development in the teenage boys' "gender identit[ies]" (Mosse 10), i.e. how they define themselves according to other men and which masculine gender role they assume. As previously mentioned, both

Campbell's and Vogler's journey are predominantly focused on male heroes and the masculine experience of the heroic. The heroes described in both theories seem to have gender identities that correlate strongly with prevailing stereotypical ideas of masculine gender roles and manliness. One of the underlying ideas shaping the opinion on what constitutes manliness is the theory of "the manly ideal" (Mosse 3–4). The manly ideal, a highly resilient stereotype of the perfect man, was identified by historian and masculinity scholar George Mosse. Emerging in the late 18th century, and still relevant for the public mindset on stereotypical masculinity nowadays, the manly ideal simultaneously set the norm for both a man's looks as well as his behavior (Mosse 5). As such, the perfect man had to have impeccable morals and should embody supposedly courtly attributes, e.g. courage and honor (Glover and Kaplan 60), abilities highly important for the heroic quest hero. Especially the development of a strong moral compass and leadership skills, i.e. being capable of making hard choices while being morally stout, are attributes that distinguish the YA hero from the innocent boy. As soul, personality and individual growth were supposedly mirrored by the body and outer appearance, being physically fit and strong was of great importance for the manly ideal (Mosse 23). In YA books, the development of the hero's body is often part of the narrative: Through training and the passing of hardships stereotypical masculine attributes, such as muscles and broader shoulders, are frequently gained. Since Mosse's manly ideal is based on the warrior cache of society, battle scars of previous fights are also considered masculine and a sign of progressing from child- to manhood. Although Mosse mentions that the manly ideal diminished around the 1950s, it still has a lasting effect on the conservative idea of gender and manliness prevalent in the society of the 21st century: John Stephens, who summarized current stereotypical gender schemata in his article "Gender, Genre, and Children's Literature", provided a list with characteristics for the "socially desirable male" (Stephens 19). The image the listed attributes, i.a. strong, violent, tough, rational, protective (Stephens 18-19), evoke is strikingly similar to the manly ideal of Mosse and the idea of the pre-World War One soldier; and are shared by the heroes Campbell and Vogler describe in their quest narrative structures.

However, the development of modern YA heroes is not solely chained to their developing masculinity. Adolescent heroes of modern YA books can question the stereotypical masculinity, and, at times, exhibit numerous non-traditional masculine traits. In his recent paper "Finding a Place on the Literary Map", William Thompson passionately argues that Harry Potter should be seen as a "double-gendered hero" (Thompson 36–37): Although Harry often acts as the typical heteronormative hero, he experiences a classic fairy tale heroine upbringing. Even his inherent special abilities, to love and his willingness to sacrifice himself, are attributes

commonly ascribed to the female gender (Thompson 46–47). Still, in the end, even a double-gendered Harry Potter confirms to the typical masculine heroic role by slaying his adversary – Voldemort, the lone, dominating, and violent masculine figure – in single combat (Steveker 80). Thus, even if male YA heroes might exhibit feminine traits nowadays, becoming a man that adheres to Mosse’s stereotypical manly ideal still ultimately seems to guide the development of many teenage heroes.

As this section has shown, the developmental processes of young adult heroes differ from the one their adult counterparts go through, mostly due to their additional focus on the coming-of-age processes. In the next section, I will discuss the second part of the genre under analysis: YA literature in general, as well as its connection to one of the most classic coming-of-age genres, the German Bildungsroman.

3.2. The YA Quest Narrative, the Bildungsroman, and youthful development

Due to the quest novel’s focus on development, which is especially dominant in narratives with teenage protagonists, the overarching influence of YA literature itself has to be considered. But what is YA literature? YA literature can be used as an umbrella term for a variety of novels and has multiple definitions, some more detailed than others: Some critics, such as White (xii), center their definition solely on the main protagonist’s age, who is generally between 12 and 19 years old. Other critics, such as Sheila Schwartz, suggest that YA literature includes all literature that is either/or primarily written for a teenage audience, has teenage protagonists, and is written about topics adolescents are generally interested in (Schwartz, cited in Trites 7). Although common, broad definitions like that are too vague to aid the following analysis of the YA quest genre. In “Young Adult Literature”, Karen Coats suggests a more precise definition by differentiating between YA and children’s literature. For Coats (322), the complexity of morality is the defining factor. She therefore proposes that adolescent literature should depict a “moral universe” that does not just adhere to a simple black-and-white schema. Instead, the reader should be confronted with complex moral issues. Furthermore, Coats mentions that most YA literature also focuses on the general development and growth of its protagonists, especially the transition period between child- and adulthood that is wrought with change (Coats 320). According to this definition, YA adult novels seem to share many similarities with literature of the Bildungsroman genre. Often translated as “coming-of-age novel” or “novel of development” (Abrams 193), the Bildungsroman focuses primarily on the hero’s transition from child- to adulthood, and, as such, has development, loss of innocence, and initiation as its

dominant themes. Although glossaries and dictionaries already connected the Bildungsroman to novels of formation and development in the 20th century (cf. Baldick 69), detailed analyses examining current YA literature and the classic Bildungsroman were scarce until the turn of the century. Since *Percy*, *Knife*, and *Eragon* can be classified as YA quest narratives, I will take a closer look at the interconnection between YA literature, the quest narrative, and the Bildungsroman: First, the link between the Bildungsroman and the novel of development will be analyzed in the following section. After a brief overview of the historical and cultural aspects that shaped the Bildungsroman and the development of the genre since the 19th century, contemporary research focusing on the connection between the Bildungsroman to YA literature will be examined. The final section will exemplify why the YA quest narrative, as a specific sub-genre of the YA novel, is especially suitable for a comparison to the Bildungsroman.

3.2.1. The Bildungsroman

Although entries in literary glossaries (c.f. Baldwick) show that the Bildungsroman is nowadays frequently associated with the coming-of-age novel and the novel of development, this has not always been the case. In its original, historical context, the Bildungsroman was a very limited genre. Although clearly established and recognized as a distinct genre after the appearance of Christoph Wieland's *Geschichte des Agatheon* (1767) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796), the term 'Bildungsroman' was not widely used until the 19th century (Kontje 7–9). While sometimes translated as 'novel of development' or 'novel of formation' in glossaries (c.f. Abrams, Cuddon), most literary critics tend to use the original German name, due to the problematic aspect of translating the term 'Bildung', which has a variety of meanings in German (Hardin, "An Introduction" xi) and the genre's historic origin in the German-speaking world (Kontje ix–xi). Consisting of the two German words 'Bildung' and 'Roman', the compound noun was first coined by Karl Morgenstern, a Prussian professor. As Morgenstern was not well known, and the term was only used in a series of lectures held at the Imperial University in Dorpart, as well as in a journal published by Morgenstern himself, the term had to be re-coined by Wilhelm Dilthey in 1870 (Martini 2–3). In Morgenstern's and Dilthey's understanding, the term Bildungsroman describes German novels whose plot focuses on the development of its young, mostly male, main character⁵, who is in conflict with himself and the world. By consciously reflecting, searching for his true self, and interacting with the

⁵ Although the novels' educational aspect and approach and young protagonist made them a worthwhile read for even the younger bourgeois readership, the classical Bildungsroman was still primarily written for an adult audience (Trites 9).

world around him, the hero develops from a rebellious teenager to a responsible adult that acts as a productive member of the established society (Hardin, “An Introduction” xiii). Thus, the main plot goal of the initial Bildungsroman was the establishment of a fulfilling life, by finding either happiness or freedom within the constraints of society and one’s means (Moretti 8). Although Dilthey’s and Morgenstern’s definitions were only applicable to a relatively small number of German novels (Sammons 32), the genre was seen as relatively clear cut by literary critics in the 19th century. Over the course of the 20th century, however, the term ‘Bildungsroman’ was used more and more often to describe novels that, while even fulfilling Morgenstern’s and Dilthey’s initial interpretation, were produced outside of German speaking countries. Novels such as Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) or Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1795-1796), which followed the classic Bildungsroman plot, but were set and written in England, opened the genre to other, geographically new locations (Hardin, “An Introduction” xxiii), ultimately leading to the creation of specific sub-genres, such as the English Bildungsroman.

The continued use of the term Bildungsroman for more and more novels blurred the initially quite strict boundaries of the genre. This more open classification divides literary theorists of German studies. Although some writers celebrate the growing inclusiveness of the genre, others feel that the Bildungsroman should stay true to its origin: Some contemporary, more conservative, critics (c.f. Kontje, Sammons, Selbmann) still vehemently oppose the on-going expansion of the genre. Todd Kontje suggests in *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* that the Bildungsroman, due to its German origin, should still be exclusively understood in connection to German philosophers’ understanding of Bildung. This approach would effectively limit the Bildungsroman to literary works that express sentiments typical for 18th century pedagogy (Kontje 1–9). These conservative critics maintain that only works written during that time, such as the aforementioned *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Geschichte des Agatheon*, as well as subsequently inspired novels that closely follow the established tradition should be considered Bildungsromane (Jacobs and Krause 18). This narrow genre definition does not only restrict the genre locally and temporally, but also charges it ideologically by stipulating that the concept of Bildung is a cultural depending, German concept (Sammons 232). Using the term Bildungsroman in a non-historical context is thus often frowned upon by scholars studying the classic 19th century German novel.

More moderate critics (c.f. Jacobs and Krause, Millard) try to contest this restrictive approach by advertising the need for multiple definitions. Jacobs and Krause try to answer the questions

on localization and tradition by referring to the personal choice of each scholar (Jacobs and Krause 35–37). Although Jacobs and Krause themselves adhere to a more traditional definition, centered on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and its contemporaries, as well as relevant modifications of the historical genre over time, e.g. the English Bildungsroman, they still acknowledge that the genre is in flux, and that its boundaries should be repeatedly questioned (Jacobs and Krause 31–35). Other critics argue for more radical change, advocating not only the detachment from the genre’s original German context, but also suggest that a complete liberation from its historical connection is of necessity. Kenneth Millard, for example, proposes that the term Bildungsroman should be applicable to “any novel of youthful development” (Millard 2–3): Instead of a German understanding of Bildung, he defines the loss of innocence, that accompanies the act of growing up, as the central feature of the Bildungsroman (Millard 2–3). Although Millard only uses the term for contemporary American coming-of-age novels, that focus on teenagers struggling to become part of the society around them, his identified version of the Bildungsroman is applicable to most YA novels. Such a vague definition, which opens the formerly quite restrictive genre to a vast number of contemporary works, can also be found in multiple, contemporary literary glossaries (cf. Abrams, Baldick, Cuddon, Holman and Harmon). Glossaries, such as the *Glossary of Literary Terms*, often classify YA novels in general as modern Bildungsromane, albeit focusing solely on the ‘development of the young protagonist’ topoi in their definition. The original, educational, aspects of Bildung, as well as Bildung’s supposedly stabilizing effect counteracting socio-political upheaval, seem to have lost their importance nowadays. Thus, while some critics might still primarily speak of the historical Bildungsroman, the current common usage of the term seems to allow a reapplication of the old concept to the contemporary YA novel.

3.2.2. The modern YA novel and the Bildungsroman

YA literature shares many similarities with the Bildungsroman genre, especially during its emergence and formative years. The establishment of adolescent literature is often attributed to the – historically speaking quite recent – invention of the “teenager”, a stage in human development that did not exist prior the 20th century. Due to the Great Depression and the subsequent rise in unemployment, children lost their value as workers. Their assistance at home and in factories was less and less required (Pattee 8), leading to their prolonged stay in school and their “institutional segregation from children and adults” (White 5). After the sudden appearance of a quite distinctive teenage age group – not quite children anymore, but also not

burdened with all adult responsibilities – was acknowledged by adults and the society at large, books specifically targeting an adolescent readership were being written. The production of these so-called “junior novels” (Pattee 10) increased even more when the new young adult gained significant market value after World War II. The growing middle-class teen-generation had a surplus amount of money available, that could be spent on commodities such as books, as well as the time to simply read for pleasure. Realizing the economic potential, publishers increased their investment in young adult books, which led to its’ establishment as a separate genre by the late 1950s (Pattee 8–12). This literature primarily focused on the young adults’ immediate life reality and problems they were familiar with: Common themes included typical difficulties one encounters when growing up, learning how to navigate within the social structure, and socialization; topics that have also been identified as primary themes in the classic Bildungsroman, but were now available and especially tailored to a teenage audience.

The connection between the Bildungsroman and YA literature was however not solely drawn between the literature written at the beginning of the YA genre. Even contemporary adolescent literature shares important similarities with the classic genre: One of the most influential researchers on the connection between the now very prominent literary body of YA literature and the classic Bildungsroman is the previously mentioned Roberta Seelinger Trites (see section 2.2.2.). In *Disturbing*, Trites provides a new perspective on the development of the YA novel by examining the genres that facilitated and influenced the emergence of the YA literature, namely the Bildungs- and the Entwicklungsroman. According to Trites (17-18), the YA novel has inherited the themes of the German Bildungsroman as well as its position on the literary map. Just as in the Bildungsroman, the most general topic governing most YA novels is the growth and development of its main protagonist. If the adolescent has managed to significantly mature throughout the narration, Trites (14) argues that the YA novel should be classified as being part of the Bildungsroman genre. However, the YA novel is not as bound to the Bildungsroman’s pedagogic function of prompting the continuity of the predominant social order. Instead, YA novels are now able to feature subversive heroes with the agency to change an oppressive society, which allows for a critical engagement with predominant power structures and institutions. Thus, instead of advocating conformity, YA novels provide a space to critically reflect on the power structures governing the adolescent reader’s society (Trites 16-19). Another critic drawing parallels between contemporary coming-of-age narratives and the Bildungsroman is Stella Bolaki. In her book, *Unsettling the Bildungsroman* (2011), Bolaki passionately argues for a modern re-examination of the “not outdated and exhausted genre” (Bolaki 9) through current coming-of-age narratives. Instead of focusing on the historical aspect

of the Bildungsroman, her definition of the Bildungsroman is based on its themes of finding one's place within society and the problematic of assimilation versus individuality. Similar to Trites, the complete integration into the predominant social order is not seen as an essential element in Bolaki's analysis. Hence, criticism towards the dominant social structure is once again allowed within these versions of the Bildungsroman. The possibility of critical engagement does not mean that YA novels always advocate a change of the social order of their literary universe. A study by Emily Lauer successfully identifies even conservative elements of the Bildungsroman in the dystopian book series *Curse Workers* (2010) by Holly Black. Her analysis convincingly portrays the *Curse Workers* series as a cross-over between the classical Bildungsroman and the dystopian YA literary genre. Instead of the typical dystopian YA plot-line, in which the protagonist successfully rebels against society, the hero of *Curse Workers* learns to operate within the system. This assimilation to the norm, so Lauer (44), mirrors the maturing process Dilthey and Hegel identified as crucial for the Bildungsroman: The main character has to learn how to interact with the power structures dominant in his world. Although ultimately complying to the dominant structure and rule, he still gains independence and grows up. While Lauer's findings are not representative for other dystopian YA novels, her research successfully demonstrates that even traditional aspects of the classical Bildungsroman can be present in contemporary YA novel.

3.2.3. The Bildungsroman, the Quest, and the Fantastic

As the previous sections of 3.2. have shown, the Bildungsroman genre is amenable to adaption, and which books can be included highly depends on each scholar's working definition. Furthermore, the previously exclusive term Bildungsroman is now frequently applied to other genres, especially to YA novels and its sub-genres. I want to stipulate that the quest genre with a teenage protagonist is a rather noteworthy subcategory here, as the quest signifies the inner growth of the protagonist in its outer development of the adventure. A relation between the Bildungsroman and the quest narrative is not completely new. Previous research by Victoria Williams (2013) analyzed elements of the hero's journey within the classic Bildungsroman. Although not always involving a journey based on physical movement, the Bildungsroman replicates the heroic development within the mind of the protagonist. By encountering and juggling social expectations, as well as developing from a dependent teenager to a responsible adult, capable of making hard decisions, the Bildungsroman hero essentially undertakes a quest of psychological development (Williams 181). Instead of the classic heroic quest, focused on

literal movement as physical advancement and the saving of the world, Williams suggests that the Bildungsroman can be seen as an inward journey, where self-realization and self-finding lies at its center (181-184). Thus, the Bildungsroman portrays the quest of growing up and finding ones' place within the world and society.

Rather than focusing on the quest of the historical Bildungsroman hero, the current analysis is examining the development of the YA quest hero. As Brian Attebery (87) remarks in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1999), Campbell's hero's journey, a typical structure for the fantasy novel, is a plot pattern relatable to many coming-of-age stories. Both genre structures follow the pattern of departure, trials, and return, which often leads to the hero's reintegration into society and the assuming of his proper place (Attebery, *Strategies* 87-88). Furthermore, the story of the YA quest hero is often a story of forced development, seeing as the YA quest hero has to grow up, since his survival and the world's future existence might depend on it. Thus, rites of maturity and -passage, which differ from the developmental processes an adult hero has to go through, are of even greater importance for the adolescent hero. The analysis following in chapter 5 will therefore specifically pay attention to the similar framework of the quest narrative and the Bildungsroman.

One final issue that has to be considered, when connecting the YA quest narrative to the Bildungsroman, is the magical element. As all three novels under analysis are part of the fantasy genre, the fantastic makes an appearance in all of them, which influences the narrations on both the story and the discourse level. Fantasy is a genre that is neither completely fixed or always distinguishable from other literary genres, like science fiction. However, there is one fundamental component that has to be part of any fantastic novel: the "impossible" (Attebery, *Tradition* 2). Attebery (2) proposes in *The American Fantasy Tradition* (1980) that "any narrative which includes as a significant part of its make-up some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law – that is fantasy". These irregularities of the norm can take on different forms: From creatures such as unicorns, elves, and werewolves, to objects that have fantastic abilities or aspects, like magic wands in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, or the rings of power in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Attebery (*Tradition* 2) also maintains that the fantastic can be expressed through "events", which also includes the never-ending "Noise" in *Knife*, the unfiltered portrayal of men's thoughts into the world (Ness 13), into the category of the fantastic. These elements, although unrealistic and foreign, are expected and unquestioned by readers of fantasy literature, and, in immersive and liminal fantasies, even the literary

characters themselves. Therefore, their occurrence does not violate the logic of the literary world.

The impossible element might therefore completely legitimately influence a character's growth and development in narratives of the fantasy genre. Since the storyline is not bound by the rules of realism, the fantastic can be implemented as a plot device to facilitate or accelerate developmental processes. Hence, magical solutions might be offered to problems that usually have to be solved through lengthy developmental processes. The fantastic can therefore offer short-cuts to issues typical for teenagers in midst of their developmental processes. Although the impossible element is foreign to the realistic Bildungsroman, the inclusion of the fantastic does not inhibit Bildungsroman themes. Instead, it allows for new possibilities to resolve some of the problems adolescents typically face during their coming-of-age and might aid in their successful completion of different rites of passages (see section 5.1.1.). Since the current project is only focused on the relation between genre and the depiction of grief, analyzing every rite of passage Eragon, Todd, and Percy have to overcome is beyond the scope of this research. Instead, I will primarily investigate the impact the quests and the fantastic environments have on the young heroes' developments after their loss. Influences on the subsequent self-realization processes that death often facilitates, will also be examined. Before presenting my findings, however, the methodology used to conduct said analysis will be briefly explained in the following chapter.

4. How to combine grieving and the quest – Methodology

The analysis following in chapter 5 provides answers to the question “How is the hero’s grief and grieving process for a loved one addressed and represented in Young Adult quest narratives?” As I am both interested in the heroes’ emotions, as well as if, and how, the structure underlying the quest narrative corresponds to the mourning process, my research will primarily focus on two aspects: the death-scenes of the parental figures, and scenes in which the heroes react to their parents’ death – both immediately after the occurrence and throughout the rest of the narrative. The corpus my research is based on is limited to three novels: *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini, *Knife of Never Letting Go* by Patrick Ness, and *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan. All three books have male teenage protagonists and have – in a primary reading – exhibited markers typical for the quest narrative. To obtain data on the grieving process, the expression of grief as an emotion in the quest, and the structural implications of the quest genre, the close reading of my corpus literature was guided by structuralist text analysis methods.

As Jeffrey Pence has already warned, narrative emotions should not be seen as “transparently available content” (Pence 274) and a character’s grief might be expressed in a variety of ways. In *Fictional Minds* (2004), Alan Palmer (113) points out that although occasionally emotions are explicitly labeled, this is not always the case. Instead, sometimes information on a character’s emotional state has to be gained through interpreting a character’s speech- and thought processes, which can be classified as “mental events that appear to embody an emotion” (Palmer 114). Apart from a character’s words, literary characters also express their feelings through emotionally motivated ‘actions’, i.e. “consist[ing] of both a mental event of intention and a bodily movement” (Palmer 118), and what henceforth will be referred to as ‘reactions’, an involuntarily, often physiological reflex to a situation. In the following analysis, any re- /action related to grieving, as well as the speech and thought production related to loss – either in their thoughts or as actually voiced speech representation – that can be found in the three novels under analysis will be analyzed via a close reading, and interpreted in accordance to the plot structure and the Kübler-Ross model of the grieving process (see chapter 2).

In order to gain a deeper insight on the interrelation between the structure of the quest genre and the depiction of grief, the scenes including grieving behavior will be analyzed according to the following three sub-research questions:

- How can the spatial and temporal circumstances of the quest narrative contribute to the duration of the grieving process?

- Which roles and functions do the side characters occupy in accordance to the quest narrative and how do their reactions to the death of the heroes' parents relate to the duration of the grieving processes?
- How do the specific roles and functions of the dying parental figures, in accordance to the quest narrative, affect the heroes' grieving processes?

After describing each death and grieving scene, the results will be set in relation to the plot structure of the individual book and Campbell's modified quest genre (3.1.2), in order to identify how the spatial and temporal aspects of the genre correspond to the depictions of grief. Genette's theories, described in section 3.1.3, will be used to analyze how often actions of grief are repeated by the boy hero and how frequent the death of the parental figure is mentioned. Furthermore, I will differentiate if the deceased characters are actually grieved for or only (fondly) remembered by the bereaved (see ch.2). Thus, although the focus of my analysis is on the passages explicitly marked as death and grieving scenes, moments of recollection in which the protagonist, and/or the narrator alludes to the deceased, have to be taken into consideration as well. Information on side-characters' responses is less transparent, as the majority of the side characters' thoughts are private, and neither accessible to the protagonist nor, in case of first-person narrative, to the reader. Therefore, the side characters' responses will be assessed based on their reactions and actions towards the protagonist, both immediately after the loss and in situations directly related to it. Their speech representations alluding to the death of the heroes' parental figures will also be analyzed. To analyze the function of different characters in the grand scheme of things, i.e. the quest and the heroes' lives, Campbell's model of quest characters will be used as the main reference. However, since parental figures are insufficiently described in *Hero* for the research at hand, I will combine Campbell's character framework with Propp's theory of fairy tales and 'dramatis personae' for a more accurate analysis of the parental roles and functions.

5. Analysis

5.1. Percy Jackson

5.1.1. Time frame, genre and plot constraint

Sally Jackson's death is a clear retelling of the monomyth script. Percy's mother dies right in front of a literal "threshold" to the fantastic world, the property line of Camp Half-Blood, killed by the Minotaur, who acts as the "threshold guardian" (Campbell 64). Percy, who defeats the monster after his mother disappeared, is exhausted and afraid and wants to mourn his mother immediately, but the danger and pain he and his friend Grover are in, as well as the fear of possible other monsters, force him to cross the boundary line:

My head felt like it was splitting open. I was weak and scared and trembling with grief. I'd just seen my mother vanish. I wanted to lie down and cry, but there was Grover, needing my help, so I managed to haul him up and stagger down into the valley, towards the lights of the farmhouse. I was crying, calling for my mother, but I held on to Grover – I wasn't going to let him go. (Riordan 56)

Percy's immediate grief reactions are intense and portrayed in detail: He cries, calls out for his dead mother, is in disbelief and wants to break down. However, Percy's explicit wish to give into his feelings of grief cannot be fulfilled. He knows that he and Grover are badly hurt and that safety, according to his mother, lies at the bottom of the Valley in Camp Half-Blood. Therefore, instead of stopping and giving into his grief, the bereaved boy carries on, mourning his mother while crossing the threshold. As the crossing of the boundary is immediately followed by Percy's collapse and passing out, the transition between the mundane and fantastic world is experienced as quite sudden for the young boy.

Camp Half-Blood proves to be the entering point of the fantastic, in which mythical creatures, e.g. naiads, nymphs, and satyrs, live. However, it is also a safe place, primarily designed so that half-blood children can prepare to survive monster attacks in the previously mundane world. *Percy* thus proves to be a mixture between an intrusion and portal fantasy. Although there are some fantastic places completely off-limits to humans that can only be reached by crossing portals, e.g. the camp, Mount Olympus above the Rockefeller Center, etc., monsters can also intrude into the mundane world. After the minotaur attack, the safe, mundane world Percy grew up in is gone has ultimately disappeared and has become fantastic and dangerous itself. As demigods, the children are expected to stay in Camp Half-Blood long enough to learn the skills necessary to stay safe in the outside world. Camp Half-Blood therefore is a fantastic "Belly of the Whale" (Campbell 74), necessary for the symbolic death of the dyslexic kid with ADHD, and the modeling and eventually rebirth of the hero. As his purpose in Camp Half-Blood is to

adapt to his new role as a half-god, the bereaved boy has no time to grieve for his mother over an extensive period of time: Percy only expresses prolonged grief during the first day of being awake by stating “My mother was gone. The whole world should be black and cold. Nothing should look beautiful” (Riordan 59). Although Riordan only used one sentence, Percy’s emotions are depicted as intense: His wish for a dark and bleak world mirrors his own feelings and darkened, emotional landscape. He seems to be keenly aware of his mother’s absence, as her disappearance during the fight with the Minotaur has just been confirmed. However, simultaneously, Percy is already busying himself by marveling at his surroundings and the fantastic world he just woke up in. With the subsequent realization that Grover is actually a satyr, the fantastic completely takes over and hijacks, through its novelty, Percy’s attention. Prolonged grief about his mother’s presumed demise, which Percy knows he should feel, seeing as he wants the world to express his pain for him by being “black and cold”, is therefore restricted to a singular event with no further repetition. . After a few moments, he is presented to the Camps leader, the god Dionysus, and Percy receives a short introduction and explanation about the rules of the fantastic world. Although his mother is mentioned during these conversations, Percy shows no emotional reaction or indicates in any way that he feels bereaved of his mother’s presence (Riordan 63-72), although dialect scenes are a reasonable opportunity for expressing the protagonist’s thoughts within a first-person narration. Due to the ellipsis of further grieving action and reaction, the reader has to assume that Percy’s earlier quite emotional state of mind has passed, and that the boy’s prolonged grief is truly limited to the initial awakening scene. His changed attitude becomes even more evident at the end of the first day of Camp Half-Blood:

My fingers curled around the Minotaur horn. I thought about my mom, but I had good thoughts: her smile, the bedtime stories she would read me when I was a kid, the way she would tell me not to let the bedbugs bite. When I closed my eyes, I fell asleep instantly. [...] I wish I’d known how briefly I would get to enjoy my new home. (Riordan 106)

Although the cradling of the Minotaur horn invites another recounting of the fight with the threshold guardian and his mother’s disappearance, Percy focuses on memories with a shared past with his mother instead. The association between the horn and his mother is clearly there, but Percy seemingly has overcome his grief enough to concentrate on memories of his early childhood, e.g. “when I was a kid” during his anachronic recollection. The positive and lighthearted tone of the memory and the fact that Percy has no problem falling asleep are further indicators that the protagonist has already reached the “acceptance stage” (Kübler-Ross 126) of

the grieving process. Thus, the bereaved boy has seemingly completed his grieving process in less than a day of story time.

After the slow-paced, detailed description of Percy's first day, the narrative pace is accelerated once more. The next few days, which are filled with introductory hero training (Riordan 107-109) and the development of kinship to other camp members, are summarized and are nearly devoid of any mentions of grief: Percy tries to fit in, , "not to think too much about [his] mom" (Riordan 108), and has to get used to his new life. The nearly complete ellipsis of actions motivated by grief and any thoughts Percy might occasionally have about his mom during this phase, overall limited amount of narrative time and space reserved for the grieving process create the appearance of a hasty conclusion of an initially quite dramatic grieving process. This rushed grief is, however, understandable if analyzed in connection to the quest structure of the monomyth. As the stay within the Belly of the Whale is seen as period of growth, long-term grieving processes would have no purpose for the development of the hero and the plot. Thus, of the minimization of prolonged grief to a singular event in the first morning., allows for a hasty transition into the new world, the hero's old life and his worries are left behind.

The start of the quest, which is given to the hero by a mummified Oracle and his mentor, is not providing any more time to repeat or deepen the previously rushed grieving process. The three questers only have ten days to find and return Zeus' stolen Master bolt to Mount Olympus (Riordan 146), a time constraint constantly weighing on the group's mind on their way to the underworld. Following a rapid narrative pace, with a duration pattern focused on decelerated fighting scenes, the hero does not gain any more time to reflect on the life and people lost throughout the course of the quest. Percy's decelerated narration is primarily depicting the trials the young hero and his companions have to face, i.e. defeating various monsters, being trapped in a magic casino, tricking their way into the Underworld, etc. In contrast, the majority of the scenes interluding the trial-focused narration are accelerated summaries of the children's westward travels. Thus, the rapid narrative pace shaping the narrative does not seem to aid the depiction of a prolonged grieving process: The bereaved boy does not have the time to indulge in longer thoughts about his mother, since he is busy trying to figure out how to stay alive. Furthermore, as Percy is actually on his way to the underworld, where his mother, presumed dead, dwells, the young hero can nourish the hope, that he might actually save her (see 5.1.3.). The fantastic aspect of possibly defeating death itself, finally dismisses any lingering necessity to mourn Mrs. Jackson. Although the monomythical quest-structure, the fantastic, and the temporal and spatial constraints significantly contribute to the rushed grieving process, other

aspects shorten Percy's grief as well. The next section will focus on the side-characters' contribution, or lack thereof, to the hero's mourning process.

5.1.2. Side characters' reactions, roles, and functions

In *Percy*, most side characters do not bother to overly comment on Percy's loss or are chillingly disregarding of Sally Jackson's death. The two adults leading the camp, the god Dionysus and the hero-trainer Chiron, neither express their sympathy nor show any kind of sensitivity when breaching the topic: Dionysus treats Mrs. Jackson's death as an inevitable matter that deserves no second thought. As such, the god only mentions off-handedly that dying due to keeping their children close is a common fate for mortal parents of demigods (Riordan 66). Chiron is not acting more sympathetic. He explicitly mentions Mrs. Jackson's death in an off-handed way, saying "What if I told you, Perseus Jackson, that someday people would call you a myth, just created to explain how little boys can get over losing their mothers?", to which Percy only answers "I wouldn't like it" (Riordan 68-69). Although Chiron is the hero's mentor, he does not bother to inquire after Percy's mental state or even offers sympathies. As both adult figures are immortal fantastic beings, who have seen their fair share of death, their (non-)reaction is maybe not surprising. Instead, their dismissive attitude towards Percy's loss is representative for the attitude the fantastic mythological world holds towards death in general, seeing as gods and monsters do not die. Through the nonchalant treatment of such a sensitive topic by both authority – and in Chiron's case mentor – figures of the fantastic world, the bereaved hero adopts the same attitude. He does not dwell on the fact that he just lost his mother and ignores the side-comments mentioned above, showing no sign of anger, sadness or any other emotion associated with the grieving pattern.

One of the few people to express their sympathies for Percy's loss is Grover, Percy's best friend, who blames himself for Mrs. Jackson's death ("I'm sorry [...] I'm the worst satyr in the world" Riordan 59). Grover acts as Percy's helper and, later on, as a quest companion, but has previously been described as being in need of protection (Riordan 3). Seeing his friend down, instantly provides Percy with the agency to lift his friend's spirits: "Grover was still sniveling. The poor kid – poor goat, satyr, whatever – looked as if he expected to be hit. I said, 'It wasn't your fault'" (Percy 60). Instead of Grover comforting the bereaved hero, it is Percy who calms his friend and tries to elevate him from any feelings of guilt. Grover's sadness thus prompts Percy to stop grieving, and to cheer up his sad friend instead of getting comforted himself. However, in *Percy*, the fantastic increases the side-character's agency. As the helper is not

completely ignorant of the hero's vulnerable state, and a fantastic being knowledgeable about the mythological world and its remedies, he assists Percy with drinking a magical potion: By drinking nectar – the drink of the gods – Percy's body and soul are recovering and healing, he is "feeling warm and good, full of energy" (Percy 60). Although Percy explicitly states that his "grief didn't go away" (Percy 60), any mentions of sadness or bereavement stop the consumption of the divine beverage. The helper hence provides the hero with a magical remedy against his emotional problems. Instead of talking about Percy's feelings or sending him to therapy, nectar acts as a prescriptive drug – numbing emotional pain and providing an artificial feeling of contentment. Just like a real drug too, the intake of nectar is restricted; too much of it is not recommended and can lead to unwanted side effects, such as fever (Riordan 149). Through this magical solution, the lack of emotional processing by the hero and the careless behavior of his surroundings are partly justified.

Thus, the side-characters hamper the hero's grieving process through their actions. While Dionysus and Chiron reduce the hero's grief through their dismissive actions and interest in death, Grover in his function of the helper, both passively and actively stops Percy from focusing on his grief. However, the lack of interest in both Ms. Jackson's fate and Percy's grief can be explained through the side-characters' connection to the fantastic. Lastly, there is one more character who further restricts the bereaved boys' grieving process and who has not been discussed within this section, Sally Jackson herself.

5.1.3. The deceased parental figure and the heroic quest

Percy's mother performs two functions within the narrative. The first one is her role as loving mother, who tries to protect her child to the best of her abilities. As a purely sweet person, a character trait which is amplified by her job at a candy shop, she showers Percy with unconditional love and affection. She opened the bedroom door and my fears melted. My mother can make me feel good just by walking into the room. Her eyes spark and change colour in the light. Her smile is as warm as a quilt [...] When she looks at me, it's like she's seeing all the good things about me, none of the bad. I've never heard her raise her voice" (Riordan 32-33). Percy worships his mother, and her sole presence is enough to make him feel better. She is the stereotypically beautiful mother, who only exists to provide love and safety for everyone around her. As Percy's protector she tries to ensure his safety with the means available to her: Love and caretaking, as is evident by her marriage to "Smelly Gabe" (Riordan 30), who hides Percy's inhuman scent from monsters with his stench (Riordan 15). Basically, Sally Jackson

assumes the role of the living embodiment of home and safety, and as such also the mundane world's barrier against the dangerous, fantastic world, making the hero's loving "protector" her primary role prior to the beginning of the quest.

However, being the stereotypical female caretaker, she is also demure, and a victim towards circumstances and her domineering husband. As she is completely incapable of saving herself in dangerous situation, the effectiveness of her role as Percy's protector is highly questionable. Trapped in an abusive marriage, she cannot seem to stand her ground against her husband, who has control over the money of the household, and forces her to cook and clean for him. The only way Mrs. Jackson can persuade her husband to lend her his car, is by being particularly pleasant and kind to him before asking him for permission. Her inability to fight dominating men, is also visible when she guides Percy's interaction with Gabe, asking Percy to "be nice" and to "not make him mad" (Riordan 34-35). Thus, her created safe haven and protection prior to Camp Half-Blood is only superficial at best. Furthermore, by trying to keep Percy near her, she puts him directly in harm's way: She can only protect Percy by hiding him, and during the Minotaurs' attack, she has no fighting chance. As soon as running away is no longer an option, her ill-fated attempt to save Percy and Grover by taking the monster's attention of them leads to her immediate 'death' (Riordan 45-53), ultimately failing in her role as protector. Although his mother's sacrifice, i.e. the protection of the mundane world, might be grieved for, Percy likes being in Camp Half-Blood where he feels at home and like he belongs with the other Half-Bloods (Riordan 106). Therefore, mourning for the mundane world left behind – in case of his mother literally since he ran away towards the property line while she stayed behind – is counterproductive to the attempted proliferation of the new beginning the hero can experience in the fantastic world.

Although she is mentioned frequently throughout the rest of the book, Percy does not mourn his mother after the initial grieving process. When Mrs. Jackson's death turns out to be a deadly kidnapping by Hades, she assumes a new, passive role – the damsel in distress – for the remainder of the narrative. Saving his mother becomes Percy Jackson's secondary quest goal for the quest to the underworld, often lurking in the background. However, the savior trope does not take overhand, Percy's main motivation is his continued survival, as well as getting revenge on Hades for all the trouble that he has caused, i.e. "I was ready to take [Hades] on. Besides, if my mother was in the underworld..." (Riordan 144). Although Percy's idea to get his mother out of Underworld might resemble the bargaining process of the grief pattern, a clear distinction can be drawn between these two acts. During the bargaining stage, the bereaved does not want

to live without the dead and would do numerous things to return them to life. Percy, in contrast, has already accepted his mother's death. His intention to reverse her death is not due to the fact that he is still in pain and cannot let go, but because saving damsels is what heroes do. This becomes even more evident, when he immediately drops the idea of saving his mother, when Hades makes it clear that saving Sally Jackson would lead to the failure of the initial quest (Riordan 315-317). While the role of the protector has been minimally grieved for, her newly assumed role as a – maybe only temporally dead – damsel is inhibiting the grieving process completely, as mourning would serve no motivational purpose in connection to the savior quest.

5.2. Eragon

5.2.1. Time frame, genre and plot constraint

The narrative structure in *Eragon* derivates from the standard monomyth framework. However, as Campbell (222) has mentioned, following the structure of the nuclear monomyth precisely – “departure”, “trials and initiation”, “return” (Campbell 23) – is not a necessity. Instead, specific sub-stages can be repeated or left out, and multiple cycles can be accumulated to create one larger narrative. In *Eragon*, the sub-stages belonging to the first two stages are repeated once. Instead of consisting of one full cycle, the narrative follows the following pathway: Separation, trials and initiation, then a repetition of separation, following another stage of trials and initiation, and finally closing with return. Both instances of separation are centered around the death of a loved parental figure: First, Eragon is bereaved of Garrow, his uncle, which provides the quest goal for the first and incomplete cycle. Then in the middle of the narrative, his mentor Brom, dies, which leads to the hero setting forth on his own with a new quest goal, i.e. saving the elven maid Arya. The cycles can be distinguished from one another through their different narrative paces, which establish peculiar conditions for the plot of the quest narrative and the depiction of Eragon’s grieving process.

The first cycle in *Eragon* is unusually slow-paced for a YA quest narrative. The narration primarily consists of decelerated scenes focusing on the development of Saphira, the establishment of the relationship between dragon and rider, and the exposition of general information about dragon riders – both for Eragon’s as well as the readers’ sake. Thus, the quest-typical motifs “urgency” and “speed” (see section 3.1.3.) do not seem to apply to this part of the narration. Instead, a close reading suggests that “heroic development” has been adopted as the defining motif of the first cycle. The lack of urgency allows for the slower advancing of the monomyth’s plot and for a greater focus on the hero’s emotions. Although Garrow’s death occurs within the boundaries of the mundane world, the safety of Carvahall is not immediately destroyed. The villains who conducted the off-scene attack – an unusual event itself as death often occurs on-stage in YA fiction (Trites 120) – disappear shortly after the initial intrusion. Thus, no immediate danger forces Eragon to depart instantly after his uncle’s death. The bereaved boy does not have to suppress his emotions; he is safe enough to immediately give into his grief:

He fell on the bed, wrapped his arms around his head, and sobbed convulsively. He felt Saphira contact him, but he pushed her aside and let himself be swept away by sorrow. [...] Frustrated and terrified, he turned his tear-dampened face toward the heavens and shouted, ‘What god would do this? Show yourself!’ He heard people running to his room,

but no answer came from above. 'He didn't deserve this!' Comforting hands touched him, and he was aware of Elain sitting next to him. She held him as he cried, and eventually, exhausted, he slipped unwillingly into sleep. (Paolini 90-91)

Eragon's response to Garrow's death is narrated via a "scene" (Genette 94), which allows for an in-depth description of the hero's thoughts and emotions. The detailed representation of Eragon's initial reactions and actions to Garrow's death includes a variety of elements typically associated with the grieving process: Shock, denial, crying, confusion, a lament etc. Furthermore, having found refuge in Horst's home, Eragon has the time to experience a complete mental break-down. Due to the lack of "urgency", the orphaned boy's grief is not restricted to this first, immediate reaction. As there is still no threshold guardian or intrusive villain in sight, Eragon has the chance to repeat parts of his grieving ritual, i.e. crying and feeling despair, when waking up in the morning after his uncle's passing (Paolini 92). The repetition of the initial grieving process can be seen as an indicator of how hard Garrow's death hit the young dragon rider. Only after the second instance of grieving is conducted the hero decides to act and leave his old life behind. Thus, in comparison to *Percy* or *Knife*, the hero's departure in *Eragon* is not structured by time-sensitive external factors like an advancing enemy or a forced emergence into the fantastic world: Instead the young dragon rider is mainly motivated by the intrinsic wish to avoid problematic questions and his reluctance to face his foster-brother Roran (93-95). This missing external pressure allows for a slow-paced conclusion of the first stage and a longer grieving process. Even in the next sub-stage of the monomyth, *Belly of the Whale*, the young hero has an additional chance to grieve. During the time spend within the safety of the hidden clearing, Eragon repeats his mourning ritual one last time: He cries when he wakes up and explicitly expresses his despair. However, this time, the expression of grief is even shorter than the last one. Thus, while the grieving process is presented as a "plurisingular" event (Bal 111), the length of story and discourse time dedicated to it are shorter with each instance of narration. This change in duration, from scene to summary, can be interpreted as an indicator of the hero's waning feelings of despair – the focus of the narration and the hero's starts to lie elsewhere. However, preparing to exit the *Belly of the Whale* and crossing the 'Threshold' of the familiar world, changes Eragon's behavior dramatically. "The next morning Eragon avoided bringing to mind any of the recent events; they were too painful for him to consider. Instead, he focused his energies on figuring out how to kill the Ra'zac" (Paolini 123). Suddenly, feelings of sadness seem to be actively restricted. The crossing of the threshold is therefore also the crossing of one stage of development into the next. Henceforth, Eragon consciously tries to turn away from his feelings, and redirects his emotions into productivity, or in this case, revenge. While the passage above also indicates that Eragon cannot completely forget the image of his

dead uncle, he still actively tries to ban sorrow from his mind; his focus now lies on his self-imposed quest to kill the villains and on feelings of revenge. Therefore, although recollections of the dead parental figure are still occurring⁶ during the trials and initiation stage, the tone of the narrative changes. Mentions of the dead foster-father are limited in their emotional coloring and lacking lament, e.g. “‘I can’t believe it, we actually found them,’ said Eragon quietly. An image of his dead uncle and burned farm flashed through his mind. His jaw tightened” (Paolini 254). Instead of expressing sorrow, anachronic retellings are mainly evoked to provide the hero with a sense of purposefulness (see section 5.2.3.). Still, Garrow’s death is a major factor of *Eragon*’s first monomythical cycle, which allows for a relatively long grieving process.

In comparison, the grieving period for Brom’s death, both the initial and the prolonged mourning process, is defined by shorter discourse and story time. The mentor’s death occurs immediately after the group’s flight from Dras Leonas, which signals the end of the first trial and initiation stage. Eragon has to give up on his quest to hunt the Ra’zac, seeing as their plan to invade their hiding place failed. The villains’ following retaliation attack leads to Brom being critically injured. As the mentor does not die immediately from his wounds, Eragon and Saphira have enough time to find a secure location, where they “can rest in safety” (Paolini 270). Thus, the narrative repeats part of the monomyth’s script: The retreat to a safety haven indicates the return to the departure stage and the Belly of the Whale, in which emotions can be expressed. After failing to save the old man’s life, the safety of the cavern allows Eragon to immediately embrace his grief once again. He cries and “a sense of horrible loss bled through him” (Paolini 270). Grief is hereby described as a bodily sensation that is felt all over. Instead of staying inside the hero’s mind, grief, slowly but surely, overtakes the hero’s entire body, metaphorically travelling via the blood stream. However, “to bleed” is generally understood as the dispersion of one’s blood outside one’s body, hence the loss of something internal to the outside world. Consequently, as soon as the burial is conducted, Eragon loses all mobility. He stands “like a living statue till evening, when light faded from land” (Paolini 277), his inanimate behavior copying both his dead mentor’s physical state, as well as the unfeeling stone the bereaved boy entombed him in.

However, although the Belly of the Whale allows for this intense initial grief reaction, it is also the preparation stage for the upcoming trials. The hero has to find a new quest goal, since he has just failed his old one. adoption of the new quest goal and the preparation allows for the

⁶ Grief in connection to his uncle dying and the destruction of the farm is mentioned once during ‘Trials and Initiation’ (Paolini 131). Eragon further has one dream in which his foster-father and -brother make an appearance (Paolini 165).

hero to be reborn once more: Eragon decides that “[f]rom this moment on, I’ll live by the sword. Let the whole world see what I am. I have no fear. I am a rider now, fully and complete” (Paolini 280). Thus, leaving the mountain and the cave proves to be another crossing of a ‘metaphorical’ threshold: Instead of leaving a familiar place behind, Eragon departs from the last instance still connecting him to his old life. As he has now finally accepted his place in the new world, ruminations and grieving for what has been lost are of no use for neither his development nor the quest, allowing for a fast conclusion of his initial grieving process. Furthermore, the hero has already matured immensely throughout the first cycle of the quest. The hero’s earlier development has, after all, not only been restricted to heroic development, i.e. the progress in magic, sword fight, etc., but has also led to the teenager’s maturing. After months of growth, the bereaved boy is nearly required to react differently to the death of a loved one: Less than a bereaved child, and more like a young adult⁷. Hence, although the mourning ritual is repeated once more the morning after Brom’s, it is conducted in a greatly subdued manner: Eragon sheds a single tear as a re-enactment of his earlier sobbing and visits the tomb with Saphira once more to repeat his previous statuesque behavior (Paolini 284). With Saphira magically changing the sandstone tomb into crystal, the burial scene as well as the immediate grieving process are concluded, and the heroes depart on their second quest.

The adoption of a new quest and the start of a new monomythical cycle change the primary motifs of the narration, which has severe repercussions on the hero’s prolonged grieving process. As the hero’s development and education has been successfully completed in the first half of the novel, the second cycle is primarily characterized by the quest-typical motifs urgency and speed. These motifs are introduced through two plot-related external factors: Firstly, with the start of the second trial and initiation stage, the hero is in constant flight. Due to the role reversal between the first and second cycle – instead of being the hunter, Eragon is now the hunted one – the young boy is in the dual position of being both a “seeker”- and “victim hero” (Propp 36). Although he is looking to join the Varden in their fight against Galbatorix, Eragon also has to disappear for his own safety (Paolini 280-281). Furthermore, throughout their journey to find the rebels, the small group of travelers is fleeing from multiple foes, e.g. the Ra’zacs, Gil’Ead’s city soldiers, and Urgals (Paolini 281-345). Thus, instead of Eragon’s

⁷ The narrative can hereby count on the readers’ awareness of Eragon’s ability to grieve. The YA hero has already proven that he is sensitive and capable of expressing a great variety of feelings, especially through his re-/actions to the first loss. As readers are therefore already aware of Eragon’s capacity to mourn and feel, it is not necessary for the overall narration to showcase the same intensity of in the second cycle.

development, the narration aims attention at the young hero successfully escaping his foes and surviving the hunt, before finally reaching his quest goal.

Secondly, the bereaved boy adopts an additional, time-sensitive sub-quest. Immediately after Brom's death, the young dragon rider decides to look for an elven woman he had previously only seen in – prophetic – dreams. As she is evidently badly injured, and as the hero discovers later, lethally poisoned, Eragon has the urge to find her, and – after talking to her – bring her to the Varden in order to save her life. The acceptance of this quest is prompted by another dream, in the night of Brom's death. During a conversation the following morning, the young hero mentions that he “feel[s] that *time is running out* for her; something dreadful is going *to happen soon*. She's in mortal danger – I'm sure of it” (Paolini 283, emphasis added). Not only does this passage convey the urgency Eragon himself places on the task of finding Arya, the use of phrases directly related to the shortage of time explicitly mark the change in motifs and the start of the narrative's general acceleration of speed. After this conversation, the narrative pace of the novel irreversibly increases. Sections of longer story time, such as the hero's month-long travel to Gil'Ead, are suddenly summarized, creating an overall rapid narrative pace. Furthermore, action-focused passages are immediately followed by accelerated scenes of flight, leaving only limited time available for quest-unrelated musings and distractions. These changes do not provide the best outcome for a lengthy presentation of Eragon's thoughts and feelings. Instead of long monologues and multiple direct thought reports, which frequently occurred in the first cycle, feelings and emotions are represented briefly and often summarized. This limited depiction gives the impression of a surprisingly haste grieving process: The accelerated narration of the journey to Gil'Ead offers only two elements hinting towards a prolonged mourning process, both of which are summaries, and occur immediately in the following four pages after the departure: So does Eragon mention that “[i]n an earlier time he would have smiled, but after Brom's death, such expressions did not come easily”. After describing that Eragon tries “not to awaken painful memories” (Paolini 289), depictions of grief cease and subsequent mentions of the dead mentor figure seem to evoke no emotional reaction from the bereaved hero. The scarce accounts of prolonged grieving scenes, and the limited length of the two instances mentioned, purport the view that Eragon's grief is short lived – especially in comparison to the hero's drawn out and frequently mentioned mourning of Garrow's death in the first cycle of the monomyth. Thus, both the hero's development and maturing during the course of the quest, as well as the accelerated, quest-typical plot structure seems to rush the bereaved boy through his second grieving process, limiting any detailed expressions of his mourning to the one night and the morning after.

5.2.2. Side characters' reactions, roles, and functions

In connection to the lack of urgency during the first departure-stage, Eragon also has stronger ties to the mundane world than Percy or Todd. While boy-heroes are often easy to dispatch due to their social situation (Potts 222-223), Eragon has allies and good acquaintances within the community of the mundane countryside of Carvahall. Thus, most side characters do not seem to mind the hero's grief, are mostly sympathetic to his plight, and do not want to prohibit the hero from grieving his foster-father. Instead, their supportive reactions enable Eragon's grief. When Garrow dies, Eragon is surrounded by characters of the mundane world he has known all of his life. As soon as he breaks down and cries, people rush to him and comfort the teenager until he passes out (Paolini 91). The characters of the mundane world thus provide the hero with the safety he needs in order to give into his initial grieving process. The mentor, Brom, who joins Eragon when he left Carvahall and accompanies him to the bramble, also comments on the hero's loss, saying that "[Eragon's] family did not deserve such a tragedy" and even apologizes for not warning him about the Ra'zac before the attack (105-109). This constant acknowledgment and affirmation of Eragon's initial grief over Garrow via the interaction with various characters enables an extensive depiction of the bereaved boy's feelings and allows for a more detailed description of Eragon's reactions.

Saphira – the most important companion and at this stage of the monomyth, the quest giver – is the only side-character who reacts differently to Garrow's death, and actually actively shapes the grieving process: As the quest giver, Saphira proposes that Eragon seeks revenge against the Ra'zac; the dragon is the reason that the hero can convert his initial sorrow into purpose (Paolini 92). Furthermore, seeing as Saphira had no connection to Garrow and is actually concerned about her own discovery, her reaction in a conversation the morning after his passing is completely unsympathetic.

Eragon examined his emotions. It surprised him that, more than grief, he found a searing anger. *'What do you want me to do... pursue the strangers?'*

'Yes.' [...]

'I don't care what you say; those aren't reasons to leave!' cried Eragon.

'Then here are others. My tracks have been seen, and people are alert to my presence. Eventually I will be exposed. Besides, there is nothing here for you. No farm, no family, and –'

'Roran's not dead!' he said vehemently.

'But if you stay, you'll have to explain what really happened. He has a right to know how and why his father died. What might he do once he knows of me?' (Paolini 92-93)

As the quest giver, she is the only character not offering words of comfort or sympathy. Instead she disrupts the initial mourning process. and only focuses on starting the quest, which completely disregards the hero's needs to emotionally process his loss. The quest giver role thus seems to limit Saphira's actions and her ability to be a caring companion in the scenes following Garrow's death. However, her unrelentless and unsympathetic insistence to act ceases once her function, to initiate the departure, is fulfilled: When Eragon embraces his feelings of bereavement in the safety of the Belly of the Whale once more, Saphira does not rush Eragon to completely abandon his feelings, but she also does not aid him. Furthermore, any subsequent anachronic recollections are also ignored by Saphira. Thus, although the quest giver does not actively try to inhibit prolonged grief, they also do not provide any emotional aid.

After Brom's death, the side-characters influence the grieving process in a more negative way. Instead of being surrounded by a mundane community, the hero is only surrounded by his two companions. While no one stops Eragon from breaking down in the night after Brom's passing, his mourning ritual is cut short by his newest quest companion and helper, Murthag, in the morning after (see section 5.3.1). The young man appeared during the Ra'zacs attack and immediately takes on an active role in the group, albeit not providing much sympathy for Eragon's loss. "Murthag looked at him sideways in a calculating way. 'You wont want to stay here for much longer. If the Ra'zac are nearby, Brom's tomb will be like a beacon for them.' Eragon had not thought of that." (Paolini 281). Although not forcing the hero to leave immediately, the companion's revelation sets the pace and indicates that a departure from the cave is near. After their departure, Murthag, offers no words of comfort or comments on Eragon's countenance, However, the new companion lessens the hero's grief by taking over some of the dead mentor's function towards the journey and the quest, e.g. offering advice, practice sword fights. Although one companion was lost, a substitution immediately arrives (Paolini 281-291), which provides the hero with stability and lessens his need for multiple recollections of the lost mentor in need of guidance. Arya, in her role as the above-mentioned secondary quest goal, also influences Eragon's ability to confront his emotions. Although the elven woman has not joined Eragon and Saphira's group yet, her being in danger distracts the bereaved hero from his recent loss, as thoughts about the maiden in distress occupy his mind (Paolini 283-286). The side-character acting as a sub quest-goal, therefore, also passively limits the Eragon's grieving process.

Saphira, once more, proves to be the only exception, as she too grieves for the old man. Compared to Garrow's death, where Saphira was acting solely in the role of the quest-giver, the dragon can now react as a companion who suffers as well. However, the companions in *Eragon* do not play a vital role for the hero's conclusion of grief. The dragon is not mentioned during the entombment process at the top of the hill, where the hero and his newest companion create a tomb for Brom.. Albeit saying that she misses "the old one" (Paolini 281), Saphira and Eragon immediately continue to plan their further journey and set their next quest goal, to go to the Varden. After performing the magical deed of changing Brom's sandstone tomb into one made out of crystal, "a decent burial", according to Eragon (Paolini 322), Saphira is not encouraging her rider to talk about his feelings or emotions after leaving the cave. Eragon, who "trie[s] not to awaken painful memories" (Paolini 289), as such only sporadically talks about his mentor when travelling to Dras Leonas according to the summarized speech report of the accelerated travel scene (Paolini 285-290). Therefore, the guide and companion in the second cycle, does seem to aid Eragon's emotional development either.

5.2.3. The deceased parental figure and the heroic quest

As already demonstrated above, the two parental figures are grieved for in fundamentally different ways. The difference in the depicted mourning processes can also be related to the different functions and roles Garrow and Brom occupy throughout the narrative and in relation to the quests. Eragon's uncle Garrow, who raised Eragon in lieu of his mother, fulfills the role of, what I will call, the hero's "anchor" point to the mundane world. While sometimes described as strict, he is clearly regarded as the hero's loving family (Paolini 17-20), and thus ties the hero to his home at Palancar valley: Not only does Eragon love Garrow and his brother Roran, he is needed at the farm they live on and his hunting skills are important for the family's survival. After his foster brother left to find work elsewhere, the anchor role is solely taken over by his foster-father Garrow. Garrow's status is additionally increased by the debt Eragon perceives he owes his uncle, as Garrow took Eragon in and raised him at the farm after Eragon's mother left him there shortly after the young boy's birth (Paolini 76). Thus, as long as Garrow is alive, Eragon is bound to the mundane world and makes no plans to leave said life behind (Paolini 52).

However, the loving uncle adopts a different role after being killed. Instead of being the main anchor to Palancar Valley, he becomes a victim in need of revenge – and Eragon's main motivation for leaving Carvahall: As Eragon has no clear quest in the beginning and is still

unsure about his own role in the world, he adopts hunting his uncle's killers as a temporary quest goal (Paolini 101). This in turn elevates Garrow's status from an anchor to a "lack" (Propp 35) and revenging the creation of said lack to the partial quest goal of the seeker hero. The goal for revenge also establishes a direct correlation between the protagonist's need to grieve and his heroic development. Initially, the young hero has to hold onto the memory of his uncle in order to find purpose within his new life (Paolini 165), which explains why the image of the beloved uncle is re-evoked multiple times at the beginning of the quest. While the pain itself largely seems to be ignored after leaving the metaphorical Belly of the Whale, the temporary quest goal of revenge allows for the depiction of a longer, incomplete grieving process, i.e. flash-backs of the burned farm and dreaming about Garrow and Roran both being alive and interacting with the bereaved hero (Paolini 165, 197). The revenge victim, however, also has the function to motivate the hero in his heroic becoming. However, as time passes and Eragon becomes more adept and comfortable as a dragon rider; he starts to find purpose within his role as a hero. Garrow's first function, to facilitate the hero's growth, is therefore fulfilled, and his second one, to provide the hero with purpose, becomes obsolete. Although revenge still is an underlying quest goal, Eragon's motivation is more and more gained via an intrinsic heroic need to do the right thing, as hunting monsters and fighting oppressors are identified as a hero's duty (Paolini 337). Hence, Eragon's character development made lingering grief for Garrow, previously a necessity due to victim role, unnecessary.

Brom's status as a "supernatural aid", here the "mentor", (Campbell 59) provides an additional explanation for Eragon's short grieving process after the old man's passing. A hero's bereavement of a mentor figure, although one that was "like a father" to the teenager (Paolini 276), seems to be less focused on feelings of grief and more concerned on the lack of advice. As it is a mentor's function to protect and guide the hero (Campbell 57), i.e. to impart wisdom and explain the rules of the magical world, an early or untimely bereavement might have negative consequences – especially for an unprepared hero. Shortly after Brom's death, Eragon expresses the following sentiment: "*I wish [Brom] was here. He'd know whether to trust Murtagh*" (Paolini 279). With Brom gone, Eragon suddenly has to make all decisions by himself and rely on his own judgement. As such, recollections of Brom are predominantly occurring in times of uncertainty or danger, i.e. during fights, or when the young dragon rider has to use magic: "Immediately the dirt began to absorb his strength at a prodigious rate. Eragon's mind flashed back to Brom's warning that certain tasks could consume all of his power and take his life. Panic blossomed in his chest" (Paolini 321). Thinking about Brom thus seems to be largely restricted to the old man's usefulness, and to situations in which the role of an experienced

guide or mentor would have been helpful. Eragon, thus, remembers Brom and his wisdom, while neglecting to grieve for him as a father figure. Only twice does Eragon express emotional sentiments post the funeral scene: A thought report informs the reader that smiling became harder for the young dragon rider after Brom's death and Eragon mentions feeling relief that Brom had been buried in an honorable way. Other affective reactions or expressions of sorrow are glaringly missing, especially if compared to Eragon's long grieving process after Garrow's death. Brom's mentor status therefore seems to influence Eragon's post mortem mentions of the old man by mainly limiting them to battle or magic focused recollections; which skews the depiction of grief the bereaved hero experiences negatively.

5.3. Knife of Never Letting Go

5.3.1. Time frame, genre and plot constraint

In *Knife*, the hero has to face parental loss twice. The first bereavement is experienced right at the start of Todd's journey and is initiated by the intrusion of Viola's lack of Noise into the hero's known world⁸. Viola's silence acts as the "Call for Adventure" (Campbell 42) by hovering next to the borders of the isolated Prentisstown, the only settlement existing in New World according to Todd's knowledge. Once his foster parents, Ben and Cillian, who have raised Todd since he was a baby, realize that the teenager had contact with the intrusive element, they force the teenager to leave the mundane world behind, jump-starting the departure and the quest for their son's own safety. As danger is already coming to the farm, first in form of Davy Prentiss Jr, then later through the Mayor and his men, Todd's departure from his parents is hasty. Ben, without much explanation, is running with Todd and Manchee to the edge of their property. In order to buy the hero some time to get away, Cillian stays behind at the farm, and Ben runs back to aid his partner after handing Todd the necessary quest items. Their "deaths" thus occur off-scene and are only alluded to.

I stop for a second when I hear a bunch of smaller bangs from the direkshun of the house which gotta be rifle shots and I think of the rifle that Cillian took from Mr Prentiss Jr and all the rifles that Mayor Prentiss and his men have locked away in the town and how all those guns against Cillian's stolen rifle and the few others we got in the house ain't gonna be much of a fight for very long. (Ness 56)⁹

Although Todd hears loud noises, he does not know what really happens at the farm. Consequently, when the hero arrives at the boundary i.e. the swamp, Todd can still nourish the hope that his parents might get away or survive the attack. The departure before his parents' confirmed fate is hampering Todd's need to mourn and confront his emotions: He can ignore his loss, since he has no clear affirmation that his parents have actually died. Thus, Todd is able to suppress his immediate grief about both his abrupt departure, "I will come back" (Ness 57), and his parents' assumed demise during his journey to the first quest-goal, by focusing on the new and insufficiently explained quest and his new companion Viola (see section 5.3.2.). Second of all, although the questers stop and prepare for their journey by raiding Viola's

⁸ Although *Knife* might at first be classified as a clear YA sci-fi novel, the story contains fantasy elements, i.e. Noise and talking animals, that blur the boundary between the two genres. I therefore propose to approach *Knife* as a crossover between an immersive YA fantasy novel and a sci-fi novel.

⁹Quotations of *Knife* may seem to have spelling or grammar mistakes. However, these are no mistakes on my or Ness's part. Instead, the spelling and narration is strongly influenced by the first-person narrator of *Knife*: Todd is nearly an analphabet and thus favors phonetical spelling with longer words. Hence, some direct quotes may seem faulty. Since all direct quotes are quoted verbatim from the book, they will not be marked by [sic], as they are deemed correct for the novel under analysis.

crashed space ship, the short pause provides no real safety to reflect on the events passed. Without a place to reflect, the monomythical narrative of *Knife* has no precise Belly of the Whale step, which, as a place of inward focus and rebirth, could have acted as the catalyst to the grieving process. Instead Todd and his companion continue with their travels and encounter another threshold – a bridge – that has to be crossed. After crossing and destroying the bridge, and thereby escaping their pursuers, as well as meeting another female, the departure from the mundane has been completed. Todd is now fully immersed in the new – and for him fantastic – world and has to comprehend the overwhelmingly vast amount of information Farbranch provides. Although there is time to grief, the immergence into the fantastic world preoccupies the young hero completely. Thus, the time and place of parental loss – the combination of off-scene death transpiring after the hero's escape, followed by entering the fantastic world without reflection – are impeding the hero's need and ability to grief for his parents.

The bereavement occurs in close proximity of the final quest destination Haven and follows a similar, yet shorter script. Ben, who has not died at the farm, is left behind again to hold off Davy Prentiss Jr. Thus, the second time Todd loses Ben also occurs off-scene, in a fight that is neither seen nor heard (Ness 405). In the meantime, the adolescents take off and rush to reach Haven, the mythical city which may or may not provide safety from the army, a cure against Noise, and a way to contact Viola's ship. Although Todd expresses grief more clearly and immediately after the second bereavement (Ness 401-405), his feelings are only short-lived as the adolescents focus on reaching a place where they might finally be safe.

Viola looks at me, worried. 'You think it's big enough? You think we're safe?' [...] 'Let's find out,' I say. We run back down the road a piece, looking for a good climbing spot, find one and make our way up. My legs feel light as I climb, my Noise clearer than it's been in days. I'm sad for Ben, I'm sad for Cillian, I'm sad for Manchee, I'm sad for what's happened to me and Viola. But Ben was right. There's hope at the bottom of the biggest waterfall. And maybe it don't hurt so much after all. (Ness 426)

The nearby quest destination – and with it the hope for safety and an end to the flight – seems to have the same distracting effect as immersion into the outer world had for the previous grieving process; preoccupying the hero from feeling bereavement after his foster-father's most likely death. Hence, the forward focus of the narrative and the journey, due to the plot and quest structure, is once more detrimental for the depiction of grief.

The fast pace of the narration and the urgency of their hurried flight to both quest destinations are also detrimental to the grieving process depicted. Next to the absence of a Belly of the Whale scene, scenes of rest are generally brief or nearly non-existent. In contrast to *Eragon* and

Percy, the fast pace is introduced right after the exposition of the mundane world and is unrelentless throughout the narrative. After realizing that Todd might be in danger, Ben says “We have to get you outta here. We have to get you out of here *right now*” (Ness 38). The highlighting of the phrase “right now” explicitly introduces urgency into the narrative. From this moment on the journey is characterized by running and rushing, “[and Cillian] takes off back towards the house, running, actually *running*” (Ness 41). Although Todd is confused at first, he adopts the same kind of urgency after realizing that he really is in danger, first from Major Prentiss and his men, then from Alan the priest, who acts as a recurring adversary throughout the novel. *Knife* is characterized by a ‘rapid narrative pace’, consisting mostly of accelerated scenes of flight between decelerated action and fight scenes. The quick “flow from place to place” only allows for short plot-heavy reprieves in which the questers try to understand the world around them. These musings are however soon interrupted by old enemies catching up the fleeing hero and his companions, leading to repeat the pattern of decelerated fight and accelerated flight once more. The constant rushing further restricts the hero’s chances to face his emotions. While Todd repeatedly guesses that his foster-parents were killed by the Mayor’s men, these realizations always occur during times of immediate danger. Therefore, apart from having no confirmation about his parents’ death, Todd has no time to feel grief and continues to suppress his knowledge and emotions for as good as possible. For example, when Todd is being chased by the Mayor and his men, meaning that “[w]hatever happened to Ben and Cillian is done”, he just “puts the binos down and swallow[s] it away” (Ness 115) to escape his pursuers. The accelerated pace also shapes the scene of certainty during the attack on Farbranch when Todd finally voiced and accepted his parents’ likely demise.

They ain’t there. Ben and Cillian ain’t there. Which, of course is grand, ain’t it? Of *course* they ain’t part of an army of killers. They wouldn’t be. Not never, not no how, no matter what. Good, men, *great* men, even Cillian. But if that’s true, then that means the other is true, too, don’t it? If they ain’t there, then that means once and for all [...] I hope they put up the best fight ever. (Ness 216)

Seeing every man in Prentisstown except his parents marching in the army, without prisoners accompanying them, killing mercilessly, was the final confirmation the hero needed to accept Ben and Cillian’s deaths. Although the realization is a devastating one, Todd’s initial grieving reaction is brief, both in relation to story and discourse time. So does Todd respond to Viola’s expression of condolence with a simple “‘Nothing that ain’t already happened,’ I say, talking to the ground and readjusting the rucksack. ‘C’mon before I put is in danger even worse’” (Ness 217). As the Mayor’s army is attacking Farbranch at this very moment, the young hero simply has no time to act in an emotional manner. Thus, after not even half a page and only a few

moments of grief, mainly expressed through physiological reaction, i.e. tearing up, Todd composes himself and “take[s] off up the path, keeping [his] head down, motoring fast”, and the questers fall into an accelerated run, escaping the imminent danger. Thus, the constantly lurking danger narrative increases the general pace of the narration and leads to a short depiction of the hero’s reaction to his bereavement.

Although the rapid narrative pace prohibits a long immediate reaction to the bereavement, the short processes are also not repeated during the slower paced scenes. The missing repetition establishes a negative undertone towards the hero’s ability to grieve, diminishing the depicted impact that the parental loss has on the novel’s main character. The missing repetition is not only glaring in its lack of depicted mourning behavior, but also by the lexical avoidance of the word death. In speech and thought representations after Farbranch involving his foster parents, Todd generally avoids talking about their fate, as in the following scene: “*I am Todd Hewitt, I think. When it goes midnight, I will be a man in twenty-seven days. I am the son of my ma and pa, may they rest in peace. I am the son of Ben and Cillian, may they— I am Todd Hewitt*” (Ness 220). Although the phrase “may they rest in peace” was used in connection to his birth-parents, Todd suddenly discontinuities the segment when referring to his foster parents. This change in syntax suggest that the bereaved boy cannot bear to articulate his recent loss, as the wound is still to fresh. The quick transition to “I am Todd Hewitt” also suggests that instead of facing his emotions, the hero is suppressing his assumed knowledge once more. Thus, while Todd is generally aware of his loss, he is not yet comfortable with actually voicing said fact; he is in the denial stage of the grieving process. However, he does not seem to leave said stage behind, as the pattern of suppression can be observed throughout the remainder of the narrative. Todd’s thoughts, explicit through both the first-person narration and the nature of Noise, noticeable shy away from vocalizing his parents’ demise throughout their journey. It seems, as if only external factors that confront Todd with his foster-fathers’ deaths evoke physiological reactions, actions and emotions associated with the grieving process from the young boy: When Prentiss Jr taunts Todd by mocking Ben and Cillian’s deaths, Todd’s Noise turns red, which is described as a sign of anger and rage. Todd also feels his chest tightening when Viola reads Ben’s message which is “like Ben’s [voice] is ringing down the river, echoing from Prentisstown and hitting [his] chest like a punch” (Ness 224). These instances are quickly over, however, and Todd once again chooses to suppress both his feelings and controls his thoughts.

While the brevity of the mourning behavior and the lack of repetition do not indicate that the bereaved boy forgot Ben’s and Cillian’s demise, the immediate suppression of any re-/action is

a clear sign that Todd is not able to surpass the denial stage of the grieving process throughout most of the narrative. This is even more apparent after the hero's subconscious fears and doubts manifest in a less weary and injured form of himself during his fever hallucinations (Ness 329-338). When the fever vision confronts Todd with the sentence "Ben's dead" (Ness 335), Todd immediately tries to ignore his subconscious and focuses on saving Viola from Aaron's grasps. I would thus suggest, that by actively suppressing and ignoring his knowledge whenever, and for as long as, possible, the hero can keep up the tenacity needed to focus on the quest and the tasks at hand. Only by meeting his foster-father and mentor again, Todd faces his suppressed grief for Cillian, the recently dead Manchee, and the life he lost, finally moving from denial to depression. However, the quest structure and Ben prohibit the hero from staying depressed for too long: "But after only a minute I feel him gently pushing me back and he says, 'Listen, Todd, there ain't much time'" (Ness 371), which proves to be true, as Ben dies within the day. While depression is repeated once after leaving Ben behind again, Todd quickly accepts his father's death. The sudden acceleration of the grieving process, from denial to depression and lastly acceptance in less than twelve hours, seems untimely and hasty, if only analyzed in connection to the temporal and spatial constraints of the monomythical quest structure. However, Viola's reaction to Ben's death shines another light to Todd's suddenly rushed grieving process.

5.3.2. Side characters' reactions, roles, and functions

The reaction of the side-characters towards the two experiences of parental loss in *Knife* differ fundamentally, which has profound consequences on the depiction of the hero's grieving process. Todd is, in contrast to the other two heroes under analysis, a victim hero throughout the whole narrative and, except for his dog Manchee, alone during the departure stage. Due to this isolation, other characters' reaction towards his parents' deaths are obviously limited. During the departure stage Todd has no human companion, leaving Prentisstown only accompanied by Manchee. Although Manchee is capable of talking, the fantastic element, i.e. "the talking germ" (Ness 4), only increases the animals' ability to communicate with humans and not their general intelligence. Compared to Saphira, who while having a different mindset than humans, is just as intelligent as Eragon, Todd's dog is still a dog. Manchee's speech and thoughts, which are mainly focused on his owner, express only basic emotions and needs ("Need a poo, Todd" Ness 3). Therefore, he is not able to aid the bereaved boy, who experiences a state of emotional turmoil. Thus, during the initial departure and the brief journey to the swamp, Todd is not accompanied by anyone actually capable of imposing on his grieving

process. This changes when he finds Viola, who is initially only called “the girl”. Although she does not actively try to shorten his grieving process, and only limits their communication to sporadic gestures, the sole discovery of a female stops Todd from feeling nothing but turmoil. Viola thus serves as a distraction, and aids, by proxy, the willful suppression of whatever has happened at the farm. She does not actively force Todd to abandon his emotions, however, although she hampers them unwittingly.

The quest-companions minor influence on Todd’s constantly curbed grief is even more evident after the departure from Farbranch. As the army marches into town, Todd concludes that his parents have died, causing Viola to pause and express her condolences, although she does not want to stay any longer. “She takes [the binos] from me, squirming a little like she is itching to leave, but then she says. ‘I’m sorry,’ so she musta seen it in my Noise”. Todd’s answer, “‘Nothing that ain’t already happened’, I say” (Ness 217), appears nonchalant and final. Instead of facing his emotions he denies and suppresses his feelings, despite leaving home and his parents only two days ago. Although Viola increases the urgency of the quest and the departure from Farbranch prior to Todd’s discovery, the young hero suppresses his emotions without her prompting, due to the imminent danger (see last section). Thus, his suppression is deliberate and mostly rooted in his intrinsic wish to focus on escaping from Prentisstown and the danger the villains, such as the Mayor, Aaron and later on the army of men, pose. Only meeting Ben in Carbonel Downs once more ends the suppression and leads to a short release of the hero’s pent-up emotions (see next section).

However, after meeting the surprisingly alive Ben near Haven and losing him once again in an off-scene fight between him and Davy Prentiss Jr., Viola’s and Todd’s behavior dramatically changes. This second grieving process is more explicitly depicted and expresses greater despair. After Todd mentions that “[t]here’s nothing good in this life. Nothing good not nowhere”, Viola drastically changes her behavior, and cuts the second grieving process short by – violently – reminding Todd that she has also lost her parents.

‘What’s the effing point? ‘The point is,’ Viola says, stopping halfway thru a dense patch of scrub to hit me *really hard* on the shoulder, ‘He cared enough about you to maybe sacrifice himself and if you just GIVE UP’ – she shouts that part – ‘then you’re saying that the sacrifice is worth *nothing!*’ ‘Ow,’ I say, rubbing my shoulder. ‘But why should he have to sacrifice himself? Why should I have to lose him *again?*’ She steps up close to me. ‘Do you think you’re the only person who’s lost someone?’ She says in a dangerous whisper. ‘Do you forget that my parents are dead, too?’ (Ness 402)

This outburst instantly stops any depicted grief on Todd’s part. Compared to the first time Ben and Cillian were thought lost, Viola is now by his side, having become a mutual quester for

Haven as well, instead of a stranger he drags along. By confronting him with their new reality, “All I’ve got now is you,” she says, her voice still angry. ‘And all you’ve got now is me. [...] it’s crap and that it’s just us but we can’t do anything about it.’” (Ness 402), Viola provides Todd with a choice – to continue to grieve or to accept their circumstances and grow with the last loss faced. Todd, the developing hero chooses to move on – both literally and figuratively: “We run back down the road a piece [...] I’m sad for Ben, I’m sad for Cillian, I’m sad for Manchee, I’m sad for what happened to me and Viola. But Ben was right. There’s hope at the bottom of the biggest waterfall. And maybe it don’t hurt so much after all” (Ness 426). Although both teenagers are still weary and cautious to hope for safety, Todd’s focus, just as his spatial journey, shifts forward, leaving grief behind.

5.3.3. The deceased parental figure and the heroic quest

Ben and Cillian act as the hero’s foster-parents for as long as Todd can remember. Although their relationship is not explicitly categorized as sexual in *Knife*, a homosexual aspect is strongly alluded to¹⁰. Both men occupy the role of the parental figure that provides the hero with a home and stability in his childhood, as well as the protector. Cillian, Todd’s foster father, has two roles throughout the narrative. Firstly, his character occupies the role of the loving parental figure. Even in a town full of men, Cillian is presented in a rather stereotypically manly fashion. Already his first description evokes correlations of the classic working man of the 20th century, seeing as he tries to repair an old engine with “his arms covered in grease and his face [...] covered in annoyance” (Ness 29). His direct way to communicate and his tendency to solve problems or oppose injustice with violence, describes a rougher character, which affects his relationship with Todd negatively: “It’s never been so good with Cillian, not never, Ben’s always been the kind one, Cillian’s always been the other one, but it’s got worse as the day approaches when I’ll finally be a man and won’t have to listen to any more of his crap” (Ness 30). Although Cillian’s and Todd’s relationship appears to be tense in the beginning of the narrative, Cillian does love and care for Todd like a father (Ness 47), and Todd himself identifies as his son (Ness 220). When the villain makes a move, Cillian takes on the role of the protector. However, in contrast to Sally Jackson, Cillian seems to embody the manly form of protectiveness, characterized by rough and violent behavior. As soon as Davy Prentiss Jr, “the man of the law” (Ness 43), comes for Todd, Cillian functions as the protective barrier of the

¹⁰ Although the book only alludes to Cillian and Ben’s homosexual relationship, Patrick Ness openly referred to them as “gay characters” in an interview with io9 (Meisner 4th qn.).

mundane world. After failing to dissuade him from entering the house verbally, Todd's foster father physically overpowers the intruder. "Mr Prentiss Jr is on the floor, holding his mouth, blood already coming from it. Cillian's got Mr Prentiss Jr's rifle in his hands and is pointing it at Mr Prentiss Jr. 'I said get off my property, Davy,' he says" (Ness 45). Cillian's actions thus protect the hero from harm and allow him to escape. During Todd's subsequent flight from the farm, Cillian stays behind and, as a literal and physical protective barrier, held off the additional men from Prentisstown coming after the victim hero.

The instances depicting grief for Cillian are particularly scarce, as it is mostly reduced to Todd's crying and inner musing at the battle of Farbranch, as well as the reunion with Ben at Carbonel Downs. While the rapid pace and the motif of flight shaped the grieving structure significantly, the roles and functions of Cillian's character are also responsible for his scarce presence after the quest start. As the function of the protective barrier is limited to the beginning of the journey, recollections of Cillian as the protector are only occurring at the first stage of the quest, i.e. until the confirmation of Cillian's death in Farbranch. However, these references are not motivated by feelings of grief, since Todd has no knowledge about the outcome of the farm's battle. Instead the hero wonders if his protector has achieved his goal or has failed. Recollections about protector are therefore not part of the grieving process, as the focus lies on the speculation of his actions and his effectiveness. Cillian's role as a loving parent is more inviting for grieving behavior. However, although Todd feels bereaved of Cillian's presence and his old life, he only mentions missing him twice. The other times Cillian is mentioned in his role as a father figure occurs during interactions with other adults: The bereaved boy compares both Hildy and Francia to his foster father, but his comparisons do not hint at feelings associated with the grieving process. Rather, Todd's recollections of Cillian's behavior should be interpreted as a literary device mainly used to establish the newly introduced side-characters as trustworthy (Ness 193). Thus, while Cillian seems to be on Todd's mind in the beginning of the quest, the amount of grief expressed is scarce due to the limited functions of the roles Cillian is occupying in relation to the quest.

After the questers decide to go to Haven, and Todd has concluded that his foster-parents have died, mentions of Cillian are drastically reduced. The sparse moments of recollections and expressions of mourning indicate that both the father and protector role are redundant in the further steps of the trials and initiation stage, as they have no influence on the quest or the hero's development. Todd has to prove his own worth and understand the new and fantastic world surrounding him. Hence, constantly grieving and longing for his life and the people prior to the

quest is not useful. Only Ben's reappearance near Haven, analyzed in 5.3.1., allows for a short revive of the grief expressed for Cillian. However, due to the temporal and spatial forward movement of the narrative towards the quest goal, even the renewed grief for the lost father is quickly overcome during the run towards Haven. Cillian's roles as the protector and father figure – both with limited connection to the further quest – therefore seem particularly unhelpful for the depiction of a prolonged grieving process.

Todd's grief for Ben, on the other hand, is occurring more frequently and evenly throughout the narrative. Prior to the start of the quest, Ben, who occupies the dual role of the loving parent and the mentor, is idolized by the teenager:

But Ben's a different man than Cillian, a *kind* kind of man that makes him not normal in Prentisstown [...] Ben, who I can't describe much further without seeming soft and stupid and like a boy, so I won't, just to say that I never knew my pa, but if you woke up one day and had a choice of picking one from a selecshun, if someone said, here then boy pick who you want, then Ben wouldn't be the worst choice you could make that morning. (Ness 34-35)

Although Todd loves Cillian as well, Ben is his preferred parent by far. The boy's admiration for his foster-father is especially important, since Ben's behavior differs quite significantly from the one exhibited by the other men of the mundane world. Ben's most highlighted attribute is kindness; his whole being is described as soothing and calming (Ness 34-35), which also transfers to a less confrontational and pacifistic attitude in fights. Additional to the father-role, Ben has also acted as Todd's mentor throughout the young boy's childhood. As Prentisstown has had no teacher after the last one committed suicide, Todd received nearly no formal schooling. Thus, Ben, as the mentor, shaped his son's knowledge about the world to an extraordinary degree, evident in the number of times the words "Ben says" are repeated in the first two chapters of *Knife*. Ben seems to be Todd's most trusted source of information. Furthermore, his foster-father prepared Todd for the upcoming flight and quest, teaching him "survival stuff like hunting and which fruits you can eat and how to follow the moons for direkshuns and how to use a knife and a gun and snakebite remedies and how to calm yer Noise as best you can" (Ness 18-19), making sure that Todd could survive as a victim hero on the run.

At the start of the quest Ben gains two additional roles: The quest-giver and protector. While Cillian held the Mayor and his men back, Ben brought Todd to the edge of their property and handed him a backpack filled with supplies, a – forbidden – book explaining the quest in detail, and Ben's own hunting knife. After telling Todd that he had to leave right away and to follow a map to another settlement, the quest-giver then returns to the farm to aid his partner and

becomes a protector on his own¹¹. However, as the quest is not explained to a sufficient degree to Todd, the young hero does not know what to do for the first half of his journey, which leads to numerous instances of confusion, and subsequently recollections of Ben: “This isn’t fair. I’m telling you this ain’t fair at all. *You’ll know what to do when you get to the swamp, Todd. You’ll know what to do.* Yeah, thanks bloody much for that, Ben, thanks for all your bloody help and concern cuz here I am and I ain’t got the first clue what to do. It ain’t fair” (Ness 107-108). Although there are numerous recollections after his “death”, most of them are not actually focused on grief. While some recollections are based on Todd’s musings about the uncertain quest-goal, Todd also refers to Ben whenever something new or unexplainable happens, or Viola has questions about New World. As Ben’s additional roles are of greater importance to the overall quest, he is mentioned more frequently than Cillian. In instances of doubt or when explanations are needed, Todd repeatedly thinks back to his mentor and quest-giver.

However, Ben, in contrast to Sally Jackson or Garrow, does not switch from one primary role to the other. His three roles are deeply intertwined, leading to an overlap in his depiction after his presumed death. Therefore, a scene prompted by material provided by the quest-giver can also include expressions of grief for the father figure, and vice versa.

“I don’t mean any offence by it,” [Viola] says, looking up to me, “but I think maybe it’s time I read the note on the map.” [...] She takes out her torch and shines it on the paper turning it over to Ben’s message. To my surprise, she starts reading it out loud and all of sudden, even with her own voice, it’s like Ben’s is ringing down the river, echoing from Prentisstown and hitting my chest like a punch. (Ness 224)

The map, next to the knife, is the most important quest item, and contains the message necessary to understand the quest goal. However, listening to the instructions of the mentor is nearly overshadowed by the recent loss of the father. Thus, through Ben’s greater exposure and the interwovenness of his roles, the narrative provides more instances where bereavement can occur. However, as explained in section 5.3.1., due to the rapid-narrative pace and Todd’s own denial, the depiction of the grieving process is still limited.

When meeting Todd in Carbonel Downs, Ben returns as a complete combination of the mentor, father, and quest-giver. Ben’s main purpose is to provide necessary information – the final exposition concerning Prentisstown’s history – from a trusted source. His second purpose is to facilitate the hero’s emotional closure with his previous life in Prentisstown. Ben, as the mentor and father, encourages Todd to look forward, by encouraging both the boy’s hope for the future

¹¹ Ben as the protector is tied to Cillian’s role and therefore shares its limitations, which have already been described sufficiently above.

and a successful end of the quest: “He pulls himself away. ‘But there’s hope at the end of the road. You remember that.’ [...] He grips my shoulder for a last time. ‘Remember,’ he says. ‘*Hope*’” (Ness 400). Ben’s words “but there’s hope” are repeated in Todd’s narration, when the bereaved boy tries to accept his father’s death. Although Ben’s name itself is not mentioned, the correlation between his final parting words and Todd’s change in lexicon is clearly there. Through his encouraging words, the once-more killed mentor-father-quest giver lessens Todd’s grieving process and provides him with the energy needed to embark on the last section of his journey. As soon as Ben’s work is done, and he has fulfilled all of his – quite limited – functions, he stays behind once more. Seeing as Ben’s roles are of no further usage for the remaining very short plot (see section 5.3.1), it seems as if the narrative does not require any extensive grieving post the initial grieving reaction. Todd rushes through his grief for Ben’s second death in under a day of story time, which directly opposes the lengthy grieving process of Ben’s first death. Ben’s second, rushed grief demonstrates quite clearly how the importance of the role of the parent in connection to the quest is an important variable in how much time to grief the narration allows.

6. Conclusion

The temporary or finite disposal of the parents is a common plot device to liberate the hero from his connection to the mundane. However, it seems that the process of working through one's emotional responses typically occurring after bereavement is a rarer occurrence in quest narratives. This thesis has investigated how depictions of grief that bereaved, adolescent heroes experience after losing a parent are influenced by genre constraints within the YA quest narrative context. My sample consisted of three YA novels, *Eragon*, *Percy*, and *Knife*, and any scenes connected to their main characters' grief after their parents or guardians were killed: Eragon's grief after his uncle Garrow's and mentor Brom's deaths, Todd's feelings after losing Cillian and Ben, and Percy's response after his mother was supposedly killed by the Minotaur. To gain the necessary data in order to analyze how the portrayal of emotions is connected to the underlying framework of the narratives' genre, my research is based on structuralist theories.

Taken together, my results suggest that the depiction of grief is dependent on a number of factors. First of all, the time and place of the death influence the hero's expressed grief, both initially and prolonged. If a safety haven, i.e. Belly of the Whale, is available, the hero can experience a longer episode of initial grief. If, however, the hero is hunted, or is in other immediate danger, grieving has to be temporally suppressed until safety is reached, i.e. until after crossing the threshold and entering the Belly of the Whale. Secondly, the analysis also suggests that the portrayal of grief is affected by narrative pace: Fast pace tends to shorten the immediate expressions of grief, as new action-focused scenes are of more importance than the hero's musings and ruminations. Additionally, rapid narrative pace also tends to minimize lengthy repetitions, as the focus lies on the quest goal and action-heavy scenes.

The study has further shown that side characters' negative reactions abruptly shorten the hero's expressed grief. If side characters are dismissive of the loss, ignore it, and/or express the need to focus on the quest/the departure, the hero tends to stop mourning and starts to move forward. Sympathetic reactions, however, seem to have no impact: In all three books under analysis, the bereaved heroes has different reactions to expressions of condolences. My study therefore indicates that only negative reactions influence the depiction of the grieving process; they establish the forward focus of the plot, the hero's emotional development, and his maturity.

Lastly, the role of the dead parental figure affects how the hero can grieve him or her. Although everyone can be grieved for initially, a direct connection between the parent and the quest has to be established in order for the hero to express a prolonged grieving sentiment. If the parent

acts as the quest initiator, and the hero fears to disappoint or fail the deceased in the afterlife, expressions of grief and mourning seem to be enhanced. However, if the dead parental figure takes on the secondary role of the quest goal, the grieving process seems to be shortened instead. Hence, when the fantastic aspect of the narrative allows for a reversal of death and the questioning of mortality itself, lingering feelings of grief can be replaced with hope. Another role detrimental to the grieving process is the mentor figure. Mentors only seem to be grieved for if they also occupy another primary role, such as the quest initiator. Otherwise, ruminations are either focused on the loss of a guide, not a loved one, or on past instructions.

One unexpected result from my analysis is that all three male heroes express their grief in a non-gendered way. Instead of primarily falling back on intuitive grieving patterns, all three heroes express grief affectively. The bereaved adolescent boys cry, break down, and explicitly express sorrow about their loss at least once during the narrative. However, although the boys are not explicitly told to “man up”, other characters often interfere with the grieving process if it continues for too long. Whenever teenagers grieved for longer than a day, other characters stirred the heroes’ focus towards the quest goal, and, in turn, undermined the grieving process. However, it cannot be confirmed that this interaction is connected to gender stereotypes or prescriptive gender roles with the data at hand. The forward focus and the dedication to overcome grief in a timely manner seem to be closely connected to the development of the adolescent hero and the process of growing up, which hint towards a link between the three novels under analysis and the newly revived Bildungsroman genre.

Before his or her death, the loving parent or guardian holds power over the hero, while simultaneously shielding him from the power structures ruling their society. After the parental figure’s removal, the YA hero, similar to the Bildungsroman hero, is forced to interact with the world in a new manner: The teenager has to learn about his place and role within the world, something most adolescent readers can relate to. While raising dragons or locating a stolen godly artifact are definitely not problems most teenagers face in their adolescence, these tasks, as well as quests themselves, are only symbols for the hardship humans regularly encounter and have to overcome in order to grow (Campbell 17). Percy, who has felt like a disappointment for all of his life, finally finds with Camp Half-Blood a place where he belongs. The teenager grows into his role as a hero and realizes that he is not a screw-up; instead, he actually has powers and abilities that are valued by others and can save the world. In *Knife*, Todd has to navigate and understand gender roles and what it means to be a man. Hence, deciding what kind of man he wants to be, is one of the most central problems Todd faces, and one he only has to

figure out after losing his fathers, who acted as his main male role models. Eragon's struggles seem bigger in comparison, but ultimately he has to figure out what kind of role he wants to play within the world he lives in – a thought that plagues him for the first myth cycle in *Eragon*. The young dragon rider knows that after his attempt at revenge, he will have to decide whether he wants to live his life in hiding, or if he should fight for what is right – a choice he only makes after Brom's death. Death, thus, does not only propel the plot forward, it also increases the hero's agency and forces him to face his problems heads on. The visible struggle heroes go through when dealing with their responsibilities, as well as their doubts of being able to overcome hinderances, embeds them with the characteristics the typical Bildungsroman heroes possess, i.e. how to master life and the act of growing up. Experiencing loss and moving on from bereavement is just one of these issues.

Although the analysis has shown that heroes are allowed to grieve, leaving their parents metaphorically and literally behind is seen as an important developmental step. Just like the Bildungsroman hero, who separates from his parents and strikes out into the world alone, the YA hero has to leave his deceased guardians behind if they have no direct relation to the quest, and thus the hero's new life. This allows not only for a successful emergence into the fantastic, but also aids his development as an independent person. In *Percy*, the young demigod decides to leave his mother twice: Once at the boundary of the fantastic world, here Camp Half-Blood, and the second time in the underworld. When he is confronted with the choice of rescuing her or protecting his friends and fulfilling his quest, Percy chooses to save his fellow questers and the world. With this decision, the twelve-year-old effectively places the need of the many over his mother's life. This might seem like a difficult decision for a young boy, but for Percy – a hero – the choice is clear. Todd also has to grieve Ben's loss twice, and both times he is faced with the options of either giving up or to develop further and grow. Although Todd chooses to lament about life not being fair after leaving Ben for the second time, he is immediately reminded of the importance of his quest and task by Viola. The short conversation nearly instantly leads to an episode of growth and heroic becoming, in which his father, his grief, and his focus on what is lost are left behind. However, if this departure from one's parent and grief is not conducted successfully, the hero is held back in his development. When Eragon still thinks about Palancar Valley and Carvahall after leaving his home to hunt the Ra'zacs, he has no real plan for the future, and his new place within the world. The crossing of the barrier does not seem final to him, as he repeatedly mentions an at least temporary return to his childhood home. Only when he leaves his quest for revenge behind, his wish to immediately return to Palancar Valley diminishes. Instead, he realizes that he now has to navigate the world from a

new position of power, both over himself and within the world. Overcoming grief and becoming a hero thus seems to be an important aspect of heroic development. The bereaved teenagers are forced to make decisions and choices that decide their, and the world's, future. Through the death of their parents, Todd, Eragon and Percy are forced to grow and take on a much-needed role in their respective fantastic worlds – the role of the hero.

Although my analysis has yielded interesting results, the methodology could be slightly refined, if further research is to be conducted. The decision to analyze the corpus according to three aspects could be revised for future research, as splitting the first section – plot and pace – into two sections might have provided even more clarity. Furthermore, analyzing the role and function of the side characters as a separate group has shown the least conclusive results. Thus, a simple differentiation between side characters' sympathetic and unsympathetic reactions, including a variety of sub-categories, might have provided enough data on the influence side characters exhibit on the hero's mourning process. Furthermore, the present study has only investigated three YA quest novels. Given the small corpus, generalizing results valid for the whole YA quest genre cannot be drawn. Additional research based on a bigger sample should therefore still be conducted. However, the presented methodology still has the potential to shine light on the interconnection between the generic framework and the depiction of emotions in literature. Furthermore, the presented methodology can be adapted to analyze other emotions from a structuralist viewpoint as well. As the portrayal of emotions in popular media shapes society's understanding on the appropriateness of expressing one's feelings, analyzing on how emotions are presented in the media young adults consume, an-age group actively shaping and redefining their identity, should be of greater scientific interest. Especially the depiction of grief in non-bereavement genres has not been analyzed enough, although death is an inevitable aspect of life, that most young adults will encounter for the first time during their teenage years. I hope that the present work will further the academic discourse on emotions in literature and will start an in-depth conversation on the grieving, YA hero.

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8. Appendix

English Abstract

The depiction of bereavement and grief in children's and YA literature has received some attention since the of the 20th century. However, previous studies (cf. Apseloff 1991, Day 2012) have primarily focused on bereavement literature, mourning by characters of other literary genres, such as the quest narrative, has not been sufficiently addressed. This thesis has two major purposes: Firstly, to investigate how teenage quest heroes grieve after the bereavement of parental figures, and secondly, to analyze how the generic constraints of the YA quest genre contribute to the depicted expression of grief. The corpus consists of three YA quest novels: *Eragon* (2002) by Christopher Paolini, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2005) by Rick Riordan, and *Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008) by Patrick Ness. A structuralist approach, based on the models of Joseph Campbell, "the monomyth" (23), and Vladimir Propp, "dramatis personae" (20), was used to gain the necessary data. The findings indicate that there is a clear correlation between the generic framework and the depicted grieving process: First, the rapid narrative pace and the monomythical quest framework, initially focused on the departure from the mundane, contribute to a short grieving process. Secondly, the role of the parental figure has to be quest related, to justify a lengthy mourning process. Lastly, the side-characters' actions may influence the hero's grief negatively, although expressions of condolences show no effect. The results confirm the initial hypothesis that the genre's structure contribute to the predominantly rushed grief of the YA quest hero after the loss of a loved, parental figure.

Key words: grieving process, bereavement, YA quest hero, parental loss, generic constraints, rapid narrative pace, monomyth

German Abstract

Die Themen Verlust und Trauer nach dem Tod haben seit dem Ende des 20. Jhd. in der Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung mehr Beachtung gefunden. Frühere Studien (Day 2012, Apseloff 1991) in diesem Gebiet haben sich bis jetzt jedoch vor allem auf Trauerliteratur bezogen. Der Verlust und die Trauer von Charakteren in anderen literarischen Gebieten, wie der Geschichte der Heldenreise, wurde jedoch noch nicht ausführlich genug behandelt. Die vorliegende Thesis erfüllt zwei Zwecke: Erstens, um zu erforschen, wie jugendliche Helden nach dem Verlust eines oder mehrerer Elternteile trauern, und zweitens, um zu analysieren wie die Strukturen des Genres zu der Darstellung des Trauerprozesses beitragen. Der Korpus, auf dem die Analyse beruht, besteht aus drei Jugendbüchern, welche dem Genre der Heldenreise angehören: *Eragon* (2002) von Christopher Paolini, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2005) von Rick Riordan und *Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008) von Patrick Ness. Um die erforderlichen Daten zu erhalten, wurden die drei Bücher anhand ihres Genres und mithilfe strukturalistischer Modelle, unter anderem dem Modell des „Monomythos“ (23) von Joseph Campbell und die „dramatis personae“ (20) von Vladimir Propp, analysiert. Die Ergebnisse der Analyse deutet darauf hin, dass es einen klaren Zusammenhang zwischen der Struktur des Genres und dem dargestellten Trauerprozess gibt: Erstens, sowohl das schnelle Tempo der Erzählung wie auch die Grundstruktur des Monomythos führen zu einer Verkürzung des Trauerprozesses. Zweitens, solange das verstorbene Elternteil keine wichtige Rolle für die Heldenreise hat, scheint die Möglichkeit eines längeren Trauerprozess nicht gegeben zu sein. Drittens, können Nebencharaktere den Trauerprozess des Helden negativ beeinflussen, Beileids- oder Mitleidsbekundungen haben jedoch keinen Effekt. Die Ergebnisse bestätigen die anfangs gestellte Hypothese, dass die Struktur des Genres zu dem schnellen Trauerprozess des jugendlichen Quest-Helden beiträgt.

Schlagwörter: Trauerprozess, Todesfall, Jugendlicher Quest-Held, Monomythos, Verlust der Elternfigur, Genrestruktur, Rapides Erzähltempo