A hero on the sidelines:

The role of a morally ambivalent supporting character in young adult fantasy series

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty	Laitos – Department
Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Musiikin, taiteen ja kulttuurin tutkimuksen laitos

Tekijä – Author
Kaisa Pulkkinen

Työn nimi – Title
A hero on the sidelines: The role of a morally ambivalent supporting character in young adult fantasy series

Oppiaine – Subject	Työn laji – Level
Kirjallisuus	Maisterintutkielma

Aika – Month and year	Sivumäärä – Number of pages
Lokakuu 2017	74

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tässä maisterintutkielmassa tutkin moraalisesti ambivalenttia sankaria nuorten fantasialle ominaisena sivuhenkilötyyppinä. Tutkimuskohteena on kolme nuorille aikuisille suunnattua, modernin fantasian lajiin kuuluvaa kirjasarjaa: Christopher Paolinin *Perillinen* (2003-2011), Cassandra Claren *Varjojen kaupungit* (2007-2014) ja Rick Riordanin *Olympoksen sankarit* (2010-2014). Jokaisesta sarjasta tutkittavaksi on nostettu yksi moraalisesti ambivalenttia henkilöhahmotyyppiä edustava sivuhenkilö. Tutkimuskysymykseni ovat: Miten moraalisesti ambivalentteja sankareita kuvataan nuorten fantasiassa? Mitä funktioita heillä on sivuhenkilöinä ja miten he suhteutuvat keskeisempiin henkilöihin ja tarinan kaareen omissa kirjasarjoissaan?

Teoreettiselta viitekehykseltään tutkimukseni nojaa fantasian lajitutkimukseen, henkilöhahmoteoriaan ja sankaruuden käsitteen tutkimukseen. Tarinan sankari – eli päähenkilö – on fantasian kontekstissa tuttu tutkimuksen aihe, mutta omassa työssäni keskityn siihen, millaista sankaruutta nämä tarinan kannalta marginaalisemmassa roolissa olevat henkilöhahmot osoittavat. Teen työssäni deskriptiivistä analyysiä, jossa nostan kirjasarjoista esille sivuhenkilöiden tarinan kaaren kannalta olennaisia vaiheita ja käännekohtia. Keskeiseen asemaan nousevat hahmojen positio sarjojen keskeistä konfliktia toteuttavien hyvien ja pahojen puolien välillä ja heidän muuttuvat motivaationsa, jotka johtavat heidät toimimaan (tai olemaan toimimatta) tietyn puolen hyväksi. Löytöni osoittavat, että sivuhenkilön asemasta huolimatta näistä hahmoista muodostuu monitahoinen ja "pyöreä" henkilökuva, ja että mustavalkoiseksi hyvän ja pahan väliseksi kamppailuksi luonnehdittavassa nuorten fantasiassa esiintyy myös moraalisen harmaan alueen sävyjen kuvaamista.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Paolini, Christopher, Clare, Cassandra, Riordan, Rick, nuorten fantasia, henkilöhahmotutkimus, sivuhenkilö, sankari

Säilytyspaikka – Depository

Muita tietoja – Additional information

Contents

1 Introduction

> The concept of characters is perhaps the most problematic and the most undertheorized of the basic categories of narrative theory. It is also perhaps the most widely-used of all critical tools, at all levels of analysis. (Frow 1986, 227.)

This is a natural sentiment to present in an introduction to a study about characters, but it also certainly holds truth to it. Characters are the lens through which a story is told. They do not only experience the events, but are also responsible for affecting and constructing them. A book without characters is a book without action, without much of a plot. Understanding characters is essential to understanding the story, and similarly the story itself can center around the portrayal of a character or character cast. As such it is no surprise that researchers often approach literature from the perspective of the figures that appear in it.

The interest of this thesis rests in the genre of fantasy literature. After the explosive popularity of the fantasy genre during the last century, an abundant volume of research has been produced on it. In spite of this, the field remains interesting because of new developments, new material getting published and different points of view emerging to focus on. Within the larger genre of fantasy, numerous subgenres offer different targets to bring to the spotlight. Young adult (YA) fantasy is, as its name suggests, fantasy that is targeted to and/or consumed by young readers. It is a fascinating area of study as the stories remain interesting and relatable to young readers in spite of the fanciful elements. Rather than alienate readers, the presence of the fantastic affords the story something extra, makes it more appealing.

Fantasy for children and young adults is often approached in research through the lens of what it has to offer readers in practice. All reading can, of course, be seen as sophisticating, but Nikolajeva (2012, 60–61) believes that "At its best, fantasy for children provides moral and spiritual guidance for young people". Pierce argues that:

> Everything in speculative universes, and by association the real world, is mutable. Intelligent readers will come to relate the questions raised in these books to their own lives. If a question nags at youngsters intensely enough, they will grow up to devise an answer – to move their world forward, because ardent souls can't stand an unanswered question. (Pierce 1993, 50.)

Reading fantasy is not only entertaining, but also inspiring and educational. This being said, it is evident that fantasy stories and, by extension, the characters the stories are viewed through can create a powerful experience for young readers. However, this study will not approach

characters from the point of view of the reader, but from the point of view of the story. YA fantasy is often criticized for employing the same patterns over and over again (e.g. Nikolajeva 2012, 59), which may in part explain why many researchers find it more intriguing to approach the genre from a reader-response-like angle rather than just content analysis. However, I do not believe that dedicating attention to these admittedly formulaic plots or the character troupes starring in them should be ignored. Even though the genre is dismissed somewhat, "paradoxically, the best examples of children's fantasy have always been questioned as books for children" (Nikolajeva 2012, 61). This would seem to suggest not that a children's book cannot be of high literary value, but that if a children's book is of high quality, that must in fact mean that it is not really a mere children's book; a rather dismissive view. Simply the commercial success of many children's and YA fantasy books and book series tells that something about these straightforward and repetitive plots is doing the trick.

There are many interesting aspects to focus on when looking at the characters of YA fantasy. Maund (2012, 147) argues that in the context of fantasy, "the series is close to being its dominant form". One of the many appeals of the series is the way readers can grow to know the characters it features and begin to care about the new directions their adventures take them. In a series, as the story spans greater in length than it can in a single novel, there is room to expand on the description and development of not only a handful of central characters, but a large cast of interesting figures. It is this pool of characters, not in the immediate forefront, but rising from the background to provoke readers' curiosity and attention that I want to choose my target of study from.

1.1 Research topic and objective

Minor or secondary characters, in spite of their smaller role in a novel, can often be just as memorable as the protagonists. They have meaningful relationships with the more central characters and they have their own functions in developing the plot and enacting important turning points. Without them, the story simply would not work. At best they can even offer an intrigue that main characters cannot, as the reader does not get as much information about them straight away. In YA fantasy, the main characters can usually be relied on to maintain their stance when it comes to the fight for good over evil. However, there is often another type of character on the sidelines that does not quite conform to the dichotomy between heroes and

villains. Tymn speaks of this character, though not in the context of YA fiction but fantasy in general, as the morally ambivalent hero. With examples such as the roguish outlaw Robin Hood, Tymn goes on to describe how morally ambivalent heroes can "challenge the traditional good-versus-evil motif of high fantasy. Though basically good, their commitment is not to the good but to their own independence and individuality." (Tymn 1979, 8.) In YA fantasy more specifically, these are characters who often work on the edges of one side of the conflict or another – or both – but instead of truly committing to either, they want instead to serve their own agenda. While the typical heroes tend to stick to their heroism, the ambivalent heroes are more multi-dimensional and go through a complex process of development between the pull of two opposing forces. Their allegiance is eventually tested and sometimes not fully confirmed until the very end of the story.

It seems relevant to specify that the character of the morally ambivalent hero is hardly rare as a central character in literature in general. On the contrary, some of the most well-known and beloved protagonists in both fantasy and other genres of literature could be classified as morally ambivalent. The examples vary from Robin Hood to Sherlock Holmes, not to mention the majority of characters in George R. R. Martin's popular fantasy installment, *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996–). In YA fantasy, however, this character type falls into a smaller role, while the traditional commoner-hero takes the center stage. The commoner-hero is an underdog, someone who is used to living a simple life, but "once the task is undertaken, the commoner-hero discovers hitherto unsuspected qualities of nobility: courage, generosity, loyalty to the right" (Tymn 1979, 8). This way, the extremities of good and evil are better represented, while still allowing for a glimpse of what it is like for someone to exist in the gray area in between.

A familiar example of a secondary character as a morally ambivalent hero would be Professor Snape from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), who is introduced in the first installment of the series as the most hated teacher at Hogwarts. As Nikolajeva (2011, 196) writes: "Snape's personality fluctuates between the helper and the villain - - Like in a crime novel, suspicion against Snape is built up to divert the reader's attention from the real perpetrator". He mistreats students and is openly fond of the Dark Arts, but when the villain Voldemort rises to power, Snape takes on the dangerous role of a double agent to help defeat him. Eventually, he appears to betray the good guys as he kills their leader, confirming the suspicions the protagonist Harry has had of him all along. Only in the very end of the story is his true allegiance revealed: he was fighting to destroy Voldemort all along to avenge the death

of his unrequited love, Harry's mother. While this revelation reveals his heroic side, it does not erase the ambivalent nature of his character: he was Voldemort's follower until a personal motive – his desire to protect the woman he loved and later on to honor her memory by protecting her son – turned him to support the heroes' side. In Nikolajeva's words, Snape's tale is "not the story of a standard, predictable hero of myth, fairy tale and children's literature, but a complex existential narrative of the life and death of a miserable man who, through thick and thin, remained true to his one and only love" (2011, 204).

In this thesis, I will focus on three supporting characters from three different YA fantasy series. The characters all work with the protagonists, or hero casts, but stay on the sidelines, sometimes even hindering their progress or turning against them. A sense of individuality and loyalty to their own agenda first and foremost, even at the risk of rebuffing the heroes, is what affords these characters their morally ambivalent quality. The series considered are *The Mortal Instruments* (2007–2014) by Cassandra Clare, *The Heroes of Olympus* (2010–2014) by Rick Riordan and *The Inheritance Cycle* (2003–2011) by Christopher Paolini. The three series create a material package of 15 novels total, which is copious for a study of this extent, but I argue the choice is well-founded. As I am focusing on secondary characters and their personal story arcs, the actual material I'm working with is only a fraction of the full length of the novels. Furthermore, choosing three characters to study instead of just one or two allows for better comparison and a more comprehensive understanding of the character type.

My goal is to develop an understanding of the morally ambivalent hero as a supporting character type in the context of YA fantasy series. There is without a doubt a certain formulaic quality in the way YA fantasy stories are constructed: similar patterns and types are repeated in all areas of narrative, including characterization. These patterns are present to serve some purpose within the overall framework of the story. I want to investigate not only what features make up morally ambivalent heroes or how they are constructed, but also why – what their purpose or function in the story is, why they are included in it. Indeed, the characters at the focus of this study, in spite of their less central role, have an important function in how the story unfolds. The research questions I am looking to answer are: How are morally ambivalent heroes depicted in YA fantasy? What functions do they have as supporting characters and how do they relate both to the more central characters and the overall story arc of their respective series? The central focus will be in the ways they, as complex characters with their own histories and motivations,

embody and on the other hand challenge the idea of classic heroism, and the ways they interact with and affect central characters and culmination points in the plot.

There are already some existing studies on or relating to these series and my topic of research. Perälä (2009), from the University of Helsinki, wrote her Master's thesis on the two first volumes of *The Inheritance Cycle*, studying narration and focalization. Haikka (2016), also from the University of Helsinki, has written a Master's thesis on *The Heroes of Olympus* focusing on the depiction of female heroes. Her object of study is close to my own, observing two members of the main character cast and the way they embody heroism. The study of heroes in fantasy is a very popular field. In her Master's thesis, Kesti (2007), from the University of Jyväskylä, applies Campbell's monomyth theory to five heroes from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955) to see if they carry out the hero's journey. Four out of these five characters Kesti has qualified as "side characters", which goes to show that there is interest in literary research to focus on characters aside from just the protagonists.

Studies on different types of fantasy heroes are also readily available – in fact, it would seem that the two topics of fantasy literature and heroism go very much hand in hand. While heroes can make appearances in any genre, fantasy fiction always tends to star heroes of some kind, whether traditional or unconventional. McEvoy (2011), writing for an anthology called *Heroism in the Harry Potter series*, discusses three different marginal groups of heroes: flawed heroes, ambiguous villains and secondary or tertiary heroes.

> Characters in the series choose to be good or evil, to behave in laudable or morally repugnant ways, and their choices shift as the characters develop. Rowling's heroes make mistakes, sometimes tragic ones. Some of her villains choose to behave heroically. Marginal characters surprise us by breaking free of their established roles and becoming great heroes. (McEvoy 2011, 209.)

While the anthology as a whole focuses largely on central characters and more conventional ways to assess heroism – for example, Harry's archetypal hero's journey, following Campbell's monomyth, is retraced – also more minor characters such as Neville the comic relief are studied in the terms of rising to hero status.

My thesis joins the practice of taking into account the auxiliary character cast of fantastic fiction and acknowledging the important role they have in establishing a story into a rounded, detailed whole. Whereas the heroes in major fantasy installments, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, have already been studied from nearly all angles, the series I have chosen have

more points of view left un-scoured. In the context of these series, my thesis investigates a specific secondary character type, the morally ambivalent hero. While characters such as these have been studied before to some extent, there is much left to uncover about their particular roles and functions in YA fantasy as unconventional heroes and as morally gray characters.

1.2 Source material and research methods

The series chosen for this thesis are all representatives of what might be called modern fantasy with all volumes published between the years of 2003 and 2014. They are all popular contemporary series that have, at some point, been featured on the New York Times Best Sellers list (https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/) and have reached international success. The first volume of Paolini's series, *Eragon*, was adapted into a movie, as were the two first volumes in Riordan's earlier series *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* (2005–2009), featuring several characters recurring in *The Heroes of Olympus*. Also Clare's *The Mortal Instruments* has been seen in adaptations in the form of a movie based on the first volume and a Netflix original series, *Shadowhunters*, based more loosely on the book series as a whole. While commercial success is not necessarily a reliable measure of quality, it does reveal a sustained interest in these works among consumers. In fact, both Riordan and Clare are still actively publishing books that take place in the same story worlds as the series under consideration here, speaking volumes about the continued involvement of their readers and fans. In the following, I will briefly introduce the three series and the characters, the morally ambivalent heroes, that I will focus on within each series.

The Mortal Instruments, by Clare, includes six volumes called *City of Bones*, *City of Ashes*, *City of Glass*, *City of Fallen Angels*, *City of Lost Souls* and *City of Heavenly Fire*. The protagonist and most common point of view character is Clary, a teenage New Yorker, who finds out that she is a Shadowhunter. Shadowhunters are a group of human warriors blessed with angelic powers and tasked to fight demons and law-breaking Downworlders (warlocks, faeries, werewolves and vampires). Clary joins up with a group of other young Shadowhunters consisting of her future romance interest Jace and his adopted siblings Alec and Isabelle. Together with Clary's human, later turned vampire, best friend Simon, this group of central heroes fight against the series' main villains.

The character I will be focusing on, however, is Magnus Bane. He is a Downworlder, more specifically a warlock, and as such has close ties to the world against which Shadowhunters usually clash. Warlocks are immortal, half-human, half-demon beings that have magical powers. Because of that magic, Shadowhunters often come to them for help in spite of the fact that they usually think of Downworlders as worth less than actual human beings. This is how Magnus meets the group of main characters in *City of Bones* and grudgingly agrees to help them in spite of his general disregard for Shadowhunters and the way they treat Downworlders.

Paolini's *The Inheritance Cycle* is made up of the four volumes *Eragon*, *Eldest*, *Brisingr* and *Inheritance,* and it tells the story of Eragon, a boy who lives in the fictional land of Alagaësia. Alagaësia is populated by humans, elves, dwarves, urgals (somewhat similar to Tolkien's orcs) and a number of other races. There is a war being waged against the evil king Galbatorix, and young Eragon becomes a part of it when he finds a dragon egg and it hatches. Dragons were thought to be all but extinct with only three eggs and one dragon, that of Galbatorix's, remaining. Thus, when Saphira hatches for Eragon, he becomes a Dragon Rider and joins the Varden, the alliance that opposes Galbatorix's reign.

Murtagh, the morally ambivalent hero of *The Inheritance Cycle*, is a traveler who meets and rescues Eragon in a moment of dire need. He is a warrior with a mysterious past and ties to Galbatorix's court, but the two become friends. The rest of the faction opposing Galbatorix distrust him because of his parentage, and he in turn does not want to join their movement. The two friends end up separated. The next time they meet, Murtagh has also hatched a dragon and become its Rider. On account of this, he has been forced to join Galbatorix's side against his will.

The Heroes of Olympus, by Riordan, consists of five volumes named *The Lost Hero*, *The Son of Neptune*, *The Mark of Athena*, *The House of Hades* and *The Blood of Olympus*. The cast of main characters is made up of seven demigods, children of Greek and Roman gods with superhuman abilities. They are prophesied to fight the goddess of the earth, Gaia, and to try and prevent her from destroying the world. In spite of drawing on Greek and Roman mythology, the story takes place in the modern world, in which the ancient gods and goddesses have survived, but moved their base of operations to North America.

The character targeted in this study is Nico di Angelo, who is also a demigod and a son of Hades. He was born in Italy in the 1930s, but he remained young due to entrapment in Hotel Lotus, a magical place where time moves slower than the outside world. He and his sister Bianca were released from the hotel before the events of *The Heroes of Olympus*, and Bianca was killed shortly after. Nico has always been estranged from the community of other demigods although he sometimes assists them from the sidelines. There remains distrust between them and Nico finds it difficult to fit in, especially since the other demigods occasionally find him and his powers frightening.

These three YA fantasy series, while similar in some respects, take place in very different settings and the three morally ambivalent characters start off in rather different positions in their respective stories. Magnus is a several-hundred-year-old warlock, who only helps the 'good guys' when it suits his personal motives. Murtagh is first a friend, then a foe, who is most interested in his own welfare, but becomes a reluctant participant in a conflict he would much rather stay out of. Nico is, on the surface, a demigod like the others, but regardless cannot find his own place in the modern world, and is mostly left to fend for himself. In spite of these different standpoints, there are numerous similarities in the ways these characters conduct themselves and eventually take their stance in the crises of their respective storylines.

As I begin my analysis, I will approach the three series within the context of fantasy literature as a field of study. In chapter 2, I will go over definitions for key terms and concepts and map out ways to approach the concept of the fantastic – that element of supernatural that separates fantasy literature from other genres. This will help to understand the position of the three series in the domain of fantasy and YA literature as well as the setting in which each story takes place. This will be the most theoretical part of my study, which is why I have named it "Forming context".

In chapter 3, I will move on to the topic of character study, and especially how to make sense of characters who stand aside from the story's spotlight. In this section, I will also begin to delve into the three individual figures and their characteristics more in-depth, as is the objective of this thesis. By means of a close reading I will decipher meanings behind the way they are described as they make their entrance as characters. I will also touch upon the topic of viewing secondary characters as heroes in their own right, which includes a more thorough reasoning as to classifying them as morally ambivalent heroes.

Lastly, in chapter 4, I will select to the forefront themes, events and aspects of the story arc that are relevant in understanding the complexities of the three characters as representatives of the character type and as enactors of the different narrative functions they serve. These include them taking – and changing – sides in terms of the overarching conflict, affirming motivations, performing acts of heroism or opposition and forming and modifying relationships with characters important in the overall plot as well as with characters with a special significance in their own personal story arc. With all these considerations, a rather well-rounded general understanding of the characteristics of the morally ambivalent hero should emerge. Also, the type's role and functions as a supporting character both in relation to other characters and the overall narrative should be well illustrated.

2 Forming context: the field of fantasy

In this section, my main focus rests in placing this thesis and the series studied in it into context in terms of the field of study they relate to – the vast world of fantasy literature. The three series studied here represent the genres of modern fantasy and young adult fantasy, but what exactly is meant by these terms? When it comes to forming definitions, it may be surprisingly difficult to justify a distinction between one genre and another. Furthermore, there are different ways for authors to create the intricate story worlds featured in their books, to introduce the element of the supernatural. By considering what it is that gives these stories their fantastic characteristic, I hope to also understand better the context in which each character at the focus of this study is constructed.

2.1 Fantasy literature – definitions and classifications

Writing about fantasy today, one tends to think of a very specific type of literature. Fantasy is by no means new invention, however, as Sinisalo (2004, 13) points out. Although fantasy literature as a term only grew popular along with Tolkien in the 1950s (Wienker-Piepho 2004, 33), the type of literature dealing with fantastical phenomena has existed for ages, only it has been approached in different ways during different times. In Jackson's words: "As a literature of 'unreality', fantasy has altered in character over the years in accordance with changing notions of what exactly constitutes 'reality'. Modern fantasy is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance." (Jackson 1981, 4.) In fact, Sinisalo tells that the current realistic trend in mainstream literature only dates back to the 1800s, before which myth and mysticism provided the groundwork for mainstream literature (Sinisalo 2004, 13). This is one of the reasons why, when speaking of fantasy today, the specification modern fantasy is often used. In myth and fairy tale, the presence of fantasy is accepted head-on, and is typically understood to have an allegorical or educational meaning or purpose. In modern fantasy, the more important function is, arguably, to entertain – while it can still certainly be read or interpreted as allegory to real-word issues. Sisättö argues that the birth of actual fantasy literature – and its separation from the newborn branch of realistic literature – took place only after the scientific world view replaced the religious one. He times this change taking place somewhat earlier than Sinisalo, in the 1700s. (Sisättö 2006, 11.)

James credits much of the shape of modern fantasy to two authors from the mid-20th century, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. According to him they "stand together at the origins of modern fantasy, mediating the fantasies of earlier generations and both, in their own very different ways, helping to give modern fantasy its medievalist cast". (James 2012, 62–63.) Especially Tolkien's name tends to turn up very frequently in studies about fantasy literature – as it has already in this thesis. Researchers point out how he lends elements from folktale and legend in terms of both structure and content (e.g. Wienker-Piepho 2004, 45, 47) and how later authors lend from him. Wienker-Piepho (2004, 47) in fact describes Tolkien as the "standard" to which other fantasy works are compared. The groundwork created by these authors and followed by others after them affects not only the literature itself, but also the ways in which the research approaches the literature.

As far as definitions for fantasy as a genre go, a good starting point might be the most instinctive one – fantasy is literature in which some fantastic components are present. Therefore, this one provided by Tymn is appealing in its simplicity and non-obstructiveness, as it unequivocally includes all works which include some fantastical element:

> Fantasy, as a literary genre, is composed of works in which nonrational phenomena play a significant part. That is, they are works in which events occur, or places or creatures exist, that could not occur or exist according to rational standards or scientific explanations. The nonrational phenomena of fantasy simply do not fall within human experience or accord with natural laws as we know them. (Tymn 1979, 3.)

While the wide definition is by no means invalid, it does encompass a vast body of literature that may call for some further classification. In the attempt to pinpoint the nature of fantasy literature, a common method has been to select the kinds of texts that are and are not included in its definition, in which there has been some disagreement (e.g. James and Mendlesohn 2012, 1). According to Tymn, fantasy differs from "mainstream literature" because of the presence of nonrational phenomena and from "other nonmainstream types of literature", such as dream visions, weird tales and science fiction, because these, unlike fantasy, offer some rational or scientific explanation for the (apparently) fantastical phenomena (Tymn 1979, 4).

In Todorov's research, the genre of "the fantastic" takes place in a world that conforms to the realistic one until something supernatural happens. The characters experiencing this supernatural event – and potentially, by extension, the reader (Todorov 1975, 33) – are then faced with a choice of either believing what occurred has a rational explanation or that the laws governing reality in the story have been altered. "The fantastic occupies the duration of this

uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous." (Todorov 1975, 25.) In the uncanny, events are, in spite of their incredible nature, accounted for by natural laws, whereas in the marvelous, supernatural elements of the story are accepted as supernatural (Todorov 1975, 47, 54).

Curiously, looking at Todorov's definitions, the bulk of modern fantasy literature would seem to fall under the category of the marvelous rather than the fantastic. While in some books the first supernatural events may come as a surprise to the protagonist(s), they are usually accepted as the new reality very shortly. In *The Mortal Instruments*, for example, Clary has no idea that the Shadow World exists until she is drawn into the Shadowhunters' affairs. However, it is not long until she actually develops a sense of belonging in this new incredible reality that she did not experience in her old life. Furthermore, in many fantasy books, a fantastical story world (such as, most famously, Tolkien's Middle Earth) is in fact the only reality known to the characters and is, as such, accepted at face value. While protagonists like Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* or Eragon in *The Inheritance Cycle* may be amazed at having the chance to interact with supernatural entities like elves, dragons and magic in general, they have always known these things to exist in the same world they live in. The same goes for the reader: there is no uncertainty or expectation of a hidden rational explanation when the author presents these magical occurrences.

Schaafsma (1986, 61) argues that "Fantasy is the only modern genre which takes as its subject man's relationship to this supernatural or numinous reality; only fantasy affirms that relationship as the source of positive values for man". According to her, fantasy differs from horror fiction in that whereas in horror, the supernatural element, the Other, is a negative, opposing force, in fantasy the relationship between man and the Other can be "intimate" and "harmonious" (Schaafsma 1986, 62). Furthermore, she believes that while fantasy is often considered a simple contest between good and evil, "In most fantasies the relationship which develops between the hero and a benevolent supernatural figure is of equal or greater significance" than the battle of the opposing forces. This separates fantasy from romance literature, in which supernatural figures may occur, but are always in a secondary role next to the conflict between the hero and the antagonist. (Schaafsma 1986, 63). The idea of the supernatural as a positive force in fantasy holds true at least for the books studied in this thesis. While the opponents may represent the Other in a frightening way, the heroes fighting against

them also have supernatural power on their side. The discovery of one's magical destiny is eventually, if not immediately, experienced as a welcome, empowering thing.

In more modern research, the most common point of distinction between genres has been between fantasy and science fiction, presumably because of the ever-increasing popularity of each and the similarities between them. Both deal with instances only possible in the author's or reader's imagination. As James and Mendlesohn (2012, 1), in agreement with the previous definition from Tymn, phrase it, "fantasy is about the construction of the impossible, whereas science fiction may be about the unlikely, but is grounded in the scientifically possible". This obviously does not go to say that the events in science fiction necessarily concur with the possibilities of modern science, but that they can be explained through some pseudoscience or advanced technology, not magic.

The key problem with defining the genre of fantasy arises from the fact that it is often attempted to be defined in contrast to the realistic. However, that would also require a conclusive definition for the term "real". As Collins (1982, 119) writes: "One man's 'world', then, may be another man's fantasy. No doubt the difficulties of establishing a definition of fantasy-as-genre can be traced in large part to the problems of defining the real." After all, the way people define reality is always dependent on their own perception of it. Coyle describes the difference between the fantastic and the realistic as follows:

> To signify the creation of an alternative world as opposed to realistic transcription of the observable, the term fantasy is perhaps most suitable. Negatively, fantasy rejects the empirical, logical world of appearance; positively it accepts the magical, non-rational, impossible world of imagination. The realist, of course, also uses imagination, but he uses it to create a credible model of what he considers reality; the fantasist imaginatively projects the incredible. (Coyle 1986, 1–2.)

As can be surmised from this quote, Coyle believes in a very wide definition of fantasy, allotting under that heading all non-realistic literature. Submitting to such a loose definition, Coyle in fact goes so far as to refuse fantasy as a genre, choosing instead to think of it as a mode, "a way of perceiving human experience" (Coyle 1986, 2).

In the introduction, I have begun approaching the three novel series selected for this thesis with the basic assumption that they represent the modern fantasy genre. This assumption is easily justified. All works include supernatural phenomena for which there are no rational explanations available – some form of magic, although it is not necessarily called by that name

in the books themselves. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, for example, it is the Greco-Roman gods being real that represents the overall existence of a magical or supernatural reality. The existence of magic, or "sense of wonder", whatever form it takes, does not conform to natural laws as they are known in the real world, but the magic present in each story still follows some laws and restrictions as put forth in that fictional world specifically.

In *The Inheritance Cycle*, magic is a force that exists independently from any magic users, but it can be controlled, mainly with the use of a language that consists of the true names of all things. The use of magic is limited by the amount of energy a spell caster has at his or her disposal as doing something with magic will take as much energy as doing it manually. In *The Mortal Instruments*, magic originates from the existence of angels and demons, powerful entities who have passed on their power to humans and other races. Warlocks can use magic innately, while Shadowhunters draw power from angelic runes that they draw on their weapons and their own skin. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, magical power comes from mythical creatures, gods, titans and monsters and is passed on to demigods due to their divine heritage. Magic is not something the characters use so much as a part of who they are, giving them innate abilities to affect and control the elements of the world around them, depending on which god they are descended from.

As such, the nature of the supernatural phenomena differs between the three series, but in compliance with Schaafsma's (1986) argument, the relationship between characters and the supernatural is ultimately positive and rewarding. This extends to the existence of non-human races, such as dragons and elves, warlocks and werewolves, or satyrs and pegasi, who are in the role of ally, not antagonist, to the human or human-like protagonists. This separates the stories from horror or romance, but also science fiction: the fantastic and the characters or entities that represent it are largely inspired from a folkloric or mythological origin, not science or technology.

2.2 Worlds of fantasy: setting and subgenres

Rather than to try and further ruminate on the definitions of the fantasy genre, Mendlesohn approaches the field of study from a slightly different the point of view. She wants to draw her focus to "the way in which a text becomes fantasy or, alternatively, the way the fantastic enters

the text." (Mendlesohn 2008, 11). She argues that there are four different ways this can be done, i.e. there exist four categories within the fantastic genre. "In the portal-quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape." (Mendlesohn 2008, 12.) The way in which fantasy is brought into the story also affects how readers, and the characters through which they experience the story, respond to it.

Mendlesohn's taxonomy compares closely with several earlier, similar classifications. A traditional, even old-fashioned approach divides fantastic worlds twofold: high and low fantasy, fantasy taking place either in a secondary or a primary world. Simply, a primary world is a world equivalent to the real one, whereas a secondary world is an imaginary one that, while still complying with its own internal, consistent order, cannot be explained in terms of natural laws, but the supernatural. While fantastic events may take place in a primary story world as well, these events will then have "no explanation, rational or nonrational". (Tymn 1979, 5.)

It is, of course, possible for a fantasy tale to afford characters access to both the primary and the secondary worlds. According to Tymn (1979, 6–7), however, the presence of any secondary world is a characteristic of high fantasy, whereas low fantasy is strictly limited to the one, primary world. The terms high and low have often aroused criticism due to their implied value judgment (Ihonen 2004, 82), and Tymn does seem to insinuate he credits high fantasy more literary value than low fantasy. He writes: "However entertaining weird tales, farces, or animal tales may be, we are not concerned in this volume with the horrors or laughter or learning of low fantasy; rather we are intent upon experiencing the 'awe and wonder' (Tolkien's terms) afforded by high fantasy" (Tymn 1979, 7). Regardless, Ihonen (2004, 82) stresses that the terms should only be understood to describe the kind of environment the story takes place in.

To combat the limitations of the twofold division of high and low fantasy, Nikolajeva (1988) has developed three potential types of fantasy based on how the primary and secondary worlds are presented in the text. A closed secondary world, as the name implies, has no connection whatsoever to the primary world; its existence is not even implied. An open secondary world means that there are two worlds, primary and secondary, between which it is possible for characters to travel. Lastly, an implied secondary world means that the story is taking place in the primary world, but the secondary world – that is to say, some supernatural element –

penetrates into the primary world. (Ihonen 2004, 82.) Of these categories, the first two would fit into Tymn's description of high, the last one to low fantasy – some researchers, however, would consider only the closed secondary world to qualify as high fantasy.

While these categorizations based on the types of worlds that exist in fantasy stories – or the kinds of worlds the stories exist in – are useful in understanding the nature of fantasy literature as it is known today, they appear to rely on the idea or concept that the fantastic must originate from someplace; from outside of the "regular" world. Even when the story takes place in a single, regular primary world, the very fact that something fantastical is present must imply there exists some secondary world just out of sight, from where the fantastic seeps through. That is why I find Mendlesohn's approach more appealing: while it acknowledges the importance of alternate worlds, the fantastic itself is more of a thing or an element than a place, a "land of faërie" as Tolkien (1983) knew it.

To approach Mendlesohn's categorization from the perspective of the aforementioned forefathers of fantasy, Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956) is a prime example of a portal-quest. In it, children leave the realistic world and enter the fantastical one through a portal, located in a wardrobe or a painting, for example. Apart from actually containing these portals, the regular, or primary, world remains true to the laws of nature as they are known in the real world. The world beyond the portal, the secondary world, however, allows for the existence of magic and all sorts of events and feats previously unthinkable to the children who have passed through. Tolkien's numerous books taking place in Middle Earth, most famously *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings*, represent immersive fantasy. The world is, as mentioned previously, unescapable to both characters and, by extension, readers. It is the only world that exists in the story's reality and the presence of the fantastic is far less awe-inspiring to the characters living there.

Out of the three fantasy series studied in this thesis, one falls under the category of immersive fantasy, and two are intrusion fantasies. *The Inheritance Cycle* takes place in the fictional world of Alagaësia, wherein elves, dwarves and dragons are fully known to exist, even if the protagonist has not personally encountered any at the beginning of the story. As Mendlesohn (2008, 16–17) says, the presence of the magical or fantastic is taken for granted. In this sense, the entrance of the fantastic in *The Mortal Instruments* and *The Heroes of Olympus* makes them somewhat more interesting to analyze, as intrusion fantasy takes place in the primary world.

The key difference between intrusion and liminal fantasy is that in the former, the appearance of the fantastic takes the characters by surprise whereas in the latter, the characters do not seem to find anything strange in the strange events, thus alienating the reader (Mendlesohn 2008, 17–19). There is no portal or transition into the strangeness, it is the world itself that turns out not to be so natural at all, as more and more fantastical elements emerge.

At the beginning of the first novel of the series, Clary, the protagonist of *The Mortal Instruments*, finds out that right in the middle of her home city, there exists a whole other world which she has never been able to see: the Shadow World. All her life, magical creatures have existed right under her nose, but because of her mother's attempts to protect her, her ability to see them has been blocked. While many characters are introduced who have known of and belonged to the Shadow World their whole lives, Clary's point of view is the one from which the story is primarily narrated from. As such, the readers are joined in her disbelief, amazement and eventual adjustment to this change in perspective. Mendlesohn (2008, 17–18) writes that "it is assumed that we, the readers, are engaged with the ignorance of the point of view character, usually the protagonist. - - the protagonists and the reader are never expected to become accustomed to the fantastic." While the presence of the fantastic in itself becomes a given, there are always new surprises, travels to new places, new people and all sorts of magic to re-awaken the sense of wonder.

In *The Heroes of Olympus*, the introduction of the fantastic is perhaps even more curious, as the world of demigods and monsters is already familiar to some readers from Riordan's earlier series *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*. However, the new series starts from a situation where many of the numerous protagonists are not yet familiar with the Olympian gods and their role in the modern world. In the first two installments, *The Lost Hero* and *The Son of Neptune*, the central protagonists and titular characters, Jason and Percy, respectively, have already known their heritage and identity for years, but are suffering from amnesia and need to be reintroduced to what it means to be a demigod. Mendlesohn touches upon the likely reason for this:

> The required awestruck or skeptical tone is tricky and may contribute to the preference for stylistic realism in order to maintain the contrast between the normal world and the fantastic intrusion. It also may explain the tendency of the intrusion fantasy to continually introduce new protagonists, and to up the ante on the nature or number of the horrors. Horror, amazement, and surprise are difficult to maintain if the protagonist has become accustomed to them. Escalation—of many kinds—is an important element of the rhetoric. (Mendlesohn 2008, 18.)

If the characters took the influx of supernatural elements in stride, it might be difficult for readers unfamiliar with Riordan's previous work to keep up with the order of the fictional world. It is also easier for readers to relate to characters and their experiences as the narrative maintains the awestruck tone in the face of surprising events. Even late on in the series, after everything the characters have seen, it is not uncommon for them to be taken aback by some new horror: "Nico had witnessed many forms of death. He didn't think anything could surprise him any more [sic]. / He was wrong." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 464.)

Maintaining the sense of wonder can be especially hard in the context of the fantasy series: even if the fantastic comes as a surprise in the first volume, by the second or third novel the protagonists – assuming they remain the same – must be at least somewhat accustomed to its presence. Naturally, the same applies to readers, which is why new volumes in a series must always up the ante. However, the serial is definitely a dominant form in modern fantasy. Maund (2012) examines the appeal of the series as a prevalent form within all genre fiction and fantasy specifically. She argues that "any author is effectively promising to provide her readers with adventure, pleasure, exploration and experience. But the series author holds out an often reassuring offer of familiarity and continuity." (Maund 2012, 147.) There is evident value in continuity, for what is it, after all, if not a guarantee of continued quality as already established in previous works? However, a series does also need to advance in order to keep readers invested.

Maund outlines three main types of series based on whether the driving force rests on characters, plot or place. In the first case, the "classic series", the main character or characters remain the same in numerous books detailing largely unrelated adventures. In the second, "scripted series", there is an overarching quest or conflict, which the characters must resolve over the course of the series, with some more minor victories and losses taking place in each novel. Lastly, in the "thematic series", each novel may introduce different characters during different times or on different sides of a conflict, detailing for example the history of a fictional world. (Maund 2012, 148–149.) "Reader involvement is built by the layering of new narratives over these tropes and by the expansion out from the story's core - - into surrounding landscapes, into fictive history and into character growth" (Maund 2012, 153). The familiar is refurbished with new wonders to maintain readers' interest throughout the progression of the series.

All three series studied in this thesis fall under the category of the scripted series. In *The Inheritance Cycle*, the overarching plot is to overthrow the evil king Galbatorix, in *The Mortal Instruments*, to win the war waged against the Shadowhunters first by Clary's father Valentine, and later by her brother Sebastian, and in *The Heroes of Olympus*, to stop the rise of the earth goddess Gaia. In each of these cases, then, the plot takes the form of a quest. Embarking on a quest is a common trope in all fantasy, and especially so in fantasy directed at young adults. Senior describes the subgenre as follows:

> The structuring characteristic of quest fantasy is the stepped journey: a series of adventures experienced by the hero and his or her companions that begins with the simplest confrontations and dangers and escalates through more threatening and perilous encounters. The narrative begins in a single thread but often becomes polysemous, as individuals or small groups pursue minor quests within the overall framework. (Senior 2012, 190.)

This escalation in the narrative complies with Mendlesohn's (2008) and Maund's (2012) comments on increasing or expanding the oncoming challenges and fantastical elements to keep the reader invested in the story.

The techniques used in expanding the story are largely similar in all three series. Characters' skills and abilities develop and they are capable of taking on more imposing opponents and tasks. New characters are introduced and, perhaps more notably, previously minor characters are given more range. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, for example, two characters with brief appearances in the early volumes rise to protagonist status in the last one – including the character this thesis focuses on. In fact, each of the three characters in this study are in a relatively minor role in the beginning of the series, but their significance increases as the story proceeds. Seeing things from the points of view of different characters helps in keeping the story fresh and giving it a less black-and-white feel. Travel and new, unexpected landscapes are in an important role during quests that take characters all over their respective worlds. In the last volume of *The Mortal Instruments*, in spite of the series' overall nature of intrusion fantasy, the characters even embark on a portal quest to an alternate dimension.

Considering the importance of the setting, there is one further genre classification that holds relevance. *The Inheritance Cycle* takes place in a Tolkien-esque medievalist world, the classic world of high fantasy. After the influence of Tolkien's Middle Earth, as James (2012, 70) says, "the default cultural model for the fantasy world was the Middle Ages." Even in stories taking place in the modern day, where characters are familiar with things like cell phones and planes, the side-effects of magic can render these technologies useless. This often leaves the characters

stranded in the medievalist time of slow long distance communication and travel or forced to come up with fantastical alternatives to replace modern amenities. However, in *The Mortal Instruments* and *The Heroes of Olympus*, the presence of the modern, urban world adjacent to all the fantastic events is in an important role.

Irvine describes the genre of urban fantasy thusly:

> The elements common to all urban fantasies – a city in which supernatural events occur, the presence of prominent characters who are artists or musicians or scholars, the redeployment of previous fantastic and folkloric topoi in unfamiliar contexts – hint at a characterization if not a rigorous definition. (Irvine 2012, 200.)

The cities and landmarks that characters visit and readers may well be familiar with in real life are re-defined by the revelation of the supernatural that lurks within. In *The Heroes of Olympus*, monsters from Greco-Roman myth attack demigods on the streets of American and European cities. In *The Mortal Instruments*, New York City is the breeding ground for vampires and werewolves and fey have made their home in Central Park. Mythical elements are ever present, just as in the more traditional setting of the medieval fantasy world, but gods, giants, angels and demons are transferred into the urban environment.

2.3 Fantasy and the young adult genre

All three of the series studied in this thesis are examples of young adult fantasy. Traditionally, YA literature is studied at least somewhat jointly with children's literature, although there are significant differences between the two. The definition of a young adult is complicated, not only in terms of literature, but also in real life. When does the transition from a child to a young adult happen and how do young adults differ from children? According to Waller (2009, 6), adolescence "does not clearly refer to ideas of innocence, origin or moral security, and it is located, not merely as 'other' to adulthood, but also as 'other' to childhood". It is difficult to name a specific age in which this change begins to apply, but to form some context, at least Waller uses the word "teenager" (that is, 13-19-year-old) somewhat synonymously with adolescent. Even then, the term young adult is problematic, because a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old can hardly be considered an adult by any standards, even a young one. In Finnish research, the noun "nuori" is used instead. It refers simply to a young person, although its meaning is clearly distinct from a child. The translation "youngster" is perhaps the most accurate one, if a little vernacular, but as the term young adult is probably the most widely used in English writing, I shall use it here as well.

In literature, specifically, the distinction between child and young adult is problematic also because different readers develop an interest in more complex stories and themes at different ages. Therefore it is impossible to name an exact age spectrum for readers of YA books. The age of the protagonist can be seen as an indicator to the age of the (intended) audience, but this definition is commonly dismissed by researchers as insufficient or inaccurate (Ihonen 2004, 77, Nikolajeva 2012, 60). Instead of considering the intended audience, Ihonen (2004, 77) suggests defining children and adolescent fantasy based on whether the readers find it interesting – that is, young adult fantasy would simply be fantasy read by this group. This definition, while appealingly straightforward, does not offer much in the way of concreteness.

Rantalaiho (2006) argues that publishers, bookstores and libraries do much of the classification on the reader's behalf. They decide who a book is marketed for and whether it gets shelved in the child, young adult or adult section. Even the physical qualities of a book say much about the reader it is intended for: children's books tend to have more colorful covers than adults' books, young adult books are thicker than children's books and so on. However, these are only indicators and even authors may not entirely agree with their publishers over which books are targeted at which audience. (Rantalaiho 2006, 108–109.) Even separating between fantasy directed at adults and at young readers (children and/or adolescents) is not always clear. Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000), for example, was marketed to adults in the US, but to young readers in Finland (Ihonen 2004, 77).

YA fantasy is often approached from the point of view of its relatability to readers and its representation of real world issues. According to Nikolajeva (2012, 60), although in the context of children rather than young adults, fantasy offers a way to "deal with important psychological, ethical and existential questions in a slightly detached manner". While the events described are outlandish, they provoke questions about ways to understand and make sense of reality. The alienation provided by the fantastical elements can even offer new insights to real phenomena (e.g. Ihonen 2004, 78). While these are interesting considerations, they easily take the spotlight away from the story itself and more towards a reader-response type of research.

Themes in adults' fiction are generally more complicated and difficult to approach than in works aimed at children, and a similar, if less pronounced, distinction can be found between children's and young adults' books. In fantasy, specifically, common themes between

children's and young adults' stories include newfound independence and responsibility, friendship, personal growth, adventure and of course the fight between right and wrong, good and evil. In YA fantasy, however, these themes tend to present themselves in somewhat more complex and deep ways. The element of hope is often seen as a characteristic of children's fantasy (Ihonen 2004, 77), whereas the YA genre starts to include heavier themes such as death and mortality. Also romance, which is rarely more than a hint in books for children, and even sexuality are important and interesting themes to young adults, regardless of whether the fiction is realistic or fantastic. Furthermore, in children's books, it is common for good and evil to be represented dichotomously, whereas in the YA genre, some more shades of gray are portrayed, even if good still does tend to prevail in the end.

Seeing as how drawing the line between children and young adult or young adult and adult literature can be problematic, it seems relevant here to justify qualifying all three series subject to my study as YA fantasy. While these divisions are problematic and there are no exhaustive boundaries to refer to, all series include features that are typical to the YA genre. Firstly, in each series the key protagonist or protagonists are in their teens – and remain in that age spectrum for the duration of the series – and are as such likely to attract readers of a similar age, although this explanation on its own should always be considered far from definitive. Secondly, the books are all quite long, each volume in each series spanning several hundred pages. This is likely to deter young children from reading them, at least by themselves. They are also marketed chiefly for young adults, although naturally that does not prevent readers of other ages from taking an interest in them.

Lastly, the central themes in the books are typical fantasy content, dealing both with whimsical adventure and with danger and loss. Not every character's story ends with a clear-cut happily ever after, and even subjects like physical and emotional torture are touched upon. Romance and (awakening) sexuality are also present themes, and in *The Mortal Instruments*, even the topic of actual sex is broached. Again, this is likely to turn away the youngest child readers. However, the theme of growing up and achieving independence from one's parents or mentors is significant throughout the span of all three series, making the books perhaps more relatable to young readers than adults. There is also a fairly clear division between good and evil, even if the blurred area in between does exist. The choice of what is right and wrong is not always obvious, but in the end there is little surprise in the triumph of the forces of good. While any

reader can certainly enjoy these series, there exists a certain element of predictability that may affect adult readers' interest.

3 Sideshow in the spotlight: supporting characters

This section will focus on characters: what they are like and the ways they can be studied and interpreted. Not all characters are the same, nor do they have the same roles or visibility – some are in the front and center, where the entire narrative is essentially revolved around who they are and what their personal story is, whereas others appear only briefly as part of the setting where more important things are taking place. More to the point, then, I will look into the topic of character theory and develop an idea of what kinds of characters there are and how these different types of characters can be understood in terms of their vividness as individual creations and their positions in the story. I will argue for the importance of supporting characters, and take a look at the ways they have been theorized to grasp how they can be unmasked as wholesome creations even from the sidelines. This will lead to a close reading on passages that function as introductory to bringing the three characters of Murtagh, Magnus and Nico into their respective stories. The original descriptions reveal them in a way that allows for the sustained interest of readers – not much is given away, but it is clear that there is more to be learned after they exit the stage for the first time. Lastly, I will consider the concepts of heroes and heroism, and how marginal characters, too, can come to embody them.

3.1 Characters – central, minor and in between

> [L]iterature – whether read as fiction, or heard as oral narrative, or viewed as drama and film – involves the generation in our minds of images of people who figure in it. Hence we must have a way of talking about such images, about their nature and function – doubly so, perhaps, because, to judge by the history of the critical tradition, we often respond to these images with an intensity and a degree of both affectivity and objectivity that are greater than what we feel for people we encounter in life. (Hochman 1985, 30–31.)

In order to talk about literary characters, these images of people, as Hochman calls them, one must first understand what is meant with the term. The Oxford English Dictionary simply defines a character as a "person portrayed in a work of fiction, a drama, a film, a comic strip, etc." (OED Online 2016a). The person may be entirely fictional or based on some real life model, but in any case a character in a novel is seen at least as a representation of a human being. Some researchers accept this definition head-on. Forster, one of the classical points of reference when it comes to character study, even went so far as to name his chapter regarding

characters "People", on the basis that "the actors in a story are usually human" (Forster 1974, 30).

In the context of fantasy literature, this first and most basic assumption is instantly contradicted. Fantasy and science fiction introduce characters such as elves, dragons, aliens and robots, not to mention the very old and familiar trope of animals as the characters of a fairy tale, for example. Of the three characters studied in this thesis, one is a warlock, one a Dragon Rider and one a demigod – all of them resemble humans more or less closely, but definitely are not. Of course, in the real world, the only race generally accepted as being capable of attributes associated with humanity (such as speech, emotion or the more elusive concept of sentience) are humans. Therefore, when authors invent these other character species, they give them human-like characteristics: thoughts, beliefs, language. They are not precisely humans, but humane, not necessarily people, but persons.

So while this definition of characters as the people of a book is not necessarily incorrect, it does leave something to be desired. What are characters actually like, how do they work, how are they constructed, how are they understood by readers? After all, declaring that a character is a person as documented on the pages of a book is a gross oversimplification. A number of postmodern and structuralist researchers reject the idea of visualizing characters as people entirely. Analyzing characters as if they imitated real humans is dismissed as a somewhat old-fashioned notion, and critics who do this are even accused of confusing fiction with reality. Instead, a character is identified as a narrative function and nothing more. While it can be read mimetically, this is just a literary convention. (Fokkema 1991, 28–30.)

It seems safe enough to agree with Fokkema insofar as characters being intrinsically different from actual, real human beings. However, this hardly means that there are no similarities or that characters could not be studied with regard to their resemblance to real life. Smith argues:

> To my knowledge, no humanist critic has ever argued that characters are real. Rather, they argue that characters can be so successfully life-like in so far as they give the impression of 'roundness', of a depth and complexity of motivation which is adumbrated but never exhausted by the fiction in which they appear. (Smith 1995, 35)

The way that characters are created in narrative lends them the impression of human-like traits such as appearance, thoughts, feelings and motivations. While this is an illusion created by textual methods (narration, description, dialogue et cetera), it is very often a successful one. In

fact, one very commonly held criteria for a successful piece of literature is how believable or credible it is, regardless of it obviously being fictive.

Therefore, when looking to understand and analyze characters, one approach is to categorize them on the basis of how 'realistic' or 'life-like' they are. A traditional twofold division is that of Forster's flat and round characters, which tends to persist as a go-to theory in spite of substantial criticism and the fact that the study was originally published already in 1927. In simple terms, a flat character is one that focuses around one defining quality. A round character, correspondingly, is more complicated and capable of surprising the reader. Roundness is mostly illustrated simply by the ways in which it differs from flatness, as Forster dedicates far more room for definitions of flat characters. (Forster 1974, 46–54.) Regardless of this, he (1974, 50) goes on to say that "flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones". The reason for this is clear: a round character is the one that more successfully mimics real life and the complexity of the human being it attempts to represent.

As mentioned, this dichotomous division has received criticism for being reductive, and has since been reformulated in a number of different ways to accommodate a more extensive descriptive criteria. Rimmon-Kenan (1989, 41) presents a classification in which three character traits are considered as follows: "complexity, development, penetration into the 'inner life'". These criteria take into account what Forster's did not: that a character can be static but complex or develop but remain simple (Rimmon-Kenan 1989, 40–41). The description of inner life is also a relevant addition, as granting a reader some insight into the thoughts and feelings of a character is likely to increase the character's perceived depth.

Harvey (1965) devises a scale along which he names four different character types: protagonists, background characters and intermediate characters of two different kinds. Protagonists are the most important of these groups, although similarly to Forster's round characters, they are explained rather briefly. Protagonists are the characters of whom most information is offered, and in fact the novel itself "exists to reveal them". Correspondingly, the least amount of information is given on background characters, who mainly function to establish a sense of social context. (Harvey 1965, 56–57.)

Between these two extremities exist the individuals of ficelles and cards. The main difference between them lies in whether their role in the novel is merely to serve some narrative function,

as ficelles do (Harvey 1965, 58), or to appear as "an end-in-himself", like cards do (Harvey 1965, 62). Hochman (1985, 87) describes this difference quite aptly in describing the card as "an intensified, wildly energized, animated, often caricaturistic version of a person", whereas the ficelle "serves to set off, contrast with, dramatize, and engage the protagonist". That being said, on the continuum between protagonists and background characters, the card holds more resemblance to the protagonist. The ficelle, on the other hand, "while more fully delineated than any background character" (Harvey 1965, 58) takes its place closer to the other end of the spectrum, near the background.

Hochman (1985), who finds Harvey's analysis insufficient, establishes no less than eight categories according to which he believes characters can be conceptualized. These categories are stylization, coherence, wholeness, literalness, complexity, transparency, dynamism and closure. To form a scale on which to assess characters, he offers each category a polar opposite. These opposites are naturalism, incoherence, fragmentariness, symbolism, simplicity, opacity, staticism and openness, respectively. (Hochman 1895, 88–89.) While all these qualities are certainly relevant in studying characters, they are already quite far removed from the simple aesthetic of Forster's twofold division and in fact are more suited for functioning as analytical tools than helping with categorization.

Another appealingly dichotomous – and almost certainly the most common – way to classify characters is the division into main and minor characters. At first glance, the definitions of the two are very straightforward. Main characters are characters whose roles in the story are in the front and center, whereas minor ones are stooped to the background. In other words, the main or minor character bifurcation assesses how much "screen time" is allotted to different characters and how much they participate in moving forward the plot. In fact, this division is also enacted in some of the theories discussed above: two of Harvey's character types, protagonists and background characters, could easily be renamed main characters and minor characters.

This division into main and minor characters holds some similarity to Forster's round and flat characters, but essentially the two measure different qualities. More information is generally provided of a main character than a minor one, which is why main characters often tend to be, or be perceived as, round ones. The same applies to minor characters and flatness. This is not always the case, however. Main characters, while maintaining their position in the center of the

story, can remain sort of caricatures, their essence revolving around one defining trait. As more is revealed of them, instead of an impression of increased depth, the reader receives more confirmation of their flatness. Likewise, even if a character only appears briefly, it can emerge as a wholesome, complex creation, capable, as Forster says, of taking the reader by surprise.

The instinctual categorization of the three characters in the focus of this thesis, Murtagh, Magnus and Nico from *The Inheritance Cycle*, *The Mortal Instruments* and *The Heroes of Olympus*, respectively, would be that they are minor characters. They are not members of the protagonist cast, although they are in more or less close interaction with them. They are present as some relevant events take place, but then disappear from the story for long stretches of time. They affect the plot, but are not the driving force behind it. In spite of this, they are by no definition flat: all three exhibit both complexity and development throughout their story arcs. It is clear early on in each series that the characters have hidden depths, secrets that the reader can expect to discover during the course of the story. As these secrets – or at least some of them – are revealed, the extent of the characters' complexity is made clear, lending them the impression of so-called roundness, and as they move on through the plot, the reader can observe the changes they go through as they develop as personalities.

Complying with the characteristics relayed by Rimmon-Kenan, also the depiction of inner life is achieved to some extent. All three series are narrated in the third person, with the point of view or focalization – "the lens through which we see characters and events in the narrative" (Abbott 2008, 73) – varying between different characters. With the exception of Murtagh, the characters have a chance to function as focalizer, with the bulk of narration in their point of view taking place in the later volumes of their series as their importance in the story grows. Murtagh is only ever seen through the eyes of other characters, Magnus comes to focalize numerous, if short, passages and Nico actually, in a way, becomes one of the protagonists in the last volume of *The Heroes of Olympus*. Throughout the series, each chapter is narrated from the point of view of a single lead character, who constitute the protagonist cast, and by this inclusion Nico, as well as another previously minor character, Reyna, become members of that group.

Taking this into account, the division between main and minor characters no longer seems that simple, especially in the terms of the series novel. None of the characters start off, in the first volume or even a few of them, as anything comparable to a protagonist or a main character.

Towards the end, their significance increases. The question arises: at what point does a character stop being a minor one, and becomes a major one? A book can certainly have more than one main character, but in order for the classification to work, there has to be a line drawn between the major and minor. Galef (1993), in his study on flat and minor characters, addresses this issue. He presents four possible criteria for measuring the importance of any one character: plot, theme, space and action. If a character is "irreplaceable" in one or more of these aspects, that character is automatically a major figure. (Galef 1993, 11.) These criteria are not without their problems, however. They would, for example, allow for a main character who appears only once to enact an important incident and then disappears from the story entirely.

As a counter to this Galef (1993, 12) tells that "Some critics choose to regard anyone besides the protagonist and antagonist as minor, others can find a solid artistic motive for almost all the characters and so, in a fine democratic display, regard no one as minor". This is, of course, also a very problematic stance, as it does not allow for any deviation between extremes, and would, in fact, almost seem to defeat the purpose of drawing up such a classification in the first place. While all characters are certainly likely to serve some purpose in the story they are in – why else, after all, would the author have included them? – there is hardly any way they can all be equally important. Even in the case of separating the protagonist and the antagonist from the minor characters, a vast array of characters left, all with different roles and functions in the story, are lumped together as equally (un)important.

To address the "miscellaneous assemblage of minor characters", Galef introduces three groups of minor characters based on their "relative importance". These groups are cameos, characters only mentioned or seen in passing, bit parts, of whom some information or description is offered, and minor roles, who grow to play a part in the level of plot or thematics. (Galef 1993, 12.) Galef does not offer a similar division within the major character group, which would steer away from the focus of his study. For comparative reasons, such a classification would be interesting, as it might offer some insight into the precise line between main and minor characters and how the most important minor characters differ from the least important main characters.

Bly (2004) uses the term "secondary character" instead of minor as the contrast to main character. According to him, a secondary character "is not a principal character, nor is it a cameo figure or bit part", but rather something in between (Bly 2004, 5) – perhaps relatable, then, to

Galef's minor roles. He emphasizes the important role of secondary characters and argues that "secondary characters might well be presented in more vivid terms than their principals - - In such instances, they go beyond their nominal function of animated scenery and become symbolic or plot necessities, perhaps best appreciated once the reading of the novel is completed." (Bly 2004, 6.) In view of this, the term secondary seems to offer more credit to these characters and their important roles in the overall story than the term minor. Even Galef, while mainly speaking of characters termed minor, has chosen to title his work *The Supporting Cast*, implicating the relationship between minor and major characters and the significance characters in smaller roles have in upholding the story.

While I do not object to the term minor character in itself, I do believe it is not sufficient in describing the role that the characters chosen for study in this thesis play in their respective stories. In terms of Galef's threefold division, they would each be minor roles at the very least. Furthermore, toward the ends of each series, the importance of each character increases in terms of their status in the overall character framework. They all contribute to the story in terms of plot, theme, space and action. In addition, there is mounting description dedicated to their personal development and complexity. For these reasons, I find classifying Murtagh, Magnus and Nico as secondary or supporting characters more apt than using the more diminutive term minor. An argument might even be made for counting them among main characters, but I believe that would be excessive as they do still stand separate from the central heroes and heroines of their respective series. This is especially true in terms of the series as a whole, and proposes an interesting question: are they still secondary characters in the context of the series as a whole if they are something close to central characters in one or two volumes within it? I argue that the answer is yes. The reader has more time to grow familiar with the characters who are central from the beginning of the story until the end, and even as more is revealed about the secondary characters, it is also revealed that there is much left that is not known or understood about them. Their function in the story as a whole is to support it, not to carry it out – that is left to the protagonists.

3.2 Getting to know supporting characters: a close reading

There are several central ways for authors to provide their readers with information about characters. Narration and description reveal how characters look, move and act in different

circumstances, dialogue exposes their voice and the ways in which they interact with other characters. Depending on the narrative point of view, an author can choose to show a character's external qualities and behaviors or their inner functions, thoughts and feelings – or, of course, both. In the case of central characters, a large portion of the narrative focuses on their actions and behaviors, revealing them in great detail. Much less space is dedicated to the description of secondary characters, which makes understanding them more challenging and open to interpretation.

In order to gain as much information and as thorough an understanding as possible of the three secondary characters at the focus of this thesis, I have chosen to do a close reading of passages in which they are introduced into their respective stories. While protagonists spend most of the time as the focalizer of their story, secondary characters are commonly first seen from the point of view of a more central character. Their own narrative voice is not heard until later, if at all, so the information readers receive is filtered through the perspective of not only the omniscient narrator, but the point of view character. The image that readers form is based on the image that the other character has. This does not mean the introduction cannot be informative, as much can be implied even in a short passage about a character's role and future significance in the story.

Murtagh is first seen when Eragon, the protagonist of *The Inheritance Cycle*, wakes up wounded after a battle to learn that someone has rescued him after he lost consciousness:

> The stranger, dressed in battered clothes, exuded a calm, assured air. In his hands was a bow, at his side a long hand-and-a-half sword. A white horn bound with silver fittings lay in his lap, and the hilt of a dagger protruded from his boot. His serious face and fierce eyes were framed by locks of brown hair. He appeared to be a few years older than Eragon and perhaps an inch or so taller. Behind him a gray war-horse was picketed. The stranger watched Saphira warily. (*Eragon*, 267.)

It is obvious that Murtagh is a warrior, and without a doubt an accomplished one. While his clothes are battered, implying he has been through some rough times, he carries several weapons. Especially the silver-fitted horn and the war-horse would seem to imply some wealth or otherwise noteworthy status. This is later confirmed when he tells Eragon about his upbringing in court. His composed outlook is impressive considering the presence of Eragon's dragon Saphira, a rather threatening sight in most people's eyes. It can be deduced that he is no stranger to dangerous situations. A curious detail is the instant comparison between Eragon and Murtagh's ages and difference in height. It seems a rather irrelevant detail as far as a random

acquaintance is considered, but all comparisons between the two turn out to be significant when a more complex relationship is formed between them and more is learned about the connection they share. At his point, Murtagh offers very little information about his past, but Eragon chooses to trust him and the two start to travel together.

This description shows Murtagh early on in the story, right when he and Eragon first meet. However, he has something of a second introduction when he is revealed to have joined King Galbatorix's service as a Dragon Rider. Perhaps more importantly, this is the first time his dragon, Thorn, is introduced. Even though Murtagh is the object of study here, the significance of his dragon is noteworthy in terms of both his identity and the development in his character throughout the story. While a character, if minor, in his own right, Thorn is also a physical representation of Murtagh's character, or his soul. Whereas the evil king Galbatorix has a black dragon and Eragon a bright blue one, Thorn is described as follows:

> A red dragon - - glowing and sparkling in the sunbeam like a bed of blood-red coals. His wing membranes were the color of wine held before a lantern. His claws and teeth and the spikes along his spine were white as snow. In his vermilion eyes there gleamed a terrible glee. (*Eldest*, 639.)

This extensive description paints Thorn as an impressive sight, suggesting already the awe and fear his appearance rouses in the viewing crowd. The significance of the red color is quite clearly implied by the detailed description of Thorn's appearance. Miller (2000, 281-295) discusses color symbolism in relation to different warrior types with examples from various myth sources. On the type of red knights, he says: "The color red is - - invested with all the ambivalence of the hero himself: red is always a dangerous color, reflecting the doubled potencies of blood and fire, or of their combination in the 'hot blood' of the furious warrior-hero" (Miller 2000, 285). Murtagh is an accomplished warrior who rides a red dragon and, later on, wields a red sword. He is seething with rage at the whole world for the torment he has been subjected to in his life, and especially now as Galbatorix's servant. He certainly fits the description of danger and fury.

In the first volume of *The Heroes of Olympus*, Nico, following Galef's (1993, 12) classification, is only a cameo. Someone at the Greek demigod camp mentions his name as one of a list of people looking for the missing boy, Percy. The first time he actually appears in the story is in the second volume, when Percy, suffering from amnesia, sees him at the Roman demigod camp. They are introduced by Hazel, Nico's half-sister at the shrine of their father Pluto, or Hades as he is known to the Greeks:

> Hazel led Percy to a black crypt built into the side of the hill. Standing in front was a teenage boy in black jeans and an aviator jacket. - - The boy turned. Percy had another one of those weird flashes: like this was somebody he should know. The kid was almost as pale as Octavian, but with dark eyes and messy black hair. He didn't look anything like Hazel. He wore a silver skull ring, a chain for a belt and a black T-shirt with skull designs. At his side hung a pure black sword. (*The Son of Neptune*, 57–58.)

Nico's role as a child of the Underworld is an important factor in describing his personal identity and how others regard him throughout the series, so it is rather fitting that he is first shown in the milieu of a crypt. His heritage is made evident with the repeated reference to the color black. His appearance goes from the dark color scheme of his clothing and hair – black being the color most commonly associated with death – to the pale, vampire-like hue of his skin. The skull motif in Nico's shirt and ring underlines the connection he has with darkness and the afterlife. Furthermore, Percy feels like he recognizes Nico, but Nico claims not to know him: instantly, the possibility is presented that Nico cannot be fully trusted.

Like Murtagh, Nico carries a weapon and can easily be recognized as a fighter, the same as most demigods. His description, with several allusions to darkness, resonates with another warrior type of Miller's, the black knight.

> The associational constellation identified with the black knight thus can display every kind and degree of Otherness, from telluric powers or the darkness of the night to a placement beyond order or cosmesis, even the prenumbous, hyperactive, uncontrolled stage in which a young warrior-initiate subsists before he is made a full 'daylit' member of adult male society. (Miller 2000, 283).

Indeed, Nico is revealed to have powers above and far-removed from other demigods: powers that often even frighten others. Nico is described as somewhat separate from the company of demigods at large. He was the only one to know about the existence of both the Greek and Roman demigod camps and he even traveled between the two without telling either about the other. Regardless, he does not truly have a place as a member in either. He feels he is not accepted, and in fact later on asserts that "When this war is over, I'm leaving both camps for good" (*The Blood of Olympus*, 426), choosing to isolate himself from the society of his peers.

While describing Nico as a dark warrior could easily paint him in an intimidating light, that is not how the image of him turns out. A few pages after the initial description, with the point of view shifted from Percy to Hazel, the following passage is presented:

> Nico didn't appear scary. He was skinny and sloppy in his rumpled black clothes. His hair, as always, looked like he'd just rolled out of bed. - - The first time she'd seen him draw that black sword of his, she'd almost laughed. The way he called

it 'Stygian iron', all serious-like – he'd looked ridiculous. This scrawny white boy was no fighter. She certainly hadn't believed they were related.

She had changed her mind about that quick enough. (*The Son of Neptune*, 60.)

Whereas the physical attributes described remain the same – even the difference between his and Hazel's appearances is mentioned again – the tone is very different, which goes to show the importance of the character filtering the description. Perhaps Nico is trying to look true to the way he sees himself as a child of the Underworld, ominous and commanding, but this attempt at toughness comes across as unsuccessful. Regardless, the last line of the quote allows for suspicion that in spite of the less than impressive exterior, there is more to Nico than meets the eye. Hazel describes her brother as the most dangerous demigod she has met before Percy's arrival to camp (*The Son of Neptune*, 59). This is an interesting choice of words: dangerous instead of powerful or strong, for example. While Nico may physically appear harmless, this does not extend to his internal qualities.

Magnus is first introduced to *The Mortal Instruments* series when the main character Clary tries to remove a block someone has placed on her memories. The Shadowhunters are unable to restore them, but find out who installed the block: the warlock Magnus Bane. (*City of Bones*, 197.) Clary and her friends find Magnus at a party he is hosting:

The young man blocking the doorway was as tall and thin as a rail, his hair a crown of dense black spikes. He was Asian, with an elegantly high-cheek-boned, handsome face, broad-shouldered despite his slim frame. He was certainly dressed for a party, in tight jeans and a black shirt covered with dozens of metal buckles. His eyes were crusted with a raccoon mask of charcoal glitter, his lips painted a dark shade of blue. (*City of Bones*, 231.)

This image of Magnus is rather remarkable in that it does not correspond to the typical connotations of an old, powerful warlock. He looks young and attractive, he is wearing flashy clothes and makeup: he does not exactly appear as a serious, commanding figure. In fact, descriptions of his characteristic fashion choices are offered frequently whenever he is seen in the story and even presented as a means of comic relief (e.g. *City of Fallen Angels*, 50). Whereas Murtagh and Nico, with their openly displayed weapons, are clearly warriors, Magnus looks like a regular man, perhaps even less imposing because of his eccentric style.

However, only moments after his first appearance, Magnus demonstrates his strength by effortlessly incapacitating and throwing out an angry vampire with his magic. Curiously, it is also during this confrontation, not earlier when she takes in Magnus's appearance for the first time, that the focalizer Clary notices the one non-human trait in his looks. It is his eyes, which

"had vertical slit pupils, like a cat's" (*City of Bones*, 235). Typically, one could expect this anomaly to be the first thing someone notices about him, but in Clary's case, it took seeing his use of magic to notice his magical appearance. Like with Nico, it is Magnus's power that commands respect, not his appearance. Even Jace, the Shadowhunter prodigy, commends Magnus's apparently effortless dealing with the vampire as "impressive" (*City of Bones*, 235).

In a way, Magnus as a character is representative of Schaafsma's (1986) idea of the supernatural Other. Of course, the main characters face many representatives of the supernatural, and in fact as Shadowhunters (or werewolves or vampires) are supernatural themselves. However, aside from the demon-hunting, they are largely presented as regular teenagers, rather relatable to the average reader, whereas Magnus is more of a mystery. Schaafsma writes:

> The supernatural Other is represented in many forms in fantasy (it may be a unicorn, a dragon, or a wizard), but it is typically characterized by a paradoxical combination of qualities. On the one hand, it is powerful, awesome, mysterious, and impersonal; on the other hand, it is revealed as vulnerable, subject to loneliness, sorrow, and loss. (Schaafsma 1986, 63.)

Magnus is one of the most powerful warlocks the characters know of, much of his past remains clouded in mystery even to those closest to him, and he often chooses to distance himself from the conflicts dealt with by those around him. He enjoys throwing frivolous parties – like a birthday party for his cat the first time he is introduced – dressing up in silly ensembles and joking around when others are serious. There are times, however, when his light-hearted charade vanishes and more somber feelings come to surface – especially when the subject of his old age is broached: "His eyes seemed to contain the sadness of great ages, as if the sharp edges of human sadness had been worn down to something softer by the passing of years, the way sea water wore away at the sharp edges of glass" (*City of Fallen Angels*, 262).

These brief, introductory paragraphs describing the three supporting characters are better understood as more information about them is revealed and their roles in the overarching plot become clearer. Even from the brief passages selected here to illuminate the first impressions readers – and other characters – receive of the trio, it is clear that they have hidden depths. Readers can expect to see them again and learn more about them, as they are already described in more detail than minor characters just making a brief appearance. There is more purpose to their presence in the story than is given away at first, and their significance later on is already hinted at with the inclusion of descriptive details whose relevance unfolds as the plot progresses.

3.3 Secondary character as a hero

In the genre of fantasy literature, hero is surprisingly often a term interchangeable with main character and appears frequently in phrases such as "the hero of the story". This tends to happen without much thought towards the topic of whether or not the character in question is, in fact, heroic. Traditionally, a hero is the lead character of classical mythology, a "man (or occasionally a woman) with superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favoured by the gods" (OED Online 2016b). In more modern use, hero can mean anyone "distinguished by the performance of courageous or noble actions" (OED Online 2016b). Of course, these are typically attributes a fantasy protagonist is likely to exhibit.

There are many traits associated with heroes such as courage, strength, selflessness, overall goodness or purity of character and the willingness to help those in need or to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others. In fantasy, and YA fantasy especially, the hero protagonists are usually characters easy for readers to identify with, regular people who regardless come to realize some hidden power and uniqueness of character during the course of the story. Tymn speaks of so-called Everyman types, "recognizable characters who represent all of us on our journeys. Their conflicts, their quests, their flaws and their virtues are those we all share, and these universal aspects take precedence over their individual personality traits." (Tymn 1979, 8.)

Tymn brings up two very different kinds of heroes that exist within the Everyman type: the commoner-hero and the morally ambivalent hero. Although Tymn's comments on these heroes are placed within the context of high fantasy, both types are recognizable also in the field of fantasy literature as a whole. The commoner-hero is perhaps the most well-known fantasy hero type. He (or she, albeit far more rarely) is low-born, no one special, and reluctant to take on the hero's mission, but after accepting the responsibility, he rises to the task. The commoner-hero is, typically, a "good" character. The morally ambivalent hero, however, can question the black-and-white good-versus-evil setting as he is driven not by loyalty to the good (or the evil), but by his own personal motives and independent aspirations. (Tymn 1979, 8.)[1]

---

[1] I have settled for using the word "he" here not because the character in question is without exception male, but because it is the pronoun Tymn uses and because the characters I am dealing with are all male. Furthermore, it is an unfortunate truth that in fantasy, it is still more common for any hero to a man than a woman – although in the series studied here there are numerous examples also of interesting female characters in the roles of heroes and protagonists.

The most recognized authority on the study of heroes is almost certainly Joseph Campbell with his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in which he outlines the monomyth, or the hero's journey. This journey, he argues, is repeated in essentially the same pattern in myths and stories around the world (e.g. Campbell 1966, 38). There are three main steps to the journey: "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 1966, 30).

Each of these main steps consists of five or six more specific milestones during which the hero accepts the call to adventure, receives aid and encounters trials and adversaries but finally succeeds in his mission and is restored from the realm of the supernatural back to the common world with some boon to share with his people (Campbell 1966, 36–37). There is some room for variation in the way these stages are represented in a story, but nevertheless the hero – that is to say, the main character – goes through them all in some shape or form.

> The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. He and/or the world in which he finds himself suffers from a symbolical deficiency. - - Typically the hero of a fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph, and the hero of a myth a world-historical, macrocosmic triumph. Whereas the former – the youngest or despised child who becomes the master of extraordinary powers – prevails over his personal oppressors, the latter brings back from his adventure the means for the regeneration of his society as a whole. (Campbell 1966, 37–38.)

These are all motifs directly recognizable not just from myth, but also fantasy literature: the heroes discover their hidden strength, they triumph over their adversaries and they defeat their foe, the all-powerful antagonist and usually save the whole world from said antagonist in the process. This type of hero is very close to the commoner-hero described by Tymn.

Campbell's hero, as well as Tymn's, is always the main character of the story. However, it does not go to say that secondary or minor characters cannot be heroes or act heroically. As their personal story arc is not exposed in as much detail as that of a more central protagonist-hero, supporting characters do not necessarily go through Campbell's heroic journey – although they are more than likely to experience some individual stages included in it. Instead, their heroism can be seen in other areas, in details and turning points within the larger story and in the positive and negative relationships formed with the more central characters – heroes or villains. In YA fantasy particularly, the central conflict in the story, the fight between good and evil, is by and

large created and enacted by these two clear-cut contraries. In adult fantasy, the gray area in between can be quite significant, but in YA fantasy this is often not the case – at least for central characters. Secondary characters can be members of either faction, heroes or villains, but it is not necessary for them to be either. They are not obligated to profess their dedication openly in the same way as protagonists and antagonists are, which provides room for the emergence of a morally ambivalent hero from amongst the secondary character cast.

It is this group of morally ambivalent heroes that the characters at the center of this thesis belong to. Murtagh, Nico and Magnus are not traditional heroes in the same sense as protagonists like Eragon, Percy or Clary are. Their motivations and interests are more complicated than the simple desire to do what is right for the common good, to defeat the forces of the antagonist. However, they, too, express heroic traits such as loyalty, courage or self-sacrifice. Tymn, in his description of the morally ambivalent hero, offers two examples of such morally ambivalent characters: heroes who change sides based on their personal motives, and heroes who are essentially good, although "their commitment is not to the good but to their own independence and individuality" (Tymn 1979, 8). Out of the three characters studied here, Murtagh is the only one who can, to any extent, be said to play both sides. While Magnus and Nico do not necessarily agree with or participate in the agendas of the (so-called) good guys, they are still adamantly against the agendas of the villains. However, they do not see it as their personal responsibility to defeat the antagonists the way that the central heroes do, and want to hold on to their self-sufficiency rather than to rely on or join with others. The same applies to Murtagh, too. He would prefer not to take sides at all, but when he is forced to, he makes the best of it to protect himself and the things he believes in.

4 Plot twists: key points in the stories of Murtagh, Magnus and Nico

In this section, I will focus on a descriptive analysis of several interesting stages within the stories of the three chosen characters. As the characters are supporting characters, some natural comparison forms between them and more central characters. As such, their relationships are one of the key factors illustrating their moral ambiguity as well as their eventual emergence as heroes themselves. In fact, the comparison between the good and the evil is a decisive factor in interpreting the nature of the characters caught between the two. All the themes or events focused on in this section are chosen on the basis that they will help in creating a thorough understanding of the particular functions each character has and the roles they play in the story. Therefore, they represent different phases in both the personal story arc of each character and the overall plot of each series, answering the question of how the overall image of the morally ambivalent hero is created.

4.1 Taking sides: the ambivalent hero caught in the middle

As the characters enter the story, they also eventually establish what their stance is in terms of the central conflict. Originally, Murtagh does not believe in the agenda of King Galbatorix nor that of the opposing faction, the Varden. He is on the run from the king, so when he is forced to follow Eragon to the Varden, Eragon tries to convince him to join them. He argues that since the king is Murtagh's enemy, the Varden should be his allies. Murtagh answers:

> "I don't want Galbatorix to learn where I am, which is inevitable if people start saying I've sided with his enemies, which I've never done. These," he paused, then said with distaste, "*rebels* are trying not only to overthrow the king but to destroy the Empire… and I don't want that to happen. It would sow mayhem and anarchy. The king is flawed, yes, but the system itself is sound." (*Eragon*, 391.)

In Murtagh's eyes, both sides are wrong and he wants to maintain his neutrality. Eventually, however, he ends up helping the Varden in battle when their stronghold is attacked (*Eragon*, 475). The leader of the Varden sees this as a chance for Murtagh to show he can be trusted, but that does not go to say that this is his only motivation for choosing to fight. If the Varden were defeated, the attackers would most likely capture Murtagh and take him to Galbatorix, which is the very fate he wants to avoid. In fact, although the battle is won, Murtagh is shortly after kidnapped and presumed dead (*Eldest*, 9–10).

When Murtagh returns to the story, he has become a Dragon Rider and joined Galbatorix. He defends Galbatorix to Eragon and Saphira:

> He can't kill you, either of you, if his vision is to become reality. … And what a vision it is, Eragon. You should hear him describe it, then you might not think so badly of him. Is it evil that he wants to unite Alagaësia under a single banner, eliminate the need for war, and restore the Riders? (*Eldest*, 649.)

Once before, Murtagh has described that there is something entrancing about the way Galbatorix speaks (*Eragon*, 390), and it seems that again, he has been able to convince Murtagh of his side, at least partially. However, Murtagh and Thorn do not follow Galbatorix of their own free will. The king has discovered their true names, which means they are enslaved to him, forced to obey his will (*Eldest*, 650). Perhaps defending Galbatorix's vision, trying to see the good it could bring, is also a way for Murtagh to defend his own actions in enforcing Galbatorix's orders even though he knows of the king's past atrocities and his capacity for cruelty and murder. This is supported by the fact that he defeats Eragon in battle and could easily bring him to Galbatorix, but instead lets him go free (*Eldest*, 651–652). The two were friends before, and Murtagh does not want to bestow his own fate as a captive and a slave upon Eragon. Alas, the next time he and Eragon meet, Murtagh and Thorn have been punished for this act of mercy: "We have both suffered horribly on account of you. We shall not do so again." (*Brisingr*, 318.) Murtagh blames Eragon for his involvement in their suffering and is motivated by anger and fear of punishment – not faith in any good that might follow from supporting Galbatorix.

Even knowing that they are forced to follow Galbatorix, Eragon thinks Murtagh and Thorn should surrender their lives to him and Saphira rather than be used by the evil king. Eragon, as the traditional, noble hero, would almost certainly be willing to make such a sacrifice, as following Galbatorix's orders would mean risking the lives of innocent people. Murtagh, however, refuses this. "No stranger's life is more important than Thorn's or my own", he argues (*Eldest*, 650). This sums up Murtagh's attitude as a morally ambivalent character. He has every reason to hate Galbatorix, but he still does not support the Varden either. Survival is more important than victory over his oppressor, and in the situation he and Thorn are in, that means doing what Galbatorix wants. A noteworthy detail in the previous quote is that Murtagh mentions Thorn's life first, and his own second. This resonates with an almost identical quote from the previous volume, before the two had bonded, where Murtagh defends killing an unarmed man by saying: "I'm only trying to stay alive. - - No stranger's life is more important than my own." (*Eragon*, 352.) There is a very powerful and intimate bond between dragon and

Rider, and where Murtagh used to put his own well-being first and foremost, Thorn is now included in this priority. From here on, throughout most of the series, his key motive remains the continued survival of his partner and himself – effectively setting him and Eragon against each other. As Dragon Riders, the two are, essentially, in the same position but on opposite sides, and a strong contrast is formed between the two as they repeatedly come to meet each other in battle.

Out of the three characters under study, Nico is perhaps the one most closely caught up in working to support the heroes in their mission. He certainly understands the dangers brought on by Gaia, but he is not one of the seven demigods mentioned in the prophecy about defeating her. In *The Son of Neptune*, he recognizes the amnesiac Percy, but does not tell anyone who he is because "Important things are at work here", and "I can't interfere" (*The Son of Neptune*, 65). He tries to help independently by searching for the Doors of Death, but ends up drawn into Tartarus, the deepest pit of the Underworld. He is captured in a great bronze jar to starve, and after the hero cast rescue him, he ends up getting involved far more closely than he had intended. Two of the heroes, Percy and Annabeth, fall into Tartarus in turn and Percy extracts a promise from Nico: he has to lead the other heroes through the mortal world to the Doors of Death, the only exit from Tartarus, help them through and then help close the Doors so that Gaia can no longer bring monsters back from the dead.

So Nico joins the heroes aboard their flying ship, the *Argo II*, on a quest, although he does not really become a part of the close-knitted crew. The moral ambivalence of his character is not presented so much in the way of his actions in terms of the central conflict than it is in his behavior towards and relationships with the other heroes. Most of the others are intimidated by him, and find it hard to fully trust him the way they do each other. "Percy had shared some disturbing stories about Nico. His loyalties weren't always clear. He spent more time with the dead than the living." (*The House of Hades*, 267.) In the course of the series, Nico does nothing to further Gaia's agenda. However, hiding things like Percy's identity and his knowledge about the existence of both Greek and Roman demigod camps – while paramount to avoid interfering with the gods' plans – has certainly made him seem untrustworthy in the eyes of the other demigods. Furthermore, he occasionally reveals himself to be capable of rather terrifying and even cruel feats, like when he kills a Roman demigod, Bryce. Bryce is openly an enemy, threatening the lives of Nico and his friends and confessing to already having murdered his own centurion. Even then, the way Nico kills him, using his Underworld powers to strip him of his

voice and memory, turning him into a ghost, is very different from the way other demigods usually do battle. (*The Blood of Olympus*, 295.)

Nico mostly keeps to himself and even when others do try to get closer to him, he pushes them away. Jason goes too far in trying to get Nico to open up, so he snaps:

> "I'm going to honour my promise," Nico said, not much louder than a whisper. "I'll take you to Epirus. I'll help you close the Doors of Death. Then that's it. I'm leaving – forever." (*The House of Hades*, 429.)

This is not the only such threat that he makes during the course of the story, but in spite of his desire to be rid of the rest of the heroes, when push comes to shove, he is willing to offer his help. After the Doors of Death are closed, the need for another sub-quest presents itself. The seven demigods of the prophecy must continue on to face Gaia in Athens, but someone is needed to transport a powerful, magical statue back to Camp Half-blood in New York to prevent a civil war between the Roman and Greek demigods. Nico volunteers to go with the Roman demigod Reyna and the satyr Coach Hedge, surprising the other heroes with both his willingness and confidence (*The House of Hades*, 575). The journey requires him to shadow-travel – to turn incorporeal in order to teleport – which is one of his abilities as a child of Hades. However, to transport himself, the statue and other people is risky since the distance is long and will need to be covered in several jumps, between which he will be greatly weakened and unable to defend himself.

Nico's willingness to take this responsibility is somewhat unexpected. He has already threatened to leave the society of other demigods behind him, but now he is willing to risk his life to protect them from civil war. He has thus far shown little signs of being personally invested in the central heroes' mission, even if he has been included in the sidelines for a while already. The other heroes have a hard time understanding what Nico's motivations are for doing the things he does: "Percy wished he could figure out what made this guy tick, but he'd never been able to" (*The House of Hades*, 579). When Percy tries to thank him for keeping his promise about the Doors of Death, he dismisses it: "You got me out of that bronze jar in Rome. Saved my life yet again. It was the least I could do." (*The House of Hades*, 579.) This is similar to what he said to Jason in the earlier quote about honoring his promise: he likes to think he does these things because he has said he would, because he wants to keep his word, or because he does not want to feel like he owes the others anything. On the one hand, he feels the others do not accept him, on the other, he does not want to accept their gratitude or affection. In some

ways, he works just as hard as all the rest in trying to revert Gaia's plans, but does not want to identify himself as a member of the good guys' team, but as an independent agent.

The division into good and evil is not quite as straightforward in *The Mortal Instruments* series as it is in *The Inheritance Cycle* or *The Heroes of Olympus*. In the first three books, the main antagonist is the Shadowhunter Valentine, who wants to eradicate the "impure" Downworlders and wage war on the Clave, the Shadowhunter governing body, for their willingness to live in peace with them. While the Clave opposes Valentine, they are not exactly painted as the good guys either, as they are corrupt and prejudiced against both Downworlders and mundanes, people who do not know about the existence of the Shadow World. Originally, even the Shadowhunter members of the central cast of heroes openly voice their opinion against accepting Downworlders as equal to themselves (e.g. *City of Bones*, 206–207).

With even the good guys coming off as racists, it is no wonder Magnus finds it hard to support their cause. He warns the protagonist Clary about trusting Shadowhunters: "Keep in mind that when your mother fled the Shadow World, it wasn't the monsters she was hiding from. Not the warlocks, the wolf-men, the Fair Folk, not even the demons themselves. It was *them*. It was the Shadowhunters." (*City of Bones*, 257.) Tymn (1979, 8) touches on the possibility that a morally ambivalent character may even raise some doubt as to which of the good and evil sides is which, as Magnus does by questioning the trustworthiness of the Shadowhunters. Although the Shadowhunter mandate is to fight demons, in the story demons are usually not the enemy itself, only a tool used by people to forcibly push through their own agenda.

The hero cast oppose Valentine, although mainly by working behind the Clave's back, even breaking laws to achieve results. Magnus, on the other hand, wishes to detach himself from the conflict entirely:

> If I had to choose between the Clave and Valentine, I would choose the Clave. At least they're not actually sworn to wipe out my kind. But nothing the Clave has done has earned my unswerving loyalty either. So no, I'll sit this one out. (*City of Bones*, 248.)

He has every reason to hope for Valentine's defeat, seeing as Valentine's mission includes driving warlocks to extinction, but it is not his business personally to openly oppose Valentine. Valentine is a Shadowhunter gone rogue and as such, the Clave's problem. Taking a stance would put Magnus's own life at risk, and he has no reason to do that to help the Clave, as they also treat him badly. Shadowhunters address him as "warlock" or "Downworlder" instead of

his name (e.g. *City of Ashes*, 264) and when he does arrive to defend their capital city, Alicante, from Valentine's army of demons, he is accused of entering the city without permission. His – and other Downworlders' – help is rejected even in a moment of dire need because "The Clave doesn't need help - - Not from the likes of you" (*City of Glass*, 237).

As can be surmised from the fact that he does eventually show up to fight Valentine's troops, Magnus does occasionally lend his help to the heroes. However, as is fitting to a morally ambivalent character, this is always at Magnus's own leisure, not because he pledges himself to the heroes' cause. After he heals Clary's sort-of stepfather Luke following a demon attack, he curtly reminds the heroes that this kind of thing does not come free of charge (*City of Ashes*, 221–222). When Clary searches for a spell book that can cure her magically comatose mother, Magnus helps her find it and agrees to perform the spell – but only in exchange for the extremely valuable and powerful book itself (*City of Glass*, 155–156). There is always something motivating Magnus to do the right thing before he is willing to do it – but the motivation is not necessarily always selfish. When he arrives in Alicante to defend it, it is not to end the evil of Valentine, but to protect someone he loves.

So while all three characters start off as disconnected to the central conflict that forms in each series, they all end up becoming more and more involved as the stories progress. The reasons for their involvement are, at first glance, largely coincidental. Thorn hatches for Murtagh, making him an invaluable asset to Galbatorix. Nico is captured and then whisked into a rescue mission himself shortly after being saved from near death. Magnus is approached again and again for help, even though he says he is not interested in taking a side. At this point, it seems each character's sides have been chosen: Murtagh as the unwilling champion of the opponent, Nico and Magnus as the more or less willing aides for the protagonists. As the series progress and reach their peaks, however, these roles turn out not to be quite as static as that.

4.2 Origin story: is evil hereditary?

The next aspect of characterization I would like to draw attention to is each character's back story: where they come from, how they got to where they are and how their past affects them. All three characters, Murtagh, Magnus and Nico, come from a rather dark background. Murtagh's father was a follower of King Galbatorix, as cruel towards his own son as to his

enemies. Magnus is half demon, shunned by his human parents when they found out what he was – and what his father was. Nico is a child the god of death, torn out of the time of his childhood and forced to withstand the loss of his family. All three have suffered pain and cruelty from an early age, as much at the hands of their own family as their enemies, which has a strong impact on how the image of them as characters and as heroes turns out.

When Murtagh first meets Eragon, he announces his lack of allegiance to both King Galbatorix's Empire and the opposing faction of the Varden (*Eragon*, 279). The two young men form a close friendship, but Murtagh refuses to open up about his mysterious past. He reveals only that he is wanted by the Empire, and that "Encountering the Varden would be as dangerous to me as walking in to Urû'baen [the Empire's capital] with a fanfare of trumpets to announce my arrival" (*Eragon*, 283). Eventually, he is however forced to follow Eragon to the stronghold of the Varden, and the reason for his secrecy is revealed. He is the son of Morzan, first of the thirteen Dragon Riders who sided with Galbatorix in his rebellion. They betrayed their own order, helped to kill every last member and slaughtered nearly the entire race of dragons in the process. Morzan served as Galbatorix's right hand man until his death, after which his son remained to be raised in the king's court. At age 18, Murtagh decided he did not want to serve Galbatorix as his father had, and fled for his life.

The reason Murtagh wants to keep his identity a secret is clear: he knows how hated his father is. He and Eragon have grown close, but the moment he confesses he is Morzan son, Eragon's reaction is to reach for his sword and wonder: "*What could he want with me? Is he really working for the king?*" (*Eragon*, 369, italics in the original). The opinion Eragon has formed of him during their time together no longer seems to matter, as the simple fact of his paternity instantly makes him someone who cannot be trusted. Even though Eragon's good opinion of him is eventually restored, the Varden keep him imprisoned. In the end, Murtagh reacts to this imprisonment rather agreeably, stating: "No one would be at ease around me, knowing my true identity, and there would always be people who wouldn't limit themselves to harsh looks or words" (*Eragon*, 465). Even though his father died when he was a child, it seems clear to all that his father's identity remains the defining characteristic of his personality – even if he can prove himself to be a good person, it will always be viewed as a contradiction to his past, not something that he might simply be in his own right.

In spite of the immediate distrust his background rouses in people, Murtagh harbors no affection to his father's memory. When he reveals his identity to Eragon, his voice is described as "tortured" and "bitter" (*Eragon*, 368, 369). He reveals on his back a massive scar that he received from his drunken, enraged father who threw a sword at his three-year-old son (*Eragon*, 369). He also tells Eragon how his mother met Morzan and fell in love with him. He does not believe Morzan cared for her, but "recognized the advantage of having a servant who wouldn't betray him" (*Eragon* 388). After his birth, he was kept away from his mother save for occasional visits. Revealing these things to Eragon goes to say how Murtagh despises his own father and how anxious he is to set himself apart from him. Even after he gets captured by the Empire, becomes a Dragon Rider and is compelled to join Galbatorix's forces, he is offended by the comparison between himself and Morzan:

> Pity and disgust welled inside of Eragon. "You have become your father."
>   A strange gleam entered Murtagh's eyes. "No. Not my father. I'm stronger than Morzan ever was." (*Eldest*, 647.)

One of Campbell's (1966) steps on the hero's journey is atonement with the father. The Oxford English Dictionary offers the word atonement definitions such as "The condition of being at one with others; unity of feeling, harmony, concord, agreement" or "Restoration of friendly relations between persons who have been at variance; reconciliation" (OED Online 2016c).

> The mystagogue (father or father-substitute) is to entrust the symbols of office only to a son who has been effectually purged of all inappropriate infantile cathexes – for whom the just, impersonal exercise of the powers will not be rendered impossible by unconscious (or perhaps even conscious and rationalized) motives of self-aggrandizement, personal preference, or resentment. Ideally, the invested one has been divested of his mere humanity and is representative of an impersonal cosmic force. He is twice-born: he has become himself the father. (Campbell 1966, 136–137.)

The reason I find it relevant to mention this specific phase in the context of studying morally ambivalent heroes is that the father or the father's shadow plays an important role. Murtagh, in a way, takes his father's place when he joins Galbatorix as his right hand man – even though Morzan joined Galbatorix of his free will whereas Murtagh was forced to take unbreakable oaths in the ancient language, the binding language of magic.

When Murtagh emerges before Eragon for the first time after becoming a Dragon Rider, he has, in Eragon's point of view, returned from the dead in his father's image. The two battle and Murtagh emerges victorious, taking from Eragon the sword he received from Brom, Morzan's killer. "If I have become my father, then I will have my father's blade - - It is mine by right of

birth." (*Eldest*, 652.) In this way, he receives a so-called "symbol of office", accentuating his role as his father's replacement. However, Murtagh, with his self-interest and bitterness, does not correspond to Campbell's idea of a hero worthy of being entrusted this prize, and indeed he does not use the weapon in a positive capacity. Certainly, there is no reconciliation or harmony for Murtagh neither before nor after he has taken the place of the father he always hated.

Magnus's backstory in *The Mortal Instruments* is somewhat more complicated than Murtagh's to track. He is, after all, several hundred years old (although his exact age is never revealed) and therefore has already experienced much that has shaped him and given him perspective. However, he too has a precarious father relationship affecting how others see him – and how he sees himself. Being a warlock, he is the offspring of a demon and a human. This gives him some special abilities, such as immortality and the ability to use magic, but also sets him apart from regular humans in more negative ways. Warlocks are even physically marked as different by something known as a warlock's mark. This mark can be anything from blue skin to horns, bat wings, webbed toes or, in Magnus's case, cat eyes. Therefore, before they learn to conceal their mark with magic, warlocks are easily recognizable and often subject to contempt and cruelty. For Magnus, this discrimination originated from his own family:

> "You want to know what it's like when you happen to be born with the devil's mark?" He pointed at his eyes, fingers splayed. "When your 'father' flinches at the sight of you and your mother hangs herself in the barn, driven mad by what she's done – or what's been done to her? When I was ten, the man who raised me tried to drown me in the creek. He knew I was no son of his; that my real father was a demon. I lashed out at him with everything I had – burned him where he stood. I went to the Silent Brothers eventually, for sanctuary. They hid me. They say that pity's a bitter thing, but it's better than hate. When I found out what I was really, only half a human being, I hated myself. Anything's better than that." (*City of Bones*, 243.)

Although Magnus scarcely even mentions his real father in this quote, it is clear what heritage he has left his son simply by bringing him into the world: prejudice and pain. Although Magnus shortly after claims he is "over it" (*City of Bones*, 243), that he has come to terms with his identity, whenever someone asks about his father or even mentions him, he refuses to make any comment: "It wasn't something Magnus liked to tell people. It was one thing to have a demon for a parent. It was another thing when your father owned a significant portion of Hell's real estate." (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 130.) Much like Murtagh, Magnus wants there to be no association between his father and himself. When he and the protagonist team summon a demon for help and he reveals he knows of Magnus – and his father – the other characters are surprised:

"[Simon] didn't think any of them had ever assumed that Magnus even knew who his father was, beyond that he had been a demon who had tricked his mother into believing he was her husband" (*City of Lost Souls*, 240). Magnus interrupts the demon from speaking his father's name: he does not want the others to know, nor does he want to contact his father under any circumstance. Although they were desperate enough to ask for a demon's help, Magnus chose to call on one he did not know rather than his own father.

When the villain Sebastian traps Magnus in an alternate dimension, a demon realm ruled by his father, Magnus is greatly weakened and unable to use magic. Even then, at the risk of his own life, he refuses to call on his father for aid, because the price for his help would not be worth it, and he himself "might not be the one who pays it". (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 425–426.) Only at the very climax, after Sebastian has been defeated and the team of heroes have no other means to escape the demon realm, can the others convince Magnus to summon his father. He tries to warn them off: "I have gone my whole life without ever taking recourse to this path, save once, when I learned my lesson. It is not a lesson I want the rest of you to learn." (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 568.) Though he does not elaborate, it is clear that this single previous encounter with his father has turned Magnus irrevocably against him. He even argues that there are things worse than death and seems to genuinely believe that all of them dying then and there might be a better fate than what his father has to offer.

When the demon is finally summoned, the reason for Magnus's reluctance grows clear: his father is not just any demon, but Asmodeus, a Greater Demon and one of the Nine Princes of Hell (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 570) – one of the most powerful and most evil demons to exist. He agrees to help, but the price he requires is steep, leaving the victory tasting sour. Though Magnus faces his father and lives to tell the tale, he achieves no more of an atonement than did Murtagh. The price Asmodeus asks for opening a gateway to the characters' home dimension is Magnus's immortality, which at his age would mean his death. Magnus agrees to pay the price, but Simon, who is a vampire, but only seventeen years old, offers himself in Magnus's place. He loses his immortal life, but simply becomes a human again. However, in addition to this, Asmodeus takes away all the memories Simon has about the Shadow World and, by extension, the rest of the character cast, thus proving Magnus's warnings true. Asmodeus explains his request:

> "You've never quite understood what it is to be a demon, have you? - - To be an *artist* of pain, to create agony, to blacken the soul, to turn pure motives to filth,

> and love to lust and then to hate, to turn a source of joy to a source of torture, *that is what we exist for!*" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 580.)

He knows that simply killing Simon is not as painful as letting him live on without his memories, making him unable to recognize his friends. In this sense, Magnus is nothing like his father – Asmodeus even mocks him for his kindness, his willingness to sacrifice his own life to save his friends. There is no reconciliation: if anything, Magnus's aversion to his father grows after this second meeting when he refuses to accept Magnus's sacrifice, choosing instead the better option of torment offered in Simon.

Nico is different from both Magnus and Murtagh in a lot of ways, but he, too has darkness in his past. He and his sister Bianca were born in the 1930s in Venice. Though they did not know it then, Hazel, another one of their father's demigod children, was born in New Orleans around the same time. Whereas Hazel died young, Nico and Bianca survived to the 21st century after their father sent them to the Lotus Hotel, a magical place where time moves slower than the outside world. They were trapped for decades but did not age. After they were freed, they were thrown without introductions into a time they were not familiar with. Eventually, they joined Camp Half-blood, the Greek demigod camp, and Bianca was killed on a quest, alienating Nico from the other demigods as well as his father, the god of death, who he held responsible for Bianca's death. Nico's origins were described in Riordan's series *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*.

In *Heroes of Olympus*, more is learned about what Nico did after losing his sister, and it is these events and the story arc he goes through that motivates this study. During the onset of the story, in Nico's own words, he spends most of his time in the Underworld (*The Son of Neptune*, 90). He says he visited his sister Bianca there a few times, but the last time, when he intended to bring her back from the dead, she was gone. She had chosen to be reborn to a new life, meaning Nico would never see her again. (*The Son of Neptune*, 92.) He encountered Hazel, however, and chose to bring her back to life instead, in his own words to give her a chance to earn a place in Elysium, the Underworld paradise (*The Son of Neptune*, 194). This, while certainly an act of kindness towards Hazel, speaks of a deep-rooted loneliness that Nico is trying very hard to mend. His mother is long dead, his father is as distant a parent as all the Olympian gods, forbidden from interfering with the mortal world, and he has permanently lost his beloved sister, who was the "only person who ever accepted" him (*House of Hades*, 428). Knowing how badly Nico misses his "real" sister, it is no wonder Hazel feels that "Nico might care about Hazel, but

she'd never be Bianca. Hazel was simply the next best thing Nico could manage – a consolation prize from the Underworld." (*The Son of Neptune*, 66.)

With his godly father, Nico fits right in with Murtagh and Magnus in terms of absent, burdensome parents. Even though Hades is rarely a present figure in Nico's life, his heritage affects Nico strongly. In Roman mythology, Pluto is the god of both death and riches (*The Son of Neptune*, 66), whereas in Greek mythology, Hades is the ruler of the Underworld. Therefore, while Nico's half-sister Hazel is born of their father's Roman aspect and has power over the riches in the earth, Nico is capable of feats such as reanimating skeletons and communicating with or even controlling the spirits of the dead. Although he and Hazel are siblings, other demigods seem to feel uneasy around Nico in a way they do not with Hazel:

> Frank tried not to flinch when he realized Nico was at his shoulder. The guy was so quiet and brooding he almost seemed to dematerialize when he wasn't speaking. Hazel might have been the one who came back from the dead, but Nico was *way* more ghost-like. (*The House of Hades*, 121–122.)

Nico, noticing how others shy away from him, tries his best to avoid their company, leaving him isolated and lonely.

Like Magnus, Nico, too, comes face to face with his father during the procession of his story, although their meeting goes far more amicably. A lot is said about their relationship by Nico's first reaction upon seeing his father: "A year ago, he would have jumped out of his skin if his father suddenly appeared next to him. Now, Nico was able to control his heart rate, along with his desire to knee his father in the groin and run away." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 143.) There is a certain comedy in the idea of a teenage boy kneeing a god in the groin, but clearly Nico's reaction goes to say that while being contacted by his father makes him feel uneasy, he is not as averse towards it as he might have been in the past. Also, he has himself developed some confidence and is able to maintain his calm. He addresses his father coolly and sarcastically, though internally he experiences some wistfulness: "Story of our relationship, Nico thought. You only ever have a few moments." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 145). Their relationship is distant, and not by Nico's desire, but it is not hostile. In fact, as his father leaves, Nico finds his father had a reassuring effect on him: "Like death, his father's presence was cold and often callous, but it was *real* – brutally honest, inescapably dependable. Nico found a sort of freedom in knowing that eventually, no matter what happened, he would end up at the foot of his father's throne." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 148–149.) Whereas death is something most people fear or at

least wish to avoid, Nico finds the thought of it almost relieving: it is a connection to his father, and a constant in his life where there are so many other things he struggles with.

Nico does not necessarily take over his father's role, like Murtagh does, but the he definitely reaches an atonement with him. Campbell (1966, 130) writes that atonement "requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, and that is what is difficult. One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy." Nico and his father have been on bad terms in the past – not in the least because of Bianca and her death – but now they reach a certain reconciliation, even a fondness of each other.

> "My children are so rarely happy. I… I would like to see you be an exception."
> Nico stared at his father. He didn't know what to do with that statement. He could accept many unreal things - - But tender words from the Lord of the Underworld? No. That made no sense. (*The Blood of Olympus*, 148.)

Whereas Nico finds peace in the thought of eventually ending up in his father's realm, Hades wishes him a happy life before that time comes – although he also promises to prepare Nico rooms at his palace in case the quest ends poorly for him (*The Blood of Olympus*, 149). Their differences have been reconciled and they have both reached a point of harmony with each other. They also know that eventually they will see each other again, but this thought is no longer one of discomfort or discord. Near the very end of the story, when the main conflict has already been resolved, Nico even prays to his father for the first time (*The Blood of Olympus*, 479).

A curious example of how differently the characters relate to their fathers is the way each character refers to theirs. Murtagh usually calls his father rather coldly by his first name, "Morzan", or simply "my father". Magnus avoids speaking of – or to – his father altogether, but when he must, he just says "father", or "my father". When he is face to face with him, Magnus once even contemptuously uses the term "the demon" rather than speak Asmodeus's name (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 575). Nico, on the other hand, addresses Hades as "Father" to his face and sometimes employs the surprisingly informal "Dad", when speaking of him to others (e.g. *The Son of Neptune*, 66). This, too, goes to show how much better – and more familiar – terms he is on with Hades than the other two with their respective parents.

The key difference between Nico's father and Murtagh and Magnus's fathers is that while most demigods certainly regard him negatively, Hades is not a villain. Morzan sided with Galbatorix against his own people, participating in the practical eradication of an entire sentient race.

Asmodeus, though scarcely an important figure in Sebastian's plan to overthrow the Shadowhunters, allows him the use of his realm, not to mention his exploitation of the heroes after they defeat Sebastian and need a way to return home. Hades offers Nico guidance in his quest and when the time comes, he joins the other gods and the seven demigod heroes to battle Gaia's giants (*Blood of Olympus*, 437). Although his relationship with Nico is distant, this is more by circumstance than either one's choice. While other demigods express discomfort in witnessing the darker aspects of Nico's abilities, he does not try to hide his strength or deny the connection he has with his father's domain. Magnus, too, has come to terms with his own demonic aspects, and is not, for example, afraid to use his magic to summon demons when necessary, even though it is against the law. He is even suggested to have further abilities than a regular warlock because of his father's identity (*City of Lost Souls*, 518). In spite of this, he has not, and does not, come to find any common ground with his father. Like Murtagh, he chooses to dissociate himself from his father and his legacy as much as possible. It is unsurprising that, out of the three, Nico is the one who reaches a genuine atonement with his father while the other two continue their resentment.

4.3 Romance and friendship: inspiring goodness

As supporting characters, an important aspect of the characterizations of Murtagh, Magnus and Nico is the relationships they form with other characters. I already discussed the significance of the father relationship, but as each character's father is a very minor character in the overall framework of things, I will here focus more on relationships with other, more central characters. These relationships take the forms of friendships, feuds and romantic entanglements – and often more than one of these with the same individuals. Murtagh's most important relationships are with the protagonist Eragon and, especially in the last volume of the series, with Nasuada, the leader of the resistance against Galbatorix. The story of Magnus's character is closely entwined with that of the Shadowhunter Alec – not necessarily a protagonist, but a member of the central hero cast nonetheless. Nico has a complicated relationship with the entire hero cast in his story as a whole, but especially so with Percy. Also, as his own role in the story grows, his relationships with more minor characters gain significance.

Murtagh and Eragon begin as allies and friends in the first installment of the series. However, this is changed when Murtagh becomes Galbatorix's servant. A key turning point in the

relationship of the two happens during the first battle between the two as Dragon Riders. The victorious Murtagh takes Eragon's sword, Zar'roc, which Eragon's mentor Brom took from Murtagh's father after slaying him, and says:

> "Zar'roc should have gone to Morzan's eldest son, not his youngest. It is mine by right of birth."
> A cold pit formed in Eragon's stomach. *It can't be.*
> A cruel smile appeared on Murtagh's face. "I never told you my mother's name, did I? And you never told me yours. I'll say it now: Selena. Selena was my mother and your mother. Morzan was our father." (*Eldest*, 652.)

Murtagh and Eragon are brothers, and Eragon is horrified to learn that the traitor Morzan was also his father. This speaks volumes about the importance that is placed on blood relations in the series. Murtagh takes pleasure in how badly this knowledge hurts Eragon, as is evident in his smile. He has suffered his entire life because of his father's identity, and now that suffering is imparted on someone else as well. This also illustrates the bitterness that is defining in Murtagh's character, and shows that while he is not a willing aide to Galbatorix, he does have a cruel streak of his own.

Eragon and Murtagh have much in common now. In the end of the first volume of the series, Eragon receives a scar on his back similar to the one given to Murtagh by Morzan (*Eragon*, 497), even though it is later healed. They are both Dragon Riders, both essential figures in opposing sides of the conflict. Eragon has even sworn an oath of fealty to Nasuada, leader of the Varden, similar to Murtagh's servitude to Galbatorix, even though it is bound only by his honor, not the magic of the ancient language (*Eldest*, 23). As it is revealed that they are brothers, a clear comparison forms between the two: they come from a similar starting point, but their lives have taken them down very different paths, forcing a friendship to turn into rivalry. While this connection between the two horrifies Eragon, who is appalled to think of himself as Morzan's son, Murtagh seems to rejoice in it: "You and I, we are the same, Eragon. Mirror images of one another. You can't deny it." (*Eldest*, 652.) When Eragon does deny it, if only with the rather weak argument that he no longer has the similar scar, Murtagh is clearly taken aback. He clings to the idea of their similarity, and pointing it out to Eragon. He envies Eragon for the easier life far from the shadow of their father and wants to prove, perhaps even to himself, that he is not a bad person, only a victim of circumstance:

> "I am not evil!" said Murtagh. "I've done the best I could under the circumstances. I doubt you would have survived as well as I did if our mother had seen fit to leave *you* in Urû'baen and hide *me* in Carvahall." (*Brisingr*, 319.)

Eventually it is revealed, however, that Eragon and Murtagh are not brothers, but half-brothers: while Morzan is Murtagh's father, Eragon's father is Brom, his old mentor. Whereas Morzan was Galbatorix's follower, Brom was a Dragon Rider whose dragon Morzan killed during the rebellion. He helped found the Varden, and eventually killed Morzan and his dragon. He met and fell in love with Selena after she gave birth to Murtagh, but after Eragon's birth and Selena's death, he decided to hide the truth of their relationship to keep Eragon safe, leaving him to be raised by his mother's brother. (*Brisingr*, 604–613.) This revelation modifies the comparison between Eragon and Murtagh. Murtagh's character remains as a foil to Eragon's, but whereas Eragon, the hero, can adopt his true father's heroic legacy, Murtagh remains trapped under the shadow of his villainous father. Even more than the actual antagonist, Galbatorix, who only becomes physically present in the story in the last volume of the series, Murtagh is the opponent that Eragon must fight against. As two brothers whose fathers preceded them as champions to opposing sides of the conflict, they are contrasts and opposites of each other, alternate versions of the same hero. While finding out the truth about their fathers is an empowering experience for Eragon, to Murtagh it is an assertion that they are not, after all, two of a kind.

Murtagh's romantic attraction to Nasuada is already implied briefly early on in the series (*Eragon*, 465). However, the relationship between the two only gains significance in the last volume when Galbatorix sends Murtagh to capture Nasuada and bring her to the capital (*Inheritance*, 354). While she is held captive, Galbatorix and Murtagh – forced by Galbatorix's use of the magical ancient language – torture her both physically and by invading her mind, causing hallucinations. However, between these torture sessions, Murtagh takes to visiting Nasuada in secret, to ease her suffering with spells and to keep her company. While much of what Murtagh does for Nasuada during her captivity shows kindness and compassion, he also makes a confession that illustrates his selfishness and dubious morals. Galbatorix originally intended to have Nasuada assassinated, but Murtagh convinced him to capture her instead:

> "It was the only way I could keep him from killing you. … I'm sorry. … I'm sorry." And he buried his head in his arms.
>> "I would rather have died."
>> "I know," he said in a hoarse voice. "Will you forgive me?"
> (*Inheritance*, 452.)

Murtagh knows Nasuada would sooner choose death than continued torture or the risk of breaking down and taking oaths of loyalty to Galbatorix. Regardless, he chooses to preserve Nasuada's life. This is a judgement call fitting for a morally ambivalent hero. Nasuada is more of a traditional hero, ready to lose her life rather than risk becoming Galbatorix's servant. While

there is arguably certain heroism in saving her life, Murtagh is thinking not of Nasuada, but his own, selfish desire. He cannot bear to see her killed. To him, it is better to subject her to suffering than death, because it is what he chooses for himself. This way, he has someone to share his own torment with, and he even gets to be close to the woman he loves, even if it means harming her. At the same time, he craves her forgiveness and after he recounts the story of his own suffering and torture by Galbatorix's hand, Nasuada does feel sympathy for him, stating: "I cannot forgive … but I understand" (*Inheritance*, 453).

As Nasuada's imprisonment continues, the effect she has on Murtagh's character grows clear. When they first speak, he has accepted his position in Galbatorix's service, and even tries to once more argue that Galbatorix's victory would not be such a bad thing: "If he defeats the Varden, Alagaësia will finally be at peace. - - What's more, if the Varden lose, Eragon and I can be together as brothers ought to be. But if they win, it'll mean the death of Thorn and me. It'll have to." (*Inheritance*, 459.) While Murtagh tries to refer to the good Galbatorix could bring to the world, at the bottom of his argument there still remains the desire for himself and his dragon to survive. Even though Galbatorix is obviously evil – after all, he tortures the woman Murtagh loves – the king's victory is also the only solution that guarantees his own continued survival. While he is ready to help Nasuada by easing her pain, he is also angered and offended by her urging him to try and rebel against Galbatorix, to try and help her escape. He simply believes it is impossible, and does not even respond to Nasuada's argument that death is better than life as a slave. (*Inheritance*, 460.)

As Nasuada's torture escalates and the relationship between her and Murtagh deepens, Murtagh begins to change his views. Against all hope, he promises to find a way to free Nasuada, even if is too late for Thorn and himself (*Inheritance*, 490). He knows that freeing her would result in severe punishment from Galbatorix, but wants to do it anyway. His very way of thinking, always placing concern for himself first and foremost, is beginning to change. This is illustrated clearly when he touches Nasuada's mind with his own, to help her know whether what she sees is real or a hallucination created by Galbatorix. Nasuada is surprised to find that his mind reminds her of Eragon's:

> [T]he similarities were striking, as were the equally prominent differences. Foremost among the differences was his anger, which lay at the center of his being like a cold black heart, clenched and unmoving, with veins of hatred snaking out to entangle the rest of his mind. But his concern for her outshone his anger. (*Inheritance*, 492.)

Even though Murtagh never comes to function as a focalizer, this passage gives the reader some insight to his inner life. Thus far, Murtagh has always been clearly motivated by two things: his will to preserve his own life and Thorn's, and his undirected rage at the whole world for the suffering he has undeservingly been subjected to. However, he is now willing to risk Galbatorix's fury by aiding Nasuada escape, and his affection for her is even starting to outweigh his most defining characteristic. In other words, his character is developing in a direction that will finally decide his fate as the story grows closer to its conclusion.

In a lot of ways, *The Mortal Instruments* series can be seen as two separate, if closely connected, trilogies. The main characters remain the same, but the central conflicts change, as does the antagonist. Clary's mother is saved, Valentine defeated, romantic relationships fulfilled and so on. New conflicts arise in book four to replace the ones resolved in book three. This applies to the relationship of Magnus and Alec as well. While their relationship is in a rather minor role in the overall framework of the first half of the story, it becomes a far more central storyline in the second. Similarly, Alec's and especially Magnus's points of view are not prominent in the first half, where their relationship is mostly seen through other characters' eyes. While the attraction between Magnus and Alec is clear to his closest friends, Alec does not want to openly confess to the relationship or his own homosexuality. Homosexuality is frowned upon by the Clave – not to mention the attitudes Shadowhunters have towards Downworlders. Furthermore, Alec still harbors unrequited feelings towards Jace, another member of the leading hero cast and central male protagonist.

Eventually, Magnus grows tired of the way Alec shies away from his touch (*City of Ashes*, 187) and even openly denies their relationship (*City of Ashes*, 222) when they are in front of his friends – and Jace especially. He tells Clary, "Alec refuses to acknowledge that we have a relationship, and so I refuse to acknowledge him" (*City of Glass*, 157). He still comes to Alicante to help fight off Valentine's army of demons, and confesses his feelings to Alec, even openly voicing that his entire motivation for helping the heroes is because he loves Alec:

> "You *love* me?"
> "You stupid Nephilim", Magnus said patiently. "Why else am I here? Why else would I have spent the past few weeks patching up all your moronic friends every time they got hurt? And getting you out of every ridiculous situation you found yourself in? Not to mention helping you win a battle against Valentine. And all completely free of charge!" (*City of Glass*, 223.)

However, he also says he knows their relationship will never work because of Alec's refusal to make it public. Eventually, Alec decides to resolve this by kissing Magnus in front of his parents and practically the entire Clave, thus coming out of the closet (*City of Glass*, 387). The couple achieve an apparent happy ending, with even Alec's parents evidently accepting Magnus as his boyfriend (*City of Glass*, 490).

In the second half of the series, Magnus – and Alec especially – become more prominent characters and frequent focalizers, thus giving their relationship more visibility. It is learned that Alec's parents are not as accepting of his homosexuality as the end of the third book seemed to imply (*City of Lost Souls*, 397). However, the new central conflict between the two turns out to be Magnus's immortality and his past. As the pair encounter a past lover of Magnus's from over a hundred years ago, the vampire Camille, Alec grows jealous of the amount of past experience Magnus has: "'She said pretty boys were your undoing,' Alec said. 'Which makes it sound like I'm just one in a long line of toys for you. One dies or goes away, you get another one. I'm nothing. I'm – trivial.'" (*City of Fallen Angels*, 318.) While Magnus tries to convince Alec that Camille is manipulating him, Alec's feelings of inadequacy and jealousy begin to create a strife between the couple. This is accentuated by the fact that Magnus does not like to open up about his past, and Alec feels like he cannot truly get to know Magnus even though they are in a relationship and in love. When Camille tempts Alec with an offer of a way the two might be truly together, as equals, Alec is intrigued. She offers Alec immortality but as he does not want to become a vampire, she then claims to know a way to take away Magnus's immortality, giving the pair a chance to grow old together. (*City of Fallen Angels*, 387, *City of Lost Souls*, 82–84).

As the team of heroes are fighting the new threat presented by Sebastian, Magnus works closely together with them. However, he is not afraid to speak out his motivation for participating:

> "I had a dream," Magnus said, his eyes distant. "I saw a city all of blood, with towers made of bone, and blood ran in the streets like water. Maybe you can save Jace, Daylighter, but you can't save the world. The darkness is coming. - - If it weren't for Alec, I'd be gone from here."
> "Where would you go?"
> "Hide. Wait for it to blow over. I'm not a hero." (*City of Lost Souls*, 310–311.)

Even after everything he did to help the heroes during the war against Valentine, he still does not consider himself a hero. He is terrified of what he believes is coming and is not helping because of any common good or because he believes his vision can be averted. He is only

participating because he wants to try and protect the person he loves. Simon argues, "You love Alec enough to stick around - - That's kind of heroic" (*City of Lost Souls*, 311). Like Murtagh, Magnus's first instinct is to do the thing that keeps himself safe, but then the importance of other characters' welfare surpasses this need for self-preservation.

However, Magnus eventually discovers Alec has been meeting Camille behind his back. Alec says he was not going to go through with his bargain with Camille, that he only kept meeting her to have someone to talk to about Magnus to try and understand him better (*City of Lost Souls*, 516–517), but Magnus is furious about this betrayal of his trust. He ends their relationship and with it, his willingness to offer help to the hero cast: "It's over. I don't want to see you again, Alec. Or any of your friends. I'm tired of being their pet warlock." (*City of Lost Souls*, 518.) Magnus has announced several times that the only reason he has been helping the heroes has been his affection for Alec. The reason for his participation as a member of the hero cast has been his role as a romance interest, not the fact that he has joined the group as a fellow hero. As the relationship ends, so do his free services in magic – or at least that is what he threatens at the end of the fifth volume. As the dangers escalate in the last installment of the series, this proclamation to keep away from Shadowhunter business is tested.

During the course of *The Heroes of Olympus* series, it is frequently established that Nico does not feel like he fits in with other demigods. Especially his tense relationship with Percy – and Percy's girlfriend Annabeth – is implied:

> Nico had blamed Percy for getting his sister Bianca killed, but they'd supposedly got past that, at least according to Percy. Piper had also mentioned a rumor that Nico had a crush on Annabeth. - - Jason didn't get why Nico pushed people away, why he never spent much time at either camp, why he preferred the dead to the living. He *really* didn't get why Nico had promised to lead the *Argo II* to Epirus if he hated Percy Jackson so much. (*The House of Hades*, 273.)

It is clear that Nico's relationship with Percy is central to understanding his character, but it is not a topic he likes to open up about. The reason for this is revealed when he and Jason meet Cupid, the god of love, who forces Nico to confess out loud the truth of why he avoids the demigod camps and finds it impossible to fit in. He has – or in his own words, used to have – a crush on Percy. (*The House of Hades*, 289–293.) This explains many things about Nico's character. The reason he is uncomfortable around Annabeth is not because he is attracted to her, but because he is jealous of her. It is difficult for Nico to be around Percy, knowing that he will never feel the same way. Nico's twofold feelings for Percy are described well in the following passage: "It didn't seem to matter how much he resented Percy Jackson; Nico would do

anything for him. He hated himself for that." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 152.) He does not always even like Percy, and certainly does not want to be attracted to him, but at the same time, he cannot stop himself from being drawn to him.

Furthermore, Nico is ashamed of his homosexuality, and does not want anyone to find out. Even though Jason, the only person to hear Nico's confession, does not judge him for it, he understands why Nico is afraid of telling people: "Jason couldn't imagine what it had been like for Nico all those years, keeping a secret that would've been unthinkable to share in the 1940s, denying who he was, feeling completely alone – even more isolated than other demigods" (*The House of Hades*, 293). Nico grew up in a more conservative time, and has not had any positive experiences regarding his orientation. He genuinely believes that people would never accept him if they knew. Jason tries to encourage Nico to be honest to people, convinced that they would be supportive. However, Nico already feels that people recoil from him because of his connection to the Underworld, and his homosexuality would be just another reason for them to judge him: "I'm the son of *Hades*, Jason. I might as well be covered in blood or sewage, the way people treat me. I don't belong anywhere. I'm not even from this *century*. But even that's not enough to set me apart. I've got to be – to be –" (*The House of Hades*, 428.) He is not only afraid of how other people might react to him, but he cannot come to terms with his identity himself: he cannot even bring himself to speak the word gay. He believes it is something that automatically makes him an outsider, and as a result he is filled with shame and anger – directed both at himself and the outside world.

As Nico's story progresses and receives more attention – more specifically, when he becomes a focalizer and as such, a protagonist in the last volume – he is seen forming more close relationships. He and Reyna, a Roman demigod and another new protagonist, travel together towards New York to end the impending civil war between the demigods. Reyna, as a child of the Roman war goddess Bellona, is capable of sharing her strength with others, and as she sustains Nico through the arduous journey, the two grow close. Reyna can feel Nico's suffering as she lends him strength: "She'd expected some backlash; it happened every time she shared her strength. But she hadn't anticipated so much raw anguish from Nico di Angelo. - - If this was only a portion of Nico's pain… How could he bear it?" (*The Blood of Olympus*, 50.) Likewise, Nico finds himself encouraging Reyna to open up about her painful past: "Nico felt like a stranger in his own body. Why was he encouraging Reyna to share? It wasn't his style or his business." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 280.) This signals a change in Nico's character. Partially

by force of circumstance, partially for other reasons, he is forced to let someone get close to him. The quest they are on requires them to work together, to understand each other, and as they become friends, Nico's attitude about always shutting everyone out, refusing even to let other people touch him (e.g. *The House of Hades*, 272) subsides. When he hears that one of the seven demigods of the prophecy is destined to die, he finds himself worrying about them all – not just his romance interest:

> To his surprise, his thoughts didn't leap first to Percy. His primary concern was for Hazel, then for Jason, then for Percy and the others aboard the *Argo II*. - - Nico had never allowed himself the luxury of friends, but the crew of the *Argo II* was as close as he'd ever come. (*The Blood of Olympus*, 146–147.)

He has never really had friends before in his life, perhaps he has even thought that he does not deserve them, but slowly his persistent will to isolate himself from others is breaking, signaling an impending turning point for his character.

Thus far I have tracked the important phases and relationships that take place during each characters story arc. As the overall plot develops, as Senior (2012, 190) says, the story that began "in a single thread" has now evolved into several interconnected, "polysemous" directions. This feature of quest fantasy is what allows previously minor characters to increase in significance towards the end of the story. At this point in my analysis, it is time for the morally ambivalent heroes to show their true colors, so to speak, and finally take their places in the overall resolution of the central conflicts. There is something pushing each of them forward and something holding them back and the choice, such as it is, between the two is what will define the nature of their heroism.

4.4 Hero in full

As the final climax of each story approaches, Murtagh, Magnus and Nico are pushed towards taking a stance. For Murtagh, the decision on how to act comes only at the last second during the fight against Galbatorix, and for Magnus, much earlier in the last volume of *The Mortal Instruments*. Nico's decision is not formed in a moment, but rather it grows on him even as he himself develops as a person during his ordeal on the quest and in the subsequent battle. It is perhaps no surprise that each ends up aligning themselves with the side of the heroes, but the reasons that lead them to this are, while similar in some respects, ultimately their own.

Murtagh has already decided that he wants to save Nasuada from Galbatorix, even at the expense of his own well-being. Before he can accomplish this, however, the Varden's forces attack the capital city and Eragon, Saphira and their aides penetrate into Galbatorix's castle to confront him. Galbatorix's magic is so powerful, however, that he can incapacitate the attackers easily. He has discovered the name of names, the true name of the ancient language of magic, and with it, he can control all the people who use the language to do magic. He makes Eragon and Murtagh fight, largely for entertainment and to finally determine which one is the better warrior, although he forbids them from killing each other. The two are evenly matched, but in the end, Eragon wins the battle by tricking Murtagh: letting him land a strike to grant Eragon a chance to cause a far more serious wound.

> "That was always the difference between you and me." [Murtagh] eyed Eragon."You were willing to sacrifice yourself. I wasn't. … Not then."
> "But now you are."
> "I'm not the person I once was. I have Thorn now, and… - - I'm not fighting for myself anymore. … It makes a difference." He took a shallow breath and winced. "I used to think you were a fool to keep risking your life as you have. … I know better now. I understand… why. I understand. …" His eyes widened and his grimace relaxed, as if his pain was forgotten, and an inner light seemed to illuminate his features. "I understand – *we* understand," he whispered, and Thorn uttered a strange sound that was half whimper and half growl. (*Inheritance*, 708–709.)

For the first time, Murtagh has found himself willing to risk his own life, to sacrifice himself so that he might protect Nasuada. This readiness for self-sacrifice, a definite trait of a hero, leads him – and his dragon – to the realization that their personalities have changed fundamentally: their true names have changed. As it is their true names that bind their oath to obey Galbatorix, they are now free from his influence.

The changing of his true name allows for a concrete way to witness the change that has taken place in Murtagh's character. There are a number of factors motivating it, key among them his ability to let go of his anger enough to put something else before it – namely, Nasuada. This is a chance for him not only to attempt to save her, but also the only chance he has had to openly try and oppose Galbatorix himself. The thought Murtagh used to cling to, of Galbatorix bringing peace to Alagaësia, is not even breached as Murtagh immediately seizes his chance and strikes against Galbatorix using the name of names. He does not actually harm Galbatorix, but succeeds in stripping away the magical wards he has in place to protect himself, and opening a window for Eragon and his friends to attack, ultimately leading to their victory. When the moment of

action is at hand, Murtagh displays his loyalty to the heroes' side and helps them achieve their ultimate goal.

Regardless, after the battle is over, Murtagh's dark past and morally ambivalent nature are not forgotten. He and Nasuada have formed a positive relationship with each other, and it is even implied that Nasuada reciprocates Murtagh's romantic feelings. Murtagh and Eragon also mend their strife as they are no longer pitted against each other. Regardless, Murtagh and Thorn leave the capital, knowing that while Eragon and Nasuada no longer blame them for their part in helping Galbatorix, the rest of the Varden would never stand for them staying after all they have done. Nasuada appears to understand this, but Eragon tries to convince them to stay:

> Murtagh shook his head and continued to stare over the nettles. "It wouldn't work. Thorn and I need time alone; we need time to heal. If we stay, we'd be too busy to figure things out for ourselves. - - Besides, it would be painful to be around Nasuada right now, for both her and me. No, we have to leave."
> "How long do you think you'll be gone?"
> "Until the world no longer seems quite so hateful and we no longer feel like tearing down mountains and filling the sea with blood." (*Inheritance*, 735.)

While Murtagh's love for Nasuada and both their willingness to risk themselves to do the right thing have changed Murtagh and Thorn enough to change their true names, it has not erased the anger and suffering that is a key part of their characters. It is still something they have to come to terms with on their own, and so they do not participate in the happy ending and rebuilding of the kingdom with Nasuada as queen. In the very end, the parallel is once again drawn between Murtagh and Eragon as Eragon ends up leaving Alagaësia behind and travelling to parts unknown. Even as their fates have taken them similar routes on opposite sides thus far, so do both their stories end on a similar note, with isolation from the rest of society.

Magnus declares in the end of volume five of *The Mortal Instruments* that he is done helping the hero cast as his relationship with Alec is over. However, he cannot keep his distance for long. Early on in volume six he even goes to say goodbye to Alec, who is about to leave for the Shadowhunter capital, in spite of his vow that he does not want to see Alec again. The two discuss their relationship and the reason why it cannot work: not only because one of them is immortal and the other is not, but also because of Magnus's refusal to share who he really is. Alec says: "[Y]ou never tell me anything. I don't know when you were born. I don't know anything about your life - - You know everything about me, and I know nothing about you. That's the real problem." (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 67.) Even though the meeting does not end

on a positive note or with anything resolved, Magnus wishes Alec to be safe: "I need you to live" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 68).

Soon after this, Magnus finds himself drawn back into the fray:

> "I thought you were done helping Shadowhunters," said Catarina, and then she held up a hand before he could say anything. "Never mind. I've heard you say that sort of thing enough times to know you never really mean it."
> "That's the thing," Magnus said. "I've looked into it, but I haven't found anything. - - I don't think I *can* help them, Catarina. I don't know if anyone can." (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 131.)

He confesses to his friend Catarina how much he really loves Alec – unlike anyone he has loved before in his long life (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 131). During this conversation, it is learned that Magnus did not end his relationship with Alec just because of Alec's betrayal of his trust, but also because he senses the danger that is coming and, in Catarina's words, "you want to push him away before you lose him" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 130). After Catarina encourages him to go be with Alec and argues that some loves are worth the risk of losing them, Magnus ends up following Alec to Alicante, where the danger is about to begin. This is a defining moment for Magnus's character, as he decides that his desire to try and protect Alec should outshine his fear of giving too much of himself in a relationship where he is sooner or later doomed to lose the other person. In a sense, this is a decision between self-preservation – not physically, though he does put his own survival at risk too, but on an emotional level – and taking the risk that giving himself up to another person is be worth the pain that may follow.

Before they can be reunited, however, Magnus is abducted and taken to the other realm, where the final showdown between Sebastian and the heroes eventually takes place. Sebastian is defeated and, with no other escape, Magnus's father, the demon Asmodeus, is summoned. As already discussed earlier, Magnus is ready to give his life to save those of the other heroes: "I have to save you, Alec - - You and everyone you love; it's a small price to pay, isn't it, in the end, for all that?" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 575.) There is no hesitation, no fear for himself: while he does not want to die, this is still a worthy reason to do so. Even until the very end of his story arc, it is love that inspires Magnus's heroism, not any altruistic vision of a better world. Even more so than with Murtagh, the love felt for someone who is a traditional hero is what brings out the heroism in the morally ambivalent character as well. Even though it is the central heroes who resolve the conflict and defeat the antagonist, Magnus is there to help in whatever capacity he can – as did Murtagh.

In the end, however, it is not Magnus that pays the price for their escape, but Simon. Magnus and Alec's happy ending is not portrayed as inherently positive as it was in the end of the third volume. They have been through a lot and this time, it is Alec who is hesitant to make the commitment, afraid that their relationship will fall on the same things it did before, on Magnus not opening up to him. As a symbol of his willingness to change this, Magnus gives Alec a notebook detailing stories about his past, saying that it is "Evidence that I am willing to give you something I have never given anyone: my past, the truth of myself. I want to share my life with you, and that means today, and the future, and all of my past, if you want it. If you want me." (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 610.) This time, they acknowledge the problems that they have, like Magnus's immortality and choose to be with each other anyway: "Even if it were only days, I would choose to spend them all with you" (*City of Heavenly Fire*, 647).

For Nico, a turning point in his character development and willingness to embrace his role as a hero takes place shortly after one of his darkest moments: killing the sadistic demigod Bryce. Nico is furious as he attacks Bryce, and as he unleashes his anger, he also exposes the most vulnerable parts of himself: "Reyna and the coach experienced his journey through Tartarus, his capture by the giants, his days wasting away in that bronze jar. They felt Nico's anguish from his days on the *Argo II* and his encounter with Cupid in the ruins of Salona." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 294.) But while his friends have some trouble processing the sinister way Nico turned Bryce into a spirit, they do not turn on him like he expects them to:

> Nico wasn't sure what to say. They'd seen his deepest secrets. They knew who he was, what he was.
>> But they didn't seem to care. No… They cared *more*.
>> They weren't judging him. They were concerned. None of it made sense to him. (*The Blood of Olympus*, 302.)

Nico, who always keeps to himself and refuses to open up to anyone, has been forced to inadvertently reveal at once all the parts of himself that he himself considers the worst. Even though he loathes himself for these things, key among them his feelings for Percy, his friends do not think any less of him. Even the seemingly cruel way to take Bryce's life was just Nico doing what he could to protect them.

Whereas to Murtagh and Magnus, it is love that helps them to embrace their heroic side, for Nico, it is friendship. His one-sided attraction to Percy has been holding him back, causing him to resent himself for the way he feels and withdraw from the company of other demigods. As he makes friends and sees that they can accept him for who he is – both in terms of his

homosexuality and his dark Underworld powers – he becomes not only happier, but stronger: "Reyna tried not to stare at him. In the last few days he'd become so much stronger. - - She had seen Nico do some impressive things, but manipulating dreams… had he always been able to do that?" (*The Blood of Olympus*, 354.) Even then, with his grown confidence, he still clings on to the idea that once the battle is done, he has to leave the camps behind, that he does not belong in the society of the demigods as a whole (*The Blood of Olympus*, 427).

Making friends alone is not enough to make Nico join the heroes in full: he also has to find a way to be at peace with who he is. In terms of his position as a son of Hades, this comes from understanding and accepting the sometimes unpleasant responsibilities that come with his power: "Nico remembered his father's words in the Chapel of Bones: *Some deaths cannot be prevented. - -* For once, he decided to trust the wisdom of his father." (*The Blood of Olympus*, 467–468.) After the battle, he is responsible for overseeing the burial rites of those fallen on the battlefield, and he finds himself embracing this responsibility. While he has never hidden his abilities, now he no longer associates representing his father's domain of power with other people recoiling from him, but takes pride in it.

Perhaps the more important aspect of embracing his identity comes from coming to terms with his homosexuality. As he has seen that people can know this side of him without judging it, it is easier for him to be open about it. During the battle and its aftermath, he connects with another Greek demigod, Will, who bluntly gives him a piece of his mind about Nico avoiding the camp: "'Oh please.' Will sounded unusually angry. 'Nobody at Camp Half-Blood ever pushed you away. You have friends – or at least people who would *like* to be your friend. You pushed yourself away.'" (*The Blood of Olympus*, 427.) After the battle, Will approaches Nico again, reprimanding him for not initiating contact. Encouraged by noticing Will's interest in getting closer with him, Nico decides to openly declare his homosexuality. He does this by confessing his former crush to Percy – this time honestly confident that he no longer feels attracted to him. There is an implication that his interest has shifted towards to the more positive recipient Will: "Then he walked back across the green, to where Will Solace was waiting" (*The Blood of Olympus*, 486).

To return briefly to Campbell's description of the hero's journey, one of the steps described is the hero's "reward" for his success in the form of winning a woman's love:

> The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. - - The meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love (charity: amor fati), which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity. (Campbell 1966, 120)

Of course, in these series, two of the characters have central romantic interests that are men, not women, but alas the successful fulfilment of a romantic relationship – or its failure – is a relevant consideration in the journeys of these morally ambivalent heroes. Magnus's love for Alec has motivated him to embrace his position as an affixed member of the hero cast, and as he has grown ready to relinquish his independence in favor of achieving a truly intimate relationship, the fulfilment of the romance is his reward. As Percy is revealed as Nico's romance interest, it is immediately clear that this relationship will not be enacted: Percy is heterosexual and in a happy relationship with Annabeth. However, as Nico embraces his position as a hero, he is rewarded in the appearance of the conveniently romantically available character, Will.

For Murtagh, his love for Nasuada is the most significant motivation for his decision to turn over to the heroes' side and perform his own act of heroism. However, while there are significant implications that Nasuada reciprocates his affections, the two do not have their relationship fulfilled, but instead Murtagh is forced to flee while Nasuada stays behind to rule as queen. She is not only an object of his desire, but a strong character and a hero in her own right – and Murtagh's past ambivalence, even if his loyalties are now decided, make him unworthy of her love: "The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master" (Campbell 1966, 120). Murtagh has not reached this mastery of life, or even mastery over his own persona and the darker aspects of it. Just as he was unable to make peace with the legacy of his father, he is unable to prove himself worthy of the status of hero among the rest of society. Nico and Magnus, on the other hand, have faced the demons of their past. While Magnus may not be fully accepted in the Shadowhunter society, he himself is at peace with who he is and ready to share it with others openly. For Nico, the realization that he himself was the one causing his isolation from others allows him to find his place among his demigod peers.

5 Conclusion

Thus is concluded this thesis about morally ambivalent heroes as secondary characters in three YA fantasy series. In the previous chapters I have produced a background understanding of fantasy as a genre and as a field of study as well as an overview of some relevant theories regarding character study and the nature and significance of supporting character types. With reference to the concept of heroes and heroism, I have identified three secondary characters from different fantasy series as morally ambivalent heroes. By describing and analyzing important mile stones from the stories of these characters, I have identified the features and characteristics that lend them their morally ambivalent nature and observed the developments that lead them to accepting their roles as heroes. All three characters, in spite of their position as supporting rather than leading characters, have played an important part in producing a complex, multilateral and entertaining story arc for the series they are in.

The research questions I set out to answer in this thesis were: How are morally ambivalent heroes depicted in YA fantasy? What functions do they have as supporting characters and how do they relate both to the more central characters and the overall story arc of their respective series? When answering these questions, I focused especially in the concepts of heroism and moral ambivalence: how did the characters portray and fuse together these two qualities? As morally ambivalent heroes – and as opposed to traditional heroes – what roles did they have in forwarding the story, and what significance did their relationships with the more central, and more traditional, heroes hold?

I found that one of the key elements in the description of these morally ambivalent heroes was their position in the center of the conflict between good and evil. They all care about what is right, but it is not their most important motivation. Considering these complex motivations is important as it helps to understand who they are as characters and why they do the things that they do. As Eder et al. write:

> The logic of the story then automatically implies the logic of the character's intentions and hopes as to future events. Consequently, in order to understand the story, the reader or viewer needs to understand the wishes, plans and motivations of the characters. (Eder et al. 2010, 24.)

All these three characters make decisions through the course of the story that affect the direction the plot takes – as well as the development that takes place in their own personas. While they are all essentially good characters, or at least they are not inherently bad, they are not motivated

by a belief in serving some greater good: it is their own personal goals they care about. For the most part, this means maintaining their independence and personal well-being. Especially Murtagh puts his own survival before almost anything else, and even Nico and Magnus, who do choose to help one side of the conflict over the other, wish to do so while remaining independent from the majority group. Even later on in the story, when they choose to act at the risk of their own individuality, the motivation is not necessarily the actual eradication of the forces of evil. For Murtagh and Magnus, the motivation is protecting someone they love, even at their own expense. For Nico, it is first his stubborn idea of holding to his promises and paying off what he sees as a debt to someone who helped him first. Only after he lets go of his fixation to isolate himself from the rest of society does he recognize a position for himself as a full-fledged member of the hero group – something that Murtagh and Magnus do not achieve.

As the morally ambivalent heroes are supporting characters – that is to say, their function is to support the central cast – the relationships they form with the other characters have a significant role in mapping out what functions they have in the overall story. In the case of Murtagh, his main role is as the protagonist Eragon's opponent. While the main antagonist is Galbatorix, he is not actively present in the story, but rather sends Murtagh in his stead to function as the foe Eragon fights against. Their connection as brothers – or half-brothers, as is eventually revealed – draws a parallel between them, showing Murtagh not only as an enemy to Eragon, but also as a foil, an alternate version of himself, in a similar position yet opposite. Even at the moment of culmination, when it is time to strike at Galbatorix, Eragon is powerless to act before Murtagh's sudden outbreak against the king opens the window to attack.

In some ways, Nico functions as a similar alternate version of a demigod hero. On paper, he is really no different from other demigods, but regardless whereas the children of gods like Poseidon and Jupiter are painted as traditional heroes, his particular set of powers as a child of Hades are seen as dangerous and suspicious. The others are light, he is dark. However, as he rises from minor character status to a protagonist in the last volume and more of his story is revealed, he comes to achieve mastery over the darker aspects of his persona and embrace them, thus transforming into a full hero. In a sense, he comes to prove that being different does not mean you cannot be a hero, and in fact he displays perhaps the most heroism of all the characters considered here by helping see through the quest that eventually prevents civil war between the two demigod factions.

Magnus has a twofold role when it comes to his connection with the central hero cast. On the one hand, he is a powerful aid to the heroes, one without whom many of them might have died early on in the story. On the other hand, he can only be bothered to help with the right encouragement, namely his romantic attraction to one of the main characters. His irrelevant attitude towards the central conflict allows for an alternate perspective towards the two factions: there are no right and wrong options here, but rather a wrong and a slightly less wrong one. Even once his love for Alec allows him to overcome his fear of losing his independence and self-preservative instincts, there is no unequivocal happy ending – the issues that have always existed complicating his life and his relationship with Alec are still there.

As secondary characters, the personas and backgrounds of Murtagh, Magnus and Nico are revealed bit by bit, with secrets foreshadowed and then exposed. This allows them to intrigue the readers' interest in a different way than more central characters can, often even leading to readers getting more invested in finding out what is next in store for them than their more central counterparts. They help move on the plot, even participating in decisive turning points, but in the end stand aside as more central characters resolve the final conflict and defeat the antagonist. They act as foils or comparisons to more central characters and offer an alternate way to view the world. As morally ambivalent heroes, they portray a less clear-cut image on what really is right and wrong in the context of each story – and on what all heroism really is and can be. While central characters in YA fantasy tend to be cut from the same cloth, secondary characters can be allowed more variation, and as such they have the opportunity to take readers by surprise – as is mentioned in Forster's (1974) criteria for the formulation of a round, credible and life-like character.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Clare, C. (2007). *City of Bones*. London: Walker Books.

Clare, C. (2008). *City of Ashes*. London: Walker Books.

Clare, C. (2009). *City of Glass*. London: Walker Books.

Clare, C. (2011). *City of Fallen Angels*. London: Walker Books.

Clare, C. (2012). *City of Lost Souls*. London: Walker Books.

Clare, C. (2014). *City of Heavenly Fire*. London: Walker Books.

Paolini, C. (2003). *Eragon*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Distributed by Random House.

Paolini, C. (2005). *Eldest*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Distributed by Random House.

Paolini, C. (2008). *Brisingr, or, The seven promises of Eragon Shadeslayer and Saphira Bjartskular*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Paolini, C. (2011). *Inheritance, or, The vault of souls*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Riordan, R. (2011). *The Lost Hero*. London: Puffin.

Riordan, R. (2012). *The Son of Neptune*. London: Puffin.

Riordan, R. (2012). *The Mark of Athena*. London: Puffin.

Riordan, R. (2013). *The House of Hades*. London: Puffin.

Riordan, R. (2015). *The Blood of Olympus*. London: Puffin.

Printed sources:

Abbott, H. P. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bly, P. (2004). *The Wisdom of Eccentric Old Men: A Study of Type and Secondary Character in Galdós's Social Novels, 1870-1897*. Montreal: MQUP.

Campbell, J. (1966). *The hero with a thousand faces* (8 pr.). Cleveland, O.

Collins R. (1982). "Fantasy and 'Forestructures': The Effect of Philosophical Climate upon Perceptions of the Fantastic". In Slusser G. E., Rabkin E. S. & Scholes R. (1982). *Bridges to fantasy*. Carbondale Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press.

Coyle W. (1986). *Aspects of fantasy: Selected essays from the second international conference on the fantastic in literature and film*. Westport (Conn.): Greenwood.

Eder, J., Jannidis, F. & Schneider, R. (2010). *Characters in fictional worlds: Understanding imaginary beings in literature, film, and other media*. New York: De Gruyter.

Fokkema A. (1991). *Postmodern characters: A study of characterization in British and American postmodern fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Forster E. M. & Stallybrass O. (1974). *The Abinger edition of E. M. Forster. 12, Aspects of the novel and related writings*. London.

Galef, D. (1993). *The supporting cast: a study of flat and minor characters*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Haikka, I. (2016.) *Nobody's sidekick: The female hero in Rick Riordan's* The Heroes of Olympus. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Harvey W. J. (1965). *Character and the novel*. London.

Hochman B. (1985). *Character in literature*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Ihonen M. (2004). "Lasten ja nuorten fantasian kerronnalliset keinot." In Blomberg K., Hirsjärvi I. & Kovala U. (2004). *Fantasian monet maailmat*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.

Irvine A. C. (2012). "Urban fantasy". In James E. & Mendlesohn F. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jackson R. (1981). *Fantasy: The literature of subversion*. London: Methuen.

James E. & Mendlesohn F. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

James E. (2012). "Tolkien, Lewis and the explosion of genre fantasy". In James E. & Mendlesohn F. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kesti, T. (2007). *Heroes of Middle-Earth: J. Campbell's monomyth in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955)*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Maund K. (2012). Reading the fantasy series. In James E. & Mendlesohn F. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

McEvoy K. (2011). "Heroism at the Margins". In Berndt, K. & Steveker, L. (2011). *Heroism in the Harry Potter series*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Mendlesohn F. (2008). *Rhetorics of fantasy*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

Miller, D. A. (2000). *The epic hero*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Nikolajeva, M. (2011). "Adult Heroism and Role Models in the Harry Potter Novels". In Berndt, K. & Steveker, L. (2011). *Heroism in the Harry Potter series*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Nikolajeva M. (2012.) "The development of children's fantasy." In James E. & Mendlesohn F. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to fantasy literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Perälä, H. (2009.) *Fokalisaatio fantasiassa: kertojan ja henkilön näkökulmat nuorten fantasiakirjasarjassa*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.

Pierce, T. (1993.) "Fantasy: Why kids read it, why kids need it". *School Library Journal*. Vol. 39 Issue 10: 50-51.

Rantalaiho L. (2006). "Kaikenikäisille keskenkasvuisille. Fantasia Leena Krohnin lasten- ja nuortenkirjoissa". In Leinonen A. & Loivamaa I. (2006). *Ihmeen tuntua : Näkökulmia lasten ja nuorten fantasiakirjallisuuteen*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1989). *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*. London: Routledge.

Schaafsma, K. (1986). "Wondrous vision: Transformation of the Hero in Fantasy through Encounter with the Other". In Coyle W. (1986). *Aspects of fantasy: Selected essays from the second international conference on the fantastic in literature and film*. Westport (Conn.): Greenwood.

Sinisalo J. (2004). "Fantasia lajityyppinä ja kirjailijan työvälineenä". In Blomberg K., Hirsjärvi I. & Kovala U. (2004). *Fantasian monet maailmat*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.

Sisättö V. (2006). "Fantasia ja fantasiakirjallisuus". In Leinonen A. & Loivamaa I. (2006). *Ihmeen tuntua : Näkökulmia lasten ja nuorten fantasiakirjallisuuteen*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.

Smith M. (1995). *Engaging characters: Fiction, emotion, and the cinema*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press.

Todorov T., Howard R. & Scholes R. (1975). *The fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1983). "On Fairy-Stories". In Tolkien, J. R. R., & Tolkien, C. (1983). *The monsters and the critics and other essays*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Tymn M. B. (1979). *Fantasy literature: A core collection and reference guide*. New York:

Waller A. (2009). *Constructing adolescence in fantastic realism*. New York: Routledge.

Wienker-Piepho S. (2004). "Kansantarinat ja folklore fantasian maaperänä". In Blomberg K., Hirsjärvi I. & Kovala U. (2004). *Fantasian monet maailmat*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.

Online sources:

OED Online. (December 2016a). "character, n." Oxford University Press. Accessed 8.2.2017 from
http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/view/Entry/30639?rskey=4pjeFQ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid

OED Online. (December 2016b). "hero, n." Oxford University Press. Accessed 8.2.2017 from
http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/view/Entry/86297?rskey=aMBr4Z&result=1#eid

OED Online (December 2016c). "atonement, n." Oxford University Press. Accessed 24.2.2017 from http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/view/Entry/12599?redirectedFrom=atonement#eid

The New York Times Best Sellers. Accessed 15.9.2017. https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/